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**Sermons Preached  
Upon Several  
Occasions. Vol.  
IV.**

**Robert South**



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## Sermons Preached Upon Several Occasions. Vol. IV.

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**SERMONS**

PREACHED UPON

**SEVERAL OCCASIONS,**

BY

**ROBERT SOUTH, D.D.**

PREBENDARY OF WESTMINSTER,  
AND CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,

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**A NEW EDITION, IN SEVEN VOLUMES.**

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**VOL. IV.**

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**OXFORD,**

**AT THE CLARENDON PRESS.**

**MDCCCXXIII.**



## CHIEF HEADS OF THE SERMONS.

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### VOL. IV.

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#### SERMON LIV.

##### MAN'S INABILITY TO FIND OUT GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

###### ROM. xi. 33.

*How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! P. 1.*

The methods of divine Providence, whereof king Charles's return (the subject of this day's commemoration) is an eminent instance, surpass all human apprehension, 1. and the most advanced wisdom is an incompetent judge of the ways of God, with respect,

1st, To the reason or cause of them, 4. For men are prone to assign such causes as are either false, as that the happy in this life are the proper objects of God's love; the miserable, of his hatred, 5. and that prosperity always attends innocence, and sufferings, guilt, 9. or imperfect, 17.

2dly, To the event or issue of them, 18. For men usually prognosticate the event of an action, according to the measure of the ability of second agents, 18. or from success formerly gained under the same, or less probable circumstances, 19. or according to the preparations made for it, and the power employed in it, 21 .

Hence we may infer,

1. The folly of making success the rule of our actions, 24.
2. The necessity of depending upon Providence, 26.
3. The impossibility of a rational dependence, but in the way of lawful courses, 28.

#### SERMONS LV. LVI.

##### ENTHUSIASTS, NOT LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

###### ROM. viii. 14.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. P. 32.*

It being clear, that the Spirit of God in some degree leads and helps all men, 33. it will be necessary, in the prosecution of these words, to shew,

1st, How the Spirit is said to be in men, 34. viz. two ways allowable by scripture, either,

1. Substantially, as he filleth all things, 34.
2. By the effects he produces in them, 35.



For the way, pretended to by the familists, viz. a personal indwelling in believers, is not to be proved either from reason or from scripture, 36.

2dly, How men are led by the Spirit, 38. viz.

1. Outwardly, by his prescribing rules of actions in the written word, 39.

2. Inwardly, by his illumination of the judgment, and bending of the will, 39.

For the way, pretended to by enthusiasts, viz. his speaking inwardly to them, 41. is not allowable; because,

1. Scripture is by the Spirit itself declared a rule both necessary and sufficient, 42.

2. That inward speaking is seldom alleged but for the patronage of such actions as cannot upon any other account be warranted, 43.

3. It is contrary to the experience of the generality of Christians, 44.

4. It opens a door to all profaneness and licentiousness of living, 45.

5. No man can assure himself, or others, that the Spirit speaks inwardly to him; neither from the quality of the things spoke, nor from reason, scripture, or miracles, 48.

An examination of what the pretenders to an immediate impulse of the Spirit plead from several scripture-examples, 57. as of Abraham, 65. Jacob, 66. the Egyptian midwives, 66. Moses, 66. Phinehas, 67. the Israelites, 67. Samson, 69. Ehud, 69. Jael, 70. Elijah, 70. Also with four observations relating to the examination of these examples, 58.

3dly, What is meant by being *the sons of God*; viz. by imitation, 72.

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2. To be tolerated in the state, as having a pernicious influence upon society, 76.

## SERMON LVII.

### THANKFULNESS FOR PAST MERCIES, THE WAY TO OBTAIN FUTURE BLESSINGS.

#### ISAIAH v. 4.

*What could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?* P. 79.

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1st, The manner of God's complaint, which runs in a pathetic interrogation, 81. importing in it a surprise grounded upon,

1. The strangeness, 81. and,

2. The unusual indignity of the thing, 82.

2dly, The complaint itself, 83. wherein is included,





1. The person complaining, God himself, 83.
2. The persons complained of, the Jews, 84.
3. The ground of the complaint, 85. which appears by observing,
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  2. How they dealt with God by way of return, 92. And they are charged with injustice and oppression, [ver. 7.](#) 93. rapacity and covetousness, [ver. 8.](#) 94. luxury and sensuality, [ver. 11, 12.](#) 95.
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    1. From within; a growth of all sects and factions, 99.
    2. From without; to be laid waste by a foreign enemy, 100.



## SERMON LVIII.

### THE NATURE, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF ENVY.

#### [JAMES iii. 16.](#)

- For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.* P. 102.
- In order to prove that of all sins there is none of greater malignity and baseness than envy, 102. it will be necessary to shew,
- 1st, What it is, and wherein its nature consists, 102.
  - 2dly, What are its causes, 105. on the part,
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    2. Of the person envied, 113. viz. great natural parts and abilities, 113. the favour of princes and great persons, 114. wealth and prosperity, 116. esteem and reputation, 119.
  - 3dly, What are its effects, confusion and every evil work, 121.
    1. To the envious person himself, 121.
    2. To the person envied, 123. viz. a busy prying into all his concerns, 123. calumny or detraction, 124. his utter ruin and destruction, 126.
  - 4thly, What use and improvement may be made of this subject, 128. by learning,
    1. The extreme vanity of the best enjoyments of this world, 128.
    2. The safety of the lowest, and the happiness of a middle condition, 129.
    3. The necessity of depending upon Providence, 130.



## SERMON LIX.

### CHRIST'S PROMISE, THE SUPPORT OF HIS DESPISED MINISTERS.

#### LUKE xxi. 15.

*For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist.* P. 134.

Our Saviour before his death, in order to support the ministers of his church against what should befall them after it, leaves with them this promise, 134. in the words of which is implied,

1st, A prediction, that the apostles should not fail of adversaries, 135. which would oppose them both in word, by gainsaying, 141. and indeed by resisting, 144.

2dly, The promise itself of such an assistance as should overcome all that opposition, 146. very necessary to remove the fears which he foresaw would be apt to seize their spirits, 147. In which promise we may consider,

1. The thing promised, viz. a mouth, 149. or an ability of speaking with great perspicuity, 149. simplicity, 151. zeal, 153. and wisdom, or a prudence in action and behaviour, 155. by opposing neither things nor persons any further than they stood in their way, 156: and opposing them resolutely whenever they did, 156. Which two, viz. mouth and wisdom, being united, have the greatest advantage, 158.

2. The person promising, viz. Christ, 158.

3. The means, by which that promise was performed, viz. the effusion of the Holy Ghost, 159.

## SERMON LX.

### FALSE METHODS OF GOVERNING THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EXPLODED.

#### GAL. ii. 5.

*To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.* P. 162.

From the way of St. Paul's dealing with the schismatics of his time, 164. a pattern may be drawn, how to deal with our dissenters, viz. not to yield up the least lawful, received constitution of our church to their demands or pretences, though never so urging and importunate, 167. The prosecution of which assertion shall be managed by considering,

1st, The pretences alleged by dissenters against our church's ceremonies, 167. As,

1. The unlawfulness of those ceremonies, 169.

2. Their inexpediency, 170.



3. Their smallness, 172. Which three exceptions are confuted severally, 172.

2dly, The consequences of yielding or giving them up, 174. Which will appear very dangerous, if we observe,

1. The temper and disposition of those men who press for such a compliance, 174.

2. The effects of such a compliance heretofore, 176. and those, which a comprehension is likely to produce for the future, 177. together with a discourse upon toleration, 180.

3dly, The good and great influence of a strict adherence to the constitutions of our church, in procuring the settlement of it, and preserving the purity of the gospel amongst us, 189. because it is the most sovereign means,

1. To preserve unity in the church, 189.

2. To beget in the church's enemies an opinion of the requisiteness of those usages, 190.

3. To possess them with an awful esteem of the conscience of the governors of the church, 191.

Lastly, A brief recapitulation is made of all the fore-alleged reasons and arguments, why (according to St. Paul's example and dealing with the judaizing Christians) we are by no means to give place in the least to our dissenters, 197.

## SERMONS LXI. LXII. LXIII.

[The chief heads of these sermons are printed p. vii. &c. of Vol. II. as they relate to the subject there treated of.]

## SERMONS LXIV. LXV. LXVI.

### DELIVERANCE FROM TEMPTATION THE PRIVILEGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

#### 2 PETER ii. 9.

*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.* P. 289.

Man's condition, with reference to temptation, is so desperate, that without the assistance of a superior good spirit he cannot be an equal match for the evil one, 289. And the text sets forth to us the signal mercy of God to the godly or truly pious persons, 292. in delivering them from all temptations or trials, chiefly such as are designed to corrupt them, 294.

1st, All the ways of deliverance from temptation may be reduced to these, 300.

1. Of being kept from it, 300.

2. Of being supported under it, 306.

3. Of being brought out of it, 311. when the temptation has in some measure prevailed; for there are several degrees, 312. viz. seduction, 312. enticement, 312. consent of the will,



313. commission of sin, 313. and the habitual reigning of sin, 314. Into which last state those scarcely fall who are actually in a state of grace, 317.

From the foregoing particulars we may learn,

1. The great goodness and wisdom of God in the severest precepts of religion, 318.

2. The most effectual method of dealing with a temptation, viz. prevention, 319.

2dly, The impulsive causes inducing God thus to deliver the godly, 323. are,

1. The free mercy of God, 324.

2. The prevailing intercession of Christ, 328. With some objections answered, 332. and a case resolved concerning the fallibility of regenerate persons, 334. and the several assurances of regeneration, 337. and the expectations men may have of being delivered, 335. in relation to the ways of entering into temptation, 343. illustrated by in stances of different success, 344. with a confutation of some pretences alleged by some bold men, who unwarrantably put themselves upon trial, 346.

3dly, Deliverance out of temptation is a transcendent privilege, 352. Which will appear from those intolerable evils consequent upon a prevailing temptation, 353. viz.

1. The soul's utter loss and damnation, 354.

2. Loss of a man's peace with God and his own conscience, 357.

8. Temporal judgments of God in some signal and severe affliction, 361.

4. The disgrace and reproach which it casts upon our Christian profession, 366.

With some useful inferences, 371. and directions for a man not to be peremptory with God in his prayers, for any particular enjoyment or state of life, 374. but to acquiesce in the state allotted him by Providence, 374.

## SERMON LXVII.

### THE HAPPINESS OF BEING KEPT FROM THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION.

#### REVELATION **iii. 10.**

*Because thou has kept the word of my patience, therefore will I keep thee from the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world, to try the inhabitants of the earth. P. 377.*

Nothing more sets off the greatness of God's mercy in delivering his people out of temptation, than the critical time of his vouchsafing it, 377. For,

1st, There is a certain proper season and hour which gives a peculiar force and efficacy to temptation, 378.

2dly, A temptation attains its proper season and hour by these means, 382.

1. By the original, universal corruption of man's nature, 382.

2. By every man's particular corruption, 383.

3. By the continual offer of alluring objects agreeable to it, 385.



4. By the unspeakable malice and activity, the incredible skill and boldness of the tempter, 385.

5. By God's just judgment, in commissioning this evil spirit to tempt at a rate more than ordinary, 387.

6. By a previous growing familiarity of the mind with the sin which a man is tempted to, 388.

7. By a long train of gradual, imperceptible encroachments of the flesh upon the spirit, 389. 3dly, A temptation's proper season may be discerned by some signs, 391. As,

1. By an unusual concurrence of all circumstances and opportunities for the commission of any sin, 391.

2. By a strange averseness to, if not a total neglect of spiritual exercises, prayer, reading, and meditation, 393.

3. By a temptation's unusual restlessness and importunity, 394.

4thly, Useful inferences may be drawn from this discourse, 397. Such as these;

1. Every time wherein a man is tempted, is not properly the hour of temptation, 397.

2. Every man shall assuredly meet with such an hour, 398.

3. The most successful way to be carried safe through this hour, is to keep the word of Christ's patience, 400.

## SERMONS LXVIII. LXIX.

### HOW, AND BY WHAT WAYS, GOD DELIVERS US FROM TEMPTATION.

#### 1 COR. x. 13 .

*God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* P. 404.

True faith is bottomed upon God's infinite wisdom and power; who alone is able to give a full and absolute deliverance out of temptation, 404, &c. Some of the principal temptations which threaten most the souls of men, are,

1. A public declared impunity to sin, 425.

2. The vicious examples of persons in place and power, 426.

3. The cruel oppressions of men in their persons, liberties, and estate, 428.

In opposition to which, we must consider,

1. That the strongest temptations to sin are no warrants to sin: and,

2. That God delivers only those who do their lawful utmost to deliver themselves, 429- The deliverances out of temptation are of two sorts, 431.

1st, Those whereby God delivers immediately by himself and his own act, 431. As,

1. By putting an issue to the temptation, 407.

2. By supplying the soul with mighty inward strength to withstand it, 410.



3. By a providential change of a man's whole course of life and circumstances of condition, 417.

4. By the overpowering operation of his holy Spirit, gradually weakening, and at length totally subduing the temptation, 421.

From these considerations, that God alone can deliver out of temptation, and that the ways by which he does it are above man's power, and for the most part beyond his knowledge, 433. we may deduce these useful, practical consequences:

1. That the estimate of an escape from temptation is to be taken from the final issue and result of it; that a temptation may continue very long, and give a man many foils before he escapes out of it: which affords an antidote against presumption on the one hand, and despair on the other, 433.

2. No way out of any calamity, if brought about by a man's own sin, ought to be accounted a way allowed by God for his escape out of that calamity or temptation, 437. Nor,

3. To choose a lesser sin to avoid a greater, 439.

4. When a temptation is founded in suffering, none ought to be so solicitous how to get out of it, as how to behave himself under it, 445.

5. There can be no suffering whatsoever, but may be endured without sin, 448.

Since to be delivered out of temptation is of an infinite concern, and since the tempter has so many advantages over us; we should be so much the more careful to use such means as our Saviour himself has prescribed to us, viz. watchfulness and prayer, 450.



## SERMON LXX.

### WATCHFULNESS AND PRAYER, A SECURITY FROM TEMPTATION.

#### MATTH. xxvi. 41.

*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* P. 454.

In the Christian man's warfare, the two great defensives against temptation are watching and prayer, 455.

1st, Watching imports,

1. A sense of the greatness of the evil we contend against, 455.

2. A diligent survey of the wit and strength of our enemy, compared with the weakness and treachery of our own hearts, 458.

3. A consideration of the ways by which temptation has at any time prevailed upon ourselves or others, 461.

4. A continual intention of mind upon the danger, in opposition to idleness and remissness, 466.

5. A constant and severe temperance, 470.

2dly, Prayer, 476. is rendered effectual by,

1. Fervency, or importunity, 478.
2. Constancy, or perseverance, 479-

Lastly, Watching and prayer must always be joined together; the first without the last being but presumption, and the last without the first, mockery, 482. Which is shewed by two instances, in which men may pray against temptation without any success, 484.

## SERMON LXXI.

### THE FOLLY OF TRUSTING IN OUR OWN HEARTS.

#### PROV. xxviii. 26.

*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.* P. 487.

Of all the cheats put upon a man by trusting, none is more pernicious than that of trusting his own heart, 487. and resigning up the entire conduct of himself to the directions of it, as of an able and a faithful guide, 488. The folly of which will appear by considering,

1st, The value of the things we commit to that trust, 490. viz.

1. The honour of God, who is our Creator, our Lord, and our Father, 490.
2. Our happiness in this world, with relation both to our temporal and spiritual concerns, 493.
3. Our eternal happiness hereafter, 497.

2dly, The undue qualifications of that heart to whose trust we commit these things, 499. who,

1. Cannot make good the trust because of its weakness, in point both of apprehension and of election, 499.

2. Will not make it good because of its deceitfulness, 502. Which shews itself in several delusions, that relate either to the commission of sin, 503. or to the performance of duty, 509. or to a man's conversion, 513.

Since therefore the heart is so deceitful, and to trust it is inexcusable folly; we ought to trust only in the conduct of God's holy Spirit, who will lead us into all truth, 515.

## SERMON LXXII.

### THE HOPE OF FUTURE GLORY AN EXCITEMENT TO PURITY OF LIFE.

#### 1 JOHN iii. 3.

*Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* P. 518.

A Christian, though he has great privileges and hopes, yet ought not to presume, but prepare himself for future glory by the purity of his life, 518. Having considered how a man



may be said to purify himself, and to such a degree, 519. even as Christ is pure; we shall in these words observe,

1st, What is implied in a man's purifying of himself, 522. viz. to rid himself,

1. Of the power of sin; which consists in bewailing all his past sinful acts, 522. in a vigilant prevention of future ones, 524. And this will be effected by opposing every first sinful motion, 527. by frequently performing severe mortifying duties, 529. by often using fervent prayer, 531. Whence we may perceive the error of those who pursue the reformation of some particular sins only, 533. and of others who only complain of the evil of their nature, with out endeavouring to amend it, 535.

2. Of the guilt of sin, 536. which can be expiated by no duty within man's power, 536. but only by applying the virtue of Christ's blood to the soul through faith, 538.

2dly, How the hope of heaven does purify a man, 540. viz.

1. Upon a natural account, as it is a special grace, in its nature contrary to sin, 540.

2. Upon a moral account, by suggesting to the soul arguments for purification, 542. such as these; that purity is the necessary means to the acquisition of eternal happiness, 542. that it alone can qualify the soul for heaven, 543. that it is a duty we are obliged to out of gratitude, 545. that it only can evidence to us. our right in those glorious things that we hope for, 546.

From all these, every one may gather a certain criterion, by which to judge of his hope as to his future happiness, 547.





A SERMON  
 PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER-ABBEY,  
 ON THE  
 TWENTY-NINTH OF MAY, 1672;  
 BEING THE ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL APPOINTED BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT,  
 FOR THE HAPPY RESTORATION OF KING CHARLES II.

ROMANS xi. 33.

—*How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

THAT which first brought both a present guilt, and entailed a future curse upon mankind, was an inordinate desire of knowledge. And from the fall of Adam to this very day, this fatal itch has stuck so close to our nature, that every one of his succeeding race is infinitely eager, inquisitive, and desirous to know and judge, where he is called only to adore and to obey. By which we see, that it was this restless appetite of knowing, which made the earliest and boldest encroachment upon the divine prerogative; setting man up, not only as a rebel, but also as a rival to his Maker, and from behaving himself as his creature, encouraging him to become his competitor. For there appears not the least inducement to the breach of this command of God, from any pretence of the unreasonableness or difficulty of it, but merely because it was a command; it obliged, and therefore was to be broken or shook off. So that upon the whole matter, it was not so much the taking beauties of the forbidden tree, as its being forbidden, which stirred the unruly humour, gave relish to the fruit, and force to the temptation. And could there be an higher and more direct defiance of the Almighty, under the peculiar character of Lord and Governor of the universe, than to have the very reason of his subject's obedience turned into an argument for his rebellion? to see a pitiful, short sighted creature prying into the reserves of Heaven; and one who was but dust in his constitution, and of a day's standing at most, aspiring to an equality with his Creator in one of his divinest perfections? All know, that even in human governments there is hardly any one of them but must have its *arcana imperii*, its hidden rules and maxims, which the subjects of it must by no means be acquainted with, but yield to their force, without examining their contrivance, (the very ignorance of them being the chief cause that the generality are governed by them.) And if so, how much a more unpardonable absurdity, as well as insolence, must it needs be for those who commonly stand at so great a distance, even from the little intrigues and mysteries of human policies, to say, like their grand exemplar and counsellor Lucifer, *I will ascend and look into the secrets of the Most High*, rip up and unravel all the designs and arts of Providence in the government of the world; as if, forsooth, they were of the cabinet to the Almighty, were privy to all his decrees, and, in a word, held intelligence with his omniscience. For no less than all this was or could be implied in our first parents affecting



to be as gods; the main thing which, by the advice of the serpent, they were then so set upon and so furiously desirous of.

Whereas on the contrary, that great repository of all truth and wisdom, the scripture, is in nothing more full and frequent, than in representing the infinite transcendency of God's ways and actings above all created intellectuals. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me*, says David, [Psalm cxxxix. 6](#). And, *Thy judgments are a great deep*, [Psalm xxxvi. 6](#). And, *God has put darkness under his feet*, [Psalm xviii. 9](#). And, *His ways are in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known*, [Psalm lxxvii. 19](#). In all which passages could any thing be expressed with more life and emphasis? For he who treads upon the waters leaves no impression; and he who walks in the dark falls under no inspection. There is still a cloud, a thick cloud, about God's greatest and most important works; and a cloud, we know, is both high and dark, it surpasses our reach, and determines our sight; we may look upon it, but it is impossible for us to look through it. In a word, if we consult either the reports of scripture or of our own experience, about the wonderful, amazing events of Providence, especially in the setting up or pulling down of kings and kingdoms, transplanting churches, destroying nations, and the like; we shall find the result of our closest reasonings and most exact inquiries concluding in an humble nonplus, and silent submission to the overpowering truth of this exclamation of our apostle; *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

The glorious subject of this day's commemoration is an eminent and bright instance of the methods of Providence surpassing all human apprehension or conceit: and as it is a very great one itself, so was it brought forth by a numerous train of other providential passages, altogether as great, whether we respect the quality of the actions themselves, or the strangeness of the effects. My business therefore shall be, from so notable a theme, to read men a lecture of humility; and that in a case in which they seldom do (and yet have all the reason in the world to) shew it; to wit, in taking a due estimate of the proceedings of Almighty God, especially in his winding and turning about the great affairs of states and nations; and therein to demonstrate, what weak, purblind expositors we are of what is above us; how unfit to arraign and pass sentence upon that Providence that overrules us in all our concerns; and in a word, to turn interpreters where we understand not the original. It is, no doubt, an easy matter to gaze upon the surface and outside of things. But few who see the hand of the clock or dial can give a reason of its motion; nor can the case of the watch (though never so finely wrought) be any rule to judge of the artificial composure and exact order of the work within.

Now he who would pass a clear, firm, and thorough judgment upon any action, must be able to give an account of these two things belonging to it; viz.

1. From what cause or reason it proceeds.
2. To what event or issue it tends.



In both which respects I shall demonstrate, that the sublimest and most advanced wisdom of man is an incompetent judge of the ways of God. And,

1. For the reason or cause of them. Men are so far from judging rightly of the passages of Providence, that the causes they assign of them are for the most part false, but always imperfect.

And first for the false ones; these (or some of them at least) are such as follow.

1. That the prosperous and happy in this life are the proper objects of God's love; and the miserable and calamitous, of his hatred: a blessed doctrine doubtless, and exactly according to that of Mahomet, even the very marrow and spirit of the Alcoran, and the prime and topping article, or rather sum total of the Ottoman divinity. But such, we see, is the natural aptness of men to bring down God to their own measures, and to ascribe only those methods to him, which they first transcribe and copy from themselves. For they know well enough how they treat one another, and that all the hostility of a man's actions presupposes and results from a much greater in his affections; so that the hand is never lifted up to strike, but as it is commanded by the heart, that hates. And accordingly let any notable calamity or distress befall any one, (and especially if maligned by us,) and then how naturally do there start up, in the minds of such Mahometan Christians, such reasonings as these: "Can so beneficent a being as God be imagined to torment in love? to kill with kindness? Or does the noise of his blows and the sounding of his bowels speak the same thing?" No, by no means; and therefore, when any one chances to be cut off by the stroke of some severe providence, no sooner has God done execution, but the malice of men presently passes sentence, and, by a preposterous proceeding, the man is first executed, and afterwards condemned, and so dies not for being a criminal, but passes for a criminal for being put to death.

Many remarkable instances of which have been in the late times of confusion; in which, when a violent faction had, by perjury and rebellion, and success in both, rode triumphant over the best of kings, the loyalest of subjects, and the justest of causes that was ever fought for; how then was the black decree of reprobation opened and let fly at them, both from pulpit and from press, and how were all the vials of wrath in the Revelation poured down upon their heads! Every mother's son of them was a reprobate and a castaway, and none to hope for the least favour hereafter, who had not Cromwell or Bradshaw for his friend here. And as for the poor, oppressed episcopal clergy of our church, I myself, in those blessed times, have heard one of their leading doctors, or rather pulpit officers, thus raving against them, in a sermon in the university. "See," says he, "those of the late hierarchy, (as they called themselves,) how God, for their uselessness, has wholly laid them aside, with a design never to use them more." But what, never? Could the man of prophecy be sure of this, when the year sixteen hundred and sixty was then so near? Or did God then so wonderfully restore the church and clergy, for no other end but to make no further use of them for ever? Or



does he do miracles only to make sport for the world? But so full were these sons of arrogance and imposture of the prophetic spirit, (true or false it mattered not, so long as it served a turn,) that in time, with the help of a little more confidence, and less sense, (if possible,) they might have set up for the writing almanacks, and even vied with their oracle Lilly himself, in his famous predictions of the glories of a deposed, pitiful protector, not able to protect himself.

Nor were these enthusiasts less liberal in denouncing God's curses upon their enemies, than in engrossing his blessings to themselves; there being none of those reforming harpies, who, by plunders and sequestrations, had scraped together three or four thousand a year, but presently (according to the sanctified dialect of the times) they dubbed themselves God's peculiar people and inheritance; so sure did those thriving regicides make of heaven, and so fully reckoned themselves in the high road thither, that they never so much as thought that some of their saintships were to take Tyburn in their way.

Thus we see how those saucy arbitrators upon and dispensers of God's judgments took upon them to distribute life and death, election and reprobation, at their pleasure; and all this in direct contradiction to, or rather defiance of, the Spirit of God himself, (so impudently pretended to by these impostors all along,) who, as positively as words can express a thing, in [Eccles. ix. 1](#), assures us, that *no man knows either love or hatred by all that is before him*; nor consequently can conclude himself in favour or out of favour with Almighty God by any thing befalling him in this life; indeed, no more than he can read the future estate of his soul in the lines of his face, or the constitution of his body in the colour of his clothes. For should the quality of a man's condition here determine the happiness or misery of it here after, no doubt Lazarus would have been in the flames, and the rich man in Abraham's bosom. But the next life will open us a very different scene from what we see in this, and shew us quite another face of things and persons from that which dazzles and deludes men's eyes at present; it being the signal and peculiar glory of the day of judgment, that it will be the great day of distinction, as well as retribution. But in the mean time, does not common experience undeniably convince us, that God some times curses men even with prosperity, confounds them in the very answer of their prayers, and, as it were, chokes them with their own petitions? Does he not, as he did formerly to the Israelites, at the same time put flesh into their craving mouths, and send leanness withal into their souls? And is there any thing more usually practised in the world, than for men to caress, compliment, and feast their mortal enemies? persons whom they equally hate and are hated by? While, on the other side, as a father chides, frowns upon, and lashes the child whom he dearly loves, (his bowels all the time yearning while his hand is striking;) so how common is it, in the methods of divine love, for God to cast his Jobs upon dunghills, to banish into wildernesses, and so sell his most beloved Josephs into slavery and captivity; and, in a word, to discipline and fit them for himself by all that is harsh and terrible to human nature? And still there is nothing



but love, and designs of mercy, at the bottom of all this: *Thy rod and thy staff*, says David, *comfort me*, [Psalm xxiii. 4](#); that is, with his staff he supports, and with his rod he corrects, but still with both he comforts.

Now, though I think it is sufficiently manifest to the impartial and judicious, that neither the sufferings of our prince or his loyal subjects were any arguments of God's hatred of them, yet I hope his restoration was an effect of God's love to these poor, harassed kingdoms; I say, I hope so; for our great ingratitude, sensuality, and raging impiety ever since our deliverance, makes me far from being confident that what was in itself incomparably the greatest of earthly blessings, may not be made the fatal means to sink us lower, and damn us deeper, than any sins committed by us under the rod of the usurpers could have done. This is certain, that God may outwardly deliver us, and yet never love us; he may turn *our very table into a snare*. And I know no certain mark or criterion whereby we may infallibly conclude that God did the glorious work, which we celebrate this day, out of love to us, but only this one, that we become holier and better by it than before. But if it should prove otherwise, will it not rank us with the hardened and incorrigible, whose infidelity such miracles could not cure, and whose obstinacy such mercies could not melt down? and having upon both accounts done so much for us to so little purpose, resolve never to do more? And thus much for the first false cause, commonly assigned by confident and conceited men, of the dealings of God's providence, namely, God's love or hatred of the persons upon whom they pass. But,

2. Another false cause, from which men derive the different proceedings of Providence, is, the different merit of the persons so differently treated by it: and from hence still supposing, that the good only must prosper, and the bad suffer, they accordingly from men's prosperity conclude their innocence, as from their sufferings their guilt. A most absurd assertion certainly: for if men's happiness and misery in this world (of which only we now speak) be measured out to them according to their goodness or badness respectively, how infinitely vain and senseless must that old and celebrated question, *Cur bonis male et malis bene?* needs have been; when, according to the aforesaid doctrine, the very subject of this question is quite taken away, and a man's happiness as necessarily presupposes his goodness, and his misery his sin or wickedness, as, in the natural course of things, the consequent does and must the antecedent. And therefore, so far has this opinion been from obtaining with the more sober and knowing part of mankind., that there has hardly been any age of the world in which the said question has not exercised the minds of some of the wisest and best men in it; and that to such a degree, that it has proved a constant stumblingblock to most, and of all temptations to infidelity the strongest and most hardly conquered. For it was this which so staggered David himself, that he confesses, that *his feet had well nigh slipped*, [Psalm lxxiii. 2](#); and so confounded the prophet Jeremiah, [Jer. xii. 1](#), that he could almost have offered to dispute the point with God himself: so utterly puzzled and distracted were these



great men, till religion came in to their aid, and unriddled what philosophy could not solve; and faith cut asunder what reason could not untie. And from the same topic it was that Job's friends argued, and that with such assurance, that one would have thought that they took all that they said for demonstration; but how falsely and rashly they did so, appears from the verdict passed by God himself upon the whole matter, both rejecting their persons and condemning their reasonings, by a severe remark upon the presumption of the one and the inconsequence of the other: for where the rule is crooked, how can the line drawn by it be straight? It is most true, that there is no man (our blessed Saviour only excepted) who either does or ever did suffer, but was more or less a sinner before he was a sufferer; and consequently, that there is ground enough in every man to make God's infliction of the greatest evil upon him just; and yet I affirm, that a man's sin is not always the reason of his sufferings, though sinfulness be still the qualification of his person; but the reason of those must be fetched from some other cause. For the better understanding of which, we must observe, that God may, and sometimes actually does deal with men under a double capacity or relation, viz. 1. as an absolute lord; and, 2. as a judge or governor. The rule which he proceeds by as an absolute lord, is his sovereign will and pleasure; and the rule which he acts by as a judge, is his justice and his law. Now, though under the former notion God does not properly exercise or exert his justice, yet he cannot therefore be said to do any thing unjustly; it being one thing for God barely not to exercise an attribute in such or such a particular action, and another to oppose, or do any thing contrary to the said attribute. The former of which is usual, and fairly agreeable with the whole economy of his attributes; but the latter is impossible.

Accordingly, in the various dispensations befalling the sons of men, we find, how naturally prone the world has been all along to state the different usages of men's persons upon the difference of their deserts. As when Pilate mingled the Galileans blood with their sacrifices, there were enough ready to conclude *those poor Galileans sinners above all other Galileans, for their suffering such things*; but our Saviour quickly reverses the sentence, and assures them that the consequence was by no means good, [Luke xiii. 1,2](#). And on the other hand, the Israelites, from the many miraculous works done for them, and blessings heaped upon them by the divine bounty, concluded themselves holier and more righteous; than all the nations about them; but we find both Moses, in [Deut. ix.](#) and the Psalmist, in [Psalm lxxviii.](#) roundly telling them that there was no such thing, but that they were a *rebellious, ungrateful, stiffnecked people* from the very first; and, for ought appears from history to the contrary, have continued so ever since. And to proceed further, did not the righteous providence of God bring down most of the potentates of the eastern world under the feet of that monster of tyranny and idolatry, Nebuchadnezzar; and that while he was actually reigning in his sins with as high an hand as he did or could do over any of those poor kingdoms who had been conquered or enslaved by him? So that in the *Song of the Three Children*,

(as it is called,) then the objects of his brutish fury, Azarias emphatically complains, that God had not only deserted his people, but delivered them into the hands of *the most unjust and wicked king in all the world*. These were the words, ver. 9, and this the character of that *flagellum Dei*, that scourge of nations, notable for nothing great or extraordinary recorded of him, but sin and success. In like manner, did not the same Providence make most of the crowns and sceptres of the earth bend to the Roman yoke?<sup>1</sup> The greatness of which empire was certainly founded upon as much injustice, rapine, and violence, as could well be practised by men; though still couched and carried on under the highest pretence of justice and honour, (set off with the greatest shew of gravity besides,) even while the said pretences in the sight of the whole world were impudently outfaced by the quite contrary practices; as appears in particular from that scandalous case of the Mamertines, and the assistance they gave those thieves and murderers, against all the law of nations and humanity itself, only to serve a present interest against the Carthaginians. And lastly, what a torrent of success attended the Turks, till they had overrun most of the earth, and the whole Greek church and empire? And yet the notorious governing qualities which these barbarians acted and grew up by, both in war and peace, were the height of cruelty and treachery; qualities of all other the most abhorred by God and man, and such as we may be sure could never induce God to abandon so great a part of Christendom (which yet in his judgment he has actually done) to so base a people and so false a religion. And now, notwithstanding such flagrant examples of thriving impiety, carrying all before it, we see how apt the world is still to make Providence steer by man's merit. And as we have given instances of this in nations, so we want not the like in particular persons; amongst which we have not a more remarkable exemplification of the case now before us, than in the person of St. Paul, and the judgments the barbarians passed upon him, [Acts xxviii. 4, 5, 6](#). For as soon as they saw the viper fastening upon his hand, they pronounced him a murderer; and presently again, as soon as he shook it off, and felt no hurt, they looked upon him as a god; that is, in a minute's time, from one *not worthy to live*, (as they had said,) they advanced him to the condition of one not able to die. Thus we see how they declared their judgment of both these passages, and of one no doubt as wisely as the other. In like manner, is a man brought under any signal and unusual calamity? Why then to the question: Was it his own personal guilt, or that of his family, which consigned him over to it? or, in other words, *Did the man himself sin, or his parents*, that he was plundered, sequestered, imprisoned, and at length sworn out of his estate and life? Much the like question, we know, was proposed to our Saviour himself, in [John ix. 2, 3](#), and that upon the account of as great a misery befallen a man, as could be well incident to human nature. And the answer he gave it (stating the whole reason of the evil suffered upon the sole will of the inflicter, without the least regard to any guilt in the sufferer) stands upon

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Arthur Duck's book *de Usu et Autoritate Juris Civilis Romanorum*.

record as an everlasting reprimand to all such queries and reflections. So that should Providence at any time strip a man of his estate, his honour, or high place, must this presently stamp him a reprobate, or castaway; or rather, according to the divine philosophy of our Saviour's forementioned answer, teach us, that God, who perfectly knew the temper and circumstances of the man, knew also, that a mean and a low condition would place him nearer to heaven, (as much a paradox as it may seem,) than the highest and most magnificent? Another man perhaps is snatched away by a sudden or untimely, a disastrous or ignominious death; but must I therefore pass sentence upon him out of Daniel or the Revelation, or charge him with some secret guilt, as the cause of it; as if a fever or an apoplexy were not sufficient, without the concurring plague and poison of a malicious tongue, to send a man packing out of this world; or as if any death could be so violent, or distemper so mortal and malign, but that it may and does carry some into a better world, as well as others into a worse? But be the course of Providence never so unaccountable, and contrary to my notions, ought I to descant upon any act of it, while I am wholly ignorant of the purpose which directed it? Or shall I confess the ways of God to be *unsearchable and past finding out*, and at the same time attempt to give a reason of them, and so to the arrogance join the contradictions? Such methods certainly are equally senseless and irreligious.

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But of all the examples producible of impudent and perverse judging, there can hardly be any one parallel to what passed upon the sufferings of the late king of blessed and glorious memory, king Charles I. whose genealogies of family guilt, besides personal, have been charged upon his royal head; as if he had come, not only to the throne, but also to the block by inheritance. But as that excellent prince was an eminent instance of the censorious venom of men's tongues in matters of this nature, so we need go no further for a proof of the falseness and fallaciousness of this rule of judging, than to the same royal martyr; for was there ever any prince more unfortunate, and yet ever any more virtuous? Who could have imagined, that so much true piety, so much innocence, so much justice, and tenderness of his subjects lives and properties, so much temperance and restraint of himself in all the affluence and prosperities of a long-flourishing court, so much patience and submission to the hand of God in his sharpest adversities, and, in a word, such an union of all moral perfections as scarce ever met in any prince, (or indeed in any mere man but himself;) who, I say, that should measure out men's fortunes by their merit, could have imagined, that all these heights of virtue and Christianity should only prepare the princely owner of them to fall a sacrifice to the evil of his enemies in the most cruel, barbarous, and savage manner that perhaps any crowned head ever fell before? And will any one after this pretend to give an account of the proceedings of Providence from the guilt or innocence of persons, when king Charles I. was imprisoned, spit upon, arraigned, and cut off by an infamous sentence as a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy, before the gates of his own palace? And that miscreant, who was the prime actor in all this woful tragedy, (a piece of dirt soaked in

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blood, as it was said of Nero with much less cause,) should usurp the sceptre, and invade the throne of his royal master, reign successfully, and die in peace? If he could be said to die in peace who lived in perpetual war with his own conscience; the only enemy which would never make peace with him, whatsoever his dastardly, mean-spirited neighbours did.

Histories inform us of many worthy and brave persons brought to unworthy ends; any one of which were enough to rebuke the proneness of the world to judge of the causes of God's dealing with men from any qualifications in the persons so dealt with. But certainly, if we consider the peculiar strangeness of the forementioned case, with the appendage of all its circumstances, so long as the memory of king Charles I. lasts, (as I hope it will not only last, but flourish also, to the world's end,) it will be impossible for us to be convinced by an higher argument or a more amazing matter of fact, *that God's judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.* And therefore, till our bold magisterial dispensers of God's judgments can give us a satisfactory account of the foregoing particulars, from some clear and undoubted principle of reason or revelation; let them stand off, and adore in silence, without presuming to judge, and much less to condemn, having, as it is manifest, no more ability for the one, than authority for the other. And thus, as we have given proof more than enough of men's utter unfitness to sound the depths of God's providential dealings with them, upon this account, that they usually ascribe them to false causes; so in the

Third place, the same will appear yet further from this; that they always resolve them into imperfect causes. Who would assign an adequate reason of any thing which God does, must see as far into it as God sees. And there is scarce any extraordinary passage of Providence which does not point at least a thousand years forward, and stretch itself more than a thousand miles about; so that a man must be able to take into his mind all that long train and wide compass of purposes to which it may subserve, and all those influences which it may cast upon things vastly remote in place, and distant many ages in time; which it is impossible for any created intellect to have a clear prospect into or comprehension of. There is no action of God, but there is a combination of impulsive causes concerned in it; one or two of which possibly the wit of man may sometimes light upon, but the shortness or weakness of his discerning powers keeps him inevitably a stranger to far the greatest part of them. God, by one and the same numerical lot of Providence, may intend to punish one nation, to advance another; to plant the gospel in a third, and to let in trade into a fourth; likewise to make way for the happiness of one man's posterity, and for the extinction and rasing out of another's; to reward the virtues of a sober and industrious people, and to revenge the crimes<sup>2</sup> of a slothful and a vicious, a perjured and rebellious; with innumerable other designs, which God may actually propose to himself in every single passage of his transactions

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2 No nation certainly, at this time, further in debt to God's justice than the English.

with men; and which we are no more fit or able to search into or arbitrate upon, than we are to govern the world.

And thus much for the first general argument, proving the insufficiency of any human wisdom to interpret the actions of Providence, taken from its inability truly and throughly to pierce into the reasons of them; which, as it must always make one considerable ingredient in passing a right judgment upon any action, so I shew, that there was another also required, namely, a certain prospect into the utmost issue or event of the same. Upon which account also man's unfitness to judge of the proceedings of Providence shall be now made out to us, by considering those false rules and grounds by which men generally forejudge of the issue and event of actions: as,

1. Men usually prognosticate the event of any thing or action according to the measure of the prudence, wisdom, and policy of second agents immediately engaged in it. And it must be confessed, that it is the best and likeliest rule that they have to judge by, were it not controlled by two better and likelier, and from which there can lie no appeal, viz. scripture and experience. The former of which brings in God laughing at the wisdom of the wise; taking and circumventing the crafty in their own wiles, [Job v. 12, 13](#); baffling the subtle and shrewd advices of Balaam and Ahitophel, and so stifling both counsel and counsellor in a noose of his own making. And for the latter, history so abounds with instances of the most refined customs and artificially spun contrivances dashed in pieces by some sudden and unforeseen accidents, that, to ascertain the event of the most promising undertaking, if we trust but our own eyes, we shall have little cause to trust to another's wisdom.

2. Men usually prognosticate the success of any project or design, from success formerly gained under the same or less probable circumstances. And the argument seems to proceed a *majore ad minus*; as, that if a man could conquer and break through a greater difficulty, much more may he presume, that he shall be able to master and evade through a less. And perhaps the ratiocination, according to the bare natural consequences of things, is true and good. Nevertheless it is manifest, that men frequently miscarry in the application of it; and several reasons may be given for their doing so. As, 1. It is hard, and perhaps scarce possible, (whatsoever less observing minds may imagine to the contrary,) to repeat and exemplify any action under perfectly the same circumstances. 2. That in most actions there are still some circumstances not observed or taken notice of, which may have a surer and more immediate influence upon the event of those actions, than those circumstances which, coming more into view, are more depended upon. But, 3. and chiefly, because the success of every action depends more upon the secret hand of God, than upon any causes or instruments visibly engaged in it. Take an instance or two of this. It was easy and natural enough to conclude, that Hannibal, having so worsted the Roman armies while they were in their fresh strengths and full numbers, should have been much abler to crush the same enemy under all those disadvantages which such great and frequent defeats must needs have brought

upon them. And yet we find Fabius and Marcellus, after some time, wonderfully turning the stream of his conquests, and Scipio, at length, totally subduing him. In like manner, if a nation under an usurped government, disunited in itself, and in continual danger of commotions at home, as well as of enemies from abroad, was yet an overmatch to its neighbour nation in a war against it; it seems rational and probable enough to infer from thence, that the same nation, settled under an unquestionably legal government, and free from any disturbances within itself, should be much more likely (especially under the same conduct) to cope with and subdue the same enemy. And yet we find, that the premises taken up from our naval successes in the years 1652 and 1653, produced but a poor conclusion in our contest with the same adversary in the years 1666 and 1667; when we were so shamefully insulted upon our coasts, and our noblest ships fired in our harbours. And the cause of this seems not so much derivable from any failure either of the English courage or conduct at sea, as from the secret judgments of God, (much the greater deep of the two.) So that it is clear, that this rule also, of gathering the future success of actions, is weak and fallacious; and that in some sorts of events, after things have been contrived and put together with the utmost exactness, a link or two of the chain happening to break, the coherence of the whole is thereby dissolved; and then, how fairly soever the antecedent may have promised us, we shall yet in the close of all find ourselves lurch'd of the consequent.

3. Men generally measure the issue and success of any enterprise according to the preparations made for it, and the power employed in it; it being a rule of judging which the world cannot be beaten off from, that *ten thousand must needs chase a thousand, and a thousand put an hundred to flight*. Victory, on much the stronger side, seems still to be foreseen and foretold as certainly as a necessary effect in the bowels of its cause. And yet we shall find, that it is not always the bigger weight, but sometimes the artificial hand holding and managing the balance, which turns the scale. And in like manner, when we have raised armies and manned out fleets, are we not still in the hand of Providence? in that hand, which sometimes sets the crown of victory upon the weak and the few, and disappoints the hopes and breaks the force of the confident and numerous? Could any take up surer and better grounded presages of victory, from a survey of his own stupendous power, than Xerxes might, when he came to fetter the Hellespont, and to swallow up the (comparatively) despicable strength of the Athenians? Or could any thing look more invincible, than the Spanish armada sent against the English navy? But for all this, we find that there is no commanding the sea, without being able to command the winds too; and he who cannot do this, let him not pretend to the other. What a poor thing is preparation, to be trusted to, in opposition to accident. And what a pitiful defence is multitude on the one side, where omnipotence takes the other. If we read and believe scripture, we shall find Gideon, with his three hundred men, armed with lamps and pitchers, routing and destroying the vast and innumerable host of the Midianites: and can any rational man be confident of the greatest

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forces which human power can raise, if he believes that the same God, who did that, is still in being, and still as able to do the same things as ever? Nay, should we take an exact survey of all passages in history to this purpose, such a pleasure does Providence seem to take in defeating the counsels of confident and presuming men, that perhaps in the greatest battles which were ever fought, we shall find as many victories obtained by a less number over a greater, as by a greater over a less: and what then must become of the commonly received rules? But to keep nearer home, and to the day too; if human force and preparation could have determined the event of things, and Providence had proceeded by the same measures which men judge, the business of this day, I am sure, had been desperate, and as impossible in the event, as it was once in the opinion and discourse of some, who, having done their utmost to prevent it, had the good luck to get too much by it, when it came to pass. For were not the usurpers just before the king's restoration as strong as ever? Did they not sit lording it in the head of victorious fleets and armies, with their feet upon the neck of three conquered enslaved kingdoms? and striking such an awe and terror into all about them, that the boldest of their adversaries durst not so much as stir or open their mouths either against their persons or proceedings? And now in this state of things, who would have imagined, that any one could have entered into *the strong man's house, and have bound him, but one who had been much stronger?* Or that any thing could have recovered the lost sceptre, but a triumphant sword? Or that the crown, being once fought off from the royal owner's head, could have ever returned to it, but by being fought on again? These and no other methods of restoring the king did either his friends or his enemies think of; but so infinitely unlikely and unfeasible were they, that his enemies feared them as little as his friends had grounds to hope for them.

When, behold! on a sudden, and in the height of all their pride, policy, and power, Providence gives them a turn, and they see the whole web, which with so much pains, cost, and cunning, they had been so long a weaving, unravelled before their eyes in a moment, and themselves clear off the stage, without having settled any one of those innovations either in church or state, which they had been swearing and lying, whining and praying, plundering and fighting, and cutting throats for, (all in the Lord,) for near twenty years together; but instead thereof, the ancient government restored, and happily set upon its former bottom, (could it have kept itself there;) and all this (to phrase it in the words of a late historian<sup>3</sup>) so easily, and with so little noise, that the wresting of that usurped power out of their hands cost not so much as a broken head or a bloody nose; for the getting of which they had wasted so many millions of treasure, and more than one hundred thousand lives, not to mention the loss of souls: by such unlikely and unforeseeable ways does Providence some times bring about its great designs, in opposition to the shrewdest conjectures and contrivances of men. And thus much for the other general argument, proving the inability of any human wisdom

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3 Dr. Peter Heylin.

to comprehend the designs of Providence, taken from those false rates and grounds, by which men generally forejudge of the issue or event of actions.

And now, for the use and improvement of what has been discoursed by us hitherto, we may from the foregoing particulars infer these three things.

1. The extreme folly and vanity of making the future event, or presumed success of any enterprise, the rule of our present actings about the same. A rule, as such, should be a thing both certain in itself, and certainly known to be so. But there is no future contingent, which we promise ourselves, though under the greatest probability of event imaginable, but is still a thing in itself uncertain; and consequently, being capable of failing us in the issue, can be no rational certain rule to guide us for the present. And moreover, as a rule in any human action whatsoever ought to be (as we have here shewn) both certain, and certainly known to be such, upon the stock of bare prudence and reason; so ought it likewise to be lawful, or morally good, upon the accounts of conscience and religion; and therefore no thing contrary to the same ought to be admitted as a rule for men to act by, whether in a private or a public capacity. In a word, conscience, duly steering by principles of morality and religion, is the sole assured director of all human actions or designs. So that when any political sinister consideration would draw men off from a present confessed duty, upon presumption or supposal of some future advantage, (to ensue thereby for the service of some great interest, civil or religious,) still that advantage is but presumed or supposed, and so not always sure to follow the illegal actions; but the guilt of it always does. And of this we have a remarkable, but sad instance in the late royal martyr, who had but one thing lay heavy upon his conscience in all his sufferings, and which he always lamented even to his dying day, namely, the death of the great earl of Strafford. And we may easily imagine the tumults and struggles in his princely breast, when it was assaulted on both sides about that unhappy action. On the one hand, his conscience urged to him the unlawfulness of condemning a person, of whose innocence he always declared himself so fully satisfied. On the other, the stream of the popular fury beat high and fierce upon the throne itself, and seemed to threaten all, if he did not sacrifice that great minister. Now here was a present, certain duty on the one side, persuading him not to violate his conscience; and a supposed future advantage on the other, to wit, his own and his kingdom's security, which induced him to balk his conscience for that person. And we know what course he took; but did it answer his expectations? Did it abate the popular rage at all? Or did it secure either his own or his kingdom's peace? Nay, on the contrary, did not the cutting down of that great bank let in a torrent which overwhelmed and carried all before it? Nothing being indeed more usual, than for such as venture to displease God, only that they may gratify and please men, in the issue to have God their enemy and man too. And therefore that worthy prelate;<sup>4</sup> who in the face of all this danger still plied

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4 Bishop Juxon, then bishop of London, and privy-counsellor.

the king with this counsel; “ Sir, you know the judgment of your own conscience, I beseech you follow that, and trust God with the rest;” gave him an advice not more becoming the piety of a bishop, than the wisdom of a privy-counsellor; and so deep and lasting an impression did it leave upon his royal and truly tender conscience, that in his last meditations upon this sad subject he observes, that he only, who of all his counsellors advised him to adhere to his conscience against the popular rage, was the person who was the least harassed and pursued by that popular rage, when it was at its greatest height of power and tyranny. To which we may add our own further observation of the same pious and wise bishop, that he survived all that tyranny and oppression; and, after he had so fully and worthily served the father, lived to attain to the highest dignity in this church, and, as the complement of all, to set the crown upon the head of his miraculously restored son. And may that Providence that governs the world always signalize such peculiar merits with such peculiar rewards. But,

2. We gather also, from the foregoing discourse, the absolute necessity of an entire, total, unreserved dependence upon Providence in the most hopeful and promising condition of our affairs. The natural cause or ground of all dependence is men’s consciousness to themselves of their own ignorance or weakness, compared with the sufficiency of others, whereby they expect that relief from others, which they find they cannot have from themselves. This, I conceive, is the true account and philosophy of this matter. And we have already sufficiently demonstrated man’s utter inability either to understand the reasons or to control the issues of Providence; so that in all the passages of it, an implicit faith in God’s wisdom is man’s greatest knowledge, and a dependence upon his power, his surest strength. For when all the faculties of man’s body and mind have done their utmost, still the success of all is at the mercy of Providence; the ways of which are intricate and various, the grounds upon which it proceeds unintelligible, and the ends it drives at unsearchable. But in a word, to make our reliance upon Providence both pious and rational, we should, in every great enterprise we take in hand, prepare all things with that care, diligence, and activity, as if there were no such thing as Providence for us to depend upon; and again, when we have done all this, we should as wholly and humbly depend upon it, as if we had made no such preparations at all. And this is a rule of practice which will never fail or shame any who shall venture all that they have or are upon it: for as a man, by exerting his utmost force in any action or business, has all that an human strength can do for him therein; so, in the next place, by quitting his confidence in the same, and placing it only in God, he is sure also of all that omnipotence can do in his behalf. It is enough that God has put a man’s actions into his own power; but the success of them, I am sure, he has not. And therefore all trust in man about things not within the power of man, (according to the account of Heaven,) is virtually a distrust of God: for let but our trust in him be measured out by our *whole heart, soul, and*

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*strength*, (the only measure of it which the scripture knows,) and we shall find but a poor overplus to bestow upon any thing besides. But,

3. And lastly, as we have from the premised particulars evinced the necessity of a dependence upon Providence, so from the same we may learn the impossibility of a rational dependence upon it with any comfort, but in the way of lawful, honest, and religious courses. This is certain, that in all our undertakings God will be either our friend or our enemy; for Providence never stands neuter; and if so, is it not a sad thing for a man to make a mighty potentate his enemy, and then to put himself under his protection? And yet this is directly the case of every presuming sinner, and these the terms upon which he stands with Almighty God. But can that man with any confidence rest himself upon God's power, whose conscience shall in the mean time proclaim him a traitor to his laws? Or can any people, nation, or government whatsoever, in the doubtful engagements of war, cast itself upon God's mercy, while by its crying sins of profaneness, atheism, and irreligion, (or, which is worse, a countenance of all religions,) it knows itself so deeply in arrears to his justice? No man persisting in any known wicked course can rationally hope that God should succeed or prosper him in any thing that he goes about; and if success should chance to accompany him in it, it is a thousand to one but it is intended him only as a curse, as the very greatest of curses, and the readiest way, by hardening him in his sin, to ascertain his destruction. He who will venture his life in a duel, should not choose to have his mortal enemy for his second.

On the contrary, the same innocence which makes all quiet within a man, makes all peaceable and serene above him. And that person cannot but have a certain boldness, and a kind of claim to the favours of Providence, whose heart is continually telling him that he does as he should do; and that his conscience, having been all along his director, cannot in the issue prove his accuser: but that all things, whether he looks forwards or backwards, upon what is past or what is to come, shall concur in assuring him, that his great Judge has no other sentence to pass upon him, but to set a crown of glory upon his head, and receive him with an *Euge, bone serve! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*. And if, being thus inspired and anointed with such supporting expectations, he should yet chance utterly to sink, as to all his concerns and interests here below, yet, having thus broke through them all to discharge his duty, the very sense of his having done so shall strengthen his heart and bear up his spirits, though the whole world were in arms against him or in a flame about him; so that he shall be able, from his own experience, to seal to the truth of that seeming paradox of the apostle in [Rom. viii. 35, 36, 37](#), that persons thus assisted from above, even in *tribulations, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness*, (the known badges of primitive Christianity,) nay, in their being *killed all the day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter*, shall yet, under these very massacres *become more than conquerors*, through that God who makes those who fight under his banners triumph more gloriously in losing their blood for him, than their mightiest and most insulting enemies do or can in their shedding of it. For if a man

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falls a sacrifice to God, his conscience, or his country, it is not material by what hand he falls: God accepts the martyr, whosoever is the executioner. And so long as there is another world to reward and punish, no man's doom can be certainly pronounced from any thing that befalls him in this.

And now at length, to come to a close of what we have been hitherto discoursing of, we have shewn the darkness and intricacy of the ways of Providence; and we have shewn also what incompetent judges, and yet what confident interpreters men are generally of them; from all which what can so naturally result, and so justly be inferred, as the severest reprimands of the blindness and boldness (qualities seldom found asunder) of the saucy descants of the world concerning these matters? For what do they else, but, in effect, arraign even Providence itself? summon omniscience before the bar of ignorance? and, in a word, put a pitiful mortal to sit in judgment upon his Maker? The text, I am sure, positively declares, that the works of God are *past finding out*; and if so, is it not the height of absurdity, as well as arrogance, to presume, either from divinity or philosophy, to assign any other reason of the works themselves, but the sole will of the agent? or to pretend to give an account of that which we ourselves own to be unaccountable? Common sense certainly must needs see and explode the grossness of the contradiction, and convince us, that in things so transcendently above our highest and most raised speculations, the only rational and safe rule for us to proceed by will be, to make them rather matter of admiration than of argument; still remembering, that next to a direct violation of God's revealed will, is a bold intrusion into his secret.

*Now to the infinitely wise Governor of all things, adorable in his counsels, and stupendous in his works, but essentially just and holy in both, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*





A SERMON

ON

ROMANS VIII. 14.

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DISC. I.

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ROMANS viii. 14.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

HERE is that known averseness in the nature of man (as now it stands) to all acts of virtue, (especially such as are of an higher strain,) and withal that deplorable impotence and inability to go through with them, whensoever it undertakes them, that not only in the Christian, but also in all other religions, men have found it necessary, in every great action, to engage some other agent and principle besides the man himself. So that amongst the heathens, who acknowledged a plurality of gods, you will hardly find any noble or heroic achievement done by any of them, but you will find some one or other of their gods made a coadjutor in the case. Thus Homer brings in Diomedes and Ulysses assisted by Mars and Pallas, (one notable for acts of valour, and the other for those of counsel and wisdom;) and the like is said of many others. All which was but a kind of tacit acknowledgment of that weakness and decay upon man's nature, which has been ever since the fall. For they found, it seems, within themselves an experience of the thing itself, though they could give no account of its cause. And accordingly, being ignorant of the source of the malady, it could not be expected but that they should be as much out in the remedies they applied for relief against it. Only thus much is deducible from the whole matter, that they clearly saw themselves concerned to do many worthy things, which they found themselves wholly unable to do without the help of divine power, or at least some power much superior to their own.

Now what these ignorant heathens blundered about, touching this great debilitation of human nature to great and good actions, (a thing owned and agreed to by the common experience of the most considering part of mankind,) having been first taught the world (though more obscurely) by Moses, has been since more fully and clearly declared to the Christian church (and that above all Pelagian or Socinian opposition whatsoever) by our blessed Saviour himself. For as the books of Moses and of the prophets do assure us, that man was at the first created perfect in all his faculties, and strong in his inclinations to good; and that by the fall of our first parents the entireness of these perfections was lost, both to themselves and to their posterity; so the gospel (like a *tabula post naufragium*) informs us, that the great design of the Redeemer of the world was to repair these sad breaches made

upon man's nature; (so far as it was necessary to the grand purposes of man's salvation;) and that to effect this, (amongst other things which he purchased of his Father by his meritorious death,) he procured the assistance and abode of his Spirit to be in us, as it is in [John xiv. 17](#); and to  *dwell in us*, [Rom. viii. 9](#); and to  *help our infirmities*, as in [Rom. viii. 26](#); and, in a word, to  *lead us into all truth*, in [John xvi. 13](#); and so to be, as it were, an universal assisting genius more or less to all mankind.



It being clear, therefore, from these and the like places of scripture, that the Spirit of God, in some degree, leads and helps all men, though more eminently and peculiarly some; I shall cast the prosecution of the words under these four heads. As,

I. I shall shew how the Spirit is said to be in men.

II. I shall shew how men are led by the Spirit.

III. I shall shew what is here meant by being the sons of God.

IV. And lastly, I shall gather some conclusions by way of use and information from the whole. And first,

For the first of these. The Spirit may be said to be in men two ways.

1. Substantially, as he is God filling all things; and by reason of the infinity and indivisibility of his nature, being wholly every where and in every thing. For his nature being infinite, he can be excluded from no place or thing whatsoever; and being also indivisible, wheresoever he is, he is and must be totally. Forasmuch as his simplicity and indivisibility render him without parts or quantity; the only things that make a being so present to a place by one of its parts, as not to be present to the same place at the same time by another. And according to this sense the Spirit of God is equally in all men, and indeed in all things, and that essentially and necessarily by the omnipresence and unlimited expansion of his divine nature. And therefore this cannot be the thing we are now inquiring after.

2. The Spirit may be said to be in men, in respect of the effects he produces in them. And thus God is said to be in heaven, and sometimes in one place more than in another, because of some notable operation which he exerts in that place and not in another. In like manner the Spirit of God is said to be in that man, whom, by any immediate impulse or motion, he causes to do a thing; or in whom he creates those habits or dispositions to action, by which he is enabled to act with more proneness and facility one way than another; and that, whether those habits relate to matters of morality, as those graces of the Spirit, with which the hearts of believers are sanctified, certainly do; or whether they refer only to matters of a civil import, as the arts of working infused into Bezaleel and Aholiab; or of governing infused into Saul; or of wisdom into Solomon; all of them, no doubt, wrought and produced in those persons by the Spirit of God.



These, I say, are the two allowed ways by which the Spirit or Holy Ghost may be said to be in men; and besides these two, I know no other possible; though there are some who assign a third, namely, the personal indwelling of the Spirit in believers, (as they call it,) and

that wholly different from his being in any other persons or things, by either of those ways before mentioned by us. This, I find, has been confidently asserted by some, and particularly by those called *Familists*; but before it be admitted, it is fit it should be examined; and that upon terms of reason and scripture: for by one or both of these it must be proved, or not at all.

1. And first, upon grounds of reason, I affirm, that it is impossible for the person of the Holy Ghost, by any other and different way from the two former, to be more in one man than in another. Forasmuch as his nature or essence being equally diffused through all things, and that nature or essence being likewise included in, and inseparable from, his person; it carries in it a manifest contradiction, for the nature to be any where, and the person including it, and inseparably united to it, not to be there also. Add to this, that if the person of the Holy Ghost should substantially reside or inhabit more in one man than in another, it must needs be because he is freely pleased so to do: but the manner of the divine existence is an attribute of his nature, and so cannot be an effect of his will; since what is purely natural, is also necessary, and so far cannot be free. For it is not free to God, whether he will be present to all and every part of the universe, or no: but it is as necessary for him to be so, as omnipresence is a necessary result of infinity. And infinity is the first and grand thing included in the very nature and notion of a Deity. Reason therefore has nothing to say for this personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost in some certain men more than in others; but explodes it as a mere figment and paradox, contrary to all the principles of natural theology.

2. In the next place, therefore, we are to see what the assertors of this personal indwelling of the Spirit in believers are able to produce for it from scripture. And here we shall find nothing but arguments drawn from some scripture expressions, in which we are either said to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, as in [1 Cor. vi. 19](#), or that the Spirit dwells in us, as in [Rom. viii. 11](#), with other such like phrase importing inhabitation: which way of inexistence, they say, cannot properly be applied to accidents; such as are the sanctifying graces wrought in us by the Spirit; but only to persons, who alone can be properly said to be in places or temples. And this is all that they argue from scripture.

But metaphors, we know, are but weak mediums to prove any thing. And I refer it to any one of a clear impartial reason, to judge, whether, when the Spirit is said to be in us as in a temple, this does not, at the very first sight, appear to be a metaphorical expression; the words importing no more, than that we should be as wholly devoted to God's use and service as a temple is: and that, as it is sacrilegious to alienate a temple to other worldly and profane uses; so is it a piece of no less sacrilege and impiety, after we have consigned over, and, in a manner, dedicated ourselves to the Spirit, to make ourselves servants to sin, Satan, or the world. According to which way of speaking also, in [Jer. iv. 14](#), vain thoughts are said to lodge in men's hearts. And in [Coloss. iii. 16](#), the apostle speaks of the *word of Christ dwelling richly*

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*in them.* Both which expressions of *lodging* and *dwelling*, strictly taken, indeed import only a local presence, but yet are elegantly applied to thoughts, and such other things as are no more than mere accidents existing in the soul: the meaning of the words being this; that these things reside as constantly and familiarly there, as an inhabitant does in the house where he dwells. And he that would strain any more from such texts, may sooner fetch blood than any sound sense out of them; it being not always the way of scripture to speak according to the philosophical exactness of things, but in a familiar known latitude of expression. Nor indeed is any thing more usual in the word of God, than to find actions proper to persons ascribed to qualities. As *wisdom* is said *to build her an house*, [Prov. ix. 1](#); and *charity* *to think no evil, to hope all things, and to suffer all things*, in [1 Cor. xiii. 7](#); with innumerable the like instances. And therefore such places are manifestly short of proving the thing they are here alleged for.

And thus having shewn in what sense the Spirit of God may be said to be in men, I come now to the

Second general thing proposed, which was to shew, what it is for men to be led by the Spirit. Concerning which we must observe, that the word leading, taken by itself alone, without the addition of any particular term, to which we are said to be led, (as Jesus was said to be *led by the Spirit into the wilderness*, [Matt. iv. 1](#).) naturally and properly signifies a guidance of us, not in respect of any one particular action or passage of our lives, but in respect of the whole course of them. And consequently, under this leading of the Spirit, we are not to consider those particular transports and ecstasies, whether by prophecy or vision, which the Spirit of God has, at several times, raised some persons to. For these were sudden, transient beams, or flashes, upon extraordinary occasions, and not constant light to live and walk by. As, therefore, the Spirit's leading us imports a continued steady direction of us in the whole course of our lives or actions, so it imports in it these two things.

1. His prescribing rules and laws to us, to which we are to conform our actions; and so he leads us by those excellent precepts held forth to mankind both in the law and gospel; both of which were dictated by the same eternal Spirit of truth.

2. His enlightening the understanding to discern, and his bending the wills and affections of men to comply with those rules and precepts so held forth to them. The first way he leads us by providing us a path to walk in; and the second, by giving us legs to walk with. For (as I said at first) there is since, and by the fall of man, that innate darkness in his understanding, that it is of itself unable spiritually to perceive the things of God; and that obliquity and rebelliousness in his will, that it cannot heartily choose and embrace them. And therefore, though the Spirit should lead us never so much by the former way, that is, by proposing to us rules and precepts to act by; yet it is impossible that we should follow till those indispositions are in some measure removed; and this is to be done only by the Spirit.



But since some there are so hardy (or profane rather) as to affirm, that to assert that the Spirit imprints upon or creates in any faculty of the soul any disposition or habit that shall give it a facility in its actings, is enthusiasm; and that, I suppose, because they may account every thing enthusiasm which is not Pelagianism: I answer, that if these persons will but own original sin, and a general depravation of man's nature consequent thereupon, (as they are hardly Christians if they do not,) I would fain learn how nature shall be able to rid itself from the effects of this depravation or corruption, which has so universally seized all the powers of it, but by some certain principle distinct from and greater than itself. And I would fain know further, why the almighty power of God's Spirit may not work in any faculty of the soul the same readiness or permanent facility of acting (commonly by another word called *an habit*) which that faculty can produce, or acquire to itself, by a frequent repetition of its own actions; especially since there is nothing which the first cause produces by the mediation of the second, but what it can and sometimes does produce solely by itself, (except the vital acts issuing from and denominating their respective powers or principles,) in the number of which, habits cannot be reckoned, but are qualities abiding in the soul, even while there is a total cessation from acting, and may be lost again; whereas the power or faculty, wherein they are vested, cannot. But as for those who deny the immediate infusion of habits into the soul, they should do well to try their strength, and shew some principle of reason or scripture contradicted by it; and I dare undertake to allege that from both, which shall bid fair for the proof of it.



And thus much for the two ways by which the Spirit leads men; namely, 1. outwardly, by the written word; and, 2. inwardly, by his illumination of the judgment, and bending of the will. Concerning which this must carefully be observed, that though the Spirit frequently, nay ordinarily leads men the former way without this latter; as being indeed rather a direction, or bare pointing out, whither we should go, than a leading us, (forasmuch as many are so led or directed who never follow,) yet now-a-days the Spirit never leads men the latter way, namely, by his effectual inward operation upon the soul, but he does it in conjunction with the former; that is, first holding forth a rule in the word written or preached, and then working those gracious dispositions, abilities, or fitnesses in the soul, which shall cause it actually to comply with and square its actions to the same.



And these are all the ways by which the Spirit of God leads the church now. But as I shew concerning the Spirit's being in men, that there were some who, besides his being in them by his essential omnipresence, and by those effects which he works within them, held a third distinct way, namely, his personal indwelling in believers; so there are some likewise, who, besides the Spirit's leading men by the written word, and by his enlightening the understanding, and bending the will, assert yet another way, namely, the Spirit's speaking inwardly to them, and directing them by a secret, uttered (as they pretend) intelligibly enough to the soul of him to whom it is spoke, though unknown to any person besides. And if we

will give things their right names, this is truly and properly *enthusiasm*, that pestilent and vile thing, which, wheresoever it has had its full course, has thrown both church and state into confusion. For if men may be admitted to plead, that the Spirit leads them by an inward voice speaking to them, and known only to themselves, it is impossible that they should acknowledge any rule or governor of their actions but themselves. The folly and mischief of which pretence, therefore, I shall endeavour to make appear (which is the principal design of this discourse) from several considerations. But before I come to mention particulars, I shall give you one remarkable instance, and home to the subject now before us. And it is this; that the main instrument and engine which that grand and vilest of impostors, Mahomet, first set up with, in the venting and offering his blasphemous impostures to the world, was this secret, inward voice of the Spirit conversing with him, and revealing to him the several heads of his detestable religion: which as nobody did or could pretend to be conscious to but himself, so I will maintain, that upon this principle of the inward voice of the Spirit, there is nobody since. Mahomet (no not the Whigs' demigod Oliver himself) but might (had he met with such an amazing torrent of success as Mahomet found) have carried on any enthusiastic design as effectually as ever that monster did. But now to pass to those particular considerations, before promised by us, for the beating down and exploding this secret voice of the Spirit, which such hypocrites so confidently pretend to be led by, you may observe as follows.

1. That the word of God in scripture is proposed and declared by the Spirit itself speaking in the same as a rule both necessary and sufficient for men to be led and acted by in all their spiritual concerns; and consequently no such inward word or voice from the same Spirit to the soul of any particular person whatsoever can be proved or allowed to be such a rule. For if this inward word pretends to reveal the very same things which are actually revealed in the said scripture already, in that case such revelation being but the bare repetition of truths both already revealed and sufficiently confirmed, it cannot pass for a rule really necessary; nor, on the other side, if it speaks things different from (and much more contrary to) what the written word speaks, (supposing the said written word to be a full and sufficient rule both for belief and practice, as all who receive it must hold it to be,) can this inward voice and word then, in the proper notion of a rule, be so much as allowable. For does not the scripture stand vouched by apostolical and divine authority, as *able to make the man of God perfect? and to furnish him to every good work?* And will not all this satisfy? or would these men have any more? But alas! as good works (especially in the matter of justification) use to be accounted dangerous things; so whatsoever these men's new faith in the inward word or voice of the Spirit may do for them this way, I dare say, that their good works are never like to justify or sanctify either them or their religion; as will appear from the

Second and next consideration; which is the great and just suspiciousness of the fore-mentioned pretence, that the inward word or voice of the Spirit is the rule which it leads



men by, in that it is seldom or never alleged, but for the patronage of such actions as cannot be warranted or defended upon any other account whatsoever. For you shall never hear such men pleading, that the Spirit tells them they must obey their governors, reverence the church and the ministers of it, be charitable to the poor, behave themselves justly to all, injure nobody, defraud nobody, and the like; which duties both reason and the written word of God so much press and inculcate. But when the yoke of government begins to sit uneasy upon their unruly necks, or when they have run themselves out of their estates, and so come to cast a longing eye upon the revenues of the church, or of their rich neighbours about them; why then the word, that commands obedience, and forbids all violence and injustice, presently becomes not only a dead, but a killing letter, and a beggarly rudiment, and in comes the Spirit with a mighty controlling force to relieve and set them at liberty, teaching them *to bind kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron*; assuring them withal, that the godly only have any right to possess the earth. And if so, then let them alone to persuade themselves, (and others too if they can,) that they only are the godly; and that by rules and arguments which the scripture is wholly a stranger to. For the scripture, all know, is looked upon by these seraphic pretenders as a very mean insignificant thing; and never made nor intended to direct such sons of perfection, but to be directed and overruled by them. And now let any one judge, whether that inward voice or word can proceed from the Spirit, which is still urged in justification of those actions and opinions, which neither law nor gospel (though both of them infallibly dictated by that very Spirit) can speak one word for.

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3. A third argument against the same pretence is, that such a pretence is contrary to the experience of the generality of Christians, and those also the most pious, humble, and best exercised in the ways of God of any others. For did the apostles themselves pretend to any such thing? Or did the primitive professors of Christianity, and the martyrs of the church, own any thing but the written word of God, as that which they were to believe and practise by? Or did they acknowledge, that the Spirit whispered any thing to their souls by any immediate voice distinct from the scripture? Which yet they would certainly have found, had this been the way by which the Spirit of God led believers. For there is no question, but that as all of them were still led by the same Spirit, and that to the same great end, so they were led also by the same way: there being but one way to heaven and happiness, both then and now established by God; the same things being to be believed, and the same things to be practised, and those also generally the same way to be learned, in order to men's salvation.

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4. A fourth argument against this pretence of an inward word or voice being the rule which the Spirit leads men by, is, that such a pretence directly opens a door to all profaneness and licentiousness of living. For the Spirit of God being God, who gave mankind the laws which they are to live by; and it being clear, that the same power that gave or enacted the law, can dispense with its obligation in any particular instance of duty; let a man but persuade

himself, that the Spirit dwells personally in him, and speaks upon all occasions to him; how easily and readily may he plead, that the Spirit tells him he may kill his enemy, plunder his neighbour, cast off all obedience to his governors? And if the written law of God commanding the contrary be alleged to such an one, he may presently reply, that the same God that made that law, does, by an inward voice speaking to him, exempt him from the obliging power of it in such and such actions. Upon which account, let a man be never so much a villain, provided he be so in a godly sort, and will patronize all his lewd practices by the authority of the Spirit, it is impossible that that man should sin; forasmuch as the Spirit takes off the obligation of the law to his hand, so that though it may bind the rest of man kind, yet he is dispensed with, and stands particularly excepted from that common rule.

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Thus the late rebel army having conquered and imprisoned their consciences as well as their prince, completed all by bringing the Spirit to their lure, and reducing enthusiasm to an act; still governing all their transactions with their abused sovereign by this invincible principle, which enabled them with so much ease to charge through the obligation of all laws, oaths, and promises whatsoever. So that in their several treatings with the king, being asked by him, whether they would stand to such and such agreements and promises, they still answered him, that they would do as the Spirit should direct them. Whereupon that blessed prince would frequently condole his hard fate, that he had to deal with persons to whom the Spirit dictated one thing one day, and commanded the clean contrary the next. In the strength of this almighty principle also, they would openly and professedly call their seizing upon the goods, lands, and estates of the royalists, *a robbing of the Egyptians*; affirming, that the Spirit had clearly revealed to them, that God had alienated the right and property of those estates from the other, and transferred it to them; so that they held what they had took from their neighbours, by immediate donation from God himself; which, could it have been proved, was undoubtedly the surest and the best title in the world. Upon the same principle also was it, that some of their factious preachers, having first fired their fellow citizens into a rage against their king, did, the next day, upon their going to that holy war, come personally amongst them, and, in the name of God, pronounce them absolved, and free from all former oaths and promises; such as those of supremacy, allegiance, and the like, whereby they might otherwise think themselves obliged not to fight against their sovereign, whom they had so solemnly sworn obedience to: and lastly, upon the stock of the same principle was it, that one of their prime leading doctors,<sup>5</sup> being justly charged with schism, cleared himself from that imputation by affirming, that he knew himself to have the Spirit of God, and therefore that he neither was nor could be a schismatic. Which worthy argument had he used to the apostle St. Paul, I doubt not but he would have retorted it upon him, and told him, that his causeless separation from, and uncharitable invectives against

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the church, clearly proved him to be a schismatic; and that therefore in that case he neither had nor could have the Spirit of God. But if the other end of the argument be took, what person is there so vile and wicked, who may not justify himself and his actions by it? For it is but for him confidently to assert and face men down, that he has the Spirit, and then he has sufficiently proved his actings good and pious, and agreeable to the mind of God, though directly contrary to his law; while the Spirit's impulse is urged against the Spirit's commands, and his secret word bandied against his written; much like the late parliament's pressing men in the king's name to fight against the king's person. And thus by this spiritual engine are all the laws of God, in the very name and authority of God himself, overturned and made of none effect: and if so, how will any laws or statutes, made by men, be able to stand before it? No; it presently breaks through all such cob webs, and snaps asunder all these pitiful useless human ordinances, as unworthy to lay hold of such sons of perfection, as carry their law and their law giver about them. For whatsoever the Spirit commands, that in all reason they must do; especially since they are upon such fair terms, that the Spirit never commands them but what they please.



5. The fifth and last argument against this pretence of an inward voice of the Spirit is, that no man can assure either himself or others, that the Spirit of God speaks inwardly to him. And can any man look upon that as a rule to be led by, which is itself wholly unknown to him? For let any pretender to the Spirit prove, that it is really the Spirit of God which dictates this or that to him; and that what he takes for the voice of the Spirit is not indeed the dictates of his own mind or fancy, being strongly fixed upon some certain object. I have shewn elsewhere, that such as plead conscience, could not evidence the reality and truth of that plea to others, however they might know it themselves. But here, when men plead the Spirit, they can neither make out the truth of what they plead to others, nor yet to themselves. For if they would prove, that the things suggested to their minds are inspired and suggested by the immediate voice of the Spirit, they must prove it either from the quality of the things themselves, or from some argument extrinsic to those things. From the former they cannot; for neither the antecedent goodness or badness of the things, that come into their minds, can prove them to have proceeded or not proceeded from the Spirit; since this goodness is made a consequent of the Spirit's suggestion; so that whatsoever the Spirit inspires or suggests, is upon that very account rendered good; and the truth is, for this cause alone is this inspiration pretended, viz. to stamp those things and actions good, which otherwise would not, could not be so; so that we must not prove the Spirit's suggestion from the goodness of the thing suggested; but on the contrary infer, that the thing so suggested must needs be good, because it is suggested by the Spirit. Which is a compendious way for a man to authorize and sanctify whatsoever he does, thinks, or desires, by alleging, that the Spirit prompted it to him. And therefore that fanatic spoke home and fully to the point, who said, "that he had indeed read the scripture, and frequented ordinances for a long time, but could never gain



any true comfort or quiet of mind, till he had brought himself to this persuasion, that whatsoever he had a mind to do, was the will of God that he should do.”

It being most clear therefore, that men cannot prove the Spirit’s speaking to them from the quality of the things spoke, they must fetch the proof of it from something else, and that must be either from reason, or scripture, or miracles. The first of these is not so much as pretended to; for the persons that pretend to the Spirit generally lay the foundation of this pretence in the ruins of reason, which they utterly decry. And for scripture, this in effect is as much balked as the other; since the inward voice of the Spirit is still alleged in the behalf of those actions that find no patronage from scripture; but so much of it as they rely upon shall be considered, when I come to examine those scripture examples, by which these impostors would seem to defend themselves. The last way therefore, by which they must prove this immediate extraordinary guidance of the Spirit inwardly speaking to them, must be by miracles or prophecies. And surely there is all the reason in the world, that those, who pretend a guidance of the Spirit singular and extra ordinary above the rest of mankind, should be able to do something which the rest of mankind cannot do: for so our Saviour argued of himself, [John x. 25](#). *The works that I do, bear witness of me.*

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But as for our pretenders to the Spirit, what is there extraordinary or miraculous in them, but impudence, falseness, and hypocrisy? Consider the late army, the weapons of all whose warfare were in this (abused indeed) sense spiritual with a witness; and what miracles did they do, besides turning *our rivers into blood*, robbing, and cutting throats, and tumbling down *principalities and powers* to settle Christ in his kingdom, and to make themselves his deputies, to rule the nations of the earth till he came? In which office, when they were once settled, I suppose they would give him leave to stay away from his charge as long as he pleased, and perhaps the longer the better. And then for their being able to prove any of their pretences by prophecy, we may take an estimate of the prophetic spirit which inspired them, by those famous prophecies of Oliver’s recovery and long life two days before his death. As also by the so much talked of prophecies of 1666, which for a long time made the first article of the fanatics’ creed, till that year came at length, and fired them out of it.

And here having touched upon miracles and prophecies, I thought good to remark this by the way, that their proving efficacy is not so universal as to evince the truth or lawfulness of every thing that they may be brought to prove; but only of such things as are essentially good, or of such as have their moral goodness or evil depending upon the free sanction of God’s will, either commanding or forbid ding them. As for instance, the act of killing a man may be good or evil, according as it is done with or without sufficient authority; and the taking away a thing in another man’s possession may be lawful or unlawful, according as the property is either altered or not altered; both of which, we know, are in the number of those things which God may freely dispose of. But if any thing or action have a natural turpitude or indecency in it, founded upon the essential relation of one thing to another,

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this being repugnant to the divine holiness to be the author of; no miracles nor prophecies, though never so exactly fulfilled, can prove such things to be the will or mind of God, that they should be done; as is clear from [Deut. xiii. 1, 2](#), where, if any one shews a *sign or wonder*, whereby he would persuade men to worship other gods, and that sign or wonder come to pass, God positively warns his people, that no credit should be given to such signs or miracles; and the reason is evident, because it is impossible for God to give his honour to another, or command the worship due to his divine nature to be conferred on idols, or on any thing but himself. But such signs or miracles come to pass only for the trial of men's faith, to see whether they will by any means be drawn off from their duty or no. And therefore, if any one should pretend an inward voice of the Spirit suggesting such things to him, and, to prove that inward voice, should shew a sign or miracle, neither the pretence of one nor the authority of the other ought to be admitted, as being brought to confirm a thing directly contrary both to God's nature and his word.

And thus having shewn that no man pretending to this guidance of the Spirit, by an inward voice speaking to him, can prove that this is indeed the Spirit of God, by any argument, either from the quality of the things suggested by it, or from reason, or scripture, no, nor yet from miracles or prophecies, I suppose I have sufficiently demonstrated, that he has no way to prove it by at all.

And yet it must not be denied, that there is another way pretended to, by which a man may certainly know himself to have the Spirit, though he cannot prove it, and that is by the Spirit itself. For as light, they say, is seen and discovered by itself, and its own inherent brightness, without the help of any thing else to discover it to the eye; and as first principles shine and shew themselves to the understanding by their own innate evidence, without the help of any medium to prove them by; so is it with the Spirit, that shews and discovers itself to those that have it, by itself, and its own light, without any other argument to declare it.

In answer to this, I affirm, first, that this assertion of the self-evidence of the Spirit shewing itself to the soul of him who has it, or is led by it, must needs be false, as being directly contradicted by the scripture, which bids men *examine themselves*, and that particularly about this matter, *whether Christ*, i.e. *the spirit of Christ*, be in them or no, [2 Cor. xiii. 5](#).

The same scripture bids them also *try the spirits*, [1 John iv. 1](#), which, no doubt, respects the spirit in a man's self, as well as in others. But surely nothing that is self-evident can be the proper subject of examination or trial: all examination being to make something clearer and better known, by being examined, than it was before, which in things self-evident, clear, and unquestionable, can have no place. For no man is ever bid to examine himself, whether he be alive or no; and whether he breathes and walks, while he is breathing and walking; for these things are self-evident to him: and if the Spirit were so too to him who has it, it would be altogether as senseless and absurd to bid such an one examine himself, whether the Spirit were in him or no. But such absurdities are not the language of scripture. And thus

much to shew the falseness of the assertion itself. Now in the next place, for the argument brought to prove it, it is apparently fallacious, as depending upon the supposed parity of two instances, which indeed are not parallel. For though light is discerned by itself, because by itself it incurs into the eye, and first principles do by themselves shew and offer themselves to the understanding; yet I deny that the Spirit of God shews itself to the soul immediately by itself, and its own substance, but by its operations and effects; which are distinct from the Spirit itself, and consequently require some rule to try from what principle they proceed.

And that this is so, is manifest from this one consideration, that if the Spirit shew itself and its glorious substance immediately to the soul, this would be properly the beatific vision, nor would there be any difference in our knowing God here and here after: for then only we shall know him by sight, and intuition of his glorious substance; which the scripture calls, *a seeing him face to face*, and *knowing him as we are known*. From whence it being clear, that the Spirit of God not shewing itself to the soul immediately by itself and its own substance, as light does to the eye, but by the mediation of its operations and effects upon the soul, it follows, that it is not discernible by itself, as light is, but by its operations; which operations are triable and distinguishable by certain rules. And so much in answer to the prime and grand plea of enthusiasm.

But here, if being driven off from the Spirit's immediate evidencing of itself to the soul, they shall take up in the operations and effects of the Spirit, and affirm, that these carry such light and evidence in them, as must certainly discover them to the soul to have been from the Spirit; I answer, that those who allege this, mean either that the Spirit of God can exert such an operation upon the soul as shall carry in it this self-evidencing quality, or that it actually does so. The former, though granted, would be nothing to the present purpose. And for the latter, I utterly deny it, and leave it to its assertors to prove, giving withal this reason for my denial of it; that nothing is more usual than for believers to be ignorant of the graces that have been really wrought upon their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and thereupon to doubt whether they are in a state of favour with God or no. For who more apt oftentimes to complain of and bemoan the hardness and pride of their hearts, than such as are truly tender, humble, and poor in spirit? Which sufficiently demonstrates, that the operations of the Spirit do not always evidence themselves to the soul, though they have passed upon it in the production of real and great effects.

Having thus proved, that no man can be sure that the Spirit of God leads him by any word or voice inwardly speaking to him, I suppose I need not prove that he is much less able to assure others of it besides himself. And yet this must be added and insisted upon; that supposing a man to make this the rule of his actions, he stands bound not only to satisfy himself, but others also concerning it; forasmuch as he is bound to give no just occasion of offence to his Christian brethren; and consequently ought to render an account of the reason of his actings to those, who, upon great and sufficient ground, are scandalized at

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them; which the generality of Christians must needs be, when they see a professor of the same religion with themselves act contrary to that written rule, which they all judge themselves obliged to act and live by. But for them to satisfy others about this inward voice of the Spirit, which they can no ways evidence to themselves, is certainly impossible: and therefore this can by no means be admitted as a rule for any man to be led by: since nothing can be properly a rule, but that concerning which a man may rationally satisfy both himself and others; which if he cannot, nothing that he does by the direction of that rule, can be done either in faith or without scandal; and so long there unavoidably lies upon him, in all his life and actions, a necessity of sinning; the most deplorable condition certainly that can befall a man, as being the very high road to hell, and the direct way to damnation.

And thus I have given the reasons, why this inward voice of the Spirit cannot be the rule which men are to be guided by. As namely; 1. Because it infers that the written word cannot be such a rule. 2. Because of its suspiciousness; for that it is never alleged but in the behalf of such actions as can plead no allowance upon any other account whatsoever. 3. Because it is contrary to the common experience of Christians, and those the most pious, knowing, and best acquainted with the ways of God. 4. Because it opens a door to all licentiousness, and what is more, sanctifies it with the name of piety and religion. And 5 and lastly, because it is such a rule, as a man can neither evidence to himself nor to others, and yet is bound to do both. Which reasons, I conceive, are abundantly sufficient to explode and extinguish this impudent and irrational pretence with all sober and intelligent persons whatsoever.

The remaining particulars shall, God assisting, be thoroughly considered and despatched in the following discourse.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and do minion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*



## A SERMON

ON

ROMANS VIII. 14.

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DISC. II.

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ROMANS viii. 14.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

HAVING, I presume, in my first discourse upon this important subject, sufficiently exploded the bold fancies and extravagant pretences of these sons of novelty and inspiration, by the foregoing reasons there produced against them; I shall now proceed to an examination of what they yet plead more for themselves, and this their daring but absurd hypothesis. For these pretenders to an immediate impulse and inward leading voice of the Spirit, will not rest satisfied so, but, for their further defence, plead the example of several eminent saints and worthies of the church, doing several things (as they would persuade us) contrary to the express written word, and yet with sufficient evidence of the divine approbation: the reason of which seems not possible to be stated upon any thing but this, that the Spirit of God did by an inward voice raise them to, and consequently warrant them in those actions, notwithstanding any prohibition lying against them in the written letter of the word. Such, for instance, were Abraham's attempting to sacrifice his son Isaac. Jacob's deceiving his father, and defrauding and supplanting his brother Esau with a lie. Also the Egyptian midwives saving the Hebrew children; and Rahab the harlot's saving the spies of Canaan by lies and false affirmations. Likewise Moses's killing the Egyptian, while he was but a private person in Pharaoh's court. And Phinehas's killing of Zimri and Cozbi after the same manner. Of the like nature was the Israelites robbing or spoiling of the Egyptians. Samson's killing of himself, that he might be revenged on the Philistines. Ehud's killing of Eglon, king of Moab, to whom, with the rest of the children of Israel, he was at this time subject. Jael's killing Sisera, though he was in league with her husband, and upon that account was induced to take shelter in her house. Add to these, Elijah's killing the prophets of Baal, though, being no magistrate, he had no right, against the magistrate's will, to execute justice upon his fellow-subjects, though never so worthy of death by law. With these, I say, and such other scripture examples, these pretenders to the inward voice of the Spirit, in opposition to his written word, use to defend themselves. In order to the examination of which instances, before I survey them severally and apart, I shall premise these four general observations.



1. That the actions of persons recorded in scripture are not proposed to us as rules of direction to live or act by: laws and precepts are the only things intended for that purpose, and consequently are of an universal aspect and obligation, and respect the actions of all mankind. But examples and instances, as they are personal, so they are also particular, and exhibit to us matter of fact, what has been done, but not matter of duty, what ought or ought not to be done. For certain it is, that no contrary practices, though never so much allowed, even by divine approbation, do or can cancel any law made by God; but at the most declare, that some persons have been dispensed with, in some things enjoined by law. And therefore as God's will to oblige men in general, where he makes no exception, and his will not to oblige some particulars, whom he is pleased to except, do no ways clash or contradict, but very fairly accord with one another; so those examples, which declare where he has actually thus used his prerogative, do no ways abrogate or repeal the standing obligation of those laws, which otherwise certainly bind mankind, where such exceptions have not interposed. And God might have many reasons, why he thought fit to deliver down to us, in sacred history, an account of such extraordinary actions and passages of men's lives, without ever intending them as rules or patterns for us to measure our actions by. As for instance; partly to manifest the absoluteness of his prerogative and dominion even over his own laws; partly to magnify the admirable contrivances of his providence, bringing about strange and great events by such unusual actions; partly also to declare and shew the necessity of his grace, and withal the deplorable weakness even of the best of men, when he is pleased at any time to leave them to themselves: besides other reasons best known to his infinite wisdom, and therefore such as may well be come ours not to inquire into. And so much for the first observation.

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2. The second is this; that God treated with men in those first days of the church after a very different way from what he does in these latter, and since the times of the gospel; in which he has given mankind the last and perfect revelation of his will, and withal completed and confirmed the whole canon of scripture, as the great and full repository of that revelation. It may appear to any ordinary observation, that it has been God's method all along to discover himself to the world by degrees, and to train up his church from a less to a more perfect religion, still vouchsafing a greater measure of light to the latter ages of the church than to the former, till at length he revealed himself in the most absolute and perfect manner of all, by the gospel of his Son.

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Now, as in those first ages of the church, the notions of religion were generally much weaker and more obscure than nowadays, so God found it necessary sometimes, by extraordinary means and ways, to discover his mind to men; the common discoveries of it not sufficing for all the particular exigencies and occasions of the church: but as the most wise God neither in nature nor religion ever does any thing in vain, so it is observable, that as more of his will came to be declared and written by the prophets, so there were still fewer

instances of these extraordinary declarations of it by the peculiar suggestions and inspirations of the Spirit. For in the days of Samuel we read, that *the vision of the Lord was rare and seldom*, [1 Sam. iii. 1](#). And in the days of Isaiah, and the other immediately following prophets, much rarer; and from Malachi to John Baptist, the extraordinary and prophetic spirit seems wholly to have ceased. But when the Messiah was come, whose business it was to reveal the whole mind of God, and to confirm it by the highest proof of miracles that could be given, and so to establish a perpetual and universal rule, which should last to the world's end, and answer all the possible occasions of his church; what reason can there be now assigned, why any inward extraordinary inspiration of the Spirit should be thought necessary to guide men in those actions, which the Spirit has provided a standing, full, and sufficient rule for already?



The ground of God's dealing with, and speaking to, some persons after such a singular and peculiar manner in those first times, was the imperfect economy of the church then; and the imperfection of its economy was founded upon this, that it was all that time in a state of expectation; by every thing almost, whether ordinary or extraordinary, pointing at the Messiah yet to come. Who being now actually come, and exhibited, the reason of those things must by consequence cease; nor can the extraordinary motions of the Spirit, whether by prophecies, miracles, or new revelations, be of any necessity to the church at all. Granting therefore, that God did indeed, in those first times of the church, direct and move many men by immediate impulses and inward voices of the Spirit; yet the same is by no means pleadable from thence by any living under the Christian economy, forasmuch as the cause, for which God vouchsafed it then, is wholly at an end now. Where upon the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, in [Heb. i. 1, 2](#), tells us, that *God, who in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son*. In which words he clearly shews, that this one way of God's speaking by his Son was instead of all those other ways of his speaking to men formerly; and consequently, that after he comes once to speak to us this way, those other ways of his manifesting himself are no more to be expected: Christ, the great prophet, who was to make known all the will of his Father, being thus come.



But still this is to be supposed, that under the coming of Christ we are to comprehend the proof and declaration of that his coming, by the signs and miracles wrought for that purpose both by himself and his apostles; by which the Spirit of God having done enough to convince the world, that the Messiah was indeed come, and that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, and his doctrine the full and last revelation of the mind of God to mankind; this, I say, being thus effected, there is, upon no terms, the same reason alleageable for the continuance of those extraordinary motions and impulses of the Spirit in the church now, which the scripture tells us were vouchsafed to many eminent worthies in the church heretofore; and so much for the second observation.



3. The third and principal is this; that there has been no man, whom the Spirit of God immediately, and after an extraordinary manner, used to move or inspire, but has been attended with those signs and characters, by which he has been visibly known and took notice of by all about him to have been such an extraordinary person. That this was so *de facto*, will appear by running over the several persons to whom God used thus to manifest himself, either in the Old or New Testament; where you will find those remarkable manifestations of God's presence with them, whether by miracles or other extraordinary and supernatural passages relating to their persons, so that all people knew them to be prophets, and men sent and inspired by God. Nor indeed in reason could it be otherwise, considering that the design of God, in raising up such men, was to signify his mind by them to the world, whose duty there upon it was to hearken unto them, and to obey them speaking in the name of God. But if those persons did not carry upon them such marks and signs, whereby people should be enabled to know and discern them to be really what they professed themselves, it was impossible but men must unavoidably sometimes listen to impostors and false prophets, and sometimes reject the true; there being no certain mark, whereby to distinguish and know them one from another. For if their own word and affirmation were sufficient to vouch their mission, it is evident, that false prophets could and did affirm themselves to be inspired and sent by God, as much as those who were so indeed. And thus much for the third observation.



4. The fourth and last is this; that when any action, unwarranted by the rule of God's written word, has been done by a person, not known by any remarkable sign to have been led and acted by an extraordinary spirit, nothing can warrant such an action to have been allowed by God, but only God's own subsequent approbation of it, declared either immediately by himself, or by some person known to be inspired by him. And therefore, if the enthusiasts of our times will warrant any of their lawless, irregular actions to have been done by authority of divine impulse, if they cannot by miracles and signs prove themselves to be persons inspired, as were Moses, Samson, Elias, and such others; yet let them shew at least that God has passed some particular approbation upon what they have done, as he did upon the action of the Egyptian midwives, of Rahab the harlot, and Jael's killing Sisera, and the like. But then also this approbation must be made in express words, and not gathered only from the success of the action; which if it be a sufficient declaration of God's being pleased with any action, then none would have so fair and full a plea for the lawfulness of what they do as the Turk, or any victorious infidel, prospering in any great villainy that he undertakes: yet this was the constant plea and current divinity of the saints of the late times, (revived in these;) this, I say, was still the beaten theme of those Balaams in their thanksgiving sermons, all along proving God's approbation of their cause by the success of it; that is, taking their text out of the Bible, and their proofs out of the Alcoran.



Now these four rules or observations being premised, namely, 1. That examples are not recorded in scripture as rules of action: 2. That the Spirit of God treated with the church heretofore in a very different way from what he does since the time of Christ: 3. That persons extraordinarily inspired were known to be such by visible signs and characters of God's presence with them: 4. That where these signs appeared not, no action done besides the rule of God's written word could or can pretend to have been done with divine allowance, without a subsequent divine approbation expressly passed upon it: these rules, I say, being thus laid down, I shall now by the light of them examine the several instances above alleged; many of which will be found lawful and allowable by the standing rules of God's law, howsoever they have been produced in behalf of extraordinary inspiration.

1. And first for the example of Abraham going about to sacrifice his son. It is certain, that to kill any one (much more a son) without sufficient authority, is a sin; and what it is a sin to do, must be a sin also to attempt. To clear this act of Abraham therefore from sin, we must affirm him to have done it with sufficient authority; which could be derived only from God, who alone has a plenary right to dispose of the lives of innocent men. But God does not by any written law give men power to take away the lives of such persons. And therefore all authority and warrant derived from him in this matter must have been fetched from an immediate and extraordinary revelation of his divine will commanding, and thereby authorizing Abraham thus to deal with his son. So that an extraordinary voice, or dictate of the Spirit, must here be confessed. But then, that this is not here pleaded in the behalf of Abraham gratis, and upon such grounds as any man may plead the like, is evident from those many other extraordinary passages of his life. As God's appearing to him in Ur of the Chaldees, and bidding him leave his country. Three angels lodging with him, and God's discoursing with him as familiarly as a man does with his friend, about the destruction of Sodom; together with his strange procreation of a son in his old age. All which were sufficient demonstrations, that he was a person whom God dealt with after an immediate and extraordinary manner; and different from the common way of his speaking to and dealing with the rest of mankind.

2. For Jacob's supplanting his brother Esau; though God had designed him the birthright, yet the manner of his procuring it was throughout the whole action sinful and fraudulent; nor have we any cause to conclude it to have been pleasing to God, or commanded by him; and much less intended for a rule or example to warrant any to do the like; there being not one word in scripture that intimates the divine approbation of it.

3. For the Egyptian midwives saving the Hebrew children, and Rahab's saving the spies of Canaan by lies and false affirmations: the humanity, charity, and mercifulness of the action was the only thing commended and approved by God; but the adherent circumstance of it, that it was done by a lie, was sinful, and no ways approved by him, nor consequently to be imitated by us.

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4. For Moses's killing the Egyptian, while he was a private person in Pharaoh's court; we are to deny the supposition, that he was a private person at that time, but that he was even then commissioned by God governor of Israel; and consequently, in the right of a governor, might revenge the wrong done to his subjects. For though we find not a particular account, how and when God invested Moses in the government of his people, while he lived with Pharaoh; yet that the right of governing them was by God conferred upon him, is evident from [Acts vii. 25](#), where the Spirit of God by the mouth of St. Stephen speaks that of Moses, that must needs imply so much. For it is said, that when Moses slew the Egyptian, he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God had raised him up to be their deliverer, and consequently their governor. And if he supposed that this would have been understood by others, it could not be, but that he, at that time, must needs have known and understood it himself.

3. For Phinehas's killing of Zimri and Cosbi, he did it by the express command of Moses the supreme magistrate, who, in [Numb. xxv. 5](#), commanded the judges of the people, of which Phinehas, the second person in the priestly dignity, could not but be one, to fall upon such as *had joined themselves to Moab, and to slay every one his man*. So that there is no need here to recur to any extraordinary motion of the Spirit, to authorize this action of Phinehas; nor yet to that *jus zelotarum*, asserted by some amongst the Jews.

6. For the *Israelites' spoiling of the Egyptians*, [Exod. xii. 36](#), though it is manifest, that what they did was by the express command of God signified to them by Moses, whose great and mighty miracles sufficiently declared him to be one, to whom God used to speak after a peculiar and extraordinary manner; yet to state the lawfulness of the action upon other grounds also, we must know that the word שאל here translated *borrowing*., may signify either to *borrow*, or barely to *ask* or *demand* a thing of another. If we take it in the first sense, we have no cause to conclude, but that, when the Israelites borrowed such and such things of the Egyptians, they were borrowers *bona fide*, and knew not at the time of borrowing, but that, after they had sacrificed to God, they might come back again and make restitution; but God afterwards prohibiting their return, and thereupon rendering it unlawful, and withal the Egyptians pursuing them as enemies, it became impossible for them to restore what they had borrowed; and being so, though the Egyptians lost what they had lent them, yet it was with out any fraudulence or injustice on their part, who were the borrowers. But then, if we take the word in the other sense, as it signifies only the bare *asking* or *demanding* of a thing, (as the best expositors upon the place confess the word to be rendered *borrowing*., rather than *asking*, more from the circumstances of the case in hand, than from the proper force and signification of the word;) I say, if we take it thus, no more can be gathered from the text, but that the Israelites, upon their departure, asked such and such things of the Egyptians, and they freely gave them what they asked; which was very agreeable to that condition of fear and terror they were in, through the repeated infliction of so many plagues



upon their land; which might well at that time make them ready to part with any thing to the Israelites, as being desirous to be rid of them upon any terms. So that which way soever we take the word, there was nothing sinful or unjust in the action, nor applicable to their purpose, who, from this and such like scriptures, think they may plunder their neighbours *jure divino*, and rob and pillage by commission from God himself. Nor yet does that word *spoiling* of the Egyptians import any injustice in the proceeding; forasmuch as it does not of necessity denote any unlawful intention in the taker or borrower, but only the event of the action in respect of the lender; who, if he loses his estate, is equally spoiled and undone, whether the means by which he is bereaved of it were just or unjust. And so much for this instance. In the

Seventh place. As for that of Samson's killing himself, we must know that self-murder is to be measured by the prime and direct intention of the person who does it; and not by any event accident ally and secondarily attending an action designed to much another end. Samson, being chief magistrate of the children of Israel, might destroy the Philistines, who were their enemies; and this was the thing primely, nay solely intended by him, and not the taking away his own life, which no doubt he wished that in that action he could have preserved from the common ruin, though he knew that the cause was such, that while he took away his enemies' lives, he should by consequence lose his own. And this, some are of opinion, was altogether as lawful, as for a captain to descend into battle to fight for his country, though he knew certainly that he should die in the encounter. I cannot affirm the cases to be parallel; yet certainly Samson's action could not strictly and properly be called self-murder, there being in it no design against his own life, though there was a neglect of it, which in a just cause is very allowable. But if we admit here of an extraordinary motion of the Spirit, inciting Samson to do what he did, the eminent and miraculous assistance vouchsafed him by the Spirit in that very action, is abundantly sufficient to credit and make good that allegation. In the

Eighth place. For Ehad's killing of Eglon, king of the Moabites; besides that he seems to carry his authority in those words, in which he is said to have been raised up by God to deliver Israel, [Judges iii. 15](#), we must know that Ehad is not here to be looked upon as Eglon's rightful subject, but as his enemy. For the Israelites were then in captivity and bondage to the king of Moab, who oppressed them. But a state of captivity, where no league or compact supervenes, is a state of hostility; and consequently, when the captives can get power enough into their hands, they have as much right to attack the lives of their enemies, as if they met them in battle upon an open and professed war.

9. For Jael's killing of Sisera, the captain of Jabin's host, [Judges iv. 21](#), when (as some judge from the text) there was a league between Jabin and her husband Heber the Kenite, which league must equally bind her, both husband and wife being politically but one person; I answer, that both she and her husband are to be supposed to have been under a precedent



league with the Israelites, under whose protection they lived, and whose religion they professed; and consequently no subsequent league with their enemies could discharge them from the obligation of the former. And by that they were obliged to prosecute the enemies of Israel, as much as were the Israelites themselves. But I add, secondly, that the text speaks not of any league between Jabin and Heber, but says only, that there was peace between them; which, I conceive, implies no more of necessity, than a mutual forbearance of all acts of hostility, and a neighbourly intercourse thereupon; which might be without the obligation of any league or contract; and very well cease, when a league is consistent with that peace should engage them in a state of war. In the

Tenth and last place. It must be confessed, (and there is no colour of pretence against it,) that Elijah acted by the impulse of an extraordinary spirit; which was sufficiently manifest to all Israel, both from the miracles done by him in his life, and his miraculous translation, whereby he was privileged from death and mortality, the common lot of the rest of the world. And therefore we need not question by what authority Elias executed the sentence of the law upon the idolatrous priests of Baal, though he was neither supreme magistrate himself, nor yet commissioned by him.

And thus I have gone over ten of the principal scripture instances, by which our modern enthusiasts would defend their lawless irregular actings. Seven of which I have yet proved justifiable upon the principles of common right and morality; so that there remain but three, to wit, of Abraham, Samson, and Elias, the justification of which must be derived from the immediate and extraordinary impulse of the Spirit. And these were persons so eminent for the extraordinary presence of God with them, in so many other passages of their lives, that we may well venture the result of the whole matter upon this; and allow our enthusiasts to act as much besides the rule of God's written law as ever they did, provided they will give us such undeniable evidences of an extraordinary spirit moving them, as they in their several ages gave the world. For this we do and must constantly deny, that the authority of such an extraordinary spirit was ever owned or admitted upon the mere affirmation or word of the persons pretending to it; but upon one or both of these conditions: namely, 1. That the pretenders to it had otherwise, by several signs or miracles, proved themselves to have been acted and inspired by God after an extraordinary way; or, 2. That the actions for which they make this plea were commended and owned by the subsequent approbation of God himself.

Neither of which conditions being now produceable by the enthusiasts of our times, it follows, that those scripture examples are of no force at all to warrant them in their pretences to an extraordinary Spirit; nor are arguments to prove any thing so much, as the knavery of those who make this pretence, and the folly of those who allow it.

And thus I have at length finished the second and main general head proposed for the discussion of the words; which was to shew, what it is for men to be led by the Spirit. I proceed now to the

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Third, which is to declare what is meant in the text by being the sons of God. The relation of father and son in scripture is taken two ways, properly or improperly. In the proper acceptance of it, it is founded upon generation; but improperly taken, it is founded (for the most part) upon one of these two things, adoption or imitation. The latter of which, I conceive, gives the denomination here, though by consequence also it infers the persons so denominated to be sons by adoption. Now for this sonship by imitation, which consists in the cognation or conformity of a man's actions to the example or will of another, we have it fully and emphatically set forth to us in [John viii.](#) where Christ proves the *Jews not to have been the sons of Abraham, because they did not the works of Abraham: but to have been of their father the Devil, because by doing of the works of the Devil, they had made themselves his sons.* And the same is yet more fully expressed in [1 John iii. 10.](#) *In this are the children of God manifest, and the children of the Devil.* And what this is he tells us in the foregoing verses, in the [8th](#) of which he says, that *he who committeth sin is of the Devil;* and in the [9th](#), that *he who is born of God sinneth not:* which negative term of *not sinning* is, in the [7th verse](#), positively expressed by *working righteousness;* and in the [10th](#) particularly by the acts of charity, *in loving our brother.* Which is a comprehensive term, implying all the duties of the second table, as loving God takes in and comprehends all the duties of the first; according to the best and most authentic explication given of this subject by our Saviour himself. He therefore, in the apostle's sense, *is the son of God,* who does the *works of God;* and he does the works of God who loves his brother; and he loves his brother or neighbour (which in scripture are terms synonymous) who pays obedience to his governors; who neither kills nor mischiefs his neighbour in his person, nor defiles his bed, nor invades his property, nor traduces his good name, nor yet covets or casts a longing eye upon any part of his substance or estate: but on the contrary prosecutes him with all the acts of justice, love, and charity, which oppose the forementioned injuries and violences prohibited in the law.

Now this being the genuine explication of the words, let us cast them into argumentation. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, (says the apostle,) they are the sons of God.* The proposition is universal, and perhaps also the terms of it convertible; but whether they are or no, I am sure, it being a right and legitimate way of arguing, from the removal of the consequent to the denial of the antecedent, this inference must needs be firm and good; that those who are not the sons of God are not led by the Spirit. Now whether those who rebel, and prosecute their rebellion with murders, rapine, and sacrilege, who plunder their neighbours, and perjure themselves, who libel church and state, and throw all order into confusion, can be accounted the sons of God in that scripture sense, in which those only are the sons of God who do the works of God, let any one judge. If they are not the sons of God, I have shewn that they are not led by the Spirit: but if they think they can prove themselves the sons of God, while they practise these and the like enormities, (as no doubt

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they either do or would persuade themselves,) I will undertake to prove, that such sons of God are certain heirs of damnation.

Come we now to the fourth and last thing proposed, which is, to gather some conclusions, by way of use and inference, from the foregoing particulars. The conclusions shall be two.

1. That persons thus pretending to act by an inward voice, or impulse of the Spirit, in opposition to the rule of God's written word, are by no means to be endured in the communion of a Christian church, as being the highest scandal and reproach to religion, indeed a much higher and greater than drunkards, swearers, or robbers upon the highway. For though these persons by such practices disobey, and consequently dishonour the religion they profess; yet they pretend not that their villainies have any countenance or warrant from religion, so as thereby to lose their guilt, and cease to be villainies. But now such as pretend to be led by the extraordinary motions of the Spirit, do by that affirm every thing that they do to be lawful, and suitable to the mind of God: those very actions which in other men are sinful and abominable, as done by themselves through the authority of the Spirit, putting on quite another nature. So that their killing is no murder; their plundering their neighbour, no robbery; their violating his bed, no adultery; their resisting and fighting against their king, no rebellion; for the Spirit, by an inward voice or motion, dissolving the bonds of those laws which tie up other men from these actions, does in the mean time authorize and empower them to act all these things innocently, piously, and perhaps meritoriously too; than which it is impossible for the wickedness of man to utter or conceive any thing more highly opprobrious to God and to religion. Villains may fly to the altar to escape the punishment of their sin; but that they should fly to religion to excuse and take off the guilt of their sin, this is to make the altar itself a party in the crime, and the Almighty, not so much a pardoner, as a patron of their guilt. This is certainly next to the sin against the Holy Ghost, (if that sin may be committed nowadays,) and possibly one kind of that sin itself. For if the Pharisees are said to have sinned against the Holy Ghost by blaspheming him, and that blasphemy consisted in their attributing those works which were done by the Holy Ghost to the power of the Devil; pray, what difference, in point of blasphemy, is there between that and the ascribing those villainies, which are done by the instigation of the Devil, to the impulse and suggestion of the Holy Ghost? For my part, I can perceive no more nor other difference in the blasphemy of these two assertions, than there is in the same way, as it leads from Thebes to Athens, and from Athens to Thebes. For the Spirit can be no less dishonoured and blasphemed by having the works of the Devil ascribed to him, than by having his own works ascribed to the Devil.

2. The other conclusion or inference is this; that as these pretenders are upon no terms to be endured in the church, for the scandal they bring upon religion; so neither are they to be tolerated in the state, for the pernicious influence they have upon society. Whether the original right of civil government were from compact or no, has been disputed but that the



actual subsistence and continuance of it stands upon compact observed and made good, is past question; I mean that compact and agreement whereby all agree to submit and be subject to the same laws. For if one half of a nation agree to live in subjection to such laws, and the other half refuses all submission to the same, and both parts be equally strong, the government must of necessity fall in pieces. And upon this account, no subject has any right to claim protection of the government he is under, any longer than he submits to the laws of that government.

But now the enthusiasts we speak of, pretending to be led and governed immediately by the Spirit, whose inward voice is the only rule and law they hold themselves obliged to live and act by; by virtue of which also they plead themselves authorized to do many things which the written laws of God and man forbid, and to omit many things which the same written laws enjoin; with what face or confidence can they expect the protection of the government they live under, when they profess themselves to live by a law wholly differing from those laws, to the observers of which alone that government promises protection? Is it reason that my neighbour should live at peace by me, and enjoy his estate only by my conscience of, and obedience to that law, which forbids me to rob or steal from him; and he in the mean time proceed by an inward law, which exempts him from the same obligation, and allows him, when he pleases, to seize upon my estate, and rifle me? I say, is there, can there be any reason that such a fellow should be safe from me by my subjection to the laws of my country, and I not be mutually safe from him by his subjection to the same? No, certainly; where the benefit of the law is his, the obligation of it ought to reach him too, or there will be no equality, and consequently no society. He therefore who shall presume to own himself thus led by an inward voice, or instinct of the Spirit, in opposition to the laws enacted by the civil power, has forfeited all right to any protection from that power, and has, *ipso facto*, outlawed himself, and accordingly as an outlaw ought he to be dealt with; and if by these impulses and inspirations he shall dare to offend capitally, the magistrate must assert his rights, and vindicate the prerogative of his abused laws with the gibbet or the halter, the axe or the fagot; and this, if any thing, will cure such villains of that which they call the Spirit.

Infinite have been the disturbances given the world in general, and this poor kingdom in particular, by crafty persons sowing their hypocrisy by pretences of religion: of all which pretences none have been so frequent and fatally successful, as the two grand ones, one of the Spirit, the other of tender consciences; concerning the highest pretenders to both of which I shall say no more, than that it is well for them that no sort of lies whatsoever can choke them, and well for the magistrate that something else can; there being no casuist comparable to the minister of justice, to answer the sturdy scruples of an enthusiast disposed to rebel. For otherwise, as to matter of duty, whether to God or man, there can be no doubt or difficulty about it at all; that rule of our Saviour being infallible for the discovery of all

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such pretenders and spiritual cheats, *that by their fruits ye shall know them*. And the *fruits of the Spirit*, St. Paul tells us, [Galat. v. 22, 23](#), are *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance*, and the like; fruits which never grew in the same soil with rebellion, murder, and sacrilege. For, as the same apostle says, *those who live by the Spirit, will walk by the Spirit* too, since no man subsists by one vital principle, and acts by another.

*To which eternal Spirit of truth and holiness, together with the Father and the Son, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for evermore.*



## A SERMON

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER-ABBEY,

NOVEMBER 5, 1688.

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### ISAIAH v. 4.

*What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*

I CANNOT think it the chief, much less the sole business of this day, to declaim and make invectives against the persons whose villainy occasioned the solemnity of it. Their action was indeed bad enough, had we not lived to see it transcended by many worse; so that were not Protestantism in itself a better religion than Popery, it would have but little advantage from most of the persons who profess it. For are we less proud, covetous, or rebellious, than the Papists? I am sure, if many that call themselves Protestants were so, we must make our reckoning from before six hundred and forty, or despair of finding them so since. All the wicked arts of the Jesuits have been first sanctified, and then acted under the splendid names of *the power of godliness, Christian liberty, and the sceptre and kingdom of Jesus Christ*, with other such words as have writ their meaning with the sword's point, and now stand legible to posterity in letters of blood. Nor ought any to wonder that I ascribe these reformers' practices to Jesuitish principles; it being so well known, that the Jesuit never acts himself more than under another person, name, and profession.

Declamatory satires may indeed seem useless to all purposes whatsoever; it being impossible to revile away a distemper, or to cure a disease by an invective. But were they never so proper, though the church of England, whose principles and practices breathe nothing but loyalty to princes, may justify any hard speeches against the sons of Rome, yet surely the Papists are not fit to be reviled by, nor indeed before many amongst us, who have acted worse things, and that with the aggravation of acting them under a better religion; unless it could be fit to arraign one malefactor before another, who is himself a greater. I wish that, while we speak loud against those of the Romish church, we could at the same time inwardly abhor and detest their impieties, and yet imitate their discretion, and be ashamed that those sons of darkness should be so much *wiser in their generation*, than we that account ourselves such *children of light*. For be they what they will, it is evident that they manage things at an higher rate of prudence than to fear a change in their church-government every six months, or to be persuaded by any arguments to cut their throats with their own hands, or, amongst all their indulgences, to afford any to their implacable enemies.

My business at this time shall be to make the mercy of the present day an occasion of declaring our great unworthiness not of this only, but of all other mercies; and that by a



parallel instance; if so be our wickedness proves not too big for a parallel, and of that bulk, as to laugh at examples, and baffle all comparisons. For indeed our sins seem as much to surpass those of the Jews, the persons here up braided by God, as all men would judge it more monstrous and intolerable for a vineyard to answer the dresser's labour and expectation with a crop of thorns than with a vintage of wild grapes. The words that I have here fixed upon are a vehement complaint of God, uttered against the Jewish church and nation, his peculiar and most endeared people; and accordingly offer these two things to our consideration.

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I. The form and manner of the complaint.

II. The complaint itself.

I. And first for the form and manner of it. It runs in a pathetic, interrogatory exclamation; which way of expression, naturally and amongst men, importing in it surprise, and a kind of confusion in the thoughts of him who utters it, must needs be grounded upon that which is the ground and foundation of all surprise, which, I conceive, is reducible to these two heads:

1. The strangeness. 2. The indignity of any thing, when it first occurs to our apprehensions.

1. And first for the strangeness of it. Whatsoever falls out either above or beside the common trace of human observation, and so puts the reason upon new methods of discourse, is that which we call strange, and such as causes surprise; which is nothing else but a disturbance of the mind upon its inability to give a present account of the reason of what it sees first offered to it; from whence it is, that as a man comes still to know more, the strangeness of things to him grows less; and consequently nothing can be strange to him to whom nothing is unknown. But how then come we here to find God himself under a surprise, and omniscience, as it were, brought to a nonplus? Surely it could be no ordinary thing that should thus put an infinite wisdom upon making inquiries. Nor indeed was it. For could any thing be imagined more monstrous, and by all rational principles unresolvable, than upon a most rich and fertile soil, fenced and enclosed against all injuries from abroad, dressed and manured by the finger of God himself, and watered with all the influences of a propitious heaven; I say, could any thing be more prodigious, than in such a place to see a figtree bear a thistle, or the fruit of the bramble load the branches of the vine? This is a thing directly against all the principles of mere nature, though not encouraged by the assistance of art: and therefore even the God of nature seems to stand amazed at the unnatural irregularity of such a monstrous event. But,

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2. The other ground of such interrogatory exclamations is the unusual indignity of a thing: this being as great an anomaly in the morality of actions, as the former was in the nature of things; and therefore as that passion of the mind, raised by the strangeness of a thing, is properly called *wonder*, so that which commences upon this, is properly *indignation*.

It being a great trespass upon decency and ingenuity, and all those rules that ought to govern those intercourses of rational beings; which are all crossed, and even dissolved, by that one grand fundamental destroyer of society and morality, which is ingratitude. For society subsists by the mutual interchange of good offices, by which the wants and concerns of men are mutually supplied and served; that being the only thing that unites and keeps men together in civilized societies, who otherwise would range and ravin like bears or wolves, and never but to seize a greater prey.

Now ingratitude is the thing here exclaimed against with so much abhorrence; a passion that has all in it that wonder has, with the addition of some thing more; wonder resting merely in the speculation of things, this proceeding also to a practical aversation and flight from them. But since a sinner is no strange sight, nor can it pass for a wonder to see men wicked, what cannot be found in the bare nature of things must be sought for in their degree; and therefore it must needs be some superlative height of wickedness which drew from God this loud exclamation. What that is, will appear in the prosecution of the next thing, which is the complaint itself; for which there are these things to be considered.

1. The person complaining, who was God himself.
2. The persons complained of, which were his peculiar church and people.
3. The ground of this complaint, which was their unworthy and unsuitable returns made to the dealings of God with them.

4thly and lastly, The issue and consequent of it; which was the confusion and destruction of the persons so graciously dealt with, and so justly complained of.

Of each of which briefly in their order.

1. And first for the person complaining, God himself. It must be confessed, that according to the strict nature and reason of things, as he who knows all things cannot wonder, so neither can he who can do all things properly complain; weakness being cause of complaining, as ignorance is of wonder. Yet God is here pleased to assume the posture of both; and therefore the case must needs be extra ordinary. But how possible soever it may be for in finite power to complain, it is certainly impossible for infinite goodness to complain without a cause. So that we read the indubitable justness of the complaint in the condition of the person who makes it; a person transcendently wise, just, and merciful, who cannot be deceived in the measures he takes of things and persons, nor prevaricate with those measures, by speaking beside the proportion of what he judges. And after all, he it is that complains who has power enough to render all complaint needless; who has an omnipotence to repair to, and an outstretched arm to plead his cause in an higher dialect than that of words and fair expostulations. We see therefore the person here complaining, even the great and omnipotent God; and we may be sure, that where God is the plaintiff, no creature can, with either sense or safety, be the defendant.

The next thing to be considered are the persons here complained of; and they were the Jews, the peculiar and select people of God; a people that had no cause to complain, and therefore the more unfit to give any to be complained of. From the beginning of God's taking them into his care and patronage, they were fed and maintained at the immediate cost and charges of Heaven; they were dieted with miracles, with new inventions and acts of Providence, the course of nature itself still veiling to their necessities; the heaven, the sea, and all things, dispensing with the standing laws of their creation to do them service, in order to their serving of God. But it seems it was easier to fetch honey out of the bowels of the earth, to broach the rock, or draw rivers from a flint, than to draw obedience from them.

They were persons who wore all the marks of the particular, incommunicable kindnesses of Heaven: *God had not dealt so with any nation*, says David, [Psalm cxlvii. 20](#). They seemed as an exception from (or rather above) the common rule of Providence; a people whom God courted, espoused, and married, and, by a yet greater wonder, continued to court them even after marriage. God thought nothing too good for them to enjoy, nor thought they any thing too bad for themselves to commit. They were a people culled and chose out of the rest of the world; in short, they were, in some sense, a gathered congregation, whom God thus horribly complains of.

3. The third thing to be considered is the ground of this complaint raised against them; which was their unworthy, unsuitable returns made to the dealings of God with them. Which will appear, first, by considering God's dealing with them; and secondly, their dealing with God; and so, by confronting them both together, we shall give them all the advantage of contraries set off by nearness and comparison. We will begin with God's dealing with them, which consists of these three things.

1. That he committed his sacred word and oracles to them; so that when all the world round about them had no other religion than what they either derived from their own errors, or at best from their conjectures, these were taught by immediate and infallible revelation; neither confounding themselves in the notion of God's nature, so as to own a multiplicity of deities; nor yet of his worship, so as to serve him by absurd, and, what is worse, by impious practices, which yet the best and the most reputed of the gentiles placed all their devotion in. In sum, they had that *sure word of prophecy*, which was *able to make them wise to salvation*; while the neighbouring nations had such a religion, as neither represented them wise in this world, nor like to be saved in the next.

And yet, as pure and as divine as the Jewish worship was, it had many more ceremonies than ours; nor do we find any proviso for the abatement of the least of them, to gratify any tender conscience whatsoever; though yet the nature of God, who was to be worshipped, and of the souls of men, who were to pay him that worship, were the same then that they are now, and consequently apt to be helped or hindered by the same means: which one consideration is enough to cut the sinews of all the pitiful arguments that the nonconforming

comprehensive sages did, or do, or ever will produce. But we understand the men; they strike indeed at the church, but their aim is further, and, if God prevents not, their blow will follow it.

How this profane, atheistical age may rate things, I know not; but believe it, the accounts of England run high in the books of Heaven, for the religion which God has planted amongst us. A religion refined from all that superfluous dross which the Romish is generally and justly charged with; and yet so prudent in its economy and constitution, as not to leave itself wholly unprovided of decency in circumstantial, which are the necessary appendants of all human actions; and consequently being left to the arbitrement of every man's various fancy, would be so differing, loose, and extravagant, that should but a sober heathen view such a divine worship, he would certainly say, (as St. Paul speaks,) *were we not mad?* while with amazement he beheld one man paying his reverence to an infinite Majesty sitting, another expressing the same reverence (forsooth) with his hat on his head; postures which pass for affront and contumely even in our addresses to an earthly superior.

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But let the doctrine, discipline, and rituals of the church of England be searched to the bottom by rational and impartial heads, and then let them, if they please, produce any thing justly offensive to a conscience tender not to the degree of rebellion. God will one day reckon with us for the church privileges we enjoy, and for our religion, which is unquestionably the best, the purest, and the most primitive in the world; how ill soever it has been used by some, who were concerned upon more accounts than one to encourage it. In this respect therefore our case falls in with the Jews, that God has vouchsafed both them and us the greatest of blessings, the richest and most improveable of talents, even a pure, a clear, and an uncorrupted religion. God's regard to which (for ought I know) was the chief, if not the only cause of the mercy we commemorate this day.

2. As God planted his vineyard with this so generous a plant, so he was not wanting to refresh and influence it with the continual dews of his mercy, and the showers of his choicest blessings. The miracles of Egypt and the Red sea, the Jews' frequent deliverances from captivity, from the insolence of the Philistines and the Midianites, and from that scourge of nations, the Assyrians, were enough, not only to have argued, but even to have shamed them into the highest returns of gratitude and obedience.

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And has not God dealt as mercifully and as gloriously with these three nations? So that we are an island, not only encompassed with a sea of waters, but also surrounded with an ocean of mercies. From the day that God first vouchsafed us the settlement of the reformed religion under the reign of queen Elizabeth, how has he been like a *cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night*, both to guide and protect us in the profession of it? For can we forget the deliverance of eighty-eight, and those victorious mercies, more invincible than the armada designed to invade and enslave us; when the seas and winds had a command from Heaven to fight under the English colours, and to manifest the strength of God in our weakness?

Or can we pass over that never to be forgot blessing of this day, which brought to light those hidden and fatal works of darkness, that would have ruined both king and church, and the three estates at a blow; when that God, who humbles himself enough in be holding what is done upon the earth, was pleased to stoop yet lower, and to behold what was doing under it too; and so, by a mature providence, stepping in between the match and the fatal train, to catch us as it were a *brand out of the fire*, or rather, by the greater mercy of prevention, to keep the destructive element from kindling upon us; and thereby to give us both an opportunity and obligation of eternally celebrating the mercy of such a glorious rescue from a plot in all the parts of it so black and hideous, that the sober Papists themselves ever did, and do, and, I believe, ever will profess an utter abhorrence of it, how ready soever they may be to repeat it.

But the divine mercy has not took up here; it has delivered us from a blacker and a greater calamity; a calamity, the memory of which has even blown up the gunpowder treason itself; I mean the late horrid and for ever accursed rebellion, contrived, acted, and carried on by persons and principles worse, and more destructive to monarchy, than those of the Papists. For the crowns of Spain and of France thrive and flourish, for all the Popish religion settled in those kingdoms; but the sanctified actors of our late confusions were such as tore the crown from the king's head, and his head from his shoulders, and would, upon the same advantages, undoubtedly do the same again. The least finger of fanaticism bearing harder and heavier upon monarchy, than the whole loins of Popery: God deliver us from them both.

Now surely, by these miraculous instances of mercy, God would fain provoke us to such a degree of piety, as might prevent his justice from consigning us over to a relapse into the same sad effects of the same sins. For can we think that God detected and dashed the conspiracy of this day, only to enable the sons of luxury and ingratitude perpetually to conspire against him? Did he break the neck of the late rebellion, that we might transcribe their actings towards their king into our behaviour towards God? Did he deliver the sword into our hands, that we might thrust it into the bowels of his church? Did he scatter all those anti-monarchical sects of presbytery, independency, and anabaptism, and other fanatics, by whatsoever names they stand distinguished, and (such is their good fortune) in a fair way dignified too? I say, did he scatter all these locusts, that we might court their return, recall our old plagues, and fall back into our former Cromwellian confusions? If this be our lot, we must charge our misery upon none but ourselves: for God would have delivered, nay, actually has delivered us; but it seems, even in spite of providence and mercy itself, we are resolved not to be delivered.

3. The third course of God's dealing with the persons here complained of in the text was by judgments. It is possible that the most generous of plants, fixed in the richest soil, and visited with the kindest and most benign influence of sun and weather, may yet not

fructify, till they are pruned and cut, and rid of those superfluous branches and suckers which steal and intercept that juice and sap, which, according to the prime intention of nature, should pass into fruit. And therefore the great husbandman of souls takes this course with his spiritual vines, to add the pruning-hook of his judgments to the more gentle manurings of his mercy; and when watering will not do, to dig about them. And it is his last course; after which, if they still continue barren, comes the sentence of extirpation, positive and irreversible, *Cut them down, why cumber they the ground?*

Now that God has not been wanting to endeavour our reduction and fertility by these means also, we can call in many great and sad experiences to attest. For not to mention the sun of mercy, almost as soon as risen in the first reformation of religion, presently setting again in blood in the cruel reign of queen Mary; nor yet to mention the festivity of almost every succeeding prince's coronation, presently followed by a dismal sweeping plague, as if sent purposely to upbraid us with the mortality of our joys, by casting so sudden a cloud over our triumphs, and dashing our wine with our own tears: I say, not to insist upon these more remote instances of the divine judgments, let us cast our eyes upon those latter ones, much surpassing all the former. And here we shall see three kingdoms for some years bleeding by an unnatural civil war, weltering in their own blood, and wasted and spoiled by the fury of their own inhabitants; a calamity so universal, that, like a deluge, it involved all sorts, estates, and conditions of men; from the prince to the peasant; from him that wielded the sceptre, to him that held the plough. And this war we shall find concluded with the success of the rebel cause and army; which in the midst of peace continued upon the kingdom all the miseries of war; acting all the cruelties of banishments, imprisonments, sequestrations, and decimations upon all those that durst own the least loyalty to their prince or affection to the church.

And when it pleased Providence to blow over this storm in the happy restoration of both, it was not long before the destroying angel stretched forth his hand over us in that woful mortality, caused by a spreading devouring sickness, that ceased not to destroy and mow down thousands before it, without stay or stop; till at length it gave over, as it were, out of very weariness with killing.

And when we were still unconcerned, after all these blows falling so thick and heavy upon us, a fire, more dreadful than all, breaks forth upon the metropolis and glory of our nation, the great magazine of our strength and riches, and makes as great a mortality of houses, as the sickness had made of inhabitants.

And, lastly, when the growing impiety of the nation had baffled this judgment also, and brought us out of this fiery furnace with all our dross still about us, God commissions the enemy, the enemy whom he had so often delivered into our hands, to come and outbrave us at our very doors, and to fire those ornaments and bulwarks of our English nation even under our noses: a disgrace and a blot upon us not to be fetched out by the fire that burnt

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them, nor to be washed off by the whole ocean that carried them; and it is well that there followed not a destruction greater than the disgrace.

We have seen and felt what an angry God can do; and if we still sin on, and make new judgments necessary, so that God can neither fire, nor plague, nor fight us by sea or land out of our sins, what can be expected, but that he, who hitherto has been only a correcting, should, in the next place, be a *consuming fire*?

Having thus shewn how God dealt with his people, his vineyard, and his beloved inheritance, namely, by instruction, by mercies, and by judgments, (so that he might well make good this his saying, *What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done?*) and withal having shewn how parallel to those his proceedings with us have been, let us now come to see how both of us have dealt with God by way of return.

Three things the text remarks of them.

1. Great injustice and oppression, in [verse 7](#).
2. Great rapacity and covetousness, in [verse 8](#).
3. Great luxury and sensuality, in [verses 11, 12](#).

1. And first, God charges them with injustice and oppression; though a sin of all others least to be expected from them, that they, who had so lately groaned under the rod of oppression, should presently turn oppressors themselves; and that in the most cruel and inhuman instances of it, *neither judging the cause of the fatherless, nor supporting the widow*; as this prophet tells them in [chap. i. verse 23](#). It seems no plea *sub forma pauperis* could thrive or succeed in their courts: they had no commiseration for those who had suffered the same bondage and captivity, and smarted under the same tyranny with themselves.

We have had mercies, indeed great and glorious, in his majesty's restoration: but have those been any gainers by the deliverance who were the greatest losers by the war? No, (in a far different sense from that of the scripture,) *to him only that has shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly*. But if a man's loyalty has stript him of his estate, his interest, or relations, then, like the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, every one steps in before him.

We keep days of thanksgiving for our deliverance from the powder plot, and for his majesty's return, and the like; but do these experiments of God's goodness to us provoke ours to our brethren, our loyal, suffering, undone brethren? to whom the greatest kindness had been but the strictest justice. But such have been our methods of treating them, that we must expect the same declaration that God makes in [verse 7](#), that *he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry*; and it is well if it prove not a cry to Heaven for vengeance.

2. The second thing here charged by God upon his ungrateful people was their abominable covetousness. *Every one* (says the prophet [Isaiah, i. 23](#)) *loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards*: and here again he charges them for joining *house to house, and field to field*; and that deservedly, for the usual way of men's doing so is by their joining sin to sin, and extortion

to extortion: a course equally offensive to God, and grievous to man; it being no more possible that a nation should flourish when the wealth of it is grasped into a few hands, than that the body should thrive when the nutriment due to all the parts of it is gathered into two or three swelling wens or imposthumes. The imputation of covetousness, I well know, makes a great and a tragical noise, when it is maliciously and falsely cast upon a certain sort and profession of men, who (God knows) for much the greatest part of them have scarce any thing to be covetous of. But surely this is far more likely to be found amongst those who can raise great estates and families out of nothing, and transmit the fruits of their sin and rapine to their posterity.

How much covetousness endangered this nation, even in reference to this very business of the powder treason, those words of king James sufficiently demonstrate, who, considering how far the conspiracy had gone, and how near we were to ruin, and how narrowly we escaped it, is reported to have said with some heat, but more reason, “that this horrid plot might have been earlier discovered, had not some of his officers loved their money or their own persons much more than their country.” And the truth is, considering how gross the action was, being a conveyance of so much wood and so many barrels to such a certain place, adding withal the number of the persons engaged in the plot, it is a miracle it was not searched into and found out before. I am sure, upon this and many other accounts, we have cause to adore the truth of that divine aphorism of that eminent prelate and great martyr, both for king and church, archbishop Laud, who lived and acted up to all that he said, even to the sealing it with his last blood. “The Lord (says he) deliver us from covetous and fearful men: the covetous will betray us for money, the fearful for security.”

3. And lastly, the third thing charged by God upon those unworthy persons spoken of in the text, was their excessive luxury and sensuality; pursued by them even to the degree of a trade or a profession: for in the [11th verse of this 5th chapter](#), we have them *rising up early, and sitting up late at their cups*; such painful and laborious drunkards were they; and to the clattering of their cups we have the additional music of the harp and viol, in the [12th verse](#), where we find them feasting and gratifying all their senses, till they had utterly silenced their reason; and, which is the natural consequent of voluptuousness, wholly abandoned all thoughts of Providence; as it is in the same verse, *not regarding the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands*.

It is like they might spend their time, as many amongst us do nowadays, in dressing and adorning themselves, in preparing for the great and weighty work of balls and dances, and then in shewing their little wit, by scoffing at God, and goodness, and all religion.

But did God vouchsafe such transcendent blessings either to them or us, only to be improved into the food and fuel of intemperance? Did God keep off our enemies by sea and land, that we might compass both to satisfy our unruly appetites? There have been rumours and fears of French armies, but they are the French fashions and the French vices that have

invaded, and conquered, and spoiled our land; while every one almost makes this his sole business, employment, and glory, to do wickedly, and to *fare deliriously every day*: a trade which is sure to go on apace, though all others languish and decay.

Such surely are neither the persons nor practices that moved God to do such great things for us; who fills no man's coffers only to furnish him out in every new vain dress or ridiculous fashion. For, as St. Paul says, *does God take care for oxen?* So we may be sure, that much less does he take such care for apes and monkeys, for goats and swine; for such as are good for nothing, but either mimically to imitate their neighbours' fooleries, or to immerse themselves in all kind of lascivious and debauched living. But if these be the courses we are resolved upon, we should do well to strike this and such other festival days of public deliverance out of our rubrick, which stand there only to blush for our guilt, and upbraid us for our ingratitude.

Thus at length I have given you some account of the grounds of that loud and heavy complaint here commenced by God himself against his peculiar darling people; namely, their unworthy, unsuitable returns made to God's dealings with them; that when he endeavoured to inform and guide them with the word of his eternal truth, to endear them with his mercies, and to discipline and reclaim them with his judgments, they were so incorrigible, and even impenetrable by all these methods, that they let loose the reins to all the filth and baseness that the corruption of their nature could engulf them in; defying heaven with their clamorous oppressions, burdening the earth with their rapines and extortions; and lastly, abusing themselves and all the good creatures of God with their insatiable luxury and intemperance.

And now, if we think that the injured goodness of God could, after all this, satisfy itself with bare complaints, we may conclude, that it had something else to complain of besides their wickedness, even his own justice; which was too far concerned to put up such provocations, without much another kind of revenging the injuries done to his abused mercy. And therefore we have God here come to his final resolution; namely, to destroy and ruin those vile persons; which is the sad issue and consequent of the foregoing complaint, and the

Fourth and last thing proposed by us to be handled. This dreadful proceeding of God with them we have fully set down in the [5th and 6th verses](#): *And now go to, says God; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it.* In a word, he would utterly bereave them of all their defences, and expose them to all the miseries of a defenceless condition.

Now the defences of a nation are twofold: 1. Its laws; 2. Its military force: in the destruction of both of which, history tells us how miserably the Jewish nation suffered, till at length,

overpowered with continual invasions, their commonwealth and government was quite dissolved.

1. And first for their laws, (which in every government are as the sinews and nerves, binding together all the parts and members of the body politic;) the execution of them amongst the Jews was at length wholly neglected; so that they stood only to upbraid the weakness of the magistrate, and as trophies of a victorious reigning impiety, much too strong for them: which laws, had they had their full course and career, must have borne down all disorder before them, and made *judgment run down like a river, and righteousness like a mighty stream*. But they, by new unheard of methods of policy, set themselves only to suppress their laws, and to secure themselves by the rotten short arts of connivance, winking at the grossest disorders so long, till they had even winked themselves blind; and indulged wickedness into that bulk and height, that, over topping authority, and scorning all control, it was itself only a law to itself.

2. And then, in the next place, this introduced a dissolution of their military power; no persons ever growing into a fitness for war under a licentious and ungoverned peace: whereupon we find them run down by every potent adversary. The Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Grecians, and the Romans, all successively vanquished and enslaved them.

And then they found that neither their insulting over their poor brethren, their joining house to house, nor their chanting to the harp and viol, their merry meetings and profuse feasting, their gaudy dresses and damning oaths, could enable them to look an active, hardy, and resolved enemy in the face.

And now, as the walls and safeguard of a nation are its laws and military force, so upon a failure of them ensue two fatal and destructive evils.

1. A growth of sects and factions; for as soon as God had pulled up the hedge of his vineyard, we find it in the sixth verse of this chapter overrun with briars and thorns; things not only useless, but hurtful; such as, instead of refreshing or feeding the husbandman, only rend and tear his flesh; and not content only to grow, will at length aspire also to govern; it being natural to the vilest bramble to affect royalty and supremacy.

The Jewish church and nation was at length pestered with Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, and Essenians, all rending the unity of the church, and troubling the peace of the state, much like that rabble of sects and names nowadays amongst us, the blessed effect of the late bloody reformation; which how they swarm, and to what a languishing condition they have brought this once flourishing kingdom, every judicious person sees, and every pious laments. And, which is the greatest mischief of all, we still take pretences of conscience for cur rent from those, who had conspired and rebelled against the government, murdered one king, and banished another, and to this day have not declared the least repentance for



any of all those things which they have done. But since our physicians think the best way of curing a disease is to pamper it, the Lord in mercy prepare the kingdom to suffer what he by miracle only can prevent.

2. The other mischief consequent upon God's pulling down the wall of his vineyard, was its being *trodden down*. It was first to be choked up by a growing evil from within, and next to be laid waste by a force from abroad. The non-execution of laws caused the first, and the failure of power occasioned the next. How deep the Jews drank of this cup has been already hinted, even till the whole nation was *drunk with God's fury*: and if so, could any thing prepare them for and expose them to a more dreadful fall; and yet they had experience of as great mercies from God, as ever this day produced to England; and I am confident they did not (because indeed they could not) abuse them more.

Now what rational ground we can have to presume upon greater kindness and forbearance than God vouchsafed his own vineyard, I believe it will pose any of us to tell. We have lived under a long sunshine, and God knows that it has ripened our sins apace. Nor have the judgments used by him been hitherto able to reduce us, though they have been so various, that now there remains not many more behind; but yet those which do remain are such, that, if God brings them upon us, they will indeed leave no work for any more. In the meantime, it is surely our grand concernment to prevent the divine justice, before the last and fatal sentence goes out against us; and so, breaking off our crying national sins by a commensurate national repentance, to reconcile ourselves to our great Judge; even that Judge, who has mercy for relenting sinners, but repays the obstinate, and those who hate him, to their face.

*To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen*



## A SERMON

ON

### JAMES III. 16.

*For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*

**O**F the sins and ill qualities that the corruption of man's nature has poisoned and polluted his mind with, there is none of greater malignity and baseness than envy. For the condemnation of which, we need not bring it to the bar of religion and Christianity; there being enough to sentence and condemn it from bare reason and philosophy.

For the prosecution of the words I shall do these four things.

I. I shall shew what envy is, and wherein the nature of it does consist.

II. What are the grounds and causes of it.

III. What are its effects and consequences. And

IV. And lastly, make some use and improvement of the whole.

And first for the first of these; what envy is, and wherein the nature of it does consist. And for this we shall find, that moralists generally give us this description of it; that it is a depraved affection or passion of the mind, disposing a man to hate or malign another for some good or excellency belonging to him, which the envious person judges him unworthy of, and which for the most part he wants himself. Or yet more briefly; envy is a certain grief of mind conceived upon the sight of another's felicity, whether real or supposed: so that we see that it consists partly of hatred and partly of grief. In respect of which two passions, and the proper actings of both, we are to observe, that as it shews itself in hatred, it strikes at the person envied; but as it affects a man in the nature of grief, it recoils, and does execution upon the envier; both of them are hostile affections, and vexatious to the breast which harbours them. Acts of love indeed have naturally something of pleasure still attending them, and please the mind, while they proceed from it. But no man perfectly enjoys himself while he hates another; hatred being a quality that sours the whole soul, and puts all the faculties of it, as it were, into a posture of offence. It is really war begun, and commonly so, before it is proclaimed; it gives the first charge, and strikes the first stroke in all acts of hostility. And can there be any thing of enjoyment in all this? A battle certainly can be no present pleasure, though it should end in a victory. And during a man's actual pursuit of his hatred, he is much in the same condition, restless and unquiet; his head contriving, and his hands laying about them to do the hated person all the mischief he can: in a word, he lives in the fire, fighting and fencing, and forced to carry on a constant opposition. For hatred being too active and mercurial a passion to lie still, never takes up with the bare theory of mischief, with sluggish thoughts and secret grudges, but, as opportunity serves, will certainly be doing;



and till such opportunity falls in with it, which frequently it does not, it must needs afflict, and grate, and feed upon the man himself, and make him as miserable as he wishes others.

And thus hatred having done its part towards the disturbance of the mind in which it is, the other passion of grief is hereupon presently set on work: for when any of the other passions are defeated about their respective objects or operations, then this passion immediately comes upon the stage, and takes its turn to act. So that, when a man cannot vent his rage outwardly, he is sure to grieve and mourn, and bleed inwardly; like a wretch falling on his own sword, because he cannot thrust it into the body of his enemy. This is the nature of envy, always exerting itself in and by these two afflicting passions; first, in the way of hatred carrying its mischievous influence abroad, and then in the way of grief playing the tyrant at home; but whether in the one or in the other, guilt and sadness are its inseparable companions: it being utterly impossible upon all principles, both of nature and religion, for an envious person to have either a good conscience or a cheerful mind.

But to shew the malignity of this ill quality yet further, it is observable, that in all or most of the other passions of the mind, there is, as to the general nature of them, an indifference to good or evil; as being, under that consideration, determined to neither. Thus, for instance, we find it, in the forementioned affections of grief and hatred, taken singly and by themselves, and likewise in fear, anger, despair, and the like; of all which there is none but what may be lawful in the respective actings of each, provided they pitch upon right objects, and proceed in a due manner: for a man may grieve, hate, fear, be angry, and despair of the accomplishment of this or that design, without transgressing any of the rules of morality. So that there may be such things as an honest grief, hatred, fear, anger, and despondency, as we have said, if duly placed and directed; but notwithstanding all this, there can be no such thing in nature as an honest and a lawful envy; but it is intrinsically evil, and imports in it an essential obliquity, not to be taken off or separated from it. For though I have shewn, that envy was made up of hatred and grief, and have since also affirmed, that these two affections may be good and lawful in their respective actings; yet we are to remember, that this is so only when they act singly, and withal upon due objects; but (when by being combined together, and pitched upon a wrong object, they both make up the passion of envy,) they then receive thereby such a different formality and nature, as stamps them absolutely evil, and that so unchangeably such, as no consideration or circumstances whatsoever can possibly render them otherwise; which shews, and proves too, an original necessary disagreeableness between envy and the soul of man: for nothing can agree with this, which consists not with its innocence; and for a man to be envious and innocent too, is contradictory and impossible. And this, by the way, will serve also to demonstrate to us what affections or passions are natural to the soul of man, and what is unnatural. And thus much for the nature of envy, shewing what it is, and wherein it does consist. I proceed now to the

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Second thing proposed, viz. to shew what are the grounds and causes of envy; and these are two fold.

1. Either on the part of the person envying; or,
2. On the part of the person envied.

And first for those of the first sort, we may reckon these.

1. Great malice and baseness of nature. In which I am forced to use a general word, not being able to give it a particular and more expressive name. But the thing which I mean and design by it, is such a temper of mind, as makes men for the most part love mischief for mischiefs sake; and though they serve no real interest, and reap no advantage by the hurt they do, yet it is so peculiarly suitable to their ill nature and constitution to do and to wish it, that the work itself is its own wages and reward. Just as it is observed in some beasts of prey; which, having filled their ravenous appetites, so that hunger can prompt them to no further cruelty, yet out of mere savageness shall tear and destroy whatsoever they meet with, and take pains to kill, though they leave it presently, when they have done.

It is a common saying, that there is no disputing of the reason of facts; forasmuch as each man's particular fancy and humour determine him to like this and dislike that: and so it is in the pleasures of the mind; some men affect this, and wonder that others hate it; and they on the other side wonder as much, that any one can hate what they so much love. But as philosophy teaches that all wonder springs from an ignorance of the causes of things; so this proceeds from a particular inexperience, and want of observing matters of daily occurrence. In which we shall see many things, of which we can give no clear account, or reason, from the common principles of human nature: but they seem to be some of those irregular, monstrous productions, which the general corruption of it preternaturally shoots out into; and which, not keeping the stated course and road of human nature, must not be measured by the usual actings and inclinations of it. Which being so, why should he, whose temper inclines him to be gentle, candid, and beneficial to all who come within his converse, be at all surprised to find another fierce, malicious, and shrewd to every one whom he has to do with; any more than a dove, which feeds upon corn and other seeds, should wonder that a crow or a raven can feed so heartily upon carrion? For every particular temperament has its particular pleasure. And the mind of a Nero will make him hiss, and sing, and play, and enjoy himself as much in beholding the bravest city in the world all in a flame, as others could rejoice at the sight of a triumph and the glories of a victory.

Now this is the reason that some dispositions do really delight themselves in mischief; and love to see all men about them miserable. It is that ἐπιχαίρεκακία, as the Greeks call it, that vile quality that makes them laugh at a cross accident, and feast their eyes and their thoughts with the sight of any great calamity: and indeed, morally speaking, they cannot do otherwise. It is meat and drink to them to see others starve; and their own clothes seem then to sit warmest upon them, when they behold others ready to perish with nakedness and





cold; like Ætna, never hotter, than when surrounded with snow. Now this disposition, this blessed, human, Christian disposition, (to express a thing contrary to nature by words as contrary to itself,) is the very groundwork and first foundation-stone of envy.

2. The second ground or cause of envy is an unreasonable grasping ambition. For the design of the envious person is not only to obtain, but to engross all honour and greatness to himself. He thinks he can never trade to his advantage, unless he can have the monopoly of every thing he values. Other kinds of ambition indeed will hardly brook any thing above them, but this envious ambition will endure nothing considerable about it. It is remarked of Alexander as a very great fault, and, in truth, of that nature, that one would wonder how it could fall upon so great a spirit; namely, that he would sometimes carp at the valorous achievements of his own captains. *Suae demptum laudi existimans, quicquid cessisset alienae*, says the historian: because he thought, that whatsoever praise was bestowed upon another, was took from him. A great meanness certainly; and enough to make the conqueror himself as much the object of men's pity, as his conquests could be of their envy.

Now this is directly the temper of the envious person, whose ambition is not merely ambition, but an odd compound of ambition and covetousness too: for he would have all to himself, and not so much as a good word must fall beside him; so that whatsoever commendation is given to another, is looked upon as an invasion of his property, and a reproach to his person: and to do any thing excellent or praiseworthy, is to pass an affront upon him not to be put up. And therefore he bids the whole world, as it were, stand off, while he alone puts himself upon every public performance, catches at every occasion of popularity, and thrusts himself into every man's business; he puffs, and he blows, and he swells, as if the whole world were not enough to afford him elbow-room; for it will not content such an one to be the prime, unless he be also the only man. In a word, he would needs be every thing, did not the same ill quality certainly make him fit for nothing.

But then, if this temper comes also to be backed with interest and power, and the favour of great ones, how grievous and intolerable is it to all persons of modesty and sobriety? What a bluster does it make in all places? Such an one lives in the world like a continual storm, blowing down all before him: and men (better than himself) must be willing to lie prostrate under his feet, and account it an honour (forsooth) to be trampled upon, and made a pedestal only for him to get up by and ride.

But surely it concerns all wellwishers to society to oppose and pursue such an one, as they would a wild boar, for his design is the same, which is to waste and spoil and forage all that is about him. Society neither shall nor can be saved by the parts and virtues of others, till such an obstacle to both be stript of all power, and removed out of the way; who is to the body politic like an enormous excrescence or great wen to the natural; drawing the proper aliment and juice of all the parts to itself, and so feeding upon and supporting itself

by the bane and ruin of the whole. Now this disposition may pass for a second ground of envy.

3. Another cause of envy is an inward sense of a man's own weakness and inability to attain what he desires and would aspire to. I do not say, that envy universally and always proceeds from hence, or supposes this for the cause of it, but generally and for the most part it does: nor does this carry in it the least contrariety to what I said before, in making ambition one of the causes of envy; for upon a due estimate of the qualities that affect the mind of man, we shall find that no minds are weaker than the haughty and ambitious; much like the uppermost branches of trees, lofty but slight, and much more easily broke, than those which they overtop.

Now nothing stirs up envy more than a despair of being what the envied person is; and that despair is founded upon a man's consciousness of his not being able to reach the same pitch of perfection: and this consciousness sticks so close to the mind, that for all a man's flattering himself, and his boasting to others, yet he can neither boast nor flatter it away; but that it is a perpetual check to his spirits, and will be sure to keep him under in the inmost judgment he passes upon himself. Some have observed, that there is no creature whatsoever but by a kind of natural instinct knows its match; and no doubt, by consequence, its superior and overmatch too. And when a man knows this by an impartial comparison of himself with his rival, (the inward apprehensions of the soul being generally impartial and true, what disguise soever they may put on in men's carriage and expressions,) upon such a comparison, I say, he sinks and sneaks inwardly; and weighing himself in the balance with the other, quickly sees which scale rises and which falls. Sight and sense are his conviction; and in such cases men seldom or never dissemble with themselves. And this inward intimate sense of a man's own impotence, I affirm to be one ground of envy, and a principal one too. In a word, a man is envious, because his desires are vast and immoderate, and he finds them cramped and stinted by the bounds which nature has put to his abilities. He would fain rise, but he finds something within that pulls him back, and stakes him down; and therefore he casts an evil eye upon others, because he finds such poor entertainment for it in himself.

4. The fourth and last cause of envy that I shall assign, is idleness; for this often makes men envy the high offices, honours, and accomplishments of others. They will not be at the pains to fit themselves for preferment, and yet malign those who have it for their fitness, and owe that fitness to their pains. No, they would lie still and be great, sleep or play and be learned. Honours and dignities must come to their bedside, wait the time of their rising, (forsooth,) and even court their acceptance. But nature and providence has cast the course of things much otherwise; and honour and greatness will wait upon none but such as first wait upon them; which men must not think to do by lazing and sleeping; for as wisdom generally brings men to honour, so study and labour must bring them to wisdom, and the way to be wise is to consult their pillow less. Industry, for the most part, opens the way to



preferment, but always to improvement; and it is the sweat of the brow that entitles it to the laurel. And therefore Caius Marius, a person of a plebeian extraction, but one who by his valour and labour had made himself the envy of the Roman nobility, defends himself against them in his speech to the people with great reason. *Invident*, says he, *honori meo; ergo invideant labori, innocentiae, periculis etiam meis, quoniam per haec illum cepi*. In like manner one man perhaps envies another's greatness or reputation; but why then does he not also envy his labour, his abstinence, his night-watches, and all his other severities, which were the proper ways and means by which he acquired it? If men would be but true to themselves, in employing their parts, their time, and opportunities, they would probably have no provocation to envy their superiors; for this would be the direct way to keep them from having any, and to make them as great and eminent as the greatest. But their idle hours, or rather years, their cups and their sports, their gossiping visits and vain courtships, not suffering them to exert those faculties which God and nature had endowed them with, are the only things that keep them low; and being so, they look upon such as ascend, and get into a region above them, like so many black clouds riding over their heads, and by a dark malign shade always obscuring and eclipsing them; though the true cause of all such eclipses is from men themselves standing in their own light.

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But because I have stated envy upon idleness as one cause of it, we ought by all means to note the difference between envy and emulation; which latter is a brave and a noble thing, and quite of another nature, as consisting only in a generous imitation of something excellent; and that such an imitation as scorns to fall short of its copy, but strives, if possible, to outdo it. The emulator is impatient of a superior, not by depressing or maligning another, but by perfecting himself. So that while that sottish thing envy sometimes fills the whole soul, as a great dull fog does the air; this on the contrary inspires it with a new life and vigour, whets and stirs up all the powers of it to action. And surely that which does so, (if we also abstract it from those heats and sharpnesses that sometimes by accident may attend it,) must needs be in the same degree lawful and laudable too, that it is for a man to make himself as useful and accomplished as he can.

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Having thus shewn the causes of envy on the part of him that envies, let us in the next place see the causes of it on his part also that is envied. Where in the first place we are to observe, that it is always caused by something either good or great; for no man is envied for his failures, but his perfections. Envy sucks poison out of the fairest and the sweetest flowers, and, like an ill stomach, converts the best nutriment into the worst and rankest humours. So that if we would give in an exact catalogue of all the motives of envy, we must reckon up all the several virtues, ornaments, and perfections, both internal and external, that the nature of man is capable of being ennobled with. But I shall only mention some of the principal: as,

1. Great abilities and endowments of nature.

2. The favour of princes and great persons.
3. Wealth, riches, and prosperity. And
4. And lastly, a fair credit, esteem, and reputation in the world. And,

First, for the first of these; great natural parts and abilities usually provoke men's envy. God is pleased to send some into the world better furnished and more liberally endowed with the gifts of nature than others, with a quicker apprehension, a further and a deeper reach, and generally a greater fitness for business and weighty affairs than others; which qualifications, as they set them above the common level of mankind, so they make them to be maligned and struck at by most below them; for let a man stand never so low, he can yet shoot at him that stands higher; much as it is with the lower parts of the world, the earth and the sea, which, not being able to vie with the upper and nobler parts of it, the heavens, for brightness, quit scores with them at least by obscuring them with mists and exhalations.

Envy makes a man think another of greater faculties only a continual blemish to himself. He thinks his candle cannot shine in the presence of the other's sun; that is, in truth, he is angry with God for not making him better, and wiser, and stronger. He expostulates the supposed injuries of his creation, and questions his Maker for not coming up to his measures. For while envy spits its venom directly at men, much of it falls obliquely upon God himself; and while it quarrels with the effects of his goodness towards others, does by consequence blaspheme the cause.

So that we see how it strikes both at God and man with the same blow; in which, though God will be sure to maintain his own honour, yet it is seldom in the power of men to secure theirs; many having had but too frequent and sad cause to complain of the very bounties of nature towards them, that it made them too excellent to be safe and happy; so hard is it for any one to keep what another thinks it his interest to take away; according to that man's case, who, while he was rescuing from being drowned, had a ring spied upon his finger, which quickly procured him another death.

2. A second provocative of men's envy is the favour of princes and great persons; which yet, one would think, no envy should presume to control: for the grace of God and the favour of princes are absolute and unaccountable, and so far from being founded upon merit, that for the most part they serve instead of it, and are never more liberal than where they find none at all. Princes claim a sovereignty in their affection, as well as in their office and condition.

Nevertheless envy will be interposing its thwarting, countermanding power even here also, shutting up the breasts, and tying up the hands of princes, so that they must neither give nor do any thing but by law; and envy must give that law. Whereupon, if a prince casts an eye of favour upon any person of worth, and parts, and fitness for public service, if such an one commences favourite one day, envy shall vote him an evil counsellor the next; and then the public good and the rights of the subject run all presently to wreck, till the envious

person steps into his place. Merit is an unpardonable piece of popery, with respect to men as well as to God, and to the rewards of this world as well as of the next.

But if, on the other side, a prince shall think fit to cast his eye downwards, and by the shine and warmth of his favour draw up some earthly, ignoble vapour to the upper region, and there make it glisten like a star, envy shall never cease till it brings this down also; and then, though it is a pleasure to most eyes to view a star falling, yet none look after it when it is fallen.

So that we see, that whether sovereignty would serve itself by preferring men of sufficiency, or divert and sport itself by advancing men of none, envy equally protests and plants its engines against both; neither allowing sovereign rulers (who yet are men, and sometimes not without the infirmities of men) meet helps and ministers to govern by, nor so much as an illustrious simpleton sometimes to refresh themselves with; which is very hard and severe usage certainly, especially since it has been always looked upon as one of the most allowed, uncontested royalties of princes, to make their will the sole rule and reason of their kindness, to dispense their benefactions as they please, and, in a word, to be as free and arbitrary as fortune herself, by bestowing their favours upon such as she usually bestows hers; not the wisest always in the world.

3. A third ground or motive of envy is from the wealth, riches, or plenties of another. No man willingly would be poor, and no envious person would have another rich; every one who is remarkably so being commonly looked upon but as a kind of injury to all the poor ones about him; not that he does or ever did them any injury, but that by being rich, he is reckoned one himself. For whosoever has a great deal to lay up, will be always an intolerable grievance to him who has nothing to spend; and to look upon a full bag, and to have nothing to do with it, is no small mortification to such a one. The learned Verulam observes, that diseases arising from emptiness are generally the most dangerous, and most hardly cured; and amongst the diseases of the mind, envy, grounded upon domestic penury, is certainly of the same nature; especially where a neighbouring opulence shews what the remedy is, but not how it may be had; like the thirst of Tantalus, where the thing thirsted for was near enough, and yet out of reach too. And in such a case envy will be sure to work and boil up to a more than ordinary height, while the envious person frets, and raves, and swells at the plenties and affluence of his abounding neighbour, and (as I may so express it) is even ready to burst with another's fulness.

What made the Devil (the grand exemplar of envy) so much malign Job, but the bounties of Providence to him in a large estate, great revenues, and a flourishing family; and all of them watched over and guarded by the wakeful eye and the powerful hand of him who gave them? And no doubt the Sabeans and Chaldeans, with the rest of his good neighbours, (who did such terrible execution upon all that he longed to him,) were acted and led on by the same spirit. They could not brook the splendour and greatness of so potent and (as they

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thought) overgrown a neighbour. He was an eyesore to them upon the throne, but (for all his noisome ulcers) none at all when they saw him upon the dunghill.

What made that wretch Ziba accuse his lord and master to David, (a judge after Ziba's own heart?) The accusation indeed charged treason upon Mephibosheth; but whatsoever the treason was, it was only his land which was the traitor: for when his envious accuser had once swallowed that, the accusation was at an end presently, and *poor* Mephibosheth quickly became *innocent* Mephibosheth.

In fine, if the envious person be poor and beggarly, he would have all about him as arrant beggars as himself; but if rich, he would have all beggars but himself; like Gideon's fleece, filled with the dew of heaven, and every thing else dry about it; so that wheresoever you see any one of a plentiful fortune and large possessions, you are not at all to wonder, if you also see such an one maligned, envied, and pursued with all imaginable spite and rancour by some pitiful malecontent or other, who perhaps could never call so much land his own as might serve to bury him when dead, and much less suffice to maintain him while alive. And it is too well known to all the world, not to be justly detested by it, that there is a certain profession of men who shall never cease to be maligned and persecuted, while there is any thing of revenue either to support the dignity of their function, or procure a common respect to their persons; but they shall be followed with all the odious, false, and base imputations of pride, covetousness, and luxury, still rattling about their ears, and whatsoever else the envy of a gaging avarice and a domineering insolence can belch out against them. But after all, I would gladly learn wherein this monstrous pride and covetousness of the church shews itself. Why, in this, that the ministers of it are not yet clothed in rags or sackcloth; that the church itself is neither for naked gospels<sup>6</sup> nor naked evangelists; and that her poor clergy can just (or very hardly) find enough to pay taxes and other public duties, and yet make a shift to keep themselves from quite starving or begging afterwards. This, this is the pride and covetousness of our clergy. And then, lastly, for their luxury, that will be found (if at all) in their not being willing to lick the crumbs at the end of their rich neighbour's table, and much less under it; that they scorn to sneak here and there for a dinner, or to beg their daily bread of any one but of God himself.

This, I say, is the real and true account of all these loud and impudent clamours made by envy and atheism, popery and puritanism, against the English clergy. And the truth is, that as long as that small remainder of land belonging to the church shall continue yet untorn from her, and as long as there shall be those about her (as there will ever be very many) who will never think that they themselves have enough, the church and clergy of England shall always be inveighed against and struck at, as having too much.

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6 See a vile book so entitled, and reflecting upon the clergy, though (to the shame of the author) written by a clergyman.

But fourthly, the fourth and last grand motive and ground of envy that I shall mention is, a man's having a fair reputation and name in the world; a thing upon which envy has always a cross and malign aspect: though surely nothing in nature can be imagined less liable to any rational exception, than for a man of merit to be praised and commended, that is, to have a few good words sprinkled upon him without offence to any one; and that fame, which is nothing but air and voice, should not be able to raise such storms in any breast whatsoever. But experience has declared it much otherwise, and that some men can hear the applauses of none but themselves, but with the utmost indignation and impatience; nay, so boundless and unreasonable are they, that they would even engross the vogue of the whole world, and confine the very popular breath, and unlimited, boundless freedom of men's tongues to their own persons. Such an one perhaps is hated by his neighbour to the very death. And what, I pray, may be his fault? Why, he is generally well spoken of, the world gives him the character of a virtuous, a just, or a discreet person; and this the envious wretch thinks casts a dark shadow upon himself, who never reckons himself so fine, as when he plumes and decks himself with the spoils of his brother's reputation, and can refresh his base mind in all companies with malicious, reproachful stories of him; often repeating and improving what the malice of report has brought to him to be commented and enlarged upon by his own more malicious invention. Nay, that very worth and virtue which deservedly draws after it the highest panegyrics from some, often proves matter of the bitterest satires from others; a very odd and strange thing, I confess; but envy will easily unriddle the strangeness, and take off the wonder. The due consideration of all which has founded the truth of a saying much more significant, I own, than believed, and more believed than practised, namely, that he of all men lives the safest who lies the closest; and that none are so much out of the reach of the world, as those who are most out of the view of it too. For what is every step into the public, but a further advance into danger? an engaging in fresh troubles and contentions, and a drawing after one those eyes, which, like the basilisk, kill whatsoever they look upon, if but capable of worth enough to be looked to death by them. It is not safe for any one to be much commended, to be borne upon the wings of fame, and ride in triumph upon the tongues of men; for the tongues of some do but provoke the teeth of more; and men, we know, do much more heartily detract than they use to commend. And thus I have shewn four of the chief motives of envy; for I never pretended to recount or rip them up all: but yet, if I should endeavour to make such an attempt, and to comprise them all in one general representation, I think I might very properly give it you in this one word, that every thing will make a man to be envied, which shall set him above being pitied.

I come now to the third general head proposed for the handling of the words; which is, to shew the effects and consequences of envy, expressed by *confusion, and every evil work*.

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The proper and grand effect then of envy, we see, is confusion; and this also is twofold, upon the account of a twofold relation. 1. To the envious man himself. And 2. To those who are envied and maligned by him. And,

First of all, this ill quality brings confusion and calamity upon the envious person himself, who cherishes and entertains it; and, like the viper, gnaws out the bowels which first conceived it. It is indeed the only act of justice that it does, that the guilt it brings upon a man it revenges upon him too, and so torments and punishes him much more than it can afflict or annoy the person who is envied by him, We know what the poet says of envy; and it is with the strictest truth, without the least hyperbole, that Phalaris's brazen bull, and all the arts of torment, invented by the greatest masters of them, the Sicilian tyrants, were not comparable to those that the tyranny of envy racks the mind of man with. For it ferments and boils in the soul, putting all the powers of it into the most restless and disorderly agitation. It lies at the heart like a worm, always gnawing and corroding, and piercing it with a secret invisible sting and poison; it even changes the way of man's ordinary conversation, sours his behaviour, sharpens and envenoms his discourse, and very often proceeds so far as to leave its marks upon his very countenance, and the habit of his body, making that pale and pining, of a ghastly look and a declining constitution; the livery which is heretofore bestowed upon Brutus and Cassius, a livery every way suited to the worthy service it had engaged those wretches in. And now does not this remarkably shew the peculiar unreasonableness and sottishness of this vice? For there are few other vices but prevail upon men upon the account of some supposed pleasure, as that they afford some short gratification to their sensuality, or at least bring with them something of profit or emolument; but he who will be envious, can design nothing but to make himself miserable, because he sees another happy; he must resolve to be dejected and cast down, whensoever he sees his neighbour prosperous, and as the poet describes Envy, *ready to weep for this very cause, that she could see nothing to be wept at: Vixque tenet lacrymas, quia nil lacrymabile cernit*. We need not seek for arguments to dissuade a man from being envious upon the score of charity to his neighbour, but even of love and mercy to himself. Let him but be prevailed upon not to be his own tormentor, his own executioner, and his envy will be at an end. Let not his neighbour's rest break his sleep. Let not his friend's for tune or reputation make him out of love with himself, and neglect his own. For why may not I come in as a sharer, instead of being a maligner of his joy and felicity? Forasmuch as there is a real pleasure in the congratulation of another's good; the very society of joy redoubling it: so that while it lights directly upon my friend, it rebounds upon myself; and the brighter his candle burns, the more easily will it light mine. Whensoever the Romans conquered an enemy, it was indeed the general himself only who was said to triumph, but the whole army and all the people equally rejoiced. But the envious person will bear no part in the festivals of a public mirth: he shuts himself up and snarls, while others laugh and sing. And if all the world were of this temper, it would

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be an useless (which yet has ever been accounted the noblest) property of good, that it naturally spreads and diffuses itself abroad. And therefore I shall say no more of such a person but this; that he who maligns and envies others, is, of all men living, least to be envied himself.

In the next place we are to consider the effects of envy, in respect of the object of it, or the person envied; and these may be reduced to the following three.

1. A busy, curious inquiry, or prying into all the concerns of the person envied and maligned; and this, no doubt, only as a step or preparative to those further mischiefs, which envy assuredly drives at. For most certain it is, that no man inquires into another man's concerns, or makes it his business to acquaint himself with his privacies, but with a design to do him some shrewd turn or other. Such an eye is never idle, but always looking about to see where a man lies open to a blow, and accordingly to direct the hand to take a sure stroke. It is withal an indefatigable teller and hearer of base stories. It is said of the priests and scribes, (who bore so cruel an envy to our Saviour for the acceptance he found amongst the people,) that they were almost continually sending forth spies, that they might catch him in his words, [Luke xx. 20](#). And it is this blessed quality, forsooth, that so insinuates into families, that puts them upon hiring servants to betray their masters, and inveigling one friend, if possibly they can, to supplant another: it is this that listens at doors and windows, that catches at every breath or whisper that is stirring; so that it will concern the person envied to be still upon his strictest guard, having an enemy so constantly upon the watch. Watching, for the most part, imports hostility, and no man observes the motions of his enemy, but that he may the more advantageously find a time to fight him. The eagle is a very sagacious bird, but a very devouring one too; and the quickness of its sight is only in order to the better seizing of its prey.

2. The second effect of envy, with reference to the envied person, is calumny or detraction. We have already seen the first effort made by it against him by an insidious diving into his most reserved and secret affairs, and the next to this always works out at the mouth; so that if a man cannot rival and overbear his neighbour by downright violence of action, he will attempt it at least by slander, and vilifying expressions, and, that there may not want art as well as malice, to carry on the attack more sure and home. Has a man done bravely, and got himself a reputation too great to be borne down by any base and direct aspersions? Why then envy will seemingly subscribe to the general vogue in many or most things, but then it will be sure to come over him again with a sly oblique stroke in some derogating but or other, and so slide in some scurvy exception, which shall effectually stain all his other virtues; and like the dead fly in the apothecary's ointment, which (Solomon tells us) never fails to give the whole an offensive savour. And peradventure, to weave the dissimulation with yet a finer thread, and so to make it the more artificial and less discernible, the disgrace shall be insinuated and cast in with words of pity. As, after a man has been commended in

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company for several good qualities and perfections, the sneaking, envious wretch shall then put in, and seem to assent to every thing so spoken of him; but shall add withal, what an unhappiness is it, that a person endued with such accomplishments should be so unluckily surprised, as to be guilty of such or such actions; and that there should be any thing to allay or blemish the clearness of his reputation. When perhaps the rest of the company were either wholly ignorant of any such matter, had not his malicious ill-favoured pity brought it fresh into remembrance. This is the way which envy takes to undermine a man's honour, when the universal vogue of men is on his side, and so makes art and caution necessary to support and fix the slander. But if a man be quite unknown, and his virtue has lain private and obscure, envy will then prevent, and be beforehand with such an one, loading him with direct impudent and down right lies, and represent him as vile and infamous as it would have him thought by all. So that when he shall appear and step forth into the world, he shall find it prepossessed, and a mighty prejudice against him for him to break through and conquer; a prejudice sown and cherished in men's minds by a long, a diligent, and malicious detraction. In which case, if it so falls out, as oftentimes it does, that what an envious tongue reports, a credulous ear drinks in and believes; but withal conceals and hides from the injured, defamed person, and thereby deprives him of all power to clear and vindicate himself: it is evident and unavoidable, that, so far as the malice of one and the greatness of the other can blast him, he must of necessity be ruined; as being for the present utterly destitute of all other relief, but the conscience of his own innocence, and a reliance upon that Providence, which alone is able to bring light out of darkness, and in its own good time to make an injured and abused innocence, in spite of all the conjunctions of envy and power, clear and victorious.

3. The last and grand effect of envy, in respect of the person envied, is his utter ruin and destruction; for nothing less was intended from the very first, whatsoever comes to be effected in the issue. Its methods of destroying are indeed various; some times it assaults a man with open violence; some times it smites him secretly; sometimes it flies in his face; and sometimes it reaches him more spite fully with some backstroke; and so, like the worst of cowards, comes behind him, and runs him through. For (as I said before) nothing can satisfy envy, but a man's utter confusion, and (if it were possible) his very annihilation. It is not content only to asperse or defame a man, nor regards his mere infamy otherwise than as it is an instrument of his absolute and total ruin. No, it would see him begging at a grate, drawn upon an hurdle, and at length dying upon a gibbet. It would make him odious to his friends, and despised by his enemies. Nothing under death clothed with all the circumstances of misery and disaster that human nature is capable of, can assuage the rage and fury of envy, which in all its persecutions of a man is *as cruel as death*, and *as insatiable as the grave*. What says the wise man of it, [Prov. xxvii. 4.](#) *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?*

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It hunts and pursues a man without remorse or pity, and never rests nor gives him over, till it has sucked his blood, and drawn out his very breath and soul together. Nor does it stop here, or expire with the bare life of the envied person, but it tramples even upon his ashes also, lashes and tears his surviving memory, and possibly wreaks itself likewise upon his posterity. So that the child, as heir apparent, shall inherit all the calamities, succeed into all the enormities and disgusts, that worried the father while living; they shall, I say, all of them be charged upon the son's person, as debts are upon his estate. And lastly, envy has a peculiar malignity in it, that the grudges arising from it admit of no reconciliation. There is no buying a man's peace with an envious person: but the burnings of such an hatred are, like those of hell, intolerable and perpetual. For the truth is, all sort of reconciliation, in the very nature of the thing, supposes a deprecation of, or a satisfaction for some injury, which first caused a breach between the persons thus to be reconciled. But envy grounds not itself upon any injury offered or done it by any man; it has no provocation but its neighbour's virtue or felicity; crimes never pardoned by envy, wheresoever in any topping degree it finds them.

And thus having given some account of this vile and accursed quality, and that both as to its nature and consequences; and likewise both in respect of him who envies another, as likewise of him also who is envied by him; come we now to the third and last thing proposed for the handling of the words, and that was, to make some use and improvement of the subject hitherto treated of by us: and what better and more important use can we make of it, than to convince and remind us of these following things?

1. First, of the extreme vanity of even the most excellent and best esteemed enjoyments of this world. How do riches and honour, wit and beauty, strength and learning, shine and glister in the eyes of most men! and no doubt, but as all of them are the gifts, so are they also the blessings of God to those who can make a wise and sanctified use of them. But such is our unhappiness in this vale of weakness and mortality, that, like Jonah's gourd, no sooner do these things shoot out and flourish about us, and we begin to delight and please ourselves under the shadow of them, but God quickly provides a worm, even that killing one of envy, to smite the root of them, and then presently they decline, wither, and die over our heads. Shadows do not more naturally attend shining bodies, than envy pursues worth and merit, always close at the very heels of them, and, like a sharp blighting east wind, still blasting and killing the noblest and most promising productions of virtue in their earliest bud, and, as Jacob did Esau, supplants them in their very birth. For what made Saul so implacably persecute David? Was it not the greatness of his valour and the glory of his actions, which drew after them the applause of the whole kingdom, and consequently the envy of the king himself? How comes history to tell us of so many assassinations of princes, downfalls of favourites, underminings and poisonings of great persons? Why, in all or most of these sad events, still only worth has been the crime, and envy the executioner. What drew the

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blood of Caesar, banished Cicero, and put out the eyes of the brave and victorious Belisarius, but a merit too great for an emperor to reward, and for envy to endure? And what happiness then can there be in such things, as only make the owners of them fall a woful sacrifice to the base suspicions and cruelties of some wicked and ungrateful great ones; but always worse than they are or can be great? He indeed who is actually possessed of these glorious endowments, thinks them both his ornament and defence; and so does the man think the sword he wears, though the point of it may be sometimes turned upon his own breast; and it is not unheard of for a man to die by that very weapon, which he reckoned he should defend and preserve his life by.

2. This may convince us of the safety of the lowest, and the happiness of a middle condition. Take the poorest wretch who begs his bread from door to door, yet he does not this in fear of that life which he begs for the support of: for that he accounts safe, and thinks he needs no watch to guard it against the motions or designs of any potent adversary, but walks unconcernedly, and sleeps securely; for his poverty is his guard, and his rags his armour. No poisons or daggers are prepared in hospitals: these are entertainments which envy treats men with in courts and palaces. Only power and greatness are prize for envy; whose evil eye always looks upwards, and whose band scorns to strike where it can place its foot. Life and a bare competence are a quarry too low for so stately a vice as envy to fly at. And therefore men of a middle condition are indeed doubly happy. First, that, with the poor, they are not the objects of pity; nor, 2. with the rich and great, the mark of envy. *Give me neither poverty nor riches*, said Agar: and it is a question, whether the piety or prudence of that prayer were greater. The honest country gentleman, and the thriving tradesman, or country farmer, have all the real benefits of nature, and the blessings of plenty, that the highest and richest grandees can pretend to; and (which is more) all these without the tormenting fears and jealousies of being rivalled in their prince's favour, or supplanted at court, or tumbled down from their high and beloved stations. All those storms fly over their heads, and break upon the towering mountains and lofty cedars; they have no ill-got places to lose; they are neither libelled nor undermined, but, without invading any man's right, sit safe and warm in a moderate fortune of their own, and free from all that grandeur and magnificence of misery, which is sure to attend an invidious greatness. And he who is not contented with such a condition must seek his happiness (if ever he have any) in another world, for Providence itself can provide no better for him in this.

3. And lastly, we learn from hence the necessity of a man's depending upon something, without him, higher and stronger than himself, even for the preservation of his ordinary concerns in this life. No thing can be a greater argument to make a man fly, and cast himself into the arms of Providence, than a due consideration of the nature and the workings of envy. For how fierce and cruel, how watchful and diligent, how remorseless and implacable, and, which is worst of all, how causeless for the most part, and how unprovoked, is this vile



thing in all its assaults upon its neighbour; not acting upon any injury or motive from without, but boiling over upon all about it, through an overflowing fulness of malice from within!

The greatest strength which God has vouchsafed men, to secure themselves by in this world, are innocence and wisdom; and yet both of them together are not always an equal match for envy. Thou perhaps art busied in the honest employments of thy estate or calling, neither doing nor thinking hurt to any one; but in the mean time envy may chance to be much busier than thou, dropping poison into the ears of thy prince or patron, and so dashing thy innocent name and fortune with such a killing whisper, as shall strip thee of all in a moment, before thou shalt know either the tongue that hurt thee or the hand that smote thee. Hast thou a large estate? So had Naboth; yet envy quickly found a Jezebel to alter the title, and dispossess the true owner of his rich vineyard. Hast thou friends in the world? Their minds may change, and their friendship fail thee, when the envy of two or three back-friends shall be continually stabbing and pecking at their good opinion of thee, till at length they strike thee through and through, and so pierce thy heart before it even reaches thy ear. And lastly, hast thou a fair reputation and name in the world? Know that it is but as glass, the foul breath of envy can quickly sully, and the least touch of the hand easily break it. For it is God only who must watch over thy good name, and protect thy reputation. For envy will be awake against it when thou art asleep, and still present to asperse thee when thou art absent, and so not able to vindicate or speak one word for thyself. And therefore none but that great *Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps*, and whose omni presence makes him actually present in all places, can preserve thee in this great concern. It is he, I say, who must *keep thee secretly in his pavilion from the strife of tongues*, control their virulence, and rebuke the foul and restless spirit of slander and detraction. For otherwise, he who reckons himself out of the reach and power of envy, by any pitch of greatness or goodness whatsoever, is like that man whom Solomon represents *lying down to sleep upon the top of a mast*, and never considers either the winds and storms roaring about him, or the cruel devouring deep gaping under him; a very unsecure place certainly to sleep in, though never so high.

Nor has that man pitched upon a safer dormitory, who thinks to rest quietly over a much more merci less element, and more dangerous a deep of the two, (as we have proved envy to be,) unless the man's sense and reason should have first left him, and fallen fast asleep before him. In a word, what mortal can stand his ground against this irresistible engine of all mischief? Even the wisest have perished by its wiles, and the most innocent been taken by its snares; the noblest, and most valiant; the ablest ministers of state, and most renowned commanders in war; nay, even kings themselves have sometimes fallen before it; so impossible is it for any thing in nature to be sure of protection against it; but that man only, who, under the cover of an almighty wing, has made the King of kings his refuge, and the God of gods his everlasting habitation.

*To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*



**A SERMON**  
**PREACHED AT CHRIST-CHURCH, OXON,**  
**ON THE 30th OF APRIL, 1668,**  
**BEING ASCENSION-DAY.**

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**LUKE xxi. 15.**

*For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.*

**I**T being the great design of our Saviour's coming into the world to declare and prove himself the Messiah, and to establish a church upon that belief, we have him here encouraging the ministers of it with this notable promise, left them as a kind of legacy not long before his death; together with a prediction of what should befall them after it; which was so dreadful and discouraging, that nothing but such a promise could support them against the terrors of such a prediction. And therefore, as a tender master, all made up of goodness and compassion, while he delivers them this bitter cup with one hand, he reaches them as great a cordial with the other; all that he here promised, or said to them, being but a pledge of what he would more abundantly do for them after his ascension: when having finished his dolorous course here, and triumphantly sat down at the right hand of his Father, his glorious employment ever after should be, as a king to make good, what as a prophet he had foretold. And this he did with so exact a conformity of his actions to his words, that no instance can be given through all the records of time, where there is so perfect and punctual a correspondence between past and present, as we see and find in the predictions and promises of our Saviour in his life, and the completion of them since his death. A most clear and full proof doubtless of his doctrine, and consequently as infallible a demonstration of the divinity of his person, and the authentic truth of his commission.

In the words we have these two things considerable.

I. Something implied by way of prediction, viz. that the apostles should be sure to meet with adversaries, who would both gainsay and resist them in the discharge of their apostolic function .

II. Something declared by way of promise, viz. that they should find such succour and assistance from their Lord and Master, after the resumption of his glory, as should make and overcome all this opposition.

Which two heads comprehend all that is in the text, and accordingly I shall give some brief account of both. And,



I. For the first of these, the prediction here implied, viz. that the apostles should not fail of adversaries to oppose them. This indeed was to be no small argument of their apostolic mission, though by no means to be reckoned amongst miracles, it being so far from having any thing of miracle or wonder in it, that nothing can be more frequent, usual, and indeed fashionable, than for the generality of men to malign a preacher, and persecute an apostle. For such as engage themselves in the service of that grating, displeasing thing to the world, called truth, must expect the natural issue and consequent of truth, which is, a mortal hatred of those who speak it. The Christian ministry is a troublesome and a disgusted institution, and as little regarded by men as they regard their souls, but rather hated as much as they love their sins. The church is every one's prey, and the shepherds are pilled, and polled, and fleeced by none more than by their own flocks. A prophet is sure to be without honour, not only in his own country, but almost in every one else. I scarce ever knew any ecclesiastic but was treated with scorn and distance; and the only peculiar respect I have observed shewn such persons in this nation (which yet I dare say they could willingly enough dispense with) is, that sometimes a clergyman of an hundred pound a-year has the honour to be taxed equal to a layman of ten thousand. Even those who pretend most respect to the church and churchmen, will yet be found rather to use than to respect them; and if at any time they do ought for them, or give any thing to them, it is not because they are really lovers of the church, but to serve some turn by being thought so. As some keep chaplains, not out of any concern for religion, but as it is a piece of grandeur something above keeping a coach; it looks creditable and great in the eyes of the world; though in such cases he who serves at the altar has generally as much contempt and disdain passed upon him, as he who serves in the kitchen, though perhaps not in the same way: if any regard be had to him, it is commonly such an one as men have for a garment (or rather a pair of shoes) which fits them, viz. to wear him and wear him, till he is worn out, and then to lay him aside. For be the grandee he depends upon never so powerful, he must not expect that he will do any thing for him, till it is scandalous not to do it. If a first or second-rate living chance to fall in his gift, let not the poor domestic think either learning, or piety, or long service a sufficient pretence to it; but let him consider with himself rather, whether he can answer that difficult question, Who was Melchizedek's father?<sup>7</sup> Or whether, instead of grace for grace, he can bring gift for gift; for all other qualifications without it will be found empty and insignificant.

In short, every thing is thought too much for persons of this profession. Though one would think, that as they are men, and men who have been at the charge of an expensive and laborious education, as much or more than most others, they ought, upon the very right of nature and justice, to expect a return, in some degree (at least) proportionable to such cost and labour, as well as men of any other profession whatsoever; yet here, it seems, religion

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<sup>7</sup> A question very hardly solvable by a poor clergyman, though never so good a divine.



must supersede the rule of justice and the course of nature; and the ministers of it must be required to live, not only as spiritual persons, but as spirits; that is, with out those common accommodations of life, which God and nature have made necessary to all who are yet in the body, and freely reach out to the whole race of mankind; and upon no other ground in the world it is, but men's envying the church a competent share of these, that all those virulent, but senseless clamours of the pride, covetousness, and luxury of the clergy have been raised; so that when their insolent domineering enemies cannot get them under their feet, as they desire, then presently the clergy are too high and proud. And when avarice disposes men to be rapacious and sacrilegious, then forthwith the church is too rich. And lastly, when, with whoring, and gaming, and revelling, they have disabled themselves from paying their butchers, their brewers, and their vintners, then immediately they are all thunder and lightning against the intemperance and luxury of the clergy, (forsooth,) and high time it is for a thorough reformation.

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But to disabuse the world, and to answer the several branches of the imputation; the true account of the pride of the clergy is, that they are able to clothe themselves with something better than rags; or rather, that they have any thing to clothe them at all, and that the church of England would (by its good will) neither have naked gospels nor naked evangelists. And then in the next place, the covetousness of the clergy is, that they can and do find wherewithal to pay taxes, and just enough to keep them from begging afterwards. And lastly, their luxury and intemperance lies in this, that they had rather eat at their own poor home, than lick up the crumbs at the end of their haughty neighbour's table, and much less under it; that they scorn to sneak here and there for a dinner, or beg their daily bread of any but of God himself. The world in the mean time proceeding by no other measure with the clergy than this, viz. to exact of them hospitality to others, and to grudge them bread for themselves. And this is the true account of the pride, covetousness, and luxury of the clergy, which, by the mouths of puritans and republicans, have made such a noise in these deluded kingdoms.

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But it is the church's lot to be defamed, libelled, and persecuted on all hands; and may our blessed Lord, who found the same usage before us, give us grace and courage to bear it: even I myself have heard it said, and that with no ordinary acceptance and pleasure to the rest of the company who heard it, that a divine was to be spit upon by his place. And be it so, since it must be so. Nevertheless it is the comfort of such, that Christ was spit upon before them, though he had not indeed the honour to be spit upon by Christians; in which respect it must be confessed, that the servants are preferred before their master. And I have heard it said also, that the church and clergy of England have an interest opposite to the rest of the nation; that is, in other words, that the whole nation ought to rise up (as one man) against them with staves and clubs, and knock out their brains, as vermin and public nuisances; and withal, that there ought to be no church or clergy for the future, if the nation will but mind its own interest. This is the proper sense and interpretation of these words; and I

hope all the impartial world (which bear and deserve the name of Christians) will consider and remember them.

Nevertheless, to dispute this point a little, I would fain know how the English clergy come to have an interest opposite to the English nation; for we are both English men, and the sons of English men, (till of late at least,) and own no dependence upon any foreign power, (as the papists do,) and consequently have a claim to a support and maintenance from our country, while we serve it in a profession useful to the exigences of it. And whether those, whose profession obliges them to be still pressing obedience upon their fellow-subjects to their sovereign, and just and amicable dealing with one another, together with an universal regulation of men's manners, serve the public by a profession useful to the exigences thereof, we appeal to the public, and to all men of sense and conscience, to judge. But if, because the clergy will never attempt, by cheating and pimping, to raise themselves from beggary to great estates and high stations, and have not forty, or fifty, or perhaps an hundred thousand pounds ready at every hand for a purchase, they must therefore have an interest opposite to the rest of the nation; this opposition, for ought I see, is like to continue as long as the honesty and poverty of the clergy (for the most part accompanying it) is like to do. But whether those, who avow such an implacable enmity against the ministry, will be able to preserve this or any other government, so much as one poor minute, from the ruin which their own detestable lives, principles, and vices, threaten it with, is very much to be questioned; or rather indeed it is past all question, that they tend directly, and operate strongly, to wards its utter ruin and destruction.

Upon the whole matter, if we consider the treatment of the clergy in these nations, since popery was driven out, both as to the language and usage which they find from most about them; I do, from all that I have read, heard, or seen, confidently aver, (and I wish I could speak it loud enough to reach all the corners and quarters of the whole world,) that there is no nation or people under heaven, Christian or not Christian, which despise, hate, and trample upon their clergy or priesthood comparably to the English. So that (as matters have been carried) it is really no small argument of the predominance of conscience over interest, that there are yet parents who can be willing to breed up any of their sons (if hopefully endowed) to so discouraged and discouraging a profession.

We see then, according to the prediction in the text, how, from the apostolic age, down all along to the present, the ministers of Christ were sure to meet with enemies; and that, whether they were professedly such, or pretendedly friends, their enmity was still the same, and perhaps much more fatal in the effects of it, acting under this latter guise than under the former; as the thief never does his business so effectually as when he robs under a vizard. After which, the next thing offering itself to our consideration is, how this enmity (especially in the apostles time, which the words chiefly point at) was to exert itself; and that, the text tells us, was to be two ways, viz. by word and deed; by gainsaying and resisting; and these

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two certainly could not but afford scope and compass enough for all the malice of man to employ and spend itself in.

And accordingly we will speak distinctly of both of them. And,

1. For *gainsaying*; the word in the Greek is ἀντειπεῖν, importing opposition in disputation, with an endeavour to refel or confute what is alleged by another; and the design of it is redargution, called by Aristotle ἐλεγχος, or ἐλέγχειν; that is, a concluding of something contradictory to the proposition asserted. And thus we find the apostles frequently and fiercely encountered by adversaries of very different persuasions, by Jews and Gentiles, and the several sects belonging to both. As for our Saviour himself, who led the way, and was first engaged in such conflicts, we know the constant issue of all the disputes the Jews had with him was, that he silenced them by an absolute confutation. So that the end of all these contests was, *that they durst not ask him any more questions*; shewing hereby so much discretion at least, as to know when they were baffled, and to say no more. And this mighty force in arguing he was pleased to transmit to his apostles after him, as it was highly requisite that he should. Whereupon we see how Peter and John (as illiterate as they were) nonplused the whole council of the priests and elders, giving such an edge to the truth they spoke, that the text tells us *it cut them to the heart*, [Acts v.](#) And in the next place we read how St. Stephen confounded the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, together with them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with him; so that the text remarkably notes, that they were not able to withstand the *wisdom and spirit by which he spake*. [Acts vi. 10.](#) Truth, it seems, with that one single weapon of wisdom to defend it, being an over match to never so many tongues opposing it. Like wise we find how Apollos triumphed over his Jewish opponents, mightily convincing them *that Jesus was Christ*, [Acts xviii. 28.](#) And the same overpowering spirit we find conjuring down Elymas the sorcerer, opposing St. Paul's doctrine, [Acts xiii. 8, 9,](#) &c. The like opposition also the same apostle complains of from Alexander the coppersmith, greatly with standing the gospel taught by him, [2 Tim. iv. 14.](#) And it was well the coppersmith did not out of spite turn preacher, and so disgrace it more.

But this gainsaying humour stopped not in the doctrine preached, but overflowed and worked over also upon the preachers themselves; and that in calumnies and slanders of all sorts; sometimes reproaching them as drunkards, in [Acts ii. 13,](#) and thereby shewing us, that the charge of intemperance upon the clergy was as early as the apostles, who had a liberal share of it; and not only so, but it began even upon Christ himself, who was taxed for a glutton and a wine-bibber long before them: though, methinks, it looks something odd and unaccountable, that those should make the lame walk, and restore to others the use of their legs, who had drunk themselves off their own. They were traduced also as public incendiaries, and such as *turned the world upside down*, [Acts xvii. 6;](#) which yet (as the world then stood, with idolatry at the head of it, and truth under foot) was perhaps the only way to restore it to its right posture. They were also jeered and flouted at, as *fools and babblers*; [Acts](#)

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xvii. 18. But why then did not those profound rabbies amongst the Jews, and the Stoicks and Epicureans (those oracles of reason) amongst the philosophers, baffle and refel these babblers, and so dashing their absurd doctrine in its first rise, prevent its spreading, by a mature and thorough confutation? But it was ever an easier work to contradict than to confute. From reproaching them as fools, they proceeded to represent them also as mad men; [Acts xxvi. 24.](#) [2 Cor. v. 13.](#) Though this, I confess, seems not so much a wonder to me, since I doubt not but the clergy in all ages, (if but well beneficed) would be accused for lunaticks, if for so doing their accusers might be their guardians. But since it would be endless to traverse all particulars, let it suffice us to have observed, that as in the forecited [Acts xvii. 32.](#) we find the Athenians mocking, and in [Acts xviii. 6.](#) the Jews opposing themselves and blaspheming; so let us take the sum total of all from that one place in [Acts xxviii. 22.](#) *As for this sect, we know that it is every where spoken against.* In fine, the apostles and ministers of Christ were looked upon as the very offals and offscouring of the world, and were trampled upon accordingly. They were scarce ever mentioned but with slander; or so much as spoken to, but with sarcasm and invective. They were perpetually railed at as deceivers and impostors, even while they were endeavouring to undeceive the world from those wretched impostures and delusions which had so long and so miserably bewitched it. In a word, they were like physicians exchanging cures for curses, and reviled and abused by their froward patients, while they were doing all they could for their health and recovery. But,

2. The other branch of the opposition designed against the apostles and ministers of Christ is expressed by resisting; a word importing a much more substantial kind of enmity, than that which only spends at the mouth, and shews itself in froth and noise; an enmity which, instead of scoffs and verbal assaults, should encounter them with all that art could contrive or violence execute; with whips and scourges, cross and gibbet, swords and axes; and though bare words draw no blood, yet these, to be sure, would. And such were the weapons with which they were to act their butcheries upon the Christians; till at length, through all the sorts and degrees of cruelty, the same martyrdom should both crown and conclude their sufferings together. Nor were these persecutions more terrible for their sharpness than for their frequency, and sometimes their continuance also: ten persecutions in the space of the three first centuries, and the last of them of ten years duration. They came so fast upon the Christians, that all the intermission they had from one persecution was but a kind of pause or breathing time, (a short parenthesis of ease,) to enable them for another. So that notwithstanding those short intervals, it was really and indeed a persecution still; and the work went on, though the workmen might sometimes sleep or stand still a little, to gather more strength. For the persecuting spirit seemed to shake the primitive church like a mighty ague; and it held it for a long time; the disease continuing, when the fits were gone off. This was the miserable condition which Christianity was then in; the whole world rising

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up in arms, and combining in a common association against the professors and preachers of it; a forlorn company, God knows, of helpless, defenceless men, without any thing but truth and innocence to stand by them: idolatry in the mean while sitting in the thrones of emperors, marching in the head of armies, and commanding the joint assistance of all that was worldly, wise, or mighty, to secure it in the possession of the so long captivated and deluded universe. So that no wonder, armed with all this power, persecution raged with a vengeance. And yet by all the terrible massacres and executions done by it, it neither did nor could prevail. Forasmuch as that which kills the person does not therefore destroy the cause, especially a cause designed to teach sufferings, to be carried on by suffering, and lastly to conquer and command the world by suffering. In a word, a religion founded in the cross (as that of Christianity eminently was) could not surely be extinguished or suppressed by it.

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But some may possibly here object and say, that all that has been hitherto spoken by us of this gainsaying and resisting the apostles, seems a direct contradiction to the text, which positively affirms, *that their adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist them*. But this difficulty is small, or rather indeed none at all, and consequently the solution very easy and obvious; for the gainsaying and resisting mentioned in the text, may either signify the bare acts of gainsaying or resisting, or the success and prevalence of the said acts against the persons so gainsaid and resisted: and accordingly the full drift and meaning of the text is, that the apostles' adversaries, by all the virulence of words and violence of actions which they could and would use, should not be able to prevail over them, or run them down; howbeit they would not fail with all their might to attempt it, and to that purpose to gainsay and resist them to the utmost, though in the issue all to little or no effect, unless perhaps to their own confusion. In fine, that, as long as the world stands, Christianity shall be sure to be opposed; and as long as it is opposed, shall certainly overcome.

And so from the thing supposed or implied in the text, I now proceed to the other and next thing positively declared in the same, to wit, Christ's promise to his apostles of such an assistance from above, as should overcome and master all their adversaries opposition: which promise we will consider two ways, 1. According to its form and coherence with the context. And 2. According to the subject-matter of it. And,

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1. For the first of these. The words being introduced by the causal particle for, shew, that they stand as a reason here assigned of something going before; which we shall find to have been a warning given by Christ to his disciples against those fears and misgiving apprehensions, which he foresaw would be apt to seize and work upon their spirits, when they should find themselves so fiercely and universally opposed on all sides: in which case, though he allowed of caution, yet he was for taking off the fright: nothing considerable being ever achieved by a mind damped and surprised with fear; a passion which will be sure to betray

a man in the exercise of all his faculties. For he who fears his enemy, fights for him; or, which is worse, gives him the victory without the trouble of a battle.

Nor can any thing more peculiarly unqualify a man for the office of an apostle or preacher of the gospel, than this degenerate quality: for it makes him unable to look a bold sinner in the face, to assert a disgusted truth, or to own his commission, when power and interest shall frown him into silence and mean compliances.

Nevertheless, since fear itself may plead reason, when it meets with objects and motives every way equal to the natural workings of it; our Saviour never forbids the passion, till he first removes the reason of it, as he does here by opposing the success of omnipotence to the assaults of a mortal force; thereby owning the danger, but overmatching it with the deliverance.

Nor was it a bare deliverance, but a conquest, which Christ designed the first champions of the Christian cause; not merely to bring them off safe from their enemies, but to carry them victorious over them. And conquering, doubtless, is more glorious than not fighting, and to see an enemy fall or fly before one, than to have none at all. All which the great captain of our salvation designed and did for his apostles; and certainly he never exerted his power more to the proof of his godhead, than when he made such worms to *thresh the mountains*, fishermen to silence philosophers, weakness and poverty to brave it over the whole Roman empire, the counsels of senates, and the force of legions, and that with the fairest sort of violence imaginable, viz. binding their hands by sliding into their hearts.

And thus having given an account of the form and scheme of the promise with reference to the context, and what followed, and what went before it, I come now to the other thing to be considered in it, viz. the subject-matter of it, which represents to us these three things.

1. The thing itself promised, viz. *a mouth and wisdom*.

2. The person who promised it, which was Christ himself; *I will give you a mouth and wisdom*.

3. The way by which Christ performed this promise; not indeed here expressed in the text, but fully inferred from several other texts treating of the same subject, to wit, the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles presently after Christ's ascension into glory, when, and by virtue whereof, this great promise was made good to them. And here,

1. For the thing promised; *a mouth and wisdom*, that is, an ability of speaking, joined with an equal prudence in action and behaviour. Which things we will consider first singly, and then in conjunction. And,

1. For the ability of speaking conferred upon the apostles. It was highly requisite, that those, who were to be the interpreters and spokesmen of heaven, should have a rhetoric taught them from thence too; and as much beyond any that could be taught them by human rules and art, as the subjects they were to speak of surpassed the subject of all human eloquence.

Now this ability of speech, I conceive, was to be attended with these three properties of it.

1. Great clearness and perspicuity.
2. An unaffected plainness and simplicity. And,
3. A suitable and becoming zeal or fervour. And,

1. For its perspicuity: Christ and his apostles well knew, that the great truth delivered by them would support itself, and that barely to deliver it, would be abundantly sufficient to enforce it; nakedness (of all things) being never able to make truth ashamed. There was nothing false, faulty, or suspicious in it, and therefore they were not afraid to venture it in the plainest and most intelligible language. Where indeed the thing to be spoken is unwarrantable, and the design of the speaker as bad, or worse, there, I confess, every word may need a cloak of obscurity both to cover and protect it too: but truth and worth neither need nor affect to keep out of sight, nor the lights of the world to wrap themselves in a cloud. The apostles never taught men to preach or pray in an unknown tongue; nor valued such devotion as had ignorance for its parent. Christ still closed his instructions to his disciples with this question, *Do ye understand these things?* And we find no parable, but the rear of it is brought up with an explication. For even when Christ and his apostles preached the most mysterious truths of religion, yet then, though the thing uttered might nonplus their reason, the way and manner of their uttering it was plain, easy, and familiar; and the hearer never put to study, when it was his business only to hear and understand. The oracles of Christ were not like those of Apollo, doubtful and ambiguous, always made to deceive, and commonly to destroy; but on the contrary, as the grand business of our Saviour, and his apostles after him, was to teach, and that chiefly in order to persuade; so they well knew, that there could be no effectual passage into the will, but through the judgment; nor any free admission into the former, but by a full passport from the latter. And therefore we find not, that in their sermons they were for amusing or astonishing their auditory with difficult nothings, rabbinical whimsies, and remote allusions, which no man of sense and solid reason can hear without weariness and contempt.

Besides that, if we look into the reason of the thing itself, it will be found, that all obscurity of speech is resolvable into the confusion and disorder of the speaker's thoughts; for as thoughts are properly the images and representations of objects to the mind, and words the representations of our thoughts to others, it must needs follow, that all faults or defects in a man's expressions must presuppose the same in his notions first.

In short, nothing in nature can be imagined more absurd, irrational, and contrary to the very design and end of speaking, than an obscure discourse; for in that case, the preacher may as well leave his tongue, and his auditors their ears behind them, as neither he communicate, nor they understand any more of his mind and meaning, after he has spoken to them, than they did before.



And yet, as ridiculous as such fustian bombast from the pulpit is, none are so transported and pleased with it as those who least understand it. For still the greatest admirers of it are the grossest, the most ignorant, and illiterate country people, who, of all men, are the fondest of highflown metaphors and allegories, attended and set off with scraps of Greek and Latin, though not able even to read so much of the latter, as might save their necks upon occasion.

But laying aside all such studied insignificant trifles, it was the clearness of the apostles' preaching which rendered it victorious and irresistible. And this we may rest upon as certain, that he is still the powerfulest preacher, and the best orator, who can make himself best understood. But,

2. A second property of the ability of speech, conferred by Christ upon his apostles, was its unaffected plainness and simplicity; it was to be easy, obvious, and familiar; with nothing in it strained or far-fetched: no affected scheme, or airy fancies, above the reach or relish of an ordinary apprehension; no, nothing of all this; but their grand subject was truth, and consequently above all these petty arts and poor additions; as not being capable of any greater lustre or advantage, than to appear just as it is. For there is a certain majesty in plainness; as the proclamation of a prince never frisks it in tropes or fine conceits, in numerous and well turned periods, but commands in sober, natural expressions. A substantial beauty, as it comes out of the hands of nature, needs neither paint nor patch; things never made to adorn, but to cover something that would be hid. It is with expression, and the clothing of a man's conceptions, as with the clothing of a man's body. All dress and ornament supposes imperfection, as designed only to supply the body with something from without, which it wanted, but had not of its own. Gaudery is a pitiful and a mean thing, not extending further than the surface of the body; nor is the highest gallantry considerable to any, but to those who would hardly be considered without it: for in that case indeed there may be great need of an outside, where there is little or nothing within.

And thus also it is with the most necessary and important truths; to adorn and clothe them is to cover them, and that to obscure them. The eternal salvation and damnation of souls are not things to be treated of with jests and witticisms. And he who thinks to furnish himself out of plays and romances with language for the pulpit, shews himself much fitter to act a part in the revels, than for a cure of souls.

*I speak the words of soberness*, said St. Paul, [Acts xxvi. 25](#); and I preach the gospel not with the *enticing words of man's wisdom*, [1 Cor. ii. 4](#). This was the way of the apostles' discoursing of things sacred. Nothing here of *the fringes of the north-star; nothing of nature's becoming unnatural*; no thing of *the down of angels' wings, or the beautiful locks of cherubims*: no starched similitudes introduced with a "Thus have I seen a cloud rolling in "its airy mansion," and the like. No, these were sublimities above the rise of the apostolick spirit. For the apostles, poor mortals, were content to take lower steps, and to tell the world in plain terms, that he who believed should be saved, and *that he who believed not should be*



*damned.* And this was the dialect which pierced the conscience, and made the hearers cry out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* It tickled not the ear, but sunk into the heart: and when men came from such sermons, they never commended the preacher for his taking voice or gesture; for the fineness of such a simile, or the quaintness of such a sentence; but they spoke like men conquered with the overpowering force and evidence of the most concerning truths; much in the words of the two disciples going to Emmaus; *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he opened to us the scriptures?*

In a word, the apostles' preaching was therefore mighty and successful, because plain, natural, and familiar, and by no means above the capacity of their hearers: nothing being more preposterous, than for those who were professedly aiming at men's hearts, to miss the mark, by shooting over their heads.

3. The gift of preaching, conferred by Christ upon his apostles, required a suitable zeal and fervour to attend it; for without this, as high and important a truth as the gospel preached by them was, none would have believed that it had any powerful effect upon the preacher's own affections, nor consequently, that it could have wrought at all more upon other men's; this is most certain. So true is it, that the same things, differently expressed, as to the proper effects of persuasion, are indeed not the same. A cold indifference dispirits a discourse; but a due fervour gives it life and authority, and sends it home to the inmost powers of the soul, with an easy insinuation and a deep impression.

But then I do by no means place this zeal in speaking loud, in sweating, or in a boisterous motion or agitation of the body, for all this looks rather like the preacher's wrestling with his auditory, than instructing it; but I place it in his shewing a warm and sensible apprehension on his part of the things uttered by him; so that the very manner of his speaking shall demonstrate the real inward sense he has of what he speaks, and that in the judgment of all who hear him.

Thus when Christ accosted Jerusalem with that melting exprobration in Matt, xxiii. 37, 38, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.* Now what a relenting strain of tenderness was there in this reproof from the great doctor as well as saviour of souls, and how infinitely more moving than if he had said only, *O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, how wicked and barbarous is it in you thus to persecute and stone God's prophets! And how can you but expect some severe judgment from God upon you for it?* Who, I say, sees not the vast difference in these two ways of address, as to the vigour and winning compassion of the one, and the low dispirited flatness of the other in comparison? Likewise for St. Paul, observe how he uttered himself in his excellent farewell discourse to the elders of Ephesus, [Acts xx. from verse 18 to the end of the chapter](#), and particularly in [verse 31](#). *Remember,* says he, *how that for the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night*

*and day with tears.* These were the arguments here used by this great apostle, arguments, in comparison of which he knew that the most flowing rhetoric of words would be but a poor and faint persuasive. And then again, in [2 Cor. xi. 29](#), with what a true and tender passion does he lay forth his fatherly care and concern for all the churches of Christ? *Who, say he, is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?* Than which words nothing doubtless could have issued from the tongue or heart of man more endearing, more pathetical and affectionate.

And thus much for the ability or gift of speaking, the first member of the promise made by Christ here to his disciples. The other and next is that of wisdom, the noblest endowment of the mind of man of all others, of an endless extent, and of a boundless comprehension, and, in a word, the liveliest representation that a created nature can afford of the infinity of its Maker. And this, as it is in men, is properly the great principle, directing them how to demean themselves in all the particular passages, accidents, and occasions of human life, which being in the full compass of them indeed innumerable, to recount and treat of them all here would be next to impossible; but as that wisdom which most peculiarly belonged to the first dispensers and ministers of the gospel, I shall only mention two instances in which it most remarkably shews itself; namely,

1. That they opposed neither things nor persons, any further than they stood in their way in the ministry of it. On the contrary, *I am become all things to all men*, says St. Paul, and that neither to gain favour nor interest, but only converts to Christianity, [1 Cor. ix. 22](#). And again, he owned the very sect of the Pharisees, so far as they owned and contended for the grand article of the resurrection, in [Acts xxiii. 6](#). In like manner he quoted also and approved several things out of some of the heathen poets, as in [Acts xvii. 28](#), and [Titus i. 12](#). In a word, he never rejected any real solid truth, whether spoken by Jew or heathen, or whatsoever the design of either of them might be in the speaking of it. For as right reason most certainly lies at the foundation of all true religion, so the apostles embraced all that which by genuine consequence was deduced from thence by any sort or sect of men whatsoever, forasmuch as they made not those deductions under the formal notion of such a sect or party, but as they were rational men, arguing rightly upon the general received principles of nature. And accordingly the apostles countenanced and fell in with truth so offered them, wheresoever they found it; they valued a pearl, though took up from a dunghill. And to have done otherwise, had neither been zeal nor discretion, but a kind of ridiculous and morose partiality. But,

2. The other instance of the wisdom given by our Saviour to his apostles, was their resolute opposing all doctrines and interests whatsoever, so far as they stood in opposition to the gospel. They would not so much as hold their peace in such a case, but their proceeding was absolute and peremptory, [Acts v. 29](#), *We ought to obey God rather than men*. And when a point of Christian liberty was endangered by the judaizing brethren in [Gal. ii. 5](#), *We gave*



*place to them, (says the blessed St. Paul,) no, not for an hour.* And we know how *he withstood St. Peter himself to the face* upon the like occasion. We read also how the same apostle preached of justice and temperance before Felix, who he notoriously knew lived in a lewd, incestuous marriage, and was equally infamous for bribery and extortion.

And this undoubtedly was his wisdom, his high and apostolic wisdom; though had he indeed lived in such an age as measures conscience by latitude, and compliance and wisdom by what a man can get, much another kind of character would no doubt have attended him, and he would have been taxed as a weak, hasty, and inconsiderate person, for reflecting upon and provoking the governor, who had used him fairly and civilly; so that if he had been but less free of his tongue, and a little more free of his purse, he might in all likelihood have been very easily released, and perhaps preferred too; but now, poor man, he has quite lost himself.

Such would have been the descants of our modern politics upon this occasion; but after all, if the word of truth itself may be heard, that, we shall find, knows no wisdom in an apostle, but what makes him bold and fearless in the cause of the church and of religion, and ready to discharge a rebuke upon any of the highest rank of right worshipful or right honourable sinners, where a scandalous guilt shall call for, or make it necessary; the contrary practice being incomparably the grossest of follies, and such as will be sure to lay a man low enough in the next world, whatsoever preferment it may raise him to in this.

And thus we have seen here the full compass of our Saviour's promise to his ministers and disciples, even the two most valuable perfections of man's nature, and the very top of the wisest of the heathens wish, *sapere et fari, a mouth and wisdom*, a sagacity of mind, and a command of speech. And he bestows them also in their proper lustre and great est advantage, that is to say, united, and like two stars in conjunction; many indeed being able to bring mouth enough to the ministry, though as for wisdom, that may even shift for itself: but still those two stand best by mutual support and communication, elocution without wisdom being empty and irrational, and wisdom without elocution barren and unprofitable. *Praestat eloqui, modo cum prudentia, quam sine eloquio acutissime cogitare*, said the great master of eloquence. A faculty to speak properly, and to act wisely, was a legacy fit to be left by the Saviour of the world to those, by whom he intended to instruct the world. And so much for the first general thing proposed from the words, to wit, the thing promised; I proceed now to the

2. The person promising, who was Christ himself; *I will give you a mouth and wisdom.* I lay a peculiar stress and remark upon this, because Christ seems by this very thing to give his disciples an assurance of his resurrection. He knew that it would not be long before they should see him crucified, killed, and laid in the grave, and so under all the umbrages of weakness and mortality that human nature could undergo; but when again, in the midst of all this, they should remember, that there was still a promise in store, not yet fulfilled, and



withal not capable of being fulfilled by a person dead and extinct, they must needs from thence have concluded that he could not abide in that condition, but must irresistibly triumph over the grave, ascend and enter into a state of sovereignty and glory. Every tongue which sat upon the apostles at the day of pentecost, spoke aloud the resurrection and ascension of him who had promised, and then gave the same. For surely they could not expect to receive gifts from above, while the giver of them was under ground. And so I proceed to the

3. And last thing proposed from the text, which was, to shew by what means Christ conferred those gifts upon his disciples and apostles; and that, we find, was by the effusion of the Holy Ghost, the author and giver of every good and perfect gift, ministerial gifts more especially. Those were endowments too great to spring either from the strength of nature or the force of industry. The conferring of which we have eminently set forth in [Matt. x. 19, 20](#). *Take no thought (says our Saviour) what ye shall .speak: for it shall he given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.* They were surely the first, and perhaps will be the last, who ever did or are like to speak so much sense and reason *ex tempore*. But the cause is assigned in the next verse, *for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of the Father which speaketh in you.* And this glorious day, we know, informs us, that it spoke at length with a witness, with fiery tongues, and a flaming eloquence, and such an one as bore down all contradiction before it. This was the inspiration which filled and raised them so much above themselves, for their work was too big for a mere mortal strength; and therefore, as God himself was to send, so he was also to furnish out his own ambassadors at the cost of heaven, (as I may with reverence express it.) The apostles we find were not (and that by our Saviour's particular order) to stir out of Jerusalem till the Holy Ghost was come upon them, and then they went forth armed at all points, to encounter either Jew or Gentile, and they did it both with courage and wisdom, and consequently with triumph and success.

And accordingly we are to carry it in perpetual remembrance, that while the work of preaching the gospel continues in the world, (as he, who is truth itself, has assured us it ever will,) the Spirit will never be wanting to the faithful preachers of it in a suitable assistance of them, though not in the same measure, we own, in which the apostles were assisted by it, whose work being peculiar and extraordinary, their assistance was to be so too. Infallibility was in the apostles a real privilege, but nowadays an insolent, or rather impudent pretence. And yet nothing is more confidently and constantly laid claim to, both by the papist and the enthusiast, than the Spirit; but none certainly ever yet ventured to speak lies and nonsense by the Spirit but themselves. To some of which persons indeed the world may allow a sort of wisdom, but far from *the wisdom which is from above*; and a mouth too they are well known to have, but a mouth never so open to speak as to devour. Christ defend his church from such inspired impostors, and vouchsafe his mighty presence to all the true (though too much despised) ministers of it, according to the measure of that glorious promise, and



the last uttered by him here on earth at his victorious ascension into heaven. *Go, teach all nations; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

*To whom therefore, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

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*The false methods of governing and establishing the church of England exploded, &c.*

IN

A DISCOURSE

UPON

**GALATIANS II. 5.**

*To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

**I**F in the compass of so small a space as from the first entrance of Christianity into the world to the times of the apostle Paul, the church of Galatia (then but newly planted) could pass into so corrupt and degenerate a condition as this epistle represents it in, let none be surprised to find the very grossest errors sometimes got into the very best and purest churches, but wonder rather, that, after so many centuries since passed, there should still be (what our Saviour foretold there should scarce be at his second coming) such a thing as *faith upon earth*, or indeed any church at all.

As for that of Galatia, the subject of the text before us, and consisting of great numbers both of Jews and Gentiles, just converted to Christianity, there arose a very early and fierce dispute amongst them, whether the Jewish customs and ceremonies were to be joined with and adopted into the Christian profession; and consequently, whether the converted Gentiles ought not to be circumcised according to the law of Moses, as well as they had been baptized according to the institution of Christ? The Jewish converts, whose education had made them infinitely fond of the Mosaic rites, and who, though they had the substance, still doted upon the shadow, even after they had given up their names to Christ, eagerly contended for the continuance of circumcision, and that not amongst themselves only, but for obliging the converted Gentiles also to the same. And in this their error they chanced unhappily to be the more confirmed by a temporizing practice of St. Peter himself, the great apostle of the circumcision; who yet, (as great as he was,) by judaizing in some things, and that even contrary to his own judgment, .as well as to the truth of the gospel, (the text itself telling us, in [verses 12, 13](#) of this chapter, that it was indeed no better than downright dissimulation,) he spread and carried the infection much further by the authority of his example; so that, by this his in sincere dealing and compliance, he mightily fixed these half Christian Jews, not only in a confident persistence in their error, but gave them heart also to expostulate the matter very insolently even with St. Paul himself, who, being by divine commission no less the apostle of the Gentiles than St. Peter was of the Jews, with a courage equal to his sincerity, both taught and practised quite otherwise than that his brother apostle. Nay, so high did their judaizing impudence work, that they began to question the very truth of his doctrine,



as St. Paul not obscurely intimates in [chap. 1 of this epistle, verse 9](#). To all which they add their no less rude reflections upon his apostleship, extolling St. Peter and others as pillars, but undervaluing St. Paul, as nothing in comparison of them. And lastly, to complete these scurrilities, we have their vilifying reproaches of his person, their ridiculing his bodily presence as mean, and his speech as contemptible; and, in a word, himself also as by no means so gifted a brother, forsooth, so powerful an holderforth, nor of such edifying lungs and loudness, as some of their own schismatical tribe.



This, I say, was the language of a set of schismatics in the church of Corinth, mentioned in [2 Cor. x. 10](#), and the like, no doubt, of the brotherhood in Galatia; and not of them only, but so long as there shall be governors and government in the church, the same, we may be sure, will be naturally the cry and virulence against them of all schismatics, sectaries, and dissenters whatsoever.

But as to St. Paul's case now before us, he, in his apostolic circuit or visitation, coming to visit these hopeful converts in Galatia, accompanied with his beloved Titus, (not indeed then circumcised,) finds himself very vehemently pressed by them, and that with an opportunity next to compulsion, to have him circumcised also, according to the false persuasion they had conceived of the necessary and perpetual use of circumcision. Nevertheless, as false and confident as this persuasion of theirs was, and as positively as it stood condemned by St. Paul, it wanted not for several arguments, and those, seemingly at least, not inconsiderable, to give colour to the defence of it. As, to instance in some of them, might not these Galatians have pleaded for the continuance of circumcision, that Christ himself declared, that he came *not to destroy the law of Moses, but to fulfil it*; and if so, was not circumcision one of the most considerable parts of that law? and indeed so considerable, as to be the grand obligation to bind men to all the rest? Did not also Christ command his own disciples *to hear and to do whatsoever the Scribes taught them out of Moses's chair*? And did those Scribes teach or own any thing as more necessary than circumcision? Moreover, did not St. Peter, who was the, proper apostle of the circumcision, (as we have shewn,) agree and concur with these men in this practice, or, at least, not dissuade them from it? Nay, and did not St. Paul himself cause his beloved Timothy to be circumcised? And if in this matter there should be any difference between these two apostles, would not the advantage be clearly on St. Peter's side, who, having conversed with Christ in the flesh, might rationally be presumed to know the true sense and design of the gospel more exactly than St. Paul, who had not so conversed with him; and consequently, that it must be much safer to adhere to the former, in this controversy, than to the latter? And, lastly, besides, and above all this, might they not plead themselves extremely scandalized, grieved, and offended at the practice of such brethren as should lay aside circumcision, which they were sure was at first commanded, and never since (for what they could learn) forbidden by Christ; but rather so much the contrary, that



to countenance, and, as it were, even christen this ceremony, Christ submitted to be circumcised himself?

Now surely these things could not but carry some more than ordinary shew of reason with them; and I frankly declare, that I cannot but own them for arguments much more forcible against the abrogation of circumcision, than any that I could ever yet find our nonconformists were able to bring for the abrogation of the ceremonies of our church. And yet, as forcible as they were, or seemed to be, they had no other effect upon St. Paul, than that with an inflexible steadiness he rejects both the arguments themselves, and those who urged them; and upon a full cognizance of the merits of the whole cause, he peremptorily withstands those judaizing trimmers, and without the least regard either to the occasional communion which St. Peter himself had lately vouchsafed them, or fear of his depriving power for doing so, (if he had any,) this high-church apostle (as we may worthily call him) resolves neither *to give place to him nor them., no, not for an hour.*

This historical account of the occasion of the words here pitched upon by me for my text, I thought necessary to premise, for the better clearing and handling of them; in order to which I shall consider in them these five particulars.

1. A fierce opposition made by some erroneous Christians in the church of Galatia against St. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, and consequently of prime authority in that church.

2. The cause of this opposition; which was their importunate and unreasonable pressing of him to the practice of a thing as necessary, which neither was in itself necessary, nor so accounted by him.

3. The way of their managing this opposition, which was by bespattering his doctrine, and detracting from the credit and authority of his person, for withstanding these their encroaching demands.

4. The way which the apostle took to deal with such violent encroachers, and that was by *not yielding, or giving place to them, no, not for an hour.*

5. And lastly, the end and design driven at by the apostle in this his method of dealing with them; and that was no less than the very preservation of the gospel itself, in the truth and purity of it, in those words, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

The sum of all which five particulars I shall gather into this one proposition, which shall be the subject of the following discourse; namely, That the best and most apostolical way to establish a church, and secure to it a lasting continuance of the truth and purity of the gospel, is, for the governors and ministers thereof not to give place at all, or yield up the least lawful, received constitution of it, to the demands or pretences of such as *dissent or separate from it, though never so urging and importunate.*

This, I say, is a most plain, natural, undeniable inference, from the words and practice of St. Paul himself; and that in a case so like ours in the church of England, that a liker can





hardly be imagined. And accordingly I shall manage the prosecution of this proposition under these three general heads.

1. I shall examine and consider the pretences alleged by dissenters for our quitting, or yielding up, any of the rites, ceremonies, or orders of our church.

2. I shall shew what are naturally like to be the consequences of such a yielding, or giving them up. And,

3. And lastly, I shall shew what influence and efficacy a strict adherence to the constitutions of our church, and an absolute refusal to part with any of them, is like to have towards a lasting settlement of the same, and of the truth and purity of the gospel amongst us.

But before I enter upon a more particular discussion of any of these, I must premise this observation, as the ground and rule of all that I shall say upon this subject; namely, that the case is altogether the same of requiring, upon the account of conscience, the forbearance of practices in themselves lawful, out of a pretence of their unlawfulness; and of imposing upon the conscience practices in themselves not necessary, upon an allegation and pretence of their necessity: which latter was heretofore the case between St. Paul and those judaizing Galatians, as the former has been, and still is, between the church of England and the non-conformists. Now both of these courses are really and equally superstitious: for though amongst us loudness and ignorance have still carried the charge and cry against the ceremonies of our church, yet (as a very learned divine<sup>8</sup> of our own has fully proved in a sermon of his at a visitation) this charge truly recoils upon our dissenters themselves, in the very point and matter now before us. For, as to urge the practice of a thing in its nature really indifferent, as a part of God's worship, and for itself necessary to be practised, (which the church of England never did, nor does, in the injunction of any of its ceremonies,) is properly superstitious; so, on the other side, to make it necessary to abstain from practices in themselves lawful and indifferent, (as the dissenters do, by alleging them to be sinful and unlawful, and consequently that to abstain from them is part of our obedience to Almighty God,) this is altogether as superstitious as the other, and as diametrically opposite to and destructive of that Christian liberty, which Christ has invested his church with.

Which observation being thus premised, I shall now enter upon the first general thing proposed, to wit, to examine and consider the several pretences alleged by dissenters for our quitting or giving up any of the constitutions or customs of our church: and here I shall not pretend to recount them all in particular, but only at large, and as they are deriveable from, and reducible to, these three particulars.

1. The unlawfulness; 2. the inexpediency; and 3. and lastly, the pretended smallness (as they word it) of the things excepted against by them. Each of which I shall touch very briefly upon. And,

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1. For their leading plea of the unlawfulness of our ceremonies, grounded upon that old, baffled argument, drawn from the unlawfulness of will-worship, and the prohibition of adding to or detracting ought from the word or worship of God, no other answer need or can be given to it, than that which has been given over and over, viz. that our ceremonies are not looked upon either as divine worship, or as any necessary essential part of it, but only as circumstances, and external appurtenances, for the more decent performance of that worship: for that men should of their own will impose or use any thing as the necessary worship of God, or add any thing to that worship, as a necessary essential part of it, this questionless (as the forementioned allegations sufficiently prove, and nobody, that I know of, denies) must needs be sinful; but if from hence it be affirmed also, that no circumstance is to be allowed about the divine worship, but what is declared and enjoined by express scripture, the consequence of that is so unsufferably ridiculous, that it will extend to the making it unlawful for the church to appoint any stated place or hour for God's public worship, that it will reach also to the very taking away of pulpits, reading desks, fonts, and every thing else circumstantially ministering to the discharge of divine service, if not expressly mentioned and commanded in the written word of God; and let these men, upon the foregoing principle, avoid the absurdity of this consequence, if they can. But it has been well remarked, that the truth is, those men do not really believe themselves, while they thus plead against the ceremonies and orders of our church. For when a late act of parliament required all persons in office, or designing to qualify themselves for any office in the state, to receive the sacrament according to the use and order of the church of England, (which we all know was to receive it kneeling,) we find not that those men, in such cases, refused the doing of it, (how idolatrous soever both now and then they pretended it to be,) rather than quit the least office of gain which they actually had, or miss of any which they were in pursuit of; which practice of theirs, had it been unlawful, surely men of such tender consciences, as they own themselves to be of, would never have been brought to; forasmuch as not the least unlawful thing ought to be done for the greatest temporal advantage whatsoever: though it may be quite otherwise, I confess, with those new lights, whose humour is their law, their will their reason, and their interest their whole religion. And so to pass from hence to their

Second plea, to wit, of the inexpedience or inconvenience of the said ceremonies in the divine worship: to which I answer these two things.

1. That *expedient* or *inexpedient* being words of a general, indefinite sense or signification, and upon that account determinable chiefly by the several fancies, humours, and apprehensions of men about one and the same thing, (so that what is judged expedient by one man is often judged as inexpedient by another;) the judgment of expedient or inexpedient in matters to be passed into law, ought in all reason to rest wholly in the legislators and governors of any community; and consequently, that no private person whatsoever ought to be looked upon as competent judges of the inexpedience of that which the legislative power

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has once enacted and established as expedient. But, 2dly, I affirm also, that what is not only in itself lawful, but likewise highly conducive to so great a concern of religion, as % decency and order in divine worship certainly is, and that to such a degree conducive to the same, that without it neither order nor decency could possibly continue or subsist; that surely cannot, ought not to be reckoned inexpedient upon any contrary account, considerable enough to be compared with, and much less to over balance that great one of order and regularity in our addresses to Almighty God; which I affirm the ceremonies used by our church are most properly subservient to. For since the outward acts of divine worship cannot be performed, but with some circumstances and postures of the body, either every man must be left to his own arbitrement to use what circumstances and postures he pleases, or a rule must be fixed to direct these things after one and the same manner: the former of which will of necessity infer great diversity and variety in the discharge of the divine worship; and that, by as great a necessity, will infer such a disorder, undecency, and confusion in the same, as nothing but an uniformity in the behaviour and circumstances of all persons joining in that worship can possibly prevent: an argument, no doubt, worth the consideration of all, who must needs know, that God will not be served by halves, but be honoured by body as well as soul, (the whole man being less than enough, for all our solemn 1 acts of devotion.) And so we come now to the

Third and last of their exceptions, grounded upon the smallness of the things excepted against: to which also my answer is twofold,

1. That these things being in themselves lawful, and not only so, but also determined by sufficient authority, their smallness is so far from being a reason why we should refuse and stand out against the use of them, that it is an unanswerable argument, why they should, without any demur, submit to and comply with authority in matters which they themselves confess to be of no very great moment. For it ought to be a very great and weighty matter indeed, which can warrant a man in his disobedience to the injunctions of lawful authority in any thing whatsoever. And that which is a reason why men should comply with their governors, I am sure can be no reason why their governors should give place to them. But,

2dly, I add further, that nothing actually enjoined by law is or ought to be looked upon as small or little, as to the use or forbearance of it, during the continuance of that law, nor yet as a sufficient reason for the abrogation of that law; since, be the thing never so small in itself, yet being by great deliberation first established, and for a long time since received in the church, and contended for with real and great reason on the one side, be the reasons never so plausible (which yet hitherto does not appear) on the other, yet the consequence of a change cannot be accounted small, since it is certainly very hazardous at best, and doubtful what mischief such a change may occasion, how far it may proceed, and where it may end; especially since the experience of all governments has made it evident, that there was hardly ever any thing altered in any settled estate, which was not followed by further



and further alterations, and several inconveniences attending those alterations, unforeseen indeed at first, but such as, in the event, made too great impressions upon the public to be accounted either small or in considerable.

These exceptions therefore being thus stript of their plausibility and force too, and returned upon the makers of them, it follows, that notwithstanding all the late harangues concerning our differing in lesser things, (as the phrase still goes,) and our contending about shadows, and the like, made by some amongst us, who would fain be personally popular at the cost of the public, and build themselves a reputation with the rabble upon the ruins of that church, which by all the obligations of oaths and gratitude they are bound to support, as (I am sure) that supports them; it follows, I say, that for the governors of our church to be ready, after all this, to yield up the received constitutions of it, either to the infirmity, or importunity, or the plausible exceptions (as their advocates are pleased to term them) of our clamorous dissenters, is so far from being a part either of the piety or prudence of those governors, (as the same advocates insinuate,) that it is the fear of many, both pious and prudent too, that in the end it is like to prove no other than the letting a thief into the house, only to avoid the noise and trouble of his rapping at the door.

And thus much for the first thing proposed, which was, to examine and consider the pretences alleged by dissenters for our quitting or yielding up any of the constitutions of our church. I come now to the

Second general thing, which is, to shew what are naturally like to be the consequences of such a yieldance.

In order to which, I shall consider these two things.

1. What the temper and disposition of those men, who press for such compliances with them, used to be. And,

2. What the effect and consequence of such compliances has been heretofore. And,

1. For the temper of the men; this certainly should be considered; and if it ought to give any force to their demands, it ought to be extremely peaceable and impartial. But are there any qualities incident to the nature of man, which these persons are further from? For do they treat the governors of the church with any other appellation but that of *Baal's priests, formalists, dumb dogs, proud popish prelates, haters of God and good men*, and the like? I say, is not this their usual dialect? And can we imagine that the spirit of Christianity can suggest such language and expressions? Is it possible, that where true religion governs in the heart, it should thus utter itself at the mouth? And to shew yet further, that this temper can manifest itself by actions as well as words, did not those who now plead conscience against law, in the year 41, persecute, plunder, kill, and murder those who pleaded and followed conscience according to law? And can any one assure the government that they will not, under the same circumstances, do the same things again?

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And for their impartiality, did they ever grant allowance or toleration to any who were dissenters from them? The presbyterian would grant none, and he has given the world so much under his own hand, in those many vehement books wrote by him on this subject; one of which, I well remember long since, was by a kind of sanctified quibble entitled, *Intolerable Toleration*, pamphlet mean enough, and of little note in the world, but as it served to shew the temper of the presbyterian, and how utterly averse he was to the indulging of any of a different persuasion from himself. And when his younger brother the independent, the abler and more thriving sectarian of the two, had tripped up his heels *in the Lord*, (a word then much in fashion,) and so brought in his independency, with a kind of toleration along with it; yet still prelacy, no less than papacy itself, stood expressly excepted from any benefit, favour, or toleration, from the one party or the other; that is to say, both of them were ready to tolerate Turks, Jews, infidels, (and even all who will but acknowledge one God,) rather than those of the communion of the church of England. This has been the way and temper of the persons whom we have to deal with. And now is it not pity but the whole government, civil and ecclesiastical, should bend and veil to such patterns of humility and self-denial, and forthwith abrogate and destroy all its laws, only because there is a faction disposed to break through and trample upon them? A faction which nothing can win, nothing oblige, and which will be sure to requite such a favour once done them, by turning it to the utmost reproach and ruin (if possible) of those who did it. And thus having given some short account of the temper and disposition of these men, I come now in the

Second place to consider, what the effect and consequence of such compliances and relaxations has been heretofore. And for this I appeal to the judgment, reading, and experience of all who have in any measure applied themselves to the observation of men and things, whether they ever yet found that any, who pressed for indulgences and forbearances, did it with a real intent to acquiesce, and take up in those forbearances once granted them, without proceeding any further? None, I am sure, ever yet did, but used them only as an art or instrument to get into power, and to make every concession a step to a further demand; since every grant renders the person to whom it is made so much the more considerable, and dangerous to be denied, when he shall take the boldness to ask more. To grant is generally to give ground. And such persons ask some things only, in order to get others without asking; for no encroachers upon, or enemies to any public constitution, ask all at first. Sedition itself is modest in the beginning, and no more than toleration may be petitioned for, when in the issue nothing less than empire and dominion is designed.

The nature of man acts the same way, whether in matters civil or ecclesiastical. And can we so soon forget the methods by which that violent faction grew upon the throne between the years forty and sixty? Did not the facility and goodness of king Charles I. embolden their impudence, instead of satisfying their desires? Was not every condescension, every concession, every remission of his own right so far from allaying the fury of their greedy appetites,



that, like a breakfast, it rather called up the stomach, and fitted it the more for a dinner? Did not craving still grow upon granting, till nothing remained to be asked on one side, or given on the other, but the life of the giver?

Thus it was with the state; and I would fain hear any solid reason to prove that it will not fare alike with the church. For how has the papacy grown to that enormous height, and assumed such an extravagant power over sovereign princes, but by taking advantage from their own grants and favours to that rapacious and ungrateful see? which still took occasion from thence to raise itself gradually to further and further pretensions; till courtesy quickly passed into claim; and what was got by petition, was held by prerogative; so that at length insolence, grown big and bold with success, knew no bounds, but trampled upon the neck of emperors, controlled the sceptre with the crosier, and in the face of the world openly avowed a superiority and preeminence over crowned heads. Thus grew the papacy, and by the same ways will also grow other sects; for there is a papacy in every sect or faction; they all design the very same height or greatness, though the pope alone hitherto has had the wit and fortune to compass it.

And thus having shewn what have been the effects of such concessions heretofore, as well as described the temper of the persons who now press for them; I suppose it will not be very difficult for us to judge, what are like to be the future effects and consequences of the same amongst ourselves. Concerning which I shall lay down this assertion; That what effects and consequences any thing has had formerly and usually, and what in its own nature it tends to, and is apt to produce, it is infinitely sottish and irrational to imagine or suppose that it will not produce and cause in the world for the future. And I believe hardly any nation or government, but ours, would suffer the same cheat to be trumped upon it twice immediately together. Every society in the world stands in the strength of certain laws, customs, and received usages, uniting the several parts of it into one body; and accordingly the parting with any one of those laws or customs is a real dissolution of the continuity, and consequently a partial destruction of the whole. It certainly shakes and weakens all the fabric; and weakness is but destruction begun; it tends to it, and naturally ends in it.

But to pass from argumentations founded upon the general nature of things, to the same made evident to sense by particular instances; let us here first of all suppose our dissenters to be dealt with upon terms of comprehension, (as they call it,) and took into the communion of the church, without submitting to the present conditions of its communion, or any necessary obligation to obey the established rules of it, then these things must follow; first, that men shall come into the national ministry of the church of England full of the Scotch covenant, and all those rebellious principles fresh and keen upon their spirits, which raised and carried on the late fatal war. Then will it also follow, that in the same diocese, and sometimes in the very same town, some shall use the surplice, and some shall not; and each shall have their parties prosecuting one another with the bitterest hatreds and animos-

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ities. Some in the same church, and at the same time, shall receive the sacrament kneeling, some standing, and others possibly sitting; some shall use the cross in baptism, and others shall not only not use it themselves, but shall also inveigh and preach against those who do. Some shall read this part of the common prayer, some that, and some perhaps none at all. And where (as in cathedrals) they cannot avoid the having it read by others, they shall come into the church when it is done, and stepping up into the pulpit, (with great gravity no doubt,) shall conceive a long, crude, extemporary prayer, in reproach of all the prayers which the church, with such admirable prudence and devotion, had been making before. Nay, in the same cathedral you shall see one prebendary in a surplice, another in a long cloak, another in a short coat, or jacket; and in the performance of the public service some standing up at the Creed, the *Gloria Patri*, and the reading of the gospel; and others sitting, and perhaps laughing, and winking upon their fellow schismatics, in scoff of those who practise these decent orders of the church. And from hence the mischief shall pass from priest to people, dividing them also into irreconcilable parties and factions; so that some shall come to church when such an one preaches, and absent themselves when another does. I will not hear this formalist, says one; and I will not hear that schismatic, (with better reason,) says another. But in the mean while the church, by these horrible disorders, is torn in pieces, and the common enemies of it, the papists, and some (who hate it as much) gratified. These, I say, are some of the certain, unavoidable effects of comprehension; nor indeed could any other, or better, be expected by those who knew, that their surest way to ruin the church would be to get into the preferments of it. So that I dare avouch, that to bring in comprehension, is nothing else but, in plain terms, to establish a schism in the church by law, and so bring a plague into the very bowels of it, which is more than sufficiently endangered already, by having one in its neighbourhood; a plague which shall eat out the very heart and soul, and consume the vitals and spirits of it, and this to such a degree, that in the compass of a few years it shall scarce have any, visible being or subsistence, or so much as the face of a national church to be known by.

But now from comprehension it may be natural and proper enough for us to pass to toleration. Concerning which latter, since it has had the fortune to get a law (or something like a law) made in its behalf, I think there cannot be a matter of greater moment or truer charity, than to inform men's consciences how far this new law will warrant them in their separation from the church. For the vulgar and less knowing part of the nation do verily reckon, that this, as an act for toleration, has utterly cancelled all former obligations, which did or might lie upon them, to join with the church in the public worship of God, But this is a very great and dangerous mistake, and may, if persisted in, cost them no less than their souls; for certain it is, that there are laws extant amongst us, enjoining conformity to, and communion with, the established church, as likewise obedience to the pastors thereof, legally set over it and the respective members of the same: and consequently, that as long as the

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obligation of these laws continues, conformity to it must be a duty, and non conformity a sin: and lastly, that the obligation of these laws does and must continue till the said laws are actually repealed; which as yet, I am sure, they are not, and I hope never will. Thus therefore stands our case. But what effect then, will some say, has this act for toleration? Why, truly, none at all, as to the nature and quality of the actions commanded or prohibited by the preceding positive laws of the church; but as to the penalties annexed to those laws against the violators of them, these indeed are taken off and rescinded by this toleration, (or indulgence rather, for strictly it is no more.) So that it may, I confess, give temporal impunity to such as transgress upon this account, but for all that, it can never by so doing warrant the transgression itself; it may indeed indemnify the person, but cannot take away the guilt, which, resulting from the very nature of the action, is inseparable from it. Nor is it able to take off all sorts of penalties neither; forasmuch as those enacted by the divine law can never be remitted or abrogated by any human law or temporal authority whatsoever. And therefore our separatists will do well to consider, that the laws of our church, (admitting them to be but human laws, yet) so long as they neither require any thing false in belief nor immoral in practice, stand ratified by that general law of God, commanding obedience to all lawful, though but civil and temporal authorities; and consequently oblige the conscience, in the strength of that general divine law, to an obedience to all that shall be enacted and enjoined by the said authorities. So that when God shall come to pass sentence upon men for their disobedience to the same, whether in this world or the next, I fear that no plea of toleration will be able to ward off the execution.

Most true it is, both from principles of philosophy and divinity, that the abrogation of the positive declared penalties of a law is no abrogation or repeal of the law itself. And accordingly upon this occasion I must declare, that penalties and rewards are not of the essence of a law, but extrinsic to it; nor does any law owe its obliging power to them, but solely to the sovereign will of the legislators: so that the taking away the penalties of any law does but leave the obliging power of the law as it was before; law being properly nothing else, but the will of the supreme power to the persons subject to it, concerning something to be done or not done, possessed or not possessed by, or any ways belonging to, the said persons. This, I affirm, comprehends the whole nature of a law precisely considered; and as for the annexion of punishments to the violation, or of rewards to the performance of it, they are not of the precise intrinsic nature and obligation of a law, but are added only as appendages to strengthen it, and procure a more certain awe to it and performance of it: forasmuch as man will be more likely not to transgress a law, being under the fear of a declared punishment for so doing, and to perform it upon a persuasion of a sure promised reward for such a performance, than if neither of these were added to it. Nevertheless, had God said to mankind, I command you to do this, and my will is that you forbear that, without expressing any reward for doing the former, or penalty for not doing the latter; it had been as duly and essentially

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a law, and the obligation thereof as real, as if the reward and penalty had been by an express sanction declared to either. And if any one should here object, How then could God punish for any neglect of his law, or reward for the doing of it, had there been no sanction of a punishment for the former, nor of reward for the latter? I answer, that the sovereignty and justice of God, together with the nature and merit of every action of the creature, will sufficiently account for this, without recurring to any positive sanction of penalties or rewards; it being unquestionably just with God (and natural conscience, with the τὸ γνῶστικὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, is sufficient to teach every man that it is so) to punish an action in the nature of it worthy of punishment, though he should not declare by any positive sanction before hand, that he would punish it; and in like manner he may freely reward any good action, though he should never oblige himself by any precedent promise so to do. And upon this account it seems to me very remarkable, that in the ten commandments (which are so many particular laws of God) there are seven of the ten without either reward or penalty in the decalogue annexed to them; and no doubt, though God had never expressed either of them elsewhere in the writings of Moses, they had, notwithstanding, been as essentially laws, and as really obliging, as they were afterwards upon the clearest and most express declaration of the said rewards and penalties. And here, I confess, I look upon God's declaring the addition of penalties and regards to his laws, rather as an effect of his goodness than of his strict justice; nothing, that I know of, obliging him thereunto upon that account. Not but that I acknowledge also, that such a declaration adds great strength to his laws; as to their prevalence upon men to observe them. But for all that, to prevail with men actually to do their duty, and to oblige them to it, are very different things, and proceed upon very different grounds. The laws of men, I own, are extremely lame and defective without these two great props to support them, and very hardly able (especially since the corruption of man's nature by sin) to compass the proper ends of laws upon men barely by the sense of precise duty. So that if there were no rewards or punishments proposed, there would hardly be any actual obedience. However, a law will still be truly and properly a law, so long as it obliges men, though it may be unable to bring them actually to obey it. As a cripple, though never so lame and weak, and even with his legs cut off too, is a man still, and as essentially, though not as integrally so, as he was before.

This I thought fit to discourse about the nature and obligation of laws, penalties, and rewards, upon this occasion. But to return to the high and mighty piece of policy sublimate, (as I may call it,) toleration. I am far from grudging our dissenters the benefit of the law they have obtained, (if it be such.) and further from soliciting a repeal of it; but being providentially engaged in the subject I am now upon, I cannot but, as a divine, discharge



my conscience both to God and the world, by declaring what I judge, according to the best of my reason, will, and unavoidably must, be the consequences of a thing, which this church and kingdom, ever since they were a church and kingdom, have been wholly strangers to. And because such consequences, if drawn out to the utmost, would be innumerable, I shall only mention one instead of all the rest, as being certain, obvious, and undeniable; and that is, the vast increase; of sects and heresies amongst us, which, where all restraint is taken off, must of necessity grow to the highest pitch that the Devil himself can raise such a Babel to; so that there shall not be one bold ringleading knave or fool, who shall have the confidence to set up a new sect, but shall find proselytes enough to wear his name, and list themselves under his banner; of which the Quakers<sup>9</sup> are a demonstration past all dispute. And then what a vast part of this poor deluded people must of necessity be drawn after these impostors! So that as number and novelty generally run down truth and paucity for a while; the church, and orthodox part of the nation in communion with it, will probably in a short space be overborne and swallowed up by the spreading mischief. And moreover, since it is impossible for government or society to subsist long, where there is no national bond or cement of religion to hold it together, it must quickly dissolve into confusion: and since confusion cannot last always, but that it must in the issue settle into something or other; that [something] here no doubt will and must be popery, popery infallibly and irresistibly: for the church of England being once suppressed, no other church or sect amongst us (for all besides it are no better) has any bottom or foundation, or indeed any tolerable pretence to set up and settle itself upon.

And that this fatal consequence thus drawn is neither false nor precarious, we may be assured from the papists themselves. For did not their late agent,<sup>10</sup> who lost his life in their service, and whose letters are so well known, tell us in one of them, “that the way, by which he intended to have popery brought in, was by toleration; and that if an act for general liberty of conscience could be obtained, it would give the greatest blow to the protestant religion here, that ever it received from its birth?” And did he not also complain, “that all their disappointments, miseries, and hazards, were owing to that fatal revocation (as he calls it) of the king’s declaration for liberty of conscience?” And lastly, does he not affirm, that all the advantages they expected to make, was by the help of the *nonconformists*, as *presbyterians*, *independents*, and *other sects*? (I transcribe his own words.) And shall we not here believe, that the papists themselves best knew what were the properest and most efficacious ways for the prosecuting their own interest? Nay, and did not king James II. with great ostentation as well as earnestness, often declare, that he would have a kind of *magna charta*, (forsooth,) or standing law for liberty of conscience, in this nation for ever? And can we believe, that

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9 George Fox, an illiterate cobbler, first beginner and head of them.

10 Coleman.

his design was to keep out popery by this project? No, surely; for such as believe even transubstantiation itself cannot believe this. So that let all our separatists and dissenters know, that they are the pope's journeymen, to carry on his work, (and for ought I know, were but king James amongst us, might be treated, together with his nuncio, at Guildhall.) They are, I say, his tools, to do that for him which he cannot do for himself; (as a carpenter cannot be an hatchet, how effectually soever he may use it.) In a word, they are his harbingers and forerunners to prepare and make plain a way for him to come amongst us; and consequently they, even they, who are the loudest criers out against popery, are the surest and most industrious factors for it. For it is evident to the whole world, that it is their weakening the church of England by their separation from it, and their unsufferable virulent invectives against it, which makes old Renard the pope, with his wolves about him, presume, that he may attack it now (being thus weakened by our encouraged dissenters to his hands) with victory and success. The thief first breaks the hedge and mounds of the vineyard, to fetch away a few clusters; but the wild boar enters by the same breach, and makes havoc of all. But let us in the mean time with all Christian submission wait the good pleasure of Al mighty God, and our governors, for one seven years, and by that time I question not but we shall see what this new project tends to, and is like to end in; while, at present, we have but too great reason to believe, that the chief design of some of the busiest contrivers, and most indefatigable promoters of it, was, and is, by such a promiscuous toleration of so many sects and heresies amongst us, to bring the church of England at length to need a toleration itself, and not to have it, when it needs it.



As to which truly primitive church, (whatsoever fate may attend it,) this may and must be said of it, that it is a church which claims nothing of secular power to itself, but, like a poor orphan exposed naked and friendless to the world, pretends to no other helps but the goodness of God, the piety of its principles, and the justness of its own cause, to maintain it; a church not born into the world with teeth and talons, like popery and presbytery, but like a lamb, innocent, and defenceless, and silent, not only under the shearer, but under the butcher too; a church, which as it is obedient to the civil power, without any treacherous distinctions or reserves, so would be glad to have the countenance and protection of that power in return for her hearty obedience to it; though after all, if it cannot be protected by it, it is yet resolved to be peaceable and quiet under it, and while it parts with every thing else, to hold fast its integrity.



And now if Almighty God should, for the nation's unworthy and ungrateful usage of so excellent a church, so pure and peaceable a religion, bereave us of it, by letting in upon us the tyranny and superstition of another, it is pity but it should come in its full force and power; and then, I hope, that such as have betrayed and enslaved their country will consider, that there is a temporal, as well as an ecclesiastical interest concerned in the case, and that there are lands to be converted, as well as heretics; and that those who pretend, that they

can with a word speaking change the substance of some things, can with as much ease alter the property of others. God's will be done in all things; but if popery ever comes in by English hands, (as I see not how it can come in by any other,) I doubt not but it will fully pay the scores of those who brought it in. But,

3. I come now to the third and last general thing at first proposed, which was to shew, what influence and efficacy a strict adherence to the constitutions of the church, and an absolute refusal to part with any of them, is like to have upon the settlement of the church, and the purity of the gospel amongst us.

As for this I shall shew three ways, by which it tends effectually to procure such a settlement. As,

1. By being the grand and most sovereign means to cause and preserve unity in the church. The psalmist mentions this as one of the noblest and greatest excellencies of the Jewish church, [Psalm cxxii. 3](#), that it *was built as a city which is at unity in itself*. Unity gives strength, and strength duration. The papists abroad frequently tell the English, that if we could but once be united amongst ourselves, we should be a formidable church indeed. And for this reason, there was none whom they so mortally hated (I speak upon certain information) as that late renowned archbishop and martyr, whose whole endeavour was to establish a settled uniformity in all the British churches; for his zeal and activity in which glorious attempt the presbyterians cut him off, according to the papists hearts desire.

Now a resolution to keep all the constitutions of the church, the parts of its service, and the conditions of its communion entire, without lopping off any one of them, must needs unite all the ministers and members of it, while it engages them, as the apostle so passionately exhorts the Corinthians, [1 Cor. i. 10](#), *to speak all the same thing*. Not that I think that the apostle's meaning is, that all should speak the same thing in the very same words, (though I cannot disprove this neither, as to a considerable part of the divine service.) But this I affirm, that the using the same words (still allowing for the diversity of languages) is the readiest, the surest, and most effectual way to speak the same things of any other way whatsoever: and it is sufficiently known, that the laws of this national church, by the liturgy it has provided and prescribed, enjoins the whole nation so to do. But, on the contrary, if any one be indulged in the omission of the least thing there enjoined, they cannot be said to *speak all the same thing*. In which case, besides the deformity of the thing itself, so much exploded by St. Paul in the whole fourteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, viz. that where the worship of God was the same, the manner of performing it should be with so much diversity, as the apostle there tells us it was; I say, besides the undecency of it, such a difference of practice, even in any Christian congregation, must and will certainly produce an irreconcilable division of minds, since the said diversity cannot be imagined to proceed from any thing else but an opinion that one man understands and does his duty after a better and more spiritual manner than another; and consequently has got the start

of his neighbour or fellow-minister, either in point of judgment or devotion; in neither of which is any man apt to give precedency to another, especially when it comes once to be contested: unity without uniformity being much like essence without existence; a mere word and a notion, and no where to be found in nature.

2. A strict adherence to the constitutions and orders of the church, is another way to settle it, by begetting in the church's enemies themselves an opinion of the requisiteness and fitness of those usages, for which they see the governors and ministers of the church (men of unexceptionable learning and integrity) so concerned, that they can by no means be brought to recede from them. Let factious biased people pretend what they will outwardly, yet they cannot but reason the matter with themselves inwardly, that certainly there must be something more than ordinary in those things, which men of parts, judgment, and good lives so heartily contend for, and so tenaciously adhere to. For it is not natural to suppose, that serious men can or will be resolute for trifles, fight for straws, and encounter the fiercest oppositions for such small things, as all the interests of piety, order, and religion may be equally provided for, whether the church retains or parts with them. This certainly is unnatural, and morally impossible. And, on the other side, let none think that the people will have any reverence for that, for which the pastors of the church themselves shew an indifference.

And here let me utter a great, but sad truth; a truth not so fit to be spoke, as to be sighed out by every true son and lover of the church, viz. that the wounds which the church of England now bleeds by, she received *in the house of her friends*, (if they may be called so,) viz. her treacherous undermining friends, and that most of the nonconformity to her, and separation from her, together with a contempt of her excellent constitutions, have proceeded from nothing more than from the false, partial, half conformity of too many of her ministers. The surplice sometime worn, and oftener laid aside; the liturgy so read, and mangled in the reading, as if they were ashamed of it; the divine service so curtailed, as if the people were to have but the tenths of it from the priest, for the tenths he had received from them; the clerical habit neglected by such in orders as frequently travel the road clothed like farmers or graziers, to the unspeakable shame and scandal of their profession; the holy sacrament undecently and slovenly administered; the furniture of the altar abused and embezzled; and the table of the Lord profaned. These and the like vile passages have made some schismatics, and confirmed others; and, in a word, have made so many nonconformists to the church, by their conforming to their minister.

It was an observation and saying of a judicious prelate, that of all the sorts of enemies which our church had, there was none so deadly, so pernicious, and likely to prove so fatal to it, as the conforming puritan. It was a great truth, and not very many years after ratified by direful experience. For if you would have the conforming puritan described to you, as to what he is,

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He is one who lives by the altar, and turns his back upon it; one who catches at the preferments of the church, but hates the discipline and orders of it; one who practises conformity, as papists take oaths and tests, that is, with an inward abhorrence of what he does for the present, and a resolution to act quite contrary when occasion serves; one who, during his conformity, will be sure to be known by such a distinguishing badge, as shall point him out to, and secure his credit with, the dissenting brotherhood; one, who still declines reading the church service himself, leaving that work to curates or readers, thereby to keep up a profitable interest with thriving seditious tradesmen, and groaning, ignorant, but rich widows; one who, in the midst of his conformity, thinks of a turn of state, which may draw on one in the church too; and accordingly is very careful to behave himself so as not to overshoot his game, but to stand right and fair in case a wished for change should bring fanaticism again into fashion; which it is more than possible that he secretly desires, and does the utmost he can to promote and bring about.

These, and the like, are the principles which act and govern the conforming puritan; who, in a word, is nothing else but ambition, avarice, and hypocrisy, serving all the real interests of schism and faction in the church's livery. And therefore, if there be any one who has the front to own himself a minister of our church, to whom the foregoing character may be justly applied, (as I fear there are but too many,) howsoever such an one may for some time soothe up and flatter himself in his detestable dissimulation, yet when he shall hear of such and such of his neighbours, his parishioners, or acquaintance, gone over from the church to conventicles, of several turned quakers, and of others fallen off to popery; and lastly, when the noise of those national dangers and disturbances, which are every day threatening us, shall ring about his ears, let him then lay his hand upon his false heart, and with all seriousness of remorse accusing himself to God and his own conscience, say, I am the person, who, by my conforming by halves, and by my treacherous prevaricating with the duty of my profession, so sacredly promised, and so solemnly sworn to, have brought a reproach upon the purest and best constituted church in the Christian world; it is I, who, by slighting and slubbing over her holy service and sacraments, have scandalized and cast a stumblingblock before all the neighbourhood, to the great danger of their souls; I, who have been the occasion of this man's faction, that man's quakerism, and another's popery; and thereby, to the utmost of my power, contributed to those dismal convulsions which have so terribly shook and weakened both church and state. Let such a mocker of God and man, I say, take his share of all this horrid guilt; for both heaven and earth will lay it at his door, as the general result of his actions: it is all absolutely his own, and will stick faster and closer to him, than to be thrown off and laid aside by him as easily as his surplice.

3. And lastly, a strict adherence to the rules of the church, without yielding to any abatements in favour of our separatists, is the way to settle and establish it, by possessing its enemies with an awful esteem of the conscience and constancy of the governors and

ministers of it. For if the things under debate be given up to the adversary, it must be upon one of these two accounts; either, 1. That the persons who thus yield them up judge them unfit to be retained; or, 2. That they find themselves unable to retain them: one or both of these must of necessity be implied in such a yieldance. If the first, then will our dissenters cry out, Where has been the conscience of our church governors for so many years, in imposing and insisting upon those things which they themselves now acknowledge and confess not fit to be insisted upon? And is not this at once to own all the libellous charges and invectives which our nonconformists have been so long pursuing our church with? Is not this to fling dirt upon the government of it ever since the reformation? Nay, and does not the same dirt light upon the reformers themselves, who first put the church into the order it is in at present, and died for it when they had done? Such, therefore, as are disposed to humour these dissenters, by giving up any of the constitutions of our church, should do well to consider what and how much is imported by such an act; and this they shall find to be no less than a tacit acknowledgment of the truth and justice of all those pleas, by which our adversaries have been contending for such a yieldance to them all along. The truth is, it will do a great deal towards the removal of the charge of schism from their own door to ours, by representing the grounds of their separation from us hitherto lawful at the least. For the whole state of the matter between us lies in a very narrow compass, viz. that either the church of England enjoins something unlawful, as the condition of her communion, and then she is schismatical; or there is no unlawful thing thus enjoined by her, and then those who separate from her are and must be the schismatics: and till they prove that the church of England requires of such as do or would communicate with her either the belief or profession of something false, or the practice of something impious or immoral, it will be impossible to prove the unlawfulness of those things which she has made the conditions of her communion; and consequently to free those who separate from her from the charge of schism. Now so long as this is the persuasion of the governors of our church concerning these things, the world can not but look upon them, in their immovable adherence to them, as acting like men of conscience, and, which is next to it, like men of courage. The reputation of which two great qualities in our bishops will do more to the daunting of the church's enemies, than all their concessions can do to the gaining them; for that is impossible. In the mean time, courage awes an enemy, and, backed with conscience, confounds him. He who, having the law on his side, and justice too, (for they are not always the same,) resolves not to yield, takes the directest way to be yielded to; for where an enemy sees resolution, he supposes strength, and upon trial generally finds it; but to yield, is to confess weakness, and consequently to embolden opposition. And I believe it will be one day found, that nothing has contributed more to make the dissenting nonconforming party consider able, than their being thought so. It has been our courting them, and treating with them, which has made them stand upon their own terms, instead of coming over to ours.

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And here I shall shut up this consideration with one remark, and it is about the council of Trent; the design of calling which council, in all the princes who were at all for the calling one, was to humble and reduce the power of the papacy; and great and fierce opposition was made against that power all along by the prelates and ambassadors of those princes; but so far were they from prevailing, that the papacy weathered out the storm, and fixed itself deeper and stronger than ever it was before. But what method did it take thus to settle itself? Why, in a word, no other but a positive resolution not to yield or part with any thing, nor to give way either to the importunity or plausible exceptions, nor, which is yet more, to the power of those princes. So that, as the renowned writer of the history of that council observes, notwithstanding all those violent blusters and assaults made on every side against the papal power, “yet in the end,” (I give you the very words of the historian,) “the patience and resolution of the legates overcame all.”



Now what may we gather from hence? Why, surely, this very naturally; that if courage and resolution could be of such force as to support a bad cause, it cannot be of less to maintain and carry on a good one; and if it could thus long prop up a rot ten building, which has no foundation, why may it not only strengthen, but even perpetuate that which has so firm an one as the church of England now stands upon?

And here to sum up all: could St. Paul find it necessary to take such a course with those erroneous, judaizing dissenters in the church of Galatia, as *not to give place to them, no, not for an hour?* and is it not more necessary for us, where the pretences for the schism are less plausible, and the persons likely to be perverted by it much more numerous? Let us therefore, by way of close, briefly recapitulate and lay together the forealleged reasons and arguments, why we should by all means deal with our separatists and dissenters as St. Paul (a most authentic example) did with those judaizing hybrid Christians, viz. *not give place to them at all.* And that because,

1. By our yielding or giving place to them, we have no rational ground to conclude that we shall gain them, but rather encourage them to encroach upon us by further demands; forasmuch as the experience of all governments has found concessions so far from quieting dissenters, that they have only animated them to greater and fiercer contentions.

2. By our yielding or giving place to them, we make the established laws, in which these men can neither prove injustice nor inexpedience, submit to them, who, in duty, reason, and conscience, ought to obey and submit to those laws.

3. By our yielding or giving place to them, we grant that to those, who, being themselves in power, never thought it reasonable to grant the same to others in the like case.

4. By our yielding or giving place to them, we bring a pernicious, incurable schism into the church, if it be by a comprehension; though it is hoped that the wisdom of the government will prevent the equal danger which some fear from an unlimited toleration.





5. By our yielding to these men in a way of comprehension, we bring such men into the church, as once destroyed and pulled it down as unlawful and antichristian, and never yet renounced those principles upon which they did so, nor (as it is rationally to be thought) will.

6. By such a comprehension we endeavour to satisfy those persons, who could never yet agree amongst themselves about any one thing or constitution in which they would all rest satisfied.

7. By indulging them this way, we act partially, in gratifying one sect, who can pretend to no more favour than what others may as justly claim, who are not comprehended; and withal imprudently, by indulging one party, who will do us no good, to the exasperation of many more, who have a greater power to do us hurt.

8. By such a concession we sacrifice the constitutions of our church to the will and humour of those whom the church has no need of; neither their abilities, parts, piety, interest, nor any thing else belonging to them, considered.

9. And lastly, by such a course we open the mouths of the Romish party against us, who will be still reproaching us for going off from their church to a constitution, which we ourselves now think fit to relinquish and surrender up, by altering her discipline and the terms of her communion; and may justly ask of us, where, and in what kind of church constitution, we intend finally to fix?

These, I say, amongst many more that might be named, are the reasons why we contend that our dissenters are by no means to be given place to in the least. And after all, may not this concluding question be likewise asked, viz. Whether, supposing that this yielding or giving up the things so long and earnestly disputed both for and against amongst us had been done in a parliamentary way, and seconded by the clergy's own solemn act and deed in convocation, it would be now imagined by any one of solid sense, reason, and experience, that the church of England should ever have seen the same rites, rules, and constitutions restored to it again; nay, even at that grand and glorious restoration of king Charles II. and of the whole nation with him, in the year sixteen hundred and sixty? No certainly, no; and I, for my own part, neither do nor can believe it; and let any one else (of a faith less than *able to remove mountains*) believe it, if he can.

And therefore what remains now, but that we implore the continued protection of the Almighty upon a church by such a miracle restored to us, and (all things considered) by no less a miracle hitherto preserved amongst us, powerfully to defeat her enemies and increase her friends, and so settle her upon the best and surest foundations of purity, peace, and order, that neither *the gates of hell*, nor all the arts of those within them, may ever prevail against her.



*Which he, the most sovereign Lord and Patron of our church, and Defender of our faith, of his infinite goodness effect. To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*



TO  
THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD  
GEORGE,

By divine Providence

LORD BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS.<sup>11</sup>

MY LORD,

SHOULD I but so much as think of any other countenance or patronage to these following Papers (as poor and mean as they are) from one either of other or lower principles than your Lordship, it would, instead of a becoming and due address, prove a direct affront to your honour.

My Lord, your Lordship was bred in two of the most eminent seminaries for loyalty and learning perhaps in Europe, viz. in the king's school at Westminster, and in that noble college of Christ Church in Oxford; in each of which you grew up not barely as in a school or college, but as in your proper, genuine, and connatural element, and accordingly took and drank in throughly from thence all that they were remarkable and great for: and they, my Lord, in requital have made your Lordship what you now so deservedly are, and what all so unanimously accounted your Lordship to be.

But, my Lord, it is time for me in modesty (and that to spare your Lordship's, as well as to shew my own) to with draw, and calmly and silently contenting myself with the naked contemplation and admiration of your Lordship's superlative worth and virtues, (being utterly unable to reach the very lowest pitch of them by the best and highest of my expressions,) I must with the utmost deference (the only height which I would aspire to) sincerely own, avow, and (both with hand and heart) subscribe myself,

My Lord,  
Your Honour's ever faithful,  
humble and obedient servant,  
ROBERT SOUTH.

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<sup>11</sup> This dedication refers to the twelve sermons next following.

THE  
SECOND DISCOURSE<sup>12</sup>

ON

**ISAIAH V. 20.**

Shewing the first grand instance of the fatal influence of words and names falsely applied, in the late subversion of the church of England by the malicious calumnies of the fanatic party, charging her with Popery and Superstition.

**ISAIAH v. 20.**

*Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil, &c.*

**I** FORMERLY made an entrance upon this text in a discourse by itself; and after some short explication of the terms, and something premised by way of introduction to the main design and further drift of the words, I cast the whole prosecution of them under these three heads.

First, To give some general account of the nature of good and evil, and of the reason upon which they are founded.

Secondly, To shew that the way by which good and evil commonly operate upon the mind of man, is by those respective names and appellations by which they are notified and conveyed to the mind.

Thirdly, To shew the mischief which directly, naturally, and unavoidably follows from the misapplication and confusion of these names.

These three things, I say, I prosecuted and despatched in my first and general discourse upon this text and subject: and in this my second and following discourses upon the same, I shall endeavour to assign the several instances, in which the mischievous effects then mentioned do actually shew themselves, and by sad experience are but too commonly found and felt in most of the affairs of human life. And here we are to strike out into a very large field indeed; for could all of them be recounted in their utmost compass and comprehension, they would spread as far and wide as even the world itself, and grasp in the concerns of all mankind put together. For is it not the first and most universal voice of human nature, “Who will shew us any good?” and the next to it, “Who shall deliver us from evil?” Is it not the sole project and business of all the powers and faculties both of soul and body, how to procure us those things that may help, and to ward off those that may hurt us? Is it not the great end of a rational being to compass and acquire to itself the happiness of this world by



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<sup>12</sup> The first sermon upon this text is in vol. ii. p. 108.

what it enjoys, and to secure to itself the enjoyment of the next world by what it does? And is there any third thing alleageable in which a man can be concerned, besides what he is to do, and what he is to enjoy? and must not the adequate object of both these be good?

But then, as the shadow still attends the body, so there is no one thing, relating either to the actions or enjoyments of man, in which he is not liable to deception; no good, but what, looking upon its dark side, he may misjudge to be evil; and no evil, but what, by a false light, he may imagine to be good: the consequence of which will be sure to reach him by an effect as good or evil as its cause. So that the subject here before us is as large as good and evil, as comprehensive as right judgment and mistake, and the effects of both are as infinite, numberless, and in conceivable, as all the particular ways and means, by which a man is capable of being deceived and made miserable.

But since to rest here, and to take up only in universals, would be useless and unprofitable; as, on the other side, to reckon up all particulars would be end less and impossible, we will endeavour to reduce the forementioned fatal effects of the misapplication of those great governing names of good and evil to certain heads, and those such as shall take in the principal things which the happiness or misery of human societies depends upon; which I conceive to be these three.

1st, Religion. 2dly, Civil government. And 3dly, The private interests of particular persons.

In all which, if we find the scene of these unhappy effects no where so full and lively set forth as here amongst ourselves, I hope, as the truth will be al together as great, as if drawn from all the kingdoms and nations round about us; so the edification will be greater, by how much the concern is nearer, and the application more particular.

1. And first for religion. Religion is certainly in itself the best thing in the world; and it is as certain, that, as it has been managed by some, it has had the worst effects: such being the nature, or rather the fate of the best things, to be transcendently the worst upon corruption. Forasmuch as the operative strength of a thing may continue the same, when the quality that should direct the operation is changed: as a man may have as strong an arm and as sharp a sword to fight with in a bad cause as in a good. And surely a sadder consideration can hardly enter into the heart of man, than that religion, the great means appointed by God himself for the saving of souls, should be so often made by men as efficacious an instrument of their destruction.

Now the direful and mischievous effects of calling good evil, and evil good, both with respect to the general interest of religion, and to the particular state of it amongst ourselves, will appear from these following instances.

1. Some men's villainous and malicious calling of the religion of the church of England, *popery*.

2. Their calling such as have schismatically deserted its communion, *true protestants*.



3. Their calling the late subversion of the church, and the whole government of it, *reformation*.

4. Their calling the execution of the laws in be half of the church, *persecution*. And, 5thly and lastly, Their calling a betraying of the constitutions of the church by base compliances and half conformity, *moderation*.

In all which you have the shallow, brutish, unthinking multitude worded out of their religion by the worst and most detested appellations fastened upon the best of things, and the best and most plausible names applied to the very worst.

And this I shall demonstrate, by going over every one of these as distinctly and as briefly as I can.

1. And first for that masterpiece of falsehood and impudence, their calling and traducing the reformed, primitive, and apostolical religion of the church of England by the name of *popery*, an application of the word *popery* more irrational and absurd, if possible, than the thing itself. But what do I talk of the thing itself? when scarce one in five thousand of the loudest and fiercest exclaimers against popery knows so much as what popery means. Only that it is a certain word made up of six letters; that has been ringing in their ears ever since their infancy, and that strangely inflames, and transports, and sets them a madding they know not why nor wherefore. A word that sounds big and high in the mouths of carmen, broommen, scavengers, and watermen, on a 5th or 17th of November, when extortion and perjury, in place and power, thinks fit to authorize and let loose the rabble to try what metal the government is made of, under a plausible pretence of burning the pope, together with a fair intimation of what they long to be doing to some others, whom they hate much worse. Concerning which, by the way, I think that there never was so great a compliment passed upon the pope in this kingdom, since the reformation, as when the pope's picture and our Saviour's picture were so frequently burnt by the same hands, and upon the same account. We very well know the design of these men in both, but cannot so well tell how they will be able to excuse either the sedition of the one, or the scandal of the other; though, as for the pope, I dare undertake, that all the hurt that these fellows either can or will do him, shall never reach him any further than in his picture.

But to return to the charge of popery made against the church of England. It is certainly the most frontless, barefaced lie, and the most senseless calumny, that ever was dictated by the father of lies, or uttered by any of his sons. And I could wish myself but as sure of my own salvation, as I am that those wretches stand condemned in their own hearts and consciences while they are charging this upon us. Nevertheless, since the world is witness that they have made the charge, and thereby drawn and abused a great part of these kingdoms into a cursed, soul-ruining schism, let us take an estimate of the villainy of it by these two considerations.

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1st, Of the mind and carriage of the church of Rome, both towards the beginners and the supporters of the reformation of the church of England.

2dly, Of the several articles of the Romish belief, compared with the belief owned and professed by our church.

And I hope by these two we shall be able to discover what is popery, and what is not.

1. And first for the behaviour or carriage of the church of Rome towards us. Surely had she took us either for her sons or her friends, she would not have used us as she has done. For she is too wise to think to support her kingdom by dividing against herself. And as the apostle assures us that *no man hateth his own flesh*, so neither does any church anathematize, curse, burn, and destroy its faithfulest and most beloved members. Fire and fagot, racks and gibbets, are but a strange sort of love-tokens, yet such as the church of Rome has still followed the English reformers with. We stand excommunicated by her as heretics and schismatics; and there has not a minute passed since the reformation, in which she has not been endeavouring our destruction. The authors and compilers of our Liturgy and book of Homilies paid down their lives for these books at the stake; and will the virulent, unconscionable fanatics charge and reproach these books as popish, when the makers and assertors of them were butchered by the papists for their being so? The fanatics burnt the books, and the papists burnt the authors. By the former I hope you will take notice how much the fanatics abhor popery, and by the latter how much the papists love us. Love indeed is usually compared to a fire, but I never yet knew that the party beloved was consumed by it. The papists would burn us for being protestants, and the fanatics would cut our throats for being papists. And now if you would learn from hence which of the two we really are, I suppose, when you consider the judging abilities of both parties, you will easily allow the papists to understand what they do and say much better than the fanatics. But let us now, 2dly, in the next place consider the several articles of the Romish belief, as compared with the belief owned and professed by our church. And here,

First of all; Does the church of England own that prime and leading article of all popery, the pope's supremacy, an article so essential to the grandeur of the papacy, that without it the pope himself would not care a rush for all the rest? No, the very corner-stone of the English reformation was laid in an utter denial and disavowance of this point, for which our kings have lain under the papal curse, and the kingdoms been exposed to the ambition and rage of foreigners. And as we begun, so we have continued the reformation, by placing the English crown and the English church-supremacy upon the same head; and it is much if our oath of supremacy to the king should consist with an allegiance to the pope, such as the sottish, senseless fanatics are still charging us with.

2. In the second place; Do we of the church of England admit of the pope's infallibility? No, we look upon it as a sacrilegious invasion of an attribute too great and high for any but God himself. And so far are we from looking upon him as infallible, that we do not own

him so much as a judge appointed by Christ to receive the last appeals of the catholic church in matters of faith, discipline, or any thing else; and we are as little concerned whether he makes his decrees and pronounces his decisions *in cathedra* or *extra cathedram*. As no man has any other or better thoughts of a fox while he is in his hole than when he is out of it.

3. In the third place; Does the church of England own a transubstantiation of the elements in the sacrament into the natural body and blood of Christ, all the accidents of those elements continuing still the same? No, she rejects it as the greatest defiance of reason, and depravation of religion, that ever was obtruded upon the belief and consciences of men, and as a paradox, that, by destroying the judgment of some about sensible objects, undermines the very belief of the gospel, and the certainty of faith itself, the object of which must be first taken in by sense; and withal as a direct cause of the greatest impiety in practice, which is idolatry, and that of the very worst and meanest kind, in giving divine worship to a piece of bread, a thing so infinitely contrary to all the principles that the mind of man is capable of judging by, that if it could be made appear that the gospel did really affirm and declare this article in the very same sense in which the church of Rome holds it since the fourth Lateran council under Innocent III. I should be so far from believing it therefore, that I should look upon it as a sufficient reason for any rational man to demur to the divine authority of the gospel itself. For no thing can come from God that involves in it a contradiction. But as to this matter, our church has sufficiently declared her sense, both in her Articles and in her Liturgy.

4. In the fourth place; Does the church of England hold the divine authority of unwritten traditions equal to that of the scriptures, or written word of God, making them, together with, and as much as, the scriptures, part of the rule of faith? The church of Rome in the council of Trent positively and expressly affirms this. But the church of England explodes it as an insufferable derogation from the perfection of the holy scriptures, and withal as a wide and open door, through which the church of Rome has let in so many superstitious fopperies and groundless innovations into religion, and through which (claiming, as she does, the sole power of declaring traditions) she may, as her occasions serve, let in as many more as she pleases.

5. In the 5th place; Does the church of England hold auricular or private confession to the priest, as an integral part of repentance, and necessary condition of absolution? No; the church of England denies such confession to be necessary; either *necessitate praecepti*, as enjoined by any law or command of God; or *necessitate medii*, as a necessary means of pardon or remission of sins: and consequently rejects it as a snare and a burden groundlessly and tyrannically imposed upon the church; and too often and easily abused in the Romish communion to the basest and most flagitious purposes.

But so much of private confession as may be of spiritual use for the disburdening of a troubled conscience, unable of itself to master or grapple with its own doubts, by imparting them to some knowing, discreet, spiritual person for his advice and resolution about them;

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so much, I confess, the church of England does approve, advise, and allow of. I say, it does advise it, and that as a sovereign expedient, proper in the nature and reason of the thing, for the satisfaction of persons otherwise unable to satisfy themselves, but by no means does it enjoin it as a duty equally and universally required of all.

6. In the sixth place; Does the church of England hold purgatory, together with its appendant doctrine, of the pope's power to release souls out of it, and without which the pope would be little or nothing concerned for it? No, our church rejects it as a fable, and has quite put out this fire, by with drawing the fuel that only can keep it alive; to wit, the doctrine of venial sins, with that other of merit, and of works of supererogation.

7. In the seventh and last place; Does the church of England, either by its belief or practice, own that article about the invocation of saints, and the addressing our prayers immediately to them, that so by their mediation they may be tendered and made acceptable to God? No, our church cashiers the whole article, as contumelious to and inconsistent with the infinitely perfect mediatorship and intercession of Christ, so fully declared in [1 Tim. ii. 5](#). *There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*: a mediator too great to need either deputies or copartners in the discharge of that high office. Besides that such addresses or prayers to the saints cannot possibly be made by us in faith, (which yet *without faith cannot possibly please God*,) since we have no assurance that they hear those prayers, or have any certain and distinct knowledge of what particularly occurs and falls out here below; though indeed a general knowledge of the common constant concerns of the church, by reason of their having lived in the world, ought with great reason to be allowed them. But that is not sufficient to warrant a rational invocation of them upon our personal and particular occasions, since a particular knowledge of these can by no means be inferred or argued from a general knowledge of the other.

And thus I have gone over seven notable branches of the Romish faith, and there are many more of the like nature belonging to the same rotten stock; but these I am sure are the principal, it being impossible for a man to be a papist without holding these, or to hold these without being a papist. But now which of all these do our learned mouthing friends of the fanatic party prove to be held by our popish church of England, as they call it? I confess my thus going over these particulars in our church's vindication, cannot but have been a need less trouble to most of my hearers, as well as to my self; it being but little better than bringing so many arguments, to prove that it is not midnight, while the sun shines full in a man's face. But being to deal with the height of impudence and ignorance in conjunction, and with a sort of men, who abound with ignoramus's in the trial of spiritual as well as temporal matters, I thought fit for their sake to come to particulars, and, by a kind of an inductive demonstration, to prove to their wonderful and profound understandings, that two and two do not make six: and that what contradicts, overthrows, and destroys every

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article of popery, is not, cannot be popery. No; though the whole faction should, with a *nemine contradicente*, vote it to be so.

And perhaps those wretches never did real popery so great a service, nor gave their popish plot so mortal a wound, as when, tripping up the heels of their own narratives, by the advice of some half witted Ahitophels, they began to stretch the imputation of popery even to the church of England too, calling all of its communion papists in masquerade. But thanks be to God, that the mask they provided for us has pretty well took off the mask from themselves, and that their wisdom has not been altogether so great as their malice; for it is manifest that they have not acted as the wisest men in the world, the merciful and good providence of God very frequently ordering things so, that in great villainies there is often such a mixture of the fool, as quite spoils the whole project of the knave.

In the mean time let popery be as bad as any one would have it, yet for all that let us not be deceived with words. We are men, and let us not sell our lives and our estates, our reason and religion, for wind and noise. For where the thing exclaimed against is extremely bad, yet if the persons that exclaim against it are certainly much worse, worse in their principles, worse in their practices, you may rest assured that there is roguery at the bottom, and that, how plausibly soever things may pass as they are heard, they would look very scurvily if they were seen. Something no doubt is designed that is not declared, but what that is, I will not presume to determine from an inspection of men's hearts. Only it having been always accounted a very rational and allowed way, to judge what may be by what has been, you may remember that about forty years since this word *popery* served such as brandish it about the ears of the government now, as an effectual engine to pull down the monarchy to the ground, to destroy episcopacy root and branch, and to rob the church, and almost all honest men, to the last farthing. From which it appears to be a very easy, natural, and hardly to be avoided inference, that the very same means, used by the very same sort of men, are and must be intended to compass and bring about the very same ends once again. And if so, it is left to you to consider, whether it can become sober and wise men (especially in such great concerns) to be deceived by the same cheat. And thus I have given you both the short and the long, the top and the bottom of all these enormous out cries against popery, together with an account how the church of England comes to be part of the church of Rome, while it stands excommunicated by it, and actually cut off from it.

2. And now in the second place to shew, that the men whom we have been dealing with are no less artists in calling *evil good*, than in surnaming *good evil*; as they have imposed the name of *papists* upon us, so they have bestowed that of *true protestants* upon themselves, both of them certainly with equal truth and propriety. But they must not think to carry it off so. For how popular and plausible soever the name of *protestant* may sound, it is not that which can or will credit or commend fanaticism; but fanaticism will be sure to embase and discredit that. For names neither do nor can alter things, but ill things will in the issue

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certainly foul and disgrace the best names. But are these men (who have thus dubbed themselves *true protestants*) in good earnest such mortal enemies to popery and the popish interest, as they pretend themselves to be? If they are, they will do well to satisfy many wise and considering men in the world about some things that they cannot so well satisfy themselves in, nor reconcile the reality of such pretences to.

1. As first, how came the old puritans and fanatics all on the sudden to be so more than ordinarily troublesome to the government, when the Spanish armada in 88, breathing nothing but popery and destruction to England, was hovering over our coasts, ready to grasp us as a certain prey? And in like manner how came they to grow so extremely crank and confident, and importune both upon church and state, just before and about the time of the powder-treason? Both which remarkable passages (with some more of the like nature) have been particularly taken notice of by such as have wrote of the affairs of those times. Now that while the papists were attacking the government on the one side, the puritans should fall upon it on the other, and that both these parties should so exactly keep time together in troubling it, if there were not some thing of peculiar harmony, or rather a kind of unison correspondence between them, requires (in my poor judgment) a more than ordinary reach of understanding to conceive.

2. If the papists and the fanatics are really so opposite to one another, how came it to pass, that while they sat together in parliament, they constantly also voted together in all things that might tend to the weakening and undermining of our church? both of them with one heart and voice promoting indulgences and comprehensions, and such other arts and methods of destroying us? So that in all such cases our church was sure to find an equally spiteful attack from both sides.

3dly, If these two parties are so extremely contrary as they pretend to be, what is the cause nowadays that none associate, accompany, and visit one another with that peculiar friendliness, intimacy, and familiarity, with which the Romanists visit the nonconformists, and the nonconformists them? So that it is generally observed in the country, that none are so gracious and so sweet upon one another, as the rankest papists and the most noted fanatics: of which I will not pretend to know the reason, though I doubt not but they do.

4thly, I would gladly know, what can be alleged why the papists never write against the nonconformists, though they are never so much reviled, and sometimes written against by them, unless it be, that the papists know their friends under any disguise, and can easily pardon a few rude words spoken against them, in consideration of many real services done for them? However, their great silence towards them in such cases must needs proceed from one of these two things, either from love or from contempt; if from the first, then it is evident that the papists look upon them as their friends; if from the latter, then they look upon them as very contemptible adversaries. And they are free (for me) to pass under which of these two characters they please.

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5thly, If popery and fanaticism are so irreconcilable, as our *true protestants* would bear us in hand that they are, how come we by that extraordinary discovery, made by them of late years, that the late blessed king Charles I. was murdered by the papists? For all that visibly acted in that hellish tragedy were that traitorous packed remainder of the house of commons, together with their high court of justice, and the officers of their rebel army. The names of all which are known, and stand upon record. So that if the king was murdered by papists, it is evident that these men were the papists. For we all know who they were who cut off the king. And we are now at length beholden to the faction for telling us also what they were. However, it seems many were engaged in this murder under masks and vizards, besides the executioner.

These things I thought fit to remark to you; from which yet I will not positively affirm, that such as call themselves *true protestants* are either indeed papists themselves, or by a very close confederacy united to them. I say, I will not positively affirm it; only the forementioned objections being all of them founded upon known matter of fact, I shall here leave these with them; and they may, if they please, and can, at their leisure, answer them.

In the mean time, there is one thing, which I can not but observe upon them, as very material, and fit to be laid in their dish for ever; which is this: that if any branch of the royal family has unhappily drank in any thing of the popish contagion, these who call themselves *true protestants* are of all men breathing the most improper to decry, or so much as to open their mouths against, any such person upon that account. For they must thank themselves for it, who forcibly plucked the children out of the bosom of the best father and the firmest protestant in the world, and sent them into foreign countries, there to converse with snares and traps, and to support their lives with the hazard of their faith, flying from such protestants for safety and shelter amongst the papists; a staggering consideration, let me tell you, to persons of such tender years.

But had that blessed prince been suffered to spin out the full thread of his innocent life in peace and prosperity, none had issued from his royal loins but what he himself would have tutored and bred up to such a knowledge of, and adherence to, the church of England, that it should not have been in the power of all the Papists and Jesuits under heaven to have shook them in their religion.

So that the great seducers were Cromwell and his fellow-rebels, who, by banishing the royal family, cast them into the very jaws of popery and seduction, and not only *led*, but *drove* them *into temptation*. And now will these fellows plunge men over head and ears in a ditch, and then knock out their brains for having a spot upon their clothes? kindle a flame round about them, and then with tragical out cries reproach them for being singed? do all that they can, compassing even sea and land, to make a proselyte to popery, and then strip

him of his inheritance for being so? O the equity, reason, and humanity of a true protestant fanatic zeal! much according to the Devil's method, first to draw men to sin, and then to damn and destroy them for it.

Upon the whole matter, we are eternally bound to thank our good God for all of the royal family that have not been perverted to popery, and to thank the rebels and fanatics, if any have. And so I leave these zealots to make good their claim to this new distinguishing title, and to prove themselves *true protestants*, if they can, without either truth or protestantism belonging to them.

3dly, A third misapplied word, by which these men have done no small mischief to religion, is, their calling the late sacrilegious subversion of the discipline, orders, and whole frame of our church, by the name of *reformation*; a word which (as taking as it is to the ear) has yet some years since raised such a war in the state, and caused such a schism in the church, as hardly any place or age can parallel; a word which has cost this kingdom above a hundred thousand lives; which has pulled down the sovereignty, levelled the nobility, and destroyed the hierarchy; and, filling all with blood, rapine, and confusion, reformed the best of monarchies into an anarchy, and the happiest of islands into an aceldama: and doubtless that must needs be a blessed seed, that can thrive in no soil, till it be ploughed up with war and desolation, and watered with the blood of its inhabitants.

But if we will needs be at this reforming work once more, it will concern us to consider first, what we are to reform from; but that is quickly answered, that the old plea must proceed upon the old pretence, and that we must reform from popery and superstition: but for this we have already shewn, by going over the principal parts of popery, that not one of them all can be found in our church; and if so, where and how then shall we be furnished with popery for reformation-work? Why, I will tell you: there are certain lands and revenues which the church is yet possessed of, and that with as full right as any man does or can hold his temporal estate by, which an old, surfeited avarice, not well able to gorge any more, either for shame or satiety, thought fit to leave remaining in the church still. And this is the popery that with men of a large and sanctified swallow we stand guilty of, and ought by all means to be reformed from. For with a certain sort of men there can be no such thing as a thorough reformation, till the clergy are all clothed in primitive rags, and brought to lick salt at the end of their table, who think the crumbs that fall from it much too good for them. But thanks be to God, it is not come to this pass yet, nor, till the government falls into such hands as grasped at it some years since, (which God forbid,) is it ever like to do.

Well, but if we are thus at a loss to find any thing like popery, besides the popery of church lands, for us to be reformed from, let us in the next place consider who are to be our reformers. And for this, such as appear foremost, and cry loudest for reformation, are a sort of men greatly branded with the in famous note of atheism and irreligion, debauchery and sensuality, lust and uncleanness; so that al though we cannot see what we are to be reformed



from, yet we may fairly perceive what we are like to be reformed to. A reformation proceeding in such hands being in all probability likely to prove much after the same rate, as if, upon those disorders and abuses mentioned to have been in the church of Corinth, St. Paul should of all others have singled out and wrote to the incestuous Corinthian to reform them.



But to give you a remarkable instance of what kind of sense of religion these reformers of it have had from first to last. When that reproach and scandal to Christianity, Hugh Peters, held a discourse with the arch-rebel his master upon the mutinying of the army about St. Albans, and things then seemed to be in a scurvy, doubtful posture, this wretch encouraged him not to be dismayed with the discontents of the soldiery, but accosting them resolutely to go on, as he had done all along, and to *fox them a little more with religion*, and on doubt he should be able to carry his point at last. A blessed expression this, *Fox them with religion!* and fit to come from the mouth of a noted preacher of religion, and a prime reformer of it also, but, how ever, very suitable to the person that uttered it, who died as he lived, with a stupified, seared conscience, and went out of the world *foxed* with something else beside religion.

4thly, A fourth abused name or word, by which the faction is every day practising upon the church, and the government of it, is their miscalling the execution of the laws made in behalf of the church, *persecution*. Now since the ten persecutions of the primitive Christians by the heathen emperors, in the first ages of Christianity, the word persecution is deservedly become of a very odious and ill import. And therefore, without any more ado, our fanatics (who are no small artists at disguising things with names which belong not to them) presently clap this vile word, like a fireship, upon the government and the laws, and doubt not by this to blow them up or burn them down in a little time. And indeed with the brutish rabble, who take words not as they signify, but as they sound, the artifice has gone very far, the great disturbers of the church by this sophistry passing for innocent, and the laws themselves being made the only malefactors.



But setting aside noise and partiality, I would gladly know why such as suffer capitally by the hand of justice at Tyburn, should not be as high and loud in their clamours against persecution as these men? If you say that those persons suffer for felony, but these for their conscience, I answer, that there is as much reason for a man to plead conscience for the breach of one law as for the breach of another, where the matter of the law is either good or indifferent, and both one and the other stand enforced by sufficient authority.

And possibly the highwayman will tell you, that he cannot in conscience suffer himself to starve, and that without taking a purse now and then he must starve, since *dig he cannot, and to beg he is ashamed*. But now, if you will look upon this as a very unsatisfactory plea to the judge, the jury, and the law, as no doubt it is a very insolent and a very senseless one, I am sure, upon the same grounds, all the pleas and apologies for the nonconformists (though made by some conformists themselves) are every whit as senseless and irrational.

But as to the plea of conscience, I shall only say this, that I will undertake to demonstrate to any one possessed of the least grain of sense and reason, that there neither is nor can be any such thing as government in the world, where the subject is allowed to plead his private conscience in bar of the execution of the laws. For if, while the prince is to govern by law, the law is to be governed by the subject's conscience, wheresoever the name and title of sovereignty may be lodged, the power is undoubtedly in those who overrule the law.



And now, if this pitiful sham and term of art, *persecution*, shall be able to screen those spiritual riots and seditious meetings, that look so terribly upon the government, from the justice of it, how can it possibly be safe? For the design of conventicles is not to worship God in another and a purer way, (as they cant it,) but to adjust the numbers, to learn the strength, and to fix the correspondence of the party, and thereby to prepare and muster them for a new rebellion; and the design of a rebellion is, for those that have not estates to serve themselves upon those that have. This is the sum total of the business. And thus much for this other trick that the faction would trump upon the government of the church, by loading the execution of its laws (which is the vital support of all governments) with the abhorred name of *persecution*. But now in the

Fifth and last place, let us come to the principal engine of all, which is their prosecuting the worst of designs against the best of churches, under the harm less gilded name of *moderation*, than which can any thing look milder or sound better? For as justice is the support of government, so moderation and equity is the very beauty and ornament of justice itself. And what is all virtue but a moderation of excesses, a mean that keeps the balance of the soul even, neither suffering it to rise too high on one side, nor to fall too low on the other? And does not Solomon, the wisest of men, commend it, by condemning the contrary quality, in *being righteous overmuch*? [Eccles. vii. 16](#). And is not also one of the best of men, and one of the greatest of the apostles, St. Paul himself, alleged in praise of the same? Philip, iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known unto all men*. And possibly some Bibles, of a later and more correct edition, may by this time have improved the text, by putting *trimming* into the margin. So that you see that there could not be a more plausible nor a more authentic word to gull and manage the rabble, and to carry on a design by, than this of *moderation*.



But have we never yet heard of a wolf in sheep's clothing? nor of a sort of men who can smile in your face, while they are about to cut your throat? And for these fellows, who have all along hitherto handled our church with the hands of Esau, how come they now all on a sudden to bespeak it with the voice of Jacob? Certainly therefore there is something more than ordinary couched under this beloved word of theirs, *moderation*. And if you would have a true and short account of it, as by *persecution* they mean the execution of those laws that would suppress nonconformity, so by *moderation* they mean neither more nor less than the encouraging and supporting of nonconformity by the suppression of those laws. This is the thing which is meant and driven at by them.

But then you are still to understand, that this is to be done dexterously and decently, and in a creeping, whining, sanctified dialect, and such as may not too much alarm the government, by telling it plainly and roundly what they would be at; for that would be more haste than good speed. As for instance, to break in rudely and downright upon the church, and to cry out, “Away with your superstitious liturgy, we will have no stinting of the spirit: away with your popish canons, we are a freeborn people, and must have our liberty, both as men and as Christians: away with your gowns, hoods, and surplices, and other such rags and trumpery of the whore of Babylon: down with bishops and archbishops, deans and chapters, we will have nothing of them but their lands: repeal, abrogate, and take away all laws for conformity, and against conventicles, which are held as a rod over the good people of God, the sober, industrious, trading part of the nation.” Now I say, though *a gracious heart* (as they call their own) is big with all and every one of these designs, yet it is not time nor prudence to cry out, till there be *strength to bring forth*: and therefore, instead of all these boisterous assaults, the same thing is much better and more hopefully carried on in a lower strain and a softer expression. As, “Pray use moderation, gentlemen. Moderation is the virtue of virtues. Moderation bids fair to be a mark of regeneration, it is an healing, uniting, protestant-reconciling grace; and therefore since by our good will we would neither obey the laws, nor suffer for disobeying them, be sure above all things that you use moderation.” Well, the advice, you see, is good, especially for those that give it; but how is this to be done? Why thus: suppose one, in the first place, a church-governor, and that he comes to understand that such and such of his clergy exercise their ministry in a constant neglect of the rules, rites, and orders of the church? why, with great prudence and gravity he is to take no notice of it. Is the surplice and the ecclesiastical habit laid aside? why, still he is to practise the grace of connivance, and to wink hard at this too. Is the service of the church read brokenly, slovenly, imperfectly, and by halves? why, he is to suffer this also, and to make no words of it. Does any one presume to preach doctrines quite contrary to some of the articles of the church? why, in this case, if the preacher offends, the bishop is to silence only himself. And if at any time there happens a contest between a clergyman and some potent neighbour about the rights and dues of his living, he is presently to cajole and side with that potent oppressing neighbour, and to snub and discountenance the poor clergyman for not suffering himself to be oppressed, defrauded, and undone quietly, and without complaint. And this is some (though not all) of that moderation which some nowadays require in a church-governor, and which in due time cannot fail to have the very same effect upon the church, which the continual hewing and hacking at a tree must naturally have towards the felling it down.

Well, but in the next place we will suppose another man a justice of peace. And if so, let him not concern himself to lay this or that factious conventicle-preacher by the heels, as the law and his office require him to do. But if he must needs, for shame or fear, sometimes





make a shew at least of searching after this precious man, let him however send him timely notice thereof underhand, that so the justice may fairly and judiciously search for that which he is sure not to find; according to that of the poet, *Istud quaero, quod invenire nolo*. Moreover, if there chance to be a conventicle or unlawful meeting just under his nose, let him not disturb or break it up; for, alas! those that are of it are a sort of *peaceable, well-meaning people, who meet only to serve God according to their consciences*. Possibly indeed some of the chief of them may have fought their king heretofore at Edgehill, Marston-Moor, Naseby, or Worcester; but that is past long since, and they are resolved never to do so again till they are better able than at present (to their sorrow) they find themselves to be. And this is some of the moderation which is required of a magistrate or justice of peace; so called, I conceive, for sitting still, holding his peace, and doing nothing.



But then, lastly, if a parliament be sitting, O! that above all others is the proper time for such as are men of sobriety and zeal, and understand the true interest of the nation, (forsooth,) to manifest a fellow-feeling of the sufferings of the brotherhood, and in the behalf of their old puritan friends to pimp for bills of union, comprehension, or toleration. And this you are to know is a principal branch of that moderation which has been practised by several worthy and grave men of the church of England, as they are pleased (little to the church's honour, I am sure) to style themselves; and, which is more, it was practised by them at a certain critical juncture of affairs, not many years since, when a clergyman could hardly pass the city streets without being reviled, nay spit upon, as several (to my knowledge) actually were. And I hope, though we churchmen had been blind before, so much dirt and spittle so bestowed might (without a miracle) have opened our eyes then.

And now, when both sense and experience as broad as daylight has shewn us what the party means by *popery*, what by true *protestantism*, and what by *reformation*, and the like, is this a time of day for any who profess and own themselves of the church of England to play fast and loose, to trim it and trick it, and prevaricate with the church by new schemes and models, new amendments and abatements of its orders and discipline, in favour of a rest less implacable faction, which breathes nothing less than its utter destruction? Has not the church of England cause above all other churches in the world to complain and cry out, "*These are the wounds, which I have received in the house of my friends? My constitution is undermined and weakened, my laws broken, my liturgy despised, my doctrine impugned, and a kind of new gospel brought in, and millions of souls drawn from my communion; and all this dishonour done me, not only by my open avowed enemies, but chiefly and most effectually by such as have subscribed my articles and canons, such as have eat my bread and worn my preferments; these are the men who have brought me to this low, languishing, and consumptive condition, by their treacherous compliances and their false expedients, while I was still calling for their help and support, by that which only, under God, could or can preserve me a strict, thorough, and impartial observation of my laws.*" For this I say,



and will maintain, that the church of England, as to its external state and condition in this world, stands upon no other bottom, and can be upheld by no other methods, but a vigorous execution of her laws on the one side, and a constant, uniform, unreserved conformity to them on the other. And all other ways are but the palliated remedies and the fallacious prescriptions of quacks, and mountebanks, and spiritual Pontaeus's, such as wise men would never advise, nor good men approve of, and such as, by skinning over her wounds for the present, (though probably not so much as that neither,) will be sure to cure them into an after rottenness and suppuration, and infallibly thereby at length procure her dissolution. And for my own part, I fully believe that this was the very thing designed by these men all along. For I dare aver, that if that one project of union, as it was laid, had took place, it would have done more to the breaking our church in pieces, and to the bringing in of popery by those breaches, than the papists themselves have been able to do to wards it since the reformation. So that whatsoever the danger may have been to our church heretofore from church papists, I am sure the great danger that threatens it now is from church fanatics.

And thus I have at length done with the first grand instance of the three, in which the abuse and confusion of those great controlling names of good and evil has such a pernicious effect; and that is, in the business of religion and the affairs of the church, and particularly as they stand here amongst our selves, where both have infinitely suffered by the malicious artifice of a few misapplied words. But wo to those villainous artists by whom they have been so misapplied; good had it been for the church of England, and perhaps for themselves too, that they had never been born: and may the great, the just, and the eternal God, judge between the church of England and those men who have charged it with popery, who have called the nearest and truest copy of primitive Christianity *superstition*, and the most detestable instances of schism and sacrilege *reformation*; and in a word, done all that they could, both from pulpit and press, to divide, shatter, and confound the purest and most apostolically reformed church in the Christian world, and all this by the venomous gibberish of a few paltry phrases instilled into the minds of the furious, whimsical, ungoverned multitude, who have ears to hear, without either heads or hearts to understand.

For I tell you again, that it was the treacherous cant and misapplication of those words, *popery*, *superstition*, *reformation*, *tender conscience*, *persecution*, *moderation*, and the like, as they have been used by a pack of designing hypocrites, (who believed not one word of what they said, and laughed within themselves at all who did,) that put this poor church into such a flame heretofore as burnt it down to the ground, and will infallibly do the same to it again, if the providence of God and the prudence of man does not timely interpose between her and the villainous arts of such incendiaries. For we may and must pronounce of this vile cant, what a great and learned man said of common prophecies and predictions, usually vented and carried about to amuse the minds of the vulgar, to wit, that in point of any credence to be given to them, in respect of their truth or credibility, they are utterly to

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be despised and slighted; but in point of the influence they may have upon the public, by perverting the minds of the people, no caution can be too great to be used against them, no diligence too strict, no penalties too severe, to discourage and suppress them. For even the silliest and most senseless things may sometimes conjure up more mischief to a government, than the wisest and the ablest statesmen in the world can conjure down again.

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And to give you one terrible instance, how far the minds of men are capable of being canted and seduced into the most violent and outrageous courses, as they are managed by some pulpit impostors, you may all remember that the great engine of battery, which broke and beat down our church, was the Scotch covenant. But how did it do this execution? Why, by those spiritual *boutcfeus* calling this wretched thing from the pulpit to the deceived rabble *the covenant of God*. And so strangely had they beat this notion into their addle heads, that there was not one text in the whole book of God about the covenant between God and the Israelites, in which the brainless rout did not immediately, upon the bare clink of the words, conclude the Scotch covenant to be meant and pointed at there by. Such were all the texts in which God calls upon the Israelites *to keep his covenant*, and all the texts in which he reproaches and expostulates with them for having broke and been false to his covenant. In all which the stupid, schismatical herd, by the help of those hypocrites, those perverters of scripture, and murderers of souls, (if ever there were any such upon the face of the earth,) I say, by the fraudulent and fallacious infusions of those seducers, the abused vulgar reckoned the Scotch covenant, by clear and irrefragable evidence of scripture, bound inviolably fast upon their consciences. And can any thing in nature be imagined more profane and impious, more absurd, and indeed romantic, than such a persuasion; and yet, as impious and absurd as it was, it bore down all before it, and overturned the equallest and best framed government in the world. So that it was not for nothing that a sanctified dunce of the faction compared the covenant to the ark of God, brought into the temple of Dagon, and Dagon thereupon falling prostrate upon his face before it. For thus says he: "Nothing wicked or superstitious could stand before this other ark of God, the covenant, but presently upon the bringing of it into England, popery fell down before it, arbitrary power fell down before it; prelacy fell down and gave up the ghost at the feet of it." And why did not the man of allusion, while his head was hot, and his hand was in, add also, that sense and reason, law and religion, justice and common honesty, and, in a word, all that was enjoined by God or approved by man, fell down and gave up the ghost before it? For it is certain that wheresoever the very breath of the covenant came, it blasted and consumed all these.

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And now, was it not high time, think you, to tie up the tongues of those seducers, who could arm mere cant and nonsense to such a formidable opposition to the government, as to make one despicable word, villainously misapplied, and sottishly misunderstood, a fatal *besom of destruction*, to sweep away all before it, civil or sacred, legal or established, both in church and state?

Certainly there can be no truly pious, or indeed so much as truly English heart, but must bleed, when it looks back upon that *abomination of desolation*, which was seen in all our holy places in those days, and consider, both by whom all this was brought upon them, and how. That the best and surest bulwark of protestantism, the glory of the reformation, and the express image of the purest antiquity, should be run down and laid in the dust by the meanest of cheats, managed by the worst of men. This has been done once, and God grant that we may never see it done again.

*To which God, the great lover of truth, peace, and order in his church, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore.*  
Amen.

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*The second grand instance of the mischievous influence of words and names falsely applied, in the late overthrow of the English monarchy, compassed chiefly hereby, in the reign of king Charles I. and attempted again in the reign of king Charles II. being the third Discourse from those words in [Isaiah v. 20](#).*

### ISAIAH v. 20.

*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, &c.*

**I**FORMERLY discoursed twice upon these words, the whole prosecution of which I cast under these four heads.

First, To give some general account of the nature of good and evil, and of the reason upon which they are founded.

Secondly, To shew, that the way by which good and evil commonly operate upon the mind of man, is by those respective names and appellations, by which they are notified and conveyed to the mind.

Thirdly, To shew the mischief which directly, naturally, and unavoidably follows from the misapplication and confusion of these names.

Fourthly, and lastly, To shew the grand and principal instances in which the abuse or misapplication of those names has so fatal and pernicious an effect.

The three first of these I despatched in my first discourse, and in my second made some entrance upon the fourth, to wit, the assignation of those instances, &c. concerning which I shewed, that if we should consider them in their utmost compass and comprehension, they would carry as large a circumference as the world itself, and grasp in the concerns of all mankind put together, being in their full latitude as numberless, various, and unconceivable, as all the particular ways and means by which men are capable of being miserable. And therefore, since to reckon up all particulars would be endless, and to rest only in universals would be equally fruitless, I chose to reduce the forementioned fatal effects of the misapplication of those great governing names of good and evil to certain heads, and those such as should take in the principal things which the happiness or misery of human societies depends upon.

Now those heads were three.

1st, Religion, and the concerns of the church.

2dly, Civil government. And,

3dly, The private interests of particular persons.

The first of which three, relating to religion and the church, I have fully treated of already in my last discourse, and shall now proceed to the

Second, Which is, to shew the direful and mischievous influence which the abuse or misapplication of those mighty operative names of good and evil has upon civil government, or the political state of the world.

In treating of which I will not be so arrogant and impertinent as to presume to discourse of the rules and arts of government, or to prescribe to those whom I am called to obey, government being the greatest, the noblest, and most mysterious of all arts, and consequently very unfit for those to talk magisterially of, who never bore nor affected to bear any share in it.

For though some have had the face and confidence to be meddling with religion, and reforming the \church, reversing her canons, and new forming her liturgy, who were much fitter to have been learning their catechism at home, and dealing with their tenants in the country, if they had any; I say, though religion and divinity have the ill luck to be so meanly thought of, that every half-witted corporation blockhead thinks himself a competent judge of the deepest points of its doctrine, and the reason of its discipline, so as to be new modelling of both at his insolent but senseless pleasure; yet the learning which qualifies for the pulpit teaches more sense and better manners.

But though it be above our sphere to teach the rules and arts of governing, and to direct those how to steer who sit at the helm; yet I am sure it is not above us to help and assist them in their government, by declaring the villainy of those practices which would subvert it. Any one may kill wasps and hornets, and other vermin which infest a gar den, without pretending to the skill and art of a gardener; and a watchman may do much towards the defence of a city, though he offers not to govern it. In like manner, for a preacher of the word to denounce the wrath of God against faction and sedition, and by all the spiritual artillery of the word, (as I may so call it) to prosecute and run down those sins which both disturb government and destroy souls, cannot justly or properly be called his meddling with matters of state. And therefore when some very gravely tell us, that the sole or chief business of a preacher is to preach up a good life, and to preach down sin, I heartily assent to them, but withal must tell them, that I take obedience to government to be a principal part of a good life, and faction and rebellion to be some of the worst, the blackest, and most damning sins that men can be guilty of; and consequently, that it is the direct, unquestionable duty and business of a preacher, with all imaginable zeal, to testify against crimes of so high and clamorous a guilt, wheresoever he finds them; since the same divine commission which commands him to instruct, equally empowers him to reprove; and I know no privilege or condition under heaven which can warrant a man to sin without reproof or control. This indeed is the proper post in which every preacher and spiritual person ought to serve the government; and how much soever such men may be despised, I am sure no sort of men are able to serve or disserve it more; the infamous pulpits between the years forty and sixty having been but too convincing a demonstration of the one, and the loyal clergy ever since sixty as effectual a proof of the other.

This I thought fit to note briefly beforehand, to obviate that insolent objection of some irreconcilable haters of the ministry, who still call the preaching of obedience to government,

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the ripping up of faction and sedition, a meddling with matters of state; as I question not but St. Paul himself would have incurred the very same censure from the same sort of persons, for what he says and teaches in the 13th chapter to the Romans, about the necessity of *every soul's being subject to the higher powers*, and that *there is no power but from God*, and that *such as resist shall receive to themselves damnation*. Would not such as we have to deal with nowadays have cried out against him, What ails this pragmatical pulpiteer, thus to talk of government and obedience? Shall he presume to teach the commons of Rome how to behave themselves to their prince? Does he understand their privileges, which pass all understanding but their own? Trounce him, gaol him, and bring him upon his knees, and declare him a reproach and scandal to his profession, that so he may learn for the future (as one wisely advised upon the like occasion) *to preach and to say nothing*. For what has he to do to lay the law of subjection and loyalty to the freeborn people of Rome, when, for reason of state, the wisdom of the nation shall think fit to take their prince by the throat with one hand, and to wrest his sceptre from him with the other?

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Nor is St. Paul the only troublesome person in this case, but we shall find that St. Peter also will needs be meddling with matters of state, [1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15](#), where he presses all, without exception, to *submit themselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, &c.* together with an earnest exhortation, in five or six verses together, to the now antiquated duty of passive obedience. For though the duty of patience and subjection, where men suffer wrong fully, might possibly be of some force in those times of primitive darkness and imperfection, yet in times of light and revelation those beggarly elements of loyalty and subjection vanish; and Buchanan's modern and more improved Christianity teaches, that then only men are bound to suffer, when they are not able to resist: a worthy doctrine, no doubt, and such as none but rebels were ever the better for, and none but such as love rebellion ever approved of.

But must not that government, think you, be all this time in a very hopeful case, where a company of popular demagogues are let loose to poison and inflame the minds of the people with the rankest principles of rebellion; and those whose proper office, duty, and calling is to teach and to inform, to undeceive and disabuse men, must not, in the behalf of the government, warn them against such persons and principles as would debauch them from their allegiance, for fear of being loaded with the odious imputation of meddling with matters of state? No doubt that flock must needs be in a safe and good condition, where the shepherds must never cry out, nor the dogs bark, but when the wolves shall give them leave.

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But I hope no clergyman of the church of England will ever debase and prostitute the dignity of his calling so far, as to want either courage or conscience to serve the government, by testifying against any daring, domineering faction which would disturb it, though never so much in favour with it, no man certainly deserving the protection of the government,

who does not in his place contribute to the support of it; as, on the other side, those who at their utmost peril have spoke, and others who have fought for the support of it, surely of all others have least cause to be discouraged or forsook by it, howsoever it has sometimes happened otherwise.

And thus much by way of introduction to our main subject, which is to shew how our old gamesters have been, and still would be playing the same game upon the state, which they had done upon the church, and that by the very same libellous disguise and false representation of things and persons, blazoning out the worthiest men and the best actions under the foulest and most odious colours, and the vilest persons and the wickedest designs under the most popular and taking; one of the most pestilent ways certainly of calling good evil, and evil good, that the public can suffer by. For still the prime and most effectual engine to pull down any government, is, to alienate the minds of the subjects from it; it being a never-failing observation, that when a governor comes to be generally hated, he is not many steps from being assuredly ruined: by which old, long-practised, lying, diabolical artifice, as the worst of rebels mounted heretofore into the throne of the best of princes, so no doubt they hope to do the same again; and it is not long since that they bade fair for it.

Now those artificial words, by the misapplication and management of which, these overturners of all above them have done such mighty execution, being much too many for a present rehearsal, as I formerly culled out five of the chief and most venomous, by which those wretches ruined and overthrew the ecclesiastical state amongst us, so I shall now pitch upon four of the principal; by which they did, and hope to do the same feat again upon the monarchy and civil government; it being the usual fate of that and the church, to be supported and run down by the same methods.

1st, The first is their traducing and exposing the mildest of governments and the best of monarchies by the odious name of *arbitrary power*.

2dly, Their blackening and misrepresenting the ablest friends and assistants of their prince in his government, with the old infamous character of *evil counsellors*.

3dly, Their setting off and recommending the greatest enemies both of prince and people, under the plausible, endearing title of *public spirits, patriots, and standers up for their country*.

4thly, and lastly, Their couching the most malicious, selfish, and ambitious designs, under the glorious cover of *zeal for liberty and property, and the rights of the subject*.

These four rattling words, I say, *arbitrary power, evil counsellors, public spirits, liberty, property, and the rights of the subject*, with several more of the like noise and nature, used and applied by some state impostors, (as scripture was once quoted by the Devil,) are the great and powerful tools by which the faction hope to do their business upon the government once more. For since (as I observed in the first discourse upon this subject) the generality of mankind are wholly governed by words and names, having neither strength of judgment

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to discern, nor leisure to inquire into the right application and drift of them; what can be expected, if a company of bold, crafty, designing villains shall be incessantly buzzing into the rabble's ears, *tyranny and arbitrary power, pensioners and evil counsellors*, on the one hand, and pointing out themselves for the only patrons of their country, the only assertors of liberty and property, and redressers of grievances on the other? I say, if the rout be still followed and plied by them with such mouth granadoes as these, can any thing be expected, but that those who look no further than words should take such incendiaries at their word, and thereupon presently kindle and flame out, and throw the whole frame of the government into tumult and confusion?

And therefore I shall go over every one of these rabble-charming words, which carry so much wild fire wrapt up in them, and lay open the true meaning and design of them as distinctly as in so short an exercise I can.

1. And first, let us begin with the highest and loudest, and that which leads the van in all clamours against the government, namely, that of *arbitrary power*, twin to that other great and noted one of popery., treated of by me heretofore; *arbitrary power* being of much the same import with reference to the state, that popery is with relation to the church; indeed they always go hand in hand, the cry of one still accompanying the other: and as it is hardly possible for a man to spit, but at the same time he must breathe too; so I believe hardly any foul mouth ever opened against the church, in the slander of popery, which did not likewise discharge itself against the monarchy, in the slander of arbitrary power.

But since there has been so much noise made of it, I think it may be no less than requisite for us to see and state what arbitrary power is. And in the true sense of it, it is a prince's or governor's ruling his people according to his own absolute will and pleasure, either without law or against it. Such a kind of power was that vested in the Roman emperors by the *lex regia*, that the sole will of the emperor should in all things obtain the force of a law. And such an one more properly is at this day the power of the grand signior, or Turkish emperor, and generally of all eastern princes. But when was such a power ever claimed by, or where does the least foot step of it appear in the very worst of our kings who have reigned since the conquest? And therefore it is strange that it should be charged upon the very best.

For though every statute-law is the product of the king's will, it being the royal assent that properly enacts or stamps it a law, yet our kings have consented to such a limitation of the exercise of this their power, as to the matter of all laws, that they claim not now a power to make what laws they please; but still the matter of them, or the thing which is to receive that authorizing sanction from the royal hand, is first to be prepared and tendered to it by the choice and consent of the subjects themselves, acting by their representatives. So that as the king has always a negative upon the sanction, so the subject has still a negative upon the matter of the law.

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And can there be a greater privilege enjoyed by any subjects under heaven, than to be the choosers of their own laws? Or did any of our princes, especially those of the present race, ever go about to ravish or extort it from them? And have not those laws been as free and uncontrolled in the execution, as they were benign and wholesome in the composition? And lastly, have not those laws that have made the English government so easy, so equal, and so beneficial to the subject, even to the envy of all nations round about us, been the effects and issue of that princely goodness which induced our kings to pass them into laws, and without which they could never have been laws, but, after all, would have remained an useless *caput mortuum*, without either life or force in them?

The truth is, we have been so governed for above these hundred years, that it is hard to decide whether the government or the governor has been the milder of the two. For as to the government itself, can any constitution in nature be imagined gentler, and further from the least shadow of oppression, than that in which, as to all matters of right, the subject stands upon the same ground with his prince, so as to be allowed legally to contest his right with him in his own courts, they being free and open, and judges appointed to umpire the matter in contest between them, and to decide where the right lies? And can there be any thing arbitrary or tyrannical, where justice has so free and uninterrupted a course, and where the king is understood neither to do, nor so much as to command any thing, but what he does or commands by his laws, and those such as for the most part are more in favour of the subject than of the prerogative?

And if so, can we imagine that any one in his wits, who designs to fight, would first suffer, or rather cause his own hands to be tied? Yet this is not a greater absurdity, than to suppose a prince setting up for arbitrary power, just after he himself had passed those laws which make the exercise of such a power in a prince ruling by law utterly impossible. And yet this was eminently the case of the two last kings, with reference to this slander cast upon them by the republican faction, after they had passed more laws to assure the right of the subject, and to the limiting the prerogative, than all their predecessors since the conquest had done before them. And so much was once acknowledged of king Charles I. by that very faction which ruined him. nay even while they were actually ruining him; and we know his son, in such acts of grace, rather outdid than came behind him. Indeed both of them parted with so much of their royal power and prerogative, to gratify and content their people, that many wise men have feared that the crown may have hardly enough left it in all cases to protect them. Which, should it be so, is the chief thing that looks like a grievance to the subject of any that I know; and if it be, they know whom they may thank for it, especially when those laws were made in the reign of two such princes, that though they had never been made, the very temper and disposition of the men had been a superabundant security to the subject against all their fears; princes who had nothing arbitrary or violent either in their nature or their family; princes of such an unparalleled clemency, that I dare confidently

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aver, that it was solely and wholly owing to their surpassing mildness, that there was so much as one wretch in all their dominions either able or willing to do them hurt.

But there cannot be a greater demonstration that there is no such thing as arbitrary power in this kingdom, than that men have been endured so commonly and so freely to charge the government with it. What a noise was there of arbitrary power in the reign of the two last kings, and scarce any at all during the usurpation of Cromwell! Of which I know no reason in the world that can be given but this; namely, that under those two princes there was no such thing, and under Cromwell there was nothing else. For where arbitrary power is really and indeed used, men feel it, but dare not complain of it, for fear their complaints should be answered, as the Egyptians answered those of the Israelites, by increasing their tasks and redoubling their burdens. And besides all this, what an hideous outcry was, not many years since, raised by an insolent, impudent company of men against arbitrary power, while they themselves were practising it upon their fellow-subjects, and that at such a rate, as none of our kings ever so much as pretended to. And yet, if ever it should so please God as to punish the nation with an arbitrary oppression for complaining of it when there was none, surely it would be much more tolerable to groan under the arbitrary will of a noble, royally descended monarch, than under the lawless will and tyranny of a pack of spiteful, mean, merciless republicans; as without question it would be a much nobler death to be torn in pieces by a lion, than to be eaten up by lice.

And thus much for the first groundless, senseless, and shameless calumny upon the government, to wit, that of arbitrary power; a calumny which more than sufficiently contradicts and confutes itself by this one irrefragable argument; that any subject who has presumed to libel and reproach his prince with it, is seen alive and well, nay, rich and thriving, after he has done so. Of which sort of arguments this (it is well known) affords no small plenty and variety.

2dly, The next word of art and malice, by which the faction would undermine the government, is *evil counsellors*. For sometimes it is not found either so safe or so expedient for popular rage and rudeness to discharge itself immediately upon the person of the king himself, and therefore they choose to make their approaches more artificially, and first to attack those about him. But as in a siege the taking in the outworks is in order to the taking of the main fort at last, so faction never strikes at any of a prince's ministers, but with a design that the blow should go round, and reach him in the end. When the wolves intended to destroy the sheep by way of parley and making peace with them, it would have been a very impudent and a senseless thing to have told them in plain terms that they had a design to devour them; and therefore they made a more dexterous and politic proposal, and promised to live peaceably and neighbourly with them, upon condition that they would deliver up their dogs. So when the late rebel faction had designed the destruction of the king and monarchy, they were not such sots as to profess and declare so much at first; no, they



were only for removing his evil counsellors, that is, for sucking the blood of his best friends, and stripping him of his faithfulest ministers, and such as were most able both to serve and support him, and then let them alone to make him as great and glorious, as in the issue (you all know) they made him.

And in like manner, when the true brood and spawn of the same republican cabal was about to play the same game upon the son which their predecessors had done upon the father, this and that counsellor was to be removed from his counsels, and banished from his royal presence for ever. And then, if he would but part with his guards too, he could not with any reason have doubted of his safety, having cast himself into those hands which had brought him so many dutiful petitions. For no man questions but they (good men) would have done all they could to have secured him. Nay, I dare undertake for them, that they would not have thought any castle in the kingdom too good or strong to have bestowed him in. But he should have had all the security that Holdenby-house, or Hampton-court, or Carisbrook, or Hurst, or Windsor-castle, could have afforded him; and it were much if he could not have been secure in all these. But yet if these could not have made him so, they had one way more left, which would have followed of course, and would infallibly have done it.

Only there was indeed this difference in the proceedings of the faction formerly against the father, and lately against his son, that the faction first imprisoned the father, and then addressed to him; whereas the late managers of the same design against the son libelled him with their addresses first, hoping to be able to imprison him afterwards. And this difference, let me tell you, was very material, and (thanks be to God) produced a very different issue and success to the whole proceeding. It being no small favour of Providence to kings and princes, that their enemies had sometimes rather shew their anger than employ their wit.

But however, you see, by reflecting upon what has passed, that the clamour against evil counsellors was an old trusty tool, equally managed both against father and son. And I hope such as have eyes and ears, and common sense to judge by, do by this time sufficiently understand both the engine itself, and the persons who use to manage it; especially since they have been so extremely kind to the world, as, by printing their politics, to inform not only this, but all future ages, how honestly they designed matters, and how wisely they carried them.

Well, but if evil counsellors must needs be removed, what must be done next? Why, that is a needless question. For what should be done, but to take in those in their stead who were so earnest and active to remove them? For do you think that these patriots are so fierce and zealous against ministers of state, and other high officers, for any other reason in the world but to get into their places? Or that they pitch upon this course of crying out against others for any other end, but because they judge it the most likely and effectual to promote themselves? It would indeed be too gross, too fulsome, and too shameless a request, for any

one to come to his prince, and say, Sir, I will not be quiet, unless your majesty will make me treasurer or chancellor, chief justice, or secretary of state, attorney general, or the like; and if you will not give me such or such a great office, I will never leave troubling you, never give over petitioning, addressing, and protesting, never cease crying out *grievances, popery, pensioners*, and *evil counsellors*, till the whole nation rings of it again; and therefore your majesty will do very prudently, and consult both your ease and safety, by removing such a great officer, and putting me, your worthy petitioner, into his room; and by this you will also wonderfully please and gratify your people, whom in truth I care as much for, as I do for the dirt under my shoes.

These things, I confess, are very gross and scandalous; but as gross as they are, assure yourselves, that whensoever you hear any one clamouring against evil counsellors, this is as really and truly his sense and meaning, as if he had wrote his mind upon his forehead, and used every one of the forementioned expressions to a tittle.

3dly, The third battery which the faction plants against the government, is, their recommending the most mortal enemies both of prince and people under the plausible, endearing title of *public spirits*; that is the word, but *private interest* is the signification. But pray, what has any private man to do, to concern himself for the public, but in his private station? What has this extortioner or that lace-seller to do, to mistake his prince for his apprentice, and to undertake to instruct him? What has this or that joiner to do, to leave his shop, and to guard the parliament? These and the like matters belong properly to the sovereign prince, and to those whom he shall be pleased to employ under him. For surely none can be so fit to be intrusted with the public weal of the nation, as he who gives the surest pledge of his concern for it, by having the greatest interest and share in it.

And therefore he who sets up for his country against his prince, goes about to make the body thrive by the decay and ruin of the head. Assuredly no man shews his zeal and love for his country so much, as he who does all he can to enable his prince both to govern and protect it; which I am sure cannot be done either by weakening or impoverishing him, by disgracing or misrepresenting him. This indeed has been the course taken by those great factors for sedition, who have shot that odious distinction like a fiery dart at the government, of *the court party*, and *the country party*; for which the country may perhaps one day have as little cause to thank them, as they have at present to thank themselves. For I do not find that by all their noise and heat they have made themselves so considerable, as to be thought worthy to be taken off. But whether they succeed this way or no, (as it were much if the same cheat should always find the same success,) they know, however, that to be still mouthing out *the interest of the country*, *the interest of the country*, is a sort of plausible, well received cant, and a sweet morsel, which never fails to be readily swallowed by the gaping rout, who always loves those men best who abuse them most.

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But for all this, I would have those state-vermin know, that *king* and *country* are hardly terms of distinction, (in the forementioned kings I am sure they were not,) and much less of opposition, since no man can serve his country without assisting his king, nor love his king without being concerned for his country. One involves the other, and both together make but one entire, single, undivided interest. God has joined them together, and cursed be that man, or faction of men, which would disjoin, or put them asunder.

And therefore, friends, suffer not yourselves to be imposed upon, but rest assured that all who come to you with those glossing pretences of public spirits and zeal for their country, if they do it with the least reflection upon their prince or his government, are all that time mocking and making a prey of you; they are *smiting the shepherd*, and that uses to be the way to *scatter the flock*. Alas! their design is not to preserve their country, but to prefer themselves; nay, they are making all this hectoring bustle for the country only to get themselves into the court. They are holding up their heads to see what the government will bid for them; and if their pretences are found too old and stale to be marketable, or worth buying, you shall find them retreat, and sneak away with all that odium and contempt which is justly due to baffled, discovered cheats. And then the *public spirit* vanishes immediately, and the country, after all this highflown zeal for it, is left to shift for itself.

For we must know, that when this public spirit is once raised, there are but two ways of laying it again, and those the very same which we use to take to rid ourselves of restless, importunate beggars; namely, either to give them what they desire, or resolutely to reject, and give them nothing. Now the first of these is that which beggars and public spirits do most desire. For still you must observe, that the public spirit here spoken of has always this strange property with it, that when it is most boisterous, furious, and troublesome, it is then also most desirous to be conjured down, provided it be done skilfully and privately. For as Solomon says, [Prov. xxi. 14.](#) *A gift in secret pacifieth anger*, and has a wonderful ascendant over all evil spirits, but over the public one especially; which though it has all the poison of the adder, yet has nothing of the deafness of it, forasmuch as it never *stops its ear against the charmer, if he does but charm wisely*; that is, if he applies the forementioned charm liberally and privately too. This being a rule always to be remembered, that the more public the spirit is, the more private must be the exorcism, for spirits being invisible things, must be dealt with after an invisible manner. So then this is one way of exorcising or conjuring down a public spirit, and recovering those that are possessed with it, which some of late years have called *a taking them off*. Though some governments have another way of taking such off, which they find much more effectual. For as in the case of beggars before hinted, so here also we must observe, that though this way of gratification, or giving, may rid the government of the importunity of the public spirit for the present, yet the same spirit will be sure to return upon it again, and perhaps with seven more in its company worse than itself, that they also may be exorcised and taken off the same way. As the very same relief which

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stops a beggar's mouth, and sends him away, at one time, will certainly bring him, and many more with him, to the same house at another; it being not to be imagined that such customers will forsake a door only because they use to be fed at it. And therefore governors will never find this way of laying the public spirit successful; but just like a man's drinking in a fever, which may be some refreshment at present, but an increase of torment in reversion.

From whence it follows, that the other way for the government to dispossess and cast out these public spirits is certainly the wisest and most effectual, which is, to give them nothing, but to defy their rage, and to despise their pretences, and to answer them, as a man in place and power would answer the craving and clamour of a restless beggar, with authority and correction. For if men come once to find, that nothing is to be got by being troublesome to the government, they will quickly alter their way of traffick, and come to fawn upon it, instead of barking at it; which, though it be not of much worth, I confess is yet the better worthless thing of the two. Let a governor take up such as trouble him and his people with rigour and resolution, and make them know, if he can, that he neither fears nor needs them, and I dare undertake that he shall not be long troubled with them. If an horse grows resty, head strong, and apt to throw his rider, surely to pamper him cannot be the way to tame him; but the discipline of the whip and spur will bring him to hand much sooner and surer than the plenties of the rack and manger.

But now, after all, what is the thing which really lies under the disguise of this plausible word, *public spirit*? Why, if you would have the whole truth of it, name and thing together, it is faction and sedition rampant; it is a combination of some insolent, unruly minds to snatch the sceptre out of their prince's hand; it is their thrusting themselves into his peculiar business, and so, in effect, into his throne; it is their confounding the essential bounds and limits of sovereignty and subjection, and consequently a dissolution of all government. For where such up start, aspiring mushrooms assume a right to govern, I am sure it can be no man's duty to obey.

And thus much for this sham pretence of public spirits, which has proved so troublesome to our public peace; the fatal and malign influence of which, I think, cannot be better expressed, than by telling you, that this pretence of a public spirit has been as hurtful and mischievous to government, as that of the private spirit has been to religion.

4thly. The fourth and last mighty misapplied word which I shall mention, with which the faction has of a long time been fighting against the government, is, *liberty, property, and the rights of the subject*. And so loud and tragical has the outcry about these been, that a man unacquainted with this sort of people could imagine no less, by what he had heard, than that almost all the houses in the nation were emptied into the gaols, and that there were scarce a foot of land in the kingdom but what was seized on by the crown. And yet, after all this noise, there is not a freer and a richer people upon the face of the earth than the English; nor were they themselves ever so free and so rich before, as they have been in the reigns of

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those two excellent princes whom they were perpetually baiting with complaints about their liberties and properties; princes so far from wronging the subject upon either of these accounts, that, as to the point of liberty, the crown has almost parted with its power of imprisoning the subject; and as for property, it has been so far from encroaching upon the subjects' lands, that it has very near the matter parted with all its own. But I hope by this time the crown perceives, that such sturdy beggars are not to be dealt with this way, and that it is neither wisdom, mercy, nor charity, to feed a bottomless pit.

But, to adjust the true and proper measures of liberty, there is no people so free as those who live under a just monarchy; there being no slavery in the world comparable to that of having many masters. And those state mountebanks who would persuade people that there is no such thing as freedom of the subject under a monarchy, let them go seek for it in Holland and Venice, and other republics, and there they shall find a free people indeed; that is, free to undergo any penalty which their govern ors shall be pleased to inflict, and free to pay any tax which they shall think fit to impose; and that with out either remedy or redress, be it never so grievous. And as for any other kind of freedom, you must look for it elsewhere, if you would find it; for it is not a commodity of the growth of those countries.

And to shew further, how falsely, how partially, and unjustly this reproach has been cast upon monarchical government, that of England especially, I have heard of a certain sort of men not far off, who, when they had tied up their prince from detaining any dangerous or seditious subject in prison, thought it yet very reasonable for themselves to imprison whom they pleased, and as long as they pleased, according to that unerring rule of equity and right reason, (forsooth,) their own pleasure. So that (it seems) it must pass for slavery for a subject to be kept in prison by his sovereign, but liberty, for the same person to be held in durance by his fellow-subjects. Oh! the tyranny and impudence of some men!

But what is that liberty which they thus cry out for? Why, they would have a liberty to act those things against a prince, which some have took a liberty to write and speak. They would have a liberty to set their insulting feet upon the necks of their fellow-subjects, and those for the most part bet ter men than themselves. They would have a liberty to plunder and fight other men out of their estates, and themselves into them. So that, in short, the liberty and property that these men are so zealous for, is a liberty to invade and seize other men's properties. For, as it has been appositely and truly observed, none are generally so loud and clamorous for the security of our religion, as atheists and republicans, who have none at all; none such zealous advocates for liberty, as those who, when they are once got into power, prove the arrantest tyrants in nature; and none such mighty champions for property, as those who have neither a groat in their purse, nor an inch of land which they can call their own; but are a company of beggarly, broken, bankrupt malecontents, who have no other considerable property in the world, but never to be satisfied.

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And thus I have gone over some of those popular abused words, those sly and maliciously infused slanders, by which an implacable, unruly faction has been perpetually weakening and worrying the civil government; and that with such success, that it has destroyed the very being of it once, and the settlement of it ever since.

And now, by way of consequence and deduction from the foregoing particulars, what can be so naturally inferred as this; that, as the text denounces a curse to those who *call evil good, and good evil*; so it equally imports it to be a duty, and implies a blessing belonging to it, to call *good good, and evil evil*? It is the best oblation which we can make to truth, and the greatest charity that we can shew the world. For how can government, and consequently the peace of mankind, fence and guard itself against knaves passing under the guise and character of honest men, when faction and sedition shall be called activity and fitness for business, forsooth; and loyalty and conscience be sneered at as softness and in discretion? Never think, that either church or state can thrive upon these measures.

And here give me leave to utter a great truth, whether it please or not please; for my business here is not to please men, but to convince them of what concerns them. And it is this: that there has not been any one thing, since the restitution of our church and monarchy, that has contributed more to the weakening of both, and the strengthening the hands of the faction against both, than the general discouragement and restraint of men upon all occasions, and especially from the pulpit, from giving the late villainous times and practices, and the guilty actors in them, boldly and impartially their own. This only use being made by them of all this tenderness, or rather tameness, towards them, that by never hearing of their guilt, they have forgot that they were ever pardoned. They take heart, and insult, and usurp the confidence which belongs only to the innocent. Nay, they have grown, they have thriven, and become powerful by this usage; it being what above all things in the world they wished for and desired, but could not (I dare say) have been so impudent as to hope for. For what could a thief or robber desire more, than, having seized the prey, and possessed himself of his base booty, to carry it off both safely and quietly too; nay, and to see the person robbed by him, not only with his hands fast tied from recovering his goods, but with his tongue tied also, from so much as crying out "Thief?"

But for all the fallacious state-mists which have been cast before our eyes, men have both seen and felt enough to know, that for persons of honour, power, or place, to caress and soothe up men of dangerous principles and known disaffection to the government with terms and appellations of respect, is manifestly for the government to knock underboard to the faction, to infuse courage into it by courting it, and to make its shrewdest enemies strong and considerable, by seeming to fear those who may be suppressed, but can never be won. Besides, that this must needs grieve the hearts and damp the spirits of those who in its greatest extremities were its best, or rather its only friends, and (if occasion requires) must be so again, or it must have none.



And therefore I will be bold to affirm, that the great long rebellion being, in the whole carriage of it, so very black and foul, so reproachful to religion, so scandalous to the whole nation, and so utterly incapable, not only of excuse, but even of extenuation, especially in that last and hellish scene of it, the king's murder; I say, upon all these accounts it can not be too frequently, too severely, and too bitterly, upon all public occasions, ripped up and reflected upon. All the pulpits in the king's dominions ought to ring of it, as long as there is a man alive who lived when the villainy was committed. Preachers, in their sermons to their congregations, and judges, in their charges to the juries and justices of the country, ought to inculcate and lay before them the horrid impiety and scandal of those proceedings, and the execrable mischief of the principles which caused them: especially since we have seen such new rebellions springing out of the ashes of the old; a sufficient demonstration, doubtless, that the fire is not yet put out. And believe it, this, if any, is the likeliest way both to atone the guilt of those crying sins, and to prevent the like for the future. And if this course had been vigorously and heartily followed, can you imagine that such devilish, audacious libels, and such seditious coffee-house discourses, could have flown in the face of the government, as have done for above twenty years together? I tell you, that neither men's courage nor their conscience would have served them to have ventured upon their prince, or attacked his government at such a daring rate. Nay, let this course be but taken yet, and the people all over the kingdom be constantly and warmly plied from the pulpits upon the particulars here spoken of, and I doubt not but in the space of three years the king shall have quite another people, and his people be taught quite another kind of subjection, from what they have practised any time these threescore years.

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And therefore let none think that those seasonable rebukes which I here encourage and plead for, proceed from any hatred of the persons of those wretches, (how much soever they deserve it,) but from a dutiful concern for, and charity to the public, and from a just care and commiseration of posterity, that the contagion may not spread, nor the poison of the example pass any further. For I take reproof, no less than punishment, to be rather for prevention than retribution; rather to warn the innocent, than to reproach the guilty; and by thus warning them while they are innocent, in all probability to preserve and keep them so.

For does not St. Paul himself make this the great ground and end of all reproof? [1 Tim. v. 20](#), *Them that sin, says he, rebuke before all, that others also may fear*. And in [Titus i. 13](#), *Rebuke them sharply*. Where let us suppose now that St. Paul had to do with a pack of miscreants, who had by the most unchristian practices dethroned and murdered their prince, to whom this apostle had so often and so strictly enjoined absolute subjection, plundered and undone their brethren, to whom the said apostle had so often commanded the greatest brotherly love and amity; and lastly, rent, broken, and torn in pieces the church, in which he had so earnestly pressed unity, and so severely prohibited all schismatical divisions; what, I say, do we think now? Would St. Paul have rebuked such new-fashioned extraordinary

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Christians, or would he not? And if he would, do we imagine that he would have done it in the modern treacherous dialect? *Touch not my rebels, and do my fanatics no harm.* No moderation-monger under heaven shall ever persuade me that St. Paul would have took such a course with such persons, or have taught Timothy, or Titus, or any other gospel preacher, to do so, for fear of spoiling their promotion, or translation, or offending any powerful faction of men whatsoever.

And pray, do you all consider with yourselves, whether you would be willing to have your children, your dearest friends and relations, grow up into rebels, schismatics, presbyterians, independents, anabaptists, quakers, the blessed offspring of the late reforming times? And if you would not, then leave off daubing and trimming it, and plainly, impartially, and severely declare to your children and families the villainy and detestable hypocrisy of those which are such. And assure yourselves that this is the likeliest way to preserve them untainted with the same infection.

To all which considerations I shall add this one more, as an unanswerable argument, why the cursed authors of our late sad distractions should not be suffered to carry off their rogueries with the sneaking silence and connivance of all about them; namely, that by this means, about fourscore or an hundred years hence, the faction (if it continues so long, as no doubt with good keeping it may) will, from denying the impiety and the guilt, come to deny also the very history and being of the long great rebellion. This perhaps, at first hearing, may seem something odd and strange to you. But if you consider, that in the space of forty years the faction has had the face to shift off that rebellion and murder of the king from themselves upon the papists, is it at all unlikely, that in the compass of threescore or fourscore years more, they may utterly deny that there was ever any such thing at all? This, I am sure, is not impossible; and considering the boldness and falseness, and brazen confidence of the faction, I cannot think it so much as improbable. But I am sure also, that it is no less than a national concern, that following ages should not be so far ignorant of what has passed in ours, as thereby to want so great and so irrefragable an argument against disloyalty and rebellion.

And therefore, as it is said that the king never dies upon a legal account, so it is vastly the interest of the government, that the murder of the king should never die upon an historical. To which purpose, let strict, naked, and undisguised truth take place in all things; and let not evil be dignified with the title of good, nor good libelled with the name of evil, by a false and fraudulent appellation of things and persons. But as the merit of men's works must and will follow them into another world, so (in all reason and justice) let the true name of their works accompany and go along with them in this. That so the honest and the loyal may not be degraded to the same level with knaves and rebels, nor knaves usurp the rewards and reputation which none but the honest and the loyal have a claim to.



*Which God, the eternal Fountain of truth, and great Judge of all things, vouchsafe to grant; to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*



*The third grand instance of the same mischievous influence of words and names falsely applied, with reference to the interests and concerns of private persons in common conversation; being the fourth and last Discourse from those words in Isaiah v. 20.*

**ISAIAH v. 20.**

*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, &c.*

**I**MUST beg your pardon that I here resume the prosecution of a subject, which I have formerly discoursed of in this place, and for some reasons since intermitted, in the courses immediately following.

The discussion of these words I first cast under these four heads.

First, To give some general account of the nature of good and evil, and of the reasons upon which they are founded.

Secondly, To shew, that the way by which good and evil commonly operate upon the mind of man, is by those respective names and appellations, by which they are notified and conveyed to the mind.

Thirdly, To shew the mischief which directly, naturally, and unavoidably follows, from the misapplication and confusion of these names. And,

Fourthly and lastly, To shew the grand and principal instances, in which the abuse or misapplication of those names has such a fatal and pernicious effect.

The three first of these I despatched in my first discourse upon the words, and in my second made some entrance upon the fourth and last, to wit, the assignation of those instances, which I shew spread as far and wide as the universe itself, and were as infinite and numberless as all those various ways and accidents, by which a man is capable of being miserable. To recount all which in particular, since it was impossible, and yet to rest in universals equally unprofitable, I found it necessary to reduce those fatal effects of the misapplication of these great governing names of *good* and *evil* to certain heads, and those such as should comprehend and take in the principal things, upon the good or bad estate of which the happiness or misery of human societies must needs depend.

Which heads were three.

1st, Religion, and the concerns of the church.

2dly, Civil government. And,

3dly, The private interests of particular persons.

Now the first of these three, to wit, the concerns of religion and the church, I fully treated of in my second discourse, and that with particular reference to the state of both amongst ourselves, where I shew, that our excellent church had been once ruined, and was like to have been so again, only by the mischievous cant and gibberish of a few paltry misapplied words and phrases; five of which I then instanced in. As,

1st, A malicious calling the rites, ceremonies, and religion of the church of England, *popery*.

2dly, A calling the schismatical deserters of it, *true protestants*.

3dly, A calling the late subversion and dissolution of our church, *reformation*.

4thly, A calling the execution of the laws in be half of the church, *persecution*. And,

5thly and lastly, A calling all base, trimming compliances and half conformity, *moderation*.

All which five I then insisted upon at large, and shall not now trouble you with any further repetitions.

After which, the second general head to be treated of was civil government; under which I had designed to shew, how our admirably well-tempered monarchy had been once shook in pieces by the faction, under the best of monarchs, king Charles I. and was in a fair way to have run the same fate under his son, king Charles II. both of them princes of glorious and happy memory. And all this by the same villainous artifice of a few popular, misapplied words; by the senseless, insignificant clink and sound of which, some restless demagogues and incendiaries had inflamed the minds of the sottish *mobile* to a strange, unaccountable abhorrence of the best of men and things, and to as fond and furious an admiration of the very worst. Of which sort of words we may reckon these four following.

1st, Their traducing the best of monarchies and the easiest of governments by the odious name of *arbitrary power*.

2dly, Their blackening the king's ablest and best friends with the old and infamous character of *evil counsellors*.

3dly, Their setting off and recommending the greatest enemies both of prince and people, under the plausible, endearing titles of *public spirits*, *patriots*, and *standers up for their country*. And,

4thly and lastly, Their couching the most malicious, selfish, and ambitious designs, under the glorious cover of *zeal for liberty and property*, and *the rights of the subject*.

Which four rattling, rabble-charming words, I say, *arbitrary power*, *evil counsellors*, *public spirits*, *liberty and property*, and *rights of the subject*, with several others of the like noise and nature, being used and applied by some state-impostors, (as scripture was once quoted by the Devil,) I undertook to prove, were the great and powerful tools, by which the faction, having so successfully overturned the government once, was in full hopes to have given it as effectual a turn once more. The prosecution of all which, (as well as I was able,) I gathered into one entire discourse by itself.

But since all discourses in behalf of the government, partly through the guilt of some, and the false politics of others, have seldom any other effect but to recoil upon the person who makes them, I shall wave and pass over mine, and thereby escape the vanity of a thankless defence of that which is so much better able to defend itself.

And so I now come to the third and last of these three general heads; which is, to shew the mischievous influence the abuse and misapplication of those mighty operative names

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of good and evil has upon the private interests of particular persons. And here also I am sensible how boundless a subject I should engage in, should I attempt to give a particular account of all those names or words, by the artificial misapplication of which, men promote or ruin the fortunes of one another. The truth is, I might deal them forth to you by scores or hundreds, but I shall single out and insist upon only some few of the most remarkable and mischievous. As,

1st, An outrageous, ungoverned insolence and revenge, frequently passing by the name of *sense of honour*. Honour is indeed a noble thing, and therefore the word which signifies it must needs be very plausible. But as a rich and glistering garment may be cast over a rotten, fashionably-diseased body; so an illustrious, commending word may be put upon a vile and an ugly thing; for words are but the garment, the loose garments of things; and so may easily be put off and on, according to the humour of him who bestows them. But the body changes not, though the garments do.

What is honour but the height and flower, and top of morality, and the utmost refinement of conversation? But then every ruffian and drunken sot is not a competent judge of it; nor must every one who can lead a midnight whore through the streets, or scoff at a black coat or clergyman, or come behind a man and run him through, and be pardoned for it, have presently a claim to that thing called honour; which is as much the natural result, as it is the legal reward of virtue. Virtue and honour are such inseparable companions, that the heathens would admit no man into the temple of honour, who did not pass to it through the temple of virtue. It is indeed the only stated, allowed way; it is the high road to honour, and no man ever robs or murders upon that road.

And yet, in spite of nature and reason, and the judgment of all mankind, this high and generous thing must be that, in whose pretended quarrel almost all the duels of the world are fought. Oh! my honour is concerned, says one. In what? I pray Why, he gave me the lie. That is, he gave you what perhaps was your own before. But as truth cannot be made falsehood by the worst of tongues, so neither can a liar be made a true man by forcing a coward to eat his words, or a murderer become an honest man by a lucky (or rather unlucky) thrust of a lawless sword. Ay, but he spoke slightly and reflexively of such a lady: that is, perhaps he treated her without a compliment, and spoke that of her which she had rather a great deal practise than hear or be told of. In short, he might represent her in her true colours; and surely there is no reason that such should be always their own painters; and while they live by one measure, describe themselves by another. What right have the votaries, or rather slaves of pleasure, to wear the badge and livery of strict and severe virtue?

Princes indeed may confer honours, or rather titles and names of honour. But they are a man's or woman's own actions which must make him or her truly honourable: and every man's life is the heralds office, from whence he must derive and fetch that which must



blazon him to the world; honour being but the reflection of a man's own actions, shining bright in the face of all about him, and from thence rebounding upon himself.

And therefore, what plea can the bully and the hector, the champion of the tavern or the stews, have to this divine and ennobling character? And yet who is it, who so often, so zealously, and so implacably claims it? But the truth is, the name must serve such, instead of the thing; and they are therefore so highly concerned about the one, because they know themselves wholly void of the other.

But such a quarrelsome, vindictive impatience of every injury or affront, is not properly sense of honour; for certainly sense of honour does not take away sense of religion; and that, I am sure, teaches us much other things. It teaches a man not to revenge a contumelious or reproachful word, but to be above it. And therefore it was greatly spoken by Caius Marius, a man of another sort of mettle and valour from our modern town blades: *Me quidem ex animi mei sententia laedere nulla oratio potest; quippe vera, necesse est, bene praedicet, falsam vita moresque mei superant.* He said, he valued not what men could say of him; for if they spake true, they must needs speak honourable of him; if otherwise, his life and his manners should be their confutation. And doubtless it is a truer and nobler vindication of a man's honour, to clear off and confute a slander by his own life, than by another man's death; to make his innocence and his virtue his compurgators, and not to *fight*, but *live* down the calumniator.

And therefore this duelling practice (what thoughts soever some may have of it) proceeds not from any sense of honour; but is really and truly a direct defiance and reproach to the laws and justice of a government, as if they could not or would not protect a man in the dearest concern he has in the world, which is his reputation and good name, but left every slandered person to carve out his own satisfaction, and so to make himself both judge in his own case and executioner too. To prevent which, and to strip this insolent practice of all shadow of excuse, it must be confessed, that no government can be too strict and cautious, even to the degree of niceness, in setting a fence about men's good names; and that in order to it, it were better a great deal to cut the tongue out of the slanderer's mouth, than not to wrest the sword out of the dueller's hand.

But it is to be feared, that even our law itself is something defective in this particular. For if the slandered person comes to that, to right him against the slanderer, What damages, says the law, have you sustained by the slander? Prove how far you have been endamaged, and so far you shall be repaired. To which I answer, that it is impossible for any man living to know how much he is endamaged by a slander; for, like some poisons, it may destroy at two, five, seven, ten, or perhaps twenty years distance; and the venom of it, in the mean time, lie festering and rankling in the mind of some malicious grandee, whose malign influence upon the slandered person, like a worm lying at the root of a tree, shall invisibly wear, and waste, and eat him out of his greatest interests and concerns all his life after; and the

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poor man all this while never know from what quarter this fatal blast which consumes him blows upon him. And therefore I affirm, that if the law would assign a punishment commensurate to a slander, according to the true proportions of justice, it must take its measures, not from the mischief which the slander is known actually to do, but from the mischief which, according to the nature of the thing, it may do.

This I thought fit to remark, being desirous to cut off all excuse from duellers, and to take from those sons of shame their usurped pretences of honour. And indeed, when I consider how we are ridiculed abroad, as making ourselves apes, or rather monkeys to the French, by a fond imitation of their fashions, it may justly seem strange, that in all this time, duelling, which has been proscribed amongst them, should not have grown out of fashion amongst us: especially since it is too, too manifest, that these pests of government cast a greater blot upon it by the blood they shed, than it is possible for them to wash off with their own. And thus much for the first mischievously abused and misapplied word, viz. *honour*, or *sense of honour*.

2. Bodily abstinence, joined with a demure, affected countenance, is often called and accounted *piety* and *mortification*. Suppose a man infinitely ambitious, and equally spiteful and malicious; one who poisons the ears of great men by venomous whispers, and rises by the fall of better men than himself; yet if he steps forth with a Friday look and a lenten face, with a *Blessed Jesu!* and a mournful ditty for the vices of the times, oh! then he is a saint upon earth; an Ambrose or an Augustine; I mean not for that earthly trash of book-learning; for, alas! such are above that, or at least that is above them; but for zeal, and for fasting, for a devout elevation of the eyes, and an holy rage against other men's sins. And happy those ladies and religious dames, characterized in [2 Tim. iii. 6](#), who can have such self-denying, thriving, able men for their confessors! and thrice happy those families, where they vouchsafe to take their Friday night's refreshments! and thereby demonstrate to the world what Christian abstinence, and what primitive, self-mortifying rigour there is in forbearing a dinner, that they may have the better stomach to their supper.

In fine, the whole world stands in admiration of them; fools are fond of them, and wise men are afraid of them; they are talked of, they are pointed at; and as they order the matter, they draw the eyes of all men after them, and generally something else.

But as it is observed in greyhounds, that the thinness of their jaws does not at all allay the ravening fury of their appetite, there being no creature whose teeth are sharper, and whose feet are swifter when they are in pursuit of their prey; so wo be to that man who stands in the way of a meager; mortified, fasting, sharp-set zeal, when it is in full chase of its spiritual game. And therefore, as the apostle admonishes the Philippians, [Phil. iii. 2](#), to *beware of dogs*, so his advice cannot be too frequently remembered, nor too warily observed, when we have to deal with those who are always fawning upon some and biting others, as shall best serve their occasions.

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3dly, Some have found a way to smooth over an implacable, unalterable spleen and malice, by dignifying it with the name of *constancy*. There are several in the world (and those of no small note for godliness too) who take up disgusts easily, and prosecute them irreconcilable; not by way of revenge, (though even that is utterly contrary to Christianity,) for revenge, in the nature of it, supposes an injury first done; whereas this generally has nothing of retaliation in it, but commences entirely upon humour, fancy, and false apprehensions, and the man in the whole course of his spite is perfectly the aggressor.

And in this case, when once his boiling rancour has by error and misapprehension created itself an object to work upon, then presently to work it goes; and no civilities shall be able to mollify such an one, no respects shall gain him, nor obligations take him off; but his spite being fed by a perpetual fountain, is also carried out with a perpetual motion, raging and raving without end or measure; so that if the man himself could be immortal, his malice would certainly be so too. Nay, and some such have been known to take the sacrament every week, with this diabolical ferment working and fuming in their breast, eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ with a mind ready to suck that of their neighbour.

And if these wretches, in the prosecution of their malicious rage, chance to find themselves (as they do very often) mistaken in their main ground and first motive of it; yet, rather than own a mistake, and not seem infallible, as well as implacable, they will be sure to follow their blow, and the injury must still go on, till it becomes infinite and unmeasurable. And this some call *constancy*, *greatness*, and *firmness of mind*, and a kind of approach to unchangeableness; thus in effect clothing a devilish quality with a divine attribute. For it would sound but scurvily to say in plain terms, "That such an one is a person of an obstinate, inexorable, impregnable malice; take heed of him, have nothing to do with him." And therefore it strikes the ear much softer and better to say, "He is one of great constancy and steadiness, always like himself, and not apt to change or vary from the rule which he has once pitched upon to act by." Though the real, naked truth, which lies under all this disguise of words, is, that the person so set off is a kind of devil incarnate, void not only of religion, but humanity; his ignorance first apprehends and makes in juries, and then his malice pursues them.

And thus you see Samuel's mantle cast over the Devil, and, according to the apostle's phrase, a long and large cloak provided for and fitted to maliciousness. Not that this ill thing does yet so wholly tie itself to this convenient sort of garment, but that some times it can wear a gown as well as a cloak, that being often found both to keep it warmer, and to conceal it better. But wo unto the souls of those Pharisaical hellish hypocrites, if the God, whom they pretend such a peculiar relation to, and who is indeed unchangeable in his nature, should borrow some of their constancy, and shew himself such in his wrath also!

The schoolmen, speaking of the state of the fallen angels, or devils, say, that they are *confirmati in summa malicia*; which, according to the notion now before us, you may, if you please, interpret *constancy*. And our Saviour, describing the torments of hell and the

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punishments of the damned, expresses them by *the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched*. So that here is another sort of constancy also. And surely, if we compare them both together, and so pass a right judgment upon the whole matter, there seems to be all the reason in the world that such as practise the constancy of the former, should at length be rewarded with the constancy of the other.

4thly, A staunch, resolved temper of mind, not suffering a man to sneak, fawn, cringe, and accommodate himself to all humours, though never so absurd and unreasonable, is commonly branded with, and exposed under the character of pride, morosity, and ill-nature; an ugly word, which you may from time to time observe many honest, worthy, inoffensive persons, and that of all sorts, ranks, and professions, strangely and unaccountably worried and run down by. And therefore I think I cannot do truth, justice, and common honesty better service, than by ripping up so malicious a cheat, to vindicate such as have suffered by it.

Certain it is, that amongst all the contrivances of malice, there is not a surer engine to pull men down in the good opinion of the world, and that in spite of the greatest worth and innocence, than this imputation of ill-nature; an engine which serves the ends and does the work of pique and envy both effectually and safely; forasmuch as it is a loose and general charge upon a man, without alleging any particular reason for it from his life or actions, and consequently does the more mischief, because, as a word of course, it passes currently, and is seldom looked into or examined. And therefore, as there is no way to prove a paradox or false proposition, but to take it for granted; so such as would stab any man's good name with the accusation of ill-nature, do very rarely descend to proofs or particulars: it is sufficient for their purpose that the word sounds odiously and is believed easily; and that is enough to do any one's business with the generality of men, who seldom have so much judgment or charity as to hear the cause before they pronounce sentence.

But that we may proceed with greater truth, equity, and candour in this case, we will endeavour to find out the right sense and meaning of this terrible confounding word *ill-nature*, by coming to particulars.

And here, first; Is the person charged with it false or cruel, ungrateful or revengeful? Is he shrewd and unjust in his dealings with others? Does he regard no promises, and pay no debts? Does he profess love, kindness, and respect to those, whom underhand he does all the mischief to that possibly he can? Is he unkind, rude, or niggardly to his friends? Has he shut up his heart and his hand towards the poor, and has no bowels of compassion for such as are in want and misery? Is he insensible of kindnesses done him, and withal careless and backward to acknowledge or requite them? Or, lastly, is he bitter and implacable in the prosecution of such as have wronged or abused him?

No, generally none of all these ill things (which one would wonder at) are ever meant, or so much as thought of, in the charge of ill-nature; but for the most part the clean contrary

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qualities are readily acknowledged. Ay, but where and what kind of thing then is this strange occult quality called *ill-nature*, which makes such a thundering noise against such as have the ill luck to be taxed with it?

Why, the best account that I or any one else can give of it is this; that there are many men in the world, who, without the least arrogance or self-conceit, have yet so just a value both for themselves and others, as to scorn to flatter and gloss, to fall down and worship, to lick the spittle and kiss the feet of any proud, swelling, overgrown, domineering huff whatsoever; and such persons generally think it enough for them to shew their superiors respect with out adoration, and civility without servitude.

Again; there are some who have a certain ill-natured stiffness, forsooth, in their tongue, so as not to be able to applaud and keep pace with this or that self-admiring, vain-glorious Thraso, while he is pluming and praising himself, and telling fulsome stories in his own commendation for three or four hours by the clock, and at the same time reviling and throwing dirt upon all mankind besides.

There is also a sort of odd ill-natured men, whom neither hopes nor fears, frowns nor favours, can prevail upon to have any of the cast, beggarly, forlorn nieces or kinswomen of any lord or grandee, spiritual or temporal, trumped upon them.

To which we may add another sort of obstinate, ill-natured persons, who are not to be brought by any one's guilt or greatness to speak or write, or to swear or lie as they are bidden, or to give up their own consciences in a compliment to those who have none themselves.

And lastly, there are some so extremely ill-natured, as to think it very lawful and allowable for them to be sensible when they are injured and oppressed, when they are slandered in their good names, and wronged in their just interests, and withal to dare to own what they find and feel, without being such beasts of burden as to bear tamely whatsoever is cast upon them, or such spaniels as to lick the foot which kicks them, or to thank the goodly great one for doing them all these back favours. Now these and the like particulars are some of the chief instances of that ill-nature, which men are more properly said to be guilty of towards their superiors.

But there is a sort of ill-nature also that uses to be practised towards equals or inferiors; such as perhaps a man's refusing to lend money to such as he knows will never repay him, and so to straiten and in commode himself only to gratify a shark; or possibly the man may prefer his duty and his business before company, and the bettering himself before the humouring of others; or he may not be willing to spend his time, his health, and his estate, upon a crew of idle, spunging, ungrateful sots, and so to play the prodigal amongst an herd of swine; with several other such unpardonable faults in conversation, (as some will have them,) for which the fore-mentioned cattle, finding themselves disappointed, will be sure to go grumbling and grunting away, and not fail to proclaim him a morose, ill-conditioned, ill-natured person in all clubs and companies whatsoever; and so that man's work is done,



and his name lies groveling upon the ground in all the taverns, brandy-shops, and coffee-houses about the town.

And thus having given you some tolerable account of what the world calls *ill-nature*, and that both to wards superiors, and towards equals and inferiors, (as it is easy and natural to know one contrary by the other,) we may from hence take a true measure of what the world is observed to mean by the contrary character of *good-nature*, as it is generally bestowed.

And first, when great ones vouchsafe this endearing elogy to those below them, a *good-natured man* generally denotes some slavish, glavinging, flattering parasite, or hanger-on, one who is a mere tool or instrument, a fellow fit to be sent upon any malicious errand; a setter or informer, made to creep into all companies; a wretch employed under a pretence of friendship or acquaintance, *to fetch and carry*, and to come to men's tables, to play the Judas there; and in a word, to do all those mean, vile, and degenerous offices, which men of greatness and malice use to engage men of baseness and treachery in.

But then on the other hand, when this word passes between equals, commonly by a *good-natured man* is meant, either some easy, soft-headed piece of simplicity, who suffers himself to be led by the nose, and wiped of his conveniences by a company of sharpening, worthless sycophants, who will be sure to despise, laugh, and droll at him, as a weak, empty fellow, for all his ill-placed cost and kindness. And the truth is, if such vermin do not find him empty, it is odds but in a little time they will make him so. And this is one branch of that which some call *good-nature*, (and good-nature let it be,) indeed so good, that according to the wise Italian proverb, "It is even good for nothing."

Or, in the next place, by a *good-natured man* is usually meant, neither more nor less than a good fellow, a painful, able, and laborious soaker. But he who owes all his good-nature to the pot and the pipe, to the jollity and compliances of merry company, may possibly go to bed with a wonderful stock of good nature over-night, but then he will sleep it all away again before the morning.

5thly, Some would needs have a pragmatcal prying into and meddling with other men's matters, a fitness for business, forsooth, and accordingly call and account none but such persons *men of business*; a word which of late years carries with it no small character, though the thing really intended by it most commonly imports something mischievous, and justly to be abhorred. To be fit for business is no doubt a just commendation to any man; but then let it be the business which a man's station, condition, or profession, properly calls him to; that is, in other words, let it be his own business, and not another man's.

As for instance: what has a divine to do to act the part of a courtier or a merchant, and much less of an informer or a solicitor? Is the court, or the exchange, or every man's house, except his own, the fittest place for him to study and bestow his time in? And yet many both value themselves, and are valued by others, only for such preposterous, absurd, unbecoming

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practices; too just an apology (God knows) for the sacrilegious incroachments of the late times of confusion. For why might not laymen and mechanics then invade the pulpit, as well as men of the pulpit at any time intrude into the secular employments of laymen? And I cannot see how that sly, specious (but now stale and silly) pretence of doing good (though set off with never so much devotional rapture and grimace) can warrant any man to spend his time there where he has nothing to do. For though philosophy teaches that no element is heavy in its own place, yet experience shews, that out of its own place it proves exceeding burdensome. And this observation will be found to reach something further than the four elements, which the peripatetics affirm the world to be composed of.

But to return to our men of business. There are some, whose restless, insinuating, searching humour will never suffer them to be quiet, unless they dive into the concerns of all about them; they are always outward bound, but homeward never; they are perpetually looking about them, but never within them; they can hardly relish or digest what they eat at their own table, unless they know what and how much is served up to another man's; they cannot sleep quietly themselves, unless they know when their neighbour rises and goes to bed; they must know who visits him, and who is visited by him; what company he keeps; what revenues he has, and what he spends; how much he owes, and how much is owed to him. And this, in the judgment of some, is to be a man of business; that is, in other words, to be a plague and a spy, a treacherous supplanter and underminer of the peace of all families and societies. This being a maxim of an unfailing truth, that nobody ever pries into another man's concerns, but with a design to do, or to be able to do him a mischief. A most detestable humour doubtless, and yet, as bad as it is, since there is nothing so base, barbarous, and dishonourable, but power joined with malice will sometimes make use of it, it may, and often does, raise a man a pitch higher in this world, though (it is to be feared) it may send him a large step lower in the next.

But what says the scripture to this meddling, inquisitive, way-laying temper? Why, St. Peter gives his judgment of it plainly enough in [1 Peter iv. 15](#); *Let none of you (says he) suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.* But what? Does this great apostle range these men of business, the great probationers for all that is honourable both in church and state, amongst thieves and murderers? Certainly this shews that St. Peter was neither a man of business himself, nor ever desired to be so; and yet, for all that, Christ thought him nevertheless qualified for the work and business of an apostle.

But whatsoever St. Peter's judgment or St. Peter himself was, it is certain that the pharisees were men of business, and that in a very eminent manner, as appears by their behaviour both in the court of queen Alexandra, and afterwards in the court of Herod; where, by their tricks and trinketing between party and party, and their intriguing it with courtiers and court ladies, they had upon the matter set the whole court together by the ears; according to that blessed account and character given of them by Josephus, chap. 3. of his 17th book

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of the Jewish Antiquities. And there seldom wants a race of such meddlesome vermin in the courts of all other princes, so exactly like those men of business, their true ancestors, the pharisees, that could they be but contemporaries, and live together, it would be hardly possible to distinguish which were the copy and which the original.

And thus I have given you a small specimen of those artificially misapplied terms, by which crafty and malicious men word others out of their interests and advantages, and themselves into them. I say, it is but a specimen or taste of those numerous, or rather innumerable instances which might be produced; two of which especially I had thought to have spoken something more fully to; namely, the calling covetousness, good husbandry; and prodigality, generosity. According to the first of which, [Psalm x. 3](#), it is made the very mark and description of a wicked man, that *he speaks well of the covetous, whom God abhorreth*; that is, he speaks well of a thief and an idolater; for so the scripture calls the covetous man, who makes his money his god, and his neighbour too; a wretch, who, under the mask of frugality, scarce ever has a penny ready for the poor, though never without his hundreds and his thousands of pounds ready for a purchase.

And no less is the abuse in surnaming the prodigal person generous or liberal, while he is spending and borrowing, and borrowing and spending, and never considering that it is the height of injustice, as well as folly, to affect to be generous at other men's cost.

There is also another notable abuse of words, and that of so contagious an influence, that according to the prophet's expression, [Amos vi. 12](#), *it turns judgment into gall, and righteousness into hemlock*; and that is, the calling of justice, cruelty, and cowardice, mercy; a fatal and pernicious confusion of the very best of things certainly, by which the two main pillars and supports of government and society, of policy and morality, to wit, justice and mercy, are made utterly useless and ineffectual, nay, rather contrary and prejudicial to those high and noble purposes.

These things, I confess, might be further insisted upon, and many more such instances alleged; but I shall stop here, it being so easy a matter for every man to multiply particulars from his own observation.

And therefore now to recollect and sum up all that has been delivered upon this vast and even immense subject; I suppose we have seen enough to deserve the wo or curse mentioned in the text over and over; a wo which cannot possibly surmount the guilt of the persons and practices which it stands denounced against, which is so foul, that it justly draws after it all the vengeance of God in the next world, and the utmost hatred and detestation of men in this. For as it is in [Prov. xxiv. 24](#), *He who says to the wicked, Thou art righteous, him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him*. And I suppose the same curse belongs to him who robs a man of his innocence, and says to the righteous, *Thou art wicked*. All or most of the miseries and calamities which afflict mankind, and turn the world upside down, have been conceived in, and issued from, the fruitful womb of this one villainous artifice.

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For cast your eyes upon the affairs of religion, and you shall see the best, the purest, and most primitively ordered church in the world, torn, and broken, and sacrificed to the rage and lust of schism and sacrilege, only by being libeled and misrepresented, under the false guise of *formality*, *popery*, and *superstition*. You shall see the ruin of it effected under the notion of *reformation*; the laws of it made odious and ineffectual by the name of *persecution*; and lastly, the whole constitution of it baffled and betrayed by a company of treacherous, trimming, half conformists, acting under the vizard of *moderation*.

From the church, cast your eyes upon the state, and see the best, the mildest, and most religious prince that ever swayed a sceptre, butchered, and weltering in his own blood, before the gates of his own royal palace, by the barbarous hands of his in finitely obliged, but infinitely cruel and ungrateful subjects; and this by misreporting him to his people, as a designer of popery and arbitrary power, things as contrary to his gracious nature and principles as light to darkness: and yet under this character he was pursued with fire and sword, violence and rebellion, and at length doomed to death by a sentence as black and false as hell itself, pronouncing him a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy.

Next to this, see the faithfulest of his friends torn from him and destroyed, under the notion of *evil counsellors*; and the same trick offered at again in his son's time, by an endeavour to strip him of his friends too, under the name of *pensioners*.

And then, as a consequent of all this, see the vilest of men aspiring to, and grasping at, the sovereign power, by endearing themselves to the rabble under the plausible affected titles of *public spirits*, *standers up for their country*, and *for the liberties, properties, and rights of the subject*; while *inwardly they were ravening wolves*, made up of nothing but tyranny and atheism, covetousness and ambition.

From hence cast your eyes and thoughts upon the concerns of private families and persons, and there oftentimes you shall see husband and wife irreconcilably divided, parents estranged from their children, and children enraged against their parents; and all this tragical consuming flame generally kindled and blown up by the foul breath of some lying, tale-bearing wretch, throwing all into a combustion by feigned stories.

You may also see the hope and support of many a flourishing family untimely cut off by the sword of a drunken dueller, in vindication of something that he miscalls his honour.

Another you may see wasted and undone by law suits, and that through the false arts of his unconscionable, greedy counsel, colouring over crazy, unsound titles with fallacious, encouraging pretences.

Again, if at any time you see old and long acquaintances broken off with immortal, inextinguishable feuds, it is a thousand to one odds but it has happened by the base offices of some devilish tongue which has passed between them.

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And lastly, you may see others bereaved of the favour and countenance of those whom they have deserved best of, and so crushed in all their interests, only by being misrepresented by secret whispers and false informations.

But it would be endless to recount all particulars: and therefore in one word. Do but cast over in your minds all the schismatical contrivances against the church; all the seditious attempts upon the state; all the disturbances of families; and lastly, all the practices that have passed upon particular persons; by which the wicked have been encouraged, and the good oppressed; and you may lodge them all within the compass of this one comprehensive, boundless common-place, as being directly derivable from, and naturally resolvable into this one, church and state, and family-confounding practice, *the calling good evil, and evil good.*

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and do minion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*



## A DISCOURSE

### CONCERNING

### TEMPTATION.

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#### PART I.

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#### 2 PETER ii. 9.

*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.*

I DO not know a greater and a juster ground of discouragement to wise and thinking men, with reference to the high concerns of their immortal souls, than to consider, that, over and above that innate corruption brought with them into the world, and so mightily strengthened and improved by the continual restless working of the same in the actual commission of sin ever since, that there should, I say, besides this, be an external agent and evil spirit incessantly blowing up this fire within us, exasperating, stirring up, and drawing forth this active quality in the several mischievous actings thereof: and this evil spirit, withal, of such force, such sagacity, and such unspeakable vigilance for the compassing of men's destruction, as far surpass all that men themselves can be brought to do even for their own salvation. A sad case certainly, and such as must needs cast the issue of the war between them upon very unequal terms; where the superior in malice is as much the superior in strength too; and where (to make the odds yet greater) man on the one side must venture all, and the tempter on the other has nothing to lose.

It is true indeed, that the will of man can never be forced by any created or finite spirit, good or bad, but may still stand its ground against all attacks from without. Nevertheless, there are so many ways to allure, inveigle, and persuade it, by ill, but suitable objects from abroad, that this bare natural power, or rather possibility, of resisting them, in the issue of the matter, proves but a very poor security to it, being so often urged and overborne (as it is) by the powerful impressions which such objects are almost continually, and with so much success, still making upon it.

Nor is it only the present state of corrupt nature which gives force and efficacy to these importunate assaults; but it is altogether as manifest, that the forementioned qualifications of this subtle agent, even in the state of innocence itself, made him so much too hard for our first parents, that, under all the advantages of that blessed estate, he got ground of them so speedily and so effectually, that he made a shift to out them of paradise and their innocence too, before they had passed one whole day in either.



Whereupon an universal contagion seizing the whole mass of human nature, and all mankind (the second Adam only, by his miraculous conception, excepted) being ever since born in sin, and not only born, but fatally grown up in it, and made slaves to it too; how almost could it be imagined, that there should be so much as room for any further addition to the forlorn and miserable estate of a creature so weak, so wretched, and so wholly biased to his own ruin, as man, upon this account, undeniably is? Indeed, with so mighty a bias is he now earned on to wards it, that (one would have thought) it might have given even this restless and malicious spirit himself (were he capable of it) his *quietus est*: it being hard to judge, to what purpose so skilful an artist (and so perfectly acquainted with his business) should employ himself in planting engines and laying trains to blow up one, who, by the freest choice of his own will, and in spite of all the principles of self-preservation, is upon every turn so ready to destroy himself. He who will needs venture into the deep, with neither strength nor skill to encounter the boisterous element, will quickly find the stream alone more than sufficient to bear him down and sink him, without the concurrence of either wind or tide to speed his destruction.

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And this, God knows, is but too much our case. Every one of us, from the bare sway of his own inherent corruption, carrying enough and enough about him to assure his final doom, without any further impulse from without, to push home and finish the killing stroke. He who is ready to breathe his last by a fever, surely needs not to be despatched with a sword.

But this is not the worst nor saddest of a man's condition, with reference to temptation, neither: for though it be too certain, that the corruption of man's nature is such, that it is sufficient to destroy him without the tempter's doing any thing towards it, yet it is as certain also, that it never actually destroys him, but the tempter has an hand in that fatal work. Such an adversary have we, the sons of Adam, to contend with; an adversary, who, in conjunction with his two grand allies, the world and the flesh, will be always carrying on an implacable war against souls. For God has declared so much, and men have found and felt it; and (whatsoever atheism or infidelity may object) neither must the justice of the one be disputed, nor the experience of the other be denied. Nevertheless, from what has been said, this, I think, may very rationally be inferred, that there cannot be a stronger argument to evince the necessity of a superior good spirit to assist and bear men through the difficulties of a Christian course, than this one consideration, that, besides a man's own natural corruption, there is an evil spirit continually active and intent to seduce and draw him from it. Upon which account most certainly it is, that the heart of man, so weak in itself within, and so assaulted from without, if not borne up and assisted by something mightier than itself, is by no means an equal match for the tempter.

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In the prosecution of the words, I shall consider these two things.

1st, Who are here to be understood by *the godly*. And,

2dly, What is here meant by *temptation*.

And here,

First, for the first of these: we may take this for a certain, though perhaps an obvious direction of our inquiries in this matter, viz. that we are not to look or seek for *the godly*, here spoken of by the apostle, where we may be sure beforehand not to find them; that is to say, amongst such as, with the highest confidence, or rather impudence, not only arrogate, but engross this great character to themselves; such as measure their godliness by looks, postures, and phrases, by a jargon of scriptural cant, and a flow of some warm, rapturous, and fantastic expressions; all according to the sanctified whine and peculiar dialect of those times of infatuation, when noise and nonsense so mightily bore down sense and reason, and the godliness then in vogue turned religion quite out of doors. It was the very shibboleth of the party; nothing being so much in fashion with them as the name, nor more out of fashion, and out of sight too, than the thing itself.

But godliness (blessed be God) is not a mere word or pretence, a trick of state, or political engine to support a party or serve a turn, and much less an occasional cover for a stated hypocrisy. No, it springs from a nobler soil and a deeper root, and, like the great object of it, God himself, *is the same yester-day, to-day, and for ever*; in its original, divine; in its rule, unchangeable.

And therefore, since bare negatives are not to be rested in, where so high a perfection is to be accounted for, (a perfection comprehending in it all the graces of a Christian, and no less than the image of God himself new stamped upon the soul,) he and he only can lay claim to so glorious a qualification, who is actually in covenant with God, and that not only by external profession, but by real relation; a relation entitling him to all the benefits of a federal estate, by coming up to the conditions of it; or, to be yet more particular, he who with a full and fixed resolution of heart has took the whole law of Christ in the several precepts of it, with the utmost hardships attending them, for his portion in this world, and the promises of it for his inheritance in the next: he who rules his appetites by his reason, and both by his religion: he who makes his duty his business, till at length he comes to make it his delight too: he whose sole design is to be pious, without affecting to be thought so: he who lives and acts by a mighty principle within, which the world about him neither sees nor understands; a principle respecting all God's commands without reserve; a principle carrying a man out to a course of obedience, for the duration of it constant, and for the extent of it universal: and lastly, in a word, he and he only ought to pass for godly, according to the stated, unalterable rules and measures of Christianity, who allows not himself in the omission of any known duty, or the commission of the least known sin. And this certainly will, and nothing less, that I know of, can, either secure a man from falling into temptation, or (which is yet a greater happiness) from falling by it. All other measures not coming up to this standard are vain, trifling, and fallacious, and to all the real purposes of religion wholly ineffectual. They give us but a godliness of a man's own making, and consequently

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of his own rewarding too, if ever it be rewarded at all. And thus much for the explication of the first thing; namely, who and what the godly are, to whom the text promises so great a privilege, as to be *delivered from temptation*.

2dly, The other thing to be inquired into and explained by us is, what is here meant by *temptation*; a thing better known by its ill effects, than by the best description. The Greek word is *πειρασμὸς*, which signifies *trial*, and so imports not so much the matter, as the end of the dispensation. So that any thing whatsoever which tends to try and discover what is in the heart or will of man, is and may be (in one respect or other) called a *temptation*. In which sense, outward crosses and afflictions are so called, and the people of God are bidden by the apostle *to rejoice, when they fall into divers temptations*, [James i. 2](#). And according to the several ways and methods, whereby God draws forth and discovers what is lodged in the hearts of men, good or bad, God himself is said to *tempt them*, that is, to try or prove them. In which respect he was said to have tempted Abraham, in [Gen. xxii. 1](#). But (the common and most received use of the word having added something of malignity to its first and native signification) generally in scripture it denotes not only a bare trial, but such an one as is attended with a design to hurt or mischief the people so tried. In which sense the scribes and pharisees are so often brought in by the evangelists tempting our Saviour; that is, they were still trying him with captious, ensnaring questions, as we find in [Luke xi. 54](#), and elsewhere, *to get something out of his mouth to accuse and destroy him*. But chiefly and most frequently the scripture means by it such a trial, as is intended to supplant and ruin a man in his spiritual concerns, by inducing him to sin, and so subjecting him to the fatal effects and consequents thereof. And thus, on the contrary, it is said of God, *that he tempts no man*, in [James i. 13](#). This sort of temptation always proceeding from a man's own inherent corruption and concupiscence, set on work by their trusty confederate and co-worker the Devil, whose peculiar province and perpetual business being to tempt men this way, he has accordingly, by way of eminence, appropriated the odious name of *tempter* to himself. And therefore, to give a full account of this whole matter in short; any thing or object whatsoever, whereby a man, either through the instigation of the Devil or his agents, or the corruption of his own heart, or the particular circumstances of his condition, or all of them together, is apt to be drawn or disposed to some sinful action or omission, is that which the scripture principally and most properly calls a temptation.

And this, I conceive, gives us so true and full an account of the general nature of temptation, that no particular sort of it can be assigned, but what is directly comprehended in it, or fairly reducible to it.

As for the sense in which the word ought to be taken here, it may be, and no doubt with great truth is, in the full latitude of it, applicable to both sorts of temptation: it being no less the prerogative of God's goodness and power to deliver men from such trials as afflict them, than from such as are designed to corrupt them. Nevertheless, I think it also as little to be



doubted, that the text chiefly respects this latter signification, and accordingly speaks here most designedly of such a deliverance as breaks the snares, and defeats the stratagems, by which the great and mortal enemy of mankind is so infinitely busy, first to debauch, and then to destroy souls.

Nor can the very reason of the words (so far as I can judge) infer any thing else; forasmuch as all the instances here given by the apostle in the fore going part of this chapter, as first, of *persons seduced and drawn aside by false prophets and teachers, bringing in damnable doctrines amongst them*, in the first verse; and then of Noah delivered from that general inundation of sin, by which, one deluge (as I may so express it) brought upon the world another, in the [fifth verse](#); and lastly, of righteous Lot's deliverance from the filthy conversation of the Sodomites, in the [seventh verse](#), are all of them but so many notable examples of several persons, some delivered to, and others delivered from, such a sort of temptation, as, without affecting the outward man, were to shoot their poison and pollution only into the inmost powers of the soul or spirit, wounding and working upon that by secret and more killing impressions.

Add to this, that the deliverance from temptation here insisted upon, is set forth as a singular privilege and special act of favour vouchsafed by God to the righteous, and that in a very distinguishing way, (as shall be shewn presently;) whereas a deliverance from temporal crosses and calamities can hardly, with any congruity to other places and passages of scripture, be termed so; since such crosses, for the most part, are there declared to be the lot and portion of the godly in this world, the known mark of their calling, a proof of their saintship, and the very badge of their profession.

Nevertheless, allowing this sense of the word not to be wholly excluded here, the argument we may draw from thence, for our present assertion, will run, *a fortiore*, thus: That if it be so signal a mercy for God to deliver the saints from the mere outside and surface of misery, in those temporal pressures and adversities, which, though possibly they may sometimes incommode the man, yet can never reach the saint, and though they break the casket, can never come at the jewel, certainly it must needs be a mercy of a much higher rate, to deliver them from such temptations as carry nothing but hell and death along with them, and are of so strong, so malign, and so fatal an influence upon the soul, as to drive at nothing less than its utter ruin and damnation.

And now, if upon what has been said it be here inquired, whether they are the righteous only whom God delivers from temptation, and that no such deliverances are ever vouchsafed by him to any of the contrary character?

I answer, that I can find nothing in scripture or reason to found such a doctrine upon; but that such deliverances both may be and sometimes are vouchsafed to persons, far enough from being reckoned godly, either in the accounts of God or man. And first, that they may be so, we need no other reason to evince it than this, that God, in these cases, may very well

restrain the actions, without working any change upon the will or affections. And this, both with reference to the evil spirit himself, whom he may control, and keep from tempting; as likewise with reference to wicked men, from whom he may, in several instances, cut off the opportunities of sinning, or complying with the tempter, and yet leave them as habitually wicked as they were before: God's restraining grace often extending itself to such as his sanctifying grace never reaches. And in the next place, that such deliverances not only may be, but sometimes actually are afforded to persons represented under no note of piety or virtue, but much otherwise, those three memorable examples of Abimelech, Esau, and Balaam, the first in the [20th of Genesis](#), the second in the [33d of Genesis](#), and the other in the [22d of Numbers](#), sufficiently demonstrate.

So that we may rationally conclude, that even wicked persons also are sometimes sharers in such deliverances; but still so, that this by all means ought to be observed withal, that the said deliverances are dealt forth to these two different sorts of men upon very different grounds; viz. to the former upon the stock of covenant or promises; to the latter upon the stock of uncovenanted mercy, and the free, overflowing egress of the divine benignity, often exerting itself upon such as have no claim to it at all. The sovereign Author of all good, in this, as in innumerable other cases, scattering some of the bounties of his common grace, as well as those of nature, amongst the sons of men, for the wise and just ends of his providence in the government of the world; which would quickly dissolve and sink into confusion, should even the wickedest of men be always as wicked as the tempter (if he had his will) would assuredly make them.

Now this exposition of the words thus premised, I shall cast the prosecution of them under these three particulars.

1st, To shew how far God delivers persons truly pious out of temptation.

2dly, To shew what is the grand motive or impulsive cause inducing God thus to deliver them. And,

3dly and lastly, To shew why and upon what grounds this is to be reputed so great a mercy and so transcendent a privilege.

And first for the first of these, namely, how far God delivers persons truly pious from temptation. This I shall endeavour to shew, by considering them with reference to temptation these three ways.

1st, As before they enter into it.

2dly, As they are actually entered into it. And,

3dly and lastly, As they are in some degree prevailed upon by it.

All ways of deliverance from it being accordingly reducible to, and comprehensive within the compass of these three, viz.

1st, Of being kept from it; as the church of Philadelphia was, in the [third of Revel, ver. 10](#).



2dly, Of being supported under it; as Joseph in the [39th of Genesis](#), and St. Paul in the [2d of Corinthians, 12th chap. and 9th ver.](#) (we read) were. And,

3dly and lastly, Of being brought out of it, as in [Luke xxii. 31](#) we find St. Peter to have been, and as all true penitents and sincere converts never fail to be.

Each of which particular heads shall be distinctly considered by us. And,

First of all; God delivers by way of prevention, or keeping off the temptation; which of all other ways is doubtless the surest, as the surest is unquestionably the best. For by this is set a mighty barrier between the soul and the earliest approaches of its mortal enemy. Whereas, on the contrary, the first step in any destructive course still prepares for the second, and the second for the third; after which there is no stop, but the progress is infinite; forasmuch as the third more powerfully disposes to the fourth, than the first to the second; and so the advance proportionably goes on.

Which being so, and the soul no less than the body, being subject to so many distempers, too likely to prove fatal to it, must not preventing remedies in all reason be both the gentlest and the safest for it too? Distance from danger is the strongest fence against it: and that man needs not fear burning, (be the fire never so fierce,) who keeps himself from being so much as scorched.

If we consider the sin of the fallen angels themselves, there might, without dispute, have been a prevention of it, though no recovery after it; and a keeping of their first station, (as the apostle expresses it,) though, when once quitted, no postliminious return to it, no retrieving of a lost innocence or a forfeited felicity.

For which causes the preventing methods of grace may deservedly pass for some of the prime instances of the divine mercy to men in this world. For though it ought to be owned for an eminent act of grace to restore one actually fallen, yet there are not wanting arguments to persuade, that it is a greater to keep one from falling. Not to break a limb is more desirable, than to have it set and healed, though never so skilfully and well. Preservation in this, as in many other cases, being better a great deal than restoration; since, after all is done, it is odds but the scar will remain when the wound is cured, and the danger over.<sup>13</sup>

And therefore happy, no doubt, by a distinguished sort of happiness, are those favourites of Heaven, who have both omnipotence and omniscience, infinite power and infinite wisdom, jointly engaged by infinite mercy, so to guard and wake over them through all the various turns and hazardous encounters in their Christian course, as to bring them off from the enemy safe and untouched, and to work their deliverance rather by rescue than recovery. It is a work in which God, as I may so speak, shews his art and skill. *God knows how to deliver the godly*, says the text. The whole action is carried on by preventing grace, under the conduct of that high attribute of God's knowledge; and especially that noble branch of it,

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13 See the sermon in vol. ii. p. 139-162, concerning prevention of sin, upon [1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33](#).



his foreknowledge, by which he has the remotest futurities and the loosest contingencies under a certain and exact view. For though indeed the divine knowledge (as all other knowledge) be of itself unoperative; (the proper nature of knowledge being only to apprehend and judge of what comes before it, and rather to suppose than to work upon its object;) yet if the divine knowledge did not certainly and infallibly foresee and comprehend every turn, motion, and foredetermination of man's will, with reference to every object or motive that can possibly be presented to it, how could God so steadily and effectually ward off all those evils and temptations, which the several events, accidents, and occasions of our lives (all of them variously affecting our wills) would from time to time expose us to? Omnipotence itself could not certainly prevent a danger, if omniscience did not foresee it. For where there is no prescience there can be no prevention. And this is a demonstration that all such preventive deliverances are so peculiarly and wholly from God, that, for want of this perfection, no man living can possibly thus deliver himself. *I will guide thee with mine eye*, says God, [Psalm xxxii. 8](#). Next to the protecting shelter of God's wing is the securing prospect of his eye.

Numerous are the deliverances that God works for us, which we see, but infinitely more those which we do not see, but he does. For how often is the scene of our destruction contrived and laid by the tempter! how often are his nets spread for us, and those of too curious and fine a thread to be discernible by our eye, and we go securely treading on to our own ruin, when suddenly the mercy of a preventing Providence stops us in our walk, and pulls back our foot from the fatal snare!

Unspeakable are the advantages vouchsafed to mankind by God's preventing grace; if we consider how apt a temptation is to diffuse, and how prone our nature is to receive an infection. It is dangerous dwelling even in the suburbs of an infected city. Not only the touches, but also the very breath of a temptation is poisonous; and there is sometimes (if I may so express it) a contagion even without a contact.

And if the conscience has not wholly lost its native tenderness, it will not only dread the infection of a wound, but also the aspersion of a blot. For though the soul be not actually corrupted and debauched by a temptation, yet it is something to be sullied and blown upon by it, to have been in the dangerous familiarities of sin, and in the next approach and neighbourhood of destruction. Such being the nature of man, that it is hardly possible for him to be near an ill thing, and not the worse for it.

For if we accurately observe the inward movings and actions of the heart, we shall find that temptation wins upon it by very small, secret, and almost insensible gradations. Perhaps in its first converse with a tempting object, it is not presently surprised with a desire of it; but does it not hereby come to lose some of its former averseness to it? Possibly, at first view, it may not esteem it amiable, but does it not begin to think it less ugly? Its love may not be yet kindled, but is not its former loathing some thing abated? The encroaches of a temptation are so strangely insinuating, that no security under it can be comparable to a being remote

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from it: and therefore, if we hate its friendship, let us dread its acquaintance, shun its converse, and keep aloof off from its company. For he who would gain a complete triumph over it, must know, that to grapple with it is at best a venture, but to fly from it is certain victory.

And if so, where can a man be so safe as in the arms of sin-preventing grace? the sovereign influence of which will appear, not only from those peculiar effects of it upon the pious and the virtuous, but also from those great things done by it even for the worst and wickedest part of mankind, (as we hinted before,) and those indeed so great, (how little soever taken notice of,) that without them common society could not possibly subsist; but the moral and political frame of the world would fall back into a fouler and more deformed chaos than that out of which this material one was first produced. For how come men generally, and that so extremely against the bent of nature, to submit to laws; laws which for the most part lay a restraint upon their strongest appetites, and which, if they would but generally agree to break and to throw off, could signify no thing? How comes the multitude to have such an awe upon their spirits for governors and magistrates, though they know themselves so vastly superior in strength to those who govern them? And why rather is not all order and government upon these terms utterly confounded and turned topsyturvy, by thefts, rapes, incests, perjuries, and murders, and irresistibly borne down by an overflowing torrent of all kinds of villainy, forcing its way through the very bowels of it? Is it because there is not corruption enough in man's nature to prompt and carry him out to all these enormities? or because there are not sinful objects enough to inflame and draw forth this corruption? No, it is but too sadly manifest that there is too plentiful a stock of both to suffer the world to be quiet one moment, if they could but once, like two mighty seas, meet and join, and flow in together.

But all the stop is from an infinitely wise, preventing power, which keeps all in order here below, by separating between ill objects and worse appetites, by cutting off the opportunities of sin, and so both diverting and defeating the temptation. For how many might, and without doubt would have stolen, as Achan did, had the same allurements been played before them! How many might have committed David's murder and adultery, had they been under David's circumstances! How many might have denied and forsworn Christ with St. Peter, had they been surprised with the same danger! How great a part of the innocence of the world is nothing else but want of opportunity to do the wickedness they have a mind to! And how many forbear sinning, not because God's grace has wrought upon their wills, but because a merciful Providence has kept off the occasion.

And thus much for the first degree of God's delivering men from temptation; a benefit, which, for the common ends of his providence, he sometimes vouchsafes to all sorts of men promiscuously, but most eminently and frequently to the good and pious, whom for higher and better ends he often rescues and preserves from the first offers and approaches of sinful



objects and occasions, and thereby gives his first answer to that most important and divine petition in the Lord's prayer; *Lead us not into temptation.*

2dly, We are now in the next place to consider such persons as advanced a step further, and as they are actually entered into temptation; and so also God is at hand for their deliverance. But here we must first premise, what it is *to enter into temptation.* And that in one word is, for a man to meet with such objects, to converse with such occasions, and to be brought under such circumstances of life, as have in them a peculiar fitness to provoke and draw forth the working of his corruption, whatsoever it be; but especially of that particular corruption which is strongest and most predominant in him. So that a man finds something ready to take hold of his heart and affections, which he cannot easily keep off, or disengage himself from. Thus when a covetous man meets with opportunities of gain, fit to feed and gratify his covetousness; or a proud aspiring man with honours and preferments, suited to his pride and ambition; or lastly, a lustful man with objects or incentives apt to kindle and inflame his lust, with other the like provisions for the several sinful appetites of man's corrupt nature, such an one must know that he is entered into temptation; his standing is slippery, and his retreat doubtful, and what the issue will be in his final coming off, God alone knows, in whose sole power it is to fetch him out of the jaws of death, and to work his deliverance.

It is possible indeed, that, by the peculiar and extraordinary favours of divine mercy, a person so engaged may come off clear and entire, so that the temptation shall not be able so much as to fasten, or make the least impression upon him; but then this is very rare, and no more than possible, and not to be effected but by a power infinite and divine. For as it was God who suspended the natural force of that material fire from acting upon the bodies of the three children mentioned in [Daniel iii.](#) so it is God alone who must control the fury of this spiritual flame from seizing upon the soul, having always so much fuel and fit matter there for it to prey upon.

And for an eternal monument of his goodness, he has not left us without some such heroic instances as these upon record in his word, that so the saints may receive double courage and confidence, having their deliverance not only sealed and secured to them by promise, but also that promise ratified and made good to them by precedents and examples, like so many stars appearing, both to direct and to comfort the benighted traveller.

And here, first of all, we have Joseph brought under as fierce a trial as the wit and malice of hell could contrive, being tempted to a vile action by two of the most staggering inducements that could well work upon the mind of man, to wit, power and favour in his lord's family, if he complied with the temptation; and the shame, infamy, and reproach of the very villainy he was tempted to, in case he refused it. And no doubt so long as the slander was believed of him, he lay in prison under as black a note of ingratitude and baseness, and with as great an abhorrence of all good men, as the charge of so foul a crime, if true, must deservedly have branded him with. And now, could any thing be imagined so grievous and

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intolerable to a virtuous mind, as to bear the infamy of a lewd and base act, only for refusing to commit it? Yet this was the plunge and temptation which he was brought into, but God brought him out of it, and that without the least spot or sully, but with a mind as clear, and a conscience as unblemished, as the reputation it has given his immortal name to all posterity.

In the next place let us cast our eye upon Moses in the court of Pharaoh, that is, in the shop of the Devil, the school of vice, the scene and sink of all lust and impurity, and the very high road to perdition; so that perhaps the court of Egypt was a greater plague than any that afterwards befell Egypt; a place in which he was to converse with all sorts of allurements, to walk upon traps and snares, to have all his senses accosted with continual messages from the Devil; and in a word, to see, hear, and taste nothing but the *pleasures of sin*, and scarce to be able to look off from a temptation. This was his condition, and thus was he bred and trained up, as *the son of Pharaoh's daughter*, a candidate for hell, and a probationer for damnation. And yet even here, as it were, in the very bosom of sin and death, God preserved him innocent and untouched, and, like Gideon's fleece, clean and dry, while all was drenched with a foul and a killing dew round about him. Nor did God preserve him only from ill things, but prepared him also for great, and perhaps the greatest that Providence ever thought fit to achieve by the hand of a mere man.

Again, Such another instance have we in David, encountered with a temptation which seldom hap pens, and is seldomer resisted; to wit, an offer to make his way to a promised throne and sceptre by the blood of his bitter and avowed enemy, then perfectly at his mercy; and a greater temptation certainly could hardly befall a man, than that which should promise him with one stroke both to gratify his ambition, and to satisfy his revenge; to put a crown upon his head, and his mortal enemy under his feet. And yet, as dazzling and alluring as this offer was, David had something within him stronger than the strongest assaults of those two violent and transporting affections; something that would not suffer him to be disloyal to gain a crown, nor receive possession of that kingdom from the Devil, of which God himself had given him the reversion. No temptation could make him snatch God's work out of his own hands, whose sole prerogative it is to dispose of crowns and kingdoms, to appoint, and to exclude, and to hasten as well as alter successions.

But now, may there not be yet a greater temptation than either of these? something more glistering than a crown? and more luscious than revenge? If there may, surely it was that which St. Paul and Barnabas met with in [Acts xiv.](#) the offer of divine worship and adoration. For to be like God was the first temptation, which robbed man of his innocence; and so pertinaciously was this urged upon these two apostles by the men of Lystra, that it is said, [verse 18](#), *that Paul and Barnabas could hardly restrain them from doing sacrifice to them*; for the oxen, the garlands, and the priest of Jupiter, were all ready for that purpose. But now, how did this strange ἀποθέωσις, think we, affect and work upon these holy men? Why, to be sure, not as it would have worked upon a Simon Magus, whose whole heart, soul, and

study, was set upon being canonized and worshipped by the sottish Samaritans for a kind of demi-god, [Acts viii. 10](#); nor yet as it would have affected an Herod, who would needs be a god too, though of the rabble's and the Devil's making, [Acts xii. 22](#). But these men, whose hearts God had touched with a true and tender sense of religion, were so far from being exalted, that they were cast down, humbled, and astonished at such impious and extravagant honours; and no doubt rejected them with so great an horror and detestation, that they would much rather have been sacrificed themselves, than have endured any to sacrifice to them.

Now in all these notable instances of success against temptation we must observe this; that the tempting object was brought home and close to them, and laid directly before them, and that with all imaginable advantages of allurements, together with full opportunity and power to commit the sin which they were tempted to; and yet the persons so tempted came off (as we have shewn) not in the least tainted or prevailed upon. From all which it is evident, that God secures his saints against temptation, not only by antecedent preventions keeping them from it, but also by his subsequent grace supporting them under it, and bringing them victorious out of it; which is the second degree of deliverance.

3dly and lastly, We are to consider the persons hitherto spoken of, as not only entered into temptation, but also as in some measure prevailed upon by it. For that a person truly pious, sincere, and sound at the heart towards God, may through the inveiglements of the world, and the frailty of his own nature, be sometimes surprised, and for a while drawn into the ways of sin, I do no more doubt or question, than that a sound and healthful constitution may some times be disordered with heats and colds, battered with wounds and bruises, and indisposed by swellings and breakings-out; and yet all this without destroying the main, substantial health and habit of the body. And he who asserts the contrary, and acknowledges no holiness but what is perfection, will upon trial find it a much easier matter, by the faulty passages of his life, to prove himself sinful and unholy, than by the very best and holiest of them to prove himself perfect.

But that I may give some light and resolution to this great and weighty case of conscience, how far a person truly godly and regenerate may, without ceasing to be so, be prevailed upon by temptation, I will here set down the several degrees, steps, and advances, by which a temptation or sinful proposal gradually wins and gains upon the soul, and those all of them comprised in St. [James i. 14, 15](#). *Every man, says the apostle, is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* I say, in these words we have a full and distinct account of five several steps or gradations, by which a temptation grows upon, and at length prevails over, the souls of men.

1st, The first of which we may call *seduction*. As when the mind, being surprised, or suddenly struck with the taking representation of some sinful act or object, begins to think

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of it, so as by such thoughts to be for the present drawn aside from its duty. For seduction literally and properly signifies a man's being drawn away, or drawn aside. As the Greek word here has it. He is ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος, drawn off, or drawn away by his concupiscence. As for instance; when a man is intent upon the honest works of his calling, and two or three lewd companions come, and desire his company to a debauch; here he first begins to hearken to the proposal, and to think with himself of the pleasure and satisfaction which he might find by complying with it. During which thought he ceases for that time to intend the business he was upon before, or to employ his mind about it. And this is seduction, the first invading step of a temptation, whereby it seizes a man's thoughts, and actually draws him off from his duty, by diverting the intention of his mind from that to something else; much like the first unbending of a bow, which though it does not spoil it, yet for the present renders it unserviceable.

2dly, The second degree of temptation may be called *enticement* or *allurement*. As when a man does not only think upon a sinful object or proposal, but also suffers his thoughts to dwell, and, as it were, to brood upon it with delight, pleasing his imagination by frequent reflections upon it, and representing it to himself under its most advantageous colours and circumstances, while he thus turns and rolls it about in his fancy. And this is expressed here by the next Greek word, δελεαζόμενος, which the translation renders *enticed*, and imports in it a metaphor taken from the practice of such as cast or lay some bait before any fish or fowl; which, as soon as they spy it, do for a while view and look upon it with appetite and pleasure, before they are brought to take it in, or swallow it. Now if a temptation chance to be stopped here, the main and principal drift of it is defeated: nevertheless this is a great and a dangerous step; for when it comes so far, it rarely happens but it proceeds farther. And therefore,

3dly, The third degree is, when, after such possession had of the thoughts and fancy, the temptation comes to make its way into the consent of the will, and to gain that great fort also; so that the mind begins to purpose, and accordingly to contrive the commission of the sin proposed to it; and this the Greek text here calls συλλαμβάνειν, *to conceive*; εἶτα δὲ ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα, *when lust, or concupiscence, has conceived*; so that the soul hereby grows, as it were, big and impregnate with a temptation. In which case, as all immoderate fulness naturally endeavours after evacuation and vent; so the soul now becomes restless, and, as it were, in labour, till it disburdens itself, and discharges what it has thus conceived, by some sinful act or commission. And this directly introduces and brings in,

4thly, The fourth degree of prevalence which a temptation gets over the soul; and that is, the actual eruption of it in the perpetration or commission of the sin suggested to it; and this in the forementioned place of St. James is called τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν, *to bring forth sin*; when lust or concupiscence in the heart sends forth a cursed brood or litter in the actions: like a fountain, which having been for some time imprisoned and pent up in the bowels of

the earth, at length forces its way through, and casts forth its streams with a violent, uncontrolled effusion.

5thly, The fifth and last degree, completing the victory which temptation obtains over a man, is, when sin comes to that pitch, as to reign, and, by a frequent habitual commission of it, to domineer and lord it in a man's conversation; in respect of which we are said, [Rom. vi. 17](#), *to be the servants of sin*, as not being in our own power, nor having the disposal and command of our own faculties, but upon all occasions being turned and carried about by the tyrannical impure dictates of an overruling corruption; in which respect also we are said, [Rom. vii. 23](#), *to be led captive by sin*, as being conquered and over-mastered by the violent assaults of it, and then, as it were, pinioned and fettered, (as slaves and conquered persons use to be,) and so by consequence put out of all possibility either of resistance or escape.

And this the apostle St. James in the forecited place calls *τελεῖν ἁμαρτίαν*, *the finishing of sin*; ἡ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκεί θάνατον, *when sin is finished, it brings forth death*. And it is frequency and continuance in sin which properly finishes it; for it is this which gives it its full maturity and utmost perfection, which habituates, and even turns it into another nature, which a single act or commission of sin cannot do. And when a man comes once in this manner, not only to act sin, but even to be acted and possessed by it, as an absolute slave to all its commands, he is then ripe for hell and perdition, and fit only to be sent thither by the next destroying providence.

These are the several degrees by which a temptation grows and prevails upon the hearts of men; which that I may the better represent and set before you at one view, I shall gather and sum them up all into one instance; and it shall be that of Demas, mentioned by the apostle, [2 Tim. iv. 10](#), *Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world*.

Here we will first consider Demas in full communion with the church, and a zealous professor of Christianity; during which strict and self-denying profession it is suggested to his mind (by the Devil, we may be sure) what profit and advantage he might reap by relinquishing this severe course, and swimming with the common stream of the world. And this thought prevails so far with him, as to take him off from his accustomed strictness in the actual pursuit of his duty. And this is the first degree of temptation, which is called *seduction*. From this he proceeds to entertain and feed his mind with frequent thoughts of those worldly gains and emoluments, reflecting upon them with much pleasure and complacency. And this is the second degree of temptation, which the scripture calls a being *enticed* or *beguiled*. From this he goes on, and, from the pleasure of these thoughts, begins to purpose and intend to put them in execution. And this is that third degree of temptation, by which sin is said



*to conceive*. From hence he makes a step further, and actually lays down the profession of Christianity, and so, striking off to the world, fully executes those purposes and intentions. Which is the fourth degree of temptation, by which sin is said *to bring forth*. And lastly, having come so far, he adds the concluding cast, and continues and perseveres in the sinful pursuit of his worldly advantages, never returning, nor recovering himself by repentance, to his former profession. And thus at length we see him got to the top of his sin, which, by this perseverance in it, he properly finishes and completes, and so stands registered in the black roll of final apostates.

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Having thus reckoned up the several degrees of temptation, and set before you the fatal round and series of the Devil's methods for destroying souls, let us now in the next place inquire, how far God vouchsafes to deliver the pious and sincere out of them.

In answer to which I first of all affirm, that God's methods in this case are very various, and not to be determined or declared by any one standing or universal assertion.

Sometimes, by a total and entire deliverance, he delivers them from every degree and encroach of a temptation.

Sometimes he lets them fall into the first degree of it, and receive it into their thoughts; but then delivers them from the second, which is, to cherish and continue it there by frequent pleasing reflections upon it.

Sometimes he gives way to this too, but then hinders it from coming to a full purpose and consent of will.

Sometimes he lets it go thus far also, and suffers sin to conceive by such a purpose or consent; but then, by a kind of spiritual abortion, stifles it in the very birth, and so keeps it from breaking forth into actual commission.

And fourthly, for reasons best known to his most wise providence, he sometimes permits a temptation to grow so powerful, as to have *strength to bring forth*, and to defile the soul with one or more gross actual eruptions.

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But then, in the last place, by a mighty, over powering grace, he very often (as some assert) or always (as others affirm) keeps it from an absolute, entire, and final conquest. So that sin never comes to that height, as to reign in the godly, to bear sway, and become habitual. But though its endeavours are not always extinguished, nor its sallyings out wholly stopped, yet its dominion is broke. It may sometimes bruise and wound, but it shall never kill. It may possibly be committed, but it shall never come so far as to be finished. But the Spirit of God will interpose, and cut it short in its progress.<sup>14</sup> This, I say, is the judgment of some in this great and arduous point; who accordingly apply that glorious supporting

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<sup>14</sup> *Memorand.* That there are some remarks of the same nature, concerning the steps and progress of sin, in vol. ii. p. 146, 147, 148.



promise made in [Rom. vi. 14](#), to all who are actually in a state of grace, that *sin shall not have dominion over them*.

Now the foregoing particulars, upon a due improvement of them, will naturally teach us these two great and important lessons.

1st, Concerning the singular goodness as well as wisdom of our great Lawgiver, even in the strictest and severest precepts of our religion.

2dly, The other concerning the best and surest method of dealing with the tempter and his temptations.

Of each of which very briefly.

And first for the first of them. The severest precepts of Christianity seem to be those which abridge men in the very first motions and desires of their corrupt affections; such as are delivered in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew. According to which, anger passes, in the gospel account, for murder; and looking and lusting, for adultery. Which are hard lessons, you will say; and indeed, considered barely in themselves, cannot well appear otherwise. But then, if you consider withal, that the just reward of murder and adultery, without repentance, (which is not so easy a work as some imagine,) is certain and eternal damnation, and that lust and anger directly lead to them; is it not the height of wisdom and goodness too, to hinder the consummation of those soul-wasting sins, by obliging us to withstand them in their first infancy and beginnings? For then it is certain that they may be dealt with and suppressed with much more ease, than when, by several degrees of lust and desire cherished and allowed, they are ready to break forth, and, as it were, even force their way into actual commission. Is it not a much safer and surer way to victory, to attack an enemy in his weakness, than in his full strength; while he is yet levying his forces, than when he has actually taken the field? to crush the cockatrice in the egg, than to grapple with it when it is grown a serpent? Is it not much easier to prevent the conception of sin, than to suffer it to conceive, and then to forbid it to bring forth? to suffer lust and anger to boil, and rage, and ferment in a man's breast without control, and then to damn him for a lustful or revengeful act, which perhaps, after such a progress made by those sins in his desires, it is scarce morally in his power to forbear?

Certainly it is a much greater mercy and tenderness to the souls of men, to represent the first movings of the heart towards any forbidden object as unlawful in themselves, and destructive in their consequence, and thereby to incite the soul to a vigorous resistance of them while they may be mastered, and with ten times less trouble extinguished, than, after they are once actually committed, they can be repented of? No doubt sin is both more easily and effectually kept from beginning, than, being once begun, it can be stopped from going on. For every, even the least motion towards sin, not immediately checked, (though it be but in the thoughts,) is a certain step to a further degree, and consequently a dangerous preparative to the very last completion of it. And therefore all those precepts of Christ, which



seem at first view to carry with them so much of rigour and severity, are indeed quite contrary, and nothing else but the gracious and benign contrivances of a superlative wisdom and mercy combining to do us good; of wisdom, as suggesting the best course to prevent sin; and of mercy, as prescribing the surest way to save the soul.

2dly, The other great lesson which we may learn from the foregoing particulars is, concerning the most effectual method of dealing with the tempter and his temptations; and that is, to follow the method of their dealing with us. A temptation never begins where it intends to make an end.

Would the Devil tempt a man to rebellion? He will not persuade him to set up his standard, to take up arms, and declare himself immediately, unless he have to deal with one who is as much fool as knave, (a very unfit composition to make a rebel of;) but he will first tempt him to ambition, then to discontent, then to murmuring or libeling against his superiors, and from that to caballing with factious and seditious malecontents like himself, and by these several ascents and degrees the tempter will effectually form and fashion him into a perfect Absalom, a Catiline, or a Cromwell, in time.

Or would he work a man up to the height of debauchery or uncleanness? Why, in such a case it would be too black and impudent a proposal to bid him leap into his neighbour's bed presently. And therefore he will make his approaches like a more experienced artist, first inveigling him with loose thoughts; from thence leading him to impure desires; and from such desires to the further incentives of lewd, lustful, and licentious conversation: and by these several stages of filth and folly he shall at length arrive at such a pitch of guilt and infamy, as shall render him a public nuisance, a very pest and infection, and able to give the very air he breathes in the plague, or something worse.

These are some of the Devil's methods by which he tempts and destroys souls; and such as are spiritually wise will take the very same course to preserve them. So that, would a man keep the Devil out of his life and actions? let him keep him out of his thoughts and desires. And so long as he observes this way of dealing with him, that man surely can be in no danger of the guilt of murder, who makes a conscience of the first sallies of an angry thought or an abusive word; nor is he under any likelihood of being ever brought to defile his neighbour's bed, who dares not allow himself in a wanton look or a lewd desire.

But on the contrary, can any one in his wits think to secure himself from the practice of any vice, after he has suffered it to fix and seat itself in his affections? Will he let the Devil (the most expert of wrestlers) get within him, and then expect that he should not throw him? The divine wisdom, I am sure, prescribes us quite other methods for our spiritual security, even the sure and sovereign methods of prevention. God's prescription is, that we bestir ourselves betimes; that we nip sin when it begins to bud in the thoughts, and crop it off as soon as it shoots forth in the desires. And though possibly such severe disciplines and restraints of our selves may look but like chimeras or romances to persons immersed

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in their sensuality, and enslaved to their vice, yet they are really great and necessary duties, and such as must be practised, and therefore certainly may.

And the better to convince us that they are so, let this one consideration always dwell upon our minds; that there is no man so far hardened by and over grown with sin at present, but there was a time of his life once, in which his heart could have served him to have done all this. And if, by a long, inveterate course of sinning, he has since (in effect) sinned away his liberty and his conscience so far, as to become insensible and inflexible, and unable to be wrought upon by that which would both have wrought and prevailed upon him heretofore, such a moral, acquired impotence ought, in all reason, to lie at his own door; for it is certain that he can not charge it upon God, whose wisdom, justice, and goodness is such, that he never fails those, who are not first failing to themselves.

*To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

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## A DISCOURSE

### CONCERNING

### TEMPTATION.

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#### PART II.

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#### 2 PETER ii. 9.

*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.*

I HAVE formerly made some entrance into these words, in which, after a short explication and account given of these two things, viz.

1st, Who are here to be understood by *the godly*; And,

2dly, What is here meant by *temptation*;

I cast the further prosecution of the words under these following particulars.

1st, To shew how far God delivers persons truly pious out of temptation.

2dly, To shew what is the grand motive or impulsive cause, inducing God thus to deliver them. And,

3dly and lastly, To shew why and upon what grounds this is to be reputed so great a mercy and so transcendent a privilege.

The first of these three I have already despatched, and proceed now to the

Second, namely, to shew what is the prime motive, or grand impulsive cause, inducing God to deliver persons truly pious out of temptation.

Now this is twofold.

1st, The free mercy of God. And,

2dly, The prevailing intercession of Christ.

And first for the first of these; the free, sovereign inclination of divine mercy. Concerning which, if we duly and exactly consider the absoluteness and simplicity of the divine nature, nothing can be more agreeable to the conceptions which we form of it, and consequently more rational, than to state the first reason or impulsive cause of all God's actings within himself. So that, as we must acknowledge the different issue and success of persons brought into the same condition of danger or distress, to depend wholly upon the exercise or suspension of the divine mercy towards such persons; in like manner are we to resolve the exercise or suspension of this mercy into the divine will.

Thus in the present case: that one man is delivered out of the plunges of temptation, and another suffered to sink and perish under them; it is from an act of mercy vouchsafed to the one, and not to the other; and that this is not equally vouchsafed to both, it is from



the free resolution of that sovereign, supreme will, which *has mercy upon whom it will have mercy*, and is by no means bound to save or deliver those who have freely destroyed themselves.

And that this is so is evident: for if the first motives or impulsive cause of this deliverance were not wholly from God himself, then it must proceed from something in the person who is to be delivered; and if so, it must be either from the necessity of his condition needing such a deliverance, or from the worth and goodness of his person deserving it. But it will appear to be from neither. Not from the necessity of his condition in the first place: for if this were the first and chief cause inducing God to deliver men, then it would equally do the same for all in the same condition. But the contrary is too manifest; for some under the same circumstances of temptation are delivered, while others are suffered to perish by it. Nor yet, in the next place, can the cause of this deliverance be stated upon the goodness or piety of the person delivered. For certain it is, that no degree of piety whatsoever could ever yet absolutely privilege the very best of men from being tempted, that is to say, either from first entering into, or for some time continuing under a temptation; as several in all ages, who have been most remarkably pious, have found and felt by sad experience. Nor is it less certain, that it is not a man's piety which is the cause inducing God to vouchsafe him a final deliverance out of temptation, forasmuch as it could not antecedently induce God at first to rescue or keep him from it, when yet it is manifest, that the piety of the said person must needs have been at that time greater and more untainted, than after the temptation had made some breach upon it, as it always in some measure does, before the tempted person comes to be perfectly conquered by it. As, for instance, it must of necessity bring him to the commission of it; and (if it were no more) this must needs degrade his piety to a lower pitch than it was at before the temptation began. And then if an higher degree of piety could not obtain so much of God as to keep the man from first entering into the snare, surely it cannot be imagined, that after he had lost some degrees of that piety by being taken and held in it, it should, under those disadvantages, be more prevalent with God to deliver him out of it, than at first to keep him from it; which experience shews it did not.

And therefore it is clear, that the first grand motive or impulsive cause of this deliverance is not to be sought for in any thing inherent in the person delivered, but in the sole and sovereign good-will and pleasure of his great deliverer.

But you will say, Does not the text itself state the cause and reason of this deliverance, upon the godliness of the persons delivered? For does not the apostle here expressly tell us, that they are *the godly whom God delivers out of temptation*?

To this I answer, that in all the actings of divine mercy we must distinguish between the first impulsive cause of the act, and the proper qualification of the object upon which that act is exerted: the confusion of which two, frequently occasions no small mistakes and blunders in discoursing about these matters.

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God promises deliverance out of temptation to the godly, and yet their godliness is not the cause of this deliverance, any more than of God's making such a promise. It is indeed the qualification of the person who is to be delivered; so that without it the deliverance (upon a federal account, as was said before) would not be; but still the cause of it is quite another thing.

A prince, for instance, has an hundred of his subjects in captivity, and makes a declaration that he will redeem so many of them as are of such a certain age, taking no notice of the rest. Now, in this case, we cannot say that their being of such an age was the first impulsive cause inducing their prince to redeem them; but his own good pleasure, which first made him take up a resolution to redeem such persons, and to make this the condition of it. Their being indeed of such an age is the qualifying condition, rendering them the proper objects of such a redemption; so that such, and none but such, are redeemed. But the cause of that redemption it is not, that being (as we have shewn) to be sought for elsewhere.

Now the case is much the same, where God vouchsafes to deliver men out of temptation. Whence is it, that, upon such trials befalling men, some few escape, and in the issue are brought off without ruin, while *thousands fall at their right hand and at their left*? Is it the extreme misery of their condition moving God's compassion, or the worthiness of their persons requiring this of his justice, which causes their deliverance? No; these are not, cannot be the cause, for the reasons before mentioned; they are indeed the proper qualifications rendering them fit to be delivered, but the free mercy or good pleasure of God is the main, leading, impulsive cause that actually they are delivered.

The thing, therefore, which is eminent from first to last in this whole transaction is mercy; mercy, which is its own argument; mercy, the first and grand motive of which is itself. For if it were not so, what could there be in a sinful, polluted creature to engage it? There is indeed enough to need, but nothing to deserve it. But the divine compassion, wheresoever it fixes, removes all obstacles, answers all objections, and needs no other reason of its actings, but its own sovereign, absolute, unaccountable freedom.

2dly, The other impulsive cause of God's delivering the saints out of temptation, is the intercession of Christ on their behalf. And this does not in the least derogate from, or contradict our first assertion, ascribing this great work and benefit only to divine mercy: forasmuch as it is the sole effect of mercy, that we have such an intercessor; and there is no opposition in subordination.

Now the two great parts of Christ's priestly office are his meritorious satisfaction, and continual intercession. By the first of which he purchased for us all spiritual blessings, and by the latter he actually applies them. The first he perfected here on earth upon the cross, and the latter he now performs in heaven.

And with what efficacy and success he discharges this great work of intercession there, sufficiently appears from that constant, never-failing prevalence which still attended his

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prayers here. For he himself expressly tells us, that *the Father always heard him*, [John xi. 42](#). Heaven was always open to his prayers, and they could not but enter, where he, who made them, did command. There could be no frustration or denial where every request had the force of a claim, and every petition was founded in a purchase.

The divinity of Christ's person, and the surpassing value of his merits, put a commanding sovereignty into all his desires; so that every thing which he asked of his Father was indeed a petition of right; and since his divinity made him able to give, it was one part of his humiliation that he vouchsafed to ask. And for this reason, some of his requests run *stylo imperatorio*, in a kingly dialect; and we some times find him not only preaching, but also praying, as one *having authority*; [John xvii. 24](#), *Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me, to behold my glory*. It was not a mere prayer, but a kind of compound address, made up of petition and demand.

And now this way of asking, as high and as efficacious as it is, is wholly employed by Christ for delivering the saints out of temptation. Judas, we know, was tempted, and fell without recovery. Peter also was tempted, and fell, but rose again. Now, whence was this difference in the issue of the temptation? Why, those words of our Saviour will in form us, [Luke xxii. 31](#), *Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat*. And according to his desire he had him, and sifted him to the utmost, and discovered how much chaff and foul stuff was lodged in his heart, which he himself knew not of. Yet still for all this, the wheat was but sifted only, not destroyed; and Christ gives us the reason of it in the next words, *I have prayed that thy faith fail not*. And if Christ had not prayed for him in that wretched condition, it is to be feared that he would scarce have prayed for himself.

For though indeed the spirit of prayer and fervent supplication be one of the most effectual means to bring a man out of temptation, yet sometimes the temptation is so far beforehand with a man, that it prevents him, seizing and prepossessing his will and affections; and that to such a degree, that he has no heart to pray against it; but, like a thief, it steals upon him, and then binds his hands and stops his mouth, so that he can neither lift up heart nor hand to call in aid from Heaven. In which forlorn estate, if Christ prays not in his stead, and solicits his Father for the succours of recovering grace, the sinner is left remediless in the cruel grasp of his insulting enemy, to be crushed and devoured by him at his pleasure.

And now, what Christ did for Peter and other of his saints, while he was here upon earth, the same he still does, and that with advantage, for all believers know that he is in heaven; where he has changed his place indeed, but not his office; his condition, but not his affection .

What it was *to be tempted*, our Saviour knew of old, by the sure, but sharp convictions of his own experience; and therefore treats such as are tempted with all the sympathizing tenderness, that fellow ship in suffering can produce in a mind infinitely merciful of itself;



as it is expressly affirmed, [Heb. ii. 18](#), *For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour those also who are tempted.* To which we may add those words, [Heb. vii. 25](#), *That he liveth for ever, to make intercession for us.* And from both together we have all that comfort, that a boundless compassion, supported by an infinite power, and an endless duration, can afford.

And this is that unvaluable advantage which we reap from having such *an high priest, as can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.* For as he who has broke a limb, having his choice of several chirurgeons equally skilful, would much rather choose one who had not only cured many others, but had also suffered the same disaster, and felt the same pain and anguish of a broken limb himself: for that from such a hand he might rationally expect not only a sound, but a gentle cure; a cure in which compassion should combine with skill, and make one ingredient in every application.

In like manner it is not so much the greatness, the power, and majesty of our intercessor, that should animate persons under a temptation to address to him, as his *having drank of the same cup*, and passed through the same furnace himself. From which one endearing consideration it is, that the prayers of such persons find stronger arguments to enforce them in the breast of him who hears, than they can derive from the heart of him who makes them.

For as it is commonly, and perhaps very truly said, that none knows the heart of a father, but he who has been a father; so none knows what it is to be pursued and worried with the restless buffets of an impure spirit, but he who has endured the same terrible conflict himself. Christ has endured it, and his experience moves his compassion, and his compassion engages his prayers; and where he has promised us his prayers, we may promise ourselves the success.

And thus I have shewn, that the great impulsive cause of the saints' deliverance out of temptation, is partly the free, sovereign, distinguishing mercy of God, and partly the mediatorial intercession of Christ: that is, they have a gracious Father, and a powerful Advocate; and therefore, being assaulted, they are not conquered, and being tempted, are not destroyed.

But now, by way of objection to the foregoing particulars, you will say; Does not this doctrine open a door to presumption, and naturally encourage men to venture themselves into temptation, by giving them such assurances of an after-deliverance from it? Does it not tend to lessen the awe and dread they should have of their spiritual danger, by telling them that the mercy of God and the intercession of Christ are engaged for their recovery?

I answer, No; for as the persons who are here said to be delivered are persons truly sanctified, and regenerate by a principle of grace, which has wrought upon and changed their nature, (so much being implied in the very name and character of *the godly*;) so it is utterly against the very nature of such a principle, to draw such consequences from the mercy of God and the intercession of Christ. For moral ingenuity could not do so, and therefore grace much less. *The love of God*, says the apostle, [2 Cor. v. 14](#), *constraineth us.*





And as it is impossible for a principle of love to exert acts of hatred, so it is equally impossible for a principle of holiness to suggest to the heart such villainous deductions, as to make the very mercy of God an argument to offend him. Every faculty or principle is carried by its own nature, as by a strong bias, to act suitably to itself; and you may as well expect that the fire should cool, or the water dry, or a false proposition issue from a true, as that a principle of grace should argue or discourse in this manner. *He who is born of God*, says the apostle, [1 John iii. 9](#), *cannot sin, because he is born of God*. That is, the principle which constitutes a man *a new creature*, cannot incline or induce him to sin. And therefore, how did Joseph answer and repel the temptation which accosted him? Why, he neither pleaded the disgrace nor danger that might ensue upon it, but the utter inconsistency of that principle which he both acted, and was acted by, with the commission of so vile a fact. *How can I do this great wickedness*, says he, [Gen. xxxix. 9](#). Not only, *how shall I*, but, *how can I do it*. As if he had said, There is something within me so utterly contrary to, and so wholly averse from this wicked proposal, that I cannot comply with it, I cannot frame or bring my will to it.

In like manner, for persons regenerate, acting by that principle which makes them so, to take confidence to venture upon a temptation, from an assurance of God's mercy or Christ's intercession, is a thing absolutely unnatural, and consequently impossible.

But you will say, How then can a person, endued with this mighty and divine principle, come ever to be prevailed upon by a temptation?

Why, the reason of this is, because such an one does not always act according to this principle, but sometimes, either through surprise, or neglect of his duty, or remissness in it, or want of watchfulness over himself, the working force and energy of this mighty principle comes for a while to suspend its actings, and to lie, as it were, stupified, or in a trance; the giant is asleep, and the *sword of the Spirit* is not drawn, during which fatal interval or cessation, the flesh and the Devil take their advantage to assault, and get ground even of the best of men.

Nevertheless, the case is surely very different, when a man, thus overtaken with a kind of spiritual slumber, drops into a temptation; and when, with his eyes open, and all the powers of his soul awake, he argues and debates the matter with himself for and against the temptation; and in the issue of that debate comes at length to a formed resolution to venture upon it from a confidence, that after he has took his fill of his sin, the divine mercy will deliver him out of it: this, I say, is a case so vastly different from the former, that though the former may very well consist with a habit of piety and sincerity, yet this latter looks so very ill, and has in it something so desperately wicked, that I very much question whether it be, or can be, incident to the heart of a person truly regenerate.

But because this is so great a mystery of iniquity, and apt to work so fatally upon the minds of such as think themselves sincere and regenerate, but indeed not so; I think it may be of no small use to look into and resolve this case of conscience, namely, whether a regen-

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erate, a godly, or sincere person, (which are all but several words for the same thing,) can have any rational assurance, before he enters into a temptation, that being once prevailed upon by it, he shall in the issue be delivered out of it.

To which I answer in these two propositions.

1st, That a person under such circumstances can have no antecedent assurance one way or other, either that he shall or shall not be delivered. And,

2dly, That it is more probable, and that he has greater reason to believe, that he shall not be delivered, than that he shall.

Of both of which propositions with as much brevity as the thing will bear.

And first, for the first of them, I affirm, that such an one cannot certainly and positively conclude that he shall not be delivered; forasmuch as this would be a bold, unwarranted intrusion into the counsels of God, and a limitation of that mercy, the precise measures of which are determined by bounds known only to God himself. But this, I must confess, is an error of such a nature, that men need not be much cautioned against it, as being still more apt, in all their expectations of mercy, to conclude too much for, than at all against themselves.

And therefore I affirm also on the other side, that much less can a person thus offering himself to temptation have any ground of assurance, that he shall in the issue be brought out of it.

For the clearing of which matter we must observe, that the temptations here spoken of are generally such as lead to great sins; great, I say, either for the matter of them, such as are blasphemies, perjuries, rebellions, murders, adulteries, thefts, extortions, and the like; or great for the manner of committing them, as being committed against the clear light and conviction of conscience, or, as the scripture sometimes expresses it, *presumptuously, and with an high hand*, and with full deliberation. All which kind of sins wound and waste the conscience, grieve the Holy Spirit, hazard a man's final and eternal estate, and, in a word, make a very great and dangerous alteration in his spiritual condition.

Those, I say, are the sins which we are now treating of; for such, and such only, the Devil drives at in most of his temptations, whether he effects them or no; but still the malignity of a temptation is to be measured by the greatness of the sin, which it designs to bring a man to. And concerning these sins I affirm, that when any man is tempted to them, he can have no sufficient assurance, that, in case he should be prevailed upon by them, God will deliver him out of them. And the full, serious, thorough consideration of this is that flaming sword, which God has placed before the door and entrance of every such temptation, to warn all who value the present peace and future happiness of their souls, to fly from it, as they would from the regions of death and the mansions of the damned.

But you will say; Have there not been several instances of persons whom God has delivered out of temptation, after they have been prevailed upon by it? And if so, may not

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others in following times, of the same qualifications, and under the same circumstances, antecedently assure themselves of the same deliverance?

To this I answer, first, that of all persons whom God has at any time delivered out of temptation, I believe it will be hard to produce any one who ever entered into it with such a presumption. But 2dly, I add moreover, that it is hardly possible for any man to assure himself, that his qualifications and circumstances are exactly the same with those who have been delivered. Besides that, in the last place, there is nothing to oblige God to vouchsafe the same mercy to persons under the same circumstances.

But you will urge further, that there are not only instances and examples, but also promises of such a performance in several places of the scripture, and particularly in the text, where, by *God's knowing how to deliver*, the apostle no doubt meant his will and purpose to deliver the godly out of temptation. And if so, may not such persons be beforehand sure of their deliverance? since where there is a promise on God's part, there may and ought to be an assurance on ours.

To this also I answer; that we are still to remember, that neither this nor any other the like promises are made immediately to any particular person, but only in general to the godly and regenerate; amongst which no man can with any rational evidence account himself, while he is either actually committing, or at least purposing to commit some great sin; as every man under the power of such temptations (as we have mentioned) certainly is. And consequently, while he cannot be sure of his regeneracy, neither can he be sure, that a promise made only to the regenerate does at all belong to him.

But you may yet say; Suppose that such an one had a former assurance of his regenerate state, may he not now, from his remembrance of that, draw a present assurance that he shall be delivered out of all temptations?

For the clearing of which, I observe, that there are two sorts of assurance.

1. The first consisting in such a certain persuasion of a man's regenerate estate, as is subject to no mistake about it.

2. The second consisting in such a persuasion, as excludes all actual doubting of it.

Which two sorts of assurance differ as much from one another, as a man's being sure of a thing differs from his being only confident of it; which latter he may very easily be, and yet be far enough from the former. Accordingly in the case now before us, I shall not consider that first sort of assurance, consisting in an infallible persuasion of a man's regenerate estate; it being much questioned by many, whether such an assurance be attainable in this life, unless by the special and immediate gift of God: albeit all confess, that in case he should vouchsafe to any one so high a privilege, it would certainly be attended with such a confirmed habit of holiness, as would effectually keep him who had it from all gross and deliberate sins.

But then as for the other sort of assurance, which only excludes all actual doubting of a man's regenerate estate, it is much another thing; for being raised chiefly upon the stock of a forward confidence, and not supported with an equal measure of grace, it may rise and fall, ebb and flow, and in many cases, and with several persons, come at length totally to be lost.

Which being premised, I answer to the foregoing question in the negative, and that upon the ground of a double hypothesis. As,

1st, Of that which holds, that a person truly regenerate may fall from his regeneracy, and through his sin cease to be what he was. According to which opinion the person here spoken of, who is either actually committing, or fully proposing to commit some great sin, has no small reason to suspect the case wholly altered with him as to his regeneracy, and that, whatsoever he was before, he is now fallen from it; and consequently, notwithstanding any former assurance of it, can at present lay no claim to a promise, made only to persons continuing under that estate.

2dly, The other hypothesis or opinion, upon which I ground a further answer to the aforesaid question, holds the certain final perseverance of every regenerate person in a state of regeneracy. And according to this indeed, if a man be once truly assured that he is in such a state, it must follow that he will be always in the same. But then I add, that it does not also follow that he shall always be assured that he is so. But on the contrary, that the truth of a man's former assurance, in the case of great sins committed, becomes very questionable, as most likely (for all his former confidence) to have been taken up at the first upon false grounds, and consequently must needs sink and cease, though his regenerate estate should continue. For even a true proposition may be assented to upon a mistaken ground. And as to the point now before us: nothing is more certain, than that former assurances (though never so free from all doubts when first entertained) will vanish upon a present great guilt; since admitting that it should not wholly change a man's regenerate state, yet it will be sure to blot and weaken (if not quite extinguish) those evidences which he had once built his assurances thereof upon. David no doubt was a person truly regenerate, and in favour with God, and so continued to his life's end; and as little is it to be doubted, but that at most times he fully reckoned himself to be what really and in truth he was: but that with a constant, uninterrupted confidence he always thought himself so, cannot, I am sure, with any warrant from scripture, be affirmed. For though we find him sometimes with a kind of triumphant assurance declaring, *that God held him by his right hand*, and that he would *both guide him with his counsel, and after that receive him with glory*, [Psalm lxxiii. 24](#), expressions (one would think) of a confidence too high to rise higher, and too strong to be brought lower; yet elsewhere we find this mighty hero upon the very brink of despair, or rather plunged into the depths of it, as appears from those terrible, desponding outcries, [Psalm lxxvii. 7, 8, 9](#), *Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone*

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*for ever? and does his promise fail for ever more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? and hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* Every verse, every sentence, and word here, speaking nothing but the horrors of an hopeless soul, and the struggles and agonies of one sinking under the dismal apprehensions of the divine wrath. Nor are we so much to wonder, that such fearful breaches should be made upon the confidence of so eminent a saint, if we consider what temptations and what sinful failings God was sometimes pleased to suffer him to be overtaken with. To all which vicissitudes of confidence and distrust about a man's spiritual estate, we may add this further consideration; that according to the natural course of things, the insincerity of the latter part of a man's life is a greater presumption against the sincerity of the former part of it, than the sincerity of the former can be a security against the insincerity of the latter. And therefore let a man's spiritual state and condition be as safe and good as he would persuade himself that it is, yet, if he has no certain knowledge thereof, (as in the case of great guilt we have shewn that it is not to be had,) he can conclude nothing from such his condition concerning the final issue of a temptation. From all which it must follow, according to either of the forementioned hypotheses or opinions, (without my espousing either of them for my own,) that, whether a man really be or be not regenerate, yet when he is actually prevailed upon by a temptation, he cannot assure himself that God will deliver him out of it, and consequently, before the temptation, can have no certain prospect of such a deliverance.

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Well then; assurance, in such a case, we have proved that a man can have none. But to make a step lower, though there be no assurance, yet may there not be at least a comfortable expectation? and though no certainty, yet a likelihood of recovery?

Why yes, I cannot deny but that in some cases there may. But then we must distinguish of two sorts of temptation, or rather of two ways of entering into it. As,

1st, When a man enters into it purely by his own free choice, no necessary business or circumstance of his life engaging him in it, by unhappily casting the matter of a temptation before him in the course of his lawful occasions.

2dly, When a man meets with a temptation in the pursuit of his honest calling or profession, or in such a condition as he is unavoidably brought into by an overruling hand of Providence.

These, I say, are the two ways by which men pass into temptation. Concerning the first of which I affirm, that when a man enters into it by his own free choice, putting himself upon needless, adventurous trials, he leads himself into temptation, and so has no cause to rely upon God for a deliverance out of it. And yet I do not, I cannot say, that God will not, in the event, deliver such an one. But this I say, that such an one has no ground to conclude that he will; and withal, that for the most part he does not. For by thus stepping out of his way, he tempts God; and that surely is not the likeliest course to keep the Devil from tempting him.

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As for the other way by which men pass into temptation, namely, in the course of their honest calling or profession, or by some overruling providence casting them under such circumstances as may lay some tempting, alluring object before them; I do not doubt but a man, in such a case, may comfortably and warrantably hope for such assistances from God, as shall carry him safe and successfully through the temptation, be it what it will;<sup>15</sup> I say, he may have much greater grounds to hope for them in this, than in the former cases, but can say no more; and that an hope so bottomed is so far from being an act of presumption, that it is indeed a lower act of faith, or next to it, and a justifiable dependence upon the power and goodness of him who never by his sole providence brings a good man into temptation, but that, sooner or later, he also opens a door whereby he may get out of it.

And it is in good earnest a matter of some astonishment, to consider, what eminent, what triumphant success even weak persons have had against such temptations as they have been next to unavoidably entangled in; and on the other side, what scandalous falls even the strongest and greatest heroes in religion have met with, by entering the lists with their powerful and skilful enemy, before God had called them to the combat: when indeed God thinks fit to call them to it, the battle is his, and the success must needs be answerable. But God is not bound to do miracles, as often as men are pleased to be wanton, and to throw themselves into danger, and thereby create to themselves a necessity either of a dismal fall or a miraculous delivery.

But to illustrate this matter further, I shall give you some instances of the different success which has attended these two ways of entering into temptation.

And first; how came David to fall into so foul a sin as adultery, and Joseph to escape it, though the temptation was much more pressing and importunate upon Joseph than it was upon David? Why, the reason is manifest: David cast himself into it by indulging himself at that time in a course of idleness and pleasure, and a gross neglect of the duties of his royal office: for in *2 Sam. xi. 1, 2*, we find him represented first lazing upon his couch, and then *walking upon the roof of his house*; and, in a word, tarrying at home careless and unactive, and that at the highest time of action, a time when the text remarkably says that *kings went out to battle*, and when his own armies were in the field, and he himself should have been in the head of them, as he came a prince whom God had raised to that high station for nobler ends than to do his business by others, and assume the glory of it to himself.

On the contrary, Joseph came under the temptation without any precedent act or fault of his own, being forced out of his country, and carried as a slave into Egypt, and there bought and sold, and at length placed in a family where the Devil maliciously laid a snare for him, and he as victoriously broke through it. But had Joseph, out of a vain, vagrant hu-

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<sup>15</sup> Consult the sermon in vol. ii. p. 139-162, about the prevention of sin.

mour, travelled into Egypt, (as some do into France and other places,) only to see the country and to learn fashions, (as the word goes,) and in the course of his travels fallen into Potiphar's house, probably he might have given that lewd proposal another kind of entertainment, and, while he was learning fashions, not have refused so fashionable a temptation.

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Again, how came Moses to be safe amidst all the pleasures and idolatries of Pharaoh's court, and Peter to deny and forswear the Son of God and Saviour of the world in the court of the high priest, where there was much less danger of forgetting God and himself, than there was in the Egyptian court, a place fraught with all sorts of vice, and without the least savour of God or goodness, virtue or religion? Why, the same reason is to be given for this also; God, by a strange providence, had placed Moses there, without any consent or concurrence of his own; and accordingly, having brought him thither by his providence, he preserved him there by his grace.

But on the other side. What reason had Peter to thrust himself into the high priest's hall, where he had nothing to do, and to venture himself into the very mouth of that danger which Christ himself, but a few hours before, had so expressly warned him of? Why, it was his foolish confidence and curiosity, which betrayed him into that gazing, fatal adventure, which had like to have rifled his soul, and rob bed him of his faith, and, without the interposal of a singular grace, had consigned him over to a sad and final apostasy.

Many more such instances might be produced of both sorts; but I suppose these may suffice to convince the sober and considerate, that the same divine assistances which use to be vouchsafed to men in God's way, are not to be expected by them in the Devil's walk.

And yet so little is this considered, that I dare avouch, that most of those deadly blows and falls given by the tempter and his temptations to the souls of men, have been from their bold, voluntary, unwarrantable putting themselves upon those trials, which God would otherwise never have put them upon.

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And it is wonderful to consider, what absurd, senseless pretences some allege for their so doing; three of which I shall briefly mention. As,

1st, Ask some men how they dare make themselves spectators of all that lewdness, and hearers of all that ribaldry, immorality, and profaneness, which is oftentimes seen and heard in some places and companies, and those in no small request neither; and they will tell you, that they do it (forsooth) because they know themselves proof against all impressions from such objects. And do they indeed find themselves so upon experience? Why yes, just as much as tinder uses to be proof against the sparks which fall upon it. And generally such spiritual braves, upon the first encounter and trial of their strength this way, are quickly taught the contrary, full sore to their cost, seldom coming off but with a baffled confidence and a bleeding conscience, with the shame of one and the guilt of the other.

2dly, Others, in the like cases, will tell you, that they venture in this manner, to create in themselves a greater and more lively hatred and detestation of such practices by an actual

inspection of the ugliness and deformity of them. Which kind of reasoning is just as if a man should go into a pest-house to learn a remedy against the plague.

But whosoever he is, who shall presume to try the strength and temper of his soul by such venturous, unhallowed courses as these, shall find that God will leave him, and his own purposes will fail him; and the sin which he would pretend to hate shall smile in his face, and win upon his heart, and by secret encroachments grow upon his spirit, till at length it has crept into and lodged itself within the very inmost powers of his soul. It being usually with the heart of man a temptation, as it was with Esau and his brother Jacob; while Esau was marching towards him, he fully proposed to fight him, but as soon as he came to him, he embraced him.

It is a saying worthy to be wrote in the heart of every man with the pen of a diamond, [Ecclus. iii. 26](#), that *he who loves danger shall perish by it*. And that man who can be so sottishly ignorant of the nature of things, as to think to learn sobriety amongst the debauched, chastity in the stews, modesty at balls and plays, and the like, will quickly come to leave his virtue behind him, and to take the shape and impress of that mould into which such courses and companies have cast him. For there is no such thing as *gathering grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles*; no turning the incentives of vice into the instruments of virtue, or growing holy by a kind of antiperistasis. He who will needs fight the Devil at his own weapon, must not wonder if he finds him an overmatch.

3dly and lastly, There are others again who run themselves upon these ungodly and foolhardy adventures, out of an insolent confidence, that, in case they should happen to be worsted and foiled in them, they will repent, and that shall salve all, and set them whole and right again: than which confidence nothing can be imagined more absurd and impious; absurd, because a man hereby ventures the greatest interest he has in the world upon some thing not in his own power; repentance being, upon several accounts, most particularly the gift of God: and surely no man can have cause to expect a gift, nay, the best of gifts, from God, while he is actually provoking him. For how can such a wretch assure himself that God will give him either grace to repent by, or time to repent in? And yet it is certain that there can be no repentance without both, and as certain that a man can give himself neither.

He may perhaps for a while stop the mouth of his crying conscience with some flattering, fallacious promises of an after-amendment. But as it was said to the rich, sottish worldling in the gospel, singing a requiem to his soul, and projecting his future ease, upon a survey of his present stores; so may it be said to that man who abuses himself with such false reckonings about his spiritual estate, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee*; and then what will become of all those windy, abortive projects of a future repentance? No doubt, a man may drop into hell in the midst of them. And that will be a sad conviction to him, that repentance is one thing, and a purpose to repent quite another. And so much for the absurdity of this pretence.

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And then for the impiety of it. It is of so peculiar a malignity and opposition to the motions of God's holy Spirit, that whosoever can take heart to sin upon presumption of a following repentance, needs not be much concerned about the issue of any temptation; for he is already under the power of one of the worst and strongest temptations that can possibly befall a man; and carries an heart so utterly contrary to, and estranged from all real sense of piety, that the utmost commission of the sin which he is tempted to can hardly estrange it more.



Such an one is certainly in the very *gall of bitterness*, and under the most binding fetters that the Devil can well hold him by. For of all the Devil's engines, this imposture of a future repentance is the chief, and most fatally efficacious; and, I dare affirm, has sent more souls to hell than any one thing else whatsoever. Nay, the truth is, it is hard to imagine how any man, with his senses about him, could venture upon any deliberate sin without it. For come to a sinner just as he is entering upon the Devil's work, and ask him whether he does not know that God has threatened theft, murder, and uncleanness, and the like, with damnation? and he will tell you, Yes. And is not God true and just? Yes. And if so, how dare you venture to commit any of these sins? Then whispers his false heart this secret encouragement in his ear, that repentance shall step in between him and damnation. And so the scene being thus laid, the man goes on, and upon these terms complies with the temptation, and commits the sin; and God, perhaps, in his just judgment, never gives him grace to repent of it. But this is a subject of so great importance, that it worthily requires a just, entire discourse by itself.

And thus having shewn, that, which way soever a man passes into temptation, he can have no antecedent assurance that God will deliver him out of it; no, nor yet in the place, so much as a probable expectation of such a deliverance, unless the temptation befalls him in the course of his lawful occasions, or by some overruling providence casting him upon it, and not by his own free choice and fault stepping into it; and lastly, since it is certain that men fall into temptation this latter way, at least an hundred times for once that they fall into it upon the former account, I suppose there can need no further demonstration of the truth of that other proposition laid down by me, namely, "That before a man's entering into temptation, it is much more probable, and that he has greater reason to believe, that being once prevailed upon by it, he shall not be delivered out of it, than that he shall." Which one thing seriously thought of and laid to heart, surely, one would think, should be abundantly enough to alarm any man in his wits, and to keep him out of those fatal by-ways, where the entrance is dangerous, the retreat is doubtful, and the end is death.



And now to sum up this whole argument and discourse in a few words. If the foregoing assertions or propositions be true, (as the whole world will never be able to prove them otherwise,) let any one of sense and reason, from this consideration, that the mercy of God

and the intercession of Christ are engaged to deliver the godly out of temptation, draw a rational argument to venture upon a temptation if he can.

For, first, upon a principle of common gratitude or humanity, will or can any one make mercy itself a motive to sin, and the greatest kindness a provocation to the foulest hostilities? Will a son kick against his father's bowels, only because he knows that they yearn over him? And if this be monstrous and incredible, can we believe that a principle of grace can suggest or endure such reasonings as common humanity would abhor?

Or, in the next place, will a principle of common prudence suffer a man under a capital guilt to offend, grieve, and affront his advocate? Shall I spit in the face of him who is to plead for my life, and I am a dead man if he does not? And if common sense will and must explode such practices, can a principle of grace, which enlightens the understanding as well as purifies the heart, carry a man to that which common sense would secure him from? All these are paradoxes in reason and nature, and therefore infinitely more so in religion.

Well, but admit that the enormous strength of a man's corruption should so far overbear all these discourses both of reason and religion, as to make him sin, and then presume upon mercy in spite of them. Why, then it will follow, that such an one has no reason in the earth to reckon himself in the number of the godly and regenerate, to whom alone an interest in those two great benefits does belong; and consequently, that he presumes without any ground. In which case, it is not this or any other gospel doctrine, but the man's own ignorance and misapplication of that to himself which he has no claim to, which causes his presumption.

And, therefore, shew me that man who can make such cursed inferences from those two high privileges, and I will undertake to demonstrate to him, that those inferences and conclusions are much more effectual arguments to evince that he has no interest at all in that mercy and that intercession, than they can be to prove that that mercy and that intercession will be employed, or concerned to deliver him out of temptation.

For a principle of true grace; nay, even a probable persuasion; nay, further, a full assurance of that grace, would keep any one from arguing at such a villainous rate: forasmuch as no man ever attains to such an assurance but by a long course of piety, and an habitual, strict communion with God, and such an eminent, controlling degree of grace, as shall render it morally impossible for a person so qualified to make such horrid conclusions.

But the truth is, error and a wicked mind will draw poison out of any thing, and turn the choicest benefits and the richest cordials of the gospel into gall and hemlock. But for all that, *God is not mocked*, though men love to be deceived. Nor are the means of salvation at all the less so, because some abuse them to their destruction. I am sure we have all cause to pray, that God would keep us from so dangerous a delusion in so great a concern.

*To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*





## A DISCOURSE

### CONCERNING

### TEMPTATION.

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#### PART III.

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#### 2 PETER ii. 9.

*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.*

I HAVE twice already discoursed upon this text, in which, after some short explication and account given, both of the sense and design of the words, I cast the further prosecution of them under these following particulars.

1st, To shew how far God delivers persons truly pious out of temptation.

2dly, To shew what is the grand motive or impulsive cause inducing God thus to deliver them. And,

3dly and lastly, To shew why and upon what grounds this is to be reputed so great a mercy and so transcendent a privilege.

The two first of these I have formerly treated of, and proceed now to the third and last, which is to shew, why and upon what grounds deliverance out of temptation is to be reputed so great a mercy and so transcendent a privilege.

In order to which, as all deliverance, in the very nature and notion of it, imports a relation to some evil from which a man is delivered, so in this deliverance out of temptation, the surpassing greatness of it, and the sovereign mercy shewn in it, will appear from those intolerable evils and mischiefs which are always intended by and naturally consequent upon a prevailing temptation. To give some account of which shall be the business of our present discourse.

And for this we shall first in general lay down this as a certain truth: That all the mischief that sin can possibly do a man, temptation designs him. All that is valuable, either in this world or the next, it would rob him of; and all that can be called misery, either here or hereafter, it would subject him to. All that a man can enjoy is struck at, and all that he can suffer is intended; and if the tempter allows him the quiet enjoyment of any thing desirable in this life, it is only to bereave him of that which is infinitely more so in the other.

Which being so, as to that high concern in debate between the Devil and the souls of men; since his malice is such, that he cannot but tempt, it is an infinite mercy that he can do no more than tempt, and that a man's own consent must be had to his own destruction. For if the tempter could have his will upon the person tempted, he would scorn to court



where he could compel. He would make directly at his head, and not come stealing upon his heel. He would break in upon him with open force, and not stand poorly waiting at his elbow with a temptation.

But to come to particulars. Four things more especially are designed, and driven at by the tempter in all his temptations. As,

1st, To begin with the greatest, and that which is always first intended, though last accomplished, the utter loss and damnation of the soul. For this is the grand mark which the tempter shoots at, this the beloved prize which he contends so hard for.

And as two enemies may be really as much enemies while they are treating as when they are fighting, so the Devil bears the same malice to a man while he tempts him, as when he actually torments him. Temptation is the way to torment, and torment the end of temptation.

When men first venture upon sinful objects, lewd converse, and occasions of life suitable to their corrupt humours, the face of the temptation looks fair and harmless, the first proposals of it plausible and modest, and the last and dismal issue of things is with great art and care kept out of their sight; so that they shall not perceive that their enemy is so much as about to strike, till the final and fatal stroke is effectually given.

The Devil, perhaps, offers thee pleasure; but, poor creature! it is thy life which he aims at, thy darling life which he is driving a base bargain for. Or he may lay wealth and riches before thee, but be assured that he will have something for his money, some thing of more value to thee than both the Indies, and the whole world besides. Sometimes he courts with honour and greatness, but still expects to be well paid for both. And as great a prince as he is, he never knights any one, but he expects more than knight's service from him in return. In a word, he will have thy conscience and thy religion by way of earnest here, and thy soul in full payment for it hereafter. There is not the least thing in the world which the tempter offers a man for nothing; not so much as a pitiful mess or morsel to relieve thy craving, starving appetites, but he will, if he can, have thy birthright, thy immortal birthright in exchange for it.

Could we but look into those mansions of horror, where he has lodged so many millions of lost souls, the cruel monuments of his victorious delusions, and whom almost amongst them all might we not hear charging his coming into that woful estate upon the overreaching arts of this great impostor! Some we should hear cursing those false and fallacious pleasures which had baited and beguiled, befooled and drawn them into those direful pains, from which there is neither respite nor redemption. Others we should hear raving and crying out of those guilty gains, those ill filled bags and deluding heaps, which served only to treasure up wrath to the owners of them, and at length sink them into a bottomless pit, deeper, and more insatiable, if possible, than their own covetousness. Others again we should hear, with the height of rage and bitterness, reflecting upon those treacherous, dear-bought honours, the unconscionable price of their wretched souls, by which the tempter hooked them into

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his clutches, blinding the judgment and blasting their innocence, till, by several steps of guilt and greatness, he *preferred them downwards*, to the place prepared for such forlorn grandees, where they are like to lie for ever, cursing themselves as much as formerly they were cursed by others,

This is the result and end of all the tempter's glossing arts and flattering addresses. Hell is the centre of all his temptations; for from thence they were first drawn, there they all meet, and in that they end.

And therefore let not that man who would not be fooled in so vast an interest as his salvation, fix his eye either upon the outside or the beginning of a temptation. Even the beginning of a tragedy is pleasant, but the close of it is not so. Let him not judge of what the tempter intends by what he offers; for be it what it will, look it never so gay or great, can any one, not quite abandoned by common sense, imagine that his mortal, avowed enemy is at all concerned for his pleasure, profit, or preferment? Assuredly nothing less; in all this he is but setting his trap; and no man sets a trap, but he baits it too. He hates most implacably, while he offers most plausibly. His drift in every one of his temptations is to separate between the soul and its chief good for ever, and to plunge it into a state of misery both intolerable and unchangeable.

Further than this he cannot go, and short of this, if possible, he never stops. Every temptation not defeated, certainly destroys. For by once casting a man from his innocence, it carries him still down wards; and he who falls so, falls further and further by a continual rolling motion, and never leaves falling (unless staid by a mighty intervening grace) till he comes to the bottom, or rather to the place that has none.

This is the natural course, way, and method of a temptation from first to last. In the beginning it flatters, in the progress of it, it domineers, and in the issue it damns; always concluding (if not baffled and broken off in time) *in the worm that dies not., and the fire that is not quenched.*

But to proceed. There are other consequences of a successful, conquering temptation, short of damnation, and yet sufficiently dreadful in themselves. As,

2dly, In the second place, loss of a man's peace with God and his own conscience, and the weakening, if not extinguishing all his former hopes of salvation. It confounds and casts a man infinitely backwards, as to his spiritual accounts. It degrades him from his assurance; renders his title to heaven dubious and perplexed; draws a great and discouraging blot over all his evidences; and even shakes in pieces that confidence which was formerly the very life and support of his soul, with new, terrible, and amazing objections.

This is a man's condition immediately upon the prevalence of a temptation. For whatsoever makes a breach upon his innocence, in the same degree also certainly dashes his comforts. And for a man to be thus always in the dark, as to the greatest concern he has in both worlds, what is it but a kind of temporary hell, as hell itself is chiefly a perpetual dark-

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ness! And therefore, where men cannot arrive to the high privilege of a certainty, they are glad at least of a probability of their salvation. But he who has once rifled and laid open his soul to a base compliance with a temptation, has nothing to relieve his tottering, shaken hopes with, but the weak and glimmering light of God's general mercy, which many enjoy who shall never taste of his special favour.

Look upon David, a person represented under as sublime and heroic a character of piety to posterity, as any one whatsoever; a person signalized with that peculiar elogy, of being *the man after God's own heart*, [1 Samuel xiii. 14](#). And yet how did this glorious and great man, by yielding to a foul temptation, undermine and sap the very foundation of all that comfort and confidence in God, which, by a long course of piety and strict living, he had for many years together been building up; so that immediately after that terrible blow given him, we find the horror of his sin and the terrors of the Almighty always fresh and fierce upon his spirit. *My sin*, says he, *is continually before me*, [Psalm li. 3](#). Nay, though he received his pardon by a particular message from heaven, a pardon bearing date as early as the very confession of his sin, (for no sooner had he said, *I have sinned*, but the prophet replies upon him immediately from God himself, [2 Sam. xii. 13](#), *The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die*,) yet, notwithstanding all this, the wound hereby made upon his conscience was so broad and deep, so angry and inflamed, that we can not find that it was ever perfectly cured and closed up; but still we have him complaining of broken bones and noisome sores, loss of God's presence and decay of spiritual strength, mournful days and rest less nights; sometimes rising, and sometimes falling, with alternate hopes and fears, even to his dying day.

The history of whose condition one would think abundantly sufficient to set a frightful look upon the fairest and best dressed temptation. For though in such a case, God by a sovereign restoring mercy should at the last secure a man's eternal interest, and keep him from an hell hereafter, yet is it not misery enough to endure one here? to be still carrying about him a sick, ulcerated mind, a mind perpetually almost harassed with the returning paroxysms of diffidence and despair? and to go drooping all his days under the secret girds and gripes of a dissatisfied, doubting, ill-boding conscience?

Is it nothing to be haunted with the dismal apparitions of a reviving guilt, and the old black scores of our past, forgotten sins? Nothing to have that merciless *handwriting of the law against us*, which we thought had been cancelled, presented anew in fresh and flaming characters to our apprehensions? In a word, is it nothing to be always walking upon the brink of damnation, like a man looking down with horror into a deep and black water from a slippery standing, from which he expects trembling to fall every minute, and from which if he does fall, he sees his death and his grave before him in the bosom of the merciless element, where he is sure to be swallowed up irrecoverably?

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A man may have the whole frame of his spiritual estate so broken and battered by a temptation, that he shall never be able to retrieve upon his heart so much rational confidence of his future happiness, as to afford him one cheerful day all his life after, but shall *pass the time of his pilgrimage here* in sadness and uncertainty, clouds and darkness, clouds that shall make all black and lowering over him, and intercept the view of all that is comfortable above him.

Such, for the most part, is the case and condition of a sinner plunged by temptation into a great guilt; a condition so inexpressibly miserable, that it is impossible for a man under it to enjoy any thing. And that surely is or ought to be argument enough against it, though he should in the issue escape from it. For a wise man would live, not only with safety, but also with satisfaction.

And therefore, as in this temporal life it is not the bare union of soul and body, or a power merely to subsist and breathe, which deserves the name of life, and much less of enjoyment, but to have those nobler superstructures and advantages of nature, an healthful body and a sound mind, vigorous faculties and well-disposed organs, together with an happy symmetry and agreement of all the parts:

So in the spiritual and supernatural life, will any one who has a true sense and relish of such things content himself with so poor a proportion of grace and sincerity, as just to keep him spiritually alive, and out of a state of death and reprobation, and in the mean time neglect the health, the growth, the flower and activity of the spiritual principle? Will he satisfy himself in having just as much oil in his lamp as to keep it from going out, when he might and should have so much as to feed it up to a brisk and a glorious flame?

Why should a man choose to go to heaven through sloughs and ditches, briars and thorns, diffidence and desertion, trembling and misgiving, and by the very borders of hell, and death staring him in the face; when he might pass from comfort to comfort, and have all his way paved with joy and assurance, and made easy and pleasant to him by the inward, in valuable satisfactions of a well-grounded peace?

He who shuns the road of temptation may do so; but he who will needs keep in it, is at best but like the man in the gospel, who, travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, *fell amongst thieves. They stripped him, and wounded him, and left him half dead.* After which, would any one, think we, in his right wits, who had seen all this, have ventured himself into the same hands, only because the man who fell into them was not actually despatched by them? Do wise men account the dangers and disasters of war as nothing, because every one who engages in the battle is not killed outright upon the place, but many escape and come off wounded and maimed, and leaving a good part of themselves behind them?

Surely I should think, that not only graves, but hospitals, not only the enemy, but the surgeon, not only the weapons of death, but the instruments of cure, should speak terror enough to dissuade considering minds from the peril of such adventures.





But much otherwise is the discourse and arguing of those whom the tempter infatuates, when, in defiance of common sense and experience, they would reason away the dread of sin and the danger of temptation. They reason for the commission of a sin from the bare possibility of not being damned for it, but overlook the certainty of being made extremely wretched and miserable by it: just like a sot, who purchases the short, worthless pleasure of a luscious, unwholesome morsel with a terrible surfeit, or a long sickness, only because a man may be sick and surfeited, and not die. These are the wise consequences which some govern their actions by; while, by a new, unusual art of argumentation, they dispute for the Devil, but conclude against themselves.

3dly. The third consequent of a prevailing temptation, is the exposing of a man to the temporal judgments of God in some signal and severe affliction. For though, in much mercy, God may (as we have shewn) save such an one from eternal death; yet it rarely happens that he frees him both from destruction and from discipline too; but that sometime or other he gives him a taste of the bitter cup, and teaches him what his sin has deserved, by what at present it makes him feel.

When the Israelites, by that monstrous instance of ingratitude and idolatry, in changing the Deity for a golden calf, (the God that made them, for a god made by them,) had provoked God utterly to cut them off, and Moses by a mighty intercession kept off the killing blow, so that they were not then destroyed; yet for all that, they did not go unpunished, as appears from that remarkable place in [Exodus xxxii. 34](#), *Nevertheless, says God, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.* And by many terrible items did the vengeance of God remind them of it for many succeeding generations. So that it was a common saying, even to a proverb, amongst the Jewish writers, that never any judgment befell the children of Israel from that time forward, but there was an ounce of the golden calf in it.

It seems there was an old score still to be reckoned for. As the killing malignity of many a distemper may be removed, and yet the man not so absolutely cured of it, but that for many years after he may find it in his bones, and never recover the debauches of his youth so far, but that they may leave something behind them, which shall be sure to rub up his memory in his age.

Some there are who hold, that when God has once pardoned a sin, as to its guilt and merit of eternal punishment, there is yet another guilt, binding the sinner over to temporal punishment, which remains yet unpardoned, and consequently to be expiated and cleared off, either by God's temporal judgments inflicted upon the sinner before or after his death, or to be satisfied for, by something voluntarily undergone, or otherwise commuted for by the sinner himself.

This, I say, is the doctrine of some. A doctrine much more beneficial in its consequences, than true in its principles; and such as maintains those who hold it, much better than it is maintained by them. For though it is most true, that after God has pardoned a sin as to its

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eternal punishment, he may nevertheless afflict and chastise the sinner for it in this world; yet to affirm that this is in order to the satisfaction of his justice for that sin, is false, and inconsistent with the infinite fulness and perfection of Christ's satisfaction.

All satisfaction implies recompence and an equal compensation; but God intends no such thing in the calamities which he inflicts upon a pardoned person, but he inflicts them for quite other ends; as partly to give the world fresh demonstrations of his hatred of sin, and partly to inodiate and embitter sin to the chastised sinner. So that to punish, properly taken, is one thing; and to afflict and chastise, perfectly another.

The difference therefore in stating the ground or formal reason of this dispensation is very great, though the effect of it be materially the same, and the evil inflicted, whether by way of retribution or castigation, equally grievous. And since it is so, let no man, from any even the most rational persuasion that he can have of the main and final pardon of his sin, conclude, that there shall be no other reckonings with him in temporal visitations. For he who has escaped the axe or the gallows, is not sure also to escape the lash; and though mercy has spared a malefactor's head, yet justice may leave him a small token in his hand to remember it by.

For the proof and confirmation of which, can any thing be more apposite and express, than that emphatical place in [Psalm xcix. 8](#), *Thou wast a God, says the Psalmist, that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.* What! Forgiveness and vengeance upon the same persons! Light and darkness in the same region, and at the same time! Who can unriddle these obscurities, or reconcile the seeming contradiction? Why, the resolution is not so very difficult, if we consider that eternal mercy may very well consist with temporal severities, and the pardon of the sin with the correction of the sinner.

See this further exemplified in the person of David himself, (the great instance whom we shall still have recourse to, in treating of this subject.) Could or can any one act an higher repentance than he did, whose repentance stands upon record as a pat tern to the penitents of all succeeding ages? Or can any one pretend to a greater assurance of his forgiveness than the same David, whose pardon (as we have shewn) was immediately sealed in heaven, and infallibly declared to him by the mouth of an inspired prophet? Yet for all this, cast but your eyes forward, and certainly from that time you will find but very few fair days in the following part of his life. For first of all, he hears the doom of his darling child; and then, by a strange intermixture of judgments and pardons together, in the very same breath almost that the prophet tells him, *that he should not die*, he tells him also, *that the sword should never depart from his house.* And how was his royal family broken and dishonoured by strange, infamous, and unusual villainies and disasters; by incest, murder, and rebellion: one brother ravishing his sister, another killing his brother, and rebelling against his father. Surely there was as sad a face of confusion upon the house of David as ever there was, not only upon the court of any prince, but upon the family of any private person

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whatsoever. And yet all these lamentable accidents were both subsequent upon and derivable from a sin which was fully pardoned. Of so vast, so lasting, and so surviving an extent is the malignity of a great guilt.

And no wonder; for as guilt is inseparable from sin, so sorrow and suffering are inseparable from guilt. *Tribulation and anguish*, says the apostle, *upon every soul of man that doeth evil*. The sentence is universal, and we find no reserve or exempt case in the execution. And therefore let that man, who can be so far taken and transported with the present, pleasing offers of a temptation, as to over look those dreadful after-claps which usually bring up the rear of it; let him, I say, take heed, that vengeance does not begin with him in this life, and mark him in the forehead with some fearful, unlooked-for disaster. And if this once comes to be the case, I cannot see, but that those high blades, who pretend to outbrave hell, and laugh at all apprehensions of future misery, yet when they come to feel the hand of God upon their worldly interests, can as sadly and sharply resent the calamity of a languishing body or a declining family, a blasted name or a broken estate, and bend under it as poorly as the meanest and lowest spirited man whatsoever.

But let them bear it as they can; such for the most part are the dolorous effects and bitter appendages of a prevailing temptation. After all which, if pardoning mercy should come in, and save a man at the last, yet surely no serious, considering person would need any greater argument against the commission of a sin, than to have these the circumstances of its pardon.

4thly. The fourth and last mischievous consequence of a prevailing temptation is the disgrace, scandal, and reproach, which it naturally brings upon our Christian profession. The three former consequences terminated within the compass of the sinner's own person; but this last spreads and diffuses the mischief much further: nothing in nature casting so deep a stain upon the face of Christianity, as the blots which fall upon it from the lewd and scandalous behaviour of Christians.

Forasmuch as every ill practice naturally reflects a disrepute upon a man's principles, as being still supposed either to influence him to that practice, or at least not to restrain him from it; either of which is justly a discredit to them. For if the first be true, his principles are evil and immoral; if the latter, they are imperfect.

From whence it is, that constant experience has found it to be the common course and custom of the world, to except and inveigh against professions, offices, and things themselves, only for the faults of persons. A way of arguing indeed as absurd as spiteful, but yet very easy and usual, and with gross, vulgar minds (not well able to distinguish or discern any thing, but as it is exemplified and embodied in persons) almost unavoidable.

And this certainly should make every wise and good man very tender and cautious of being drawn into those ways, which may both bring upon him a personal guilt, and render him a public scandal. For why in all reason should the profession or society, the church or religion, which a man is of, suffer by his lewdness, or share the infamy of those crimes which

they are not in the least concerned in, otherwise than to disown, hate, and detest them? Common ingenuity (one would think) should stop the foul mouth of any temptation with such reasonings and replies as these.

Nay, should a man take up his religion, not out of conscience, but design, yet surely it would be his interest to keep it fair and creditable: and should he (as too many do) wear it only as a cloak, yet prudence and common decency would teach him to wear it clean, and without spots. For he who is not concerned for the honour of his religion, may justly be supposed to have neither honour nor religion.

If indeed a man could be wicked, and a villain to himself alone, the mischief would be so much the more tolerable. But the case is much otherwise. The plague flies abroad, and attacks the innocent neighbourhood. The guilt of the crime lights upon one, but the example of it sways a multitude; especially if the criminal be of any note or eminence in the world. For the fall of such an one by any temptation (be it never so plausible) is like that of a principal stone, or stately pillar, tumbling from a lofty edifice into the deep mire of the street: it does not only plunge and sink into the black dirt itself, but also dashes and bespatters all that are about or near it when it falls.

Was it not thus with Samson? who, of a judge of Israel, and a terror to his enemies, a man all made up of miracle, rendered himself both the shame of the former and the contempt of the latter; a scoff and a by-word to all the nations round about him, (as every vicious and voluptuous prince must needs be;) and all this by surrendering up his strength, his reason, and his royal trust to the charms of a brutish temptation, which quickly transformed and made him a more stupendous miracle of folly and weakness than ever he had been of strength; and a greater disgrace to his country than ever he had been a defence; or in a word, from a judge of Israel, a woful judgment upon it.

And was it not thus also with David? This was the worst and most killing consequence of the temptation which he fell by, [2 Sam. xii. 14](#), that he had, by that enormous act, *given the enemies of God*, as the prophet told him, *great occasion to blaspheme*. And no doubt, the religion he professed, as well as the sin he had committed, was thereupon made *the song of the drunkards*; and many a biting jeer was obliquely cast at one, as well as directly levelled at the other. For to be vicious in the sight of a man's enemies, and those not more the enemies of himself than of his religion, what a bitter aggravation is it of his guilt, and what an indelible reproach to his person!

Yet thus it is and ever will be in such cases; where the person of the criminal is public, the infamy of the crime can hardly be private. It is too great and too diffusive to be confined to one place, or circumscribed within one person. But the report of it shall whirl and rattle over a whole nation, damping the spirits of some, and rejoicing the hearts of others, but opening the mouths of all; those of enemies in taunts and sarcasms, and those of friends in sighs and complaints; when it shall be said of any person of credit and repute, what a false



or foul step he made, either in point of conscience or honour, throwing off all obligation of one, and all sense of the other, only through a blind, aspiring ascent to some pitiful station of worldly wealth and greatness, where the curse of men will be sure to follow, and the curse of God to overtake him.

These two things therefore let every one rest assured and persuaded of. First, that in every temptation the tempter's design is not only the single guilt and damnation of the person tempted, but, if possible, to make him a means or instrument to carry and convey the infection of the crime to many more. And if he fails in that, so that he cannot defile or destroy persons, he will endeavour at least to derive a slur upon professions. This being most certain, that there is not a man of remark in any religion in the world, but has thereby got it into his power to do his religion a great mischief. To which I shall add one note more; that every man living has it in his power to do more mischief than he can do good. And this directly introduces that other thing, which I would have every man fix and keep in his thoughts; namely, that it is the most unworthy, base, and ignoble thing, that can be incident to human nature, for a man to make himself a plague and a public calamity, a blot to a church, and a blemish to his religion. For what is it else, but to make himself a tool and an under-agent to the great enemy of God and man, and to do that for the Devil, which the Devil, without the help of such instruments, could not possibly do by himself?

But such a wretch is every one, who, by complying with a temptation in any vile or dishonest practice, does as much as in him lies to libel his very calling, to reproach his Saviour, and to put Christianity itself to the blush. But above all, scandalous and inexcusable would it be for a minister of the church, to suffer himself to be tempted to any thing wicked or dishonourable. For such an one, by so doing, first puts his foot into the mire, and then tramples upon the altar.

And thus having set before you four of the most dire and fatal consequences of a prevailing temptation, I suppose it will be no hard matter to take an estimate of the greatness of the mercy of being delivered from it.

For first, Is there any happiness in being free from the cruel bites and tortures of a perpetually accusing conscience; a conscience labouring under the guilt of some great sin, which, like a remorseless vulture, shall lie daily and hourly gnawing and preying upon his heart; or, like a poisonous adder, rolling in his bosom, and from thence always hissing in his face?

Is it a blessing to be secured from poverty and sickness, infamy and disgrace, and all the terrible lashes of an angry, provoked vengeance, which are able to make life itself all anguish, horror, and astonishment, and death, in respect of it, a relief and a sanctuary to fly to?

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Is it a mercy to be kept clear and innocent, and to be preserved from such courses and practices, as shall render a man a public nuisance and a common grievance, the abhorrence of the age he lives in, and the detestation and curse of the ages after him?

And lastly, Is it not an act of a superlative, divine goodness and compassion, to hinder a man from running headlong into a state of final and eternal perdition? A state of judgment without mercy; where there is no repentance, and from whence there is no return. A state of torment and despair; torment, *which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive*. I say, let a man rally up his best attention, his severest and exactest thoughts, and let him consider and weigh these things, each of them in particular, and all of them together, the misery of enduring, and the felicity of escaping them; and then he shall be able to comprehend, or at least to adore the height and depth, the compass and dimensions of that mercy, which delivers him from temptation.

And now, to make some useful inference and deduction from the whole foregoing discourse: what can we so naturally and so happily improve it into, as into this one great, important lesson; namely, that let men's desires, hopes, and designs, be never so big and swelling, and their fancy for the world, and the things of the world, never so fond and eager; yet that doubtless is, and ought to be accounted by the truly pious and prudent, the best condition and state of life, (be it what it will,) which shall least expose them to temptation. For if the end of any course or condition be destructive, the way to it certainly must needs be dangerous.

It is the general aim and desire of men to be rich and great, and to live with ease, plenty, and honour, and to be their own carvers for all these things; and when they can be so, they think themselves happy men. But as the king of Israel said to his insulting enemy, [1 Kings xx. 11](#), *Let not him who girdeth on his armour boast as he who putteth it off*; so say I in the case now before us: let no present fluster of fortune, or flow of riches, either transport the man himself with confidence, or the fools about him with admiration, till we see that it makes him better and wiser than he was before, (which seldom happens,) and not only makes, but steadily keeps him so, till he has finished his course by a well led life, and closed his eyes by an honour able and an happy death.

Otherwise, let his first setting out be as bright and glorious as the rising sun, many a black cloud may gather over him, and many a furious storm fall upon him, which shall bring him beaten and battered with a *Non putavi* (the fool's motto) in his mouth, to a sad and a doleful journey's end; and then he will find, (when he has once felt it,) that it is no such strange thing for a fair morning and a foul evening to fall on the same day.

This is certainly true of things as well as persons: that performances rarely keep pace with promises; and that what flatters us most at first, generally in the issue befriends us least.



And nothing in nature serves a man so more than his own heart. Oh! if I might have such an estate! how happy should I be! says one: and, If I might attain to such honour, such high place and favour, how should I enjoy myself! says another. But, thou ignorant man! dost thou know what thou shouldest be if under such and such circumstances? Dost thou carry thy heart so absolutely in thy hand, as to be sure to keep it firm and fixed, and faithful to thee, when the world and the tempter shall break in upon it, with riches to bribe, pleasure to court, and greatness to bewitch it, and all to debauch and draw it from thee, so that it shall be no longer thine, to bestow upon God or goodness, justice or religion? For alas! there is no such thing as being wicked to a measure, or playing the knave to a certain degree, and no further. This being (as the comedian says) *dare operam, ut cum ratione insanias*.

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And therefore he who ventures, upon any unlawful or suspicious practice, or supposed advantage, on such terms, is like a man who goes into the water for his pleasure or refreshment, his design (to be sure) is to divert, not to destroy himself, and accordingly with great caution he enters in step by step; but the rapid stream presently draws him in, carries him away, and hurries him down violently, and so the poor man, with all his art and caution, is drowned. He thought to have been too wise and skilful for the stream, but the stream proved too strong for him.

In the concerns of the soul, as well as of the body, it is a dangerous thing for a man to venture beyond his depth. Since it is not in men as it is in waters, which are always as deep as they are high. For in persons, experience shews, that height and shallowness may consist very well together.

But to draw towards a close. If that state or condition of life be undoubtedly the best, which is least subject to temptation, then this may afford us these two following directions.

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1st, Let no man in his prayers peremptorily importune God for any particular enjoyment or state of life. That is, let him not pray and prescribe to God in the same petition. God alone knows what will help, and what will hurt us. He only can discern the various windings and turnings, the peculiar bent and constitution of the heart, and how this or that thing would affect or work upon it, and how far such or such a condition would agree or disagree with it. He knows the proper suitableness and unsuitableness of every state of life to each mind and temper, which it is hardly possible for the ablest and deepest heads to have a perfect knowledge of. For such very often pray for they know not what, even for their own bane and ruin, and with equal importunity and ignorance solicit their own destruction. They think they *ask for bread*, but it proves *a stone*; and *for a fish*, but they find and feel it to be *a serpent*; and therefore it is oftentimes in mere love to their persons that God answers not their prayers. In a word, the wisest man living is not wise enough to choose for himself; and therefore we have cause to fly to an infinite wisdom to direct our requests, as well as to an infinite goodness to supply our wants.

2dly, As a man is by no means positively to request, or pray for any particular enjoyment or state of life, so ought he with the greatest satisfaction of mind to accept of, and acquiesce in that state and condition (whatsoever it be) which Providence shall think fit to allot and set out for him. I have already shewn, that no man living is in this case fit to choose for himself. And if we refer it to God to choose for us, surely there is all the reason in the world that we should stand to his choice. We come all as suppliants, or rather as beggars, to the throne of grace; and to beg and to choose too, we know is too much. Is thy condition in the world poor, thy circumstances low, and thy fortunes, in the eyes of all about thee, mean and contemptible? Repine not at it; for do we not every day beg of God *not to lead us into temptation*? And shall we not allow him to judge which is the best and surest way to keep us from it? Possibly this very thing that thou complainest of, is that by which God is effectually answering that prayer.

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He denies thee honour, but it is perhaps because he intends thee heaven. He refuses thee greatness, but it may be to preserve thy innocence, and perchance, in long run, thy neck too. In a word, he withholds that from thee, which he knows thy spiritual strengths are not able to bear. Thou affectest to be high and powerful, and probably the tempter, who hates thee mortally, would be glad to have thee so too. But God, who thoroughly knows and truly loves thee, knows that, instead of being high or powerful, it is much better for thee to be harmless and safe.

And if there be any truth in the gospel, and all religion be not made up of tricks and lies, it is really better and more eligible for a man to keep a good conscience, though with an halter about his neck, or a dagger at his throat, than with the loss of it to gain all the riches, and glories, and kingdoms of this world, which the tempter heretofore so liberally offered our Saviour, and our Saviour so resolutely and disdainfully threw back in his face.

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In fine, we have nothing to do, but to *commit ourselves to God as to a faithful Creator*; to receive what he assigns us humbly, and to enjoy it thank fully; knowing, that by denying us those gaudy nothings, those gilded poisons, he is doing us the greatest kindness in the world, which (in answer to the Lord's prayer) is *to keep us from temptation*; and by keeping us from temptation, *to deliver us from evil*; and by *delivering us from evil*, to prepare and fit us for all the good that can be prayed for; and for himself, the endless, inexhaustible fountain of it; *in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore*.

*To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, throughout all ages and generations. Amen.*

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## A DISCOURSE

### CONCERNING

### TEMPTATION.

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#### PART IV.

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#### REVELATION iii. 10.

*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, therefore will I keep thee from the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world, to try the inhabitants of the earth.*

AS deliverance out of temptation is undoubtedly one of the greatest mercies that God vouchsafes his people in this world, so there is nothing that more enhances and sets off the greatness of the mercy, than the critical time of God's vouchsafing it. The wise man assures us, that *there is a time for every thing and purpose under heaven*; a time which gives it a peculiar and proper advantage above what it has at other times. And therefore, since the said advantage is universal, and extends to all kinds of action, we must not wonder if the great enemy of souls has his time also; his particular, advantageous time to tempt and destroy, as God has his time to rescue and deliver. But as, in the vicissitudes of night and day, the darkness of one recommends the returns of the other, adding a kind of lustre even to light itself, so it is the hour of danger which sets a price and a value upon the hour of deliverance, and makes it more properly in season. *It shall be given you*, says our Saviour to his disciples, *in that very hour*, Matth. x. 19, in the very point and crisis of their extremity; like a pardon intervening just as the fatal arm is lifting up, a pardon sent in the very instant of execution. And certainly next to life from the dead, is to be near the killing stroke, and yet snatched away from it; to see death brought to our very doors, and yet prevented from coming in.

The occasion of the words is indeed particular, as containing in them a prediction of the sad and calamitous estate of the church under the approaching reign of Trajan the Roman emperor; but I shall not consider them under any such particular respect or limitation, but as they hold forth a general import and lesson or admonition, of equal and perpetual use to all men, with reference to those spiritual trials, conflicts, and temptations, which will be sure to exercise and engage them in the course of their Christian warfare; and accordingly I shall cast the prosecution of the words under these four particulars.

1st, I shall shew, that there is a certain proper season or hour, which gives a peculiar force and efficacy to temptation.



2dly, I shall shew, by what means, helps, and advantages, a temptation attains its proper season or hour.

3dly, I shall shew some signs, marks, or diagnostics, whereby we may discern when it has actually attained it.

4thly and lastly, draw some useful inferences from the whole. And,

First, for the first of these; that there is a certain proper season or hour, which gives a peculiar force, strength, and efficacy to temptation. It is observed in all those actions or passages which cause any great and notable change, either in the mind or life of man, that they do not constantly operate at the same rate of efficacy, but that there is a certain crisis, or particular season, which strangely provokes and draws forth the activity and force of every agent, raising it to effects much greater and higher than the common measure of its actings is observed to carry it to.

So that if we would take a true estimate of the full power of any operative principle, we must consider it under its proper advantages of working, and in those critical seasons which will be sure to employ, heighten, and call forth the utmost strength and energy that it is naturally possessed of. Every fit of a burning fever is not equally dangerous to the sick person, nor are all hours during the distemper equally fatal. But we usually say, that if the man passes such a day, or such a turn of the moon, the danger is over; forasmuch as at those particular sea sons the distemper rallies together all its malignity, and vents the height of its rage; after which it breaks and declines, and nature begins to recover itself.

In like manner there is a determinate proper time, sometimes called in scripture *the day of temptation*, [Psalm xcvi. 8](#); sometimes *the evil day*, [Ephes. vi. 13](#); and sometimes (as here in the text, and elsewhere) remarkably, *the hour of temptation*; a time in which temptation is infinitely more fierce and daring, more urgent and impetuous, than at other times; a time in which with all its might it comes rushing in upon the soul, like the *fluctus decumanus* upon the labouring ship or vessel, which always gives it the greatest and most dangerous shock.

We know our Saviour conversed freely and safely with the Jews for a considerable time, coming into the temple, and teaching in their synagogues, and they *stretched forth no hands against him*, as he himself tell us, [Luke xxii. 53](#); and yet all this while, as quiet as they held their hands, they had malice enough working in their hearts, and opportunity enough to have exerted that malice in their actions. Nevertheless for that time they touched him not.

But how then came the Devil and his instruments to have so much power at length, as to apprehend, and seize, and put him to a cruel, ignominious death? Why, our Saviour gives us the reason of it in the next words. *This*, says he, *is their hour, and the power of darkness*. Accordingly, [Mark xiv. 35](#), we have him praying, that, *if it were possible, the hour might pass from him*. And again, [ver. 41](#), *The hour is come, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners*.



And it is worth observing, that though our Saviour began his great office and ministry with temptations, ([Matt. iv. 1.](#)) and carried it on under temptations, (*Ye are those*, says he to his disciples, *who have continued with me in my temptations*, [Luke xxii. 28.](#)) yet the scripture records not his praying in his own person against any temptation, but only this last and great one, this *hour of temptation*, this terrible and critical hour, in which it pleased the all-wise God to let loose all the powers of hell upon him, and in which they spit the utmost of their venom, and summoned all their hellish arts and forces to give one mighty push for all. And it was the behaviour of Christ at this hour, upon which depended the eternal happiness or misery of mankind, and the vast moments of the world's redemption.

And as it was with Christ himself, who did and suffered every thing as a public person, and consequently was tempted as well as crucified for us, so it will be with every Christian in the world. Christ vouchsafed to be like us in most things, and we shall certainly be like him in this.

And from this consideration no doubt it is, that we must gather the true sense and exposition of that noted place, [James iv. 7.](#) in which the apostle bids us *resist the Devil, and he will fly from us*. But experience sufficiently shews, that upon every act of resistance he does not fly, but that his assaults are frequent, and oftentimes continue very long; nay, the frequency of the onset and the length of the siege are usually some of the principal methods by which he conquers, and brings the soul to a surrender. And if so, what can that particular kind of resistance be, which proves so victorious, and sends him going like a vanquished person? Why, no question, it must be eminently that which withstands and encounters him at that particular hour or season, in which the temptation is come to an head, and in which it has all the helps and advantages for conquest imaginable.

For if the tempter miscarries in this his highest, his sharpest, and most violent attack, it is natural to conceive, that he must surcease the conflict, draw off, and give it over for that time at least. For if his twenty thousands prevail not, to what purpose can it be for him to carry on the war with ten? Or what should an enemy do more, who has already done his utmost? And thus much for the first thing proposed; which was to shew, that there is a certain proper season or hour, which gives a peculiar force, strength, and efficacy to temptation. I proceed now to the second, which is to shew by what means, helps, and advantages, a temptation attains its proper season or hour. And for this I shall mention seven, beginning at the more remote, and so proceeding to such as bring it still nearer and nearer to an head. And,

1st, For that which is most remote, but yet the very source and groundwork of all the mischief which the Devil either does or can do to the souls of men; namely, that original, universal corruption of man's nature, that *fomes peccati*, containing in it the seeds and first principles of all sins whatsoever, and more or less disposing a man to the commission of them. For it is this which administers the first materials for the tempter to work upon, and

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without which it is certain that he could do nothing. For when he set upon our Saviour with all his rage and subtilty, yet still he was worsted, and beaten off; and the reason of it is assigned by our Saviour himself, in those words in [John xiv. 30](#), *The prince of this world*, says he, *cometh, and hath nothing in me*; that is, nothing for any of his temptations to fasten upon. The infinite purity of his nature, free from the least inherent filth, afforded no handle for the tempter to lay hold of him by. He was like pure fountain-water in a glass, which you may shake and shake, as much and as often as you will, but no shaking of it can ever foul it. On the contrary, let a liquor in any vessel look never so clear and transparent upwards, yet if there be the least settlement or heterogeneous matter in any part of it, shake it thoroughly, and it will be sure to shew itself.

In like manner when the tempter comes to any of us, he knows that there is something lurking in the heart of the very best of men, which he can make foul work with, if the particular grace of God does not prevent him, as it is certain that in many cases it does not. Temptation first finds a man evil, and then makes him worse.

And thus much for the first advantage which a temptation has towards the attainment of its hour; namely, the general corruption of man's nature, suiting it to all the proposals of the tempter, and rendering it always ready both to invite him and to be invited by him.

2dly, The next advantage is from that particular corruption, or sort of sin, which a man is most peculiarly prone and inclined to. And this is one step and advance beyond the former. For though every man, as we have shewn, has the root and seeds of all sins virtually in him, yet, through the good providence of God, (setting bounds to the extravagance of nature,) no man is equally inclined or carried out to all sorts of sin, for that would quickly throw the whole world into confusion. But there is a particular bent of constitution, which derives and contracts the general stream of natural corruption into a much narrower channel, by that special propensity which every man finds in himself to some one kind of vice or sinful passion more than to any other. Such a thing there is certainly in all men, and being founded in nature, it sticks closely, and operates strongly.

And so advantageous a ground does this afford the tempter to plant his batteries upon, when he would assault us, that he never overlooks it, but observes it exactly, and studies it thoroughly, and will be sure to nick this governing inclination (as I may so express it) with some suitable temptation. So that whereas by virtue of this some men are naturally choleric and impatient, some proud and ambitious, some lustful, some covetous, some intemperate, and some revengeful, and the like; this the Devil knows better than any man knows himself. He understands the crasis and temperament of his body, and the peculiar turns and motions of his mind and fancy, better than any physician can judge of one, or any philosopher can give an account of the other; and accordingly, a man shall be sure to hear from him, and receive many a terrible blow and buffet on his blind side.



He is not such a bungler at his art as to use the same nets or baits indifferently for all sorts of game. He will not tempt a shrewd, designing, active, aspiring mind, with the gross and low pleasures of wine or women; nor a sot or an epicure with the more refined allurements of power or high place. But still suiting his proposals to the temper of the person whom he addresses them to, he strikes for the most part home and sure, and it is seldom but he speeds. And therefore let a man look to it, and before he enters the combat with so experienced an enemy, who will assuredly find him out, and fight him (if possible) to his disadvantage, let him view and review himself all over, and consider where he lies most opportune and open to a fatal thrust, and be sure to guard himself there, where he is most liable to be mortally struck.

3dly, A third advantage towards the prevailing hour of a temptation, is the continual offer of alluring objects and occasions extremely agreeable to a man's particular corruption. Fire cannot burn with out fuel; and the strongest inclinations would in a little time faint and languish, if there were not objects to invigorate and draw them forth: nay, and the very faculties of the mind would grate and prey upon themselves, if they found no matter from with out to work and to whet upon. Something there must be to employ them; and whatsoever employs, will at the same rate also improve them.

And therefore the world is like a great store house, full of all sorts of provisions for men's lusts; so that whatsoever course may be taken to mortify or extinguish them, it is certain that, being left to themselves, they will never die of want. For there are riches for the covetous, honours for the ambitious, and pleasures for the voluptuous. And so keen and eager are the appetites of corrupt nature towards these things, that where such plentiful, and withal such suitable preparations come before them, they will be sure to fall to. And such moreover is the mutual agreeableness between them, that they never fail to find out one another; either such objects to find out the heart, or the heart them. And if there could chance to be any failure or defect upon this account, there is an old pander (the prince of pimps) always at hand, who makes it his great business and perpetual study to bring them together, and will never suffer a vicious inclination to starve for want of a suitable object to feed it. And this introduces the

Fourth advantage or furtherance towards the maturity or prevalent season of a temptation; which is, the unspeakable malice and activity, together with the incredible skill and boldness of the tempter. Now malice and envy are of all ill qualities the most fierce, active, and indefatigable; admitting neither peace nor truce with their respective objects. And accordingly, being much higher and more sublimate in the Devil's nature than they can be in man's, they carry him roving and ranging about the world like a roaring, insatiable lion, night and day upon the search *whom he may devour*; and the more he has devoured, the greater is his appetite to devour more. His mouth is always open, and his eyes never



shut. He is restless and unwearied; and though idleness be a sin which he loves to tempt men to, yet he is never guilty of it himself.

To which we may add his profound skill and cunning in the various arts, wiles, and stratagems which he has to overreach and circumvent even the wisest and most watchful. It is enough to say of his cunning, that it is equal to his diligence, and not inferior to his malice.

And then, in the last place, so intolerable is his boldness, or rather impudence, that no repulse shall daunt, no defeat discourage him, nor any degree of holiness deter him from tempting even the best of men to the very worst of sins. For he set upon Adam in his innocence, and prevailed; nay, and he ventured upon our Saviour himself, and that again and again: and though as often as he spoke he was baffled, yet still, though baffled, he would not be silenced: he received foil after foil, and was thrice conquered before he would quit the field.

From all which qualifications, united in our mortal enemy, let this be concluded upon, that as certain as it is that there is such an evil spirit in the world, so certain is it that every man living has a restless, implacable, subtle, audacious adversary, who will infallibly engage and fall upon him, and with his utmost skill and force dispute it with him for his salvation. But then,

5thly, Over and above all this, God sometimes, in his wise providence and just judgment, commissions this implacable spirit to tempt at a rate more than ordinary. And this must needs be a further advantage towards the ripening of a temptation, than any of the former. I shall not presume to assign all the reasons why God is pleased to do this. But it is enough that sometimes to try and manifest men's graces, as when he commissioned the Devil to try and tempt Job in that terrible manner, [Job i. 12](#); and sometimes to reproach them for their weakness, in conjunction with their absurd confidence, as when, at the tempter's own instance, he allowed him to winnow and tempt Peter, [Luke xxii. 31](#); and some times to punish them for former great sins, as when he empowered the evil spirit to persuade that monster of wickedness, and first-born of hell, king Ahab, to *go up and perish at Ramoth Gilead*; [1 Kings xxii. 22](#), *Thou shalt persuade him, says God, and prevail also. Go forth, and do so.* I say, it is enough, that, for these and the like ends, (especially in the way of judgment for former guilt,) God is sometimes pleased to take this dreadful course with men; nothing being more true, than that as temptation brings a man to sin, so sin also brings him to temptation.

But the thing which I would chiefly observe from hence is, that in all such cases in which the Devil acts by commission from above, he tempts (as we may say) with authority, and consequently with more than usual vehemence and success; always using the former, and seldom failing of the latter; as indeed it is hard to imagine how he should, when the only thing that can stand between him and success, (to wit, the divine grace,) in the case here supposed by us, is withdrawn, and the man thereby left wholly to himself. And whoso-



ever has any experience in these matters will easily acknowledge, that for a man to be left to himself, and to be left to the Devil, will be found in the issue but one and the same thing.

6thly, A sixth advantage, by which a temptation approaches to its crisis or proper hour, is a previous, growing familiarity of the mind with the sin which a man is tempted to; whereby he comes to think of it with still lesser and lesser abhorrences than formerly he was wont to do. Frequent thoughts of a thing naturally wear off the strangeness of it: for by these the mind converses with its objects; and conversation breeds acquaintance with things as well as persons.

Upon which account, when any ill thing is suggested to the mind, whether from a man's own corruption within, or from the Devil, or the examples of wicked men without, if it be not immediately rejected with a present and particular act of abhorrence, it will leave some small impression upon or disposition in the mind towards that ill thing which before it had not, and otherwise would not have.

Which impressions or dispositions, though small and inconsiderable at first, yet, by the frequent repetition of such like thoughts or suggestions, will in the issue amount to something very dangerous, and either produce in the heart a positive inclination to, or at least extinguish its former aversion from, the sin suggested to it: either of which will assuredly be made use of by the tempter, and by degrees prepare and smooth him a way, and at length open a door for the temptation in its full force and fury to enter. The serpent has already got in his head, and his whole body will not be long behind.

7thly and lastly, There is yet another way by which a temptation arrives to its highest pitch or proper hour; and that is by a long train of gradual, imperceivable encroachments of the flesh upon the spirit. I say, imperceivable for the present, and considered each of them singly and by themselves; but sufficiently perceivable, after that some considerable space of time, and a frequent iteration of them, has wrought such a change in the soul, as to a spiritual discernment will quickly shew and discover itself.

The meaning of which, I conceive, will be best declared and made intelligible by particular instances; having first premised this great and certain rule, viz. that whatsoever tends to gratify or strengthen the flesh, in the same proportion or degree tends to weaken the spirit; and look in what degree the spirit is weakened, in the same degree it is prepared for and laid open to a temptation.

Now there are several enjoyments in themselves very lawful, and yet such as, upon a free, unwary use of them, will by degrees certainly indispose and unspiritualize the mind, dulling its appetite, and taking off its edge and relish to the things of God. A man's food, his sleep, his recreations, nay, and his very business, if not ordered by the arts and conduct of the spirit, may prove a snare to him, and draw off his heart by secret estrangements from those spiritual duties and disciplines in which the very health and life of his soul consists.

So that after some time so spent, a man shall have lost his heart he knows not how nor which way; and by what dark escapes it has slipped from him he shall hardly be able to learn; only he shall find, that when he should make use of it, it is gone. For the reason of which, it is enough that the flesh has got ground of the spirit; the rise of one being still the fall of the other. And when after such a course either of extreme solicitude, or intentness upon business, on the one hand, or of gayety and freedom of conversation on the other, the frame of a man's spirit comes to be loose and unfixed, and took off from its usual guard, then let him know that the evil hour is preparing for him, and he for that. His enemy is not far off, and it will not be long before he hears from him in some fierce temptation or other.

And thus I have done with the second particular proposed, and shewn the several helps and advantages by which a temptation ripens and arrives to its proper hour and full maturity.

But now, to determine how many of these must concur to the bringing of a temptation to such a pass, is a thing not to be done by any one standing, universal rule. For sometimes two or three, some times more, sometimes all of them join and fall in, to the working it up to this critical pitch. Nevertheless, when we have said all that we can upon this subject, that which Agur says, [Prov. xxx. 9](#), of *the way and motion of a serpent upon a rock*, may be much more appositely said of the intriguing ways and windings of this *old serpent*, the tempter, with the heart of man, viz. that they are in the number of those mysterious things, which it surpasses the reason of man to give an account of. That he is often at work is too manifest, though the way of his working be undiscernible. Pass we now therefore to the

Third particular, which is to shew some signs, marks, and diagnostics, whereby we may discern when a temptation has attained its proper season or hour: I shall instance only in three. As,

1. When there is a strange, peculiar, and more than usual juncture and concurrence of all circumstances and opportunities for the commission of any sin, that especially which a man is most inclined to; then, no doubt, is the hour of temptation. When a man is to take physic, if both the humours within are prepared, and the weather without proves suitable, and the potion itself be strong, the operation and force of it must needs be more than ordinary. And as it is with the physic of the body, so no question it is also with the poison of the soul; the same advantages will give the same force of operation to both.

Sometimes a man shall see the scene of things round about him so fitly laid, and prepared to serve him in the gratification of his corrupt desires, that he cannot but conclude that there was something more than blind chance which brought him into that condition. For when we see a net or snare curiously and artificially placed, we may be sure that there is some thing intended to be caught, and that the fowler is not far off, whether we see him or no.





Judas, no doubt, had temptation to gratify his covetous humour before he betrayed his master. For St. John has given us his character, [John xii. 6](#), *that he was a thief, and carried the bag*, and that more to serve himself than any one else. But the great hour was not come, that he should shew himself so, till he had that opportunity of trucking with the priests; and then he quickly swallowed the sop and the treason together, sold his conscience, and put his master's blood in his pocket.

A corrupt principle may be strong, though it be still; and as strong at one time as at another, though it does not always break out into the same exorbitance of sin. But when occasion improves and quickens it, circumstances help and encourage it, and opportunities further and push it on; then you shall see not only what a day, but even what an hour of temptation can bring forth. Fire has always the same consuming quality, though it does not always make work for a brief. Sometimes it is quenched as soon as kindled; but when the wind strikes in with it, and both strengthens and spreads the flame, and the matter upon which it seizes is more than ordinarily catching and combustible, and all means of extinguishing and stopping the progress of it are out of the way; then, and not till then, it shall reign and rage with a boundless, irresistible fury, and shew you how much another kind of thing it is while it is your servant, and when it comes to be your master; while it serves the occasions of the house upon the hearth, and when it comes to lord it upon the roof.

Now the case of a man's corruption, before and under the crisis of a temptation, is much after this manner. When it comes against him with all its recruits, all its auxiliaries, all its peculiar advantages, then let him expect a battle, and know that he is to combat a prepared enemy, who has prevented him, and comes to fight him upon the vantage-ground. And as it was said of *the stars fighting in their courses against Sisera*, [Judges v. 20](#), so may it be said of a man brought into such a condition, that all the circumstances of time, place, person, and the like, shall jointly fight against him, inflame his corruption, heighten and give life to the temptation, driving it home like so many mighty strokes upon a wedge strong and sharp-pointed, and apt enough to enter, and makes its way of itself.

2dly, A second sign of a temptation's drawing near its hour, is a strange averseness to duty, and a backwardness to, if not a neglect of, the spiritual exercises of prayer, reading, and meditation. Now as every principle of life has some suitable aliment or provision, by which both its being is continued and its strength supported; so the forementioned duties are the real, proper nutriment by which the spiritual life is kept up and maintained in the vigorous exercise of its vital powers.

And as in all other things, when the great instrument of life, appetite to food, fails them, it is an undoubted argument of some notable disturbance or decay of nature; so when the soul begins to disrelish its daily nourishment of prayer, watchfulness, and strict communion with God, it is an infallible sign that it is under some present disorder, and possibly not far from some mortal distemper.

A man at first, perhaps, feels a kind of grudging and uneasiness all over his body, a deadness upon his stomach, and a drowsiness upon his senses, and he cannot well tell what he ails; but after a few days these uncertain beginnings come to rage in a burning fever, or to strike him with an apoplex; and then it appears what those symptoms foreboded and tended to all along; and the great question now is, not when or how soon the man shall recover and be well, but whether or no he shall live.



In like manner, when a man finds it thus with himself, as to the state of his soul, that his former freshness and fervour in the service of God is abated, and that his heart either flies off from the duties of religion, or performs them with a cold, faint, languishing indifference; in the judgment of all those guides of souls, who discourse most experimentally and knowingly of these matters, such an one has all the reason in the world to suspect, that there is some notable mischief designed him by his spiritual enemy; and that he is entering upon some dangerous trial, some critical, searching temptation, which will be sure to probe him to the bottom, to shake all the powers of his soul; and from which if the divine mercy does in the issue deliver him, yet it *will be so as by fire*, by smart, and difficulty, and great unlikelihoods, and by such near approaches to, and narrow rescues from destruction, that it will be matter of horror to him to reflect upon his very deliverance, and the danger will be terrible even after it is escaped.

3dly, The third and last sign that I shall mention, of a temptation's attaining its full hour or maturity, is a more than usual restlessness and importunity in its enticings or instigations. For it is the tempter's last assault, and therefore will certainly be furious; the last pass which he makes at the soul, and therefore will be sure to be driven home. For he knows that if he succeeds now, he is absolutely victorious; and that if he miscarries in this his last action, all his former arts and attempts vanish and fall to nothing.



So that upon such a promising concurrence of all those mighty advantages which we have mentioned, nothing can remain further to speed his design, but that he presses on to victory, by charging forcibly and frequently: and this he will sometimes do with such fury, pouring in arguments upon the mind so thick and fast, that all contrary considerations and arguings, by which it would fence against the power of his proposals, shall be either stifled with the multitude, or overborne with the urgency and impudence of his solicitations.

There have been strange examples of men brought into such a condition. It is reported of Luther, that being tempted to make away with himself, the temptation grew so fierce and pressing upon him, that falling into an agony, and, as it were, struggling for life, he had no other way to defend himself, but, during the conflict, by frequently urging and repeating over and over to himself the sixth commandment; *Thou shalt do no murder; Thou shalt do no murder*. That so, by encountering this fiery dart with the continually renewed evidence of the sin offered full and fresh to his faith, in the peremptory, express words of the precept, he might relieve his labouring mind against the present violence of that impious suggestion.

The tempter in this action behaves himself just as you shall see some eager, ill-bred petitioners, who do not so properly supplicate as hunt the person whom they address to, dogging him from place to place, till they even extort an answer to their rude requests. So in this case a man shall find himself not only importuned, but even invaded; the temptation shall in a manner break in upon him, and follow him without pause or intermission, so that he shall not be able to discharge his mind of the irksome, incessant representations of the sin which it solicits him to, but his imagination shall be possessed, and his thoughts so far entangled with it, that they shall have no power to divert or pass off to any other thing. And now when a temptation has arrived to this pitch, the tempted person may assure himself that it is at its high crisis, its hour is come, and he is actually engaged in a dispute for his soul, and nothing less than the keeping or losing it for ever is the thing which is contended for.

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And thus I have also done with the third particular at first proposed, and given you three several signs or marks, by which the spiritually wise and watchful may observe the motions of their grand enemy, and discern the approach of the fatal season. Of all which we may say, as Christ did of those signs that were to portend his own coming, [Mark xiii. 29](#), *When you shall see these things come to pass, then know that it is nigh, even at the doors*. So when a man shall find these things come upon him, he must know, that though he is not actually conquered and trodden down, yet the enemy is in his quarters, and the sword at his breast; and if these dangers alarm him not, he is beside the remedies of mercy and the admonitions of grace; he is passing into a state of hardness and insensibility, and (for ought appears) under all the sad likelihoods of a perishing condition. And thus at length we come to our

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Fourth and last particular, which was, to draw some useful inferences from the whole discourse; and many such might be drawn from thence. But I shall insist only upon three, and that very briefly. As,

1st, That every time in which a man is tempted, is not properly *the hour of temptation*. A man in his Christian course may meet with several assaults and spiritual rencounters, which he easily masters and breaks through; but if from these slight efforts or velitations, (as we may call them,) he shall conclude that the tempter can do no more, and from former success in smaller combats shall promise himself certain and final victory in all future conflicts, he will find himself deceived and imposed upon by false measures, taken from insufficient experience. For probably the temptation at those times might not have got all those helps and advantages about it, which were necessary to give it its full strength.

Temptation has its daily risings and fallings, ebbings and flowings, and a man must daily and of course expect them. But the great danger is not from hence; but when, by a kind of periodical revolution or return, it comes (as I may so speak) to its springtide, then

let a man look to his spiritual banks and mounds, that the flood break not in upon him, and the killing waters (as the Psalmist expresses it) *come not in even to his soul*.

The life and business of a Christian is but too truly a warfare, and a sharp one too; and no warrior must think himself sufficiently informed, by a few antecedent skirmishes, what the whole body and united force of his enemy can do in the main heat of the battle. For after a man has been victorious in the former, he may be, and very often is, shamefully worsted and overthrown in the latter.

2dly, The second thing which we shall infer from the foregoing particulars is, that every man living, some time or other, sooner or later, shall assuredly meet with an hour of temptation; a certain critical hour, which shall more especially try what mettle his heart is made of, and in which the eternal concerns of his soul shall more particularly lie at stake. So that if he does not quit himself like a man, and make good his station against this principal assault of his spiritual adversary, a failure or miscarriage then will prove like an oversight in the day of battle, hardly to be recovered by any after reparation.

It is indeed called an hour, but it is such an hour as has an eternity depending on it, and consequently makes a whole life little enough to prepare for it. The advice of the son of Sirach is excellent, and home to the case, [Ecclus. ii. 1](#), *My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation*. And great reason, doubtless, has a man to prepare for that which will assuredly be prepared for him, and from which no privilege of Christianity does or can exempt the very holiest and perfectest of men. For gold itself must be tried, and must pass the furnace for that purpose.

Now the two great ways of trial, by which men are generally brought to a dividing point, are by their hopes and their fears. And for the most part the tempter uses to accost men first by their hopes, and to bid fair and high, to see what they will take for their souls; and if he finds that they will come to no bargain with him, but that his offers are rejected, and so this course succeeds not, then he will see what he can do upon their fears, and try whether he can fright or disgrace, beggar or kill men out of their consciences. These, I say, are the two old stated methods, by which his temptations are usually wrought up to a pitch; and if the tempter cannot prevail one way, let not men flatter themselves, but rest assured that he will take the other; if he can not speed as a merchant, he will try what he can do as a warrior.

What our Saviour says of offences, [Matt. xviii. 7](#), holds equally true of temptations, *that it must needs be that they will come*, And accordingly, that declaration of his runs absolute and positive, [Luke xiv. 26](#), *If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*. This is the terrible decree and sentence of Christianity. And that critical, searching hour (which we have been hitherto discoursing of) is the great instrument of providence to draw forth, and place those two commanding motives of men's actions, and rivals for their choice, duty and interest, one against the other; and to set the offers of this world and the promises of the

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next, the enjoyments of one and the hopes of the other, in their full competition. And when, after a thorough debate on both sides, the deciding cast and issue of the whole matter conies to this; "Either part with your conscience or your pleasures; your conscience or your interest; your conscience or your estate; nay, your conscience or your very life;" then let a man know that the hour of temptation has over taken him; and God and his holy angels sit as spectators in heaven, looking down, and observing how he will behave and govern himself in this great crisis; in the whole carriage of which, as he is most particularly and directly under God's eye, so it will be a vast help and advantage to him to place God immovably before his.



In the mean time let this be fixed and concluded upon, that such a season, such an hour will come; and that when it is come, every man must expect to fare in it according as he has prepared himself for it. And this directly brings us to the

Third and last inference which I shall make from the words; namely, that the surest way to carry us safe and successful through this great and searching hour of probation, is a strict, steady, conscientious living up to the rules of our religion, which the text here calls *a keeping the word of Christ's patience*; a denomination given to the gospel, from that peculiar distinguishing grace, which the great author of the gospel was pleased to signalize it for, above all other religions and institutions in the world, and that both by his precept and example. And therefore we must not take patience here in the new and lately current sense of the word, for *patience perforce*, (though a most useful quality, I confess, in the case of madness;) nor, which is much the same, for a willingness of disposition to suffer, only where a man has no power to resist; according to the republican divinity of some scandalous exploders of the doctrine of passive obedience: a doctrine which shines with as high and flaming an evidence throughout the whole New Testament, as the very history of our Saviour's life does, which was a kind of comment upon it. For the Christian religion, both in itself and in its author, is a suffering religion; a religion teaching suffering, enjoining suffering, and rewarding suffering; and to express all in a word, it was Christ's passive obedience which redeemed the world; and for any one who wears the name of a Christian to scoff at or write against it, and at the same time to look to be saved by it, is certainly very strange and preposterous, and too much in all conscience for any, but such professors of Christianity as live and practise in a direct defiance of their profession.



But to pass to that which I principally intend; I say it is a steady, uniform practice of the common, constant duties of Christianity, which is the Christian's surest preservative against this great and critical day of trial. It is not any one or more strange, superlative act or acts of mortification, nor any high strain of discipline or severity upon ourselves, (though of excellent use doubtless in their proper place,) but it is the constant, even tenor of a good life, which will be found the best security against the tempter; as no one blow, how great soever, discharged upon an enemy, is so certain a protection against him, as a continual

posture of defence. And such a thing is a good life against all the arts and assaults of our subtle, watchful aggressor.

Great disputes there are about religion, and great reason there is that men should be zealous for the truth; nevertheless, be a man's belief never so true, and his religion never so good, an ill life will certainly send him to the Devil. And it is really a very senseless and ridiculous thing for an ill liver to be zealous about any religion; it being much the same case as if one who had a rotten, pocky carcass should be extremely solicitous about the colour of his clothes. For suppose a man a murderer, an adulterer, or a perjured, false person, can any religion in the world do such an one any good? No, it is impossible; for if his religion be false, it will further his damnation; and if true, it will aggravate it.

Nothing but *the word of Christ's patience*, derived into practice, and digested into a good life, can keep a man firm and tight in the terrible, shaking day of temptation; a day which every one who knows the true value of a soul will be always providing against. And that he may do it effectually, let him follow the course which I shall here briefly mention and mark out to him, and so conclude.

As first, let him be frequent and fervent in prayer, and in his devotions to God, both public and private, assuring himself that God values not one without the other. In the next place, let him be exact and impartial in the great work of self-examination, looking often and narrowly into the state of his soul, and clearing all accounts and old scores between God and his conscience. Moreover, let him be much and serious in considering the extreme vanity, emptiness, and shortness of all those worldly enjoyments which the generality of men do so much dote upon. And lastly, above all, let him daily and hourly, and with the closest intention of mind, meditate of death and judgment, of the certainty and horror of them, and the intolerable misery of such as shall be overtaken by them in their sins.

And when a man shall have inured and beaten himself to such thoughts as these for some considerable time, the allurements of the flesh and the world will be but dry, tasteless, insipid things to him; and if the tempter comes, all the avenues and passages to such a soul will be found shut and bolted against his temptations, so that he must withdraw and be gone; for where he finds a man so doing, he will find nothing to do himself.

In a word, such a course of living will make that which is generally one of the greatest hours of temptation, even the hour of death itself, neither terrible nor strange; so that although it should be sudden, yet it shall not be surprising, as having nothing more to do with such an one, but only to take him out of this world, which in mind and desire he has left already, and to carry him to heaven, where his conversation was before.

*To which God of his mercy vouchsafe to bring us all; to whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

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## A DISCOURSE

### CONCERNING

### TEMPTATION.

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#### PART V.

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#### 1 CORINTHIANS x. 13.

*—God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

THERE is nothing in itself more irrational, nor yet (as the state of nature now is) more natural, than for men to govern their hopes and their fears wholly by their present apprehensions; so that where they see a danger manifestly threatening them, there they will fear; and where, on the other hand, the means of their deliverance are obvious to the view of sense, there they will hope; that is, in other words, they will hope and fear just as far as they can see, and trust God so far as they can trust their eyes, and no further.

A temper of mind utterly contrary to that heroic nature of faith, the noblest property of which is to give light and evidence to things not seen, and being and subsistence to things before they are; and by so doing, to render its object then more credible, when most invisible; and this (if thoroughly considered) with the highest reason imaginable; for as such a short and limited faith, as ties itself wholly to the measures of sense, can proceed from nothing else but a man's not considering how many ways he may be attacked and ruined, even in his highest security; and how many ways again he may be delivered, even in his deepest distress, which he cannot possibly comprehend nor pierce into, and upon that account presumes in one case, and despairs in another; and this only from a peremptory persuasion founded upon a gross ignorance of both; so, on the contrary, that generous confidence of faith, which carries it above all these low phenomena of sense and matter, is bottomed upon the truest and strictest philosophy discoursing about God's wisdom and power; which being confessedly infinite, must needs upon that score, even in the very judgment of bare reason, have unconceivably more ways to deliver from temptation, than there can be temptations for any one to be delivered from. And therefore, where the utmost reach of created wit and power ends, then and there these two mighty attributes begin; this being the proper, eminent, and peculiar season for their working wonders; that so by this means a man may see his pitiful, narrow reason nonplused and outdone, before he sees his wants answered; and the proud nothing own himself baffled, while, in spite of his despair, he finds himself delivered.



Now of all the evils incident to man, there is none from which an escape is both so difficult and so desirable as from temptations. For as all escape, in the very notion and nature of it, imports in it these three things; 1st, Some precedent danger threatening; and, 2dly, The difficulty of getting through it; and yet, 3dly, A final deliverance from it: so in this business of temptation, the danger threatening is no less than damnation; the difficulty of escaping it is founded partly upon the importunity, vigilance, and power of a spirit inexpressibly strong, subtle, and malicious, and partly upon a furious, inbred inclination to sin in the tempted person himself; and this both heightened by inveterate custom, and inflamed by circumstances continually pushing it on to action. All which represents to us such a scene of opposition, such a combination of craft and force together, as must needs overmatch all the strength of nature, all the poor auxiliaries which flesh and blood can bring into the field against so mighty an enemy.

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And therefore nothing less than a Being infinitely wise, and thereby able to sound all the depths, and to outreach and defeat all the finesses and intrigues of this tempting spirit; and withal, of an infinite, irresistible power, to support the weaknesses and supply the defects of a poor sorry mortal engaged against him, and ready to fall under him; nothing, I say, but that almighty Being which can do all this, can break the bonds and loose the cords which the tempter holds the tempted person by, and so give him a full and absolute deliverance.

Now how and by what ways God does this, shall be our present business to inquire. In which, though (as I shew before) it would be a great vanity, and as great an absurdity, to offer to reduce omniscience to our methods, or to confine omnipotence to our measures, and consequently to give a full and distinct account of those innumerable ways by which the great ruler of the world brings about his designs, especially in his dealing with the souls of men, (which ever was and will be strange, secret, and unaccountable,) yet I shall venture to assign four several ways, and those very intelligible to any considering mind, by which God is pleased, in the course of his providence, to deliver men out of temptation. As,

1st, If the force of the temptation be chiefly from the vehement, restless, and incessant importunities of the evil spirit, God often puts an issue to the temptation by rebuking and commanding down the tempter himself. For we must know, that although the Devil, in his dealings with men, acts the part of an enemy, yet still, in respect of God, he does the work of a servant, even in his greatest fury, and operates but as an instrument; that is, both with dependence and limitation. He is in a chain, and that chain is in God's hand; and consequently, notwithstanding his utmost spite, he cannot be more malicious than he is obnoxious. And therefore, being under such an absolute control, all that he does must be by address and art; he must persuade us to be damned, cajole and court us to destruction. He must use tricks and stratagems, urge us with importunity, surprise us with subtilty, till at length we enter upon death by choice, and by our own act put ourselves into the fatal noose.

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For certain it is, that God has not put it into the power of any created being to make a man do an ill thing against his will, but has committed the great portal and passage into his soul, to wit, the freedom of his will, to his own keeping; and it is not all that the Devil can do, that can force the key of it out of his hands. But he must first be a tempter, before he can be a destroyer.

Nevertheless, though he cannot compel to sin, yet he can urge, and press, and follow a man with vehement and continual solicitations to it. And though his malice can go no further, yet certainly it is a real torture and a great misery to a well-disposed mind, that he should go so far, and to find itself incessantly importuned to any vile thing or action; indeed as great and vexatious as blows or bastinadoes can be to the body; for during the solicitation, the spiritual part is all the time struggling and fencing, and consequently in the same degree suffering and oppressed; and for any one to be always in a laborious, hazardous posture of defence, without intermission or relief, must needs be intolerable.

For admitting that none of the *fiery darts of the Devil* should actually kill and destroy, yet certainly it is next to death to be always warding off deadly blows, and to be held upon the rack of a constant, anxious, unintermitted fear about the dreadful issues of a man's eternal condition. And that man who is not sped with a mortal wound, yet if he is continually pulling arrows out of his flesh, and hearing bullets hissing about his ears, and death passing by him but at the distance of an hair's breadth, has surely all that fear, and danger, and destruction, in the nearest approach of it, can contribute to make him miserable.

It is hard indeed, if not impossible, to assign exactly how one spirit may operate upon and afflict another. But thus much it is very agreeable to reason to suppose, to wit, that a stronger spirit may proportionably make the afflictive impression upon a weaker, which a stronger body is able to make upon a body of less strength than itself. And two ways we have ground to conclude that the evil spirit does this by; one by raising strange and unaccountable horrors in the mind; and the other by rude and boisterous impulses to something contrary to the judgment of conscience. The former of which might easily be made out both from reason and experience; and the latter is what we are now discoursing of. And a very wretched, dangerous, and dubious condition is the soul very often cast into by this means; and being brought thereby to the very brink of destruction, God is then pleased to step in to its assistance; and when the tempter grows rest less, and next to violent, and, instead of persuading, attempts even to ravish the consent, God stops his foul mouth, and commands him to hold his peace, as formerly, in Job's case, he commanded him to hold his hand.

For his devilish method in tempting is commonly this. First to begin the temptation with a *still voice* and a gentle breath, and all the sly and fawning applications that can be; but when that will not do, then he raises his voice, and the temptation blows rough and high like a tempest, and would shake down where it cannot insinuate. It raises a storm amongst all the powers and faculties of the soul, and, like the rolling billows of a troubled sea, dashes

them one against another, judgment against appetite, and appetite against judgment, till the poor man, as it were, broken between both, is ready to sink and perish, and make *shipwreck of his faith*, did not a merciful and powerful voice from above rebuke the winds, and compose the waves, and chide down the rage and blusterings of so impetuous an adversary.

And this God often does out of mere compassion to a soul labouring and languishing, and even wearied out with the frequent and foul instigations of a tempting spirit. For all importunity is a kind of violence to the mind. This was the course which our Saviour himself took with him in the like case. The Devil seemed to pour in his temptations upon him without any pause or intermission; and accordingly our Saviour answers his first and second temptations with fit scriptures, calmly and rationally applied to both; but when he grew impudent and audacious in his third temptation, our Saviour not only confounds him with scripture, but also cuts him short with a word of authority, and bids him give over, and be gone. And as afterwards he once took up Peter speaking like Satan, so at this time he turns off Satan speaking like himself, with an Ὑπαγε Σατανᾶ, *Get thee behind me*. And a most proper and efficacious way it is certainly to repel the encroachment of a bold and troublesome proposal, to be rough and peremptory with it, to strike it down, and to answer it with scorn and indignation; and so to silence the pressing insolence of a saucy sophister, not so much by confuting the argument, as by countermanding the opponent. And this is one way by which God gives deliverance and escape out of temptation; he controls and reprimands the tempter, and takes off the evil spirit before he can be able to fasten.

2dly, If the force of a temptation be from the weakness of a man's mind, rendering it unable of itself to withstand and bear up against the assaults of the tempter, God oftentimes delivers from it by mighty, inward, unaccountable supplies of strength, conveyed to the soul immediately from himself. The former way God delivers a man by removing his enemy, but this latter by giving him wherewithal to conquer him. And this is as certain a way of deliverance as the other can be. For surely a man is equally safe, whether his enemy flies from him or falls before him. It seems to be with the soul, with reference to some temptations, as with one of a weak and a tender sight, with reference to the sunbeams beating upon it: if you divert or keep off the beam, you relieve the man; but if you give him an eagle's eye, he will look the sun in the face, endure the light, and defy the impression. So if God, instead of silencing and commanding off the tempter, suffers him to proceed and press home the temptation, yet if at the same time also he gives in a proportion of strength superior to the assault, and an assistance greater than the opposition, the man is as much delivered as if he had no enemy at all; the manner indeed of his deliverance is infinitely more noble, and as much preferable to the other, as the trophies of a conqueror surpass the poor inglorious safeties of an escape.

Thus it was with that holy and great man St. Paul. He was not only accosted, but even worried with a *messenger from Satan*; a messenger sent not only to challenge, but actually

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to duel him; and so sharp was the encounter, that it passed from soli citations to downright blows; for in [2 Cor. xii. 7](#), he tells us he was *buffeted*. And so near was he to an utter despair of the main issue of the conflict, that he cries out like a man vanquished, and with the sword of a prevailing enemy at his throat, *O wretched man! who shall deliver me?* Delivered (we all know) he was at length, and that it was God who delivered him. But how? Why, not by taking off the tempter, not by stopping his mouth that he should not solicit, nor, lastly, by tying up his hands that he should not buffet, (which yet was the thing which St. Paul so much desired, and accordingly so earnestly prayed for;) *Thrice*, says he, I besought the Lord, that it might depart from me, [ver. 8](#). But God designed him another, and a nobler kind of deliverance, even by a sufficiency of his grace, [ver. 9](#), *My grace*, says he, *is sufficient for thee*. God himself (as I may so speak) undertook the quarrel, and fought his battles, and that brought him off, not only safe, but triumphant, which surely was as much more honourable than to have the combat ended by parting the combatants, as it is for a generous and brave enemy to have his quarrel decided by the verdict of a victorious sword, than took up and compromised by the mean expedients of reference and arbitration.

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But this kind of deliverance by such mighty inward conveyances of strength, was never so signal and illustrious as in that *noble army of martyrs*, which fought Christ's battles in the primitive ages of the church. For what could make men go laughing to the stake, singing to the rack, to the saw and the gridiron, to the wild beasts and the lions, with a courage vastly greater than theirs, but an invincible principle, of which the world saw the manifest effects indeed, but could not see the cause? What, I say, could make nature thus triumph over nature in the cause of religion? Some heathen philosophers, I confess, did, and some heathenish Christians (who have neither religion nor philosophy) still do ascribe all this to the peculiar strength and sturdiness of some tempers.

But, in answer to these, in the first place I ask, where such a strength and sturdiness of temper ever yet was, or elsewhere to be found in any great and considerable multitude of men? Flesh and blood was and will be the same in all places and ages. But is flesh and blood, left to itself, an equal match to all the arts and inventions, all the tortures and tyrannies, which the will, power, and malice of persecution could or can encounter it with? No, assuredly the courage, which rises and reaches up to martyrdom, is infinitely another thing from that which exerts itself in all other cases whatsoever. Nor can every bold man, who in hot blood can meet his enemy in the field, upon the stock of the same courage fry at the stake, or with a fixed, deliberate firmness of mind endure to have his flesh torn off with burning pincers piece by piece before his eyes. No, there are few hearts so strongly and stoutly hard, but are quickly melted down before such fires.

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All this is most undeniably true. But then, by way of further answer to the forementioned allegation, that the natural sturdiness of some tempers might be sufficient to enable some persons to endure such exquisite torments, as we have been speaking of, I add moreover,

that the endurance of them has been in none more eminent and glorious than in persons of a quite contrary temper, of a weak and tender constitution, and of a nice and delicate education. Nay (and which is yet more) in such as have been extremely diffident and suspicious of themselves, lest upon the terrible approach of the fiery trial they should fly off, and apostatize, and deny the truth. And yet when God has brought these poor, diffident, self-distrusting souls to grapple (as it were) hand to hand with the enemy whom they so much dreaded, they have found something within them greater and mightier than any thing which they feared without them; something which equally triumphed over the torment itself, and their own more tormenting fears of it. All which could spring from nothing else but those secret, inward supplies and assistances of the divine Spirit, which raised and inspired their blessed souls to such an ecstasy of fortitude, as not only exceeded the very powers, but almost overflowed the very capacities of nature.

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For the truth is, nature at best is but a poor and a feeble thing, *the flesh is weak*, and the heart fallacious; purposes are frail, and resolutions changeable, and grace itself in this life is yet but begun. But thanks be to God, our principal strength lies in none of all those, but in those auxiliaries which shall flow in upon us from the Almighty God, while we are actually engaged for God, in those hidden, ineffable satisfactions, which are able to work a man up to a pitch of doing and suffering incredibly above and beyond himself.

For still as God brings his servants into different states and conditions, he fails not to measure out to them a different spirit, suited and proportioned to the respective exigences of each condition. For this is a most certain truth, and worthy of our best observation; that the same almighty and creative power, which has given to one man greater strength of mind than to another, can, and undoubtedly very often does, vouchsafe to the same man greater strength of mind at sometimes than he does at others. Without which consideration it is impossible to give any satisfactory account of the cause and reason of that miraculous passive fortitude (may our triumphant whigs pardon the word) which shined forth in the primitive Christians; which yet all the records of antiquity, and historians of the church, are unanimously witnesses, and equally admirers of. From all which it follows, that no man living, though never so humble, so distrustful and suspicious of himself, can, from any thing which he finds or feels in his heart in the time of his prosperity, certainly know, what a daring, invincible spirit may enter into him, when God shall call him forth as his champion to own and assert an oppressed truth, to act and to suffer, to fight and perhaps die, in his despised cause.

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And therefore, if a day of trial should come upon us, (as God knows how near it may be, and how terrible it may prove,) let us so prepare for it before it comes, as not to despond under it when it does come. For when I consider that vast load of national guilt, which has been growing upon us ever since the year forty-one, and never yet to any considerable degree accounted for to public justice; I cannot persuade myself, that either the judgments of God

or the malice of man have done with us yet: especially since the same faction, which overturned the church and monarchy then, is, with all its republican guilt, strong and in heart now; and gnashing its teeth at the monarchy, and at the church of England for the sake of the monarchy, every day. And it is but a melancholy reflection, I confess, to all honest minds to consider, what so daring a combination may in a short time arrive to.

Nevertheless, as I said before, let us not despond, but only make this our care, that though we suffer by their spite, we may not share in their guilt. And then we may be confident, that our main strengths will be found in better keeping than our own; as being neither deposited in our own hands, nor to be measured by our own knowledge. We shall find those inward comforts and supports of mind, which all the malice of men and devils shall never be able to suspend us from or deprive us of. *All my fresh springs are in thee*, says David, [Psalm lxxxvii. 7](#). We shall find a fulness in the stream to answer all our needs, though the spring perhaps, which feeds it, may escape our eye.

When our Saviour Christ had set before his disciples a full and lively draught of all those barbarous and cruel usages which they should meet with after his death, from synagogues and councils, from kings and potentates, before whom they should be arraigned, and brought to plead their cause against all the disadvantages which the wit and eloquence, the power and malice of their persecutors could put them to, he well knew that this would create in them great anxiety of thoughts and solicitous fore cast, how they, who were men of an unskilled, unlearned simplicity, and withal of none of the greatest courage, should be able to manage their own defence so as to acquit themselves at the bar of the learned, and in the face of princes. All this, I say, he foresaw and knew, and therefore, [Luke xxi. 14, 15](#), he lays in this sovereign and peculiar antidote against all such disheartening apprehensions. *Settle it*, says he, *in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist*. And in [Matt. x. 19](#), it is emphatically remarked, *that it should be given them in that same hour what they should speak*. Which undeniably proves, that they should receive that ability by immediate and divine infusion; as coming in upon them just in the season, in the very hour and critical instant of their necessity.

This example, I confess, is particular, personal, and miraculous; but the reason of it is universal and perpetual, as being founded in this: that as nature in things natural, so grace in things supernatural, is never deficient or wanting to men in necessities. And as necessary as it was for the first founding of a church, that Christ should vouchsafe his disciples those miraculous assistances in point of ratiocination and elocution, so necessary is it at this very day, and will be so as long as the world lasts, for God to vouchsafe men under some temptations such extraordinary supplies of supporting grace, as otherwise are not commonly dealt forth to them. For still (as we observed before in St. Paul's case) God intends us a sufficiency of grace. But where the trial is extraordinary, unless the grace afforded be so too, it

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neither is nor can be accounted sufficient. Let this therefore be the second way by which God delivers out of temptation.

3dly, If the force of a temptation springs chiefly from the unhappy circumstances of a man's life continually exposing him to tempting objects and occasions of sin, God frequently delivers such an one by a providential change of the whole course of his life and the circumstances of his condition. And this he may do either by a general public change and revolution of affairs, which always carries with it the rise and fall of a vast number of particular interests, whereby some perhaps, whose greatness had been a snare to themselves, as well as a burden to others, are happily thrown down into such a condition, as may serve to mortify and fit them for another world, from such an one, as had before made them intolerable in this.

And sometimes God does this by a personal change, affecting a man only in his own person and his private concerns. So that, whereas his former conversation, interests, and acquaintance might enslave him to some sort of objects and occasions, which have such a strange and powerful ascendant over his temper and affections, that he is never assaulted by them, but he is still foiled in the encounter, and always comes off from them a worse man than they found him; in this case, God, by a sovereign turn of his providence, alters and new models the whole state and course of such an one's affairs, and thereby breaks the snare, and unties the several bonds and ligaments of the fatal knot, and so unravels the whole temptation.

And this is as much God's prerogative, and the act of a divine power, as that to which a man owes his very being and creation. For as no man *can add one cubit to his stature*, so neither can he add one span, one hand's breadth to his fortune. For that a man should be either high or low, rich or poor, strong or weak, healthful or sickly, or the like, is wholly from the disposal of a superior power; and yet upon these very things depends the result and issue of all temptations.

Accordingly, if God shall think fit to strip a voluptuous person of his riches and interest, and there by transplant him from an idle and delicate way of living into a life of hardship, service, and severe action; from the softness of a court to the disciplines of a camp, to long marches, short sleeps, and shorter meals, there is no question but those temptations which drew their main force and prevalence from the plenties of his former condition, will attack him but very faintly under the penuries of the quite contrary; and the combustible matter being thus removed, the flame must quickly abate and languish, expire, and at length go out of itself.

Nevertheless there is, I confess, such an impregnable strength, such an exuberant fulness of corruption in some natures, as to baffle and disappoint all these methods and applications of Providence, and even where objects and occasions of sin are wanting, to supply the want of them by an inexhaustible, overflowing pravity and concupiscence from within. So that such an one can be proud and insolent, though Providence clothes him with rags, and seats

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him upon a dunghill; he can be an epicure even with the bread and water of affliction; nor can hardship and hunger itself cure him of his sensuality, the fury of his appetites remaining still fierce and unmortified, in spite of the failure of his stores and the scantiness of his condition: in a word, the man is his own tempter, and so is always sure of a temptation.

All this we must own to be very true; but then this is also as true, that these and the like hard and severe passages of Providence have in them a natural fitness to work upon the heart of man, though some hearts are never actually wrought upon by them. For no doubt there are monsters and anomalies, not only in the course of nature, but also in that of grace and morality; and some sort of tempers are not to be altered, and much less bettered by any or all of those disciplines, by which yet God reclaims and effectually reduces millions of souls to himself. God strikes many in their temporal concerns to promote and further them in their spiritual; and if this way fails of its designed effect, it is not from the unfitness of the remedy, but the invincible indisposition of the patient. God knows how to reach the soul through the body, and commonly does so; and so do the laws of all the wise nations in the world; though our new-fashioned politics, I confess, contrary to them all, have cried down the fitness of all temporal inflictions, to reduce men to a sober sense and judgment in matters of religion.

Nevertheless the sacred story assures us, that this was still the course which God took with his own people. They were the sins and apostasies of their souls, for the reformation of which he plagued them in their bodies and estates; and when profaneness or idolatry was the malady, captivity and the sword were generally the cure. This was God's method; and by this he put a stop to the sin, and an end to the temptation. Nor do we find that the Jews ever threw it in the prophets teeth, when they denounced God's judgments against them, that sword and famine, and such like temporal miseries and calamities, were things wholly improper, and unable to work upon the conscience: for their conscience knew and told them the quite contrary. And much less do we find, that God ever thought it suit able to his wisdom to secure the authority of those laws by which he meant to govern the world, by proclaiming impunity and indulgence to the bold violators of them.

And thus much for the third way by which God delivers out of temptation; namely, by altering the circumstances of a man's life, when the temptation is principally founded in them, and arises from them. So that if riches debauch a man, poverty shall reform him. If honour and high place turns his head, a lower condition shall settle it. If his table becomes his snare, God will remove it, and diet him into a more temperate and severe course of living. In a word, God will cut him short in his very conveniences, rather than suffer him in his extravagances; and to prevent his surfeits, abridge him even in his lawful satisfactions.

4thly and lastly, If the force and strength of a temptation be chiefly from the powerful sway and solicitation of some unruly and corrupt affection, God delivers from it by the overpowering influence and operation of his holy Spirit gradually weakening, and at length

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totally subduing it. The strength of a temptation lies generally in the strength of a man's corruption. And the tempter, for the most part, prevails not so much by what he suggests to a man, as by what he finds in him; for what hold can he have of that man, in whom he finds nothing to take hold of him by? They are our lusts, our depraved appetites, and corrupt affections, which give the tempter such a mighty power and advantage over us. Otherwise, if these were throughly mortified and extinguished, the temptation must of necessity fail, and sink, and vanish into nothing, for want of matter to work upon. It is said of Archimedes, that he would undertake to turn about the whole earth, if he could but have some place beside the earth to fix his feet upon. In like manner, as skilful an engineer as the Devil is, he will never be able to play his engines to any purpose, unless he finds something to fasten them to. If indeed he finds a man naturally choleric and passionate, he has numberless ways and arts to work upon his choler, and transport him to a rage; if he finds him lustful, he will quickly blow up his lewd heats into a flame; and if luxurious and sensual, he can lay a thousand trains to betray him to excess and intemperance. But still in all these cases, and many more, it is the corrupt humour within us, wherein his great strength lies. It being with the soul in such instances as with some impregnable fort or castle, nothing but treachery within itself can deliver it up to the enemy.

*I withheld thee from sinning against me*, says God to Abimelech, [Gen. xx. 6](#), and no doubt God has innumerable ways by which he does this: though still, by the way, barely to withhold a man from sin, and to cure him of it, are things extremely different; the proper effect of this latter being to bring a man to heaven, but of the former without this, only to suffer him to pass on in a cleanlier way to hell. God may withhold a man from sin, by plucking away the baneful object that would have ensnared him; as likewise by diverting the course of his thoughts, and the bent of his desires, by sundry cross accidents cast in his way. And lastly, after a full purpose of sin conceived, he may by many intervening impediments disable him from the execution of it: with several other ways of restraint, which we are not aware of, and all of them, no question, very great mercies, as giving a man some check at least in his full career to destruction.

But when, over and above all this, God, by the powerful impressions of his almighty Spirit, shall make a man, of angry and passionate, meek and patient; of lustful, chaste; of luxurious, temperate and abstemious; that is, when he shall subdue, break, and mortify the sinful appetite and inclination itself, and plant a mighty contrary bias and propensity of will in the room of it, (all which God can do, and some times has done,) this is a greater, a nobler, and a surer deliverance out of temptation, than either the removal of the enticing object, or the cutting off the occasion; nay, than the very prevention of the sinful act itself. It is undoubtedly one of the greatest and the best things which God does for a man in this world; and without which a man lives in continual danger of being ruined by every returning temptation. For certain it is, that he cannot be se cure from the returns, nay, the frequent

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violent returns of it. In a word, as long as the old ferment remains unthrown out, a man cannot be safe; nor can he assure himself, that, after a very long cessation, it shall not break out and rage afresh, as occasion may give life and motion to his corruption.

But you will say, perhaps, Where are there any instances of such a mighty change wrought upon men? I confess there are but very few; and I must confess also, that this, upon supposal of the necessity of such a change, is a very dreadful consideration. Nevertheless, some such instances there are: for both the scripture asserts it, [1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11](#); and those known expressions of *regeneration* and the *new creature* do evidently import it, [John iii. 3-7](#); and the experience of many good men now in heaven, who were far from having been always such while they lived upon earth, does fully confirm it. Howbeit we must still acknowledge thus much, that wheresoever such mighty changes are found, they are (as I may so express it) the very trophies and magnalia of grace, the peculiar triumphs of the Spirit over the corruption of nature, and the grand instances of its invincible, controlling power over the hearts of men. But still, I say, for all the rarity and fewness of such examples, God will have the world know, (maugre all our flourishing Socinians and Pelagians,) that under the gospel economy there is such a thing, such a *gratia vorticordia*, as we have been speaking of. And I fully believe, from the authority of much learned men than either Pelagius or Socinus, or any of their preferred disciples, as well as from the authority of holy scripture, (paramount to all other authorities whatsoever,) that none ever yet did, or ever shall, go to heaven, whom God does not vouchsafe these heart-changing impressions of his Spirit more or less to. And indeed, if we do but grant the general corruption of human nature through original sin, it is infinitely sottish, as well as impious, to assert the contrary.

And as to the present subject now before us, I doubt not to affirm, that these extraordinary workings of the Spirit in the sanctification and change of men's hearts, are so much the very masterpiece of God's power, and the greatest (as well as last) efforts of his mercy, in ridding men out of temptation, that all other ways (though confessedly great in themselves) are yet as nothing in comparison of this. For they are all of them but the diverting of a blow, not the conquest of an enemy, but like the dealing with a man under a fever or an ague, in which there may be many ways both to lessen and to put off a fit, (and those of singular use too,) but nothing but the removal of the feverish and morbid matter within can carry off the distemper.

Let this therefore be the fourth and last way which we shall mention, whereby God gives escape out of temptation; namely, by the inward, overpowering influences of his Spirit, working such a mighty change upon the will and the affections, that a man's desires shall become cold and dead to those things which before were so extremely apt to captivate and command them; than which there can not be a greater balk to the tempter, nor a more effectual defeat to all his temptations.



But now, besides all these four ways of deliverance, there are no doubt (as I shew at first) innumerable others, which no human understanding is able to comprehend or look into. Nevertheless, so much I shall venture to say, that there is hardly any sort or degree of temptation which man is subject to, but, by some one or other of those four mentioned ways, God has actually given men a full and a complete deliverance from it.

Now there are several inferences naturally flowing from the foregoing particulars, and those of no small use; but being too many to be fully treated of now, and therefore reserving them to a distinct discourse by themselves, as I have already laid before you some of the principal ways and methods by which God delivers out of temptation, so I shall now mark out to you some of the principal temptations also which do most threaten and endanger the souls of men, and which God principally magnifies his goodness by delivering them from. As, 1. A public, declared impunity to sin is one of the greatest temptations to it, which it is possible for human nature to be brought under. For if laws be intended by God and man for some of the principal preventives of sin, and the sin-preventing strength of the law lies chiefly in the coercive force it has over the transgressors of it, it is manifest, that when these coercions are taken from it, the law is disarmed, feeble, and precarious, and sin, like a mighty torrent, when the banks are cut down, must break in, and pour itself upon the lives and manners of men without resistance or control. And I need say no more than this, that laws, without power to affect or reach the transgressors of them, are but *imperii et justitiae ludibria*, the mockeries of justice, the reproaches of government, and the invincible encouragements of sin; for whatsoever weakens the law, in the same degree also invites the transgression.

Some, I know, talk of politics and reason of state; but there is no such thing as policy against common sense and experience, nor any true reason of state against religion. For since the propensity of man's nature to most things forbidden is so mighty and outrageous, that nothing can check or overawe it, but the dread and terror of the law, it is evident, that when the law is stripped of that by which alone it can strike terror into the despisers of it, it is, in effect, to bid vice and profaneness do their worst, and to bid virtue and religion shift for themselves; the grand rule by which some politicians (as they would be thought, forsooth) govern their counsels by.

2dly, The wicked, vicious, and scandalous examples of persons in place and power are strong temptations to sin. For amongst the prime motives of human actions, next to laws most reckon examples, and some place examples above them. For though indeed there may be a greater authority in laws, yet there is a greater force (because a greater suitableness) in examples; and then experience shews, that it is not so much what commands as what agrees, which gains upon the affections; and the affections, we all know, are the grand springs and principles of action.

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So that if a prince, for instance, gives himself up to lewdness and uncleanness, there is no doubt but whoring will soon come into fashion, and that he will quickly find more, by a great many, to follow him in his lusts, than to obey him in his laws. If a prince be a breaker of his word, his oath, or his solemn promise, it may prove a shrewd temptation to others to do the like by him. And then he may thank his own example, if he suffers by the imitation. Like wise, if a clergyman be noted for sensuality, covetousness, or ambition, he may preach his heart out in behalf of the contrary virtues, and all to no purpose; for still his example will be a stronger temptation to the sin, than his doctrine can be an enforcement of the duty.

The sins of princes and priests are of a spreading and a reigning contagion; and though naturally they are no more than the acts of particular persons, yet virtually and consequently they are often the sins of a whole community. And if so, good God! what huge heaps of foul guilt must lie at such sinners doors! For every person of note, power, and place, living in an open violation of any one of God's laws, holds up a flag of defiance against Heaven, and calls in all about him to fight under his lewd banner against God and his express commands, and so, as it were, by a kind of homage and obedience, to be as vile and wicked as himself. And when it once comes to this, then all the villainies which were committed by others in the strength and encouragement of his devilish example, will be personally charged upon his account, and, as a just debt, exacted of him to the utmost farthing.

3dly and lastly, Great, cruel, and vexatious oppressions of men in their persons, liberties, and estate, are strong and powerful temptations to sin; and that indeed to some of the worst of sins, such as are murmuring and repining at Providence, and perhaps questioning, nay, and possibly sometimes absolutely denying it; besides those sinister and unlawful courses, which they may tempt and drive men to for their deliverance. For as the great master of wisdom tells us, *oppression will make even a wise man mad*, [Eccles. vii. 7](#). And whatsoever robs a man of his reason, must needs also give a terrible shake to his religion. Such impressions has it sometimes made upon some of the wisest and holiest men living; and no wonder, since the wisest of men have their weak side, and the holiest some mixture of corruption. Job, David, Jeremy, and Habakkuk found it so; the last of which debates the case with God in these remarkable words, [Habakkuk i. 13](#), *Wherefore, says he, dost thou hold thy tongue when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than himself?* From which, and such like staggering passages about God's government of the world, we may safely and certainly conclude thus much at least, that that which has been a temptation to the best of men sometimes to dispute it with Providence, will effectually bring ill men to deny it.

The truth is, one grand oppressor (the more is the pity) is able to make many blasphemers; and one French Nero or Dioclesian, prospering in all his cruelties and barbarities, is like to make many more converts to atheism and scepticism than ever he did to his own false religion.

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Though, by the way, one would think that such oppressing Nimrods should have a little wit in their cruelty, and take heed how they bear too hard upon their poor subjects, whom God has placed under their government, not under their feet; and that they should find but little temptation to oppression, when others have found oppression so strong a temptation to rebellion.

And thus I have given you three great and notable instances of temptation, and those indeed so great, that thousands have perished by them; and nothing but an infinite power, under the conduct of an infinite mercy, can carry a man safe through them, or victorious over them. Nevertheless, these two things must still be considered by us.

1st, That the strongest temptations to sin are no warrants to sin.

2dly, That God delivers those only out of them, who do their lawful utmost to deliver themselves.

Accordingly to resume and run over the three forementioned particulars. As if a man, for instance, finds himself tempted to any unlawful course upon a declared impunity to the thing which he is tempted to; let him soberly and seriously consider with himself, that the obligation of a law is the same, though no punishment ever follows the transgression or breach of it; and that a liberty of sin (christen it by the name of what liberty you will) is yet one of the greatest and dreadfulest judgments which can be fall any person or people, and a certain cause as well as sign of an approaching destruction. Again, if a man be tempted to any wicked or vile act by the example of some great, powerful, or illustrious sinner, let him learn, instead of admiring and following the greatness of the person, to abhor the baseness of the practice, as knowing that the man can never authorize the sin, but the sin will be sure to embase the man.

And lastly, if a man finds himself tempted to murmuring and repining at Providence, by his being oppressed in his just rights and estate, as the greatest part of Europe now is, let him satisfy and compose his mind with this consideration, that no oppression can go a step further or last a minute longer than its commission; and that God, who gave it its commission, never did nor will suffer a good man to be oppressed beyond what he is able to endure.

Which, and the like considerations, pressed home upon the heart, will wonderfully blunt the edge and break the force of any temptation. And when a man shall thus acquit himself, and do his part, by fencing in this manner against the assaults and buffets of the tempter, then and then only may he be properly said to depend upon God; and while men do so, be the temptation never so great and pressing, such as faith fully depend upon him shall be certainly delivered by him.

*To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*



## A DISCOURSE

### CONCERNING TEMPTATION.

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#### PART VI.

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#### 1 CORINTHIANS x. 13.

*But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

I HAVE discoursed several times, from several texts of scripture, upon this great subject of temptation.

And that branch of it which I last treated of from this scripture, was about the several ways whereby God delivers men from it.

Concerning which we are to observe in general, that the said deliverances are of two sorts.

1st, Those whereby God delivers men out of temptation immediately by himself and his own act, without the concurrence or interposal of any act of the tempted person. And,

2dly, Those wherein God makes use of the endeavours of the tempted person himself, in subordination to the workings of his own grace. And these are two, watchfulness and prayer; which I intend for the subject of my next discourse upon that portion of scripture, [Matth. xxvi. 41](#), *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

Now for the first of these two sorts, viz. that wherein God acts immediately by himself, I shew the instances thereof were innumerable, and such as it was impossible for any human understanding to have a full and a distinct comprehension of. How ever in particular I then instanced in four; the heads of which, for the better representing the connection of what went before with that which is to follow, I shall briefly repeat, and so go on. As,

1st, I shew, that if the force and strength of a temptation be chiefly from the vehement, restless, and incessant importunities of the evil spirit, God often puts an issue to the temptation, by rebuking and commanding down the tempter himself.

2dly, If the force of a temptation be from the weakness of a man's mind, rendering it unable of itself to withstand and bear up against the assaults of the tempter, God oftentimes delivers from it by mighty, inward, unaccountable supplies of strength, conveyed to the soul immediately from himself.

3dly, If the force of a temptation springs chiefly from the unhappy circumstances of a man's life, continually exposing him to tempting objects and occasions of sin, God frequently

delivers such an one by a providential change of the whole course of his life and the circumstances of his condition.

4thly and lastly, If the force and strength of a temptation be chiefly from the powerful sway and solicitation of some unruly and corrupt affection, God delivers from it by the overpowering influence and operation of his holy Spirit, gradually weakening, and at length totally subduing it.

These four ways in particular I assigned, whereby God was pleased to deliver men out of temptation; and though I shew that he had infinite other ways to effect the same, known only to himself; yet I shew withal, that there was hardly any sort or degree of temptation which man is subject to, but, by some or other of these four forementioned ways, God has actually given men a full and complete deliverance from it.

Upon the whole matter, the design of the apostle in the text seems to be the convincing of the persons he wrote to, of these two things.

1st, That it is not man himself, but God, who does and must deliver him out of temptation.

2dly, That the ways by which God does this are certainly above man's power, and for the most part beyond his knowledge too.

Now these two are very great considerations; great indeed in themselves, but greater in the practical consequences naturally deducible from them. And the business I then proposed to myself was, to draw forth and lay before you some of the usefulest and most important of them.

Accordingly I undertook to insist upon these five. As,

1st, That the only true estimate of an escape from temptation, is to be taken from the final issue and result of it. From whence these two things naturally follow. First, that an escape from a temptation may consist with a very long continuance under it; indeed so long, that God may put an end to the temptation and a man's life together; so that he shall not have striven his last, till he has breathed his last too. And the other inference is, that a final escape and deliverance from temptation may very well consist with several foils under a temptation. Both which considerations are of vast moment to satisfy and instruct the conscience in so important a case, as affording an equal antidote against presumption on the one hand, and despair on the other.

For neither is a foil given or received a conquest. The tempter may be foiled and worsted in many a conflict, and yet make head again, and come off victorious at last, as we have already shewn. It is true, the scripture tells us, that if we resist the tempter, he will fly from us. Nevertheless we are not sure, that, after that flight, he will not return; but that he who flies at one time may face about, and fight it out sharply, and carry all before him at another. And therefore let no man flatter himself too much upon some little successes against the tempter and his temptations; for it is not every skirmish which determines the victory. Has

a man borne up with courage against a first, second, and third assault, whether of pride, lust, intemperance, or whatsoever other vice it be, which the Devil is apt to attack the souls of men by; let such an one be joyful, and bless God for it, but still let him be humble too; and prepare for a fourth and fifth encounter, and God knows how many more after them: for he only conquers, who gives the last stroke. On the contrary, has a man received many a foil and wound in the combats between him and his spiritual enemy, yet let him not despond; for God may deliver him for all this: only let him continue the combat still; for as long as a man dares dispute it with his enemy, though with his blood about his ears, he is not conquered. God can turn the fortune of the day when he will; and where the tempted person is not wanting to himself, he always does. But I do not say that he always does this presently; for God may try a man several years, and not deliver him till the last; as a man may struggle with a distemper the greatest part of his life, and yet recover, and get the full mastery of it in the issue; and not only so, but live many a fair and comfortable year after it.

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Nothing should make us give up our hope, till it forces us to give up the ghost too. And it is only men's being slavishly tied to the present, and fixing their thoughts wholly upon what they actually see and converse with, which disables them from doing any thing that is great, or enduring any thing that is difficult. The greatest obstacles to a religious course are men's ungoverned passions and affections; and it is impossible to conquer or overrule these, but by carrying the judgment of reason beyond the apprehensions of sense: for the passions are all founded upon the present sight and sense of things. And it is this which so wretchedly abuses and transports men, that they think that all the good and evil which is considerable in the world lies within that pitiful compass of visible objects which they have before them. This, I say, is that which makes them sell eternity for a song, give away their souls for a trifle, and turn their backs upon glory and immortality, and God himself, under the pinch of any present pain, or the bewitchery of some present pleasure. In a word, the main strength of almost every temptation lies in this, that men ascribe all to the present, which is short and contemptible, and nothing to the future, which is infinite and invaluable.

But as reason is of itself able to look much further than sense, so faith is able to look as much beyond reason: and therefore if my reason tells me that there is something in the nature of things which escapes and transcends my view, faith (I am sure) will take yet a further flight and a nobler prospect, and assure me, that though I am but an inhabitant of this world, yet I am heir of a better, and consequently ought to be governed by my highest interest, and to proportion my esteem to the measure of my concern, which is incomparably greater in the next life than it can be in this.

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A man perhaps is pressed hard and sore by a temptation, and he begs as hard of God to deliver him from it: nevertheless the temptation goes on, and he is not presently delivered. But shall now this pitiful thing called *man* prescribe to his Maker, and (which is yet worse) to his Deliverer? He, I say, who can dance attendance from day to day, and sometimes from

year to year, upon such another pitiful thing as himself, possibly a treasurer, chancellor, or some chief officer of state, (who may be, and often is, stripped and kicked out of his precarious greatness the next day;) and shall this proud nothing think much to attend the uncontrollable pleasure of the Almighty God about the inestimable concerns of his never-dying soul?

But let men satisfy themselves that God will have them wait his leisure, and that there is a ripeness for mercy as well as for judgment, and consequently that there must be a fulness of time for the former, as well as for the latter. But it has ever been one of the prime arts of the tempter to make such an attendance tedious, nauseous, and uneasy to men under any present pressure, and thereby to frustrate the wise and leisurely methods of the divine grace for their deliverance. From all which we may with great reason conclude, that nothing can be so fatal and mischievous to a person under temptation, as that weakness and instability of spirit, which so naturally betrays him to two of the worst and meanest affections incident to the mind of man, impatience and despair.

2dly, No way out of any calamity, (whatsoever temptation it may subject the afflicted person to,) if brought about by his own sin, is or ought to be accounted a way made or allowed by God for his escape either out of that calamity, or the temptation springing from it. But on the contrary, so far is it from being so, that it is truly and properly a preventing of one death by another, a temporal by an eternal, a seeking to cure the burnings of a fever by the infections of a plague; and in a word, a flying from the Devil as a tempter, and running into his hands as a destroyer. For though indeed his power and malice be such, as may and does enable him to trouble and distress us, (which is the most that he can do,) yet nothing but sin can give him power to destroy us. He may lay the train, but till sin gives fire to it, it can do no execution.

The temptations which men generally attempt to rid themselves of this way, are either temptations from suffering, or from the plausible pretences of compassing some great and public good by an action in itself indeed evil; but yet such as shall be vastly exceeded and overbalanced (as they imagine) by the good brought to pass thereby. But this is a wretched fallacy; and the procurement of the greatest good in the world cannot warrant a man to commit the least evil, nor the safety of a kingdom commute for the loss of his personal innocence. And therefore let us suppose, that a man sees his country ready to sink under the violence of a brutish tyranny; yet for all that, let him take heed that he does not rebel, and that he does not, to prevent it, baffle and distinguish himself out of his duty: for let his grievances and his fears be what they will, the fifth commandment is still where it was, and binds as fast as it did or can do in times of the greatest justice and prosperity; and it is not in the power of the mightiest sinners, and the most successful sins, to dissolve or lessen the obliging force of any of God's laws. Or does a man, in the next place, see religion and the church ready to be overrun with fooleries and superstition, or (which is worse) overturned

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with sacrilege and separation, this will not authorize him to step beyond the compass of a private man, whose business is to honour and preserve religion only by a sincere practice of the duties of it, and for the rest let him leave it to that God who governs the world, to protect his church, the best part of it, and not think to minister to his providence by a violation of the least of his precepts. For no such pretence, how specious soever, will allow a man to leap over the bounds of his profession, nor justify St. Peter himself in taking up the sword, though for the defence and rescue of his master: the greatest and the warmest zeal being but a weak and a cold plea for one who acts without a commission. Uzzah, we know, was struck dead for but offering to take hold of the ark, then shaking and tottering, though out of a pious concern to keep it from falling. But, it seems, the act was unwarrantable; and being so, the purpose of the heart could not execute the error of the hand. He went beyond his duty, and God needed not his help.

And so we may be sure it is in all God's other commands. The infinitely wise lawgiver foresaw and weighed all possible emergent cases, which might any ways be alleged in exception to the binding power of any of his laws. That is to say, God, by a full, clear, and comprehensive grasp of his immense, all-knowing wisdom, perfectly foreknew and considered all the good which men could pretend to compass or bring about by disobeying his laws, and all the evil which they were capable of suffering for obeying them, and yet, notwithstanding both, he thought fit to fix his laws absolute and peremptory, and without any limitations, exceptions, or reserves; an evident demonstration, doubtless, that God intended that our obedience should be every whit as absolute as his laws, and that when he gives a command, he does by no means allow us to assign the measures of its obligation.

But the truth is, be the case how and what it will, men care not for suffering, (which is the only grand and unanswerable argument against passive obedience that I know of,) and from hence alone it is, that while men fly from suffering, they are so fatally apt to take sanctuary in sin; that is, in other words, to go to the Devil to deliver them out of temptation. For so men certainly do, where suffering is the temptation, and sin must be the deliverance.

3dly, To choose or submit to the commission of a lesser sin to avoid the commission of a greater, (which a man finds himself tempted to,) ought by no means to be reckoned amongst those ways, whereby God delivers men from temptation. This particular head may seem at first to coincide with the former, but is in truth very different from it. Forasmuch as the former considered sin as sometimes made use of for an escape out of a temptation, founded in and springing from some temporal suffering, which a man would rather sin than fall into or continue under; whereas here we consider it as a means to defeat a temptation, by our choosing to commit one sin rather than another. But this also, howsoever it may possibly carry with it something more of art and fineness than the other, yet, as we shall now shew, has no more to justify or plead for it than that has; it being nothing else but a

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leaving of the broad way to hell for a narrower, and perhaps a smoother, but still leading to the same place.

And the reason, that no sin, though never so small, can be a warrantable and allowed means to prevent the commission of a greater, is, because no man can be brought into such a condition as shall or can put him under any necessity of sinning at all. That the case indeed may be such, that it shall render it very difficult for a man to come off without sin, is and must be readily granted; but for all that, no difficulty of any duty can take off the obligation to it, how many soever it may fright from the practice of it.

I have heard it reported (and it is a story not unknown) of a certain monk or prelate, who for a long time together was continually urged and solicited, or rather worried and pursued, with three foul and horrid temptations, viz. to commit murder, or incest, or to be drunk, till at length, quite wearied out with the restless, vexatious importunity of the tempter, he pitches upon the sin of drunkenness, as the least of the three, to avoid his solicitation to the other two. This was the course he took to rid himself of a vehement temptation. But the tempter, who was much the better artist of the two, knew how to make the very same course he took to decline it, an effectual means to push it on and enforce it. For having once prevailed and carried his point so far as to bring him to be drunk, he quickly brought him in the strength thereof to commit both the other sins too. Such are we, when God abandons us to ourselves and our own deluded and deluding judgments. Whereas had this poor wretch, (if this story of him be real, and not a parable only,) under his unhappy circumstances, betook himself to frequent prayer and fasting, with a vigilant and severe shunning all occasions of sin, such especially as either his natural temper or his unactive way of living put him in most danger of; I dare undertake, that, following such a course, he should neither have worn out his knees with praying, nor his body with fasting, before God would have given him an answer of peace, and a full conquest over his temptations. To which method may be added one instruction more, and that of no less sovereign influence in the case now before us than all of them together; viz. that we should upon no terms account any sin small; for whatsoever it may be reckoned, if compared with others of an higher guilt and malignity, yet still, considered absolutely in itself, it is not so small, but that it is an act of rebellion against the supreme Lord and Governor of the universe, by a direct violation of his law; not so small, but that by the same law it merits damnation to the sinner in the eternal destruction of his soul and body; nor, lastly, so small, but that as it merits, so it would actually and infallibly inflict the same upon him, had not the Son of God himself shed his blood and laid down his very life, both as a satisfaction for the sin, and a ransom for the sinner. And if all this must be owned and submitted to as uncontrollable truth, from what topic of reason or religion can the most acute disputant argue for the smallness of any sin? Nevertheless, admitting (without granting) that a sin were never so small, yet certain it is, that the greatest and the foulest sins, which the corrupt nature of man is capable of committing, generally enter upon the

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soul by very small and scarce observable instances at first. So that of all the courses which a man in such a case can take, this of capitulating, and, as it were, making terms with the Devil, is the most senseless and dangerous; no man having ever yet driven a saving bargain with this great trucker for souls, by exchanging guilts, or bartering one sin for another.

It is too well known, how it was with a most virtuous and excellent prince, (if we may be suffered to pay a due honour to that glorious name, which to the astonishment and scandal of all good men has been so vilified and run down of late;) it is known, I say, what a struggle his pious and truly tender conscience had with itself, when he was urged to sign the death of a faithful and great minister, and how far his heart was from going along with his hand in signing that fatal act. Nevertheless thus pressed, (as he was on all sides,) he prevailed upon at last to throw an innocent life overboard, to secure the whole government from that terrible national storm, which seemed at that time to threaten all. But what was the issue and result of this woful expedient? (which yet none more deeply regretted and repented of than that blessed prince himself.) Why, the result and natural effect of it was, that the flame (intended thereby to be stifled and extinguished) broke out and raged thereupon ten times more violently, and the Devil and his faction took their advantage, and carried all before them more and more audaciously; never ceasing, till they had brought his royal head to the block, overturned both church and state, and laid our laws and liberties, with every thing that was great, honourable, or sacred throughout the whole kingdom, in the dust.

This was the consequence of an unjustifiable act for preventing a greater mischief, (as some judged:) which, no doubt, had it not been taken, but instead thereof innocence had been resolutely protected, and Providence humbly relied upon, things could never have come to that deplorable issue, which they were brought to, and which it is to be feared that we and our posterity may for some ages rue. For according to the course of God's justice in his government of the world, there is but too much ground to think, that so horrid a rebellion and regicide have not yet been so fully accounted for, but that there remains a long and a black score still to be paid off: it being so usual as well as just with God, where the guilt of a people is high and clamorous, to revenge the practices of the fathers upon the children, succeeding into and avowedly persisting in the same principles which produced them. God has owned it for his rule, and that for more generations than one; and it is not to be presumed that he will balk an established rule for our sakes.

Such, we see, have been the false and fallacious methods, whereby some have so wretchedly deceived themselves: besides which it has been likewise observed of some others, who have been so unfortunate as to have their dependance upon persons as much wickeder as greater than themselves, that they have complied with them in lesser irregularities to induce the grandee, out of mere good nature forsooth, not to press his poor dependant to fouler and more frightful enormities. But alas! this is a way which never takes: for such great ones in all their debauches will be attended upon through thick and thin, and care not for any

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but a thoroughpaced companion in their vices; since no other can give them any countenance in their lewdness, which is the chief thing they drive at and desire. And therefore this also will be found as senseless and absurd a project to elude the tempter as any of the former, and seldom or never succeeds, but to an effect quite contrary to what was designed. For from lesser to greater has been ever accounted a very easy and natural passage, especially in sin. And he who suffers the Devil to be his rider, must not think always to jog on softly and slowly even in the dirtiest road, but must expect to be sometimes put upon his full career, and neither be suffered to choose his own way or his own pace. In a word, he who ventures deliberately to commit a less sin in order to his avoidance of a greater, does certainly bring himself under the guilt of one, and puts himself in the next disposition to the other. And therefore this can be none of those ways by which God delivers men out of temptation.

4thly, If it be the prerogative and proper work of God to deliver and bring men out of temptation, let no man, when the temptation is founded in suffering, (how careful soever he may and ought to be of entering into it,) be so solicitous how to get out of it, as how to behave himself under it. For the former being God's work, may be best left to his care; it is the latter only which belongs to the man himself, and let him but make good his own part, and he may rest assured that God will not fail in his.

And to this purpose, and for the comfort of every one under temptation, let this be observed as a great truth; that no man's suffering is properly and formally his sin, (how much soever it might be occasioned by it,) and withal, that the whole time a man is under a temptation without consenting to it, he is really and truly a sufferer by it. The tempter indeed dogs and pursues him close, and consequently must needs vex and afflict him proportionably; but still no man is ruined by being pursued by his enemy, but by being taken; and the huntsman (as hard as he may follow the chace) does not always carry his game. It is the tempted person's duty (no doubt) to fence, and strive, and oppose the temptation with all the art, as well as resolution, that he can; but nevertheless it is not his sin, if he cannot wholly rid himself of it. A sturdy beggar may weary me, but he cannot force me. He may importune my charity, but he cannot command my purse. And if in all our spiritual combats with our great enemy the tempter, this one rule were but impartially considered, and as strictly followed, it is in credible to imagine what a vast deal of guilt and mischief it would prevent in the world. It would prevent all that can arise from rashness and impatience, from a man's confidence in himself, and his diffidence in God; qualities that would advance the creature to the prerogative of God, and bring down God to the level of the creature. In a word, it would keep men from daring to snatch God's work out of his hand, from audaciously carving for themselves, or expecting God's mercies upon any but his own terms. It would keep them quiet even upon the rack, silent and patient under all the arts and engines of cruelty, and in the sorest distresses they can groan under; fearful how they caught at a deliverance, before God (who alone knows the proper seasons of mercy, and understands men better than they

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can themselves) saw them fit for it. In fine, according to that of the prophet, [Isaiah xxviii. 16](#), *he who believeth will not make haste*; that is, he who founds his belief in his reason will not sacrifice it to the transports of his passion; but rather (as Moses bade the Israelites, in a condition they thought desperate) *stand still, and see the salvation of God*, than fly to such false methods of escape, as shall both assure and hasten his destruction. Nothing so much entitles a tempted person to relief from above, as a steady, composed, and unwearied looking up for it; a qualification always attended with such a peculiar greatness and firmness of mind, as the goodness of God never yet did, nor will, nor indeed can desert. In every arduous and difficult enterprise, action, all own, must begin the work, and courage carry it on; but it is perseverance only which gives the finishing stroke. If a city be besieged by an enemy, a bold and brisk sally now and then may give a present repulse to the besiegers, but it is constancy and continuance that must raise the siege; and consequently, in such cases, where the assault is frequent, and the opposition long, he who stands it out, bids as fair for victory as he who fights it out; and nothing can be more pusillanimous or more fatal than an hasty surrender. Promises of succour (if not too long delayed) often inspire courage, even where they find none. And therefore no man of judgment, if but with a competent supply of spirit to second it, would in so high a concern as that of his soul, part with his hope before his life, having so particular a promise to support the one, and only the common protections of Providence to guard the other. But then, on the other side, if his strength lie here, and this be his case, must it not be inexpressibly senseless and irrational, for one who owns a dependance upon God for his deliverance, to have recourse to the Devil for the way and means of it? That man, no doubt, who makes his duty to God the sole measure of his dependance upon him, can never (be his straits what they will) be so much enslaved and insulted over, as to think it worth his while to purchase his liberty with the sale of his conscience, or to quit his passive obedience (with the inward comforts always accompanying an oppressed innocence) for the most active, thriving, and successful rebellion. For let a temporal suffering be never so sharp, whosoever will needs be his own deliverer, and that in his own time, and his own way also, that man first distrusts God, and then defies him, and not only throws off his yoke, but throws it at him too. For the great Lord and Governor of the world will be as much obeyed, trusted, and relied upon, while he visits and afflicts, as while he embraces and supports us; while his rod is upon us, as while his staff is under us. And in the very worst circumstances which we can be in, it will be hard to prove that our allegiance to the King of kings (according to the new, modish, whig-doctrine relating to our temporal kings) is only conditional.

5thly, The fifth and last corollary or conclusion deducible from the foregoing particulars, is, that there can be no suffering or calamity whatsoever, though never so terrible and grievous to human nature, but may be endured without sin; and if so, may be likewise made a means whereby God brings a man out of temptation.

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As to the first part of which proposition, the Christian martyrs were a glorious and irrefragable proof of it (as has been before observed;) the torments they endured were as horrid and exquisite as the wit of man could then invent, or now comprehend; nor were they more for their peculiar strangeness unaccountable, than for the variety of their kinds innumerable. The whole history of the primitive church is but a continued martyrology; in a word, this noble army of martyrs were (as the apostle tells us, [Heb. xi. 35, 36, 37](#)) *cruelly mocked and scourged, racked and tortured, slain with the sword, or rather butchered, burnt, and sawn asunder*; and in a word, what not? All this, I say, and a great deal more, they undauntedly suffered, and triumphed over; and the same grace which enabled them to bear such barbarities, enabled them also to bear them without sin; the fire indeed consumed them, but the smoke could not blacken them. All which being as to matter of fact unquestionable, it must needs be an argument of the clearest and most allowed consequence, that if such inhumanities actually have been borne, it is certain that they may be borne. Experience (which answers, or rather annihilates all objections) has made good the antecedent, and nothing can keep off the consequent. In the mean time, for my own part, I must confess my self wholly unable to believe, that such monstrous cruelties could ever have been endured, but in the strength of something supernatural and divine, some thing which raised and bore human nature above itself, something which gave it a kind of inward armour of proof; mere flesh and blood (God knows) being but a pitiful, weak thing, and by no means a match equal to such encounters.



From all which we see and learn, how wholly different the wise and gracious methods of God are from those of poor silly mortals. The way of the world is for men to rush into sin, to keep or bring themselves out of misery; but God's method is, sometimes to bring men into worldly misery, to keep them from sin, and thereby rescue them from damnation. And this is most certainly true, that no evil, how afflictive soever, is or ought to be accounted intolerable, which may be made a direct means to escape one intolerably greater. For as there is no sort of enjoyment upon earth, but may, and often does, become the ground and scene of a temptation, so neither is there any sort of temporal misery, but may be a remedy against it. Poverty is indeed a bitter pill, but often used by the great physician of souls as a sovereign antidote against pride, profuseness, and sensuality. Nothing sinks deeper into an ingenuous mind than disgrace, and yet God frequently makes it an effectual cure of vainglory, arrogance, and ambition. Sickness is a tedious and vexatious trial, eating up and consuming the vigour and spirit both of body and mind, and yet the surest and best course, by which God beats down the rage of lust, and the brutish furies of intemperance. And lastly, death itself, which nature fears and flies from, as its dreadfulest and greatest enemy, is yet the grand instrument in the hand of mercy to put an end to sin and sorrow, and a final period to all temptations.



And thus at length I am come near a close of what I had to discourse upon this great and important subject of temptation; indeed so important, that, whereas that best of prayers prescribed and left us by our Saviour (as the standing form and pattern for his church to pray by for ever) consists in all but of six petitions, this against temptation makes one of that small number; a clear demonstration, doubtless, of what infinite concern it is to all who know how to value their eternal state and condition, to guard against it, and to be delivered from it. For so much I dare aver may with great truth be affirmed of the malignity of it, (and more and worse can hardly be said,) that greater numbers have been destroyed by it than repentance ever saved. For it is this which has peopled hell, and made the Devil's dominions large and populous; this which has carried the trophies of his black conquests as far and wide as the corruption of man's nature has spread itself, and the sin of Adam extended its contagion; this, whereby that avowed enemy of God and man has done such terrible execution upon souls: for were it not for his art and skill to insinuate, his power could do nothing to destroy; that being his sure and long tried method for getting hold of the will, and seizing the affections, and so drawing the whole man after him, which by downright force he could never do. In short, (according to the poet's expression,) *populo dat jura volenti*, he brings men to obey and serve him spontaneously, and further than this he cannot go, nor lead any into the bottomless pit, but such as are as willing to follow as he to lead; a woful way of perishing certainly, and the very sting, not of death only, but even of damnation itself.

Nor is this all whereby he carries on his work, but he has yet this further advantage over men, that, being a spirit, he can convey himself into and possess himself of the chief instruments of the soul's operations, the spirits, and this without the man's discerning that he does so. For though, indeed, when God permits him to exert his mischievous power upon the bodies of men, (as he did upon many in the days of our Saviour,) it must needs in that case be discernible enough where and of whom the evil spirit has taken possession; yet where he employs his malice only in a spiritual way, by secret but powerful instigations of their corrupt nature to wicked actions, (as for the most part he does nowadays,) it is hard, if possible, to distinguish truly and exactly what proceeds from bare inherent corruption, and what from diabolical impulse and infusion; but no doubt in many instances it proceeds from both, and from the latter more especially, that being always more impetuous, and hurrying the soul with a more violent bias to the commission of sin, than, if left merely to its own inclinations, it would probably have been carried out to. And thus it is with men frequently; they find within themselves a motion both sensible and forcible, while the spring of it is invisible, and so run on violently, not aware, in the mean time, who it is that drives them, or what it is that he drives at.

These and many more are the advantages which the tempter has over the sons of men, partly from the spirituality of his own nature, and partly from the grossness and imbecility of theirs; to which if we join his incredible sagacity to spy out every the least opportunity

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offered him, and his implacable malice to pursue and make use of it, to the utter supplanting us, and that in no less an interest than that of our immortal souls, (in comparison of which the whole world is but a trifle,) it must needs hold all thoughtful minds under such continual agonies and misgiving reflections, that although we may escape hell hereafter, he will be sure, if he can, to give us a severe taste of it here.

But what? Must all advantages then lie like a dead, or rather like a killing weight, wholly on the tempter's side, and no remedies to encounter them be found on ours? God forbid; for then we must look upon our case not only as dangerous, but desperate, and give over the conflict as absurd, where all resistance is vain, and the conquest impossible. But, on the contrary, as God of his great wisdom has not been wanting to forewarn and assure men that temptations will attend them, so neither has he been failing of his equal goodness to prescribe the proper ways, means, and methods, whereby to fence against them; which, as in the several particulars thereof, (each of them severally adapted to the several states, tempers, and conditions of men,) are for their vast variety (upon the matter) innumerable, so they are nevertheless every one of them directly reducible to, and fully comprehensible under these two grand general heads, (prescribed by the best and surest guide of souls, our Saviour himself,) watchfulness and prayer; and accordingly (as I hinted before) I shall treat of them distinctly by themselves, as the proper materials of my following discourse upon the same subject, (though from another text,) with which I shall conclude all that I had proposed to deliver upon this weighty, useful, and highly concerning point of temptation.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, &c. be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*





## A DISCOURSE

### CONCERNING

### TEMPTATION.

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#### THE SEVENTH AND LAST PART.

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#### MATTHEW xxvi. 41.

##### THE SEVENTH AND LAST PART.

*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

AS the life and business of a Christian in this world is certainly to flesh and blood a thing of great difficulty, and, considering the opposition which it is sure to meet with, of equal danger, so this appears in nothing more than in its being represented by one of the most difficult and dangerous things in human life, which is war; 1 Tim. i. 18, *This charge I commit unto thee*, says Paul to Timothy, *that thou mightest war a good warfare*. And as the difficulty and danger of war is to be measured partly by the high worth of the thing fought for, and partly by the power and policy of the enemy to be fought with; so the eternal, invaluable interest of an immortal soul on the one side, and the arts and strength of a mighty, subtle, and implacable spirit on the other, are but too full a demonstration with what difficulty and danger the soul is to manage and maintain this spiritual conflict.

And therefore as all war is to be carried on partly by our own strength, and partly by that of allies and auxiliaries called in to our aid and assistance; so in this Christian warfare the things which properly answer those two are watchfulness and prayer; forasmuch as by watchfulness we exert and employ our own strength, and by prayer we engage God's; and if ever victory and success attend us in these encounters, these two must join forces, heaven and earth must be confederate, and when they are so, the Devil himself, as strong as he is, and as invincible a monarch as he would be thought to be, may yet be forced to go off with a *pluribus impar*, and to quit the field with frustration and a baffle.

In the first place then we will speak of watchfulness as the first of the two great defensives against temptation, here prescribed in the text, *Watch and pray*. In giving an account of which, as the foundation of the expression is a metaphor, so the prosecution and further illustration of it must (in a great measure at least) be metaphorical also. And consequently, as it relates to the soul waging and carrying on this spiritual war with the tempter and his temptations, it imports in it these five following particulars. As,

1. First of all, *watching* imports a strong, lively, abiding sense and persuasion of the exceeding greatness of the evil which we watch and contend against. Sense of danger is the

first step to safety, and no man watches but to secure and defend himself. Watching is a troublesome and severe work, and wise men would not willingly trouble themselves to no purpose. A combatant must first know and dread the mischief of a blow, before he will fence against it; he must see it coming with his eye, before he will ward it off with his hand.

To be always upon the guard, hungry and rest less, expecting the enemy, and liable to be killed every minute, only to secure the life of others, must needs be a very afflicting discipline; and no man would spend the night upon the sentry, who knew that he might spend it as safely in his bed. *Had the good man of the house known of the thief's coming,* (as our Saviour observes, [Matt. xxiv. 43.](#)) *he would have watched;* he would have kept his eyes open, and his doors shut; for though to break one's sleep, when nature importunately calls for it, be something grievous, yet to have one's house broke open, and to be spoiled of one's goods, and perhaps of one's life too, is much worse. The sight of danger is stronger than the strongest inclinations to rest; and no man could with any heart go to sleep, who fully believed that he should wake in another world.

Accordingly, let a man in every temptation consider the evil which is designed him, and is certainly coming towards him, and that (if reason governs) will make him readily digest a less pain to secure himself from an infinitely greater. But men slight and dally with temptation, because they are not really persuaded that there can be so much evil at the bottom of that which looks so fair at top. But the evil which lies lurking under a temptation is intolerable and inexpressible. The design of it is, by leading thee from sin to sin, to harden thy heart, to debauch thy conscience, and seal thee up under a reprobate sense; and when the tempter has brought things to this pass, he knows he has a man sure enough; he has the sinner in chains, whensoever may be the time of his execution.

A temptation presents itself to thee dressed and painted, and set off according to thy own false heart's desire; and the evil spirit is pressing thee to a compliance with it, and the good Spirit of God and thy own conscience would keep thee off from it; God is urgent on the one side, and the tempter busy on the other, and thy heart is warmly solicited on both: now consider, in this critical push, which way it inclines, and what the issue may be, if the tempter should carry thy choice. Possibly, if the blessed motions of God's Spirit dissuading thee from sin be refused now, this may be the last address the Spirit may make to thee, the last time it may ever knock at the door of thy heart. And then what follows? why, blindness of mind, stupidity of conscience, deadness of affection to all that is good, and a daring boldness in sin; which are as certain forerunners of the soul's destruction, as buds and blossoms are the foretellers of fruit, or the sentence of condemnation the harbinger of death.

Now if a man would have these terrible effects always fresh upon his spirit, it is impossible but he should be willing to be at any pains to intrench and fortify himself against such invasions. I have heard of a criminal who endured the bitterest torments of the rack with incomparable resolution, which if a malefactor endures without confessing his crime, (ac cording

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to the custom of those countries where this trial is used,) he escapes death. And being asked, how he could strengthen his spirit to endure such horrid pains, Why, says he, before I was to ascend the rack, I caused the picture of a gibbet to be drawn upon my foot, and still, as my pains grew higher, I fixed my eye upon that; and so the fear and abhorrence of dying at the gibbet, if I confessed, enabled me with silence to master and overcome the tortures of the rack without confession. In like manner, when a man is at any time accosted with a temptation, a sly, pleasing, insinuating temptation, so that to turn away from it is extremely irk some to corrupt nature, and to oppose and defy it resolutely much more, so let him, while he is thus casting one eye upon the difficulty of resisting it, cast the other upon the dismal consequences of being overcome by it. Let him look upon the slavery and the vassalage which it will subject him to here, and the ruin, the dreadful and never-ending torments, which it will infallibly bring him to hereafter. And then let but common sense be his counsellor, and it will quickly reconcile him to all the fatigues of watching and striving, and all the rigours of mortification; and even self-love itself will make him with both arms embrace all these austerities, and ten thousand more, rather than give up the combat, and lie down in eternal sorrow. Let him but once come to this positive, decretory result with himself: Either I must watch, and strive, and fence against this detestable sin and temptation, or I am lost; I must fight, or I must die; resist and stand it out, or perish and sink for ever. I say, let the case be but thus partially put, and driven home, and we may safely venture the greatest epicure and the most profligate sinner in the world, indeed any thing that wears the name of a man, to judge and choose for himself.

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2dly, Watching imports a diligent consideration and survey of our own strengths and weaknesses, compared with those of our enemy. Let a man know himself strong, before he ventures to fight; and if he finds himself weak, it will concern him either to fence or fly. Wise combatants will measure swords before they engage. And a discreet person will learn his own weaknesses rather by self-reflection than by experience. For to know one's self weak only by being conquered, is doubtless the worst sort of conviction.

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The greatest and most fatal miscarriages in all war are from these two things, weakness and treachery; and a subtle enemy will certainly serve his turn by one or both of them. And as it is too evident that weakness, as such, can be no match for strength, so strength itself must become a prey to weakness, where treachery has the management of it. Now let a man know, that he carries both these about him, and that in a very deplorable degree. And,

1st, For weakness; his heart is extremely unable to withstand or repel a sinful object suitably proposed. For so much as there is of corruption, whether natural or moral, in any one, so much there is of weakness. *Since thou dost these things, how weak is thy heart!* says the prophet Ezekiel, [xvi. 30](#). Sin is the greatest weakness in the world; and what a pitiful thing does it render the stoutest heart upon the assault of a mighty temptation! just like *a reed shaken with the wind*, or like a bulrush yielding and bending itself under the torrent of

a mighty stream; so far from being able to stem or conquer it, that it is not so much as able to shew its head.

This therefore let a man always think upon; let him still consider his weakness, and compare it with the wit and strength of him who comes against him; and if he duly weighs and considers this, he will find that weakness can have no other support in nature but watchfulness. He who is not strong enough to beat back a blow, ought to be quicksighted enough to decline it. But,

2dly, This is not all; there is not only weakness, but also treachery in the case; [Jer. xvii. 9](#), *The heart of man is deceitful above all things*: and so great is the deceitfulness of it, that the tempter never assails a man, but he is sure of a party within him. The poor man has not only one arm too feeble to resist his enemy, but (which is worse) he has the other ready to embrace him. And then, as it falls out in a siege, if weakness abandons the walls, and treachery opens the gates, the enemy must needs enter, and carry all before him.

Let a man therefore, in his spiritual warfare, draw another argument for vigilance from hence, that he carries something about him, which is like to do him more mischief than any thing that can annoy him from without; that he has a close, domestic, bosom enemy, more dangerous than the bitterest and most avowed adversary, whose open and professed defiances may pass for humanity and fair play, in comparison of the sly, hollow, and fallacious arts of the corresponding traitor within.

The truth is, in most of the transactions of human life, the cruellest and most killing blows, given both - to persons and societies, have been from some amongst themselves: hardly any government or constitution comes to confusion, but by some hungry vipers which were conceived and bred in her own bowels, and afterwards gnawed their way through them: hardly any church (though in never so flourishing a condition) is destroyed, but by the help of some wretches, who first *eat her bread*, (and perhaps wear her honours,) *and then lift up their heel against her*; suck themselves fat with her milk, and then stab her to the heart through the breast which gave it. Such oftentimes has been the fate of the greatest things. They have been ruined from within, which no force from abroad could shake. A bullet from an enemy often goes beside a man, and so spares him; but an imposthume in his head, or an apoplex, strikes him dead.

Now what I have here remarked by way of illustration, from such cases as these, let a man be assured that he is in danger of finding fatally verified upon himself in the spiritual war carried on by the tempter against him. For it is his own heart, his own false and base heart, which he is chiefly to watch against. The very instruments of watching (if not looked to) may sometimes betray him; and one eye had need to keep a watch over the other. And therefore, "God defend me from myself," ever was, and is, and will be a most wise and excellent petition.



Every man (as I may so speak) has a wolf in his breast, which (if not prevented) will be sure to devour him. Let him therefore take heed, and be wakeful; let him *neither give rest to his eyes., nor slumber to his eyelids*; for as they shut, so the tempter takes him, still directing his arrows rather by our eyes than by his own. This is our case; and surely if ever it concerns us to watch, it should be against an enemy, whose malice is such, that he will not, and whose nature is such, that he cannot sleep.

3dly, Watchfulness implies a close and thorough consideration of the several ways by which temptation has at any time actually prevailed either upon ourselves or others. He who would encounter his enemy successfully should acquaint himself with his way of fighting, which he cannot do but by observation and experience. Great captains should be good historians; that so, by recollecting the various issues and events of battles, they may see in several instances by what arts and methods the victory has been gained on one side, and by what failures and miscarriages it has been lost on the other. As for instance, such an army perished by ambuscade; such a battle was lost by such an oversight or fault in conduct; such a strong place, for want of men or courage, was took by assault and storm; such a castle was surprised by such a stratagem; and such an one was undermined, and had its walls laid flat with the ground, and delivered, but not given up; and lastly, another, by a surer way than all, sold.

In like manner, in this spiritual warfare, let the soul watch against an assault, against a surprise, and against the close, subterraneous actings of its rest less enemy; for ruin and destruction has entered by every one of these ways; and therefore take heed, that, whilst thou art expecting an assault, the enemy steals not upon thee with a stratagem, or over reaches thee by a parley, when he cannot overmatch thee by force. And thus a sagacious reflection upon what has been done, is the surest way to establish solid and certain rules what to do. For though persons vary, yet cases are generally the same, as being founded in the nature of things; and it is eternally true, that the same method will be always applicable to perfectly the same case, as things that are cast into the same mould will certainly take the same figure. Therefore, I say, let the watchful Christian consider what has been the issue and effect of the tempter's arts and methods both upon himself and others.

1st, And first for himself; every man does or should know the plagues of his own heart, and what false steps he has made in the several turns and periods of his Christian course; by what means he fell, and upon what rocks he split. I say, every rational, thinking, reflecting man must needs know this: for he who has the mind of a man must remember, and he who remembers what has fallen out, will be watchful against what may. He will carry his eye backward and forward, and on every side, when he knows that the danger moves so too. For though possibly in dealing with friends it may not always be thought so commodious to look backwards, (the rule of a great prince, one really great,) yet in dealing with enemies one would think it the concern of the stoutest soldiers to look backwards sometimes, for



fear an old, sly enemy should come behind him, and knock out his brains before he is aware; and it is certain that he will hardly be the wiser for that: for it will be too late to watch when his head is low, or to make use of his sword when he has no hand to hold it.

He who shall make true and accurate reflections upon his past life, and observe by what secret avenues and passes the temptation has entered and broke in upon him, shall find that there have been some sorts of things, persons, companies, and actions, which perhaps he never ventured upon in all his life, but he brought away matter of repentance from them, and it was well if God gave him the grace of it too.

Now let such an one look upon all these as so many engines planted against him by the Devil, and accordingly let him fly from them, as he would from the mouth of a cannon, or the breath of a pesthouse, assuring himself that the same poison will still have the same operation, and that the same stone which gave him so desperate a fall once, if he stumbles at it again, will be as apt to give him another; but then, if, notwithstanding such frequent and fatal trials, he will still run himself upon the same mischief which he has so terribly felt and fatally fallen by, he must know, that though his old enemy the Devil tempted him the first time, yet his worse enemy, himself, tempts him the second. And will that man pretend to watch, whom neither sense, smart, nor experience can awaken? who, while he feels blow after blow, will not be persuaded that he is struck? But when it comes to this, destruction must convince, where danger cannot admonish. But then,

2. In the next place; let the watchful Christian carry his eye from himself to others, and observe with what trick and artifice the tempter has practised upon them. And for this how many tragical stories and doleful complaints may you hear of persons, sometimes of great hope and reputation, yet after a while utterly fallen from both, and plunged into the very sink and dregs of all debauchery! And what account do men give us of so wretched a change? Why, of some you shall be told, that while they were under the eye and wing of their parents, they were modest, tractable, and ingenuous, sober in their morals, and serious in their religion. But alas! either they were first unhappily planted in some place of ill and vicious education, where the Devil and his agents infused such diabolical filth and poison into their hearts, that no discipline or advice, no sermons or sacraments, could ever after antidote or work it out.

Or if, through the singular mercy of Providence, such persons escape the first taint and venom of ill-breeding, and so thereby make one further step into the world, with all the advantages of a fair carriage and a fair esteem, yet generally not long after, by the insinuations of that old pander and trapper of souls, it is odds but you shall hear, that some of them either fall into villainous and lewd company, or light into loose and debauched families, or take to some ensnaring employments, which quickly wear off the first tenderness of their hearts, and bring them to a callous hardness and sturdiness in vice, till at length, stripped even of common civility, as well as abandoned by morality, they come to launch out into

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the deeps of sin, to drink and whore, and scoff at religion; and so by an uncontrolled progress through all the several stages and degrees of vice, commence at last fashionable and complete sinners.

Now when the watchful Christian shall stand by, and observe this dismal catastrophe of things, when he shall see that *proximus ardet Ucalegon*, surely it will be high time for him to look about him, and to conclude that the fire which has already burnt down his next neighbour's house will assuredly catch at his. Let him therefore watch, and stand upon his guard against all those forementioned encroaching mischiefs, which have made such a woful havoc of souls even before his eyes. Let him neither send son nor friend to the stews or the play house, banditti to Sodom or Gomorrah for education. Let him make no friendships or acquaintance with those, whom nothing will satisfy but to go to hell with them for company; let him have nothing to do with any house or family (though never so great and so much in power) where the Devil is majordomo, and governs all; and lastly, let him not follow any employment or course of life which may work immoderately upon any of his passions, which may swell his hopes, feed his lust, or heighten his ambition. In a word, let him look with horror upon all these high roads to hell, as the man did upon the passage to the lions' den, where he beheld with trembling the footsteps of innumerable who had gone in, but of none who had returned from thence. And this is truly to be watchful, for a man thus to secure and make good his own standing, by considering how and whereby others have fallen; no wisdom being so sure, and so much a man's own, as that which is bought; and none so cheap, and yet withal so beneficial, as that which is bought at another's cost.

4thly, Watchfulness implies a continual, actual intention of mind upon the high concern and danger which is before us, in opposition to sloth, idleness, and remissness. *Stand*, says the apostle, *having your loins girt about*, [Eph. vi. 14](#). The grand security of a warrior is to be always ready. While the bow is bent, it is still fit for execution; but if the enemy comes and finds that unbent, and the armour off, the man is destroyed and run down before he can either bend the one or put on the other; and then it will be to little purpose to cry out, Who would have thought this! For the fool's thought comes always too late, too late to rescue, though time enough to reproach him. There is ever some gross neglect in an army, when they come to have their quarters beaten up; for an enemy rarely ventures at this, but where he knows his advantage, and that one enemy can never take, till the other is fool enough to give.

We have a notable, but sad instance, of a supine, careless people, immersed in sloth and ease, and of the terrible fate which attended them in that condition. For in [Judges xviii. 7](#), it is said of the inhabitants of Laish, that *they dwelt careless, and after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and se cure, and had no business with any man*. But what follows? Why, some, it seems, were resolved to have business with them, though they would have none with others; for the children of Dan, we read, came, and in the midst of this profound quiet



and security fell upon them, burnt down their city, and put them all to the sword. The text says expressly of them in two several places, that they were secure; but the event shews that they were far from being safe.

In like manner, when David and Abishai came and found Saul with his troops round about him all asleep, (a most warlike and fit condition, you will say, for one upon the pursuit of an enemy,) 1 Sam. xxvi. 7, 8, Abishai thereupon thus bespeaks David; *This day hath God delivered thine enemy into thy hands: let me therefore smite him with the spear to the earth at once, and I will not smite him twice.* See here the danger of a drowsy warrior; but it was well for his royal drowsiness that he found him his true friend, whom he pursued as his mortal enemy: for had his old back-friends the Philistines found him in such a posture, they would hardly have left him so; but David would do as he came David, though never so ill used by Saul.

Another instance I have met with in story not much unlike this, of a certain general, who, going about his camp in the night, and finding the watch fast asleep upon the ground, nails him down to the place where he lay with his own sword, using this expression withal, "I found him dead, and I left him so." So that sleep, it seems, in such cases is some thing more than the image of death, and closes the eyes too fast ever to be opened again.

Accordingly in this spiritual warfare let us take heed, that our vigilant, active enemy find us not idle and unemployed. The soul's play-day is always the Devil's working-day, and the idler the man, still the busier the tempter. The truth is, idleness offers up the soul as a blank to the Devil, for him to write what he will upon it. Idleness is the emptiness, and business the fulness of the soul; and we all know that we may infuse what we will into an empty vessel, but a full one has no room for a further infusion. In a word, idleness is that which sets all the capacities of the soul wide open, to let in the evil spirit, and to give both him and all the villainies he can bring along with him a free reception and a full possession; whereas on the contrary, laboriousness shuts the doors and stops all the avenues of the mind whereby a temptation would enter, and (which is yet more) leaves no void room for it to dwell there, if by any accident it should chance to creep in; so that let but the course a man takes be just and lawful, and then the more active still the more innocent; for action both perfects nature and ministers to grace; whereas idleness, like the rust of the soul, by its long lying still, first soils the beauty, and then eats out the strength of it. In like manner the industry of the person tempted ever supersedes that of the tempter; so that as long as the former is employed, (as we hinted before,) the other can have but little to do, and consequently will be hardly brought to address himself to one, whose head and heart, whose eyes and ears, and all the faculties of his soul are actually taken up, and nothing at leisure to receive him; for few make visits where they are sure neither to be entertained nor let in.

Now the first, and generally the most fatal way, by which the tempter accosts a man, is by the suggestion of evil thoughts; for when the temptation is once lodged in the imagination,





he knows it is in the next neighbourhood to the affections, and from the affections that it is usually no long step to the actions, and that when it once reaches them, he is pretty sure that his work is then done. But now when the mind is thus intent upon greater and better objects, and the thoughts wholly taken up with no less a concern than that last and grand one of life and death, surely it is scarce possible for his impertinent stuff (and his temptations are no better) to find either audience or admittance; for the soul thus employed is really too busy to regard what he says, any more than a man who is contriving, studying, and beating his brain how to save his head, can be presumed to mind powdering his hair, or while he knows he is eating his last meal, to play the critic upon tastes; no doubt whosoever is so wholly taken up, can neither attend making nor receiving invitations, though the tempter, we own, is so much a courtier as to be always ready for both.

Let the wary Christian therefore remember, that he is *hoc agere*, that he is to keep all his hours, and, if possible, his very minutes filled up with business, and that grace abhors a *vacuum* in time, as much as nature does in place: and happy beyond expression is that wise and good Christian, whom *when the tempter comes he shall find so doing*; forasmuch as he who is thus prepared to receive the tempter, can not be unprepared to receive his Saviour; since, next to his soul, his time is certainly the most precious thing he has in the world, and the right spending of the one, the surest and most unfailing way to save the other. But,

5thly and lastly, Watching implies a constant and severe temperance, in opposition to all the jollities of revelling and intemperance. We have before observed the great analogy and resemblance between the carrying on the spiritual and the temporal warfare; and accordingly, as to this latter, we may observe further, how whole armies have been routed and overthrown, and the greatest cities and the strongest garrisons surprised and sacked, while those who should have been watching the motion of the enemy were sotted it at their cups, equally unmindful both of their danger and defence; for such debauches seldom happen either in camps or besieged towns, but their wakeful enemies quickly getting intelligence of the disorder, come upon them on a sudden, and find them, as the poet describes such, *somno vinoque sepultos*, that is to say, buried in a manner before dead, or rather already dead to their hands, and so scarce worthy to receive another and a nobler death from their enemies' sword; for when men have once drank themselves down, the enemy can have nothing more to do but to trample upon them.

How came Ahab, with an handful of men in comparison, to overthrow the vast, insulting army of Benhadad, the king of Syria? Why, we have an account of it [1 Kings xx. he and two and thirty kings his confederates were drinking themselves drunk in their pavilions, ver. 16](#), as if he had drawn together such a numerous and mighty army, headed by so many princes, only for the glorious and warlike expedition of carousing in their tents, or to fight it out hand to hand in the cruel and bloody encounters of drinking healths: but their success was answerable; they fell like grass before the mower, cut down and slaughtered without resist-



ance; and happy were those who had their brains so much in their heels, as to be sober enough to run away.

Accordingly in the management of our Christian warfare, so much resembling the other, (as I shew before,) it is remarkable, watching and sobriety are still joined together in the same precept; as [Luke xxi. 34](#), *Take heed to yourselves*, says our Saviour, *lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares*; which if it should, and chance to find men in such a condition, it would prove a sad conviction, that *men may eat and drink their own damnation* more ways than one. And the same in junction is repeated over and over by the apostles; as, *Let us watch and be sober*, says St. Paul, [1 Thess. v. 6](#). *And be ye sober, and watch unto prayer*, says St. Peter, [1 Pet. iv. 7](#). And again, *Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the Devil, like a roaring lion, goes about, seeking whom he may devour*, [1 Pet. v. 8](#). Of so peculiar a force is temperance against the fiercest assaults of the Devil, and so unfit a match is a soaking, swilling swine to encounter this roaring lion. Concerning which it is further worth our observing, that, as we read of no other creature but the swine which our Saviour commissioned the Devil to enter into, so of all other brute animals there are none so remarkable for in temperance as they, did not some, I confess, of an higher species very often outdo them.

In short, he who has an enemy must watch; but there can be no such thing as watching, unless sobriety holds up the head, forasmuch as without it sleeping is not only the easiest, but the best thing that such an one can do, as being for the time of his debauch like other beasts, always most innocent when asleep, though for the same reason also, I confess, more in danger of being caught and destroyed before he wakes.

Let that wise and circumspect Christian therefore, who would always have a watchful eye upon his enemy, with a particular caution take heed of all in temperance; and I account that intemperance, which immediately after eating and drinking unfits a man for business, whether it be that of the body or that of the mind; it renders a man equally useless to others and mischievous to himself; and we need say no more nor no worse of intemperance than this, that it lays him wretchedly open, even as open to throw out as to pour in, a kind of common shore for both; it makes his own tongue his executioner, sometimes by scandalous words, and sometimes by dangerous truths, and that which is the certain consequent of both, by procuring him dangerous enemies, unless possibly sometimes, to prevent a greater mischief, the brute cries *Peccavi*, arraigns himself, makes his folly his apology, and so forsooth proves himself no criminal, by pleading that he was a sot. But this is but one mischief of a thousand which intemperance exposes its miserable slaves to; for I look upon this vice as a kind of mother vice, and the producing cause of infinitely more, and sensuality (which is but another name for the same thing) as the very throat of hell, or rather that broad way, by which three parts of the world, at least, go to the Devil.

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And therefore, as the pious and prudent Christian warrior will be sure to keep himself far enough from such a traitor as downright excess, so to this purpose let him, as much as possible, shun all jovial entertainments, banquetings, and merry-meetings, (as they are called,) if they may deserve that name, which seldom fail to bring so sad an account after them; an account which will be sure to remain, when all bills are cleared, and all reckoning at the tavern paid off; so that every experienced guide of souls may truly pronounce of all such jollities what the best guides of health observe of some meats, that it is possible indeed with great care and niceness to order and use them so, that they shall do a man no hurt, but it is certain that they can never do him good.

And we may as confidently affirm, that no wise or truly great man ever delighted in such things. The truth is, wise men slight them, as the hinderances of business, and good men dread them, as dangerous to the soul. In a word, temperance is a virtue which casts the truest lustre upon the person it is lodged in, and has the most general influence upon all other particular virtues of any that the soul of man is capable of; indeed so general, that there is hardly any noble quality or endowment of the mind, but must own temperance either for its parent or its nurse; it is the greatest strengthener and clearer of reason, and the best preparer of it for religion, the sister of prudence, and the handmaid to devotion. But we need no further proof of the sovereign value of a strict and severe temperance than this, that the temperate man is always himself; his temperance gives him the constant command of his reason, and, which is yet better, keeps him under the command of his religion; it makes him always fit to converse with his God, and always fit and ready to answer the Devil, for it takes away the very matter of the temptation, and so eludes the tempter's design, for want of materials to work upon. And for this cause no doubt it was that our Saviour, [Matth. xvii. 21](#), told his disciples, that there were *some evil spirits not to be dispossessed but by fasting* as well as prayer; and I think we may rationally enough conclude, that whatsoever fasting casts out, temperance must at least keep from entering in. It is seldom that a temptation fastens upon a man to any purpose, but in the strength of some one or other of his passions; and this is a sure observation, that where temperance overrules the appetites, there reason is ablest to command the passions; and that till the former be done, the latter will be impracticable.

And thus I have shewn what is implied in the grand duty of watchfulness, the first thing prescribed in the text, to guard us against temptation; and many more particulars might (no question) be assigned as belonging to it; but I have singled out and insisted upon only five, which, for memory's sake, I shall briefly repeat and sum up in a few words.

As first of all, let a man throughly possess his mind with a full and settled persuasion of the devilish and intolerable mischief designed him by temptation; for unless he believes it to be such, he neither will nor rationally can watch against it.



In the next place, let him narrowly survey and inform himself of his own spiritual strength and weakness, and compare them with the forces and advantages of his enemy, and accordingly, by supporting weakness with watchfulness, let him be sure to fortify the weak side, and the stronger will be the better able to defend itself.

And then, thirdly, let him wisely reflect both upon his own experience and that of others; and so observing by what arts, methods, and stratagems the tempter has heretofore prevailed upon either, let him apply what is past to what is present, and so judging of one by the other, use his utmost vigilance, that the same trick be not trumped upon him more than once.

And to this purpose, let him, in the fourth place, have his mind continually intent upon the great and pressing danger he is surrounded with, that no sloth, negligence, or remissness of spirit, open a passage to the tempter, and so betray him like a fool, between sleeping and waking, into the hands of his cruel enemy; but let him have his danger still in his eye, and still look his enemy in the face, and that is the likeliest way to look him out of countenance.

And, fifthly and lastly, above all, let him practise the strictest temperance against all kind of excess in the use of any of God's creatures, which generally proves fatal and pernicious to the soul, frequently destroying, but always wounding it.

And to enforce these two last particulars more especially, I shall only add this one true and important remark, to wit, that of all the sins and enormities which the soul of man is capable of being ensnared by, I hardly know any (except those two of covetousness and ambition) but directly rush in upon it through those two broad, open, hellish gates of idleness and intemperance.

And thus from watchfulness pass we now to the other great preservative and remedy against temptation prescribed in the text, which is prayer; *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*; the reason and necessity of which duty is founded upon the supposition of this great truth, that it is not in the power of man to secure or defend himself against temptation, but that something above him must do it for him, as well as very often by him; and prayer is that blessed messenger between heaven and earth, holding a correspondence with both worlds, and by an happy intercourse and sure conveyance carrying up the necessities of the one, and bringing down the bounties of the other. This is the high prerogative of prayer, and by virtue of it every tempted person has it in his power to engage omnipotence itself, and every one of the divine attributes, in his defence; and whosoever enters the lists upon these terms, having the Almighty for his second, (let the combatants be never so unequal,) cannot but come off a conqueror. A state of temptation is a state of war, and as often as a man is tempted, he is put to fight for his all: danger both provokes and teaches to pray, and prayer (if any thing can) certainly will deliver from it. And to convince men, how in finitely it concerns them to fence against the danger threatened, by persevering in the duty enjoined, let them assure themselves, that there is not any condition whatsoever allotted to men in this world, but has its peculiar temptation attending it, and hardly separable from



it; for whether it be wealth or poverty, health or sickness, honour or disgrace, or the like, there is something deadly in every one of them, and not at all the less so for not killing the same way. Wealth and plenty may surfeit a man, and poverty starve him; but still the man dies as surely by the one as by the other. God indeed sends us nothing but what is naturally wholesome, and fit to nourish us, but if the Devil has the cooking of it, it may destroy us; and therefore the divine goodness has prescribed prayer as an universal preservative against the poison of all conditions, extracting what is healing and salutary in them from what is baneful and pernicious, and so making the very poison of one condition a specific antidote against that of another. In fine, let none wonder, that prayer has so powerful an ascendant over the tempter (as mighty as he is) when God himself is not only willing, but pleased to be overcome by it; for still it is the man of prayer, who *takes heaven by force*, who lays siege to the throne of grace, and who, in a word, is there by said to *wrestle with God*: and surely if prayer can raise a poor mortal so much above himself as to be able to wrestle with his Maker, it may very well enable him to foil the tempter. And therefore since both our Saviour himself, and his great apostle St. Paul, represent *prayer without ceasing* as so eminent a duty and so opportune a succour, we must needs own, that there cannot be a more pressing argument for a never-ceasing prayer than never-ceasing temptations; and therefore, whatsoever our personal strengths are, (as at best they can be but little,) it is certain, that our auxiliary forces and supplies must come in from prayer: in a word, I know no one blessing so small, which can be rationally expected without it, nor any so great, but may be obtained by it.

But then, to render it thus prevalent and effectual, there are required to it these two qualifications:

1. Fervency, or importunity.
2. Constancy, or perseverance.

1. And first for fervency. Let a man be but as earnest in praying against a temptation as the tempter is in pressing it, and he needs not proceed by a surer measure. He who prays against it coldly and indifferently gives too shrewd a sign that he neither fears nor hates it; for coldness is, and always will be, a symptom of deadness, especially in prayer, where life and heat are the same thing.

The prayers of the saints are set forth in scripture at much another rate, not only by *calls*, but *cries*, cries even to a *roaring* and vociferation, [Psalm xxxviii. 8.](#) and sometimes by *strong cries with tears*, [Heb. v. 7:](#) sometimes again by *groanings not to be uttered*, [Rom. viii. 26;](#) things too big for vent, too high for expression. In fine, he who prays against his spiritual enemy as he ought to do, is like a man fighting against him upon his knees; and he who fights so, by the very posture of his fighting shews, that he neither will nor can run away.



Lip-devotion will not serve the turn; it undervalue the very things it prays for. It is indeed the begging of a denial, and shall certainly be answered in what it begs: but he who truly and sensibly knows the invaluable happiness of being delivered from temptation, and the unspeakable misery of sinking under it, will pray against it, as a man ready to starve would beg for bread, or a man sentenced to die would entreat for life. Every period, every word, every tittle of such a prayer is all spirit and life, flame and ecstasy; it shoots from one heart into another, from the heart of him who utters, to the heart of him who hears it.

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And then well may that powerful thing vanquish the tempter, which binds the hands of justice, and opens the hands of mercy, and, in a word, overcomes and prevails over Omnipotence itself; for, *Let me go*, says God to Jacob, [Gen. xxxii. 26](#); and, *Let me alone*, says God to Moses, [Exodus xxxii. 10](#). One would think that there was a kind of trial of strength between the Almighty and them; but whatsoever it was, it shews that there was and is something in prayer, which he, who made heaven and earth, neither could nor can resist; and if this be that holy violence which heaven itself (as has been shewn) cannot stand out against, no wonder if all the powers of hell must fall before it. But,

2dly, To fervency must be added also constancy, or perseverance. For this indeed is the crowning qualification which renders prayer effectual and victorious, and that upon great reason, as being the surest test and mark of its sincerity; for, as Job observes, [Job xxvii. 10](#), *Will the hypocrite call always upon God?* No, he does it only by fits and starts, and consequently his devotional fervours are but as the returning paroxysms of a fever, not as the constant, kindly warmth of a vital heat: they may work high for a time, but they cannot last; for no fit ever yet held a man for his whole life.

Discontinuance of prayer by long broken intervals is the very bane of the soul, exposing it to all the sleights and practices of the tempter. For a temptation may withdraw for a while, and return again; the tempter may cease urging, and yet continue plotting: the temptation is not dead, but sleeps; and when it comes on afresh, we shall find it the stronger for having slept.

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And therefore our Saviour casts the whole stress of our safety upon continual prayer, by a notable parable, intended, as St. Luke tells us, [Luke xviii. 1](#), to shew that *men ought always to pray, and not to faint*; nothing being more fatally common than for men, not receiving immediate answers to their prayers, to despond and give over, and to conclude with themselves, *as good not at all as to no purpose*. A man perhaps labours under the tyranny of some vexatious lust or corruption, and being bitterly sensible of it, he sets upon it with watching and striving, reading and hearing, fasting and praying, and after all thinks he has got but little or no ground of it. And now what shall such an one do? Why, nothing else must or can be done in the case, but resolutely to keep on praying; for no man of sense who sows one day expects to reap the next: this is certain, that while any one prays sincerely against a temptation, he fights against it; and so long as a man continues fighting, though with his

limbs all battered, and his flesh torn and broken, he is not vanquished: it is conquest, in the account of God, not to be overcome. God perhaps intends that there shall be war between thee and thy corruption all thy days: thou shalt live fighting and warring, but for all that, mayest die in peace; and if so, God has answered thy prayers, I say, answered them enough to save thy soul, though not always enough to comfort and compose thy mind. God fully made good his promise to the Israelites, and they really conquered the Canaanites, though they never wholly dispossessed and drove them out.



And therefore, since God will still have something remain, to exercise the very best of men in this life, if thou wouldst have thy prayer against thy sin successful, in spite of all discouragements, let it be continual; let the plaster be kept on till the sore be cured. For prayer is no otherwise a remedy against temptation, than as it is commensurate to it, and keeps pace with it: but if we leave off praying before the Devil leaves off tempting, we cannot be safe; we throw off our armour in the midst of the battle, and so must not wonder at the worst that follows,

In a word, present prayer is a certain guard against present temptation; but as to what may come, we cannot be assured that it will keep us from it, or support us under it.

And thus much briefly for that other great preservative against temptation, *prayer*, together with its two prevailing properties, *fervency* and *perseverance*, from which all its success must come; for it is fervency in prayer which must charge the enemy, and perseverance in prayer which must conquer him.

And now, from the foregoing particulars thus discoursed of, we may learn the true cause (and it, is worth our learning) why so many men, who doubtless at sometimes of their lives resist and make head against temptation, and have many an hard struggle and conflict with their sins, yet in the issue are worsted by them, and so live and die under the power of them; and this is not from any insufficiency in watching and prayer, as means unable to compass the end they are prescribed for, but from this, that men divide between watching and prayer, and so use and rely upon these duties separately, which can do nothing but in conjunction. For watchfulness without prayer is presumption, and prayer without watchfulness is a mockery; by the first a man invades God's part in this great work, and by the latter he neglects his own. Prayer not assisted by practice is laziness, and contradicted by practice is hypocrisy; it is indeed of mighty force and use within its proper compass, but it was never designed to supply the room of watchfulness, or to make wish instead of endeavour.



God generally gives spiritual blessings and deliverances as he does temporal, that is, by the mediation of an active and a vigorous industry. The fruits of the earth are the gift of God, and we pray for them as such; but yet we plant, and we sow, and we plough, for all that; and the hands which are sometimes lift up in prayer, must at other times be put to the plough, or the husbandman must expect no crop. Every thing must be effected in a way

proper to its nature, with the concurrent influence of the divine grace, not to supersede the means, but to prosper and make them effectual.

And upon this account men deceive themselves most grossly and wretchedly, when they expect that from prayer which God never intended it for. He who hopes to be delivered from temptation merely by praying against it, affronts God, and deludes himself, and might to as much purpose fall asleep in the midst of his prayers, as do nothing but sleep after them. Some ruin their souls by neglecting prayer, and some perhaps do them as much mischief by adoring it, while, by placing their whole entire confidence in it, they commit an odd piece of idolatry, and make a god of their very devotions. I have heard of one, (and him none of the strictest livers,) who yet would be sure to say his prayers every morning, and when he had done, he would bid the Devil do his worst, thus using prayer as a kind of spell or charm: but the old serpent was not to be charmed thus; and so no wonder if the Devil took him at his word, and used him accordingly.

And therefore to disabuse and deliver men from so killing a mistake, I shall point out two general cases or instances, in which praying against temptation will be of little or no avail to secure men from it. As,

First, When a man prays against any sin or temptation, and in the mean time indulges himself in such things or courses as are naturally apt to promote an inclination to that sin, such an one prays against it to no purpose. Every sin is founded in some particular appetite or inclination, and every such appetite or inclination has some particular objects, actions, or courses, by which it is fed and kept in heart. Now let no man think that he has prayed heartily against any sin, who does not do all that he can, who does not use his utmost diligence, nay, his best art and skill, to undermine and weaken his inclination to that sin. To water an ill plant every day, and to pray against the growth of it, would be very absurd and preposterous. St. Paul, we know, complained of *a body of death*, and of *a thorn in the flesh*, and he prayed heartily against it. But was that all? No, he also *kept under his body, and brought it into subjection*, 1 Cor. ix. 27; being well assured, that unless the soul keeps under the body, the body will quickly get above the soul. If you would destroy a well intrenched enemy, cut off his provisions; and if you starve him in his strong holds, you conquer him as effectually as if you beat him in the field. But then again,

2dly, When a man prays against any sin or temptation, and yet ventures upon those occasions which usually induce men to it, he must not expect to find any success in his prayers. For would any man in his wits, who dreaded a catching distemper, converse freely with such as had it? that is, would he fly from the disease, and yet run into the infection? In like manner, do not occasions of sin generally end in the commission of sin? And if they generally end in it, must they not naturally tend to it? And if so, can men think that God ever designed prayer as an engine to counterwork or control nature, to reverse its laws, and

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alter the course of the universe, by suspending the natural efficiency of things, in compliance with some men's senseless and irrational petitions?

None trifle with God, and make a sport of sin, so much as those whose way of living interferes with their prayers; who pray for such or such a virtue, and then put themselves under circumstances which render the practice of it next to impossible; who pray perhaps for the grace of sobriety, and then wait daily for an answer to that prayer at a merry-meeting or the tavern. But the spirit of prayer is a spirit of prudence, a spirit of caution and conduct, and never pursues the thing it prays for in a way contrary to the nature of the thing itself.

Does a man therefore pray, for instance, against the temptation of pride or ambition? Let him not thrust himself into high places and employments, which he is neither worthy of nor fit for. Or does he beg of God to free him from the sin and slavery of intemperance? Let him break off from company; let him not give up his reason, his credit, his time, and his very soul, out of complaisance, (as fools call it;) but let him make his own conscience, and not other men's humours, the rule he lives by, and let him stick close to it. In a word, let him resolve against all the false pleasures of luxury, and then let him keep his resolution, and his resolution shall assuredly keep him.

And this is a plain, natural, and sure course, directly leading to the thing he prays for; but the contrary is both a paradox in reason, and an imposture in religion. And believe it, we shall one day give but an ill and lame account of our watching and praying, if, by an odd inversion of the command, all that we do is first to pray against a temptation, and afterwards to watch for it.

And thus I have given you two notable instances in which men pray against temptation without any success. In short, if a man cherishes and keeps up a sinful principle or inclination within, and shuns not the occasions of sin without, his prayers and his actions supplant and overthrow one another, and God will be sure to answer him according to what he does, and not according to what he prays.

And therefore let us take heed of putting a cheat or fallacy upon ourselves, a fallacy, *a bene conjunctis ad male divisa*, by dividing between these two great duties; and dividing, we know, in some cases, is in effect destroying, and it will prove so in this. Watchfulness and prayer are indeed principal duties, and of principal acceptance with God; but God accepts them only as he commands them, and that is, both together. God has joined them by an absolute, irreversible sanction; and what God himself has so joined, let not the Devil, or our own false hearts, presume to put asunder. But let us take this both for our direction and our comfort, that proportionably as we watch, God will answer us when we pray.

*To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

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## A DISCOURSE

### UPON

#### PROVERBS XXVIII. 26.

*He that trusteth in Ms own heart is a fool.*

THE great instrument and engine for the carrying on of the commerce and mutual intercourses of the world is trust, without which there can be no correspondence maintained either between societies or particular persons. And accordingly being a thing of such general and immediate influence upon the affairs of mankind, there is nothing in the management of which men give such great experiments either of their wisdom or their folly; the whole measure of these being taken by the world, according as it sees men more or less deceived in their transacting with others. Certain it is, that credulity lays a man infinitely open to the abuses and injuries of crafty persons. And though a strong belief best secures the felicity of the future life, yet it is usually the great bane and supplanter of our happiness in this; there being scarce any man who arrives to any sound understanding of himself or his own interest, till he comes to be once or twice notably deceived by such an one, of whom he was apt to say and think, according to the common phrase, *I would trust my very life with him*. And for this cause it is, that that nation, which seems justly of the greatest reputation for wisdom in the western world, has vouched it for a maxim, and lived by it as a rule, *to trust nobody*: whether in so doing they deal honestly and ingenuously they seem not much to care, being contented that it is safe.

But of all the fallacies and scurvy cheats put upon men by their trusting others, there are none so shameful, and indeed pernicious, as the baffles which men sustain by trusting themselves; which gives them but too frequent and sad an experience, that the nearest neighbours are not always the best friends. For none surely can be nearer to a man than himself, or be supposed so true and faithful to all his concerns, as the heart which beats in his own breast; yet Solomon, and a greater than Solomon, which is *experience*, gives us infallible demonstrations that it is much otherwise; and that the heart, of all things in the world, is least to be confided in, else certainly a man's trusting of it could not thus denominate him a fool.

The words contain in them a caution or admonition against men's trusting their own hearts, upon the account of that disgraceful imputation which such a trust or confidence will in the issue bring upon them; and consequently they very naturally present these two things to our inquiry.

- I. What is meant by a man's *trusting his heart*.
- II. Wherein the folly of it consists.

As for the first of these. For a man to trust his own heart, is, in short, for him to commit and resign up the entire conduct of his life and actions to the directions of it, as of a guide,



the most able and the most faithful, to direct him in all the most important matters which relate either to his temporal or his spiritual estate. For whosoever trusts another for his guide, must do it upon the account of these two qualifications to be found in him.

1st, That he is able to direct and lead him. So that in this case a man must look upon every dictate of his heart as an oracle; he must look upon it as speaking to him from an infallible chair, incapable of error or mistake in any thing which it proposes to him to be followed. In a word, he must take it for the unerring measure of truth, and the most certain reporter of the mind of God.

2dly, A guide must be such an one as not only certainly can, but also faithfully will give the best directions. For let a man know the way never so well, yet if he has a design not to impart that knowledge, but perhaps has more windings and turnings than the way itself, such an one is far from being a competent guide, and fit to be trusted, especially in a man's journey to eternity. So that for a man to *trust his heart*, is to take it for his best, his surest, and most unfailing friend, that will deal openly, clearly, and impartially with him in every thing, and give him faithful intelligence in all his affairs.

Having thus seen what is imported in a man's *trusting his heart*, we come now, in the next place, to see wherein the foolishness of it consists. For the making out of which, we are to observe, that there are two things which render a trust foolish, both of them to be considered with mutual relation to one another in this particular.

1st, The value of the thing which we commit to a trust.

2dly, The undue qualifications of the person to whose trust we commit it.

In both of which respects the confidence reposed by men in their own hearts will, in the procedure of this discourse, appear to be inexcusably foolish.

First of all, then, as for the thing which we commit to a trust. We do, in a word, trust all that to our hearts which is the consequent of our actions, either in reference to this world or the other. But to explicate and draw forth this general into the several particulars wrapt up and included in it; while we rely upon the guidance of our heart, we commit these three things to the mercy of its trust. 1. The honour of God. 2. Our own felicity here. 3. The eternal concernments of our souls hereafter. All of them certainly, either jointly or severally, things too great, too high, and too concerning, to be ventured upon the rotten bottom of a false and a deceiving heart.

We shall speak of each of them distinctly.

1st, First of all then, the honour of God is in trusted with the heart. So far as the manifestation of God's honour depends upon the homage of his obedient creature, so far it is at the mercy of our actions, which are at the command of the heart, as the motion of the wheels follows the disposition of the spring. God is never disobeyed, but he is also dishonoured. In every act of sin, dust and ashes flings itself in the face of the Almighty, and defies him so



far, that it puts him to the exercise of his vindictive justice, to prove his sovereignty and dominion over the bold offender.

Now God is capable of being honoured or dishonoured by us in three several respects.

1st, As he is our Creator. And is it not infinitely reasonable for clay to comply with the will of the potter? for such frail vessels as men are, to be subject to their almighty artificer? For did God make us, that we might spit in his face, and give us a being, that we might employ it to the dishonour of him who gave it? While a man sins, he seems to be his own creator, and to own an absolute independency, as to any superior, productive cause. For no understanding, judging rationally, would imagine, that a creature durst act against him, who first raised him into a capacity of acting, and that even out of nothing, and could crush him into nothing again every minute. So that the honour, by which we vouch and own God for a Creator, is a result of our actions, and the conduct of them is committed to the heart.

2dly, God is capable of being honoured by us as a Lord and Governor. *If I am a master*, says God, *where is my honour?* But can the rebellion of the subject declare the sovereignty of his prince? And is not every act of sin a blowing of a trumpet against Heaven, and a lifting up of a standard against the Almighty? Is it not the language of every offence, *We will not have God reign over us?* Does it not trample upon his laws, and puff at the power which should revenge the violation of them? And, on the contrary, is not the piety and obedience of our lives a proclaiming of God to be our King, and a recognizing of him for our great Master?

For this is an obvious and easy maxim of reason, that his servants we are to whom we obey. Obedience is but a clearer comment upon our allegiance. Why does God call upon us *to let our light shine before men*, did not the shining of that by reflection cast a shine and a lustre upon his own glory? When *men see our good works*, they are apt to glorify and acknowledge the supremacy and ruling hand of our Lord and Master in heaven.

Well it is, that it is not in the power of the most rebellious creature, by any sin and misbehaviour of his, to take away the power and prerogative of God, though it may for the present be able to eclipse, slur, and so obscure it. For surely this is done, in a great measure, by every broad violation of the divine law, which seems to attempt to persuade the rest of the world, that God is not so great and so mighty a potentate as he bears himself for; since the boldness of an offender, for the most part, speaks the weakness of the governor.

To advance the clearness of which by instance. Pray how did David own God in the relation of a king, when by his two great sins he caused the enemies of God to blaspheme? How did the sons of Eli own him in that respect, when by the insolence and impurity of their behaviour they caused all *Israel to loathe the offerings of the Lord?* All these actions were a deposing of God from his throne, so far as his throne was placed in the heart and awful esteem of his creatures. In this respect therefore is the heart intrusted with God's honour.



3dly, The honour of God also, considered as our Saviour and gracious Father, is trusted to the behaviour of the heart. For does not every sin defy, and every act of obedience honour God in this capacity? Would any one take him for a son, who lifts up his heel against him, to whom he should bend the knee? Or can any man be thought to own God for his Saviour, while he treats him with all the acts of hatred and hostility? By the behaviour of sinners towards God, one would think that they took him for an implacable tyrant and an enemy, for one who hated and maligned them, and consequently that the whole tenor of their life was but the acting of a continual revenge upon him for it. Natural ingenuity abhors the recompensing of a friend with all the indignities and contempts that exasperated nature passes upon an enemy. Every unworthy, sinful deportment therefore tends to beget and foment unbeseeming apprehensions of God in the mind of his creature. Now since the actions are governed by the heart, as the great dictator and commander in chief of all that a man either does or desires; it follows, that the heart has that great trust reposed in it, how far God shall receive the glory due to him, as he bears these three grand relations to us, of a Creator, a Governor, and a Saviour.

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2dly, The second thing a man trusts his heart with, is his happiness in this world. And this is two fold: 1st, Temporal. 2dly, Spiritual.

1st, And first he trusts it with all his temporal comforts and felicities. It is a most known truth, that most of the miseries and calamities which befall a man in this life, break in upon him through the door of sin; frequent experience shewing us, how easily men sin themselves into disgrace, poverty, sickness, loss of friends, and the like; they are the direct consequents of a man's personal misdemeanours. David's adultery and murder made his enemies scorn, and his friends desert him, [Psalm xxxviii. 11](#). It is said of them, *that they stood aloof off*; they flew from him as from a living, walking contagion. Intemperance ends in poverty, and a full belly makes an empty purse. Luxury enters upon and spoils the soul through the ruins of the body, and the bed of uncleanness prepares for the bed of sickness.

But now in all these instances of sin, which maul the sinner with these temporal disasters, the heart is the first moving spring and principle; they all flow from the prevarications of this. It is this that is the source and the fruitful womb of all the mischiefs that render this life miserable, were there no after-reckonings in another.

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How cautious is every man almost of trusting his neighbour with his mind or with his estate; because he knows how much such an one thereby gets the command, and the dispose of his happiness; for he fears lest he may by this means betray his honour, and disgrace him, or undermine his estate, and ruin him; not considering how much greater a suspicion he ought to have of his own heart and temper, which may, through the unhappy bent and propensity of it, push him on upon those courses which shall irrecoverably dash him in all his outward enjoyments; and then that shall sound forth his infamy, and trumpet out his disgrace louder than the tongue of the most merciless reviler can; that shall betray him into

captivity to some expensive vice, which shall grind his fortunes to powder, and leave him as bare as the oppression of a domestic tyrant, or the invasion of a foreign enemy.

Such an one ventures into lewd company, and perhaps is thereby surprised into the dishonours of intemperance, and so departs with a wound upon his reputation. Another is confident, and steps into the occasion of sin, which perhaps by degrees entangles, and at length draws him into the paths of vice and uncleanness, and that sullies the clearness of his fame, and withal makes a breach upon the serenity and content of his mind, so that he is brought to taste but little even of these temporal felicities.

Now, how comes this to pass? Why, all through the treachery of his heart, which persuaded him of those strengths which he never really had, which told him what command he had of himself under those circumstances of temptation, which yet upon trial he was unable to contest with, and which would needs make him believe, that he might *touch pitch, and yet not be defiled*, venture upon the occasions of sin, and yet stand secure from the sin itself. These fraudulent dealings of the heart are those impostures which plunge men into infinite calamities and inconveniences, such as embitter the enjoyment even of common life itself.

2dly, There is yet another part of a man's happiness in this world, which is spiritual, which his heart is also intrusted with, and that is, the peace of his conscience; a thing, the enjoyment of which is so valuable, and the loss so dreadful, that though it stands here reckoned but for a part of a man's felicity, yet it is of that nature, that it may well pass for the whole: for what can a man truly enjoy while he wants it? and what can he much feel the want of, while he enjoys it? It is in effect a man's whole, entire happiness; such a spreading universal influence has it upon all his thoughts, actions, and affections. For while a man carries his acquitting, absolving sentence within him, and a transcript of the pardons of Heaven deposited in his own breast, what storm can shake, what terror can amaze, what calamities can confound him! It is he alone who can look death and danger in the face with a rational unconcernment; for he has that which enables him to look him, who is infinitely more terrible than all these together, even a just, an holy, and sin-revenging God, in the face.

On the other side, when the glass of a man's conscience shall shew him a God frowning, a law cursing, wrath and vengeance preparing, and all the artillery of heaven and earth making ready against him, what can he think, say, or enjoy, in this condition? Even as much as Cain enjoyed, who lived a vagabond, and a terror to himself; or as Belshazzar, whose joints loosed, and whose knees smote together with horror and consternation. But now, what is this which puts the scourge into the hand of conscience, thus to lash and torment a man? Why, what is it, but the guilt of sin, which arms and envenoms it against the sinner? And is not sin the product of the sinner's heart? Is not this the dung hill where that snake is bred, and which gives warmth to the cockatrice's egg, till it be hatched and brought forth



to the sinner's confusion? It is the heart which sows dissension between a man and his conscience, by enticing and ensnaring him into those sins, the guilt of which lies grating and gnawing upon his mind perpetually; so that he lives with pain, and dies with horror, passes his days ill, and ends them worse. In every thing that a man's heart prompts him to, it casts the die, whether he shall be happy or miserable for ever after. An unwholesome draught or an unwholesome morsel may make a man a pining, languishing person all his days. And it is the treachery of his appetite which inveigles him into the mischief, which cheats, and abuses, and by deceitful overtures traps him into a perpetual calamity.

3dly and lastly, The other great thing which a man intrusts his heart with, is the eternal concernment of his soul hereafter. For as a man's heart guides him, so he lives; and as he has lived in this world, so he must be rewarded in the other; and the state a man passes into there is eternal and unchangeable; there is neither retreat from misery, nor fall from happiness. And if so, how vast an acquisition is future glory, and how invaluable a loss goes along with damnation! Better is it that a man had never been born, than that he should miscarry in that his grand and last concern. But it is the behaviour of his heart, which must decide whether he shall or no; for if his heart deceives and seduces him into the fatal ways of sin, upon promise of pleasure, it is a thousand to one but the man holds on his course with his life, till those present pleasures determine in everlasting pains. How many are now in hell, who have nothing to charge their coming into that woful place upon, but an hard heart, a voluptuous heart, a vain, seducing, and deluding heart, which failed them in all the specious shews and promises it made them, which varnished over the ways of sin and death, which spread the paths of destruction with roses, and made them venture an immortal soul upon an appearance, and build eternity upon a fallacy. This has been that which has kindled the unquenchable flames about their ears, which has tied those millstones, those loads of wrath, about their necks, which have sunk them into endless destruction.

*Keep thy heart with all diligence*, says the wise man. Why? Because, says he, *out of it are the issues of life*, [Prov. iv. 23](#). It is that in which a man's life is bound up. It is the portal of heaven and hell; and a man passes to either of them through his own breast. For what think we of murders, adulteries, thefts, blasphemies, and the like? Are not these the sins which have filled the mansions of the damned, and slain so many millions of souls? and whence come they, but from the heart? [Matt. xv. 19](#). This is the *puteus inexhaustus*; here are the provisions made for the place of torment, here is laid in the fuel for the *everlasting burnings*; one bottomless pit emptying and discharging itself into the other.

And thus I have shewn these things, which a man intrusts his heart with; namely, the honour of God, his happiness in this world, the peace of his conscience, and his eternal happiness hereafter; things, one would think, too great to be trusted with any one, since in all trust there is something of venture; and these things are of too high a value to be ventured any where, but where it is impossible a man should be deceived. God only, who made the

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soul, is fit to be trusted with it. For if a man is deceived here, where shall he have reparation? or what can a man gain, when he has once lost himself?

But however, if we should trust these great things in such hands as were liable to a possibility of failing, yet surely we should secure the next degree, that at least there might be no probability of it; and that we would repose our confidence in one who was infinitely unlikely to deceive or put a trick upon us; so that our confidence might be prudent at least, though not certain and infallible. But now we shall find the heart far from being such a thing, but, on the contrary, so unfit to be trusted, that it is ten thousand to one but it betrays its trust; so that as the folly of such a trust has been seen in the first ingredient, namely, the high and inestimable worth of the thing committed to a trust; so the same will appear yet more abundantly from the next, which is the undue qualifications of the party who is trusted: and the heart of man will be found to have eminently these two ill qualities utterly unfitting it for any trust.

1. That it is weak, and so cannot make good a trust. 2. That it is deceitful, and so will not.

As for its weakness, this is twofold.

1st, In point of apprehension; it cannot perceive and understand certainly what is good.

2dly, In point of election; it cannot choose and embrace it.

1st, And first for the weakness of the heart, in respect of its inability to apprehend and judge what is good. This it is deplorably defective in. For though it must be confessed, that there are these common notions concerning good and evil writ in the hearts of men by the finger of God and nature; yet these are blurred, and much eclipsed by the fall of man from his original integrity: and if they were not impaired that way, yet they arrived not to their full natural perfection, but as they are improved and heightened by virtuous practices. Upon which account the apostle ascribes not a discerning of good and evil to every one having the natural sense of it, but to such only as *have their senses exercised*, Heb. v. 14. Every man has an innate principle of reason; but it is use and cultivation of reason, that must enable it actually to do that, which nature gives it only a remote power of doing.

This being so, it is further evident, that all men may, and most do, neglect to improve those notions naturally implanted in them, whereupon they can with no more certainty trust to their direction, than they can rely upon an illiterate ploughman to be instructed by him in philosophy. The *light within is darkness* in many, and but as the dusk and twilight in all; and consequently its directions are but imperfect and insufficient, and dangerous to be relied upon.

2dly, The heart of man labours under as great weakness in point of election: it cannot choose what the judgment has rightly pitched upon. For, supposing that the understanding has done its part, and given the heart a faithful information of its duty, yet how unable is the heart, after all, actually to engage in the thing so clearly laid before it! It may indeed see



the beauty, the lustre, and the excellency of an action, but still it is so much a slave to base, inferior desires, that it cannot practise in any proportion to what it approves. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. That excellent description of a good judgment enslaved to a vile appetite, is an exact account of the movings of man's heart in most of its choices.

It cannot look its fawning affections in the face, and deny them any thing: but, like a man captivated with the sottish love of a woman, he is ready to sacrifice his reason, his interest, and all that he is worth, to her imperious will. When the affections come clamouring about the heart, that presently yields, and is not able to stand out against their assaults, to frown upon their demands, and behave itself boldly and severely in the behalf of virtue and reason. Most men in the world, who perish eternally, perish for prevaricating with themselves, and not living up to the judgment and resolves of their own knowledge; they miss of their way to heaven, not because they do not know it, but because they know it, and will not choose it. The heart is *as unstable as water*, and therefore *it cannot excel*. It hardly bears up against its corruptions so far, as to dare to purpose what is good; but if it does, inconstancy quickly melts down its strongest purposes, and the next temptation scatters its best resolutions, as the sun chases away the morning clouds, and drinks up the early dew.

It is the just shame and blush of the frailty of our condition, to consider how hardly we come to fix up on good, and then how quickly we are unfixed; how weak we are to intend, and how much weaker to perform. Impotence and change, like a spiritual palsy, have so seized all the faculties of our souls, that when we reach forth our hand to duty, and endeavour to apply the rule to practice, it trembles and shakes, and is utterly at a loss how to do any thing steadily and exactly, and reach the nice measures of Christian morality. The rule serves only to upbraid the action, which always comes short of it. *Since thou doest these things*, says God, *Ezek. xvi. 30*, *how weak is thy heart!* how unable to resist a flattering mischief and a tempting destruction! It resigns up itself upon every summons of great desire. It quits its throne, lays aside its sceptre, forgets its sovereignty, takes the bit into its mouth, and is willing to be rid.

And thus much for the first ill quality unfitting the heart of man to be trusted, namely, its weakness; and that both in apprehension, that it cannot understand, and also in election, that it cannot choose and embrace what is good.

2. The other ill quality rendering the heart unfit to be trusted, is its deceitfulness, which does so abound in the breasts of all men, that it would pose the acutest head to draw forth and discover what is lodged in the heart. For who can tell all the windings and turnings, all the depths, the hollownesses, and dark corners of the mind of man! He who enters upon this scrutiny, enters into a labyrinth or a wilderness, where he has no guide but chance or industry to direct his inquiries, or to put an end to his search. It is a wilderness, in which a man may wander more than forty years; a wilderness, through which few have passed into the promised land. If we should endeavour to recount all the cheats and fallacies of it, no

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arithmetic can number, or logic resolve them; their multitude is so vast, and their contexture so intricate.

Yet, to discover and give us some acquaintance at least with the treachery and unfaithfulness of our hearts, I shall endeavour to lay open and set before you some of those tricks and delusions, which may convince us how unlikely the heart is to make good any trust which we can repose in it, in relation to our spiritual affairs.

And these delusions shall be reduced to these three sorts,

1. Such as relate to the commission of sin.
2. Such as relate to the performance of duty.
3. Such as relate to a man's conversion, or change of his spiritual estate.

And first for those which relate to a man's committing of sin; of this sort there are three.

1. First of all, a man's heart will drill him on to sin, by persuading him that it is in his power to give bounds to himself, as to the measure of his engaging in that sin, according as he shall think fit. If his conscience is affrighted, when a great and a foul sin shall offer itself to his consideration, his heart will tell him, though the commission of it be indeed dangerous, yet he may at least indulge himself in the thought of it, act it upon the scene of his fancy, and so reap the fantastic pleasure of it in conceit and imagination. And if it comes to be listened to in this its first crafty and seemingly modest proposal, it will advance a little further, and tell him, that he may also please himself with the desires of it; and so, by letting his desires work, his corruption grows at length so inflamed, that the man is troublesome and uneasy to himself, till it breaks out into actual commission: and when he is wrought up to such an eagerness and impatience, his heart will then enlarge his commission, and tell him that it is no great matter if he ventures to commit the sin he so much desires for once, since it is in his power to retreat and give over when he pleases, and so is in no danger of being forced to continue in it, which alone proves damnable. But now, being brought thus far, sin has a greater interest in his desires than before, and easily persuades the man to act it yet once more, and then again and again, till he is insensibly brought under the power of his sin, and held captive in a sinful course; from which he is not able, by all the poor remainders of his own reason, to redeem and disentangle himself; he has brought himself into the snare which holds and commands him. So that if the free preventing grace of God (which yet no man can certainly promise to himself in such a condition) does not interpose, and knock off his bolts and shackles, the man must die a prisoner and a slave to his sin, which will provide him but a sad entertainment in the other world.

And now when a man is thus disposed of into his eternal state, with what sadness must he needs reflect upon the cursed artifices of his deluding heart? He little imagined that his destruction could have entered upon him through the narrow passage of sinful thoughts and desires. But had he considered the spreading, insinuating, and encroaching nature of sin, how that by every step it makes into the soul it gets a new degree of possession, and



thereby a proportionable power; had he considered also how few men are destroyed at once, but by gradual underminings, and that the greatest mischiefs find it necessary to use art and fallacy to make their approach indiscernible by the smallness of their beginnings; I say, had he considered all these things by an early caution, (which his false heart would be sure never to prompt him to,) he might have prevented his fatal doom, and avoided the blow by suspecting the hand that designed it.

2dly, The heart of man will betray him into sin by drawing him into the occasions of it. Certain it is, that every thing may be the occasion of a sin to man, if it be abused; but some things have a more direct and natural connection with sin than others, so that a man is under a greater danger of being surprised when he falls under such circumstances, than under others. For surely some companies, and some ways of living are such, that, upon the frailty of corrupt nature, a man may as well expect to come dry out of a river, as to come clear and unpolluted out of them. Let a man accustom himself to converse with the intemperate, the profane, and the lascivious, and something of the venom and contagion of these sins will rub itself upon him, do what he can. The very breath of infected and polluted persons is itself infectious.

But there is one notable way above the rest, by which the hearts of most men supplant them, and that is in drawing them on to something unlawful, by causing them to take their utmost scope and liberty in things lawful. The difference between lawful and unlawful is often very nice, and it is hard to cut the hair in assigning the precise limits of each of them.

But surely it cannot be safe for any man still to walk upon a precipice, to stand upon an indivisible point, and to be always upon the very border of destruction. It is true indeed, that he who stands upon the very brink of the sea, stands as really upon the land, as he who is many miles off; but yet he is not like to stand there so long as the other. There are many companies, sports, and recreations, (I shall not mention particulars,) no doubt in themselves very lawful; but yet they may chance to prove the bane of the bold user of them. For alas! the heart is unable to bear them without warping. Sin is not in the house, but it lies at the door; and it is hard for so near a neighbourhood not to occasion a visit. There are some diversions nowadays much in request to gratify the palate, the eating of which it is possible a man may time and regulate so, that they shall do him no hurt, but it is certain that they can never do him any good. Though in the diet of the soul I am afraid the observation is much stricter, and that it is hard to assign any thing, which should only not do us good, without also doing us some hurt.

And therefore let no man trust his glozing heart, when it tells him, what hurt is there in such and such pleasures, such and such recreations? for this very discourse of his heart is a shrewd sign, that they are like to prove hurtful and pernicious to him. And I shall venture to state and lay down this for a rule; that be an action or recreation never so lawful in itself, yet if a man engages in it merely upon a design of pleasure, (as I believe most do,) it is ten

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to one but it becomes a snare to that person, and that he comes off from it with a wound upon his conscience, whether he is always sensible of it or no. Let a man's heart say what it will, I am sure the Spirit of God in these cases recommends to every pious person caution, diffidence, and suspicion. It bids him secure himself by keeping out of harm's way. He that escapes a danger is fortunate, but he that comes not into it is wise.

3dly, The heart of man will betray him into sin, by lessening and extenuating it in his esteem. Than which fallacious way of dealing, there is nothing more usual to the corruption of man's nature. In the judgment of which, great sins shall pass for little sins, and little sins for no sins at all. For moats may enter, where beams cannot; and small offences find admittance, where great and clamorous crimes fright the soul to a standing upon its guard, to prevent the invasion.

Now the heart, if it does not find sins small, has this notable faculty, that it can make them so; for it has many arts to take off from, and to diminish the guilt of them. As either by calling them infirmities, such as creep upon men by daily and unavoidable surprise, and such as human weakness cannot possibly protect itself against. When the truth is, the heart is willing to excuse itself from performing duty, and from resisting sin, by representing difficulties for impossibilities, and accounting many things difficult, because it never so much as went about them; whereas a vigorous endeavour would remove not only the supposed impossibility, but even the difficulty also of many actions and duties, which mere laziness has represented to the mind as impracticable.

Certain it is, that the blow given by original sin to man's nature has left a great weakness upon it, much disabling it as to the prosecution of what is good; but yet many impotencies, or rather averseness to good, are charged upon a natural account, which indeed are the effects only of habitual sins, sins that by frequent practice have got such firm hold of the will, that it can very hardly advance itself into any action of duty. Some have accustomed themselves to swear so often, that they cannot for bear it upon every light occasion. Some have lived intemperately so long, that they cannot refrain from their whore and their cups; and then if either their conscience checks them, or others reprove them, presently their answer is, God forgive them, it is their infirmity, they cannot help it.

But in this they are wretchedly deceived; for it is not infirmity, but custom, custom took up, and continued by great presumption and audaciousness in sin, inducing them to trample upon a clear command, for the gratifying of a lust or a base desire.

Temptation also is another topic, from which the heart will draw a plausible argument for the extenuation of sin. Men will confess that they sin; but how can they forbear, say they, when the Devil pushes them on headlong into the commission of what is evil? And the Devil being so much stronger than they, how can such weak creatures resist so mighty an adversary? But in this also the heart plays the sophister, and shews itself like the Devil, while it pleads against him: for God himself assures us, that the Devil may be resisted, and that so

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far as to be put to flight: and besides this, the freedom of man's will is a castle that he cannot storm, a fort that he cannot take. If indeed it will surrender itself upon vain and treacherous proposals, its destruction is from itself, and it is deceived, but not forced into sin.

Now so long as a man's heart can possess him with an opinion of the smallness of any sin, it will certainly have these two most pernicious effects upon him.

1st, Antecedently, he will very easily be induced to commit it; nor will he think the eternal happiness of his soul concerned to watch against it; for he cannot imagine but that it will be as soon pardoned as committed, or that it can make any great breach between God and him. His conscience he finds not much startled or alarmed at it, and so he concludes that it must needs be fair weather without doors, because he finds it so within.

2dly, The other malignant effect it will have upon a man consequently to sin, is, that he will scarce repent of it, scarce think it worthy of a tear. By which means, he is actually under the wrath of God, which abides upon every man during his impenitence. The consequence of which to him, who has a spiritual sense of things, must needs be very dreadful. For every sin unrepented of may provoke God by withdrawing his grace to lay the sinner open to the commission of grosser; which how far they may waste his conscience, and where they may end, he knows not, but has cause at the thought of it to tremble.

It is incredible to consider what ground sin gets of the soul, by the heart's extenuating and under valuing of it, and that in the very least and most inconsiderable instance. For by this means it is easily let into the soul, and seldom thrown out. No caution is applied beforehand, nor repentance after. And surely it cannot but be dangerous to leave the world with any one sin unrepented of.

And thus much for that first sort of fallacies, which the heart of man is apt to put upon him, namely, such as relate to the commission of sin. The

Second sort is of those that relate to the performance of duty; of which kind are these two.

1st, A man's heart will persuade him that he has performed a duty, when perhaps it is only some circumstance of it that has been performed by him. Prayer is one of the prime and most sovereign duties of a Christian; and many there are, whose consciences will by no means suffer them to omit it. But how few are there who perform it spiritually, and according to the exact measures of Christian piety! For some do it *to be seen of men*, and to approve themselves to the eye of the world, that they are not altogether heathens, and destitute of all sense of religion. Some use to pray, as the Athenian orators made harangues before the people, for applause and ostentation of parts, styling a readiness of speech, and a great flow of words, *the inspirations of the Spirit*.

The corrupt heart of man naturally rests in the *opus operatum* of every duty; and the conscience having lost much of its first tenderness and sagacity, is willing to take up with the outside and superficies of things; to feed upon husks, and to be contented with the mere

shew and pageantry of duty. There is no doubt, but the pharisee, who made that boasting prayer, or rather bravads before God, [Luke xviii. 14](#), went home abundantly satisfied in himself, though not at all justified before the Seer of hearts. And it is as little to be doubted, but that the rest of his brethren, who did their alms in the concourse of the multitude, and proclaimed their charity with trumpets, were full of an opinion of their own piety; though all that they gave was but a sacrifice to their own pride, and a slavish service to the designs and humours of an insatiable ambition; yet still their flattering hearts echoed back to them all those acclamations of the ignorant, deceived rabble, and questionless told them, that they were the most pious, liberal, and generous persons in the world.

The like instances may be given in the fastings and mortifications used by many people; which, no question, rightly managed, are huge helps to piety, great weakeners of sin, and furtherances to a man in his Christian course. But every man who is driven from his meat by a proclamation, does not therefore keep a fast in the sight of God, whatsoever his foolish heart may persuade him. Every man who wears sackcloth, and uses himself coarsely, does not therefore perform any one true act of mortification upon his sin. The man catches at the shadow, but misses of the substance of the duty. His heart misreckons him; and therefore, when he comes to rectify his account by the measure God takes of things, he finds that in all his fastings and corporal austerities, he has done indeed a great deal of work, but little duty.

2dly, A man's heart will make him presume to sin with greater confidence, upon the account of duty performed. I have heard of some, who, after they had discharged their consciences in confession, used to rush with so much quicker an appetite into sin; as if former scores being cleared, they were now let loose to sin upon a fresh account: and experience shews, that many take heart to sin, after they have performed some strict duty, thinking that that has set them so much beforehand with heaven, that they may well be borne with, if they make some little excursions in the indulgence of their sinful and voluptuous appetites. If they have been for any time in the school of virtue, tied up under its severe disciplines, they think they may well claim some time for play, and then vice shall be their recreation.

This is the corrupt, perverse reasoning of most hearts; this they insist upon as a satisfactory argument to themselves, though infinitely sottish and contradictory to the very nature and design of religion. For as the apostle most justly and rationally upbraids the Galatians in that significant reproof of them, [Gal. iii. 3](#), *What? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* Can piety fit a man for that which crosses and destroys piety? Can any man make this an argument why he should be vicious, because he has been virtuous? or loose and voluptuous, because he has been some time strict and abstemious? Yet this is the brutish discourse of most men's minds; who think it all the reason in the world, that they should relax and unbend, after they have for some time abridged themselves by the severe courses of religion.



Though the truth is, upon a right and due estimation of things, such persons never performed any one truly pious and religious action, who had such principles and persuasions habitually resting upon their hearts, but were utterly void of the very notion, much more of *the power of godliness*. This is evident; for he who performs a duty from a principle of true piety, is so far from being weary of going on in the same course, that he finds his desires thereby quickened, and his strength increased, for a more vigorous prosecution of it; and no man changes his course, and passes into contrary practices, but because he finds in himself a loathing and a dislike of his former: than which there is not a more certain and infallible sign of a false, rotten, hypocritical heart, an heart abhorred and detested by God; for if we loathe God's commands, we may be sure that God as much loathes our performances, as being the forced effects of compulsion, not the natural, genuine, and free emanations of the will. He therefore who thinks the merit of any pious action performed by him may compound for a future licentiousness, abuses himself and his religion; for he makes a liberty to sin the reward of piety, than which there cannot be a greater and a more pestilent delusion. And thus much for the fallacies of the heart relating to the performance of duty.

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3. The third sort relate to a man's conversion, and the change of his spiritual estate; of which I shall mention two.

1. A man's heart will persuade him that he is converted from a state of sin, when perhaps he is only converted from one sin to another; and that he has changed his heart, when he has only changed his vice. This is another of its fallacies, and that none of the least fatal and pernicious. A man has perhaps for a long time took the full swing of his voluptuous humour, wallowed in all the pleasures of sensuality, but at last, either by age or design, or by some cross accident turning him out of his old way, he comes to alter his course, and to pursue riches as insatiably as formerly he did his pleasures, so that from a sensual epicure he is become a covetous miser; a worthy change and conversion indeed. But as a river cannot be said to be dried up, because it alters its channel; so neither is a man's corruption extinguished, though it ceases to vent itself in one kind of vice, so long as it runs with as full and as impetuous a course in another.

Suppose, amongst the Jews, a man had passed from the society of riotous and debauched livers, from the company of publicans and sinners, to the strictness and profession of the pharisees, this man indeed might have been termed *a new sinner*, but not *a new creature*; he had changed his intemperance or his extortion for the more refined sins of vainglory and hypocrisy; he had changed a dirty path for one more cleanly, but still for one in the same road. One man perhaps goes to a town or a city through the fields, another through the highway, yet both of them intend and arrive at the same place, and meet and shake hands at the same market. In like manner a man may pass as surely to hell by a sin of less noise and infamy, as by one more flaming and notorious. And therefore he that changes only from one sin to another is but the Devil's convert; and the whole business of such a conver-

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sion is but a man's altering of the methods of his ruin, and the casting of his damnation into another model.

2. A man's heart will persuade him, that a cessation from sin is a plenary conquest and mortification of sin. But a king is a king even while he is asleep, as well as when he is awake, and is possessed of a regal power even then when he does not exercise it. So sin may truly reign where it does not actually rage, and pour itself forth in continual gross eruptions.

There are intervals of operation, vicissitudes of rest and motion, in all finite agents whatsoever; and therefore it is not to be expected, but that the sinner may have some relaxation from the drudgery of his sin, and not be put every minute to *obey the flesh in the lusts thereof*.

Nay, there may be a very long forbearance; and yet as there may be a truce with an enemy, with whom there is no peace; so no man can conclude his corruption vanquished, because for the present it is quiet. For such a quietness there may be upon several accounts. As partly mere lassitude and weariness; for what epicure can be always plying his palate? what drunkard always pouring in? Nature is not sufficient for the commands of sin without some respite and breathing time. Partly also may sin be quiet out of design; for sin must still bait its hook with pleasure, and pleasure consists in the interchanges of abstinence with enjoyment, without which it would quickly pass into loathing and satiety. And the Devil knows that these interposals of forbearance do but whet the appetite to a greater keenness of desire, when the object shall come again before it.

How miserably then does that man's heart deceive him, when it tells him that his sin lies wholly prostrate and dead, when it only lies still, and stirs not for some time! But alas! *it is not dead, but sleepeth*; for when the soul is hereby made so confident as to quit its guard, sin will quickly step forth and take advantage to act a sorer and a sharper mischief upon it than ever.

And thus I have given an account of some of those deceits and fallacies which the heart of man is apt to circumvent him by; and God knows that it is but some of many. For infinite are the impostures that lie couched in the depths and recesses of this hollow and fallacious thing. So that all that I have said is but a paraphrase, and that a very imperfect one, upon that full text of the prophet Jeremy, *xvii. 9, That the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* It is a depth not to be fathomed, and a mystery never thoroughly to be understood. And being so, I suppose it appears by this time how unavoidable that consequence and deduction is made by Solomon here in the text, *that whosoever trusts it is inexcusably a fool*. For what principles of ordinary prudence can warrant a man to trust a notorious cheat, and that also such an one as he himself has been cheated and deceived by? There is no man whose experience does not tell him to his face that his heart has deceived him; and no wise man will be deceived so much as twice by the same person.





Now the imputation of being a fool, is a thing which mankind of all others is the most impatient of, it being a blot upon the prime and specific perfection of human nature, which is reason, a perfection which both governs and adorns all the rest. For so far as a man is a fool, he is defective in that very faculty which discriminates him from a brute. Upon which account, one would think, that this very charge of folly should make men cautious how they listen to the treacherous proposals coming out of their own bosom, lest they perish with a load of dishonour added to that of their destruction. For if it is imaginable that there can be any misery greater than damnation, it is this, to be damned for being a fool.

But this needs not be our lot, if we can but prevail with ourselves to take that conduct which God has provided us for our passage to our eternal state; a conduct which can neither impose upon us, nor be imposed upon itself, even the holy and eternal Spirit of God, the great legacy which our dying Saviour left to his church, whose glorious office and business it is to lead such as will be led by him into all truth.

*To whom therefore, with the Father and the Son, be ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*



## A DISCOURSE

UPON

### 1 JOHN III. 3.

*Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

THE apostle in this chapter endeavours to comfort the saints from a consideration of the transcendent greatness of God's love, which appeared in those excellent privileges that accrued to them from it. The first of which the saints enjoy even in this life, namely, to be *the sons of God*, the adopted children of the Almighty, to be admitted into the nearest and dearest relation to the great Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* The second great privilege is to be enjoyed by the saints in the life to come, and that is no less than a likeness to Christ himself in glory; a participation of those grand, sublime prerogatives that Christ is endowed withal. *We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him in glory,* [ver. 2](#). Now because this great enjoyment was as yet future, and so visible but at a distance, and consequently not so pregnant and bright an argument of comfort, he tells them, that the saints could view it as present in the glass of their hopes, by which they could draw from it a real comfort, with an actual fruition.

It is indeed the nature of earthly comforts to afford more delight in their hopes than in their enjoyment. But it is much otherwise in heavenly things, which are of that solid and substantial perfection, as always to satisfy, yet never to satiate; and therefore the delight that springs from the fruition of those is still fresh and verdant; nay, we may add this yet further, that the very expectation of heavenly things, if rational and well grounded, affords more comfort than the possession and enjoyment of the greatest earthly contents whatsoever.

The apostle having thus told them of their hope, and what a real hold it took of the things hoped for, that he might prevent mistake, and dash presumption, tells them also, that an assured hope of future glory did not at all lead men to present security, but was so far from ministering to sloth, that it did rather quicken and excite them to duty; so that *he that has this hope in him purifieth himself*: he does not lie still, and acquiesce in this, that he shall be happy and glorious in the world to come, and therefore in the mean time forgets to be virtuous in this; but it raises him to a pursuit of a more than ordinary strain of duty and perfection; *he purifies himself, even as Christ is pure*; this is his hope, this is his design; he expects to be like Christ in the brightness of his glory, and therefore he exerts his utmost diligence to resemble him in the purity of his life too.

Now before we proceed any further, there are two things that offer themselves in the very entrance of the words, and require some resolution. As first,

1. Is it possible for any man to *purify himself*? Is it not the Spirit of God that must work in us *both to will and to do*? For are we not naturally *dead in trespasses and sins*? And *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean*? How then can so great a work be ascribed to us?

To this I answer, that we must distinguish of a twofold work of purification.

1. The first is, the infusing of the habit of purity or holiness into the soul, which is done in regeneration or conversion; and in this respect no man living can be said to purify himself. For in this he is only passive, and merely recipient of that grace, that the Spirit of God, the sole agent, infuses into him; antecedently to which we are said to be *dead in trespasses and sins*, and consequently in this condition can by no means contribute to this work, so as to *purify ourselves*.

2. The other work of purification is the exercising of that habit or grace of purity which a man received in conversion; by the acting or exercising of which grace he grows actually more pure and holy. And in this respect a man may be said in some sense to purify himself, yet not so as if he were either the sole or the prime agent in this work; for God is the principal agent, who first moves us, and then we act and move, and are said to be coworkers with God; and so are these words to be understood. God, without any help or procurement of our own, first gave us a talent, which afterwards we improve, yet not that entirely by our own strength, but by his assistance. In short, that which has been said in explication of this thing, amounts to no more than that known and true saying, That God who made, and since converted, that is, new made us, without ourselves, will not yet save us without ourselves. And thus much for the first query.

2. But, 2dly, admitting that a man may purify himself in the sense mentioned, yet can he do it to that degree as to equal the purity of Christ himself? *to purify himself, even as he is pure*? of whom it is expressly said, that *he is fairer*, that is, holier and purer, *than the sons of men*, and that the Spirit has *anointed him with the oil of gladness*, that is, with all divine graces, *above his fellows*.

To this also I answer, that this term, *even as*, denotes here only a similitude of kind, not an equality of degree; that is, he that hopes for glory, gets \ his heart purified with the same kind of holiness that is in Christ, though he neither does nor can reach it in the same measure of perfection; he gets the same meekness, the same spiritual mindedness and love to the divine precepts, that is, the same for kind; forasmuch as there is no perfection in Christ's humanity, but the very same for kind is also to be found in his members, though, we confess, in a much lower degree; as the same kind of blood that runs in the head runs also in the hand and in the foot, though as it is in the head, it is attended and heightened with quicker and finer spirits, than as it is diffused into the inferior members. But yet further, though we should grant that he that has this hope in him pursues not only after the same kind, but also after the same degree of purity that is in Christ, yet it follows not hence that



he ever attains to the same; for we must distinguish of holiness as it is absolutely perfect in the pattern, and as it is imperfect in our imitation.

These things being thus cleared off, I cannot perceive any thing more of difficulty in the words; the prosecution of which shall lie in the discussion of these two things.

I. To shew what is implied and included in a man's *purifying of himself*, here spoken of in the text.

II. To shew how the hopes of heaven come to have such an influence upon the effecting of this work.

And first for the first of these. *To purify* is a term of alteration, and imports the removal of the filth or pollution of any thing, by introducing the contrary qualities of purity or cleanness. Now that which a man is to remove, and to purify himself from, is sin, in which there are two things to be carried off by a thorough purification.

1. The power of sin.
2. The guilt of sin.

As for the first, the purifying of ourselves from the power of sin, I shall shew,

1. Wherein it consists.
2. By what means it is to be effected. It consists of these three things.

1. A most serious and hearty bewailing of all the past acts of sin, by a continually renewed repentance. Every day, every hour, will afford fresh matter for a penitential sorrow; for sin will still increase and multiply; so that Christ has taught us a daily prayer for the forgiveness of sins; and the very nature of the thing will teach us to mingle prayer with humiliation; since to pray God to forgive that for which we are not humbled, is but further to provoke him, and to procure a penalty instead of a pardon. We are told that *the righteous man falls seven times a day*; and I am sure if he falls by so often sinning, he cannot rise but by as often repenting.

Some are apt to deceive themselves, and to think that once repenting is sufficient for all their sins; so that when this is done, they think themselves be forehand with God for all the sins that they shall commit for the future: but such must know, that repentance is still to follow sin; and he that does not repent continually, never repented so much as once truly. What needed the prophet Jeremy to have wished his *head a fountain* in order to his *weeping for sin*, did not that require such a stream as was to follow without intermission? A fountain of sin may well require a fountain of sorrow. For repentance cannot be effectual, but as it bears some proportion to sin; and unless one be as continual as the other, there is no proportion between them.

It is an excellent thing so to manage our spiritual accounts, as not to let our debts run on too far. That soul that is careful to make scores even between God and itself by a daily fresh repentance, has a mighty advantage over its corruption, and will by degrees weary it out; the very thought of a subsequent humiliation is enough to embitter and discommend the sweetest offers of sin.

Repentance has a purifying power, and every tear is of a cleansing virtue; but these penitential clouds must be still kept dropping, one shower will not suffice; for repentance is not one single action, but a course. We may here compare the soul to a linen cloth; it must be first washed, to take off its native hue and colour, and to make it white; and afterwards it must be ever and anon washed, to preserve and to keep it white. In like manner the soul must be cleansed first from a state of sin by a converting repentance, and so made pure, and afterwards, by a daily repentance, it must be purged from those actual stains that it contracts, and so be kept pure. It is an enjoyment and a privilege reserved for heaven, *not to need repentance*; and the reason of this is, because the cause of it will then be taken away. But here this pitch of perfection is not to be hoped for. We cannot expect that God should totally wipe these tears from our eyes, till he has taken all sin out of our hearts. Till it be our power and privilege not to sin, it is still our duty to repent.



2dly, The purifying ourselves from the power of sin consists in a vigilant prevention of the acts of sin for the future. If we would keep our garment clean, it is not sufficient to wash it only, unless we have also a continual care to keep it up from drailing in the dirt. After the use of healing physic, by which we are freed from our distemper for the present, we must also use preventing physic, to se cure us from the returns of it hereafter. Repentance bewails those sins that a man has committed, and bewares of those which as yet he has not; it has a double aspect, looking upon things past with a weeping eye, and upon the future with a watchful. I know the bare suppressing of sin from breaking out into act, is not able to mortify or extinguish the power; yet in this sense, at least, it may be said to weaken it, that it hinders it from growing stronger. For a restraint of ourselves from the committing of sin bereaves the power of sin of that strength that it would certainly have acquired by those commissions. Sin indeed, while it lies quiet, still is sin, but when it rages in outward actions, it is more sinful. While a beast is kept in, and shut up, he still retains his wild nature; but when he breaks out and gets loose, his wildness is much more hurtful and outrageous.

Now for the keeping of sin from an actual breaking out, a man should observe what objects and occasions are apt to draw it forth, and accordingly avoid them. When there are some impressions of holiness made upon the heart, if we yet venture it amongst the allurements of enticing objects, those will quickly again deface them. As when we have stamped a piece of wax with the print of a seal, if we put the wax to the fire again, that will presently melt out the impression.



He that would keep the power of sin from running out into act, must restrain it from conversing with the object. For when that has once cast the bait before the heart, so that the heart begins to look upon it, and by degrees to delight in it, and to feed its imagination with pleasure, then let a man beware, for the tempter is then hammering and framing out a sinful action; sin is then conceiving; and if we do not fright it by humiliation, so far as to make it

prove abortive, it will certainly bring forth; and we know that when the heart has brought forth sin, sin will be sure to bring forth death.

In vain therefore is any endeavour to purify the heart, unless we watch. A Christian should be always in a posture of caution. If the former part of our life has been stained, let us endeavour to keep that, at least, that is to come, pure and unpolluted. And then, though abstinence from sin cannot of itself take away the power of it, yet it will put the heart in a good preparedness for grace to take it away. On the contrary, every new actual transgression exceedingly heightens our account. For this is most certainly true, that whatsoever adds to the guilt of sin, increases also the power.

The purifying ourselves from the power of sin consists in a continual mortifying and weakening the very root and principle of inherent corruption. The power of sin is properly the root, and the actual commission of it are the branches; and our purifying work cannot be perfect, unless, as we lop off the branches, so we also strike at the root. There is a principle of sin conveyed to us from our very being, and it continues with us as long as our being, that is, in this state of mortality. And there is no man living but has wrapt up in his nature the seeds of all impurity; so that in this respect we are said to have *a body of sin*, [Rom. vi. 6](#). Sin is not only a scar or a sore, cleaving to one part or member, but it has incorporated itself into the whole man. In respect of which also it is said, *How can he be clean that is born of a woman?* [Job xxv. 4](#). A man draws so much filth from his very conception and nativity, that it is now made almost as natural and essential to him to be a sinner, as to be a man.

Now the chief work of purification lies in the disabling and mortifying this sinful faculty. The power of godliness must be brought into the room of the power of sin. A man must plant all his endeavours for the battering down of this strong hold. A man must be perpetually striving as for his life, and for eternity, to get the conquest over his inbred enemy. All ways and courses must be taken to pluck out this core, or the wound cannot be cured. All endeavours to purify ourselves from actual sins, unless we also work out the principle of sin, is only to wash and scour the outside of the vessel, while the inside is full of all kind of filth and noisomeness. As long as this remains in us, it will be fighting; and if it be not mortified, it will be victorious. It is continual and restless in all its workings, *like the troubled sea, continually casting forth mire and dirt*. Every day it casts new defilements upon the soul, fresh pollutions upon the conscience. Justly therefore are we to direct our purifying work against this, forasmuch as this is the cause, and, as it were, the parent of all those actual abominations that swarm in our lives.

Having thus shewn the particulars of which this work of purifying ourselves from the power of sin does consist, I come now to the next thing, which is, to shew the means by which it is to be effected: three I shall mention, as having a most sovereign force and influence for the compassing of this great work.



1. The first is, with all possible might and speed to oppose the very first risings and movings of the heart to sin; for these are the buds that produce that bitter fruit; and if sin be not nipped in the very bud, it is not imaginable how quickly it will shoot forth. There be sudden sallies out of inherent corruption in these first motions, which, though at first they are not so easily prevented, yet may be easily suppressed; and these may be working in the heart, when there is no noise of any outward enormity in the actions. The fire may burn strongly and vehemently, though it does not flame. The bees may be at work, and very busy within, though we see none of them fly abroad.

Now these sins, though they may seem small in themselves, yet are exceedingly pernicious in their effects. These little foxes destroy the grapes as much or more than the greater, and therefore are to be diligently sought out, hunted, and killed by us, if we would keep our hearts fruitful. We should deal with these first streamings out of sin, as the Psalmist would have the people of God deal with the brats of Babylon; *happy shall he be who taketh and dasheth those little ones against the stones*. And with out doubt most happy and successful will that man prove in his spiritual warfare, who puts on no bowels of pity even to his infant corruptions, but slays the small as well as the great; and so not only conquers his enemies by opposing their present force, but also by extinguishing their future race. The smallest children, if they live, will be grown men; and the first motions of sin, if they are let alone, will spread into great, open, and audacious presumptions.

But if a man is always upon his guard, and, as it were, stands perdu at his heart, to spy when sin begins to peep out in these first inclinations, and then with much force and courage beats them back again; the very power of sin will by degrees languish; for as frequent working improves the power, so a long disuse and intermission of working will insensibly weaken it. The first motions of sin lie nearest to the faculty itself; whereupon he who vigorously fights against these, must by consequence also wound that; as he that strikes that part that is next to the root, by the same blow weakens also the root itself.

As often therefore as a man finds his corruption renewing its assaults, let him set upon it with a renewed opposition. As often as that stirs, let him strike, at no hand suffering it to get ground of him; for every motion of it not resisted gives it an advance. And we know that after it has made some progress, it is then harder to be subdued than at the first repulsed. When an enemy is but rising, it is easy to knock him to the ground again, but when he is up, and stands upon his legs, he is not then so easily thrown down. It is less difficult to hinder and prevent, than to stop and restrain the course of sin.

2dly, A second way to purify ourselves from the power of sin, is to be frequent in severe, mortifying duties, such as watchings and fastings, the use of which directly tends to weaken the very vitals of our corruption. For they are most properly contrary to the flesh; and whatsoever opposes that, proportionably weakens sin. Yet still I recommend not these practices as if they were any ways meritorious, or of themselves able to subdue sin, but only

as spiritual instruments which God sanctifies, and the Spirit often employs and makes successful about this great work. And so far as, under God, they are instrumental and conducing to the taming of the flesh, they have been of singular use to the saints of God in all ages: and those who are not in some measure acquainted with the exercise of such austerities, it is to be feared, are but novices in piety, and strangers to the arts of mortification. He that would lay the axe to the root of his sin must use it coarsely, and strike it boldly. Courtship to an enemy is but cruelty to ourselves. Better were it for a man to restrain an unruly appetite, and to stint himself in the measures of his very food and his sleep, than by a full indulgence of himself in these, to pamper up his corruption, and give it strength and activity to cast off all bonds, till at length it becomes unconquerable. Sin has now so insinuated itself into our nature, that we cannot freely cherish that, but we must by unhappy consequence nourish and feed our sin too. For which cause it is, that such as have had experience what it is to walk with God, and what are the chief impediments to such a course, have been always fearful of pleasing the flesh, though in things lawful or indifferent. And every man's conscience can best resolve him, whether or no a full allowance of himself, even in things not forbid, has not indisposed him to a more near and spiritual converse with God. He that would maintain such a strict communion with himself, must bind that excellent advice of the apostle upon his heart, [Gal. v. 13](#), *not to use liberty for an occasion to the flesh*. For did but men well consider how apt the flesh is to encroach upon the spirit, and how ready to turn every thing into an occasion of sin, they would keep it under with the severest discipline, and deny it in all its importunate cravings, as knowing that they have to deal with a rebel, who is rather bound up and restrained than thoroughly subdued and conquered; and therefore, when he has opportunity, wants not will to renew his rebellion. It is not in vain, therefore, that the apostle, [Rom. xiii. 14](#), warns men *not to make provision for the flesh*. For God knows that is too apt to provide for itself, and to prog and purvey for the satisfaction of its vile desires.

There are two things in the body, both of which contend to have its service, and the interest of both is totally different, namely, *sin* and *the soul*. And if we would break the dominion that sin usurps over it, and make it subservient to the operations of the soul, and the spiritual commands of the understanding, we must be sure to rule and feed it like a sturdy slave, inure and accustom it to flesh-displeasing performances. And a constant, faithful practice of this will at length enfeeble the forces of sin, and keep them from making an insurrection against the spirit. Our bodies are unhappily made the weapons of sin; and therefore, if we would overcome that, we must, by an austere course of duty, first wring these weapons out of its hands.

3dly, A third way to purify ourselves from the power of sin, is to be frequent and fervent in prayer to God for fresh supplies of sanctifying grace. There is no conquest to be had over





sin but by grace, nor is grace any way so effectually to be procured as by prayer. For surely, if we would obtain any thing from a prince, it must be by way of petition.

We find a defiling power of sin within us; and perhaps we strive against it, but still it is strong; we contend with it, but still it prevails. And now what should we do, but call in help and assistance from above? *Come unto me*, says Christ, *all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you ease*. Christ calls upon us to come, and I am sure the best way is to come upon our knees; we cannot make our addresses to him more acceptably than by humble, frequent, and importunate supplications.

It is a truth both clear from scripture, and ratified by the experience of all believers, that there was never any one, were his entanglements in sin never so great, his corruptions never so raging, but if he was enabled to wait upon mercy in an earnest, constant use of prayer for the removal of his sin, he came in the end a conqueror, the issue was glorious, and the success comfortable. Prayer is the only expedient that we have always in readiness to procure help in the time of spiritual distress. To describe the virtue, efficacy, and excellency of this duty, is not the business of the present discourse; but thus much I shall say of it, that it is that which enables every believer like a prince to prevail with God. It has (as I may speak with reverence) a kind of omnipotence; for it even overpowers him that is almighty. It is this that has often tied God's hands from the inflicting of judgments, and opened them for the bestowing of blessings.

And now, if this be the force and energy of prayer, when we find the power of sin to grow violent, and the workings of it, by any strength of our own, irresistible, why do we not fly to this remedy, and cry mightily to God, that he would *create clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us*? Why do we not make that request to our Saviour that the leper did; *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*? It is but one word of his power dispensing out purifying grace, and we shall be pure. And surely Christ could not but vouchsafe a gracious answer to every such petition. For if he was of such tenderness and compassion as to heal the leprosy and distemper of the body upon asking, do we not think that he will be much readier to commiserate and heal the dangerous, loathsome leprosy of the soul, which is sin, upon the vehement entreaties of a sincere heart? Certainly he that was so tender to the bodies of men, must needs be much more compassionate of their souls.

Now we are to observe yet further, that as prayer is of such sovereign force to procure sanctifying grace from God, so there is a certain cleansing, purifying power in the very duty itself. And we may appeal to the experience of any pious person, who has accustomed himself to be earnest and spiritual in prayer, whether he has not found his heart in a very different frame and posture after the performance of it, from what it used to be at other times. How have his inclinations to sin been, as it were, stupified, the dislike of his corruption renewed! How has his love to holiness been inflamed! How much stronger has he found himself to encounter a temptation! I believe there is none who ever kneeled down to this

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duty with a good heart, and performed it well, but rose up with a better. If he came to it with desires against his sin, he went away with strength added to his desires.

Whosoever, therefore, would give a speedy despatch to his corruption, let him continually engage his prayers against the power of it. It is reported of Alexander, that when he was beset round by his enemies, and sorely wounded, he yet bore up his spirit, and fought upon his knees. So a Christian, when all the powers of darkness do encompass him, and his sin has given him many wounds, yet if he can but hold out praying and fighting against it upon his knees, he may in the end vanquish and overcome it. A praying heart naturally turns into a purified heart.

And thus much for the first thing from which we are to purify ourselves, namely, the power of sin, as also for the ways and means by which it is to be effected. From all which we gather how vain and successful that method of purifying the heart from sin must needs prove, which is used by two sorts of men.

1. Such as direct their humiliations and penitential cleansings only to some great actual sin that has broke out in their lives, but in the mean time never to the power and root of sin, which is the cause of all these actual rebellions. These indeed are most conspicuous in our lives, but the other is the most dangerous and hurtful to our souls. For this is that spring-head that lies under ground, and sends forth all those streams of impurity that flow in our actions. Now that should most humble us that most provokes God; but it is the sinful frame of the heart, the inclination and disposition of the whole man to wickedness, that renders us so loathsome in the pure eyes of God. We indeed take more notice of a sinful action than of a sinful heart, because that does more vex and disquiet us, and is more visible to ourselves and others. But when repentance is sincere and effectual, where it resolves to kill sin, it gives the first stab to the heart. Thus David, an excellent pattern of true penitence, when he would humble himself for those actual sins of murder and adultery, he pursues them to their first cause, which was his sinful nature, [Psalm li. 5](#). *In sin*, says he, *was I conceived*; and [verse 10](#), he cries out for *a clean heart*. Those actual sins he made only occasions to discover to him the sin of his nature. They indeed made a greater noise and clamour in the world, and procured him more trouble and shame from men; but he knew that the power of sin in his heart was most odious, and consequently most deserved his sorrow.

From whence we may take an excellent infallible note of difference between a forced, unsincere, and a true, spiritual repentance; that the first humbles us chiefly for actual sins, and that because they are the most troublesome; the latter humbles us chiefly for the sin of our hearts and natures, and that because it is the most sinful. For that it is so, is clear from this consideration; because the sin of our natures makes our state and condition sinful, which a bare actual transgression does not. No wonder, therefore, if many poor deluded persons, who spend much time and labour to purify themselves from sin, yet after all are not purified. For they fasten their repentance upon some one actual sin, but overlook the

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power. But certainly this is to take the wrong way, and to labour in the fire; this is to plaster a pimple upon the cheek or face, while a malignant humour is to be purged out of the whole body. For still it is the body of sin, and not so much this or that particular sin, that is like to be the sinner's destruction. It is not a sore or a bruise upon his hand or arm, though perhaps that may pain him most, but it is his consumption, though it does not so much pain him, that endangers his life. Whosoever therefore would be thoroughly purified, must begin the work here, strike at the foundation, stop the fountain, block up that place from whence sin receives all its supplies; otherwise all labour, all sorrow and humiliation, will avail nothing. For after it has beat back sin from one place, it will break out in another; when one actual sin disappears in a man's life, another will presently start forth. The only sure and infallible way of destroying the effect, is first to remove the cause.

2dly, The other ineffectual course to purify the heart from sin is, when men rest only in complaints of the evil of their natures, without a vigorous endeavour to amend the particular enormities and misdemeanour of their actions. This course is directly contrary to the former, which pursues the reformation of particular actions, without regarding the purification of the heart. Both ways are equally unsuccessful. For to purge the actions before the heart, is preposterous; and to complain of the heart, with out reforming of the actions, is vain and superfluous. Many complain and cry out very tragically of the wretchedness of their hearts, their total indisposition to all good, and exceeding propensity to all sin. All which may be very true. But while they are complaining of their hearts, perhaps they freely allow themselves in some known course of disobedience, they frequently renew wounds upon their consciences by the repeated commission of actual sin; and this surely is not the way ever to get themselves purified; thus to complain of sin, and to commit sin; to confute their complaints by their practices; to cry out of the body of sin, and yet to take no notice of actual impieties; this is both a provocation of God, and an abuse to themselves. Their business is to turn complaint into endeavour, words into action, and vigorously to oppose every particular temptation, to stifle every sinful suggestion. For certainly none ever truly hated the sinfulness of his heart, who did not in some measure reform the sinfulness of his actions.

I proceed now to the other thing from which we are to purify ourselves, and that is, the guilt of sin. In speaking of which I shall shew,

1. Negatively, what cannot purify us from the guilt of sin. 2. Positively, what alone can.

1. For the first of these. No duty or work within the power and performance of man, as such, is able to expiate and take away the guilt of sin. In this matter we must put our hands upon our mouths, and be silent for ever. He that thinks and attempts by his own goodness to satisfy God's justice, does by this the more incense it; and by endeavouring to remove his guilt, does indeed increase it. His works of satisfaction for sin are the greatest sins, and stand most in need of the satisfaction of Christ.

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We know how miserably the deluded papists err in this point, how they wander in the maze of their own inventions about works of penance, deeds of charity, pilgrimages, and many other such vain ways, found out by them to purge and purify guilty consciences. A man perhaps has committed some gross sin, the guilt of which lies hard and heavy upon his conscience; and how shall he remove it? why, peradventure, by a blind devotion; he says over so many prayers, goes so many miles barefoot, gives so much to holy uses, and now he is *rectus in curia*, free and absolved in the court of heaven. But certainly the folly of those that practise these things is to be pitied; and the blasphemy of those that teach them to be detested. For do they know and consider what sin is? and whom it strikes at? Is it not the breach of the law? Is it not against the infinite justice and sovereignty of the great God? And can the poor, imperfect, finite services of a sinful creature ever make up such a breach? Can our pitiful, broken mite discharge the debt of ten thousand talents? Those that can imagine the removal of the guilt of the least sin feasible, by the choicest and most religious of their own works, never as yet knew God truly, nor themselves, nor their sins; they never understood the fiery strictness of the law, nor the spirituality of the gospel.

Now though this error is most gross and notorious amongst the papists, yet there is something of the same spirit, that leavens and infects the duties of most professors; who, in all their works of repentance, sorrow, and humiliation for sin, are too, too apt secretly to think in their hearts, that they make God some amends for their sins. And the reason of this is, because it is natural to all men to be self-justiciaries, and to place a justifying power in themselves, and to conceive a more than ordinary value and excellency in their own works, but especially such works as are religious.

But this conception is of all others the most dangerous to the soul, and dishonourable to God, as being absolutely and diametrically opposite to the tenor of the gospel, and that which evacuates the death and satisfaction of Christ; for it causes us, while we acknowledge a Christ, tacitly to deny the Saviour. And herein is the art and policy of the Devil seen, who will keep back the sinner as long as he can from the duties of repentance and humiliation; and when he can do this no longer, he will endeavour to make him trust and confide in them. And so he circumvents us by this dilemma: he will either make us neglect our repentance, or adore it; throw away our salvation by omission of duty, or place it in our duties: but let this persuasion still remain fixed upon our spirits, that repentance was enjoined the sinner as a duty, not as a recompence; and that the most that we can do for God cannot countervail the least that we have done against him.

2. In the next place therefore, positively, that course which alone is able to purify us from the guilt of sin, is by applying the virtue of the blood of Christ to the soul by renewed acts of faith. We hold indeed, that justification, as it is the act of God, is perfect and entire at once, and justifies the soul from all sins both past and future; yet justification and pardon-



ing mercy is not actually dealt forth to us after particular sins, till we repair to the death and blood of Christ by particular actings of faith upon it; which actings also of themselves cleanse not away the guilt of sin, but the virtue of Christ's blood conveyed by them to the soul; for it is that alone that is able to wash away this deep stain, and to change the hue of the spiritual Ethiopian: nothing can cleanse the soul, but that blood that redeemed the soul.

The invalidity of whatsoever we can do in order to this thing is sufficiently demonstrated in many places of scripture; [Job ix. 30, 31](#), *If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.* He that has no thing to rinse his polluted soul with, but his own penitential tears, endeavours only to purify himself in muddy water, which does not purge, but increase the stain. In Christ alone is that *fountain that is opened for sin and for uncleanness*; and in this only we must wash and bathe our defiled souls, if ever we would have them pure. [1 John i. 7](#), *The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* It is from his crucified side that there must issue both blood to expiate, and water to cleanse our impieties. Faith also is said to *purify the heart*, [Acts xv. 9](#). But how? Why certainly, as it is instrumental to bring into the soul that purifying virtue that is in Christ. Faith purifies, not as the water itself, but as the conduit that conveys the water. Again, [Rev. i. 5](#), Christ is said *to have washed us from our sins in his own blood.* There is no cleansing without this. So that we may use the words of the Jews, and convert an imprecation into a blessing, and pray, that *his blood may be upon us and upon our souls*; for it is certain that it will be one way upon us, either to purge or to condemn us. Every soul is polluted with the loathsome, defiling leprosy of sin. And now for the purging off of this leprosy, if the Spirit of God bids us go and wash in the blood of Christ, that spiritual Jordan, and assures us that upon such washing our innocence shall revive and grow anew, and our original, lost purity return again upon us, shall we now in an huff of spiritual pride and self-love, run to our own endeavours, our own humiliations, and say, as Naaman did, *Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?* Are not my tears, my groans, and my penitential sorrows, of more efficacy to cleanse me, than the blood and death of Christ? may I not use these, and be clean, and purified from sin? I answer, No; and after we have tried them, we shall experimentally find their utter insufficiency. We may sooner drown than cleanse ourselves with our own tears.

I have now finished the first general thing proposed for the handling of the words, which was, to shew what is implied in *the purifying of ourselves* here spoken of in the text. I proceed now to the other;

II. Which is, to shew how the hope of heaven and a future glory comes to have such a sovereign influence upon this work.

It has so upon a double account, natural and moral.

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1st, And first upon a natural account; this hope purifies, as being a special grace infused into the heart by the Holy Ghost, and in its nature and operation directly contrary to sin: as heat is a quality both in nature and working, contrary to, and destructive of cold. All grace is naturally of a sin-purging virtue; as soon as ever it is infused into the soul, it is not idle, but immediately operative. And its operation is to change and transform the soul into its own nature; for the effecting of which it must work out that principle of corruption that does intimately possess it. When leaven is cast into the lump, it presently begins to work and to ferment, till by degrees it has thoroughly changed the whole mass. In like manner every grace will be incessantly working, till it has wrought over the heart to its own likeness.

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Now hope is one of the principal graces of the Spirit, so that we have it marshalled with faith and charity, and placed immediately after faith, in regard of the method of its operation, which is immediately consequent upon that of faith. For what faith looks upon as present in the promise, that hope looks upon as future in the event. Faith properly views the promise, hope eyes the performance. But the scripture tells us, that *faith purifies the heart*, and casts out the filth and corruption naturally inherent in it: and if these are the effects of faith, they must needs be ascribed also to hope, which is sown in the heart by the same eternal Spirit, and consequently is of the same quality and operation with that. For that it springs not from mere nature, but from an higher principle, is most manifest. Since it is the Spirit of God alone that proposes to the soul the grounds of hope, and lays before it the object of hope, and then, by an immediate, al mighty power, enables the soul fiducially to close with and rest upon that object, upon those grounds. Flesh and blood cannot rise so high; bare reason cannot furnish the heart with such a support. It may indeed cause us to presume, but it can never cause us truly to hope.

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2dly, The hope of future glory has an influence upon this work of purifying ourselves upon a moral account; that is, by suggesting to the soul such arguments, as have in them a persuasive force to engage it in this work. Of which sort I shall reckon four.

1. And the first shall be drawn from the necessary relation that this work has to the attainment of heaven, as the use of the means to the acquisition of the end. Our way to happiness does indispensably lie through holiness; and God has so ordered things, that we cannot arrive at one, but through the other. Now when the purification of our hearts is the proper way and means appointed, and consigned by God's own institution, for our obtaining of everlasting felicity with himself; is it not the highest strain of folly and madness that is imaginable, for a man to pretend that he does earnestly hope for this happiness, and yet in the mean time totally neglects that course by which alone it is attainable? Should we take such a course in worldly things, how cheap, how unreasonable, and ridiculous would our hope appear! For does any one hope to reap, when he never sows, and expect treasure from a far country, with which he holds no traffic or commerce? Certainly, notwithstanding all words and protestations, we should conclude that such persons did not really hope for the things

they pretended; or if they did hope for them, that they were incurably mad and besotted, and past all hope, at least as to the recovery of their reason. The apostle most rationally warns men in [Gal. vi. 7, 8](#), not to think that they can mock God because they can deceive themselves. *For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* For as it is absurd to hope to reap, and yet not to sow, so it is equally unreasonable to sow one kind, of grain, and to expect a crop of another; to sow tares, and yet hope to reap wheat. There is no *reaping of life everlasting*, (as the apostle's phrase is,) but *by sowing to the Spirit*; this is the only proper way to attain it. For this is an eternal truth, that the works of the Spirit have a necessary subordination to the rewards of the Spirit.

2. The second argument by which the hope of future glory persuades the soul to purify itself, shall be taken from this consideration, that it is purity alone that can fit and qualify the soul for so holy a place. He that is clothed in filth and rags is not a fit person to converse and live in a court; nor is there any one who designs the course of his life in such a place, but will adorn and dress himself accordingly. David proposes and resolves the question in [Psalm xxiv. 3, 4](#), *Who shall ascend into thy holy hill? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.* And again in [Psalm xciii. 5](#), *Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.* And therefore as God said to Moses, *Pull off thy shoes, for the place on which thou standest is holy ground*; so may we say to every one that hopes for heaven, Take away that filth, that enormity and corruption that cleaves to thy life; for the place whither thou art going is holy, and therefore requires and admits of none but holy inhabitants. In Revel, xxi. 27, it is said, that *nothing shall enter into the new Jerusalem that is polluted, or that maketh a lie.* It is with the *new Jerusalem* as it was heretofore with the old, where all the filth, the offscourings, and whatsoever was noisome in the city, was carried to a place without, and there burnt. And we all know, that there is a deep and dismal place without the new Jerusalem, where every noisome, wicked, and polluted thing shall be cast and burnt with everlasting flames.

Nay further, purity and holiness does not only fit us for heaven, so that without it we can have no entrance or admittance there; but it also so fits us, that if it were possible for us to enter into heaven void of it, heaven would be no place of happiness to us in that condition, but a place of trouble, torment, and vexation. As for instance, it is impossible for a beggar in his rags to be admitted to the society and converse of princes and noblemen; but put the case that he were, yet his beggarly condition would never suffer him to enjoy himself in that company, in which he could be nothing but a mock and a derision. In like manner, heaven bears no suitableness to an impure, un sanctified person. For a sinful heart must have sinful delights and sinful company, and where it meets not with such, in the very midst of comforts and company, it finds a solitude and a dissatisfaction. The business we shall be put to in heaven, is for ever to praise and admire the great God for the infinite beauty of his holiness,

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and the glorious perfections of his nature; but this surely is an employment no ways either fit for, or desirable to a sinner. It is indeed a blessed thing *to see God*, but it is so only to *the pure in heart*; for to the wicked and impure, the vision of God himself could not be beatifical. Those that live in any country must conform to the habit of the country. Those that are citizens of the new Jerusalem must have the clothing and the garb of such citizens, even the long *white robes* of a pure, unspotted righteousness. In a word, no hope can give us a title to heaven, but such an one as also gives us a fitness for it.

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3. The third argument, by which the hope of heaven persuades the soul to purify itself, shall be drawn from the obligation of gratitude. For surely if I expect so great a gift at God's hands as eternal happiness, even humanity and reason cannot but constrain me to pay him at least a temporary, short obedience. For shall I hope to be saved by him, whom I strike at and defy? Or can I expect that he should own me in another world, when I reject, despise, and trample upon his commands in this?

God gives us righteous precepts, and endears them to us by glorious promises; and now can it stand with the principles, not of piety only, but of common ingenuity, to balk the duty, and yet to snatch at the reward? to expect the highest favours from God's mercy, and to offer the greatest indignities to his holiness? When Christ had promised paradise to the thief upon the cross, would it not have been a prodigious piece of ingratitude for him to have joined with his fellow thief in cursing and reviling him, by whose favour he expected presently to exchange his cross for a crown?

God promises to us a kingdom, and makes the condition of our passage to it, only the *cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*. A work that is our privilege as well as our duty; and shall we not obey him in this one command? A command so reasonable for him to enjoin, and so advantageous for us to perform? For shall he be willing to make us glorious, and we grudge to make ourselves pure? Shall he hold forth such vast wages, and we not find in our hearts to set about the work? These things are absurd and disingenuous, and such as the world would cry out of in common converse. And therefore let no man think, that that disposition can commend him to God, that would justly make him abhorred by men.

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4thly and lastly, The fourth argument, by which the hope of heaven persuades the soul to purify itself, shall be taken from this consideration; that purity is the only thing that can evidence to us our right and interest in those glorious things that we profess ourselves to hope for. It is infinitely fond and presumptuous for a man to hope to inherit that estate, to which he can shew no title. The reasonableness of our hopes of heaven depends upon the sure right and claim that we have to it; and prove this we cannot in the court of our own conscience, much less in the court of heaven, but only by the obedience and purity of our lives, and their strict conformity to the excellent precepts of the gospel. No man can ascertain himself that he is an heir of glory, unless he can prove himself to be a son; and he shall



never be able to find that he is a son, till holiness makes him like his heavenly Father; for where there is this relation, there will be also some resemblance.

And now, I suppose, that from what has been discoursed upon this subject, every one does, or at least may, gather a certain mark or criterion, by which to judge of his hopes and pretences as to the happiness of his future estate. It is grace only that ends in glory. And he that hopes for heaven in earnest, will be as active in his repentance as he is serious in his hopes. Who almost is there that does not own himself a candidate and an expectant of future glory, nay, even amongst those whose present *glory is only in their shame*? But if such persons did not wretchedly prevaricate with themselves, how could there be so much of heaven in their hopes, and yet so little of it in their conversation? How comes their heart to be in one place, and their treasure in another?

It is evident that the very hope and religion of every profane and vicious liver is but mockery and pretence. For can any one of common sense really expect to be saved in the constant practice of those enormities, for which the God of truth himself assures him he shall be damned? It is infinitely vain for a man to talk of heaven while he trades for hell, or to look upwards while he lives downwards; yet thousands do so, and it is the common practice of the deluded world; which shews how much men trifle in the grand business of their eternal condition. They profess an hope of that, of which they have scarce a thought; and expect to enjoy God hereafter, though they live wholly without him here. But the issue will be accordingly; neither they nor their hopes can ever stand before the pure eyes of him, *with whom live only the spirits of just men made perfect.*

*To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

**END OF VOL. IV.**

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
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