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

**Robert South**



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

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**SERMONS**

PREACHED UPON

**SEVERAL OCCASIONS,**

BY

**ROBERT SOUTH, D.D.**

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

---

A NEW EDITION, IN SEVEN VOLUMES.

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**VOL. III.**

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**OXFORD,**

**AT THE CLARENDON PRESS.**

**MDCCCXXIII.**



THE  
CHIEF HEADS OF THE SERMONS.

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VOL. III.

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SERMON XXXVII.

THE SCRIBE INSTRUCTED, &C.

[Matthew xiii. 52.](#)

*Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old. P. 3.*

Christ here gives the character of a preacher or evangelist, 3. in these words; where we are to consider,

1st, What is meant by *the scribe* among the Jews, either as a civil or a church-officer, 5.

2dly, What it is to be *instructed for the kingdom of heaven*, 7.

3dly, What it is to *bring out of one's treasure things new and old*, 8.

And then, by applying all this to the minister of the gospel, we are to examine,

1st, His qualifications, 11. viz.

1. A natural ability of the faculties of his mind, 12. judgment, 12. memory, 13. invention, 14.

2. An habitual preparation by study, 15. in point of learning and knowledge, 17. of significant speech and expression, 21.

2dly, The reasons of their necessity, 24. viz. 1. Because the preacher's work is to persuade, 24.

2. Because God himself was at the expense of a miracle to endow the first preachers with them, 29.

3. Because the dignity of the subject, which is divinity, requires them, 30.

3dly, The inferences from these particulars, 32.

1. A reproof to such as discredit the ordinance of preaching, 32, 40. and the church itself, 41. either by light and comical, 32. or by dull and heavy discourses, 34.

2. An exhortation to such who design themselves for the ministry, to bestow a competent time in preparing for it, 42.



## SERMON XXXVIII.

### PROSPERITY EVER DANGEROUS TO VIRTUE.

[Proverbs i. 32.](#)

*The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* P. 47.

The misery of all foolish or vicious persons is, that prosperity itself to them becomes destructive, 47. Because,

1st, They are ignorant or regardless of the ends where fore God sends it, 48.

1. To try and discover what is in a man, 49.

2. To encourage him in gratitude to his Maker, 51 .

3. To make him helpful to society, 52.

2dly, Prosperity is prone,

1. To abate men's virtues, 53.

2. To heighten their corruptions, 57. such as pride, 58. luxury and uncleanness, 59. profaneness, 60.

3dly, It indisposes men to the means of their amendment, 62. rendering them,

1 . Averse to all counsel, 62.

%. Unfit for the sharp trials of adversity, under which they either despond or blaspheme, 63.

Therefore, that prosperity may not be destructive, a man ought,

1. To consider the uncertainty of it, 64. And

2. How little he is bettered by it, 65.

3. To use the severe duties of mortification, 66.

## SERMON XXXIX.

### SHAMELESSNESS IN SIN THE CERTAIN FORERUNNER OF DESTRUCTION.

[Jeremiah vi. 15.](#)

*Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall Jail among them that Jail: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.* P. 68.

Shamelessness in sin is the certain forerunner of destruction, 68. In the prosecution of which proposition we may observe,

1st, What shame is, 70. and how it is more effectual than law in its influence upon men, with respect to the evil threatened by it, 73. and to the extent of that evil, 74.

2dly, How men cast off that shame, 76.

1. By the commission of great sins, 77.

2. By a custom of sinning, 79.





3. By the examples of great persons, 80.
4. By the observation of the general practice, 81.
5. By having been once irrecoverably ashamed, 83. 3dly, The several degrees of shamelessness in sin, 84.
  1. To shew respect to sinful persons, 84.
  2. To defend sin, 85.
  3. To glory in it, 87.
- 4thly, The reasons why shamelessness is so destructive, 88.
  1. Because it presupposes those actions which God seldom lets go unpunished, 88. and,
  2. It has a destructive influence upon the government of the world, 89.
- 5thly, The judgments, by which it procures the sinner's ruin, 92.
  1. A sudden and disastrous death, 92.
  2. War and desolation, 92.
  3. Captivity, 93.
- Lastly, An application is made of the whole, 94.

## SERMON XL.

### CONCEALMENT OF SIN NO SECURITY TO THE SINNER.

Numbers xxxii. 23.

*Be sure your sin will find you out.* P. 97.

These words reach the case of all sinners, 98.

1st, Sin upon a confidence of concealment, 98. For,

1. No man engages in sin, but as it bears some appearance of good, 98.
2. Shame and pain are by God made the consequents of sin, 99.

2dly, Take up that confidence, 103. upon,

1. Their own success, 103,
2. The success of others, 106.
3. An opinion of their own cunning, 108.
4. The hope of repentance, 110.

3dly, Are at last certainly defeated, 112. Because,

1. The very confidence of secrecy is the cause of the sinner's discovery, 112.
2. There is sometimes a providential concurrence of unlikely accidents for a discovery, 113.
3. One sin sometimes is the means of discovering another, 115.
4. The sinner may discover himself through phrensy and distraction, 117. or be forced to it,
5. By his own conscience, 118.



6. He may be suddenly struck by some notable judgment, 119. Or,  
Lastly, His guilt will follow him into another world, if he should chance to escape in this, 121.

## SERMON XLII.

### THE RECOMPENCE OF THE REWARD.

[Hebrews xi. 24, 25, 26.](#)

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of reward. P. 124.

A Christian is not bound to sequester his mind from respect to an ensuing reward, 125.  
For,

1st, Duty considered barely as duty is not sufficient to engage man's will, 127. Because,

1. The soul has originally an averseness to duty, 128.
2. The affections of the soul are not at all gratified by any thing in duty, 130.
3. If duty of itself was a sufficient motive, then hope and fear would be needless, 135.

With an answer to some objections, 142.

2dly, A reward and a respect to it are necessary to engage man's obedience, 149. not absolutely, but with respect to man's present condition, 150. The proof whereof may be drawn from scripture, 151. and the practice of all law givers, 152.

Therefore it is every man's infinite concern to fix to himself a principle to act by, which may bring him to his beatific end, 154.

## SERMON XLIII.

### ON THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.

[Acts xxiv. 15.](#)

*Having hope towards God, (which they themselves also allow,) that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.* P. 157.

It is certain that there must be a general retribution, and, by consequence, a general resurrection, 157, 158.

The belief of which, though,

1st, It is exceeding difficult, 159. because,

1. Natural reason is averse to it, 160.
2. This averseness is grounded partly upon many improbabilities, 163. partly upon downright impossibilities charged upon it, 165. Yet,

2dly, Is founded upon sufficient and solid grounds, 168. which will appear,



1. By answering the objections of improbability and impossibility, 168.
2. By positive arguments, 176.
- 3dly, Gaineth much worth and excellency from all those difficulties, 185. For from hence,
  1. We collect the utter insufficiency of bare natural religion, 185.
  2. We infer the impiety of Socinian opinions concerning the resurrection, 188.



### **SERMON XLIII.**

#### **THE DOCTRINE OF THE BLESSED TRINITY ASSERTED, AND PROVED NOT CONTRARY TO REASON.**

*Coloss. ii. 2.*

*To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. P. 194.*

These words examined and explained prove the plurality of Persons in the divine nature a great mystery, to be acknowledged by all Christians, 194. which will appear by shewing,

1st, What conditions are required to denominate a thing a mystery, 198. viz.

1. That it be really true, and not contrary to reason, 198.
2. That it be above the reach of mere reason to find it out before it be revealed, 204.
3. That, being revealed, it be yet very difficult for, if not above finite reason fully to comprehend it, 209.

2dly, That all these conditions meet in the article of the Trinity, 198213.

With an account of the blasphemous expressions and assertions of the Socinians, 213.

Lastly, Since this article is of so great moment, it is fit to examine,

1. The causes which have unsettled and destroyed the belief of it, 219. Such as representing it in a figure, 219. expressing it by bold and insignificant terms, 220. building it on texts of scripture which will evince no such thing, 221.

2. The means how to fix and continue it in the mind, 221. by acquiescing in revelation, 222. and suppressing all over-curious inquiries into the nature of it, 222.



### **SERMON XLIV. XLV.**

#### **ILL-DISPOSED AFFECTIONS BOTH NATURALLY AND PENALLY THE CAUSE OF DARKNESS AND ERROR IN THE JUDGMENT.**

*2 Thess. ii. 11.*

*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. P. 224.*

A very severe judgment is here denounced against them who receive not the love of the truth, 224. which will be best understood by shewing,

1st, How the mind of man can believe a lie, either,

1. Through the remoteness of the faculty from its object, 230. or,
  2. Through some weakness or disorder in it, 231.
- 2dly, What it is to receive the love of truth, 232. viz. to esteem, 232. and to choose it, 236. And consequently, what it is not to receive it, 237.
- 3dly, How the not receiving the love of truth into the will, disposes the understanding to delusion, 240.
1. By drawing the understanding from fixing its contemplation upon truth, 240.
  2. By prejudicing it against it, 242.
  3. By darkening the mind, which is the peculiar malignity of every vice, 244.
- 4thly, How God can properly be said to send men delusions, 246.
1. By withdrawing his enlightening influence from the understanding, 247.
  2. By commissioning the spirit of falsehood to seduce the sinner, 250.
  3. By providential disposing of men into such circumstances of life as have an efficacy to delude, 252.
  4. By his permission of lying wonders, 255.
- 5thly, Wherein the greatness of this delusion consists, 259.
1. In itself; as it is spiritual, and directly annoys a man's soul, 259. and more particularly blasts his understanding, 263.
  2. In its consequences, 268. as it renders the conscience useless, 268. and ends in a total destruction, 270.
  - 6thly, What deductions may be made from the whole, 272.
  1. That it is not inconsistent with God's holiness to punish one sin with another, 272.
  2. That the best way to confirm our faith about the truths of religion is to love and acknowledge them, 277.
  3. That hereby we may be able to find out the true cause of atheism, 281. and fanaticism, 283.



## **SERMON XLVI. XLVII.**

### **COVETOUSNESS PROVED NO LESS AN ABSURDITY IN REASON, THAN A CONTRADICTION TO RELIGION, NOR A MORE UNSURE WAY TO RICHES, THAN RICHES THEMSELVES TO HAPPINESS.**

[Luke xii. 15.](#)

*And he said unto them. Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. P. 287.*

It is natural for man to aim at happiness, the way to which seems to be an abundance of this world's good things, and covetousness is supposed the means to acquire it. But our Saviour confutes this in these words, 287 288. which contains,

1st, A dehortation, 289. wherein we may observe,

1. The author of it, Christ himself, 290. the Lord of the universe, 292. depressed to the lowest estate of poverty, 292.

2. The thing we are dehorted from, covetousness, 293. by which is not meant a prudent forecast and parsimony, 294. but an anxious care about worldly things, attended with a distrust of Providence, 295. a rapacity in getting, 298. by all illegal ways, 301. a tenaciousness in keeping, 303.

3. The way how we are dehorted from it; Take heed and beware, 306. For it is very apt to prevail upon us, by its near resemblance to virtue, 307. the plausibility of its pleas, 308. the reputation it generally gives in the world, 311. And there is a great difficulty in removing it, 313.

2dly, The reason of that dehortation, 288, 318. that *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*, 318. Because,

1. In the getting of them men are put upon the greatest toils and labours, 320. run the greatest dangers, 322. commit the greatest sins, 326. And,

2. When they are gotten, are attended with excessive cares, 328. with an insatiable desire of getting more, 331. are exposed to many temptations, 333. to the malice and envy of all about them, 335.

3. The possession of earthly riches is not able to remove those things which chiefly render men miserable, 337. such as affect his mind, 337. or his body, 338.

4. The greatest happiness this life is capable of, may be enjoyed without that abundance, 341.

## SERMON XLVIII.

### NO MAN EVER WENT TO HEAVEN, WHOSE HEART WAS NOT THERE BEFORE.

[Matthew vi. 21.](#)

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* P. 348.

These words concerning man's heart's being fixed upon his treasure or chief good, 348. may be considered,

1st, As an entire proposition in themselves, 349.

1. Supposing, that every man has something which he accounts his treasure, 350. which appears from the activity of his mind, 350. and the method of his acting, 352.

2. Declaring, that every man places his whole heart upon that treasure, 353. by a restless endeavour to acquire it, 354. by a continual delight in it, 356. by supporting himself with it in all his troubles, 358. by a willingness to part with all other things to preserve it, 359.



2dly, As they enforce the foregoing precept in the 19th and 20th verses; wherein the things on earth and the things in heaven are represented as rivals for men's affections, 361. and that the last ought to claim them in preference to the other will be proved,

1. By considering the world, how vastly inferior it is to the worth of man's heart, 364.

2. By considering the world in itself, 367. how all its enjoyments are perishing, 367. and out of our power, 369. And on the contrary, heaven is the exchange God gives for man's heart, 365. and the enjoyments above are indefectible, endless, 368. and not to be taken away, 370.

The improvement of these particulars is to convince us of the extreme vanity of most men's pretences to religion, 371.

## **SERMON XLIX.**

### **VIRTUOUS EDUCATION OF YOUTH, THE WAY TO A HAPPY OLD AGE.**

[Proverbs xxii. 6.](#)

*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*  
P. 379.

The rebellion of forty-one has had ever since a very pernicious influence upon this kingdom, 379. To hinder the mischief whereof, Solomon's advice is best, to plant virtue in youth, in order to ensure the practice of it in a man's mature or declining age, 383. For since every man is naturally disposed to evil, and this evil principle will (if not hindered) pass into action, and those vicious habits will, from personal, grow national; and no remedy against this can be had but by an early discipline; it is absolutely necessary that the minds of youth should be formed with a virtuous preventing education, 386. which is the business of

1. Parents, who ought to deserve that honour which their children must pay them; and to instil into their hearts early principles of their duty to God and their king, 390.

2. Schoolmasters; whose influence is more powerful than of preachers themselves, 395. and who ought to use great discretion in the management of that charge, 397.

3. The clergy; who should chiefly attend first upon catechising, 400. then confirmation, 402. and lastly, instructing them from the pulpit, not failing often to remind them of obedience and subjection to the government, 405.

Lastly, It is incumbent upon great men to suppress conventicling schools or academies, 409. and to countenance all legal free grammar-schools, 411.

## **SERMON L.**

### **PRETENCE OF CONSCIENCE NO EXCUSE FOR REBELLION.**

[Judges xix. 30.](#)



*And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.* P. 415.

These words were occasioned by a foul and detestable fact, which, for want of kingly government, happened in one of the tribes of Israel, 415. but may be applied to express the murder of king Charles the First, 418. The unparalleled strangeness of which deed will appear, if we consider,

1. The qualities, human accomplishments and personal virtues of the person murdered, 421.
2. The gradual preparations to such a murder, a factious ministry and a covenant, 426. and their rebellious catechism, 428.
3. The actors in this tragical scene, 431.
4. Their manner of procedure in it, 432. openly, 433. cruelly, 434. and with pretences of conscience, and protestations of religion, 439.
5. The fatal consequences of it, 440. such as were of a civil, 440. or a religious concern, 442.

Lastly, Hereupon we ought to take advice, 445. and consider, that our sins have been the cause of our calamities; and that the best way to avoid the same evil is to sin no more, 447.

## SERMON LI.



### SATAN HIMSELF TRANSFORMED INTO AN ANGEL OF LIGHT.

[2 Cor. xi. 14.](#)

*And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.* P. 450.

These words suppose that there is a Devil; and forewarn us against his deceitful disguises, 450. and the sense of the words may be prosecuted by shewing,

1st, What influence he has upon the soul, and how he conveys his fallacies, 454.

1. In moving, or sometimes altering the humours of the body, 454.
2. In suggesting the ideas of things to the imagination, 455.
3. In a personal possession of the man, 457.

2dly, Several instances, wherein he, under the mask of light, has imposed upon the Christian world, 459. making use,

1. Of the church's abhorrence of polytheism, to bring in Arianism, 459.
2. Of the zealous adoration of Christ's person, to introduce the superstitious worship of Popery, 461.
3. Of the shaking off of Popery, to bring in the two extremes of Socinianism, 471. and Enthusiasm, 479. with a comparison of this last with Popery, 480.

3dly, Certain principles, whereby he is like to repeat his cheats upon the world, 485.

1. By making faith and free grace undermine the necessity of a good life, 485.

2. By opposing the power of godliness irreconcilably to all forms, 487.

3. By making the kingdom of Christ oppose the kingdoms of the world, 489.

Therefore we ought not to cast the least pleasing look upon any of his insidious offers, 489. but encounter him with watchfulness and prayer, 494.

## SERMON LII.

### THE CERTAINTY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S RESURRECTION.

[John xx. 29.](#)

*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* P. 496.

The resurrection of a body before its total dissolution is easier to be believed than after it; and it was this last sort of resurrection, which puzzled Thomas's reason, 496, 497. with various objections, 500. Which, after some preliminary considerations, 502. are severally proposed, and answered under eight heads, 502. together with a confutation of the lie invented by the Jews, 515. Then, all objections being removed, Christ's resurrection is proposed to our belief upon certain and sufficient grounds, 517. viz.

1st, The constant, uniform affirmation of such persons, as had sufficient means to be informed of the truth, 520. and were of an unquestionable sincerity, 521.

2dly, The miracles which confirmed the apostle's words, 523.

Lastly, That such tradition has greater reason for its belief, than can be suggested for its disbelief, 525.

Thence we ought to admire the commanding excellency of faith, which can force its way through the opposition of carnal reason, with an entire submission to divine revelation, 526.

## SERMON LIII.

### OBEDIENCE FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE, THE DUTY OF GOOD SUBJECTS.

[Rom. xiii. 5.](#)

*Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.* P. 531.

In these words there is,

1st, A duty enjoined, viz. subjection, 531. which the believers of the church of Rome are commanded to pay Nero, 532.





2dly, The ground of this duty, *for conscience sake*, 534. In which we are to consider,  
1. The absolute unlawfulness of resistance, 537. notwithstanding the doctrine of the  
sons both of Rome, 538. and of Geneva, 543. of the Scotch, 546. and English puritans, 548.  
With an account, how far human laws bind the conscience, 550.  
2. The scandal which resistance casts upon Christianity, 553.



TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
WILLIAM BROMLEY, ESQ.  
SOME TIME SPEAKER OF THE HONOURABLE THE HOUSE OF COMMONS;  
AND AFTER THAT  
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF STATE TO HER MAJESTY QUEEN ANNE, OF EVER  
BLESSED MEMORY;  
IN BOTH STATIONS GREAT AND EMINENT,  
BUT IN NOTHING GREATER THAN IN AND FROM HIMSELF;  
ROBERT SOUTH,  
HIS MOST DEVOTED SERVANT,  
HUMBLY OFFERS AND PRESENTS THIS FOURTH VOLUME<sup>1</sup>  
OF  
HIS SERMONS,  
AS THE LAST AND BEST TESTIMONY HE CAN GIVE OF  
THE HIGH ESTEEM AND SINCERE AFFECTION,  
WHICH HE, THE AUTHOR OF THEM, BEARS, AND EVER  
MUST AND SHALL BEAR, TO THAT EXCELLENT PERSON.



---

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the twelve sermons next following.

*The Scribe instructed, &c.*

**A SERMON**  
**PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH IN OXON,**  
**BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,**

**JULY 29, 1660.**

*Being the time of the King's commissioners meeting there, soon after the Restoration, for the visitation of that University.*

[Matthew xiii. 52.](#)

*Then said he unto them. Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.*

**I**N this chapter we have a large discourse from the great preacher of righteousness; a discourse fraught with all the commending excellencies of speech; delightful for its variety, admirable for its convincing quickness and argumentative closeness, and (which is seldom an excellency in other sermons) excellent for its length.

For that which is carried on with a continued, unflagging vigour of expression can never be thought tedious, nor consequently long. And Christ, who was not only the preacher, but himself also the word, was undoubtedly furnished with a strain of heavenly oratory far above the heights of all human rhetoric whatsoever: his sermons being of that grace and ornament, that (as the world generally goes) they might have prevailed even without truth, and yet pregnant with such irresistible truth, that the ornament might have been spared; and indeed it still seems to have been used, rather to gratify than persuade the hearer. So that we may (only with a reverential acknowledgment both of the difference of the persons and of the subject) give that testimony of Christ's sermons, which Cicero (the great master of the Roman eloquence) did of Demosthenes's orations, who being asked, which of them was the best, answered, the longest.

Accordingly, our Saviour having in the verse here pitched upon for my text, finished his foregoing discourse, he now closes up all with the character of a preacher, or evangelist; still addressing himself to his disciples, as to a designed seminary of preachers; or rather indeed, as to a kind of little itinerant academy, if I may so call it, of such as were to take his heavenly doctrines for the sole rule of their practice, and his excellent way of preaching for the standing pattern of their imitation; thus lying at the feet of their blessed Lord, with the humblest attention of scholars, and the lowest prostration of subjects. The very name and



notion of a disciple implying, and the nature of the thing itself requiring both these qualifications.

Now the discussion of the words before us shall be in these following particulars:

1st, To shew, What is here meant by the *scribe*

2dly, What by being *instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*. And,

3dly and lastly, What by bringing *out of his treasure things new and old*; and how upon this account he stands compared to an householder.

And I. Concerning the word *scribe*. It was a name, which amongst the Jews was applied to two sorts of officers.

1. To a civil; and so it signifies a notary, or in a large sense any one employed to draw up deeds or writings: whether in an higher station or degree, as we read in the [2 Kings xxii. and the 3d verse](#), that Shaphan was γραμματεὺς βασιλέως, the king's scribe, or secretary; or, as in a lower sense and acception of the word, we find this appellation given to that officer who appeared in quelling the uproar at Ephesus, as we read in [Acts xix.](#) where, in the [35th verse](#), he is called γραμματεὺς, which, I think, we may fitly enough render, (as our English text does,) *the townclerk*, or public notary of the city. To this sort also some would refer those mentioned in [Matthew ii. and the 4th verse](#), who are there called *the scribes of the people*; as if they were such notaries as we have been speaking of; but the business about which we read in that chapter that Herod called them together, seems to evince the contrary; which was to inquire of such as were skilled in the writings of the prophets, when and where the Messiah was to be born. The resolution of which was very unlikely to be had from those who were only notaries and journeymen to courts, to draw up indictments, bonds, leases, contracts, and the like. And from whence we may, no doubt, conclude, that this sort of scribes was quite of another nature from the scribe here alluded to in the text; and which shall be next treated of: and therefore,

2. This name *scribe* signifies a church-officer, one skilful and conversant in the law, to interpret and explain it. For still we find the scribes reckoned with the great doctors of the Jewish church, and for the most part joined with the Pharisees in the writings of the evangelists, and by St. Paul with the disputer of this world, [1 Cor. i. 20](#); and sometimes called also νομικοὶ, *lawyers*, as in St. [Luke vii. 30](#), and in St. [Luke xi. 52](#); that is to say, men skilful and expert in the Mosaic law. Not that these scribes were really and properly any part of the Pharisees, (as some have thought;) for *Pharisee* was the name of a sect, *scribe* of an office: and whereas we read, in [Acts xxiii. and the 9th verse](#), of the γραμματεῖς there said to be τοῦ μέρους τῶν Φαρισαίων, *of part of the Pharisees*; the word *of part* is not to be understood in respect of distribution, as it signifies a correlate to the whole, but in respect of opinion; as that they were of the Pharisees' part or side, or, in other words, joined with them in some of their opinions; as possibly others of them might join with the Sadducees in some of theirs. By *scribe* therefore must be here meant *a doctor or expounder of the law to the people*; such



an one as Ezra, that excellent person, so renowned amongst the Jews; who, in [Ezra vii. verse 6](#), is said to have been *a ready scribe in the law of Moses*. For though, indeed, the word scribe in the English and Latin imports barely *a writer*, and the Greek γραμματεὺς by its derivation from γράφω, strictly signifies no more; yet by its nearer derivation from γράμμα, which signifies *a letter*, it seems to represent to us the nature of the office from the notation of the name, viz. that these scribes were men of the bare letter, or the text; whose business it was to explain and give the literal sense and meaning of the law. And therefore, that the men here spoken of, whom the Jews accounted of such eminent skill in it, should by their office be only writers, or transcribers of it, can with no more reason, I think, be affirmed, than if we should allow him to be a skilful divine, who should transcribe other men's works, and, which is more, preach them when he had done. But,



2. As for the meaning of that expression, of being *instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*. By *the kingdom of heaven* is here signified to us, only the preaching of the gospel, or the condition and state of the Church under the gospel; as, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, that is, the gospel is shortly to be preached: now we are to take notice, that it was the way of Christ, in his preaching to the Jews, to express the offices, and things belonging to his church under the gospel, by alluding to those of the Jewish church under the law, as being known, and familiar to them. Hence he calls a minister, or preacher of the gospel, *a scribe*: and this from the analogy of what the scribe did in the explication of the Mosaic law, with what the gospel minister was to do, in preaching and pressing home the doctrines of Christianity upon the heart and conscience; much the harder work, God knows, of the two.

Now the word which we here render *instructed*, in the Greek is μαθητευθεὶς, one who was taught, schooled, or disciplined to the work by long exercise and study. He was not to be inspired, or blown into the ministry, but to come to it by mature study and labour. He was to fetch his preparations from industry, not infusion. And forasmuch as Christ's design was to express evangelical officers by legal, there must, as I shew, be some resemblance between them; and since the matter or subject they were engaged in was wholly diverse, this resemblance was to hold, at least, in the qualification of the persons, viz. that as the scribe of the law did with much labour stock himself with all variety of learning requisite to find out the sense of the same, so the evangelical scribe, or preacher, should bring as much learning, and bestow as much labour in his employment, as the other did in his; especially since it required full as much, and deserved a great deal more: and so pass we to the



3d thing proposed, which was to shew what is to be understood by bringing *out of his treasure things new and old*. By treasure is here signified that which in Latin is called *penus*, a *storehouse*, or *repository*; and the bringing out thence things new and old was (as some are of opinion) a kind of proverb, or proverbial speech amongst the Hebrews, expressing a man's giving a plentiful or liberal entertainment to his friends, and such as came about him. And accordingly, as here borrowed from the householder, and applied to the gospel-scribe

in the text, it makes the drift and import of the whole parable to amount to this: that as the former, if a man of substance and sufficiency, of a large stock, and as large a mind, will entertain his friends and guests with plenty and variety of provision, answerable to the difference of men's palates, as well as to the difference of the season; not confining them to the same standing common fare, but, as occasion requires, adding something of more cost and rarity besides; so our gospel-scribe or preacher, in the entertainment of his spiritual guests, is not always to set before them only the main substantials of religion, whether for belief or practice, but, as the matter shall require, to add also illustration to the one, and enforcement to the other, sometimes persuading, sometimes terrifying; and accordingly addressing himself to the afflicted and desponding with gospel lenitives, and to the hard and obstinate with legal corrosives; and since the relish of all is not the same, he is to apply to the vulgar with plain familiar similitudes, and to the learned with greater choiceness of language and closeness of argument; and moreover, since every age of the church more peculiarly needs the clearer discussion of some truth or other, then more particularly doubted of, or opposed; therefore, to the inculcating the general acknowledged points of Christianity, he is to add something of the controversies, opinions, and vices of the times; otherwise he cannot reach men's minds and inclinations, which are apt to be argued this way or that way, according to different times and occasions; and consequently he falls so far short of a good orator, and much more of an accurate preacher.

This, I conceive, is the genuine and full sense of the words we are now upon, and which I shall yet further strengthen with this observation: "That we shall find that Christ's design all along the evangelists was to place the economy of the church under the gospel, above that of the Jewish church under the law, as more excellent in every particular." Now it was the way of the scribes then, to dwell wholly upon the letter of the law, and what Moses said; shewing the construction, the coherence, and force of his words, only sometimes sprinkling them a little with tradition, and the pompous allegation of their ancient rabbies, Ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίως. But Christ, who, we read, *taught with authority, and not as the scribes*, as one not only expounding, but also commanding the words, took a freedom of expression, in shewing not the sense of Moses only, but the further sense and intent of God himself speaking to Moses; and then clothing this sense in parables, similitudes, and other advantages of rhetoric, so as to give it an easier entrance and admission into the mind and affections; and what he did himself, he recommended to the practice of his disciples. So that, I think, we may not unfitly account for the meaning of our Saviour in this chapter thus: You see how the scribes of the law with much anxiety and niceness confine themselves to the letter of Moses, but the scribe who is *instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*, and fitted to preach the gospel, must not dwell only upon the letter and shell of things, but often enlarge and amplify upon the subject he handles, adapting his discourse to the various circumstances,



tempers, and apprehensions of his hearers; and so letting it rise or fall in the degrees of its plainness or quickness, according to his hearers dulness or docility.

Thus, I hope, I have made out the full import of the words, and the design of our Saviour in them, which I shall now more thoroughly prosecute in this proposition, naturally resulting from them so explained, viz.

That the greatest advantages, both as to largeness of natural, and exquisiteness of acquired abilities, are not only consistent with, but required to the due performance of the work and business of a preacher of the gospel.

Not that I affirm, that every one, who has not such a furniture of parts and knowledge, is therefore wholly unfit or forbidden to be a preacher; for then most of us might for ever sit down and adore, but not venture upon this work. But in giving a rule for any thing or action, we must assign the utmost perfection which either of them is capable of, and to which men ought to aspire; not to which they of necessity must or can attain. We know the copy always falls short of the original, and the performance of the precept. But still the rule must be absolute, and highly perfect; otherwise, we should never look upon our improvement as our duty, or our imperfections as our defects.

In the handling of the proposition drawn forth, I shall shew,

1st, What qualifications are required as necessary to a minister of the word, from the force of the comparison between him and the scribe mentioned in the text.

2dly, I shall shew the reasons to evince and prove their necessity: and

3dly, I shall draw some inferences from the whole.

And first, concerning the qualifications required, &c.

I shall bring them under these two.

1. An ability and strength of the powers and faculties of the mind. And,
2. An habitual preparation of the same, by study, exercise, and improvement.

Which two, I conceive, contain all that both nature and art can do in this matter.

And first, for the first of these two.

1. A natural ability and strength of the powers and faculties of the mind. And what these are is apparent, viz. judgment, memory, and invention.

Now, whether these three are three distinct things both in being distinguished from one another, and likewise from the substance of the soul itself considered without any such faculties, but only receiving these several denominations from the several respects arising from the several actions exerted immediately by itself upon several objects, or several qualities of the same object; I say, whether of these two it is, is not easy to decide; and it is well, that it is not necessary. Aquinas and most with him affirm the former, and Scotus with his followers the latter. But yet to assert with him, that in a created nature essence and power are the same, seems too near and bold a step to the incommunicable simplicity of the divine; and according to the received way of arguing will pass for a great absurdity. However, not

to insist further upon a point merely philosophical, but supposing (at least probably) that (according to the common opinion) the soul acts or works by powers and faculties, as well as habits, distinct from its own substance; I proceed to shew the necessity of the three fore-mentioned faculties in the business of the ministry. And,

1st, For that great leading one, the judgment: without which, how can any controversy in philosophy or divinity be duly managed, stated, or determined? How can that which is ambiguous be cleared, that which is fallacious be detected, or even truth itself be defended? How, where the words of scripture may bear several senses, some proper, and some figurative, can we be assured which the writer or speaker of them intended them in? How also, without this, when a scripture has been corrupted, partly by filching some words out of it, and partly by a supposititious foisting of some in, shall the whole be rescued from the imposture passed upon it, and so restored true and genuine to itself? And lastly, how shall many seeming clashings and dark passages in sacred history and chronology be placed in such a light, as may thoroughly satisfy, or at least effectually silence the doubtful and exceptious? All which particulars (with many more of the like nature) being confessedly knotty and difficult, can never be accorded, but by a competent stock of critical learning; and can any one (even according to the very signification of the word) be said to be a critic, and yet not judicious? And then,

2dly, For memory. This may be reckoned twofold. 1. That which serves to treasure up our reading, or observations. And 2. That which serves to suggest to us, in our reciting or repeating of any thing, which we had endeavoured to commit to our memory before. I distinguish them, because one may be, and often is excellent, where the other is deficient. But now, were this never so large, yet theology is of that vast compass, as to employ and exhaust it. For what volumes are thereof antiquity, church-history, and other divine learning, which well deserve reading; and to what purpose do we read, if we cannot remember? But then also, for the reciting or repeating part of memory, that is so necessary, that Cicero himself observes of oratory, (which indeed upon a sacred subject is preaching,) that upon the want of memory alone, *omnia, etiamsi praeclarissima fuerint, in oratore peritura.*<sup>2</sup> And we know that, to a popular auditory, it is upon the matter *all*. There being, in the esteem of many, but little difference between sermons read, and homilies, save only this, that homilies are much better. And then for the

Third faculty, which is invention: a faculty acting chiefly in the strength of what is offered it by the imagination. This is so far from being admitted by many as necessary, that it is decried by them as utterly unlawful; such grand exemplars, I mean, as make their own abilities the sole measure of what is fit or unfit, lawful or unlawful; so that what they themselves cannot reach, others, forsooth, ought not to attempt. But I see not why divinity should

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2 Primo libro de Oratore.



suffer for their narrowness, and be deprived of the service of a most useful and excellent endowment of the mind, and which gives a gloss and a shine to all the rest. For I reckon upon this as a great truth, that there can be no endowment in the soul of man, which God himself is the cause and giver of, but may even in its highest and choicest operations be sanctified and employed in the work of the ministry. And there is also another principle, which I account altogether as true as the former; namely, that piety engages no man to be dull; though lately, I confess, it passed with some for a mark of regeneration. And when I shall see these principles disproved, I shall be ready to grant all exercise of the fancy or invention, in the handling things sacred, to be unlawful. As fancy, indeed, is often taken in the worst sense, for a conceited, curious, whimsical brain, which is apt to please itself in strange, odd, and ungrounded notions; so I confess, that nothing is more contrary to or destructive of true divinity; but then I must add withal, that if fancy be taken in this sense, those who damn it in its other sober and right acception, have much the greatest share of it themselves. But if, on the other hand, we take fancy for that power or ability of the mind, which suggests apposite and pertinent expressions, and handsome ways of clothing and setting off those truths which the judgment has rationally pitched upon, it will be found full as useful as any of all the three mentioned by us in the work of preaching; and consequently slighted and disapproved of by none but such as envy that in others, which they are never like to be envied for the want of in themselves. He therefore who thinks to be *a scribe instructed for the kingdom of heaven*, without a competency of judgment, memory, and invention, attempts a great superstructure where there is no foundation; and this, surely, is a very preposterous way to edify either himself or others.

And thus much for the first of the two qualifications of our evangelical scribe; to wit, a tolerable ability or strength of the powers and faculties of the mind; particularly of those three, judgment, memory, and invention. I proceed now to the other, and

Second qualification: which was an habitual preparation by study, exercise, and due improvement of the same. Powers act but weakly and irregularly, till they are heightened and perfected by their habits. A well radicated habit, in a lively, vegete faculty, *is like an apple of gold in a picture of silver*; it is perfection upon perfection, it is a coat of mail upon our armour, and, in a word, it is the raising the soul at least one story higher: for take off but these wheels, and the powers in all their operations will drive but heavily. Now it is not enough to have books, or for a man to have his divinity in his pocket, or upon the shelf; but he must have mastered his notions, till they even incorporate into his mind, so as to be able to produce and wield them upon all occasions; and not when a difficulty is proposed, and a performance enjoined, to say, that he will consult such and such authors: for this is not to be a divine, who is rather to be a walking library, than a walking index. As, to go no farther than the similitude in the text, we should not account him a good or generous housekeeper, who should not have always something of standing provision by him, so as never to be so

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surprised, but that he should still be found able to treat his friend at least, though perhaps not always presently to feast him: so the scribe here spoken of should have an inward, lasting fulness and sufficiency, to support and bear him up; especially where present performance urges, and actual preparation can be but short. Thus, it is not the oil in the wick, but in the vessel, which must feed the lamp. The former indeed may cause a present blaze, but it is the latter which must give it a lasting light. It is not the spending-money a man has in his pocket, but his hoards in the chest, or in the bank, which must make him rich. A dying man has his breath in his nostrils, but to have it in the lungs is that which must preserve life. Nor will it suffice to have raked up a few notions here and there, or to rally up all one's little utmost into one discourse, which can constitute a divine, or give a man stock enough to set up with; any more than a soldier who had filled his snapsack should thereupon set up for keeping house. No; a man would then quickly be drained, his short stock would serve but for one meeting in ordinary converse, and he would be in danger of meeting with the same company twice. And therefore there must be store, plenty, and a treasure, lest he turn broker in divinity, and having run the rounds of a beaten exhausted common place, be forced to stand still, or go the same round over again; pretending to his auditors, that it is profit able for them to hear the same truths often inculcated to them; though, I humbly conceive, that to inculcate the same truths, is not of necessity to repeat the same words. And therefore, to avoid such beggarly pretences, there must be an habitual preparation as to the work we are now speaking of. And that in two respects.

1. In respect of the generality of knowledge required to it. The truth is, if we consider that great multitude of things to be known, and the labour and time required to the knowledge of each particular, it is enough to discourage and dash all attempt, and cause a careless despair. What Hippocrates said of the cure of the body, is much truer of the cure of the soul, "that life is short, and art long." And I might add also, that the mind is weak and narrow, and the business difficult and large. And should I say, that preaching was the least part of a divine, it would, I believe, be thought a bold word, and look like a paradox, (as the world goes,) but perhaps, for all that, never the further from being a great truth. For is it not a greater thing to untie the knots of many intricate and perplexing controversies; and to bring together all the ends of a loose and hardly cohering hypothesis? to refute the opinions and stop the mouths of gainsayers, whereas some of them are so opposite amongst themselves, that you can hardly confute one, but with arguments taken from the other, though both of them equally erroneous? In which and the like cases to carry an argument for the defence of truth so warily and exactly, that an adversary shall not sometimes be able to pervert it to the support of an error, (since though the argument may be materially the same, yet the different application and management of it may produce quite different inferences from it;) this, no doubt, is a matter of great difficulty, and no less dexterity. And the like also may be said of casuistical divinity for resolving cases of conscience; especially where several ob-



ligations seem to interfere, and, as it were, jumble one another, so that it seems impossible to the conscience to turn either way without sin, and while it does so, must needs be held under great distraction. To clear a way out of which, being a work certainly depending upon much knowledge of the canon and civil laws, as well as of the principles of divinity, it must needs require much toil and labour for the casuist to provide himself with materials for this purpose, and then no less art and skill to manage and apply them to the conscience. And as it is highly requisite that this should in some measure be found in every divine, and in its height and perfection in some, which since it cannot well be, but by the whole employment of a man's time, not took off or diverted by other ministerial business, it so far shews the happy constitution of such churches, as afford place of suitable scholastic maintenance (without the trouble of a pastoral charge) for such whose abilities carry them to the study of the controversial or critical part of theology, rather than any other belonging to the ministry. But on the contrary, where there is no such proper maintenance allotted for a divine, but by preaching only, let us suppose, that which in such a case we easily may; That one had a peculiar inclination to controversy, or to dive into antiquity, or to search critically into the original letter of the scriptures; and withal had little inclination, and perhaps less ability to preach, but yet knew no other way to live as a divine, but by preaching; do we not here lose an excellent casuist, an accurate critic, or profound school-divine, only to make a very mean preacher? who, had he had the forementioned opportunity of encouragement, might have been eminently serviceable to the church in any of those other ways, while he only serves the natural necessities of life in this. And this has been observed by a learned knight<sup>3</sup> to have been an inconvenience even in those days, when the revenues of the church were not wholly reformed from it; that for our not then setting aside whole societies for the managing of controversies and nothing else, as the church of Rome finds it necessary to do, divines for the most part handle controversies only as a diversion in the midst of their other pastoral labours, and many of them have performed it accordingly. For as man's faculties will not suffice him for all arts and sciences, so neither will they sometimes reach all the parts and difficulties of any one of them. But the late times made the matter yet ten times worse with us, when *the rooters* and *through-reformers* made clean work with the church, and took away all, and so, by stripping the clergy of their rights and preferments, left us in a fair posture, (you may be sure,) both offensive and defensive, to encounter our acute and learned adversaries the Jesuits. For then the polemics of the field had quite silenced those of the schools. All being took up and busied, some in pulpits, and some in tubs, in the grand work of preaching and holding forth, and that of edification, (as the word then went;) so that they seemed like an army of men armed only with trowels, and perhaps amongst thousands only a Saul and a Jonathan with swords in their hands, only one or two with scholastic artillery,

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3 Sir Edwyn Sandys in his *Europae Speculum*.

and preparation for controversy. But this by the way, and as a sad instance to shew how fatal it is, that when divinity takes in so large a compass of learning, and that for so many uses, the church should be robbed of the proper and most effectual means of stocking herself with it.

But some perhaps will reply, What needs all this? we are resolved to preach only, and look no further, and for this much reading cannot be requisite, except only for the delivery of our sermons: for we will preach our own experiences. To which I answer, that be this as it may; but yet, if these men preach their own experiences, as they call them, without some other sort of reading and knowledge, both their hearers, and themselves too, will quickly have more than sufficient experience of their confidence and ridiculous impertinence. But as there are certain mountebanks and quacks in physic, so there are much the same also in divinity, such as have only two or three little experiments and popular harangues to entertain and amuse the vulgar with; but being wholly unacquainted with the solid grounds and rules of science, from whence alone come true sufficiency and skill, they are pitifully ignorant and useless as to any great and worthy purposes; and fit for little else, but to shew the world how easily fools may be imposed upon by knaves. And thus much for habitual preparation in point of knowledge; besides which, there is required also, in the

Second place, the like preparation as to significant speech and expression. For as I shew, that by knowledge a man informs himself, so by expression he conveys that knowledge to others; and as bare words convey, so the propriety and elegancy of them gives force and facility to the conveyance. But because this is like to have more opposers, especially such as call a speaking coherently upon any sacred subject, a blending of man's wisdom with the word, an offering of strange fire; and account the being pertinent, even the next door to the being profane, I say, for their sakes, I shall prove a thing clear in itself by scripture, and that not by arguments, or consequences drawn from thence, but by downright instances occurring in it, and those so very plain, that even such as themselves cannot be ignorant of them. For in God's word we have not only a body of religion, but also a system of the best rhetoric: and as the highest things require the highest expressions, so we shall find nothing in scripture so sublime in itself, but it is reached, and sometimes overtopped by the sublimity of the expression. And first, where did majesty ever ride in more splendour, than in those descriptions of the divine power in Job, in the [38th, 39th, and 40th chapters](#)? And what triumph was ever celebrated with higher, livelier, and more exalted poetry, than in the song of Moses in the [32d of Deut.](#)? And then for the passions of the soul; which being things of the highest transport and most wonderful and various operation in human nature, are therefore the proper object and business of rhetoric: let us take a view how the scripture expresses the most noted and powerful of them. And here, what poetry ever paralleled Solomon in his description of love, as to all the ways, effects, and ecstasies, and little tyrannies of that commanding passion? See Ovid with his *Omnia vincit amor*, &c. and Virgil with his *Vulnus alit*

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*venis et caeco carpitur igne, &c.* How jejune and thin are they to the poetry of Solomon, in the 8th chapter of the Canticles, and the 6th verse, *Love is strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave.* And as for his description of beauty, he describes that so, that he even transcribes it into his expressions. And where do we read such strange risings and fallings, now the faintings and languishings, now the terrors and astonishments of despair venting themselves in such high, amazing strains, as in the 77th Psalm? Or where did we ever find sorrow flowing forth in such a natural prevailing pathos, as in the Lamentations of Jeremy? One would think, that every letter was wrote with a tear, every word was the noise of a breaking heart; that the author was a man compacted of sorrows; disciplined to grief from his fancy; one who never breathed but in sighs, nor spoke but in a groan. So that he who said he would not read the scripture for fear of spoiling his style, shewed himself<sup>4</sup> as much a blockhead as an atheist, and to have as small a gust of the elegancies of expression, as of the sacredness of the matter. And shall we now think that the scripture forbids all ornament of speech, and engages men to be dull, flat, and slovenly in all their discourses? But let us look a little further, and see whether the New Testament abrogates what we see so frequently used in the Old. And for this, what mean all the parables used by our Saviour, the known and greatest elegancies of speech? so that if this way was unlawful before, Christ by his example has authorized and sanctified it since, and if good and lawful, has confirmed it. But as for the men whom we contend with; I see not why they should exterminate all rhetoric, who still treat of things figuratively, and by the worst of figures too, their whole discourse being one continued meiosis, to diminish, lessen, and debase the great things of the gospel infinitely below themselves. Besides that I need not go beyond the very words of the text for an impregnable proof of this; for Christ says, that a *scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven ought to bring out of his treasure things new and old.* Now I demand, what are the things here to be understood? For as to the matter which he is here to treat of, the articles of the Christian religion are and still must be the same, and therefore there can be no such variety as *new and old* in them. Wherefore it remains, that this variety can be only in the way of expressing those things. Besides that our Saviour Christ, in these words, particularly relates to the manner of his own preaching, upon occasion of the very sermon which we find all along this chapter delivered in parables; so that by *new and old* may probably be meant nothing thing else, but a plenty, or fluent dexterity of the most suitable words and pregnant arguments to set off and enforce gospel truths. For questionless, when Christ says, that a *scribe* must be stocked with *things new and old*, we must not think that he meant, that he should have an hoard of old sermons, (whosoever made them,) with a bundle of new opinions; for this certainly would have furnished out such entertainment to his spiritual guests, as no rightly-disposed palate could ever relish, or stomach bear. And therefore, the



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4 Politian.

thing which Christ here drives at, must needs be only variety and copiousness of sacred eloquence.

And thus much for the first of the three general heads proposed by us for the handling these words; which was to shew the qualifications necessary for a *gospel scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*. And these were two; first, habitual preparation, in point of learning or knowledge; and secondly, the other in point of significant speech or expression: I proceed now to the

Second general head proposed; which was, to as sign the reasons of this their necessity; and these shall be three.

1. Because the preacher works upon men's minds only as a moral agent, and as one who can do no more than persuade, and not by any physical efficiency. And herein I do not say, that conversion is caused only by moral suasion: for if we consider the strength of our corruption, and how it has insinuated itself into the very principles of nature, and seized upon those powers which are but very little under the command of the intellectual part, I think it cannot be subdued by mere suasion, which in its utmost reaches only to the convincing of that: but the heart must be changed by a much higher power, even by an immediate omnipotent work of God's Spirit infusing a quality into the soul, not there before, which by degrees shall weaken and work out our inherent natural corruption: and this being a creating work, is done solely and immediately by God himself, forasmuch as creation admits of no instrument, as being an effect of that infinite creative power, which cannot be conveyed to an instrumental agent.

But you will say then, If conversion be the sole, immediate work of God, what need is thereof a preacher? and how can he be said to be, as usually he is, God's instrument in the work of a man's conversion? To which I answer, 1st, That God's institution of preaching is a sufficient reason for it, though we knew no other. 2dly, That when the preacher is said to be an instrument in the conversion of a sinner, it is not meant, that he is such, by a properly physical efficiency, but only morally, and by persuasion. I explain my meaning thus. A physical instrument, or such as is found in natural efficient productions, is that, which, partaking of the power, force, and causality of the principal agent from thence derived to it, produces a suitable effect. As when I cut or divide a thing, the force of my hand is conveyed to the knife, by virtue of which, the knife cuts or divides. And thus, I say, the preacher cannot be the instrument of conversion, for the reason above mentioned; because that infinite power, which does convert, cannot be conveyed to any finite being whatsoever. But a moral instrument is quite of another nature; and is that, as I may so express it, *non quo producente, sed quo interveniente sequitur effectus*: not that which conversion is effected by, but that without which, ordinarily at least, it is not. So that while the minister is preaching and persuading, God puts forth another secret influence, quite different from that of the preacher, though still going along with it: and it is this, by which God immediately touches the sinner's

heart, and converts him. Howbeit, the preacher is still said to be instrumental in this great work; forasmuch as his preaching is subordinate to, and most commonly, as has been said, accompanies it: God not being pleased to exert his action, but in concurrence with the preacher exerting his. And thus having given God his prerogative, and the preacher his due, by shewing how he is morally instrumental to the work of the sinner's conversion by persuading; I infer the necessity of those forementioned abilities and preparations for preaching, as being the most proper means and instruments of persuasion. See this exemplified in St. Paul himself, and in him observe, when he deals with the Jews, how he endeavours to insinuate what he says, by pleading his own kindred with them, speaking honourably of Abraham, and of the law, and calling the gospel *the law of faith*; and affirming, that it did *establish the law*. All which was the true art of natural rhetoric, thus to convey his sense under those names and notions, which he knew were highly pleasing to them. But then, on the other hand, when he would win over the gentiles; forasmuch as there was a standing feud between them and the Jews; (the Jews, like the men here of late, for ever unsainting all the world, besides themselves;) observe how he deals with them. He tells them of the rejection of the Jews, and the Gentiles being ingrafted in their room: and that Abraham believed unto justification before he was circumcised, and therefore was no less the father of the uncircumcised believers, than of the circumcised. He tells them also, that the believing Gentiles were his spiritual seed, but the Jews, as such, were only his carnal. He takes occasion also to undervalue circumcision, and the ceremonial law, as abused by the Jews, and in themselves things most hateful to other nations. Now all this was hugely pleasing to the Gentiles, and therefore very apt to persuade. But had not St. Paul been a man of learning and skill in the art and methods of rhetoric, he could not have suited such apposite exhortations to such different sorts of men with so much dexterity. And the same course, in dealing with men's minds, is a minister of the word to take now. As suppose, he would dissuade men from any vice, he is to found his dissuasives upon the peculiar temper of the man; so that if, for instance, he should find it needful to preach against drunkenness, and there were several in the congregation addicted to several sorts of vice, as some to pride or ambition, some to covetousness, or the like; here, besides the general argument from the punishments of the other world denounced against these and such other vices, if he would do his business effectually, he must also tell the ambitious or proud man, that his drunkenness would disgrace him, and make him the scorn and contempt of all the world about him; and the covetous man, that it would certainly waste his estate, and beggar him. Whereas should he, on the other hand, transplace these arguments, and dissuade him who is proud from drinking, because it would beggar him, and him who is covetous, because it would disgrace him, doubtless he would prevail but little; because his argument would not strike that proper principle which each of them were governed by. And now what can this be grounded upon, but upon natural philosophy, and a knowledge of men's passions and interests, the great and chief springs of all their actions?

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And upon the like ground it is, that for a preacher in his discourses to the people to insist only upon universals, is but a cold, faint, languid way of persuading or dissuading; as, to tell men in general, that they are sinners, and that, going on in sin without repentance, they are under the curse and wrath of God; all which they think they knew before, and accordingly receive it as a word of course, and too slightly regard it: but conviction, the usual forerunner of, and preparative to conversion, is from particulars, as if the preacher should tell his hearers, that he who continues to cheat, cozen, and equivocate, is a wicked and impenitent wretch; and that he who drinks, and swears, and whores, is the person to whom the curse directly belongs: and this seriously urged, and discreetly applied, will, if any thing, carry it home to the conscience, and lodge it there too. And now is not the reason of this method also to be fetched from philosophy, as well as from religion? For we know, that men naturally have only a weak, confused knowledge of universals, but a clear and lively idea of particulars. And that which gives a clear representation of a thing to the apprehension, makes a suitable impression of it upon the will and affections. Whosoever therefore pretends to be a preacher, must know, that his main business is to persuade, and that without the helps of human learning, this can hardly be done to any purpose. So that if he finds himself wholly destitute of these, and has no thing else to trust to, but some groundless, windy, and fantastic notions about the Spirit, (the common sanctuary of fanatics and enthusiasts,) he would do well to look back, and taking his hand off from this plough, to put it to another much fitter for him. But in the mean time, as for ourselves, who pretend not to a pitch above other mortals, nor dare rely upon inspiration instead of industry, we must rest content to revere the wisdom, and follow the examples of those who went before us, and enjoined us the study of the arts and sciences, as the surest and most tried way to that of divinity.

2. A second reason for the necessity of these preparations for the ministry shall be taken from this consideration; that at the first promulgation of the gospel, God was pleased to furnish the apostles and preachers of it with abilities proper for that great work, after a supernatural and miraculous way. For still we find, that the scripture represents the apostles as ignorant and illiterate men, and that the chief priests and elders of the Jews took particular notice of them, as such, in [Acts iv. and the 13th verse](#). The text there giving them this character, that they were ἄνθρωποι ἀγράμματοι, καὶ ἰδιῶται, that is to say, according to the strict signification of the word, men unlearned, and of a mean and plebeian condition. Nevertheless, since they were appointed by God to preach the gospel to several nations; a work requiring a considerable knowledge of the languages of those nations, and impossible to be performed without it; and yet no less impossible for the apostles, having neither time nor opportunity to acquire that knowledge in the natural, ordinary course of study; God himself supplies this defect, and endues them with all necessary qualifications by immediate and divine infusion. So that *being filled with the Holy Ghost*, as we read in [Acts ii. and the 4th verse](#), they forthwith *spoke with other tongues*; and that so clearly, plainly, and intelligibly,



as both to convince and astonish all who heard them; even those of the most different nations and languages, as well as their own countrymen the Jews themselves. From whence I thus argue; That if the forementioned helps and assistances were not always of most singular use, and sometimes of indispensable necessity to the calling of a divine, certainly the most wise God would never have been at the expense of a miracle, to endow men, of that calling, with them. For he who observes that order and decorum in all his works, as never to overdo any thing, nor carry on the business of his ordinary providence by extraordinary and supernatural ways, would doubtless (in the eye of the world at least) seem to debase and make cheap those noblest instances of his power, should he ever exert them, but where he saw it of the highest concern to his own honour, and man's happiness, that something should be done for both, which bare nature, left to itself, could never do.

3. The third and last reason for the necessity of such preparations for the ministry, shall be drawn from the dignity of the subject of it, which is divinity. And what is divinity, but a doctrine treating of the nature, attributes, and works of the great God, as he stands related to rational creatures; and the way how rational creatures may serve, worship, and enjoy him? And if so, is not the subject-matter of it the greatest, and the design and business of it the noblest in the world, as being no less than to direct an immortal soul to its endless and eternal felicity? It has been disputed, to which of the intellectual habits, mentioned by Aristotle, it most properly belongs; some referring it to wisdom, some to science, some to prudence, and some compounding it of several of them together: but those seem to speak most to the purpose, who will not have it formally any one of them, but virtually, and in an eminent transcendent manner, all. And now can we think, that a doctrine of that depth, that height, and that vast compass, grasping within it all the perfections and dimensions of human science, does not worthily claim all the preparations, whereby the wit and industry of man can fit him for it? All other sciences are accounted but handmaids to divinity: and shall the handmaid be richer adorned, and better clothed and set off, than her lady? In other things, the art usually excels the matter, and the ornament we bestow, is better than the subject we bestow it upon: but here we are sure, that we have such a subject before us, as not only calls for, but commands, and not only commands, but deserves our utmost application to it; a subject of that native, that inherent worth, that it is not capable of any addition from us, but shines both through and above all the artificial lustre we can put upon it. The study of divinity is indeed difficult, and we are labour hard and dig deep for it; but then we dig in a golden mine, which equally invites and rewards our labour.

And thus much for the second general head at first proposed, for the handling of the words; which was to shew, the reasons of the necessity of the preparations spoken of to the study of divinity. Of which we have assigned three.

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And so we pass at length to the third and last general head proposed, which was, to shew what useful inferences may be drawn from the foregoing particulars. And the first shall be a just and severe reproof to two sorts of men.

1st, To such as disparage and detract from the grandeur of the gospel, by a puerile and indecent levity in their discourses of it to the people.

2dly, To such as depreciate, and (as much as in them lies) debase the same, by a coarse, careless, rude, and insipid way of handling the great and in valuable truths of it.

Both of them certainly objects of the most deserved reproof. And

1. For those who disparage and detract from the gospel, by a puerile and indecent sort of levity in their discourses upon it, so extremely below the subject discoursed of. All vain, luxuriant allegories, rhyming cadencies of similiary words, are such pitiful embellishments of speech, as serve for nothing but to embase divinity; and the use of them, but like the plastering of marble, or the painting of gold, the glory of which is to be seen, and to shine by no other lustre but their own. What Quintilian most discreetly says of Seneca's handling philosophy, that he did *rerum pondera minutissimis sententiis frangere*, break, and, as it were, emasculate the weight of his subject by little affected sentences, the same may with much more reason be applied to the practice of those, who detract from the excellency of things sacred by a comical lightness of expression: as when their prayers shall be set out in such a dress, as if they did not supplicate, but compliment Almighty God; and their sermons so garnished with quibbles and trifles, as if they played with truth and immortality; and neither believed these things themselves, nor were willing that others should. For is it possible, that a man in his senses should be merry and jocose with eternal life and eternal death, if he really designed to strike the awful impression of either into the consciences of men? No, no; this is no less a contradiction to common sense and reason, than to the strictest notions of religion. And as this can by no means be accounted divinity, so neither indeed can it pass for wit; which yet such chiefly seem to affect in such performances. For these are as much the stains of true human eloquence, as they are the blots and blemishes of divinity; and might be as well confuted out of Quintilian's Institutions, as out of St. Paul's Epistles. Such are wholly mistaken in the nature of wit: for true wit is a severe and a manly thing. Wit in divinity is nothing else, but sacred truths suitably expressed. It is not shreds of Latin or Greek, nor a *Deus dixit*, and a *Deus benedixit*, nor those little quirks, or divisions into the *ὅτι*, the *διότι*, and the *καθότι*, or the *egress*, *regress*, and *progress*, and other such stuff, (much like the style of a lease,) that can properly be called wit. For that is not wit which consists not with wisdom. For can you think that it had not been an easy matter for any one, in the text here pitched upon by me, to have run out into a long, fulsome allegory, comparing the scribe and the householder together, and now and then to have cast in a rhyme, with a *quid*, a *quo*, and a *quomodo*, and the like? But certainly it would then have been much more difficult

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for the judicious to hear such things, than for any, if so inclined, to have composed them. The practice therefore of such persons is upon no terms to be endured. Nor,

2. Is the contrary of it to be at all more endured in those who cry up their mean, heavy, careless, and insipid way of handling things sacred, as the only spiritual and evangelical way of preaching, while they charge all their crude incoherences, saucy familiarities with God, and nauseous tautologies, upon the Spirit prompting such things to them, and that as the most elevated and seraphic heights of religion. Both these sorts, as I have said, are absolutely to be exploded; and it is hard to judge which of them deserves it most. It is indeed no ways decent for a grave matron to be attired in the gaudy, flaunting dress of youth; but it is not at all uncomely for such an one to be clothed in the richest and most costly silk, if black or grave: for it is not the richness of the piece, but the gaudiness of the colour, which exposes to censure. And therefore, as I shew before, that the  $\delta\tau\iota$ 's and the  $\delta\iota\acute{o}\tau\iota$ 's, the *Deus dixit*, and the *Deus benedixit*, could not be accounted wit; so neither can the whimsical cant of <sup>5</sup>issues, products, tendencies, breathings, indwellings, rollings, recumbencies, and scriptures misapplied, be accounted divinity. In a word, let but these new lights, (so apt to teach their betters,) instead of all this and the like jargon, bring us, in their discourses, strength of argument, clearness of consequence, exactness of method, and propriety of speech, and then let prejudice and party (whatsoever they may mutter against them) despise and deride them, if they can. But persons of light, undistinguishing heads, not able to carry themselves clear between extremes, think that they must either flutter, as it were, in the air, by a kind of vain, empty lightness, or lie grovelling upon the ground, by a dead and contemptible flatness; both the one and the other, no doubt, equally ridiculous. But, after all, I cannot but believe, that it is the bewitching easiness of the latter way of the two which chiefly sanctifies and endears it to the practice of these men; and I hope it will not prove offensive to the auditory, if, to release it (could I be so happy) from suffering by such stuff for the future, I venture upon some short description of it; and it is briefly thus. First of all they seize upon some text, from whence they draw something, which they call a doctrine, and well may it be said to be *drawn* from the words; forasmuch as it seldom naturally flows or results from them. In the next place, being thus provided, they branch it into several heads, perhaps twenty, or thirty, or upwards. Whereupon, for the prosecution of these, they repair to some trusty concordance, which never fails them; and by the help of that, they range six or seven scriptures under each head; which scriptures they prosecute one by one, first amplifying and enlarging upon one, for some considerable time, till they have spoiled it; and then, that being done, they pass to another, which in its turn suffers accordingly. And these impertinent and unpremeditated enlargements, they look upon as the motions and breathings of the Spirit, and therefore much beyond those carnal ordinances of sense and reason, supported by industry and study;

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5 Terms often and much used by one J. O. a great leader and oracle in those times.

and this they call a *saving way* of preaching, as it must be confessed to be a way to save much labour, and nothing else that I know of. But how men should thus come to make the salvation of an immortal soul such a slight, extempore business, I must profess I cannot understand; and would gladly understand upon whose example they ground this way of preaching; not upon that of the apostles, I am sure. For it is said of St. Paul, in his sermon before Felix, that *he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*. The words being in [Acts xxiv. 25](#), διαλεγομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ, and, according to the natural force and import of them, signifying, that he discoursed or reasoned dialectically, following one conclusion with another, and with the most close and pressing arguments from the most persuasive topics of reason and divinity. Whereupon we quickly find the prevalence of his preaching in a suitable effect, that *Felix trembled*. Whereas had Paul only cast about his arms, spoke himself hoarse, and cried, *You are damned*, though Felix (as guilty as he was) might have given him the hearing, yet possibly he might also have looked upon him as one whose passion had at that time got the start of his judgment, and accordingly have given him the same coarse salute which the same Paul afterwards so undeservedly met with from Festus; but his zeal was too much under the conduct of his reason to fly out at such a rate. But, to pass from these indecencies to others, as little to be allowed in this sort of men, can any tolerable reason be given for those strange new postures used by some in the delivery of the word? Such as shutting the eyes, distorting the face, and speaking through the nose, which I think cannot so properly be called *preaching* as *toning* of a sermon. Nor do I see why *the word* may not be altogether as effectual for the conversion of souls, delivered by one who has the manners to look his auditory in the face, using his own countenance and his own native voice, without straining it to a lamentable and doleful whine, (never serving to any purpose, but where some religious cheat is to be carried on.) That ancient, though seemingly odd saying, *Loquere ut te videam*, in my poor judgment, carries in it a very notable instruction, and peculiarly applicable to the persons and matter here pointed at. For, supposing one to be a very able and excellent speaker, yet, under the forementioned circumstances, he must, however, needs be a very ill sight; and the case of his poor suffering hearers very severe upon them, while both the matter uttered by him shall grate hard upon the ear, and the person uttering it at the same time equally offend the eye. It is clear, therefore, that the men of this method have sullied the noble science of divinity, and can never warrant their practice either from religion or reason, or the rules of decent and good behaviour, nor yet from the example of the apostles, and least of all from that of our Saviour himself. For none surely will imagine, that these men's speaking as never man spoke before, can pass for any imitation of him. And here humbly conceive that it may not be amiss to take occasion to utter a great truth, as both worthy to be now considered, and never to be forgot; namely, that if we reflect upon the late times of confusion which passed upon the ministry, we shall find that the grand design of the fanatic crew was to persuade the world, that a standing, settled ministry was wholly

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useless. This, I say, was the main point which they then drove at. And the great engine to effect this, was by engaging men of several callings, (and those the meaner still the better,) to hold forth and harangue the multitude, sometimes in streets, sometimes in churches, sometimes in barns, and sometimes from pulpits, and sometimes from tubs: and, in a word, wheresoever and howsoever they could clock the senseless and unthinking rabble about them. And with this practice well followed, they (and their friends the Jesuits) concluded, that in some time it would be no hard matter to persuade the people, that if men of other professions were able to teach and preach the word, then to what purpose should there be a company of men brought up to it, and maintained in it, at the charge of a public allowance? especially when, at the same time, the truly godly so greedily gaped and grasped at it for their self-denying selves. So that preaching, we see, was their prime engine. But now what was it which encouraged these men to set up for a work, which, if duly managed, was so difficult in itself, and which they were never bred to? Why, no doubt it was that low, cheap, illiterate way then commonly used, and cried up for the only *gospel, soul-searching way*, (as the word then went,) and which the craftier sort of them saw well enough, that with a little exercise, and much confidence, they might in a short time come to equal, if not exceed; as it cannot be denied but that some few of them (with the help of a few friends in masquerade) accordingly did. But, on the contrary, had preaching been made and reckoned a matter of solid and true learning, of theological knowledge, and long and severe study, (as the nature of it required it to be,) assuredly no preaching cobbler amongst them all would ever have ventured so far beyond his last as to undertake it. And consequently this their most powerful engine for supplanting the church and clergy had never been at tempted, nor perhaps so much as thought on: and therefore of most singular benefit, no question, would it be to the public, if those who have authority to second their advice would counsel the ignorant and the forward to consider what divinity is, and what they themselves are, and so to put up their preaching tools, their medullas, note-books, their mellificiums, concordances, and all, and betake themselves to some useful trade, which nature had most particularly fitted them for. This is what I thought fit to offer and recommend; and that not out of any humour of opposition to this or that sort of men, (for, whatsoever they may deserve, I think them be low it,) but out of a dutiful zeal for the advancement of what most of us profess, *divinity*; as likewise for the honour of that place which we belong to, the University; and which of late years I have (with no small sorrow) heard often reflected upon for the meanness of many performances in it, no ways answerable to the ancient reputation of so noble a seat of knowledge. For, let the enemies of that and us say what they will, no man's dulness is or can be his duty, and much less his perfection.

And thus, having considered the two different, or rather contrary ways of handling the word, and most justly rejected them both, I shall now briefly give the reasons of our rejection of them; and these shall be two.

1. Because both these ways, to wit, the light and comical, and the dull and heavy, extremely expose and discredit the ordinance of preaching: and,

2. Because they no less disgrace the church itself.

1. And, first, we shall find how much both of them expose and discredit the ordinance of preaching; even that ordinance which was originally designed for the two greatest things in the world, the honour of God, and the conversion of souls. For if to convert a soul, even by the word itself, and the strongest arguments which the reason of man can bring, (as being no more than instruments, or rather mere conditions in the case,) if, I say, this be reckoned a work above nature, (as it really is,) then surely to convert one by a jest would be a reach beyond a miracle. In short, it is this unhallowed way of preaching which turns the pulpit into a stage, and the most sovereign remedy against sin, and preservative of the soul, into *the sacrifice of fools*; making it a matter of sport to the light and vain, of pity to the sober and devout, and of scorn and loathing to all; and I believe never yet drew a tear or a sigh from any judicious and well-disposed auditor, unless perhaps for the sin and vanity of the speaker: so sad a thing it is, when sermons shall be such, that the most serious hearer of them shall not be able to command or keep fixed his attention and his countenance too. For can it be imagined excusable, or indeed tolerable, for one who owns himself for God's ambassador to the people, to speak those things, as by his authority, of which it is hard to judge whether they detract from the honour or honesty of an ambassador most? But, in a word, when the professed dispensers of the weighty matters of religion shall treat them in a way so utterly unsuitable to the weight and grandeur of them, do they not come too near the infamous example of Eli's two sons, who managed their priestly office (as high and sacred as it was) in so wretched a manner, that it is said, in [1 Sam. ii. 17](#)? that *the people abhorred the offering of the Lord*? and if so, we may be sure that they abhorred the offerers much more.

2. As the two forementioned ways of handling the word, viz. the light and comical, and the heavy and dull, do mightily discredit the great ordinance of preaching, so they equally discredit the church itself. It is the unhappy fate of the clergy, above all men, that their failures and defects never terminate in their own persons, but still redound upon their function; a manifest injustice certainly; where one is the criminal, and another must be the sufferer: but yet as bad as it is, from the practice of some persons, to take occasion to reproach the church; so, on the other side, to give the occasion, is undoubtedly much worse. And therefore, whatsoever relation to, or whatsoever interest in, or affection to the church, such may or do pretend to, they are really greater enemies and fouler blots to her excellent constitution, than the most avowed opposers and maligners of it; and consequently would have disobliterated her infinitely less, had they fallen in with the schismatics and fanatics in their bitterest invectives against her; and that even to the renouncing her orders, (as some of them have done,) and an entire quitting of her communion besides; the greatest kindness that such could possibly have done her. For better it is to be hissed at by a snake out of the hedge or

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the dung hill, than to be hissed at and bitten too by one in one's own bosom. But I trust, that when men shall seriously and impartially consider how and from whence the church's enemies have took advantage against her, there will be found those whose preaching shall both answer and adorn her constitution, and withal make her excellent instructions from the pulpit so to suit, as well as second her incomparable devotions from the desk, that they shall neither fly out into those levities and indecencies (so justly before condemned) on the one hand, not yet sink into that sordid, supine dulness on the other, (which our men of the Spirit so much affect to distinguish themselves by, and which we by no means desire to vie with them in.) In sum, we hope that all our church-performances shall be such, that she shall as much outshine all those about her in the soundness and sobriety of her doctrines, as she surpasses them all in the primitive excellency of her discipline.

And thus having finished the first of the two general inferences from the foregoing particulars, which was for the reproof of two contrary sorts of dispensers of the word, and given reasons against them both, I shall now, in the

Second place, pass to the other and concluding inference from this whole discourse; and that shall be, to exhort and advise those who have already heard what preparations are required to a *gospel scribe instructed to the kingdom of heaven*, and who withal design themselves for the same employment, with the utmost seriousness of thought to consider the high reasonableness, or rather absolute necessity of their bestowing a competent and sufficient time in the universities for that purpose. And to dissuade such from a sudden and hasty relinquishment of them, (besides arguments, more than enough, drawn from the great inconveniencies of so doing, and the implicit prohibition of St. Paul himself, declaring, *that he who undertakes a pastoral charge must not be a novice*;) there is still a more cogent reason for the same, and that from the very nature of the thing itself: for how (naturally speaking) can there be a fitness for any great thing or work without preparation? And how can there be preparation without due time and opportunity? It is observed of the Levites, though much of their ministry was only *shoulder work*, that they had yet a very considerable time for preparation. They were consecrated to it by the imposition of hands at the age of five and twenty; after which they employed five years in learning their office, and then, at the thirtieth year of their age, they began their Levitical ministration; at which time also our blessed Saviour began his ministry. But now, under the gospel, when our work is ten times greater, (as well as twice ten times more spiritual than theirs was,) do we think to furnish ourselves in half the space? There was lately a company of men called *triers*, commissioned by Cromwell, to judge of the abilities of such as were to be admitted by them into the ministry: who, forsooth, if any of that Levitical age of thirty presented himself to them for their approbation, they commonly rejected him with scorn and disdain; telling him, that if he had



not been lukewarm, and good for nothing, he would have been disposed of in the ministry long before; and they would tell him also, that he was not only of a legal age, but of a legal spirit too; and as for things legal, (by which we poor mortals, and men of the letter, and not of the spirit, understand things done according to law,) this they renounced, and pretended to be many degrees above it; for otherwise we may be sure that their great master of misrule, Oliver, would never have commissioned them to serve him in that post. And now what a kind of ministry (may we imagine) such would have stocked this poor nation with, in the space of ten years more? But the truth is, for those whose divinity was novelty, it ought to be no wonder, if their divines were to be novices too; and since they intended to make their preaching and praying an extemporary work, no wonder if they were contented also with an extemporary preparation; and after two or three years spent in the university, ran abroad, under a pretence of *servng God in their generation*, (a term in mighty request with them,) and that for reasons (it is supposed) best known to themselves. But as for such mushroom divines, who start up so of a sudden, we do not usually find their success so good as to recommend their practice. Hasty births are seldom long lived, but never strong; and therefore I hope, that those who love the church so well, as not to be willing that she should suffer by any failure of theirs, will make it their business so to stock themselves here, as to carry from hence both learning and experience to that arduous and great work, which so eminently requires both. And the more inexcusable will an over-hasty leaving this noble place of improvement be, by how much the greater encouragement we now have to make a longer stay in it than we had some years since; Providence having broken the rod of (I believe) as great spiritual oppression, as was ever before exercised upon any company or corporation of men whatsoever: when some spiritual tyrants, then at the top and head of it, not being able to fasten any accusation upon men's lives, mortally maligned by them, would presently arraign and pass sentence upon their hearts; and deny them the proper encouragement and support of scholars, because, forsooth, they were not (in their refined sense) godly and regenerate; nor allowed to be godly, because they would not espouse a faction, by resorting to their congregational, house-warming meetings; where the brotherhood (or sisterhood rather) used to be so very kind to *their friends and brethren in the Lord*. Besides the barbarous, raving insolence which those spiritual dons from the pulpit were wont to shew to all sorts and degrees of men, high and low; representing every casual mishap as a judgment from God upon such and such particular persons; who being implacably hated by the party, could not, it seems, be otherwise by God himself. For, <sup>6</sup>*Mark the men*, said Holderforth, (as I myself, with several others, frequently heard him.) And then, having thus fixed his mark, and taken aim, he would shoot through and through it with a vengeance. But, I hope, things are already come to that pass, that we shall never again hear any, especially of our own body,

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6 Dr. H. W. violently thrust in canon of Christ Church, Oxon, by the parliament visitors, in the year 1647.



in the very face of loyalty and learning, dare in this place (so renowned for both) either rail at majesty, or decry a standing ministry, and, in a most unnatural and preposterous manner, plant their batteries in the pulpit for the beating down of the church.

In fine, therefore, both to relieve your patience and close up this whole discourse, since Providence, by a wonder of mercy, has now opened a way for the return of our laws and our religion, it will concern us all seriously to consider, that as the work before us is the greatest and most important, both with reference to this world and the next, so likewise to remember and lay to heart, that this is the place of preparation, and now the time of it: and consequently, that the more time and care shall be taken by us to go from hence prepared for our great business, the better, no doubt, will be our work, and the larger our reward.

*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 dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen,*



## A SERMON

ON

### PROVERBS I. 32.

*The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.*

**I**T is a thing partly worth our wonder, partly our compassion, that what the greatest part of men are most passionately desirous of, that they are generally most unfit for: for they look upon things absolutely in themselves, without examining the suitableness of them to their own conditions; and so, at a distance, court that as an enjoyment, which upon experience they find a plague, and a great calamity. And this peculiar ill property has folly, that it widens and enlarges men's desires, while it lessens their capacities. Like a dropsy, which still calls for drink, but not affording strength to digest it, puts an end to the drinker, but not the thirst.

As for the explication of the text, to tell you, that in the dialect of scripture, but especially of this book of the Proverbs, wicked men are called fools, and wickedness folly, as on the contrary, that piety is still graced with the name of wisdom, would be as superfluous as to attempt the proof of a self-evident and first principle, or to light a candle to the sun. By *fools* therefore are here represented all wicked and vicious persons. Such as turn their backs upon reason and religion, and, wholly devoting themselves to sensuality, follow the sway and career of their corrupt affections.

The misery of which persons is from hence most manifest, that, when God gives them what they most love, they perish in the embraces of it, are crushed to death under heaps of gold, stifled with an over coming plenty: like a ship fetching rich commodities from a far country, but sinking by the weight of them in its return. Since therefore wicked men are so strangely out in the calculating of their own interest, and account nothing happiness, but what brings up death and destruction in the rear of it; and since prosperity is yet, in itself, a real blessing, though to them it becomes a mischief, and determines in a curse; it concerns us to look into the reason of this strange event, and to examine how it comes to pass, that *the prosperity of fools destroys them.*

The reasons of it, I conceive, may be these three.

I. Because every foolish or vicious person is either ignorant or regardless of the proper ends and uses, for which God designs the prosperity of those to whom he sends it.

II. Because prosperity (as the nature of man now stands) has a peculiar force and fitness to abate men's virtues, and to heighten their corruptions. And,

III. and lastly, because it directly indisposes them to the proper means of amendment and recovery.



I. And first for the first of these. One reason why vicious persons miscarry by prosperity, is, because every such person is either ignorant or regardless of the proper ends and uses for which God ordains and designs it. Which ends are these:

1. To try and discover what is in a man. All trial is properly inquiry, and inquiry is an endeavour after the knowledge of a thing as yet unknown; and consequently, in strictness of speech, God, who knows all things, and can be ignorant of nothing, cannot be said to try, any more than he can be said to inquire. But God, while he speaks to men, is often pleased to speak after the manner of men; and the reason of this is not only his condescension to our capacities, but because in many actions God behaves himself with some analogy and proportion to the actings of men. And therefore, because God sometimes sets those things before men, that have in them a fitness to draw forth and discover what is in their heart, as inquisitive persons do, who have a mind to pry into the thoughts and actions of their neighbour, he is upon this account said to try or to inquire, though, in truth, by so doing, God designs not to inform himself, but the person whom he tries, and to give both him and the world a view of his temper and disposition.

For the world is ignorant of men, till occasion gives them power to turn their inside outward, and to shew themselves. So that what is said of an office, may be also said of prosperity, and a fortune, that it does *indicare virum*, discover what the man is, and what metal his heart is made of. We see a slave perhaps cringe, and sneak, and humble himself; but do we therefore presently think that we see his nature in his behaviour? No, we may find ourselves much mistaken; for nobody knows, in case Providence should think fit to smile upon such an one, and, as it were, to launch him forth into a deep and a wide fortune, how quickly he would be another man, assume another spirit, and grow insolent, imperious, and insufferable.

Nor is this a mystery hid only from the eyes of the world round about a man, but sometimes also even from himself; for he seldom knows his own heart so perfectly, as to be able to give a certain account of the future disposition and inclination of it, when placed under different states and conditions of life. He that has been bred poor, and grown up in a cottage, knows not how his spirits would move, and his blood rise, should he come to handle full bags, to see splendid attendances, and to eat, drink, and sleep in state. Yet no doubt, but by such great unlikely changes, as also by lower degrees of affluence and fruition, Providence designs to sift, and search, and give the world some experience of the make and bent of men's minds.

But now the vicious person flies only upon the bulk and matter of the gift, and considers not that the giver has a plot and a design upon him; the consideration of which would naturally make men cautious and circumspect in their behaviour: for surely it is not an ordinary degree of intemperance, that would prompt a man to drink in temperately before those, who, he knows, gave him his freedom, only to try whether he would use it to excess or no.



God gave Saul a rich booty upon the conquest of Amalek, to try whether he would prefer real obedience before pretended sacrifice, and the performing of a command before flying upon the spoil: but his ignorance of the use to which God designed that prosperous event, made him let loose the reins of his folly and his covetousness, even to the blasting of his crown, and the taking the sceptre from his family, [1 Sam. xv. 23](#). *Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord*, said Samuel to him, *he hath also rejected thee from being king*: so that this was the effect of his misunderstood success; he conquered Amalek, but destroyed himself.



2. The second end and design of God in giving prosperity, and of which all wicked persons are either ignorant or regardless, is to encourage them in a constant, humble expression of their gratitude to the bounty of their Maker, who deals forth such rich and plentiful provisions to his undeserving creatures. God would have every temporal blessing raise that question in the heart; *Lord, what is man, that thou visitest him? or the son of man, that thou so regardest him?* He never sends the pleasures of the spring nor the plenties of harvest to surfeit, but to oblige the sons of men; and the very fruits of the earth are intended as arguments to carry their thoughts to heaven.

But the wicked and sensual part of the world are only concerned to find scope and room enough to wallow in; if they can but have it, whence they have it troubles not their thoughts; saying grace is no part of their meal; they feed and grovel like swine under an oak, filling themselves with the mast, but never so much as looking up, either to the boughs that bore, or the hands that shook it down. This is their temper and deportment in the midst of all their enjoyments. But it is far from reaching the purposes of the great governor of the world; who makes it not his care to gratify the brutishness and stupidity of evil persons. He will not be their purveyor only, but their instructor also, and see them taught, as well as fed by his liberality.



3. The third end that God gives men prosperity for, and of which wicked persons take no notice, is to make them helpful to society. No man holds the abundance of wealth, power, and honour, that Heaven has blessed him with, as a proprietor, but as a steward, as the trustee of Providence to use and dispense it for the good of those whom he converses with. For does any one think, that the divine Providence concerns itself to lift him up to a station of power, only to insult and domineer over those who are round about him; and to shew the world how able he is to do a mischief, or a shrewd turn? No, God deposits (and he does but deposit) a power in his hand to encourage virtue, and to relieve oppressed innocence; and in a word, to act as his deputy, and as God himself would do, should he be pleased to act immediately in affairs here below.

God bids a great and rich person rise and shine, as he bids the sun; that is, not for himself, but for the necessities of the world: and none is so honourable in his own person, as he who is helpful to others. When God makes a man wealthy and potent, he passes a double obligation upon him; one, that he gives him riches; the other, that he gives him an opportunity of

exercising a great virtue; for surely, if God shall be pleased to make me his almoner, and the conduit by which his goodness may descend upon my distressed neighbour, though the charity be personally mine, yet both of us have cause to thank God for it, I that I can be virtuous, and he that he is relieved.

But the wicked, worldly person looks no further than himself; his charity ends at home, where it should only begin. He thinks that Providence fills his purse and his barns only to pamper his own carcass, to invite him to take his ease and his fill, that is, to serve his base appetites with all the occasions of sin. It is not his business to do good, but only to enjoy it, and to enjoy it so, as to lessen it, by monopolizing and confining it. Whereupon being ignorant of the purpose, it is no wonder, if he also abuses the bounty of Providence, and so perverts it to his own destruction.

II. The second general reason, why the prosperity of fools proves destructive to them, is, because prosperity (as the nature of man now stands) has a peculiar force and fitness to abate men's virtues, and to heighten their corruptions.

1. And first for its abating their virtues. Virtue, of any sort whatsoever, is a plant that grows upon no ground, but such an one as is frequently tilled and cultivated with the severest labour. But what a stranger is toil and labour to a great fortune! Persons possessed of this, judge themselves to have actually all that, for which labour can be rational. For men usually labour to be rich, great, and eminent. And these are born to all this, as to an inheritance. They are at the top of the hill already; so that while others are climbing and panting to get up, they have nothing else to do, but to lie down and sun themselves, and at their own ease be spectators of other men's labours.

But it is poverty and hardship that has made the most famed commanders, the fittest persons for business, the most expert statesmen, and the greatest philosophers. For that has first pushed them on upon the account of necessity, which being satisfied, they have aimed a step higher at convenience; and so being at length inured to a course of virtuous and generous sedulity, pleasure has continued that, which necessity first began; till their endeavours have been crowned with eminence, mastership, and perfection in the way they have been engaged in.

But would the young effeminate gallant, that never knew what it was to want his will, that every day clothes himself with the riches, and swims in the delights of the world; would he, I say, choose to rise out of his soft bed at midnight, to begin an hard and a long march, to engage in a crabbed study, or to follow some tedious perplexed business? No; he will have his servants, and the sun itself rise before him; when his breakfast is ready, he will make himself ready too; unless perhaps sometimes his hounds and his huntsmen break his sleep, and so make him early in order to his being idle.

Hence we observe so many great families to decay and moulder away through the debauchery and sottishness of the heir: the reason of which is, that the possession of an estate

does not prompt men to those severe and virtuous practices, by which it was first acquired. The grandchild perhaps comes, and drinks and whores himself out of those fair lands, manors, and mansions, which his glorious ancestors had fought or studied themselves into, which they had got by preserving their country against an invasion, by facing the enemy in the field, hungry and thirsty, early and late, by preferring a brave action before a sound sleep, though nature might never so much require it.

When the success and courage of the Romans had made them masters of the wealth and pleasures of all the conquered nations round about them, we see how quickly the edge of their valour was dulled, and the rigorous honesty of their morals dissolved and melted away with those delights, which too too easily circumvent and overcome the hearts of men. So that instead of the Camilli, the Fabricii, the Scipio's, and such like propagators of the growing greatness of the Roman empire, who lived as high things as they performed; as soon as the bulk of it grew vast and unlimited upon the reign of Augustus Caesar, we find a degenerate race of Caligula's, Nero's, and Vitellius's; and of other inferior sycophants and flatterers, who neither knew nor affected any other way of making themselves considerable, but by a servile adoring of the vices and follies of great ones above them, and a base treacherous informing against virtuous and brave persons about them.

The whole business that was carried on with such noise and eagerness in that great city, then the empress of the western world, was nothing else but to build magnificently, to feed luxuriously, to frequent sports and theatres, to run for the sportula, and in a word, to flatter and to be flattered; the effects of a too full and unwieldy prosperity. But surely they could not have had leisure to think upon their sumens, their mullets, their Lucrinian oysters, their phenicopters, and the like; they could not have made a rendezvous of all the elements at their table every day, in such a prodigious variety of meats and drinks; they could not, I say, have thus intended these things, had the Gauls been besieging their capitol, or Hannibal in the head of his Carthaginian army rapping at their doors: this would quickly have turned their spits into swords, and whet their teeth too against their enemies. But when peace, ease, and plenty, took away these whetstones of courage and emulation, they insensibly slid into the Asiatic softness, and were intent upon nothing but their cooks and their ragouts, their fine attendants and unusual habits; so that the Roman genius was (as the English seems to be now) even lost and stifled, and the conquerors themselves transformed into the guise and garb of the conquered; till by degrees the empire shrivelled and pined away; and from such a surfeit of immoderate prosperity, passed at length into a final consumption.

Nor is this strange, if we consider man's nature, and reflect upon the great impotence and difficulty that it finds in advancing into the ways of virtue merely by itself, without some collateral aids and assistances; and such helps as shall smooth the way before it, by removing all hinderances and impediments. For virtue, as it first lies in the heart of man, is but as a little spark; which may indeed be blown into a flame; it has that innate force in it, that, being



cherished and furthered in its course, the least particle falling from a candle may climb the top of palaces, waste a city, and consume a neighbourhood. But then the suitability of the fuel, and the wind and the air must conspire with its endeavours: this is the breath that must enliven and fan, and bear it up, till it becomes mighty and victorious. Otherwise do we think, that that little thing, that, falling upon a thatch, or a stack of corn, prevails so marvellously, could exert its strength and its flames, its terror and its rage, falling into the dew or the dust? There it is presently checked, and left to his own little bulk to preserve itself; which meeting with no catching matter, presently expires and dies, and becomes weak and insignificant.



In like manner let us suppose a man, according to his natural frame and temper, addicted to modesty and temperance, to virtuous and sober courses. Here is indeed something improvable into a bright and a noble perfection; nature has kindled the spark, sown the seed, and we see the rude draught and first lineaments of a Joseph, a Cato, or a Fabricius. But now has this little embryo strength enough to thrust itself into the world? to hold up its head, and to maintain its course to a perfect maturity, against all the assaults and batteries of intemperance; all the snares and trepans that common life lays in its way to extinguish and suppress it? Can it abstain, in the midst of all the importunities and opportunities of sensuality, without being confirmed and disciplined by long hardships, severe abridgments, and the rules of virtue, frequently inculcated and carefully pressed? No, we shall quickly find those hopeful beginnings dashed and swallowed up by such ruining delights. Prosperity is but a bad nurse to virtue; a nurse which is like to starve it in its infancy, and to spoil it in its growth.

I come now in the next place to shew, that as it has such an aptness to lessen and abate virtue, so it has a peculiar force also to heighten and inflame men's corruptions.

Nothing shall more effectually betray the heart into a love of sin, and a loathing of holiness, than an ill managed prosperity. It is like some meats, the more luscious, so much the more dangerous. Prosperity and ease upon an unsanctified, impure heart, is like the sunbeams upon a dunghill, it raises many filthy, noisome exhalations. The same soldiers, who in hard service, and in the battle, are in perfect subjection to their leaders, in peace and luxury are apt to mutiny and rebel. That corrupt affection, which has lain, as it were, dead and frozen in the midst of distracting businesses, or under adversity, when the sun of prosperity has shined upon it, then, like a snake, it presently recovers its former strength and venom. Vice must be caressed and smiled upon, that it may thrive and sting. It is starved by poverty: it droops under the frowns of fortune, and pines away upon bread and water. But when the channels of plenty run high, and every appetite is plied with abundance and variety, so that *satisfaction* is but a mean word to express its enjoyment; then the inbred corruption of the heart shews itself pampered and insolent, too unruly for discipline, and too big for correction.



Which will appear the better, by considering those vices, which more particularly receive improvement by prosperity.

1. And the first is pride. Who almost is there, whose heart does not swell with his bags? and whose thoughts do not follow the proportions of his condition? What difference has been seen in the same man poor and preferred? his mind, like a mushroom, has shot up in a night: his business is first to forget himself, and then his friends. When the sun shines, then the peacock displays his train.

We know when Hezekiah's treasuries were full, his armories replenished, and the pomp of his court rich and splendid, how his heart was lifted up, and what vaunts he made of all to the Babylonish ambassadors, [Isaiah xxix. 2.](#) though in the end, as most proud fools do, he smarted for his ostentation. See Nebuchadnezzar also strutting himself upon the survey of that mass of riches and settled grandeur that Providence had blessed his court with. It swelled his heart, till it broke out at his mouth in that rodomontade, [Dan. iv. 30.](#) *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?* Now, that prosperity, by fomenting a man's pride, lays a certain train for his ruin, will easily be acknowledged by him, who either from scripture or experience shall learn what a spite Providence constantly owes the proud person. He is the very eyesore of Heaven; and God even looks upon his own supremacy as concerned to abase him.

2. Another sin, that is apt to receive increase and growth from prosperity, is luxury and uncleanness. Sodom was a place watered like the garden of God, [Gen. xiii. 10.](#) *There was in it fulness of bread,* [Ezek. xvi. 49,](#) and a redundant fruition of all things. This was the condition of Sodom, and what the sin of it was, and the dismal consequence of that sin, is too well known. The Israelites committing fornication with the daughters of Moab, which reaped down so many thousands of them at once, was introduced with feasting and dancing, and all the gayeties and festivities of a prosperous, triumphing people. We read of nothing like adultery in a persecuted David in the wilderness; he fled here and there like a chaste roe upon the mountains; but when the delicacies of the court softened and ungirt his spirit, when he drowsed upon his couch, and sunned himself upon the leads of his palace; then it was that this great hero fell by a glance, and buried his glories in his neighbour's bed: gaining to his name a lasting slur, and to his conscience a fearful wound.

As Solomon says of a man surprised with surfeit and intemperance, we may say of every foolish man immersed in prosperity, *that his eyes shall look upon strange women, and his heart shall utter perverse things.* It is a tempting thing for the fool to be gadding abroad in a fair day. But Dinah knows not, but the snare may be laid for her, and she return with a rape upon her honour, baffled and deflowered, and robbed of the crown of her virginity. Lot's daughters revelled and banqueted their father into incest.

The unclean devil haunts the families of the rich, the gallant, and the high livers; and there is nothing but the wisdom from above, which descends upon strict, humble, and

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praying persons, that can preserve the soul pure and sound in the killing neighbourhood of such a contagion.

3. A third sin that prosperity inclines the corrupt heart of man to, is great profaneness, and neglect of God in the duties of religion. Those who lie soft and warm in a rich estate, seldom come to heat themselves at the altar. It is a poor fervour that arises from devotion, in comparison of that which sparkles from the generous draughts, and the festival fare which attend the tables of the wealthy and the great. Such men are, as they think, so happy, that they have no leisure to be holy. They look upon prayer as the work of the poor and the solitary, and such as have nothing to spend but their time and themselves. If Jesurun wax fat, it is ten to one but he will kick against him who made him so.

And now, I suppose, a reflection upon the premises cannot but press every serious person with a consideration of the ticklish estate he stands in, while the favours of Providence are pleased to breathe upon him in these gentle gales. No man is wholly out of the danger which we have been discoursing of: for every man has so much of folly in him as he has of sin; and therefore he must know, that his foot is not so steady, but it may slip and slide in the oily paths of prosperity.

The treachery and weakness of his own heart may betray and insensibly bewitch him into the love and liking of a fawning vice. What the prophet says of wine and music may be also said of prosperity, whose intoxications are not at all less, that *it steals away the heart*. The man shall find that his heart is gone, though he perceives not when it goes.

And the reason of all this is, because it is natural for the soul in time of prosperity to be more careless and unbent; and consequently not keeping so narrow a watch over itself, is more exposed to the invasions and arts of its industrious enemy. Upon which account, the wise and the cautious will look upon the, most promising season of prosperity with a doubtful and a suspicious eye; as beware, lest, while it offers a kiss to the lips, it brings a javelin for the side; many hearts have been thus melted, that could never have been broke. This also may be a full, though a sad argument to allay the foolish envy, with which some are apt to look upon men of great and flourishing estates at a distance: for how do they know, that what they make the object of their envy, is not a fitter object for their pity? And that this glistening person, so much admired by them, is not now a preparing for his ruin, and fattening for the slaughters of eternity? That he does not eat his bane, and carouse his poison? The poor man perhaps is cursed into all his greatness and prosperity. Providence has put it as a sword into his hand, for the wounding and destroying of his own soul: for he knows not how to use any of these things; and so has only this advantage, that he is damned in state, and goes to hell with more ease, more flourish and magnificence than other men.

And thus much for the second general reason, why the prosperity of fools proves fatal and destructive to them. I come now to the third and last, which is, because prosperity directly indisposes men to the proper means of their amendment and recovery.

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1. As first, it renders them utterly averse from receiving counsel and admonition, [Jer. xxii. 21](#). *I spake to thee in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not hear.* The ear is wanton and ungoverned, and the heart insolent and obdurate, till one is pierced, and the other made tender by affliction. Prosperity leaves a kind of dulness and lethargy upon the spirits; so that the still voice of God will not awaken a man, but he must thunder and lighten about his ears, before he will be brought to take notice that God speaks to him. All the divine threatenings and reprehensions beat upon such an one but as stubble upon a brass wall; the man and his vice stand firm, unshaken, and unconcerned; he presumes that the course of his affairs will proceed always as it does, smoothly, and without interruption; that *to-morrow will be as to-day, and much more abundant*. It is natural for men in a prosperous condition neither to love nor suspect a change.

But besides, prosperity does not only shut the ear against counsel, by reason of the dulness that it leaves upon the senses; but also upon the account of that arrogance and untutored haughtiness that it brings upon the mind; which of all other qualities chiefly stops the entrance of advice, by making a man look upon himself as too great and too wise to admit of the assistances of another's wisdom. The richest man will still think himself the wisest man. And where there is fortune, there needs no advice.

2. Much prosperity utterly unfits such persons for the sharp trials of adversity: which yet God uses as the most proper and sovereign means to correct and reduce a soul grown vain and extravagant, by a long, uninterrupted felicity. But an unsanctified, unregenerate person, passing into so great an alteration of estate, is like a man in a sweat entering into a river, or throwing himself into the snow; he is presently struck to the heart; he languishes, and meets with certain death in the change. His heart is too effeminate and weak to contest with want and hardship, and the killing misery of having been happy heretofore: for in this condition he certainly misbehaves himself one of these two ways.

1. He either faints and desponds, and parts with his hope together with his possessions. He has neither confidence in Providence, nor substance in himself, to bear him out, and buoy up his sinking spirit, when the storms and showers of an adverse fortune shall descend, and beat upon him, and shake in pieces the pitiful fabric of his earthly comforts. The earth he treads upon is his sole joy and inheritance, and that which supports his feet must support his heart also; otherwise he cannot, like Job, rest upon that Providence that places him upon a dunghill.

2. Such a person, if he does not faint and sink in adversity, then on the contrary he will murmur and tumultuate, and blaspheme the God that afflicts him. A bold and a stubborn spirit naturally throws out its malignity this way. It will make a man die cursing and raving, and even breathe his last in a blasphemy. No man knows how high the corruption of some natures will work and foam, being provoked and exasperated by affliction.



Having thus shewn the reasons why prosperity becomes destructive to some persons; surely it is now but rational, in some brief directions, to shew how it may become otherwise; and that is, in one word, by altering the quality of the subject. Prosperity, I shew, was destructive to fools; and therefore, the only way for a man not to find it destructive, is for him not to be a fool; and this he may avoid by a pious observance of these following rules. As,

1. Let him seriously consider upon what weak hinges his prosperity and felicity hangs. Perhaps the cross falling of a little accident, the omission of a ceremony, or the misplacing of a circumstance, may determine all his fortunes for ever. Or perhaps his whole interest, his possessions, and his hopes too, may live by the breath of another, who may breathe his last to-morrow. And shall a man forget God and eternity for that which cannot cure him the reversion of a day's happiness? Can any favourite bear himself high and insolent upon the stock of the largest fortune imaginable, who has read the story of Wolsey or Sejanus? Not only the death, but the humour of his prince or patron may divest him of all his glories, and send him stripped and naked to his long rest. How quickly is the sun overcast, and how often does he set in a cloud, and that cloud break in a storm! He that well considers this, will account it a surer livelihood to depend upon the sweat of his own brow, than the favour of another man's. And even while it is his fortune to enjoy it, he will be far from confidence; confidence, which is the downfall of a man's happiness, and a traitor to him in all his concerns; for still it is the confident person who is deceived.

2. Let a man consider, how little he is bettered by prosperity, as to those perfections which are chiefly valuable. All the wealth of both the Indies cannot add one cubit to the stature either of his body or his mind. It can neither better his health, advance his intellectuals, or refine his morals. We see those languish and die, who command the physic and physicians of a whole kingdom. And some are dunces in the midst of libraries, dull and sottish in the very bosom of Athens; and far from wisdom, though they lord it over the wise.

For does he, who was once both poor and ignorant, find his notions or his manners any thing improved, because perhaps his friend or father died, and left him rich? Did his ignorance expire with the other's life? Or does he understand one proposition in philosophy, one mystery in his profession at all the more for his keeping a bailiff or a steward? great and as good a landlord as he is, may he not for all this have an empty room yet to let? and that such an one as is like to continue empty upon his hands (or rather head) for ever? If so, surely then none has cause to value himself upon that, which is equally incident to the worst and weakest of men.

3dly and lastly, Let a man correct the gayeties and wanderings of his spirit, by the severe duties of mortification. Let him, as David says, *mingle his drink with weeping*, and dash his wine with such water. Let him effect that upon himself by fasting and abstinence, which God would bring others to by penury and want. And by so doing, he shall disenslave and redeem his soul from a captivity to the things he enjoys, and so make himself lord, as well

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as possessor of what he has. For repentance supplies the disciplines of adversity; and abstinence makes affliction needless, by really compassing the design of it upon the nobler accounts of choice: the scarceness of some meals will sanctify the plenty of others. And they are the quadragesimal fasts which fit both body and soul for the festivals of Easter.

The wisest persons in the world have often abridged themselves in the midst of their greatest affluence; and given bounds to their appetites, while they felt none in their fortunes. And that prince who wore sackcloth under his purple, wore the livery of virtue, as well as the badge of sovereignty; and was resolved to be good, in spite of all his greatness.

Many other considerations may be added, and these farther improved. But to sum up all in short; since folly is so bound up in the heart of man, and since the fool in his best, that is, in his most prosperous condition, stands tottering upon the very brink of destruction, surely the great use of the whole foregoing discourse should be to remind us in all our prayers, not so much to solicit God for any temporal enjoyment, as for an heart that may fit us for it; and that God would be the chooser, as well as the giver of our portion in this world; who alone is able to suit and sanctify our condition to us, and us to our condition.

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



*Shamelessness in sin, the certain forerunner of destruction:*

IN

**A DISCOURSE**

UPON

**JEREMIAH VI. 15.**

**NUMBERS XXXII. 23.**

*Be sure your sin will find you out.*

**O**F all the ways to be taken for the prevention of that great plague of mankind, sin, there is none so rational and efficacious, as to confute and baffle those motives, by which men are induced to venture upon it; and amongst all such motives, the heart of man seems chiefly to be overpowered and prevailed upon by two; to wit, secrecy in committing sin, and impunity consequent upon it.

Accordingly, Moses, in this chapter, having to deal with a company of men suspected guilty of a base and fraudulent design, though couched under a very fair pretence, (as most such designs use to be;) he endeavours to dash it in its very conception, by particularly applying himself to encounter those secret ratiocinations and arguments, which he knew were the most likely to encourage them in it; and this he does very briefly, but effectually, by assuring them, that how covertly and artificially soever they might carry on their dark project, yet their sin should infallibly find them out.

The subject and occasion of the words is indeed particular, but the design of them is manifestly of an universal import; as reaching the case of all sinners in the world, in their first entrance upon any sinful act or course. And therefore, I shall consider them according to this latter and more enlarged sense; casting the prosecution of them under these three following heads: as,

First, I shall shew, that men generally, if not always, proceed to the commission of sin, upon a secret confidence of concealment or impunity.

Secondly, I shall shew the grounds and reasons upon which men take up such a confidence. And

Thirdly and lastly, I shall shew the vanity of this confidence, by declaring those several ways, by which, in the issue, it comes certainly to be defeated.

Of each of which in their order.

First. And first for the first of them; to wit, that men generally, if not always, proceed to the commission of sin, upon a secret confidence of concealment or impunity.

For the better handling of which proposition, I shall lay down these two assertions.



1. That no man is induced to sin, considered in itself, as a thing absolutely or merely evil, but as it bears some resemblance or appearance of good, in the apprehensions of him who commits it. Certain it is, that there can be no real good in sin; but if it had no shadow, no shew of good, it could not possibly be made the object of an human choice; the will of man never choosing or embracing any thing under the proper notion of evil. But then, as to the kind of this good; if we would know what that is, it is also as certain, that no man can be so far deluded, or rather besotted in his judgment, as to imagine that sin can have any thing of moral good in it; forasmuch as that imports a direct contradiction to the very nature, notion, and definition of sin; and therefore besides that, philosophy, we know, owns and asserts two other sorts of good, to wit, pleasing and profitable; good being properly the denomination of a thing, as it suits with our desires or inclinations. According to which acceptance of the word, whatsoever pleases or profits us, may, upon that general account, be called good; though otherwise it swerves from the stated rules and laws of honesty and morality. And upon the same ground, sin itself, so far as it carries either pleasure or profit with it, is capable of being apprehended by the mind of man as good; and consequently of being chosen or embraced by the will as such.

2. The other assertion to be laid down is, that God has annexed two great evils to every sin, in opposition to the pleasure and profit of it; to wit, shame and pain. He has by an eternal and most righteous decree, made these two the inseparable effects and consequents of sin. They are the wages assigned it by the laws of Heaven; so that whosoever commits it, ought to account shame and punishment to belong to him, as his rightful inheritance. For it is God who has joined them together by an irreversible sentence; and it is not in the power or art of man to put them asunder. And now, as God has made these two evils the sure consequents of sin, so there is nothing which the nature of man does so peculiarly dread and abhor as these; they being indeed the most directly and absolutely destructive of all its enjoyments; forasmuch as they reach and confound it in the adequate subject of enjoyment, the soul and body; shame being properly the torment of the one, and pain of the other. For the mind of man can have no taste or relish of any pleasure in the world, while it is actually oppressed and overwhelmed with shame; no thing does so keenly and intolerably affect the soul, as infamy: it drinks up and consumes the quickness, the gayety, and activity of the spirits: it dejects the countenance, made by God himself to look upwards; so that this noble creature, the master piece of the creation, dares not so much as lift up either his head or his thoughts, but it is a vexation to him even to look upon others, and yet a greater to be looked upon by them. And as shame thus mortifies the soul, so pain or punishment (the other twin-effect of sin) equally harasses the body. We know how much misery pain is able to bring upon the body in this life; (in which our pains and pleasures, as well as other things, are but imperfect;) there being never a limb or part, never a vein or artery of the body, but it is the scene and receptacle of pain, whensoever it shall please God to unfence it, and let in some

sharp disease or distemper upon it. And so exceedingly afflictive are these bodily griefs, that there is nothing which affects the body in the way of pleasure, in any degree comparable to that which affects it in the way of pain. For is there any pleasure in nature, which equals the impressions of the gout, the stone, or even of the toothach itself? But then further, when we shall consider, that the pains which we have here mentioned, and a great many more, are but the preludiums, the first-fruits, and beginnings of that pain which shall be infinitely advanced, and finally completed in the torments of another world, when the body shall descend into a bed of fire and brimstone, and be lodged for ever in the burning furnace of an al mighty wrath; this consideration surely will or ought to satisfy us, that God will not be behind hand with the sinner in point of punishment, whatsoever promises his sin may have made him in point of pleasure.



And now, if we put these two assertions, laid down by us, together; as first, That no man ever engages in sin, but as he apprehends in it some thing of pleasure or advantage; and secondly, That shame and pain are by God himself made the assured consequents of sin; which are utterly inconsistent with and destructive of all such pleasure or advantage: it must needs follow from hence, that the will cannot possibly choose sin, so long as the understanding is under a full conviction or persuasion, that shame and punishment shall certainly follow the commission of it. For no man, doubtless, is so furiously bent upon his lust, or any other infamous passion, as to attempt the satisfaction of it in the marketplace, or in the face of the sun and of the world, or with the sword of the avenger applied to his heart.

Covetousness, we all know, is a blinding, as well as a pressing and a bold vice; yet certainly it could never blind nor infatuate any one to that degree, as to make a judge take a bribe upon the bench, or in the open sight of the court. No; no man is so far able to conquer and cast off those innate fears, which nature has thought fit to bridle and govern the fury of his affections by, as to bid defiance to an evil which his best and strongest reasonings assure him to be unsupportable; and therefore his apprehensions must be, some way or other, first unshackled from a belief of these evils, before his will and his choice can be let loose to the practice of sin. And does not this give us a most philosophical, as well as true account of the infinite reasonableness of the scripture's charging all sin upon unbelief, as the first root and source of men's apostasy from God? For let men think and say what they will, yet when they venture upon sin, they do not really believe that God will ever revenge it upon them: they may indeed have some general, faint, speculative belief of hell and damnation; but such a belief as is particular and practical, and personally applies and brings it home to their own condition, this they are void of; and it is against the methods of reason and nature, for any man to commit sin with such a belief full and fresh upon his spirit: and consequently, the heart must prevaricate, and shift off these persuasions the best it can, in order to its free passage to sin; and this can by no other means be so effectually done, as by promising itself secrecy in sin, and impunity or escape after it. For these two reach and remove all a man's



fears, by giving him security against those two grand terrifying effects of sin, shame and pain. Assure but the sinner, that he shall neither be discovered nor punished, and presently the reins lie loose upon all his appetites; and they are free to take their full swing in all enormities whatsoever. But yet, since this is not to be effected without the help of some arguments and considerations, which may have something of shew, at least, to delude, though nothing of strength to convince the reason; therefore,

Secondly, We shall now, under our next head, endeavour to give some account of those fallacious grounds, upon which the sinner is apt to take up such a confidence, as to believe that he shall be able to carry off his sin clear, without either discovery or retribution. And, no doubt, weak and shallow enough we shall find them all; and such as could never persuade any man to sin, did not his own love to sin persuade him much more forcibly than all such considerations; some of which are these that follow. As,

1. First, men consider the success which they have actually had in the commission of many sins; and this proves an encouraging argument to them to commit the same for the future; as naturally suggesting this to their thoughts, that what they have done so often, without either discovery or punishment, may be so done by them again. For nothing does so much confirm a man in the continuance of any practice, as frequent experience of success in what he does; the proper genuine result of this being confidence.

Some men indeed stumble in their very first entrance upon a sinful course; and this their disappointment frequently proves their cure, by making them to retreat and draw off timely, as being disheartened with so unfortunate a beginning. And it is, no doubt, the singular mercy and indulgence of God to such, thus to cross and turn them out of the paths of destruction; which had they found smooth, safe, and pleasurable, the corruption of their hearts would have infallibly engaged them in them to their lives end. That traveller, surely, has but little cause to complain, who by breaking a leg or an arm at his first setting out upon an unfortunate journey, prevents the losing of his head at his journey's end; it being but a very uncomfortable way of travelling, to finish one's journey and one's life together. Great reason, therefore, have they to own themselves particularly favoured by Providence, who have been stopped and withstood by it, in the very first attempts of any sin, and thereby snatched, as it were a brand, out of the fire, or, which is yet better, have been kept from ever falling into it: their being scorched has prevented their being burnt; while the fright, caused by the danger they so narrowly escaped, has been always fresh upon their memories; and such as come to be thus happily frightened into their wits, are not so easily fooled out of them again. In short, all frustration in the first essays of a vicious course, is a balk to the confidence of the bold undertaker. And therefore, on the contrary, when God is pleased to leave a man under the full sway and power of any vice, he does not concern his providence to lay any block or impediment in such an one's way, but suffers him to go on and succeed in his villainy, to effect all his projects, and compass the full satisfaction of his lewd desires. And this





flushes him up, and makes him hard and insensible; and that makes him venturous and daring; and so locks him fast in the embraces of his sin, while he has not the least surmise of the sadness of the issue, and that the present sweets of sin will and must be bitterness in the end; but, like a sot in a tavern, first drinks himself drunk, and then forgets that there is a reckoning to be paid.

Such an one the Devil accounts he has fast enough; and for that cause, none shall so studiously endeavour to promote a man's quiet and success in sin, as he, who at present tempts him to it, and will hereafter torment him for it. For the Devil desires not that the sinner should feel any trouble for sin, till he comes to feel it for good and all in that place which is designed only for payment, and not amendment; and where all that he can do or suffer to eternal ages can contribute nothing to his release. And therefore, that the sinner may sleep on soundly in his sin, the Devil will be sure to make his bed soft enough. It is said of the Spaniard, that there are two things much accounted of, and desired by many in the world, which yet he heartily wishes his enemy; one is, that if he be a gamester, he may win; the other, that if he be a courter of women, he may obtain his desires; for that he knows well enough, that either of these courses will, in all likelihood, prove his undoing at long run. In like manner, when the Devil has the management of a sinner, he will spread his wing over him so, that he shall never be alarmed with dangers, disgraces, and other calamitous effects of sin, (if the officious tempter can ward them off,) but shall pursue his vice with ease, safety, and reputation.

And while the sinner can do so, such is the proneness of man by nature to deceive himself in a thing which he passionately desires, that having thus acquitted himself to himself, he takes it for granted, that God will acquit him too; and like our late sanctified, and since justified rebels, concludes, that God and he, forsooth, are still of a mind: in [Eccles. viii. 11.](#) *Because, says the Wise Man, sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* Here he gives us an account of the secret reasoning of most sinners hearts; namely, that because God does not confound them in the very act of sin, by some immediate judgment, therefore they resolve upon a more audacious progress in it; and so sing Agag's requiem to themselves, that surely the bitterness of death is past: but much surer will such find it, that no man's being past fear makes him past feeling too; nor that the distance of an evil abates the certainty of it. And yet, the great knower of hearts ascribes men's resolution to sin to such reasonings as these, (as sottish and absurd as they are;) so that in [Psalm 1.](#) having reckoned up several flagitious practices, he adds, in [ver. 21.](#) *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence, and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.* God's silence, it seems, passes with such for his consent, and his not attacking the guilty wretch by a present execution, makes him conclude, that Heaven has passed an act of oblivion upon all his rogueries, so that henceforth he shall live and die a prosperous, indemnified villain, and his sin never find him out. In which case,



certainly, for a sinner thus to presume to absolve himself from his own sins, is itself a greater sin than any of those which he can pretend to absolve himself from. But,

2. A second ground upon which men are apt to persuade themselves, that they shall escape the stroke of divine justice for their sins, is their observation of the great and flourishing condition of some of the topping sinners of the world. They have seen perjury and murder nestle themselves into a throne, live triumphant, and die peaceably; and this makes them question whether God will ever concern himself to revenge that hereafter which he seems so much to connive at and countenance here; especially, since men are so generally apt to judge of things and persons according to the present face and appearance of them; that they make the present the sole measure of the future, guide their hopes and their fears by what they actually see and feel; and in a word, make their outward senses the rule and ground of their inmost ratiocinations.

For could we hear the secret language of most men's thoughts, we should hear them making such kind of answers and replies to the checks of conscience dissuading them from sin, and laying the danger of it before them, as these: Pray, what mischief befell such an oppressor, such a tyrant, or such a rebel? And who passed his life with more affluence and jollity, than such an epicure, such a money-monger, such a tally-broker, and cheater of the public? And have not some dexterous accomptants got estates, and made their fortunes, by a clever stroke or two of their pen? and by a skilful mistake, wrote themselves forty or fifty thousand pounds richer than they were before, in a trice? And did not that discreet Roman, Verres, lighting into a wealthy province, plunder and carry off from thence enough to serve himself, his friends, and his judges too? And why may not others, whose parts lie the same way, follow such lucky examples? and the thriving hypocrites of the present age find as fair quarter from God and man, as any of the former? With such considerations as these, (if they may be called so,) men commonly arm themselves against all the threatenings of the divine judgments; and think that, in the strength of them, they can warrant the most resolute pursuit of their vices for safe and rational. They see not the smoke of the bottomless pit, and so dread not the fire.

Flourishing sinners are indeed plausible arguments to induce men to sin: but, thanks be to God, that for a sinner to spend and end his days flourishing, is a privilege allowed by him to very few; and those only such, as are likely to be much lower in the other world, than ever they were high in this. But,

3. As we have shewn how mightily men are heartened on to their sins by the successful examples of others, as bad as themselves, or perhaps worse; so the next ground, upon which such are wont to promise themselves security, both from the discovery and punishment of their sins, is the opinion which they have of their own singular art and cunning to conceal them from the knowledge, or, at least; of their power to rescue them from the jurisdiction of any earthly judge. The eye of man, they know, is but of a weak sight and a short reach;

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so that he neither sees in the dark, nor pierces into the cabinet-council and corner-practices of his neighbours; and therefore these sons of darkness, who love to work as well as walk in the dark, doubt not, but to contrive and cast the commission of their villainies under such sure coverts of secrecy, that they shall be able to laugh at all judges and witnesses, and defy the inspection of the most curious and exact inquirers. And this makes them proceed to sin with such bravadoes in their hearts as these: Who shall ever see, or hear, or know what I do? The sun itself, the eye of the world, shall never be conscious to my actions; even the light and the day shall be strangers to my retirements. So that, unless the stones I tread upon cry out against me, and the beam out of the wall accuse, and my own clothes arraign me, I fear no discovery. This is the language, these the inward boasts of secret, or rather self-befooled sinners.

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But now, what if such strange things as these should sometimes come to pass? And it should so fall out, (as it will appear by and by,) that even these dumb, inanimate things are sometimes unaccountably enabled to clamour and depose against the guilty wretch; so that, to the amazement of the world, he is drawn forth into public view, out of all his lurking holes and pavilions of darkness? Why then, upon such surprising accidents as these, some have yet a further asylum to fly to, and reckon that their power and interest shall protect them; and so secure the sinner, notwithstanding the discovery of the sin. And the truth is, if matters stand so with them, that the height of their condition equals the height of their crimes, what care such ungodly great ones, whether or no their sins are known, so long as their persons must not be touched? No, so far are such from excusing or covering their lawless practices, that they choose rather to own and wear them in the eye of the world, as badges of their power, and marks of such a greatness, as has set itself above the reach of either shame or fear: even treason itself dreads not a discovery, if the overgrown traitor be but mighty enough to bear it out; but it shall walk abroad openly, and look the world in the face undauntedly, with all the consciousness of a clamourous guilt, and yet with the confidence of innocence itself. For we must know, that it is not mere guilt, but guilt weak and disarmed, which exposes an offender to the merits of his offence; they are only the *minorum gentium malefici*, *malefactors of a lower form*, who break the law, and are hanged for it. Whereas, let a crime be never so foul and so notorious, yet if the wary criminal has so armed and encompassed himself with friends and money, as to stave off all approaches of justice, howsoever his sin may find him out, yet he persuades himself that his punishment cannot; and that is as much as he cares for. For a man's debts will never fright him, if the officer dares not arrest him; and he will hardly fear breaking the law, who knows that he can trample upon it too. But,

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4. The fourth and last ground (which I shall mention) of men's promising themselves security from the punishment of their sins, is a strong presumption, that they shall be able to repent, and make their peace with God when they please; and this, they fully reckon, will

keep them safe, and effectually shut the door against their utmost fears, as being a reach beyond them all. For let a man be never so deeply possessed with a belief of God's sin-reven-  
ging justice, never so much persuaded, that all the wrath which the curse of the law can threaten or inflict, is most certainly entailed, not upon sin only in general, but also upon his own sin in particular; nay, let damnation be always present to his thoughts, and the fire of hell continually flaming in his apprehensions; yet all this shall not be able to take him off from his resolution to sin, and his confidence of escape, because he has an argument in reserve, which he thinks will answer all, to wit, an after-repentance. For if this shall interpose between the commission of sin and the punishment of it, he concludes, upon the stock of all God's promises to the penitent, that he is past danger; and consequently has outwitted the law and the curse, and so stands *rectus in curia*, in spite of all the threatenings of death and damnation.

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And as he thus reckons that repentance will se cure him, so he doubts not but he can command that when he will; as, according to the doctrine of Pelagius, and his modern ad-  
mired followers, he certainly may; repentance, in their divinity, being a work entirely in the power of the sinner's will. So that now the sinner's main business must be to time his repent-  
ance artificially, and to retreat opportunely, before the hand of vengeance be actually upon him: and if he can but prevent, and be too nimble for that; why then, he comes off clear and successful, with flying colours, having enjoyed the pleasures and advantages of his sin, without enduring any thing of the smart or sad consequences of the same.

But now, how wretched an inference this is, for any man to form to himself, and thereby to mock and defy Heaven! and yet how deep it lies in the hearts of most sinners, may easily be observed by men of sense; and will be sadly rued by such as are not so, when it is too late. For this is manifestly the great fort and castle, the citadel and strong tower, which the soul has built to itself, to repair to, whensoever it has a mind to sin both with delight and security too. And were it not for this, it would be impossible for any considering man to satisfy himself in his continuance in any known sin for one moment. For he could not, with any consistence with that mighty overruling principle of self-preservation, commit a sin, if he assuredly knew or believed that he should be damned for it; which yet, since the in finitely just and true God has most peremptorily decreed and threatened, unless repentance shall intervene, it is evident, that his whole refuge must He in the intervention of that; which also, he persuades himself, shall, in due time, step in between him and the fatal blow. And this very consideration utterly evacuates the terrifying force of the divine threatening; and by promising the sinner a fair issue of things, both here and hereafter, makes the poor self-de-  
luding and deluded creature conclude, that his sin shall never find him out.

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And thus having shewn some of those fallacious grounds, upon which men use to build their confidence of the concealment, or at least of the impunity of their sins, I proceed now to the

Third and last general head, at first proposed by us: which was, to shew the vanity of such a confidence, by declaring those several ways, by which, in the issue, it comes certainly to be defeated; and that both with reference to this world and the next.

And first for this world; there are various ways by which it comes to be disappointed here: as,

1. The very confidence itself of secrecy is a direct and natural cause of the sinner's discovery. For confidence in such cases causes a frequent repetition of the same action; and if a man does a thing frequently, it is odds, but some time or other he is discovered: for by this he subjects himself to so many more accidents, every one of which may possibly betray him. He who has escaped in many battles, has yet been killed in the issue; and by playing too often at the mouth of death, has been snapped by it at last.

Add to this, that confidence makes a man venturous, and venturousness casts him into the high road of danger, and the very arms of destruction. For while a man ventures, he properly shuts the eyes of his reason. And he who shuts his own eyes, lies so much the more open to those of other men.

2. There is sometimes a strange, providential concurrence of unusual, unlikely accidents, for the discovery of great sins; a villainy committed perhaps but once in an age, comes sometimes to be found out also by such an accident, as scarce happens above once in an age. For there are some sins more immediately invading the great interests of society, government, and religion; which Providence sets itself in a more peculiar manner to detect and bring to light, in spite of all the coverings which art or power can cast over them: such as are murder, perjury, and sacrilege, (all of them accounted sins of the foulest guilt before forty-one, but marks of regeneration with many ever since:) and more particularly for murder; in what a strange, stupendous manner does Providence oftentimes trace it out, though concealed with all the closeness which guilt and skill, and the legerdemain of a well packed and paid jury can secure it by!

Such small, such contemptible, and almost unobservable hints have sometimes unravelled and thrown open the mysterious contexture of the deepest laid villainies, and delivered the murderer into the hands of justice, by means which seemed almost as much above nature, as the sin committed was against it.

And the like instances might be given in many other crying sins, which sometimes cry so long and so loud too, that they come at length to be seen as well as heard, and to alarm the earth as well as pierce heaven. *Curse not the king, no not in thy heart*, (says the Wise Man, in [Eccles. x. 20](#),) *for a bird in the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter*: though some, I confess, are of opinion, that such as have no wings are much nimbler and quicker in carrying and telling these matters, than such as have. But to keep to these remarkable words now before us; if the bird upon the house-top (as the text seems to intimate) shall be able (in such a case as this) to tell what is done or whispered

within the house; and these inhabitants of the air shall have keys to our chambers and our closets, nay, and to our very hearts too; how can there be such a thing in the world as secrecy? (as the truth is, setting aside all tropes and hyperboles, there is but very little:) and then, if such informers as these find out the treason, we may be sure, that the treason itself will not fail to find out the traitor.

For let a criminal seem never so safe in his own thoughts, and in the thoughts of all about him, yet still he must know, that the justice of God has him in chace, and will one day shew, that it never hunts surer, than when the politicians of the world think it upon a cold scent. For how many strange, intricate, and perplexed villainies have been ript up, and spread far and near, which the subtle actors of them, both before, and in, and after the commission, fully believed could not possibly be discovered? Whereas, on the contrary, it is most certain, that no man, though never so crafty and sagacious, can propose to himself such great unlikelihoods for the discovery of any action, but others, altogether as crafty, have actually failed, and miscarried under the very same, or greater.

And therefore the psalmist, most appositely to our present purpose, observes, [Psalm xxxvi. 2](#), *that the sinner flatters himself in his own eyes, till his iniquity be found out*: that is the issue; and no wonder, if such a practice comes to such an end.

For whosoever flatters himself, cheats and be trays himself by false reasonings; and by not dealing clearly and impartially with himself, but grounding his presumption of secrecy upon arguments represented to him much firmer and stronger, than his own experience, severely judging, would allow them to be. For, if such an one finds an accident highly improbable, he will presently screw it up, from thence, to impossible, and then conclude, that in so vast a number of contingencies, one of a million shall never hit his case. And very probably it may not. But what if it should? why then, one such unlucky event will fully pay the reckoning for all former escapes; and one treason or felony discovered, will as certainly bring his neck to the block or the halter, as a thousand, were they all of them crowded together into one and the same indictment against him.

3. God sometimes makes one sin the means of discovering another: it often falling out with two vices, as with two thieves or rogues; of whom it is hard to say which is worse, and yet one of them may serve well enough to betray and find out the other. How many have by their drunkenness disclosed their thefts, their lusts, and murders, which might have been buried in perpetual silence, had not the sottish committers of them buried their reason in their cups? for the tongue is then got loose from its obedience to reason, and commanded at all adventures by the fumes of a distempered brain and a roving imagination; and so presently pours forth whatsoever they shall suggest to it, sometimes casting away life, fortune, reputation, and all in a breath.

And how does the confident sinner know, but the grace of God, which he has so often affronted and abused, may some time or other desert, and give him up to the sordid



temptations of the jug and the bottle, which shall make the doors of his heart fly open, and cause his own tongue to give in evidence against him, for all the villainies which had lain so long heaped up and concealed in his guilty breast? For let no man think that he has the secrets of his own mind in his own power, while he has not himself so; as it is most certain that he has not who is actually under a debauch: for this confounds, and turns all the faculties of the soul topsy-turvy; like a storm tossing and troubling the sea, till it makes all the foul, black stuff, which lay at the bottom, to swim, and roll upon the top.

In like manner, the drunken man's heart floats upon his lips, and his inmost thoughts proclaim and write themselves upon his forehead; and therefore, as it is an usual, and indeed a very rational saying, that a liar ought to have a good memory; so upon the like account, a person of great guilt ought to be also a person of great sobriety; lest otherwise his very soul should, some time or other, chance to be poured out with his liquor: for commonly the same hand which pierces the vessel, broaches the heart also, and it is no strange nor unusual passage from the tavern to the gaol.

4. God sometimes infatuates, and strikes the sinner with phrensy, and such a distraction, as causes him to reveal all his hidden baseness, and to blab out such truths, as will be sure to be revenged upon him who speaks them. In a word, God blasts and takes away his understanding, for having used it so much to the dishonour of him who gave it; and delivers him over to a sort of madness, too black and criminal to be allowed any refuge in bedlam. And for this, there have been several fearful instances of such wretched contemnors of Heaven, as having, for many years, outfaced all the world, both about them and above them too, with a solemn look and a demure countenance, have yet, at length, had their loathsome inside turned outwards, and been made an abhorred spectacle to men and angels. For it is but just with God, when men have debauched their consciences, to bereave them of their senses also; and to disturb and disarm their reason, so as to disable it from standing upon its guard, even by that last and lowest sort of self-defence, the keeping of its own counsel; for no chains will hold a madman's tongue, no fetters can restrain the ramble of his discourse, nor bind any one faculty of his soul or body to its good behaviour: but all that is within him is promiscuously thrown out; and his credit, with all that is dear to him, is at the mercy of this unruly member, as St. James calls it, which, in the present case, has no mercy upon him whom it belongs to; nor any thing to govern it, but a violent, frantic humour, wholly unable to govern itself.

5. God sometimes lets loose the sinner's conscience upon him, filling it with such horror for sin, as renders it utterly unable to bear the burden it labours under, without publishing, or rather proclaiming it to the world.

For some sorts of sin there are, which will lie burning and boiling in the sinner's breast, like a kind of Vesuvius, or fire pent up in the bowels of the earth; which yet must, and will, in spite of all obstacles, force its way out of it at length; and thus, in some cases of sin, the

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anguish of the mind grows so exceeding fierce and intolerable, that it finds no rest within itself, but is even ready to burst, till it is delivered of the swelling secret it labours with: such kind of guilt being to the conscience, like some offensive meats to the stomach, which no sooner takes them in, but it is in pain and travail, till it throws them out again.

Who knows the force, the power, and the remorseless rage of conscience, when God commissions it to call the sinner to an account? how strangely it will sift and winnow all his retirements? how terribly it will wring and torture him, till it has bolted out the hidden guilt which it was in search of? All which is so mighty an argument of the prerogative of God over men's hearts, that no malefactor can be accounted free, though in his own keeping, nor any one concealed, though never so much out of sight; for still God has his sergeant or officer in the sinner's breast; who will be sure to attack him, as soon as ever the great Judge shall but give the word: an officer so strictly true to his trust, that he is neither to be softened nor sweetened; neither to be begged nor bought off; nor consequently, in a word, fit to be of the jury, when a rich or potent malefactor comes to be tried, in hopes to be brought off.

And this also shews the great importance and wisdom of that advice of Pythagoras, namely, that every man, when he is about to do a wicked action, should, above all things in the world, stand in awe of himself, and dread the witness within him: who sits there as a spy over all his actions; and will be sure, one day or other, to accuse him to himself, and perhaps put him upon such a rack, as shall make him accuse himself to others too.

For this is no new thing, but an old experimented case; there having been several in the world, whose conscience has been so much too hard for them, that it has compelled them to disclose a villainous fact, even with the gibbet and the halter set before their eyes; and to confess their guilt, though they saw certain and immediate death the reward of that confession.

But most commonly has conscience this dismal effect upon great sinners, at their departure out of this world; at which time some feel themselves so horribly stung with the guilty sense of some frightful sin, that they cannot die with any tolerable peace till they have revealed it; finding it some small relief, it seems, and easement of their load, to leave the knowledge of their sin behind them, though they carry the guilt of it along with them.

6. And lastly, God sometimes takes the work of vengeance upon himself, and immediately, with his own arm, repays the sinner by some notable judgment from heaven: sometimes, perhaps, he strikes him dead suddenly; and sometimes he smites him with some loathsome disease, (which will hardly be thought the gout, whatsoever it may be called,) and sometimes again he strangely blasts him in his name, family, or estate, so that all about him stand amazed at the blow; but God and the sinner himself know well enough the reason and the meaning of it too.

Justice, we know, uses to be pictured blind, and therefore it finds out the sinner, not with its eyes, but with its hands; not by seeing, but by striking: and it is the honour of the





great attribute of God's justice, which he thinks so much concerned, to give some pledge or specimen of itself upon bold sinners in this world; and so to assure them of a full payment hereafter, by paying them something in the way of earnest here.

And the truth is, many and marvellous have been the instances of God's dealing in this manner, both with cities and whole nations. For when a guilt has spread itself so far as to become national, and grown to such a bulk as to be too big for all control of law, so that there seems to be a dispute whether God or sin governs the world; surely it is then high time for God to do his own work with his own hand, and to assert his prerogative against the impudent defiers of it, by something every whit as signal and national as the provocation given; whether it be by war, plague, or fire, (all which we have been visited with, though neither corrected nor changed by;) and to let the common nuisances of the age, the professed enemies of virtue and religion, and the very blots and scandal of human nature itself, know, that there still remains upon them a flaming guilt to account for, and a dreadful Judge to account to.

And thus I have gone over several of those ways by which a man's sin overtakes and finds him out in this world. As, first, the very confidence itself of secrecy is a direct and natural cause of the sinner's discovery. Secondly, there is sometimes a strange, providential concurrence of unusual, unlikely accidents, for the bringing to light great villainies. Thirdly, God sometimes makes one great sin a means to detect and lay open another. Fourthly, God sometimes infatuates and strikes the sinner with phrensy, and such a distraction, as makes him reveal all his hidden guilt. Fifthly, God sometimes lets loose the sinner's conscience upon him, so that he can find no rest within himself, till he has confessed and declared his sin. Sixthly and lastly, God sometimes smites and confounds him by some notable, immediate judgment from heaven.

These, I say, are some of the chief ways by which God finds out the sinner in this life. But what now, if none of all these should reach his case, but that he carries his crimes all his life closely, and ends that quietly, and, perhaps, in the eye of the world, honourably too; and so has the good luck to have his shame cast into and covered under the same ground with his carcass? Why yet, for all this, the man has not escaped; but his guilt still haunts and follows him into the other world, where there can be no longer a concealment of it, but it must inevitably *find him out*: for, as it is in [Daniel vii. 10](#), *when the judgment shall be set, the looks shall be also opened*; even those doomsday books, (as I may so call them,) wherein God has kept a complete register of all the villainies that were ever committed against him, which then shall be displayed, and read aloud in the audience of that great and terrible court. The consideration of which, surely, may well put those excellent words of the apostle, in [Rom. vi. 21](#), with this little alteration of them, into our mouths. *What fruit can we [now] have of those things, whereof we shall [then] be ashamed?* So, what advantage of pleasure, profit, or honour, can the sinner promise to himself from any sin which may be laid in the balance



against that infinite and incredible weight of reproach, with which it will certainly pay him home at that day?

For could he persuade the *mountains to cover him*, or could he hide himself in the *bosom of the great deep*, or could he wrap himself in the very *darkness of hell*; yet still his sin would fetch him out of all, and present him naked, open, and defenceless before that fiery tribunal, where he must receive the sentence of everlasting confusion, and where the Devil himself will be sure to do him justice, as never failing to be a most liberal rewarder of all his pimps and vassals, for the secret service done him in this world.

And now, what is the whole foregoing discourse, but a kind of panegyric (such a mean one as it is) upon that glorious thing innocence? I say innocence, which makes that man's face shine in public, whose actions and behaviour it governs in private. For the innocent person lives not under the continual torment of doubts and fears, lest he should be discovered; for the light is his friend, and to be seen and looked upon is his advantage: the most retired parts of his life being like jewels, which, though indeed most commonly kept locked up in the cabinet, yet are then most admired and valued, when shewn and set forth by the brightness of the sun, as well as by their own.

How poor a thing secrecy is to corrupt a rational man's behaviour, has been sufficiently declared already, by the survey which we have taken of those several ways whereby the most wise and just Governor of the world is pleased to defeat and befool the confidence of the subtlest and the slyest sinners. We have seen also what paper walls such persons are apt to inclose themselves with; and how slight, thin, and transparent all their finest contrivances of secrecy are; while, notwithstanding all the private recesses and dark closets, which they so much trust in, the windows of heaven are still open over their heads: and now, what should the consideration of all this do, but every minute of our lives remind us so to behave ourselves as under the eye of that God, who *sees in secret*, and *will reward us openly*?

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



*The recompence of the reward:*

**A SERMON**  
**PREACHED IN CHRIST CHURCH, OXON,**  
**BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,**  
**SEPT. 11, 1698.**  
**ON**

**HEBREWS XI. 24, 25, 26.**

*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.*

**T**HIS chapter exhibits to us a noble and victorious army of saints, together with an account of those heroic actions and exploits, which they were renowned for in their several ages; and have been since transmitted such to posterity: as, that *they subdued kingdoms, wrought wonders, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire*; and, in a word, triumphed over the cruellest and bitterest persecutions. And the great spring or principle, which (in spite of all their enemy's power and their own weakness) bore them up to these high achievements, is not obscurely intimated in the person of Moses, to have been *a respect to the recompence of reward*. Thus, as it were, fastening one hand upon the promise, and turning about the world with the other.

A due consideration of which ground and motive of action, in so great a person and so authentic an example of sanctity as Moses was, may justly make us wonder at that strange proposition, or rather paradox, which has, for so long a time, passed current with too many, namely, that a Christian, in all acts of duty, ought to sequester his mind from all respect to an ensuing reward, and to commence his obedience wholly and entirely upon the love of duty itself, abstracted from all regard to any following advantages whatsoever: and that to do otherwise is to act as a slave, and not as a son; a temper of mind which will certainly embase and discommend all our services to the acceptance of Almighty God.

This is a glorious speech, I confess, and to the angels, to the cherubims and seraphims, perhaps practicable; whose natures being so different from and so much superior to ours, may (for ought we know) have as different and superior a way of acting too. But then we are to consider, that even that known and so much celebrated aphorism, which this assertion is manifestly founded upon, to wit, that *virtue is its own reward*, will, upon examination, be found true only in a limited sense; that is to say, in respect of a sufficiency of worth in it to



deserve our choice, but not in respect of a sufficiency of power actually to engage our choice. For such a sufficiency it has not; and consequently, if taken in this sense, and applied to men in their natural estate, though under any height or elevation of piety whatsoever, it is so far from being the true and refined sense of the gospel, (as some pretend,) that it is really absurd in reason; and, I suppose, that to demonstrate it not to be evangelical, there needs no other course to be taken, than to prove it to be irrational. And this, by God's assistance, I shall endeavour to do in the following discourse. The foundations of which I shall lay in these four previous propositions.

I. That the gospel, or doctrine of Christianity, does not change, and much less destroy or supersede the natural way of the soul's acting.

II. That it is natural for the soul, in the way of inclination and appetite, to be moved only by such objects as are in themselves desirable.

III. That as it is natural for the soul to be thus moved only by things desirable, so it is equally natural to it to be moved by them only in that degree and proportion in which they are desirable: and consequently, in the

Fourth and last place, that whatsoever is proposed as a motive or inducement to any action, ought for that reason to be in an higher degree desirable, and to have in it a greater fitness to move and affect the will, than the action itself, which it is proposed as a motive to.

For otherwise it would be superfluous, and indeed no additional motive to it at all; forasmuch as the bare action, so considered, would be as strong an argument to a man to perform it, as such a motive (being but in the same degree desirable) could be to induce him to it.

Now these four propositions fully weighed and put together, will amount to a clear proof of that which I first intended to prove. For to be moved by rewards, belongs not to a man properly as corrupt or depraved in his nature through the fall, but simply as he is a man; a creature endued with the faculties of understanding and will: and therefore, since the gospel (as we have shewn) entrenches not upon the natural way of the soul's working, it follows, that neither under the gospel can it be unlawful to engage in duty from a respect to a future recompence. And moreover, since it is natural to the will to be more moved by that which is in itself more desirable; and since that which is given as a motive to any action, ought to be in itself more desirable than that action; and lastly, since God proposes rewards as such motives to the actions of duty and obedience, it roundly follows, that it is not only lawful, in the matter of obedience, to have *respect to the recompence of reward*, but also, that according to the natural order of human acting, the soul should have respect to that in the first place; and then, being animated and enlivened thereby, should respect the works of duty and obedience in the next.

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But to bring things into a narrower compass, and so both to prosecute the subject more fully, and to represent it more clearly, I shall reduce what I have to say upon it into these two propositions.

I. That in the actions of duty, considered barely as duty, or as morally good, and fit to be done, there is not a sufficient motive to engage the will of man in a constant practice of them.

II. That the proposal of a reward on God's part, and a respect had to it on man's, are certainly necessary to engage men in such a course of duty and obedience.

This proposition naturally and unavoidably issues from the former; and accordingly we shall consider both of them in their order.

And first for the first of them, to wit, that duty, considered barely as duty, does not carry in it a sufficient motive to engage the will of man in the constant practice of it. And this I shall endeavour to make out by these following reasons: as, 1st, If in the soul of man its averseness to duty be much greater and stronger than its inclination to it, then duty, considered barely in itself, is not sufficient to determine the will of man to the constant performance of it; which, in my judgment, is an argument so forcible and clear, that one of greater force and clearness cannot well be desired. For unless hatred must pass for courtship, and hostility for allurements, certainly that from which the will is so averse cannot be a proper means to win upon it, or to get into its embraces. No; sooner may the fire be attracted by the centre of the earth, or the vine clasp about the bramble, than any faculty of the soul have its inclinations drawn forth by a contrary and distasteful object.

And then for the ground of this argument, to wit, that the soul has originally such an averseness to duty; this, I suppose, is but too evident to need any further probation. For that horrid proneness of man's will to all vice, that inundation of lewdness, which with such an unresisted facility, or rather such an uncontrolled predominance, has spread itself over the whole world, is a sad, but full evincion of this fatal truth. For what mean all those hard restraints and shackles put upon us in our minority? What are those several arts of discipline and education, those early preventions, but so many banks, as it were, raised up to keep that sea of impurity, that swells within our nature, from pouring itself forth into actual enormities upon every occasion? How hardly is the restive, unruly will of man first tamed and broke to duty. How exceeding hardly are its native reluctancies mastered, and subdued to the sober rules of morality. Duty carries with it a grim and a severe aspect; and the very nature of it involves difficulty. And difficulty certainly is no very apt thing to ingratiate or endear itself to men's practices or affections. Nay, so undeniable is the truth of this, that the very scene of virtue is laid in our natural averseness to things excellent and praiseworthy. For virtue is properly a force upon appetite, the conquest of an inclination, and the powerful bending of the mind to unusual choices and preternatural courses; so that indeed to live virtuously is



to swim against the stream, to be above the pleasures of sense, and, in a word, to be good in spite of inclination.

And upon this account alone it is, that virtue carries so high a price in the world, and that it attracts such a mighty esteem and value, both to itself and to him who has it, and that even from those who have it not. For if to lie abed, to fare deliciously, and to flow with all sorts of delight and plenty, were to be virtuous, there could be no more commendation due to a virtuous person, than to one who had pleased his palate, fed lustily, and slept well. But nothing easy ever did or will draw after it either applause or admiration. No, these are things which wait only upon the painful, the active, and laborious; upon those who both do and undergo such things, as the rest of mankind are unwilling and afraid to meddle with; and that gives them fame, and renown, and lustre in the eyes of the world round about them: for to reconcile ease and splendour together is impossible; and not only the course of Providence, but the very nature of things protests against it. And therefore the paths of virtue must needs lie through craggy rocks and precipices; its very food is abstinence; it is cherished with industry and self-denial; it is exercised and kept in heart with arduous attempts and hard services; and if it were otherwise, it could neither be high, nor great, nor honourable, nor indeed so much as virtue.

But now, if this be the natural complexion of virtue and duty, by such terrifying severities to raise in the soul a kind of horror of it and aversion to it, let this be the first reason, why duty, considered barely in itself, and abstracted from all reward, is not sufficient to engage men in the practice of it. Next to which,

2. The second reason, for the proof of the same truth, is this, that those affections and appetites of the soul, which have the strongest influence upon it, to incline and bias it in all its choices, to wit, the appetites belonging properly to the sensitive part of man's nature, are not at all moved or gratified by any thing in duty, considered barely as duty, and therefore, as so considered, it is not a sufficient motive to induce men to the practice of it. Now this reason also, I conceive, carries its own evidence with it. For the soul of man (as the present state of nature is) generally moves as those forementioned appetites and affections shall incline it; and therefore, if that which thus inclines it be not, some way or other, first made sure of, all persuasions addressed immediately to the will itself, are like to find but a very cold reception.

I shall not here insist upon the division of the appetites of the soul into the rational and sensitive, the superior and inferior, and much less shall I trace them into any further subdivisions: but shall only observe, that there is one general, comprehensive appetite, or rather *ratio appetendi*, common to all the particular appetites, and into which the several operations of each of them are resolved, and that is, the great appetite of *jucundum*, or tendency of the whole soul to that which pleases. For whether they be properly the desires



of the rational part, or the desires and inclinations of the sensitive, they aU concur and meet in this, that they tend to and terminate in something that may please and delight them.

But now I have already shewn, that bare duty and virtue are rather attended with difficulty and hard ship, than seasoned and set off with pleasure; and for that cause are commonly looked upon but as dry things; and consequently such as need to have some thing of relish put into them by the assignation of a pleasing reward; which may so recommend and gild the bitter pill, as to reconcile it to this great ap petite, and thereby convey and slide it into the will, as a proper object of its choice.

Nay, and I shall proceed further, and add, that duty, upon these grounds, is then most effectually proposed, when it is not only seconded with a reward, but also with a reward sensibly represented; and (so far as the nature of the thing will bear) with all the conditions of allurement and delight; that so it may be able to counterbalance the contrary suggestions of sense, which beat so strongly upon the imagination. Upon which account, as Moses enforced the observation of his law upon the Israelites, by rewards most suitable, and adapted to sense, as consisting of temporal promises, (though couching under them, I confess, spiritual and more sublime things;) so Christ himself, though the rewards promised by him to his followers were all of them heavenly and spiritual, yet he vouchsafed oftentimes to express them by such objects as most affected the sense. As for instance: the enjoyments of the other world are shadowed and set forth to us in the gospel, by *drinking wine in the kingdom of heaven*, [Luke xxii. 18.](#) and by *the mirth and festivities of a marriage feast*, [Matt. xxii. 4.](#) also by *sitting upon thrones*, [Matt. xix. 28.](#) likewise by *dwelling in palaces adorned with pearls and diamonds, and all kind of precious stones*, [Rev. xxi. 19, 20, 21.](#) and lastly, by *the continual singing of triumphal songs*, [Rev. xv. 3.](#) and [xix. 1.](#) All which are some of the most lively and exalted instances of pleasure that fall within the enjoyment of sense in this world. And this way of expression was most wisely made use of by our Saviour, for that the pleasures of the sensitive, inferior appetites, though they are not in themselves the best objects, yet are certainly the best representations and conveyances of such objects to the mind; since without some kind of sensible dress, things too fine for men's apprehensions can never much work upon their affections.

And upon the same ground we may observe also, that those virtues are the most generally and easily practised, which do least thwart and oppose these appetites. As for example, veracity in speaking truth, faithfulness in not violating a trust, and justice in punishing offenders, or rendering to every one his due, are much more frequent in the world, than temperance, sobriety, and chastity, and other such virtues, as are properly conversant about abridging the pleasures of the senses.

So then, if this be the case, that the soul of man, in all its choices, is naturally apt to be determined by pleasure, and the sensitive, inferior appetites (which would draw it off from duty) are continually plying it with such suitable and taking pleasures; doubtless, there is



no way for duty to prevail and get ground of them, but by bidding higher, and offering the soul greater gratifications wrapped up in a eternal reward. For when an adversary is ready to bribe the judge, and the judge is as ready to be bribed, assuredly there is no way so likely to carry the cause, as to outbribe him. The sensitive part or principle in all the pressing, enticing offers it makes to the soul, must either be gained and taken off from alluring, or be conquered and outdone in it. The former of which can never be effected; but the latter may, and that by no other means, than by representing duty as clothed with such great and taking rewards, that the soul shall stand convinced, that there will be really a greater and more satisfactory pleasure in the consequents of duty, (how hard soever it may appear at present,) than there can be in the freest and most unlimited fruition of the greatest sensual delights.

But now, should we proceed upon the contrary principle, requiring obedience without recompence, how lame and successful would every precept of the divine law prove, when thus proposed to us naked and stripped of all that may either strengthen or recommend it? Would not such a forlorn nakedness represent it, as coming rather to beg than to command? and to ask an alms, than to impose a duty? For suppose, that when God bids us fast and pray, abstain from all the allurements of sensual pleasure, deny ourselves, being smote upon one cheek, turn the other, and lastly, choose death, rather than commit the least known sin; suppose, I say, that God should command us all these severe things, upon no other account, but because they are excel lent actions, high strains of virtue, most pleasing to God, and upon that score both commanded by him and to be performed by us: certainly these considerations (notwithstanding all the reason and truth that is in them) would yet strike the will but very faintly: for men care not for suffering, while they think it is only for suffering-sake. And self-denial is but a sour morsel, and will hardly go down without something to sweeten it; and men, generally, have but a small appetite to pray, and a much smaller to fast, (how great soever they may have after it.) On the contrary therefore, let us, in this case, take our measures from the addresses made by our Saviour himself to the minds of men; *Blessed*, says he to his disciples, *are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad.* But why, I pray? Was it such matter of joy, either to be spit or trampled upon? to be aspersed by men's tongues, or crushed under their heels? No certainly; but we have a very good reason given us for all this, in the next words: *for great*, says our Saviour, *is your reward in heaven*, [Matth. v. 12](#). And again, *Blessed are they that mourn.* But surely not for the bare *flendi voluptas*; nor for any such great desirableness that there is or can be in tears or groans, any more than in that which causes them: no, but for something else, that was abundantly able to make amends for all these sadnesses, in the [5th and 6th verses](#) of the same chapter. *For such*, says our Saviour, *shall be comforted*: which one word implies in it all the felicity and satisfaction that human nature is capable of. But now had our Saviour, in defiance of all their natural inclinations, pressed these austerities upon them, as the sole and sufficient reason and reward

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of themselves, surely he had done like one, who neither understood the nature of man's will, nor the true arts of persuasion. And the case had been much the same, as if Moses, instead of giving the Israelites water, had bid them quench their thirst with the rock. Let this therefore be the second reason, why duty, considered barely as duty, and abstracted from all reward, is not sufficient to induce men to the practice of it.

3. The third and last reason that I shall allege for the same is this; that if duty, considered barely in itself, ought to be the sole motive to duty, with out any respect to a subsequent reward, then those two grand affections of hope and fear ought to have no influence upon men, so as to move or engage them to the acts of duty at all. The consequence is most clear; because the proper objects, upon which these affections are to be employed, are future rewards and future punishments; and therefore, if no regard ought to be had of these in matters of duty, it will follow, that neither must those affections, which are wholly conversant about rewards, have any thing to do about duty, wherein no considerations of a reward ought, upon this principle, to take place. This, I say, would be the genuine, unavoidable consequence of this doctrine.

But now, should any one venture to own such an odd and absurd paradox, in any of those sober, rational parts of Christendom, which have not depraved their judging and discerning faculties with those strange, new-found, ecstatic notions of religion, which some (who call themselves Christians, and Christians of the highest form too) have, in the late super-reforming age, taken up amongst us; how unnatural, or rather indeed how romantic, would such divinity appear! For all the world acknowledges, that hope and fear are the two great handles, by which the will of man is to be taken hold of, when we would either draw it to duty or draw it off from sin. They are the strongest and most efficacious means to bring such things home to the will, as are principally apt to move and work upon it. And the greatest, the noblest, and most renowned actions, that were ever achieved upon the face of the earth, have first moved upon the spring of a projecting hope, carrying the mind above all present discouragements, by the prospect of some glorious and future good.

And therefore he, who, to bring men to do their duty heartily and vigorously, and to the best advantages of Christianity, shall cut off all rewards from it, and so remove the proper materials which hope should exert itself upon, does just as if a man should direct another to shoot right and true, by forbidding him to take aim at the mark; or as if we should bring a man to a race, and first tie his legs fast, or cut them off, and then clap him on the back, and bid him run. He who takes away the incitements to duty, dashes the performance of duty, and not the performance only, but the very attempt also: for men do not use to run, only that they may run, but that they may obtain; labour itself being certainly one of the worst rewards of a man's pains. And therefore, no wonder, if every exhortation to virtue has just so much strength in it, as there is in the argument brought to enforce it. For, if we will be but true to the first principles of nature, we shall find, that all arguments made use



of to persuade the mind of man, must be founded upon something that is grateful, acceptable, and pleasing to nature; and that, in short, is a man's easy and comfortable enjoyment of himself, in all the powers, faculties, and affections, both of his soul and body. Which said enjoyment, in the hard and dry strokes of duty and spiritual day-labour, as I may call it, I am sure is not to be found. For no man enjoys himself, while he is spending his spirits, and employing the utmost intention of his mind upon such objects, as shall both put and keep it upon the stretch; which yet, in the performance of duty, every one actually does, or at least should do. In a word, irksomeness in the whole course of an action, and weariness after it, certainly are not fruition; but the actions of bare duty are naturally accompanied with both.

Let us, therefore, here once again observe the course taken by our Saviour himself, when he would raise men up to something singular and extraordinary, and above the common pitch of duty: as in [Mark x. 21](#). we find, how he answered the rich young heir, inquiring of him the way to heaven: *Go, says he, and sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it all to the poor.* Now certainly, had our Saviour stopped here, this had been as grinding and as stripping a command, as could have well passed upon a man; and might indeed have seemed, not so much a command to prove, as an artifice to blow him up; not so much a test, to try his obedience, as a trick (like some oaths) to worm him out of his estate. But surely, our Saviour never affected to be king of beggars, and much less to make men beggars, the better to king it over them. Nor can we imagine, that he, who was all wisdom and goodness, would have so far contradicted both, as to make it a duty to give alms, and at the same time put men into a condition fit only to receive them; or that he would have enjoined so great a paradox in practice, as to require his followers to choose poverty merely for poverty's sake; or to sell their possessions, only to buy hunger and rags, scorn and contempt with the price of them. No; assuredly, the God of nature would never have put a man upon any thing so contrary to the first principles of nature. And therefore our Saviour did not require this young man here absolutely to quit his riches, but only to exchange them, and to part with a less estate in possession, for a greater in reversion, with a small enjoyment for a vast hope; in those following words: *Do this, says he, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven:* so that he proposed the duty in one word, and the reward in another. And it was this alone which made our Saviour's proposal (which looked so terribly at first) fair and rational; and which, without such a reward annexed to it, would, upon the strictest and most impartial discourses of reason and nature, have been thrown back as cruel and intolerable.

And again, when our Saviour preached to the world the grand evangelical duty of *taking up the cross*, we do not find that he made the mere burden of bearing it any argument for the taking it up; no, certainly, such arguments might have pressed hard upon their shoulders, but very little upon their reason. And therefore, in [Mark x. 29, 30](#), *There is no man, says he, that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands,*

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for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life. So that we see here the antecedent smoothed over, and recommended by the consequent; duty and reward walking hand in hand; the riches of the promise still overmatching the rigours of the precept, and (as we observe in the royal diadems of Christian kings) the cross and the crown put together.

But, above all, the example of the great *author and finisher of our faith* himself will put the point here before us past all dispute. For are not his *enduring the cross and despising the shame* (and this latter as terrible a crucifixion to the mind as the other could be to the body) both of them resolved into *the joy that was set before him*? [Heb. xii. 2](#). And did not our Saviour teach us by his example, as well as by his precept? At least so far, that what he did was certainly lawful to be done; though, by reason of the immense disparity of his condition and ours, not always necessary for us to do. But, however, as to the case now spoken of, it was manifestly the subsequent joy which baffled and disarmed the present pain, and the prospect of a glorious immortality, which carried him triumphant through all those agonies which bare mortality must otherwise have sunk under.

It has been observed, and that with great wit and reason, that in all encounters of dangerous and dreadful issue, it is still the eye which is first overcome; and being so, presently spreads a terror throughout the whole man: accordingly, on the contrary, where the eye is emboldened with the encouraging view of some vast enjoyment pressing close upon the heels of a present suffering, it diffuses such a noble bravery and courage into all the faculties, both of soul and body, as makes them overlook all dangers; and, by overlooking, conquer and get above them. In a word, let us so eye the great *captain of our salvation*, as to rest assured of this, that wheresoever he went before, it is both our privilege and our safety to follow; and that his example alone is enough both to justify and to glorify the imitation.

But to proceed. As we have shewn how our Saviour has sometimes thought fit to draw men to their duty by their hopes, so let us see, in the next place, how he sometimes also drives them to it by their fears: *Fear not those, says he, who can but kill the body, but fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, [Matt. x. 28](#). And again, in [Luke xii. 5](#), he enforces the same words, with this emphatical repetition: *Yea, I say unto you, Fear him*. But now, if the fear of hell influencing a man either to the practice of duty, or the avoidance of sin, were the direct way to hell, (as some with equal confidence and ignorance have affirmed,) surely our Saviour took the most preposterous course that could be, to prescribe the fear of hell as the surest means to escape it. For how can there be any such thing as *fleeing from the wrath to come*, if fear, which is the only thing that can make men flee, shall betray them into that which they flee from?

But further, to descend from the method used by Christ himself to that made use of by his apostles. What means St. Peter, to put men upon *passing the time of their sojourning here in fear*? [1 Pet. i. 17](#). and St. Paul, to press men upon *working out their salvation with fear*

*and trembling?* Phil. ii. 12. For *fear and trembling* are certainly very senseless things, where a man is not at all the better for them. But these experienced guides, it seems, very well knew how impossible it was, where the concern was infinite and unspeakable, and the danger equal, for any man of sense and reason to shake off his fears, and retain his wits too. And therefore to me it seems none of the smallest arguments against the modern whimsey, which we are now opposing, that, both in the language of the Old Testament and the New, the whole business of religion is still comprehended and summed up in this one great thing, *the fear of God*. For this we may assure ourselves of, that he who fears as he should do in this world, shall have nothing either to fear or feel in the next.

And now, lastly, to set off the foregoing authorities with the manifest reason of the thing itself. It is doubtless one of the greatest absurdities that can well fall within the thoughts of man, to imagine, that God, who has cast the business of man's salvation into so large a compass, as to share out to every other faculty and affection of the soul its due part and proportion in this great work, should yet wholly disinterest those two noble leading affections of hope and fear from having any thing to do in the same. For must these only lie idle and fallow, while all the other affections of the mind are employed and taken up? And has God something for us to love, and something to hate, but in the whole business of religion nothing for us to hope for, and nothing to fear? Which surely he has not, if it be absolutely unlawful for men under the gospel, in any religious performance, to act with an eye to a future recompence. And therefore, since this assertion, to wit, that duty, considered barely as duty, ought to be the sole motive to the practice of it, brings us under a necessity of asserting also, that hope and fear ought not at all to influence men in the matter of duty; which yet is most absurd: and since nothing that is absurd or false can, by genuine and just consequence, issue from what is true; it follows, that the former assertion or position, from which this latter is inferred, is most false and irrational. Which was the thing to be proved. And so

I proceed to answer such objections, as may, with any colour of argument, be alleged in opposition to the doctrine hitherto laid down and defended by us, and so conclude this first proposition: as,

1. It may be argued, that there is a certain complacency and serenity of mind attending the performance of actions pious and virtuous, and a kind of horror or remorse that follows the neglect of them, or the doing of the quite contrary; the consideration of which alone, setting aside all further hopes of a future reward, may be a sufficient argument to enforce the practice of duty upon any sober, rational mind whatsoever.

To this I answer, that this complacency of mind upon a man's doing his duty, on the one side, and that remorse attending his neglect of it, or doing the quite contrary, on the other, are so far from excluding a respect to a future recompence, or being a different motive from it, that they do really imply it, and are principally founded in it; the said complacency

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flowing naturally from the assurance given a man by his conscience, that the honesty and goodness of his actions sets him free and safe from all that evil and punishment which the law of God awards to the transgressors of it. And the contrary remorse of mind proceeding chiefly from a dread of those punishments, which a man's conscience assures him that the breach of the said law will render the breakers of it obnoxious to. And that this is so, is demonstrable by this one reason; that several men are differently affected, either with this complacency or remorse of mind, upon their doing the very same action; and that, because some are verily persuaded, that the said action is a sin, and so to be followed with the penal consequents of sin; and others, on the contrary, are as fully persuaded that it is no sin. For the better illustration and proof of which, we must observe, that men's judgments concerning sin have been, and in several parts of the world still are, very different; so that what is sin with one people or nation, is not always so with another: as for instance, some account drunkenness no sin, as many of the Germans; and others have had the same thoughts of theft, as the Spartans; and of fornication, as most of the heathens; and some again think, that an officious lie is no sin, as the Jesuits and Socinians: whereas others, on the contrary, stand as fully persuaded, that all these are sins, (as indeed they are, and most of them very gross ones too,) and such as, unrepented of, will assuredly consign over the persons guilty of them to eternal punishment from the hands of a sin-revenging justice.

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But now, upon these two so different, preconceived opinions, it will and must certainly follow, that those of the latter judgment cannot but feel that horror and remorse of mind upon the doing of these actions, which those of the contrary persuasion, to wit, that they are no sins, undoubtedly, upon the very same actions, do not feel. But now, from whence can this be? Surely, not from the bare action itself, nor from any thing naturally adherent to it; forasmuch as the action, with all that is natural to it, is the same in both those sorts of men, whose minds, after the doing of it, are so differently affected. And therefore it must needs be from the different infusions into, and prepossessions of men in their minority and first education; by which some have been taught, that a severe punishment and after-reckoning belongs to such and such actions; and by which others again have been taught, that they are actions in themselves indifferent, and to which no penalty at all is due.

I conclude, therefore, that the complacency which men find upon the performance of their duty, and the remorse which they feel upon the neglect of it, taken abstractedly from all consideration of a future reward, cannot be a sufficient motive to duty; because, indeed, so taken, they are but a mere fiction or chimera. For that all such complacency and remorse are founded only upon an early persuasion wrought into men's minds of a following retribution of happiness or misery allotted to men hereafter, according to the different nature and quality of their actions here: and so much in answer to this first exception. But,

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2. Some again object and argue, that there is a different spirit required under the gospel from that which was either under or before the Mosaic dispensation; and therefore, though

it might be lawful and allowable enough for the church in those days, living under an inferior economy, in all acts of duty to have *respect to the recompence of reward*; yet in times of higher and more spiritual attainments, and under a gospel state, men ought wholly to act, and to be acted by such a filial and free spirit, as never to enter upon any duty with the least regard to an after-compensation; this being servile, legal, and mercenary; as these sons of perfection do pretend.

But to this also I answer, that the Jewish church, and the church before it, may be considered under a double character or capacity. 1. As they sustained the peculiar formality of a church so or so constituted. And, 2dly, as they were men, or rational creatures, as the rest of mankind are.

Now it must be confessed, that what belonged to them in the former capacity was undoubtedly proper and peculiar to them, and so neither does nor ought to conclude the church nowadays, being cast into a different form or constitution. Nevertheless, what belonged to them, simply as they were men, or moral agents, equally belongs to and concerns the church in all places and all ages of the world, and under all forms, models, and administrations whatsoever.

But now, for any one in the works of duty to proceed upon hopes of a reward, is (as I have already shewn) the result of a rational nature, endued with such faculties of mind, as, according to their natural way of acting, (especially as the state of nature now is,) will hardly or never be brought to apply heartily to duty, but in the strength of such motives; the very nature of man inclining him chiefly, if not solely, to act upon such terms and conditions; so that to do one's duty with regard to a following recompence, concerns not men under any peculiar denomination of Jews or Christians, but simply as they are men. And to affirm the contrary, is a direct passing over to the heresy and dotage of the Sadducees, who, by mistaking and perverting that saying of Zadock, the author of their sect and name, to wit, that men ought to do virtuously without any thought of a following recompence, carried it to that height of irreligion, as to deny all rewards of happiness or misery in another world; and, consequently, a resurrection to another life after this. Such horrid and profane inferences were drawn, or rather dragged by these heretics, from one unwary and misunderstood expression.

Nevertheless, so much is and must be granted, (and no doubt Zadock himself, if there was such an one, never intended more,) that for a man, in the practice of duty, to act solely and entirely from a desire of a following recompence, exclusively to all love of the work and duty itself, is indeed servile and mercenary, and no ways suitable to that filial temper which ought to govern all Christian minds. But then again, we must remember, that to do one's duty only for a reward, and not to be willing to do it without one, are very different things. And if we consider even Judas himself, it was not his carrying the bag, while he followed his master, but his following his master only that he might carry the bag, which made him a

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*thief and an hireling*. For otherwise, I cannot see why he might not have been every whit as lawfully his master's almoner, as he was one of his apostles; and have carried his bag with the same duty with which he might have carried his cross.

But now, if we shall drive the matter so far, as to make it absolutely unchristian for a man, in the practice of duty, to have any design at all upon a future reward; why then (as I may speak with reverence) does not God, in the conversion of a sinner, new-model his very essence, cashier and lop off the natural affections of hope and fear? And why does he also promise us heaven and glory, if it be not lawful for us to pursue what he is pleased to promise? For are these promises made to quicken our endeavours, or to debase and spoil our performances? to be helps, or rather snares to our obedience? All which, if it be both absurd and impious for any one to imagine, then it will follow, that this and the like exceptions, from which such paradoxes are inferred, must needs also fall to the ground as false, and not to be defended.

But before I make an end of this first proposition, it may not be amiss to consider a little the temper of those seraphic pretenders to religion, who have presumed to refine upon it by such airy, impracticable notions, and have made such a mighty noise with their gospel-spirits and gospel-dispensations, their high attainments and wonderful illuminations, screwing up matters to such an height, that there is no hope of being a Christian without being something more than a man. For so, I am sure, ought he to be, who, in the doing of his duty, must not be suffered to expect or look for any reward after it; nor, in his way to heaven, so much as to think of the place which he is going to. I say, if we consider the temper of these highfliers, (who would needs impose such a new Christianity upon the world,) are they themselves all spirit and life, all Christianity sublimate? (as I may so express it;) are they nothing but self-denial and divine love? nothing but a pure ascending flame, without any mixture or communication with these lower elements? I must confess I could never yet find any such thing in this sort of men; but on the contrary have generally observed them to be as arrant worldlings, and as proud and selfish a generation of men, as ever disgraced the name of Christianity by wearing it, and far from giving any other proof, that in all their religious performances they never act with an eye to a future reward, but only this one a that having wholly fastened their eyes, their hands, and their hearts also upon this world, they cannot possibly, at the same time, place them upon another too. On the other side, therefore, not to aspire to such heights and elevations in religion, (or rather indeed above it,) since God, of his abundant goodness, has been pleased to invite, and even court us to our duty with such liberal and glorious rewards, let us neither despise his grace nor be wiser than his methods; but with arms as open to take, as his are to give, let us embrace the motives he has afforded us, as so many springs and wheels to our obedience. And whosoever shall piously, constantly, and faithfully do his duty with hopes of the promised recompence, shall find that God will not fail to make good that promise to him hereafter, by an humble de-

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pendance upon which he was brought to do his duty here: and so much for our first and main proposition. The

Second, which (as I shew before) was in a manner included in the first, and so scarce needs any prosecution distinct from it, is this;

That the proposal of a reward on God's part, and a respect had to it on man's, are undoubtedly necessary to engage men in a course of duty and obedience.

For the discussion of which, I shall briefly do these two things:

1st, I shall shew in what respect these are said to be necessary. And

2dly, I shall shew why, and upon what reasons, they ought to be accounted so.

1. And first for the necessity of them. A thing may be said to be necessary two ways. As,

1. When by the very essence or nature of it, it is such, that it implies in it a contradiction, and consequently an impossibility, even by the power of God himself, that (the said nature continuing) it should be otherwise. And thus, I shall never presume to affirm (though some I know do) that God cannot in duce a man (being a free agent) to a course of duty and obedience, without proposing a competent reward to such obedience. For I question not, but God can so qualify and determine the will of a rational agent, (and that without the least diminution to its natural freedom,) that the inclination and bias of it shall wholly propend to good, and that from a mere love of goodness itself, without any consideration of a further recompence. And the reason of this is, because all good, as such, is in its degree a proper object for the will to choose; and whatsoever is a proper object of its choice, is also sufficient to draw forth and determine the actings of it, unless there interpose some stronger *appetibile*, to rival or overmatch it in its choice: and yet even in this case also, God no doubt can so strengthen the propensity of the will to good, that it shall have no appetite to or relish for the pleasures of sense at all; and consequently shall need no proposal, either of reward or punishment, to draw it off from the choice and pursuit of those things, which the grace of God has already given it such an entire aversion to. For this, questionless, is the present condition of the angels and other glorified spirits, whose will is so absolutely determined to good, as to be without any proneness or disposition at all to evil; and what condition they are in at present, God, we may be sure, by his omnipotence, could have created man in at first, and have preserved him in ever since, had he been so pleased; so that there is nothing in the thing itself impossible. But this, I own, affects not immediately the case now before us. And therefore, in the

Second place, a thing may be said to be necessary, not absolutely, but with respect to that particular state and condition in which it is. And thus, because God has actually so cast the present condition of man, as to make his inclination to good but imperfect, and during this life to continue it so, and withal to place him amongst such objects as are mightily apt to draw him off from what is morally good, it was necessary, upon the supposal of such a condition, that, if God would have men effectually choose good, and avoid evil, he should





suggest to them some further motives to good, and arguments against evil, than what the bare consideration of the things themselves, prohibited or commanded by him, can afford. For otherwise, that which is morally good, meeting with so faint and feeble an inclination in the will to wards it, will never be able to make any prevailing impression upon that leading faculty. From all which you see in what sense we affirm it necessary for God to propose rewards to men, thereby to engage them to their duty; namely, because of that imperfect estate which God has been pleased to leave men under in this world.

And now, in the next place, for the proof of this necessity, (which was the other thing proposed by us,) these two general reasons may be offered.

The first taken from clear evidence of scripture. And the

Second, from the constant avowed practice of all the wise lawgivers of the world.

1. And first for scripture. It has been more than sufficiently proved from thence already, how deplorably unable the heart of man is, not only to conquer, but even to contend with the difficulties of a spiritual course, without a steady view of such promises as may supply new life, spirit, and vigour to its obedience. To all which, let it suffice, at present, to add that full and notable declaration of St. Paul, in [1 Cor. xv. 19](#), *that if in this life only we had hope in Christ, we were of all men most miserable*. And certainly, for a man to know, that by being a Christian, he should be of *all men most miserable*, was as untoward an argument (should we look no further) to persuade him to be a Christian, as could well have been thought of. So that we see here how those *adepti*, those *men of perfection* before spoken of, (who scorn to be religious out of any respect to a future reward,) are already got a pitch above the third heaven; and far beyond the utmost perfection that St. Paul himself ever pretended to. But,

Secondly, the other proof of the same assertion shall be taken from the practice of all the noted law givers of the world; who have still found it necessary to back and fortify their laws with rewards and punishments; these being the very strength and sinew of the law, as the law itself is of government.

No wise ruler ever yet ventured the peace of society upon the goodness of men's nature, or the virtuous inclination of their temper. Nor was any thing truly great and extraordinary ever almost achieved, but in the strength of some reward every whit as great and extraordinary as the action which it carried a man out to. Thus it was in the virtue of Saul's high promises that David encountered Goliah: the giant indeed was the mark he shot, or rather slung at; but the king's daughter and the court preferments were the mark he most probably aimed at. For we read how inquisitive he was, what should be done for him. And it is not unknown, how in the case of a scrupulous oath-sick conscience also, promise of preferment has been found the ablest casuist to resolve it; from which and the like passages, both ancient and modern, if we look further into the politics of the Greeks and the Romans, and other nations of remark in history, we shall find, that, whensoever the laws enjoined any thing harsh, and to the doing of which men were naturally averse, they always thought it requisite to add al-

lurement to obligation, by declaring a noble recompence (possibly some large pension, or gainful office, or title of honour) to the meritorious doers of whatsoever should be commanded them; and when again, on the other side, the law forbid the doing of any thing which men were otherwise mightily inclined to do, they were still forced to call in aid from the rods and the axes, and other terrible inflictions, to secure the authority of the prohibition against the bent and fury of the contrary inclination. And this course, being founded in the very nature of men and things, was and is as necessary to give force and efficacy to the divine laws themselves, as to any human laws whatsoever. For in vain do we think to find any man virtuous enough to be a law to himself, or any law strong enough to enforce and drive home its own obligation; or lastly, the prerogative of any lawgiver high enough to assure to him the subjects obedience. For men generally affect to be caressed and encouraged, and, as it were, bought to their duty, (as well as from it too sometimes.) For which and the like causes, when God, by Moses, had set before his own people a large number of the most excellent, and, as one would think, self-recommending precepts on the one hand, and a black roll of the very worst and vilest of sins on the other, (sins that seemed to carry their punishment in their very commission;) yet nevertheless, in the issue, God found it needful to bring up the rear of all with those decreatory words, in [Deut. xxx. 19](#), *Behold, I have this day set before you life and death, blessing and cursing*. And what he then set before the Israelites, he now sets before us, and the whole world besides; and when we shall have well weighed the nature of the things set before us, and considered what life is and what death is, I suppose we shall need neither instruction nor exhortation, to which of the two we should direct our choice.



And now, to close up all, and to relieve your patience, you have heard the point stated and argued, and the objections against it answered; after all which, what can we so naturally infer from this whole discourse, as the infinite concern, lying upon every man, to fix to himself such a principle to act by, as may effectually bring him to that great and beatific end, which he came into the world for?

This is most certain, that no man's practice can rise higher than his hopes. It is observed in aqueducts, that no pipe or conduit can force the current of the water higher than the spring-head itself lies, from whence the water first descends. In like manner, it is impossible for a man, who designs to himself only the rewards of this world, to act in the strength thereof, at such a rate, as shall bring him to a better. And the reason of this is, because whosoever makes these present enjoyments his whole design, accounts them absolutely the best things he can have, and accordingly he looks no further, he expects no better; and if so, it is not to be imagined, that he should ever obtain what he never so much as looked for: for no man shall come to heaven by chance.

As for trials and temptations, (those fatal rocks which the souls of men are so apt to dash upon,) we may take this for an infallible rule concerning them; namely, that nothing in this world can support a man against such trials, as shall threaten him with the utter loss



of this world. For the truth is, it would imply a contradiction to suppose that it could; and yet these are the trials which even wise men so much fear, and prepare for, and know that they shall sink under and perish by, unless borne up by something mightier and greater than the world; and therefore not to be found in it.

What further trials God may have in reserve for us, we cannot tell; only this we may reckon upon as a certain, though sad truth; that there has been a mighty growing guilt upon this nation for several years. And as great guilts naturally portend as well as provoke great judgments; so God knows how soon the black cloud, which has been so long gathering over us, may break, and pour down upon us; and how near we may be to times, in which he who will keep his conscience must expect to keep nothing else.

For nothing, certainly, can cast a more dreadful aspect upon us, than those monstrous crying immoralities lately broke in amongst us; by which, not only the English virtue, but the very English temper, seems utterly to have left us; while, to the terror of all pious minds, foreign vices have invaded us, which threaten us more than any foreign armies can.

As for our excellent church, which has been so maligned and struck at on all hands, and we of this place especially; and that by some whom we had little cause to expect such stabs from, (to their just and eternal infamy be it spoke;<sup>7</sup>) we have been moreover told, and that with spite and insolence enough, that our possessions and privileges are very precarious, (though yet, thanks be to God, and to our ancient government, confirmed to us by all that this nation calls law;) and withal, that our reign will be very short, (as no doubt, if republicans might have their will, the reign of all kings, even of king William himself, would be so too.) But still, blessed be the Almighty, we are in his hands; and whatsoever his most wise providence may bring upon us, we know upon what terms our great Lord and Master will deal with us; having so fully declared himself, as to all these critical turns and trials of our obedience, in [Rev. ii. 10](#). *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*. God enable us to be the former, by a steady, unshaken hope of the latter.

*To which God be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and do minion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

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<sup>7</sup> See a virulent, insulting pamphlet, entitled, A Letter to a Member of Parliament, &c. page 14 and 52, printed in the year 1697, and as like the author himself, W. W. as malice can make it.

**A DISCOURSE**  
**CONCERNING**  
**THE GENERAL RESURRECTION,**  
**ON**

**ACTS XXIV. 15.**

*Having hope towards God, (which they themselves also allow,) that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*

**T**HE most wise Creator of the universe has so formed one world, that it is not to be governed without the help of another; nor the actions of the life here, to be kept in order, without the hopes and fears of one hereafter. The truth is, next to God himself, hopes and fears govern all things. They act by a kind of royal deputation under him, and are so without control, that they carry all before them, by an absolute, unlimited sway. For so long as God governs the world, (which will be as long as there is a world to govern,) law must govern under him, and the sanction of rewards and punishments must be that which enables the law itself to govern: human nature of itself being by no means so well disposed, as to make its duty the sole motive or measure of its obedience.

For as in other cases, so here, it is not so much the hand which binds, as the bond or chain with which it binds, which must make good its hold, upon the thing or person so bound by it. Every man, in all that concerns him, stands influenced by his hopes and fears, and those by rewards and punishments, the proper and respective objects thereof; and the divine law is the grand adamantine ligament, tying both of them fast together; by assuring rewards to our hopes, and punishments to our fears; so that man being thus bound by the peremptory, irreversible decree of Heaven, must, by virtue thereof, indispensably obey or suffer; the sentence of the law being universal and perpetual, either of a work to be done, or a penalty to be endured.

But whether it be from the nature or fate of man kind, it is no small matter of wonder, that man, of all creatures, should have such an averseness to obey, and such a proneness to disobey his Maker, that no thing under an eternity of happiness or misery (the first of them unspeakable, and the other of them in tolerable) should be the means appointed to engage him to the one, or deter him from the other. And it is yet a greater wonder, that not only such a method of dealing with men should be thought necessary, but that in such innumerable instances it should be found not sufficient; at least not effectual to the end it is intended for; as the event of things too fatally demonstrates it not to be.

Nevertheless, since Almighty God has pitched upon this method of governing the world by rewards and punishments, a resurrection of the persons so to be rewarded or punished must needs be granted absolutely and unavoidably necessary: nothing in this life giving us



a satisfactory account, that either the good or the bad have been yet dealt with according to the strict and utmost merit of their works: which yet, the justice of an infinitely wise judge and governor having so positively declared his will in the case, cannot but insist upon. For albeit God, as creator of the world, acted therein by an absolute, sovereign power, always under the conduct of infinite wisdom and goodness; yet, as governor of it, his justice is the prime attribute which he proceeds by, and the laws the grand instruments whereby justice acts, as rewards and punishments are the things which give life, force, and efficacy to justice itself. Upon which grounds, the apostle gives us a full account of the whole matter, in that excellent place, in [2 Cor. v. 10](#). *We must all, says he, appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Thus says the apostle. But the dead, we know, as such, can receive no such things; nor are subjects capable of rewards or punishments: so that the sum of the apostle's whole argument amounts to this: that as certainly as God governs the world wisely, and will one day judge it righteously, so certain is it, that there must be a general retribution, and, by consequence, a general resurrection.



In my discourse upon which, I shall cast the whole prosecution of the subject here to be treated of by us, under these three propositions, viz.

I. That a belief of a resurrection from the dead, is a thing exceeding difficult, strange, and harsh to the discourses of natural reason.

II. That notwithstanding this great difficulty, there is yet sufficient reason and solid ground for the belief of it. And,

III. and lastly, That supposing a sufficiency of reason for this belief, all difficulties, and seeming repugnancies alleageable against it, do exceedingly advance the worth, value, and excellency of it.

Now under these three propositions shall be taken in all that we shall or can say concerning the general resurrection at the last day. And accordingly, as to the first of the three propositions, importing the great difficulty, strangeness, and repugnancy of the article of the resurrection to the belief of natural reason, we find, moreover, in the text here pitched upon by us, that the main objection insisted upon by the principal of St. Paul's opposers, the Sadducees, against the doctrine preached by him, was drawn from this controverted point of the resurrection, and of the incredibility of the same, founded upon the supposed impossibility thereof; which, as it was a point of incomparably the greatest moment in the practice of religion, and consequently with the firmest steadiness to be assented to, and with equal zeal to be contended for, by our apostle; so was it with no less heat and fierceness opposed and exploded by those his forementioned antagonists. In treating of which, I shall endeavour these two things.



1. To shew that there is such an extraordinary averseness in natural reason to the belief of a resurrection, as in the said proposition we have affirmed that there is.

2. To assign the causes from which this averseness proceeds.

And first, for the first of these. The surest and readiest way, I should think, to learn the verdict of reason in this matter, would be to proceed by the rule and standard of their judgment, who were the most acknowledged and renowned masters of reason and learning in the several ages of the world, the philosophers; persons who discoursed upon the bare principles of natural reason, and upon no higher; who pretended not to revelation, but acquiesced in such discoveries, as nature, assisted with industry, and improved with hard study, could furnish them with. And this certainly was the best and likeliest way to state the *ne plus ultra* of reason, and to shew how far it could and could not go, by shewing how far it had actually gone already. And the world has had experience in more sorts of learning than one, how much those, who have gone before, have surpassed in perfection, as well as time, those who have come after them.

Now, in the first rank of these great and celebrated persons, Pythagoras (the earliest whom history reports to us to have been dignified with the title of philosopher) asserted and taught a metempsychosis, or transmigration of the same soul into several bodies; which is utterly inconsistent with a resurrection; the number of bodies, upon these terms, in so great a proportion exceeding the number of souls; one soul wearing out many bodies, as one body does many garments. So that the Pythagoric principle can admit of no resurrection, unless there could be as many souls as bodies to rejoin one another; which, upon this hypothesis, cannot be.

Plato indeed speaks much of the immortality of the soul; but by not so much as mentioning the rising of the body again after its dissolution, (when yet he treated of so cognate a subject,) we may rationally presume, that he knew nothing of it; and that amongst all his ideas, (as I may so express it,) he had none of such a resurrection.

Aristotle held an eternity of the world, viz. as to the heavens and the earth, the principal parts of it. But as to things mutable, he placed that eternity in the endless succession of individuals; which clearly shews, that he meant not, that those individuals should revive, and return to an endless duration. For since he asserted this succession only to immortalize the kind or species, the immortality of particulars would have rendered that succession wholly needless.

As for the Stoics and Epicureans, who, I am sure, were reputed the subtlest and most acute of all the sects of philosophers, we have them in [Acts xvii. 32.](#) scoffing at the very mention of rising from the dead. They thought it ridiculous for animated dust once dead to revive, or for man to be made or raised out of it, any more than once. For if that might be, they reckoned that men could not properly be said to die, but rather only to hold their breath for some time, than totally to lose it; and that death might be called a sleep without a metaphor, if we might so soon shake it off, and rise from it again. In short, if Zeno or

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Chrysippus were alive, they would explode, and if Epicurus himself should rise from the dead, he would scarce believe a resurrection.

But to pass from heathens to those who had their reason further improved by revelation, we have in the Jewish church a great, a learned, and considerable sect, called the Sadducees, wholly discarding this article from their creed; as St. Matthew tells us, in [Matth. xxii. 23](#), and St. Luke, in [Acts xxiii. 8](#), *that the Sadducees say, there is no resurrection, &c.* as, no doubt, it was their interest (as well as belief) that there should be none.

And lastly, even for some of those who professed Christianity itself, and that in the famous city of Corinth, where most of the gallantry, the wit, and learned arts of Greece flourished, we find some Christians themselves denying it, as appears from that elaborate confutation which St. Paul bestowed upon them in the [15th chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians](#).

Which instances, amongst several others assign able to the same purpose, may suffice to shew, how hardly this article finds credit with those who are led by principles of mere natural reason; and indeed so strange and incredible does it appear to such, (and some others also, though professing higher principles,) that the same power which God exerted in raising Christ from the dead, seems necessary to raise such sons of infidelity to a firm and thorough belief of it. And so I come to the

Second thing proposed, viz. to assign the causes, why natural reason thus starts from the belief of a resurrection: and these may be reckoned of two sorts.

1. Such as are taken from the manifold improbabilities, rendering the matter so exceeding unlikely to the judgment of human reason, that it cannot frame itself to a belief, that there is really any such thing. And,

. Such as are drawn from the downright impossibility charged upon it. Both which are to be considered. And

1st. Those many great improbabilities and unlikelihoods alleged against the resurrection of the same numerical body, are apt to give a mighty check to the mind of man in yielding its belief to it. For who would imagine, or could conceive, that when a body, by continual fraction and dissipation, is crumbled into millions of little atoms, some portions of it rarified into air, others sublimated into fire, and the rest changed into earth and water, the elements should after all this surrender back their spoils, and the several parts, after such a dispersion, should travel from all the four quarters of the world to meet together, and come to a mutual interview of one another, in one and the same individual body again? That God should summon a part out of this fish, that fowl, that beast, that tree, and remand it to its former place, to unite into a new combination for the rebuilding of a fallen edifice, and restoring an old, broken, demolished carcass to itself once more? So that, by such a continual circulation of life and death following upon one another, the grave should become, not so much a conclusion, as the interruption; not the period, but the parenthesis of our lives; a short

interval between the present and the future, and only a passage to convey us from one life to another. These things, we must confess, are both difficult in the notion, and hard to our belief. For though, indeed, the word of truth has declared, that *all flesh is grass*, and man but as *the flower of the field*; yet the apprehensions of sense will hardly be brought to acknowledge, that he therefore grows upon his own grave, or springs afresh out of the ground. For can the jaws of death relent? or the grave, of all things, make restitution? Can filth and rottenness be the preparatives to glory? and dust and ashes the seedplots of immortality? Is the sepulchre a place to dress ourselves in for heaven, the attiring room for corruption to put on incorruption, and to fit us for the beatific vision? These are paradoxes which nature cannot well digest; mysteries which it cannot fathom; being all of them such, as the common, universal observation of the world is wholly a stranger to.

And thus much for the first cause, which generally keeps men from a belief of the resurrection; namely, the great improbabilities and unlikelihoods attending it; but this is not all; there being yet another and a greater argument alleged against it, and that is, in the

Second and next place, the downright impossibilities charged upon it. And this from the seemingly unanswerable contradictions and absurdities implied in it; and, as some think, unavoidably consequent upon it. Of which, the chief, and most hardly reconcilable to the discourses of human reason, is founded in and derivable from the continual transmutation of one thing into another. For how extravagant so ever the forementioned Pythagorean hypothesis, of the transmigration or metempsychosis of one soul into several bodies, may be justly accounted to be, yet the transmutation of one body into another ought not to be accounted so. For the parts of a body, we know, are in a continual flux, and the decays of nature are repaired by the daily substitution of new matter derived from our nutriment; and when, at length, this body comes to be dissolved by death, it soon after returns to earth; and that earth is animated into grass, and that grass turned into the substance of the beast which eats it, and that beast becomes food to man, and so, by a long percolation, is converted into his flesh and substance. So that such matter or substance, which was once an integral part of this man's body, perhaps twenty years after his death, by this round or circle of perpetual transmutation, comes to be an integral part of another man's. Now if there be a resurrection, and every man shall be restored with his own numerical body, perfect and complete, we may propose our doubt in those words of the Sadducees to our Saviour in [Matth. xxii. 28](#), concerning the woman who had been married to several husbands successively: *To which of them shall she belong at the last day? for all of them had her*. So may it be said of such a portion of matter or substance, which, by continual change, has been an integral part of several bodies: To which of these bodies shall it be restored at the resurrection? For having successively belonged to each of them, either our bodies must not rise entire, or the same portion of substance and matter must be a part of several distinct bodies, and consequently be in several distinct places at the same time, which is manifestly impossible.





Now the foundation of this argument, taken from the vicissitude and mutual change of things into one another, is clear, from obvious and universally uncontested experience; and being so, the restitution of every soul to its own respective body, and to every integral part of it, is a thing to which all principles of natural reason seem a contradiction; and by consequence, if so, not within the power of omnipotence to effect. I say, it seems so; and I will not presume to say more.

The consideration of which drove the Socinians, those known enemies to natural as well as revealed religion, (whatsoever they pretend in contradiction to what they assert in behalf of both,) together with some others, peremptorily to deny that men shall be raised with the same numerical bodies which they had in this world, but with another, which, for its ethereal, refined substance, they say, is by St. Paul termed *a spiritual body*, [1 Cor. xv. 44](#). And being here pressed with the very literal signification of the word *resurrection*, which implies a repeated existence of the same thing, they will have it here used only by a kind of metaphor, viz. that because in death a man seems to the perception and view of sense utterly to perish and cease to be, therefore his restitution seems to be a sort of resurrection. And as for those Greek words ἀναστῆναι and ἐγείρειν, they endeavour to shew, by other like places of scripture, that they signify no more than the bare suscitation, raising, or giving being to a thing, without its having fallen or perished before. As for instance, in [Matth. xxii. 24](#), ἀναστήσει σπέρμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ, *he shall raise up seed to his brother*. And in [Rom. ix. 17](#), God says of Pharaoh, διὰ τοῦτο ἐξήγειρά σε· *for this cause have I raised thee up*. Whereas neither of these can be supposed to have perished before that raising. From whence, and some other such like places, they conclude, that these words, applied to the present case, import at most the bare restoration of the man; and that not necessarily by restoring his soul to its old body, but by joining it to a new; accounted indeed the same to all real intents and purposes of use, though not by formal identity; they still affirming, nevertheless, the man thus raised, and with his new body, to be the same person; forasmuch as, they say, it is the soul or spirit which makes the man, and is the proper principle which gives the individuation. This was their opinion.

And thus I have done with the first of the three propositions drawn from the words, viz. the exceeding great difficulty of men's believing a resurrection. And that, both by proving that actually it is so, from the most authentic examples alleageable in the case, and by assigning withal the reasons and causes why it comes to be so: I proceed now to the second proposition, viz. To shew that, notwithstanding this difficulty, there is yet sufficient reason and solid ground for the belief of it.

And this I shall endeavour to do, both by answering the foregoing objections brought against the resurrection; and withal offering something by way of argument, for the positive proof of it.



Now for the first of these. I shew that the resurrection was argued against upon two distinct heads, viz. The improbabilities attending it, and the impossibilities charged upon it. And,

1. Briefly, as to the objection from the improbabilities said to attend it, and to keep men off from the belief of it; besides that the said objection runs in a very loose and popular, rather than in a close and argumentative way, and looks more like harangue than reasoning, (though yet the best that the thing will bear,) we are to observe yet further, that not every strange and unusual event ought always, and under all circumstances, to be accounted improbable. For where a sufficient cause of any thing or event may be assigned, though above and beyond the common course of natural causes, I cannot reckon that event or thing properly and strictly improbable. Forasmuch as it is no ways improbable, that the supreme agent and governor of all things should, for some great end or purpose, sometimes step out of the ordinary road of his providence, (as undoubtedly he often does,) and of which there are several instances upon record, both in sacred and profane story, relating what strange things have happened in the world, which could not rationally be ascribed to any other, but the supernatural workings of a divine power. Nevertheless, admitting, but not granting the fore-alleged improbabilities of a resurrection, yet this does not at all affect the point now in dispute before us, which turns not properly upon the probability, but the possibility of the thing here discoursed of. And where there is a possibility on the one side, answered by an omnipotence on the other, there can be no ground to question an effect commensurate to both. For a resurrection being allowed possible, though never so improbable, still it is in the number of those things which an infinite power can do; and upon this account we find, that there is a much higher pitch of infidelity, which stops not here, but goes so far on, as to deny the very possibility of it too: and this brings me to the examination of the

Second objection produced against this article of the resurrection, from the utter impossibility thereof, (as the objectors pretend) and that impossibility (as we have shewn) founded upon the continual transmutation of one body into another. This, I say, was the argument; and it seems to me to press the hardest upon the resurrection of the same numerical body, and to be the most difficult to be solved and answered of any other whatsoever. For as for those commonly drawn from the seeming impossibility of bringing together such an innumerable multitude of minute particles, as from a body once dissolved must needs be scattered all the world over into the several elements of fire, air, water, and earth, and reuniting them all together at the last day; I cannot, I say, find any thing in all this either hard or puzzling, and much less contrary to natural reason to believe, if we do but acknowledge an omniscience in the agent, who is to do this great thing, joined with an omnipotence in the same. For, by the first of these two perfections, he cannot but know where all and every one of the said particles of the body are lodged and disposed of; and by the latter, he must be no less able to bring them from all parts and places of the universe, though never

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so vastly distant from one another, and join them again together in the restitution of the said body. Nothing being difficult, either for omniscience to know, or for omnipotence to do; but when the thing to be done is, in the nature of it, impossible; as the fore-alleged argument would infer the resurrection to be.

To which therefore I answer, that the proposition or assertion, upon which the said argument is grounded, is neither evident nor certain; and that we have no assurance, that the transmutation of an human body into other animated bodies, after its dissolution, is total, and extends to all the parts thereof; but that there may be a considerable portion of matter in every man's body (for of such only we now dispute) which never passes by transmutation into any other animated body, but sinks into and rests in the common mass of matter, contained in the four elements, (according to the respective nature of each particular element wherein it is lodged,) and there continues unchanged by any new animation, till the last day. But what these particular parts are, which admit of no such further change, and what quantity of corporeal substance or matter they make or amount to, I suppose, is known only to God himself, the great disposer and governor, as well as maker and governor of the world.

And whereas it is said in the objection, that such a continual transmutation, as is here supposed, is evident from a general, constant, uncontestable experience; I deny, that the just measures, bounds, and compass of this transmutation can be exactly known by or evident to common experience; forasmuch as it falls not under the cognizance of the outward senses; and yet it is only that, and the repeated observations made thereby, which experience is or can be founded upon. For who can assure himself, or any one else, upon his own personal sight, hearing, or the report of any other of his senses, that the whole matter of a dissolved body passes successively into other living bodies? (though a great portion of it may, and without question does;) and if, on the other side, he cannot, upon his own personal observation, give a full and exact account of this, can he pretend to tell how and where the providence of God has disposed of the remaining part of the said dissolved body, which has not undergone any such change? This, I say, is not to be known by us, either by any observation of sense, or discourse of reason founded thereupon, and I know of no revelation to adjust the matter. So that, although it should be supposed true, (which we do by no means grant to be so,) that in the dissolution of every human body the whole mass, and every part of the said body, underwent such an entire transmutation as we have been speaking of; yet, since this cannot certainly be known, it cannot come into argumentation, as a proof of that which it is alleged for; unless we would prove an *ignotum per ceque ignotum*; which being grossly illogical, and a mere *petitio principii*, can conclude nothing, nor at all affect the subject in dispute, one way or other: forasmuch as in every demonstration of the highest sort, the principles thereof ought to be evident, as well as certain.

The sum of all therefore is this; that every human body, upon its dissolution, sinks by degrees into the elementary mass of matter; whereof a great part passes by several animations

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into other bodies; and a great part likewise remains in the same elementary mass, without undergoing any further change. To which reserved portion, at the last day, the soul, as the prime, individuating principle, and the said reserved portion of matter, as an essential and radical part of the individuation, together with a sufficient supply of more matter (if requisite) from the general mass, shall, by the almighty power of God joining all those together, make up and restore the same individual person: and this cuts off all necessity of holding, that what was once an integral part of one body, should, at the same time, become an integral part of another, which, it is confessed, for the reason before given, would make the restitution of the same numerical portion of matter to both bodies utterly impossible.

But if it be here replied, that our assertion of a reserved portion of matter never passing into other animated bodies by any further transmutation, (albeit a considerable portion of the same dissolved body be allowed so to do) is a thing merely *gratis dictum*, and that we have not yet positively proved the same; my answer is, that in the present case, there is no necessity of proving that it is actually so; but it is sufficient to our purpose, that the contrary cannot be proved, and that nothing hinders but that it may be so; the thing being in itself possible: and if that be granted, then the argument, founded upon the supposed impossibility of it, comes to nothing. Forasmuch as being possible, it falls within the compass of God's omnipotence, which is the great attribute to be employed in this case. And this effectually over throws the whole force of the objection.

But if it be further argued, that the great addition of matter to be made at the last day, out of the common mass, to those remainders of matter, which (having belonged to the same man's body formerly) are then to be completed into a perfect body again, seems inconsistent with the numerical identity of the body which was before, and that which shall be after wards at the resurrection; I answer, that this is no more inconsistent with the numerical identity thereof, than the addition of so great a quantity of new matter, as comes to be made to a man's body, by a continual augmentation of all the parts of it, from his birth to his full stature, makes his body numerically another at his grown age, from that which the same person had while he was yet an infant. In both which ages, nevertheless, the body is still reckoned but one and the same in number, though in disparity of bulk and substance, twenty to one greater in the latter than in the former. Accordingly, suppose we further, that only so much matter as has still continued in our bodies, from our coming into the world to our going out of it, shall be reunited to our soul at the resurrection, even that may and will be sufficient to constitute our glorified body in a real, numerical identity with that body which the soul was in before, so as upon all accounts to be still the same body, though in those so very different states and conditions.

And therefore, the opinion of the Socinians, viz. That the soul, at the resurrection, shall be clothed with another and quite different body, from what it had in this life, (whether of ether or some such like sublimated matter,) moved thereto by the forementioned objections,

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and the like, ought not to be admitted: it being contrary to reason and all sound philosophy, that the soul successively united to two entirely distinct bodies, should make but one and the same numerical person: since though the soul be indeed the prime and chief principle of the individuation of the person, yet it is not the sole and adequate principle thereof; but the soul, joined with the body, makes the adequate, individuating principle of the person. Nor will any true philosophy allow, that the body was ever intended for the mere garment of the soul, but for an essential, constituent part of the man, as really as the soul itself: and the difference of an essential half in any composition will be sure to make an essential difference in the whole compound. Nor is this Socinian assertion more contrary to the principles of philosophy, than to the express words of scripture; which are not more positive in affirming a resurrection, than in declaring a resurrection of the same numerical person. And whereas, they say, that they grant, that the same numerical person shall rise again, though not the same body, (the soul, as they contend, still individuating any body which it shall be clothed with,) we have already shewn, on the contrary, that the person cannot be numerically the same, when the body is not so too; since the soul is not the sole principle of personal individuation, though the chief; besides that it seems very odd, and no ways agreeable to the common sentiments of reason, to say, that any thing rises again, which had never perished nor fallen before, as it is certain that the body, which these men suppose shall be united to the soul at the last day, never did. But to elude the force of this argument, the Socinians pretend, that the words whereby we would infer a resurrection of the same body, to wit, ἀναστῆναι, ἐγείρειν, and ἐγείρεσθαι, &c. infer no such thing in the several texts from whence they are alleged; but only import a bare suscitation, or raising up of a thing, without any necessity of supposing it to have perished before, as being often applied to things entirely produced *de novo*. But the answer to this is not difficult, viz. that the point now before us is not wholly determinable from the bare grammatical use of these words; (according to which we deny not, but that they sometimes import a mere suscitation or production of a thing, without supposing any precedent destruction of the same;) but the sense of these words must be sometimes also determined by the particular state and circumstance of the objects to which they are applied; as when they are applied to and used about things bereaved of their former existence, (as persons dead, and departed this life, manifestly are;) and in such a case, whensoever the words ἀναστῆναι, ἐγείρειν, and ἐγείρεσθαι come to be so applied, I affirm, that they can, with no tolerable accord to common sense and reason, be allowed to signify any thing else, but the *repetition* or *restitution* of lost existence, or, in other words, the resuscitation of that which had perished before.

And thus much in answer to the objection brought to prove the impossibility of a resurrection of the same numerical body founded upon the continual transmutation of one body into another. The sum of all amounting to this, viz. that if the transmutation of human bodies after death, into other animate bodies successively, be total, the objection, founded

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upon such a transmutation, is not easy to be avoided; and if, on the other side, it be not total, I cannot see how it proves, that the restitution of the same numerical body carries in it any contradiction, nor, consequently, any impossibility at all. For the point now before us depending chiefly upon the due stating of the object of an infinite power, if the thing in dispute be but possible, it is sufficient to overthrow any argument that would pretend to prove, that an omnipotence cannot effect it. Which consideration having been thus offered by us, for the clearing of the forecited objection, we shall now proceed in the

Second place, to produce something, as we promised, by way of positive proof for the evincing of a resurrection, notwithstanding all the difficulties and repugnancies which seem to attend it. And here, since this is a point of religion, knowable only by revelation, it cannot be positively proved, or made out to us any other way than by revelation, that is to say, by what God has declared in his written word concerning it: for natural reason and philosophy will afford us but little assistance in a case so extremely above both. Accordingly, since revelation is our only competent guide in this matter, the natural method, I conceive, for us to proceed by in our discourses thereupon, must be this, viz. that whereas the objection is, that the resurrection of the same numerical body implies in it a contradiction, and therefore cannot possibly be, even by the divine power itself; the proper answer to this ought to be by an inversion of the same terms after this manner, viz. that God has declared that he will, and therefore can raise the same numerical body at the last day. So that the sum of the whole matter turns upon this point; to wit, whether that which we judge to be or not to be a contradiction, ought to measure the extent of the divine power; or, on the other side, the divine power to determine what is or is not to be accounted by us a contradiction. And the difficulty on either side seems not inconsiderable. For if we take the first of these methods, this in convenience will attend it; that the measure we make use of is always short of the thing we apply it to; as a finite must needs be short of an infinite: and sometimes also false, and thereby not only short of it, but moreover disagreeable to it; it being very possible, (because indeed very frequent,) that the mind of man, even with its utmost sagacity, may be mistaken, and judge that to imply a contradiction which really does not so. But, on the other hand, if we make the divine power the measure, whereby we ought to judge what is or what is not a contradiction, we make that a measure which we do not thoroughly understand or comprehend; and that is contrary to the very nature and notion of a measure; forasmuch as that by which we would understand another thing, ought to be first understood itself. But how shall we be able to understand the extent of an infinite power, so as to know certainly how far it can go, and where it must stop, and can go no further? As if we should argue thus: This or that implies in it no contradiction, because God, by his divine power, can effect it; I think the inference very good: but for all that, it may be replied, How do you know what an infinite or divine power can or cannot do? Certain it is, that it cannot destroy itself, or put an end to its own being; and possibly there may be some other things, unknown to us, which are

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likewise under an incapacity of being done by it. And how then shall we govern our speculations in this arduous and perplexing point? For my own part, I should think it not only the safest, but in all respects the most rational way, in any doubtful case, where the power of almighty God is concerned, to ascribe as much to him as his divine nature and attributes suffer us to do: that is to say, that we rather prescribe to our reason from his power, than to his power from any rule or maxim taken up by our reason. And since there is a necessity of some rule or other to proceed by, in forming a judgment of God's power, no less than of his other perfections; let God's word or revelation, (in the name of all that pretends to be sensible or rational,) founded upon his infallible knowledge of whatsoever he says or reveals, (and confirmed by his essential veracity inseparably attending it,) be that great rule for us to judge by: for a better, I am sure, can never be assigned, nor a safer relied upon. And accordingly, when our Saviour was to answer the Sadducees, disputing upon this very subject, the resurrection, he argues not from any topic of common reason or natural philosophy, but wholly from the power of God, as declared by the word of God. *Do ye not therefore err,* says he, [Mark xii. 24](#), *because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?* or, in other words, the power of God, as declared in scripture. Our Saviour went no further with them, as knowing this to have been home to the point, and sufficient for their conviction. And upon the same account, those remarkable passages in the evangelists cannot but be of mighty weight in the present case: as that particularly in [Matt. xix. 26](#), and in [Mark x. 27](#). In both which it is plainly and positively affirmed, *that with God all things are possible*; and yet more particularly in [Luke xviii. 27](#), where Christ, speaking of some things accounted with men impossible, tells us, *that the things impossible with men were possible with God*. The antithesis, we see here, is clear and full enough; and yet even with men nothing uses to be accounted impossible, but what is judged by them one way or other to imply in it a contradiction; and if so, it is evident, that the divine power may extend to some things, which, in the judgments of men, pass for contradictions; and consequently, that what, according to their judgments, implies in it a contradiction, cannot be always a just measure of what is impossible for God to do. Nevertheless, in order to the better understanding of this matter, I conceive it may not be amiss to distinguish here of two sorts of contradictions.

1. Such as appear immediately and self-evidently so, from the very terms of the proposition wherein they are expressed: the predicate implying in it a direct negation of the subject, and the subject mutually of the predicate; so that, upon the bare understanding of the signification of the terms or parts of the proposition, we cannot but apprehend and see the contradiction couched under them, and the utter inconsistency of the idea of one with the idea of the other: as if, for instance, we should say, that light is darkness, or that darkness is light; or that a piece of bread of about an inch in breadth, and of an inch in length, is a man's body of about a yard and an half in length, and of a proportionable size in breadth; each of these



propositions or assertions would import a direct and evident negation of the other, upon the very first sight or hearing, without any further examination of them at all. But then,

2. There is another sort of contradictions, which may not improperly be termed consequential. That is to say, such as shew themselves, not by the immediate self-evidence of the terms, but by consequences and deductions drawn from some known principle by human ratiocination or discourse, and the judgment which men use to pass upon things in the strength and light thereof. In all which, since men may be deceived, (nothing being more incident to common humanity than mistake,) such contradictions cannot be so far relied upon, as to be taken for a perfect and sure measure of what the divine power can or cannot do. As for instance, if we should say, "That for a body having been once destroyed, and transmuted into other human bodies, or some parts thereof successively, to be restored again, with all the parts of it complete, and numerically the same, is a contradiction;" it is certain, however, that the contradiction here charged does not manifestly appear such from any evidence of the terms, but is only gathered by such consequences and inferences, as men form to themselves in their discourses upon this subject; and therefore, though possibly a truth, yet can be no clear proof, that it is impossible for an infinite power to do that which is here supposed and said to be a contradiction. But, on the other side, touching the first sort of contradictions mentioned by us, and shewing themselves by the immediate self-evidence of the terms; these, no doubt, ought to be looked upon by us out of the sphere or compass of omnipotence itself to effect: or otherwise, that old and universally received rule, viz. that the divine power extends to the doing of every thing, not implying in it a contradiction, must be exploded, and laid aside by us, as utterly useless and fallacious.

But now, with reference to the foregoing distinction of prime and consequential contradictions, if it should be here asked, whether a contradiction of the latter sort be not as really and as much a contradiction as one of the former; I grant that it is, (there being no *magis* and *minus* in contradictions;) but nevertheless, not so manifestly nor so evidently such, nor consequently of so much force in argumentation, nor equally capable of having a conclusion or inference drawn from it, as the other is. For we are to observe, that, in the case now before us, a contradiction is not so much considered for what it is barely in itself, as for its being a medium to prove something else by it; and for that reason, we allow not the same conclusive force (though the same reality, could it be proved) to a consequential contradiction, which we allow to a prime and self-evident one, and such as shews itself to the very first view, in and by the bare terms of the proposition wherein it is contained.

Upon the whole matter therefore, if by true and sound reasoning I stand assured, that God has affirmed or declared a thing, all objections against the same, though never so strong, (even reason itself, upon the strictest principles of it, being judge,) must of necessity fall to the ground. Forasmuch as reason itself cannot but acknowledge, that men of the best wit, learning, and judgment, may sometimes take that for a contradiction, which really is not

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so; but still, on the other side, must own it utterly impossible for a being infinitely perfect, holy, and true, either to deceive or be deceived in any thing affirmed or attested by it. And moreover, to carry this point yet something further: if a proposition be once settled upon a solid bottom, and sufficiently proved, it will and must continue to be so, notwithstanding any after-arguments or objections brought against it, whether we can answer and clear off the said objections, or no; I say, it lessens not our obligation to believe such a proposition one jot. And if the whole body of Christians, throughout all places and ages, should with one voice declare, that they could not solve the foregoing objection urged against the resurrection, and taken from the continual transmutation of bodies into one another, or any other such like arguments, it would not abate one degree of duty lying upon them, to acknowledge and embrace the said article, as an indispensable part of their Christian faith; nor would they be at all the worse Christians, for not being able to give a philosophical account or solution thereof; so long as, with a *non obstante* to all such difficulties, they stedfastly adhered to and acquiesced in the article itself. For, so far as I can see, this whole controversy depends upon, and ought to be determined by the scriptures, as wholly turning upon these two points, viz. 1st, Whether a future general resurrection be affirmed and revealed in the scriptures, or no? And 2dly, Whether the said scriptures be the word of God? And if the matter stands thus, I am sure that none can justly pretend to the name of a Christian, who in the least doubts of the affirmative in either of these two points. And consequently, if this article stands thus proved, all arguments formed against it, upon the stock of reason or philosophy, come too late to shake it; for they find the thing already fixed and proved; and being so, it cannot, by after-allegations, be disproved. Since it being also a proposition wholly founded upon revelation, and the authority of the revelation upon the authority of the revealer, all arguments from any thing else are wholly foreign to the subject in dispute; and accordingly ought by no means to be admitted, either as necessary proofs of it, or so much as competent objections against it. For whatsoever is contrary to the word or affirmation of a being infinitely knowing and essentially infallible, let it carry with it never so much shew of truth; yet it certainly is and can be nothing else but fallacy and imposture. And upon this one ground I firmly do and ought to believe a general resurrection, though ten thousand arguments from the principles of natural philosophy could be opposed to it. But may it not then, you will say, upon the same terms, be here argued, that Jesus Christ (who is God blessed for ever) having expressly said of the bread in the holy sacrament, *This is my body*, we ought to believe the said piece of bread to be really and substantially his body, how much soever we may apprehend it to contradict the principles of sense, reason, and philosophy? To this I answer; That the words here alleged, as pronounced by our Saviour, are confessedly in the holy scripture. But that every thing affirmed by God in scripture, is there affirmed and intended by him, literally, properly, and not figuratively, this I utterly deny. And since it is agreed to by all, (and even by those whom in this matter we contend with,) that many ex-

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pressions in scripture cannot be understood but by a figure; and since, moreover, I grant and assert, that every thing affirmed by God in holy scripture ought to be believed in that sense only in which it is so affirmed; I will venture to allow the persons, who are for the literal sense of those particular words against the figurative, till doomsday, to prove that the literal sense only ought to take place here, and the figurative to be exploded and set aside; and if they can but prove this, I shall not fail, as I said before, to believe and assent to the thing so proved, whatsoever that, which the world calls common reason and philosophy, shall or can suggest and offer to the contrary.

And this, I hope, may suffice to have been spoken upon the second proposition assigned for the prosecution of this subject, namely, That notwithstanding all the difficulties and objections alleged against the article of a general resurrection, there is yet sufficient reason and solid ground for the belief of it. From whence we should now proceed to treat of the third and last proposition; to wit, That a sufficiency of reason being thus given for the belief of the said article, all the difficulties, and seeming repugnancies to reason, which it is charged with, do exceedingly enhance the worth, value, and excellency of that belief.

But this, as I reckon, having been, in effect, done by us already; and the whole matter set in a full view, partly by clearing off the objections pretended to be brought against it, from natural reason, in the two foregoing propositions; and partly by establishing the proof thereof, upon the sure basis of those three great attributes of God, his omniscience, his omnipotence, and his essential veracity, all of them employed to warrant and engage our assent to it; we shall now at length come to consider the same more particularly in some of the consequences deducible from it. Such as are these two that follow. As,

1. We collect from hence the utter insufficiency of bare natural religion to answer the proper ends and purposes which God intended religion for. And,

2. We infer from hence also, the diabolical impiety of the Socinian opinions; and particularly of those relating to the resurrection. And here,

1. For the first of these, the insufficiency of natural religion to answer the proper ends which religion was designed for. This is most certain, that natural religion exceeds not the compass of natural reason; it neither looks higher nor reaches further, but both of them are commensurate to one another; and it is every whit as certain, that the soul of man, being the proper seat and subject of religion, must needs be allowed to be immortal; and being withal both endued with and acted by the affections of hope and fear, that it must be supplied with objects proper and adequate to both, which yet nothing under an eternal happiness with respect to the one, and an eternal misery with reference to the other, together with a general resurrection from the dead, to render men capable of either, can possibly be. So that it is manifest, from the very nature and essentials of religion, supposing it perfect, that the particulars now alleged by us necessarily do and must come up to the utmost of what they stand alleged for. But then, on the other hand, can mere natural reason of itself, by full

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evidence and strength of argument, convince us of any of the aforesaid particulars? As, for instance, can it demonstrate that the soul is immortal? Or can it certainly prove, that there is a future and eternal state of happiness or of misery in another life? And that, in order to it, there shall be a resurrection of their mortal bodies, after an utter dissolution of them into dust and ashes? No, there is nothing in bare reason that can so much as pretend to evince demonstratively any of these doctrines or assertions. And what then can natural religion do or say in the case? For where the former is at a stand, the latter can go no further; so that there is an absolute necessity, if we would have any more certain knowledge of these matters, to fetch it from revelation: forasmuch as the great apostle himself assures us, in [1 Cor. ii. 9](#), *that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things God has prepared for those that love him*; nor consequently, (by a parity of reason,) what miseries he has prepared for those that hate him. And if both of them are a perfect nonplus and baffle to all human understanding, is it possible for natural reason to comprehend what the heart of man cannot conceive? Nothing certainly can be a grosser contradiction, and that in the very terms of it, than such an assertion. But some perhaps may here say, that though natural reason, by its own strength and light, cannot give us a clear and particular account what these things are; yet it may, however, be able to discover to us, that really there are such things. But, in answer to this also, the same apostle tells us, in [2 Tim. i. 10](#), *that it was our Saviour Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*; that is to say, cleared off all doubts about the immortal state and being of the soul, the everlasting felicities of the righteous, and the never-dying worm and torments of the wicked in another world. Touching all which, I affirm, that nothing but divine revelation could give any solid satisfaction to the minds of men, either as to the *quid sit* or the *quod sit* of these things; that is to say, either by declaring the nature of them, *what they are*; or by proving the existence and being of them, *that they are*; besides, that the very expression of *bringing a thing to light*, must needs import its being hidden or undiscovered (at least to any considerable purpose) before. But some possibly may here further object, that the heathens could not but, long before the times of our Saviour, have had a competent knowledge of these matters. For did they not, by what they discoursed of the Elysian fields, intend thereby to express the future blessedness of pious and virtuous persons? And by what they taught of Styx, Acheron, and Cocytus, and the torments of Prometheus, Ixion, and other famous criminals, design likewise to set forth to us the future miseries of the wicked and flagitious? No doubt, they meant so: but still all this was built upon such weak and fabulous grounds, that the wiser sort of them did but despise and laugh at all these things. So that Juvenal, speaking of these matters, tells us in plain terms, *vix pueri credunt*, that children scarce believed them; though surely, if any thing could dispose the mind of men to an extravagant credulity, one would think that the age and state of childhood should. And then, as for the immortality of the soul, whatsoever Plato and other philosophers might argue in

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behalf thereof, yet I am abundantly satisfied, that neither Plato, nor all of them together, have been able to argue more close and home to this subject, than those wits, who have lived in the ages after them, have done. And yet, upon the result of all, I do not find, that any thing hitherto has been so clearly and irrefragably proved for the immortality of it, but that the most that can be done upon this argument is, that the soul cannot be proved by any principle of natural reason to be mortal. And that (though it does not prove so much as it should do) is yet, I think, no inconsiderable point or step gained: but, after all, admitting the proof hereof to be as full and convincing as we could wish, then what can natural reason say to a general resurrection from the dead, that main article which we are now insisting upon? Why, truly, nothing at all: and if this be the utmost which is to be had from natural reason upon this point, I am sure there is no more to be had from natural religion; which (to make the very best and most of it) is nothing but reason, not assisted by revelation. But,

2. The other thing, which we shall infer from the foregoing particulars, is, the horrible impiety of the Socinian opinions; and particularly of those relating to the resurrection, and the state of men's souls after death. The Socinians, who have done their utmost to overthrow the *credenda* of Christianity, are not for stopping there, but for giving as great a blow to the *agenda* of it too, by subverting (if possible) those principles which are to support the practice of it. Amongst which I reckon one of the chief to be, the belief of those eternal torments awarded by God to persons dying in a state of sin and impenitence, one of the most powerful checks to sin, doubtless, of any that religion affords: forasmuch as where there is one withheld from sin by the hopes of those eternal joys promised in the scripture, I dare affirm, that there are an hundred at least, if not more, kept from it by the fears of eternal torments. And the reason of this is, because those things by which the joys of heaven are represented to us, do by no means make so quick and lively an impression upon men's minds, as those by which the torments of hell, as they are described to us, are found to do. I am far, I confess, from affirming, that this ought to be so; but as the state of mankind now generally is, there are but too many and too manifest proofs, that actually it is so. And I do not in the least question, but that there are millions who would readily part with all their hopes of the future felicities which the scripture promises them, upon condition that they might be secured from the eternal torments which it threatens.<sup>8</sup> And therefore, what a

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8 They deny the torments of hell, and give this reason for it. "Quod absurdum sit, Deum irasci in aeternum, et peccata creaturarum finita poenis infinitis mulctare, praesertim cum nulla hinc ipsius gloria illustretur." *Compendium Doctrinae Ecclesiarum in Polonia*. Likewise Ernestus Sonnerus, a noted Socinian, has wrote a just treatise, with this title prefixed to it, *Demonstratio Theologica et Philosophica, Quod aeterna impiorum supplicia non arguant Dei justitiam, sed injustitiam*. And if they be unjust, we may be sure, (as Dr. Tillotson, in his sermon on [Matthew xxv. 46](#), learnedly observes,) that there shall be no such thing. And to shew further how industrious these factors for the devil are to rid men's minds of the grand restraint of sin, the belief of eternal torments, he sets down at the end of his *Demonstration*, (as he calls it,) several places of scripture, where the

mighty encouragement must the denial of eternal punishments needs be to all sorts of wickedness in the lives of men! And what shall be able to restrain the progress and rage of it, in the course of the world, when sinners shall be told, that, after all the villainies committed by them here, nothing is to be expected or feared by them, when they have quitted this life, but a total annihilation or extinction of their persons, together with an endless continuance under the said estate? And is not this, think we, a sort of eternal punishment according to the sinner's own heart's desire? For since it so utterly bereaves him of all sense, that he can feel nothing hereafter, let him alone to fear as little here. And as for the resurrection from the dead, the same men generally deny, that the wicked shall have any at all; it being, as they affirm, intended by God for a peculiar favour and privilege to the godly, who alone are to be the sons of the resurrection. But then, if these men find themselves pinched by such scriptures as that of the [25th of St. Matthew](#), and this of my text, so expressly declaring a resurrection, *both of the just and the unjust*; in this case, some of them have another assertion to fly to; namely, that the wicked shall indeed be raised again at the last day; but immediately after such a resuscitation, shall be annihilated and destroyed for ever: an assertion so intolerably absurd, and so manifestly a scoff upon religion, that none but an atheist or Socinian (another word for the same thing) could have been so profane as even to think of it, or so impudent as to own or declare it. In fine, such is the diabolical impiety and the mischievous influence of the foregoing opinions upon the practices of mankind, and consequently upon the peace and welfare of societies and governments, (all depending upon the said practices,) that all sober and pious minds do even groan under the very thoughts of such foul invasions upon religion; and cannot but wonder, even to amazement, that the maintainers of such

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words *eternal* and *for ever* signify not an infinite or everlasting, but only a finite, though indefinite duration. Likewise Diodorus Camphuysen, one of the same tribe, with a frontless impudence, in a certain epistle of his, requires such as should read it, “negare et ridere damnatorum poenas, et cruciatus aeternos;” that is, not only to deny, but also to laugh at the eternal torments and punishments of the damned. And to make yet surer work, (if possible,) Socinus denies the soul even a capacity of being tormented after a man's death. “Tantum id mihi videtur statui posse, post hanc vitam, animam, sive animum hominis non ita per se subsistere, ut praemia ulla poenasve sentiat, vel etiam ista sentiendi sit capax, quae mea firma opinio,” &c. *Socinus in quinta Epistola ad Volkeliū*. And elsewhere; “Homo, sive anima humana nihil cum immortalitate habet commune.” In short, I am so far from accounting the authors or owners of such horrid assertions to be really Christians, that I account them really the worst of men, if profaneness, blasphemy, and the letting loose all sorts of wickedness upon the world, can make them so. For, according to these grand agents and apostles of Satan, wicked men, no less than the very brutes themselves, (whose spirits also they affirm to return to God, as well as those of the other,) being once dead, shall rise no more. And if they can but persuade men, that they shall die like beasts, there is no question to be made, but that most of them will be quickly brought to live like beasts too.

tenets were not long since delivered over into the hands of civil justice, to receive condign punishment by the sentence of the judge; as likewise, that those who deny the divinity and satisfaction of our Saviour, explode original sin, and revive several of the old condemned blasphemies, have not long before this been brought under the censures of the church in convocation. But if, on the contrary, the sheltering of some such rotten churchmen, as well as several others, from the dint of ecclesiastical authority, was one great cause of that so long and unaccountable omission of those sacred and most useful assemblies, for many years together, since the restoration, (as many wise and good men shrewdly suspect it was,) is it not just with God, and may it not, for ought we know, actually provoke him to deprive us even of the Christian religion itself? For assuredly, that lewd, scandalous, and ungrateful usage, which it has (of late years especially) found from some of the highest pretenders to it amongst us, has not only deserved, but, upon too great grounds of reason, seems also to prognosticate and forebode, and even cry out for no less a judgment upon the nation. But howsoever God, whose ways are unsearchable, shall think fit to dispose of and deal with us, let us not vainly flatter ourselves; but as we have been hitherto proving the certainty of a general resurrection, so let us still remember, that the day of the resurrection will be as certainly a day of retribution too; a day, in which the proudest and most exalted hypocrite shall be brought low enough, and even the lowest hypocrites much lower than they desire to be; a day, in which the meanest and most abject (if sincere) member of our excellent (how much soever struck at and maligned) church, shall be raised to a most happy and glorious condition: though, whether or no the church itself (God bless it) be, in the mean time, in so flourishing an estate, (as some would persuade us it is,) I shall not, I must not presume to determine.

*Now to God, the great Judge and Rewarder of men, according to the vileness of their principles, as well as the wickedness of their practices, 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 doctrine of the blessed Trinity asserted, and proved not contrary to reason:*

IN

**A SERMON**

**PREACHED BETWEEN THE YEARS 1663 AND 1670,**

**BEFORE**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF OXON,**

**UPON**

**COLOSS. II. 2.**

*To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.*

*Εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ Πατρὸς, καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.*

**I**N the handling and asserting of the doctrine of the Trinity, I do not remember any place so often urged, and so much insisted upon by divines, as that in [1 John v. 7](#), There are three who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one: a text fully containing in it the doctrine of three distinct divine Persons in one and the same blessed and eternal God head; a doctrine unanimously received by the catholic Christian church, and warranted by the testimony of the most ancient, genuine, and unexceptionable records or copies of the New Testament, as well as of the most noted of the fathers concerning it; and that not only as of a single article, but rather as the sum total of our Christian faith; and not so much a part or member, as a full but short compendium of our religion. And yet, under these high advantages of credibility, we see what opposition it met with, both from ancients and moderns; of the first sort of which we have Arius, with his infamous crew, leading the van, by questioning the text itself, as if not originally extant in some two or three ancient copies of this epistle; and of the latter sort are those innumerable sects and sectaries sprung up since; some of them openly denying, and some of them, whose learning, one would have thought, might have been better employed, slyly undermining this grand fundamental; and while they seemingly acknowledge the truth, as it lies in the bare Words of the text, treacherously giving it up in the explication.

As for the Socinians, who hold with the Arians, so far as they oppose us, though not in all which the Arians assert themselves, they have a double refuge. And first, with them pretending the doubtfulness of the text, they would further evade it by a new interpretation of its sense, affirming, that this expression, *these three are one*, does not of necessity import an unity of nature, but only of consent: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, being therefore said to be one, because they jointly and indivisibly carry on one and the same design; all of them jointly concurring in the great work of man's salvation.



Thus say they; but if this were indeed so, and if no more than matter of consent were here intended, where then (in God's name) would be the mystery which the universal Christian church have all along acknowledged to be contained in these words? For that the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, should thus jointly concur in and carry on the grand business of saving mankind, is a doctrine expressing in it nothing mysterious, unaccountable, or surpassing man's understanding at all.

But further, if unity of consent only were here intended, why in all reason was it expressed by ἓν εἶσι, that is, they are one *thing, being, or nature*; and not rather by εἰς τὸ ἓν εἶσι, they agree in one? as in the very next verse to this, such an unity of concurrence in the *spirit, the water, and the blood*, is expressed by the same words, εἰς τὸ ἓν εἶσι, manifestly importing no identity or unity of nature or being, but only of agreement in some certain respect or other: and doubtless, in so very near a neighbourhood and conjunction of words, had the sense been perfectly the same, there can be no imaginable reason given, why the apostle should in the very same case thus have varied the expression.

But, for yet a further assertion of the great truth now insisted upon, this text out of the epistle to the Colossians will as effectually evince the same, as the place before mentioned, though perhaps not quite so plainly, nor wholly in the same way; that is to say, it will do it by solid inference and just consequence from the words, though not expressly in the very words themselves. And accordingly we may consider those words, Εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ Πατρὸς, καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ., two different ways, viz.

1st, As the term τοῦ Θεοῦ may be taken personally, as in scripture sometimes it is, and then it will here signify the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, though not indeed mentioned in this place in the same order in which the three Persons commonly use to be; but the order, I conceive, may sometime be less observed, without any change in or detriment to the article itself. And so this text out of the epistle to the Colossians will point out to us the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, as well as that fore-alleged place out of St. John did. But,

2dly, If the word τοῦ Θεοῦ be here taken essentially, and for the divine nature only, then the particle καὶ will import here properly a distribution of τοῦ Θεοῦ, (signifying the divine nature,) as a term common to those two, τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, as to two particular Persons, distinguished by their respective properties. And so taken, it must be confessed, that the term τοῦ Θεοῦ here will not signify the Person of the Holy Ghost. But granting all this, are there not, however, two other Persons in the divine nature manifestly signified thereby? forasmuch as the Godhead, here imported by τοῦ Θεοῦ, is expressly applied both to the Father and the Son, in those words, τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ Πατρὸς, καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. And that, I am sure, (should it reach no further,) is a full and irrefragable confutation of the Socinians, the grand and chief opposers of the doctrine now insisted upon. For these men deny not a plurality of Persons in the Godhead from any allegation or pretence of some



peculiar repugnancy of the number of three to the same, more than of any other number; but because they absolutely deny, that there can be any more Persons in the Godhead than only one. And consequently, that a duality, or binary number of Persons in it, would, in a Socinian's account, pass for no less in absurdity than even a Trinity itself, the grand article controverted between us and them. The words, therefore, being thus examined and explained, I shall draw forth the sense of them into this one proposition; viz.

That a plurality of Persons, or personal subsistences in the divine nature, is a great mystery, and so to be acknowledged by all who really are and profess themselves Christians.

The discussion of which shall lie in these two things:

I. In shewing what conditions are required to denominate a thing properly a *mystery*.  
And,

II. In shewing that all these conditions meet in the article of the blessed Trinity.

I. And first for the first of these. The conditions required to constitute and denominate a thing properly a *mystery*, are these three:

1. That the thing so denominated be in itself really true, and not contrary to reason.
2. That it be a thing above the power and reach of mere reason to find it out before it be revealed. And,

3. That being revealed, it be yet very difficult for, if not above, finite reason fully to understand and comprehend it. And here,

1. For the first of these conditions: a *mystery* must be a thing really true, and by no means contrary to reason. Where let me lay down this rule or maxim, as the groundwork of all that is to follow; to wit, That as nothing can be an article of faith, that is not true, so neither can any thing be true, that is irrational. Some indeed lay this as their foundation, That men, in matters of religion, are to deny and renounce their reason: but if so, then let any one declare, why I am bound to embrace the Christian religion rather than that of Mahomet, or of any other impostor. And I suppose you will in the first place tell me, because the Christian religion was revealed and attested by God; whereas others, opposing it, were not so. To which I answer, first, that this very thing, that it was thus attested by God, is the greatest reason for our believing it true in the world, and as convincing as any demonstration in the mathematics; it being founded upon the essential, unfailing veracity of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. But then further, in the second place, I ask, how I shall come to know, that this is revealed by God? Now here, if you will prove this to me, (it being matter of fact,) you must have recourse to all those grounds upon which reason uses to believe matters of fact, when past, and accordingly shew me, how that all these are to be found for the divine revelation of the Christian religion, and not of any other pretending to oppose or contradict it. And this, I am sure, is solid and true arguing in the case before us; and being so, what can it amount to less, than a just demonstration of the thing here intended to be proved? I say, a demonstration proceeding upon principles of moral certainty; a certainty

full and sufficient, and such as, being denied, must infallibly draw after it as great an absurdity in reference to practice, as the denial of any first principle can do in point of speculation. As for instance, I look upon the unanimous testimony of a competent number of sincere, disinterested eye or ear-witnesses; and, which is more, (in the present case inspired too,) all affirming the same thing, to be a ground morally certain, why we should believe that thing; forasmuch as the denial of its certainty would, amongst many other absurdities, run us upon this great one, that we can have no assurance or certain knowledge of any thing, but what we ourselves have personally seen, heard, or observed with our own senses; which assertion, if stuck to, would be as absurd and inconvenient in the transactions of common life, as to deny that two and two make four in arithmetic. And in good earnest it will be very hard (if possible) to assign any other sufficient reason, why our Saviour, in [Mark xvi. 14](#), upbraided some with their unbelief, as unexcusable, only for *not believing those who had seen him after he was risen*.

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In short, the ultimate object of faith is divine revelation; that is, I believe such a thing to be true, because it is revealed by God: but then my reason must prove to me that it is revealed; so that, this way, reason is that into which all religion is at last resolved.

And let me add a little further, that no one truth can possibly contradict another truth; for if two truths might contradict, then two contradictions might be true. And therefore, if it be true in Christian religion, that one nature may subsist in three persons, the same cannot be false in reason. Thus much I confess, that, take the thing abstract from divine revelation, there is nothing in reason able to prove that there is such a thing; but then this also is as true, that there is nothing in reason able to disprove it, and to evince it to be impossible.

But you will say, that for the same thing to be three and one is a contradiction, and therefore reason cannot but conclude it impossible. I answer, that for a thing to be one in that very respect in which it is three, is a contradiction; but to assert, that that which is one in this respect may be three in another, is no contradiction.

But you will reply, that the single nature of any person is uncommunicable to another, as the essence of Peter is circumscribed within the person of Peter, and so cannot be communicated to Paul.

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In answer to this, let it be here observed, that this is the constant fallacy that runs through all the arguments of the Socinians in this dispute; and all that they urge against a triple subsistence of the divine nature is still from instances taken from created natures, and applied to the divine; and because they see this impossible, or at least never exemplified in them, they conclude hence, that it must be so also in this.

But this is a gross and apparent error in argumentation; it being a mere transition *a genere ad genus*, which is to conclude the same thing of different kinds; and because this holds true in things of this nature, to conclude hence, that therefore the same must be true also in things that are of a clean different nature; which is a manifest paralogism.

To all these arguments therefore, I oppose this one, I think, not irrational consideration; that it is a thing very agreeable even to the notions of bare reason to imagine, that the divine nature has a way of subsisting very different from the subsistence of any created being. For inasmuch as nature and subsistence go to the making up of a person, why may not the way of their subsistence be quite as different as their natures are confessed to be? one nature being infinite, the other finite. And therefore, though it be necessary in things created (as no one instance appears to the contrary) for one single essence to subsist in one single person, and no more; does this at all prove, that the same must be also necessary in God, whose nature is wholly different from theirs, and consequently may differ as much in the manner of his subsistence, and so may have one and the same nature diffused into three distinct persons? This one consideration, I say, well weighed and applied, will retund the edge and dint of all the Socinian assaults against this great article; whom I have still observed to assert boldly, when they conclude weakly, and in all their arguments to prove nothing more than this, that the greatest pretenders to, are not always the greatest masters of reason.

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But here, before I dismiss this particular, I shall observe this, that for a man to prove a thing clearly, is to bring it, by certain and apparent consequence, from some principle in itself known and evident, and granted by all: otherwise it would not be a demonstration, but an infinite progress.

Now this being supposed; in case any one shall so disprove the Trinity, as to shew that it really contradicts some such principle of reason evident in itself, and universally granted by the unprejudiced apprehensions of mankind, I should not be afraid to expunge this article out of my creed, and to discharge any man living from a necessity of believing it: for God cannot enjoin any thing absurd or impossible. But for any man to assent to two contradictory propositions, as true, while he perceives them to be contradictory, is the first-born of impossibilities.

Reason therefore is undeservedly and ignorantly traduced, when it is set up and shot at, as the irreconcilable enemy of religion. It is indeed the very crown and privilege of our nature; a ray of divinity sent into a mortal body; the star that guides all wise men to Christ; the lantern that leads the eye of faith, and is no more an enemy to it, than an obedient handmaid to a discreet mistress. Those indeed, whose tenets will not bear the test of it, and whose ware goes off best in the dark rooms of ignorance and credulity, and whose faith has as much cause to dread a discovery as their works; these, I say, may decry reason; and that indeed not without reason.

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For ask such, upon what grounds they believe the truth of Christian religion, whereas others so much oppose it: and here, instead of rational inducements and solid arguments, we shall have long harangues of the *kingdom of Jesus Christ*; of *rolling upon the promises*; of the *spirit of assurance*; and the *preciousness of gospel dispensations*; with many other such

like words, as shew that they have followed their own advice to others, and wholly renounced their reason themselves.

But I cannot think or persuade myself, that God gave us eyes only that we may pluck them out, and brought us into the world with reason, that being born men, we might afterwards grow up and improve into brutes, and become elaborately irrational. No, surely: reason is both the gift and image of God; and every degree of its improvement is a further degree of likeness to him. And though I cannot judge it a fit saying for a dying Christian to make, that wish of Averroes, *Sit anima mea cum philosophis*; yet, while he lives, I think no Christian ought to be ashamed to wish, *Sit anima mea cum philosophia*. And for all these boastings of *new lights, inbeamings, and inspirations*, that man that follows his reason, both in the choice and defence of his religion, will find himself better led and directed by this one guide, than by an hundred Directories. And thus much for the first condition.

2. The second condition required to denominate a thing properly a mystery is, That it be above the reach of reason to find it out, and that it be first knowable only by revelation. This, I suppose, I shall not be called upon to prove; it being a thing clear in itself.

But we have been told by some, that there are some hints and traces of the article of the Trinity to be found in some heathen writers, as Trismegistus and Plato, who are said to make mention of it. To which I answer, first, that if there do occur such hints of a Trinity in such writers, yet it follows not hence, that they owed them to the invention of their own reason, but received them from others by tradition, who themselves first had them from revelation. But, secondly, to the case in hand, I answer more fully, that it cannot be denied, but that some Christians have endeavoured to defend the truth imprudently and unwarrantably, by bad arts, and falsifying of ancient writers; and that such places as speak of the Trinity are spurious, or at least suspicious; as the whole book that now goes under the name of Trismegistus, called his *Paemander*, may justly be supposed to be.

But that we may a little aid and help out our apprehensions in conceiving of this great mystery, let us endeavour to see, whether, upon the grounds and notions of reason, we can frame to ourselves any thing that may carry in it some shadow and resemblance at least of one single, undivided nature's casting itself into three subsistences, without receding from its own unity. And for this purpose, we may represent to ourselves an infinite rational mind, which, considered under the first and original perfection of being or existence, may be called *the Father*; inasmuch as the perfection of existence is the first and productive of all others. Secondly, in the same infinite mind may be considered the perfection of understanding, as being the first great perfection that issues from the perfection of existence, and so may be called *the Son*, who also is called  $\delta$  Λόγος, *the Word*, as being the first emanation of that infinite mind. And then, thirdly, when that infinite mind, by its understanding, reflects upon its own essential perfections, there cannot but ensue an act of volition and complacency in those perfections, arising from such an intellectual reflection upon them; which may be



called *the Holy Ghost*, who therefore is said to proceed both from the Father and the Son, because there must be not only existence, but also understanding, before there can be love and volition. Here, then, we see, that one and the same mind is both *being, understanding,* and *willing*; and yet we can neither say that being is understanding, nor that understanding is willing; nor, on the contrary, that understanding is merely being, nor that willing is understanding; forasmuch as the proper natural conception of one is not the conception of the other, nor yet commensurate to it. And this I propose, neither as a full explication, nor much less as a just representation of this great mystery; but only (as I intimated before, and intend no more now) as some remote and faint resemblance or adumbration thereof. For still this is and must be acknowledged unconceivably above the reach and ken of any human intellect; and as a depth, in which the tallest reason may swim, and, if it ventures too far, may chance to be swallowed up too.



Nay, I think that it was a thing, not only locked up from the researches of reason, amongst those that were led only by reason, I mean the gentiles, but that it was also concealed from, or at best but obscurely known by the Jewish church. And Peter Galatine assigns a reason, why God was not pleased to give the Jews any express revelation of this mystery; namely, that people's great stupidity and grossness of apprehension, together with their exceeding proneness to idolatry; by reason of the former of which, they would have been apt to entertain very uncouth and mistaken conceptions of the Godhead and the three Persons, as if they had been three distinct Gods, and thereupon to have been easily induced to an idolatrous worship and opinion of them; and therefore, that the unfolding of this mystery was reserved till the days of the Messiah, by which time the world should, by a long increase of knowledge, grow more and more refined, and prepared for the reception of this so sublime and mysterious an article.

This was his reason for God's concealing it from the Jews; for that God did so, the Old Testament, which is the great ark and repository of the Jewish religion, seems sufficiently to declare; there being no text in it, that plainly and expressly holds forth a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. Several texts are indeed urged for that purpose, though (whatever they may allude to) they seem not yet to be of that force and evidence, as to infer what some undertake to prove by them. Such as are,

1. Those words in the first of Genesis, *Bara Elohim*; where *Elohim* signifying God, and being of the plural number, is joined with *bara, creavit*, a verb of the singular. Whence some collect, that the former word imports a plurality of persons, and the latter an unity of essence. But others deny, that any such peculiar meaning ought or can be gathered from that which is indeed no more than an idiom and propriety of the Hebrew language. So that *Elohim*, applied to others besides God, is often joined with a singular number.



2. Another place alleged for the same purpose is that in [Gen. i. 26](#), *Let us make man in our own image*; where they say, that there is a consultation amongst many persons in the

Godhead. But to this also it is answered, that the term, *Let us make*, does not of necessity imply any plurality, but may import only the majesty of the speaker; kings and princes being accustomed to speak of themselves in the plural number: as, “We will and require you;” and, “It is our royal will and pleasure.” This is the common dialect of kings; and yet it infers in the speaker no plurality, for then surely a king would speak very unlike a monarch.

3. There is a third place also, in *Isai. vi. 3*, where the threefold repetition of *holy, holy, holy*, applied to God, is urged by some to relate distinctly to the three hypostases of the Godhead. But this is thought by others to have so little of an argument in it, as scarce to merit any answer; it being so usual with all nations and languages to express any thing vehement or extraordinary by thrice repeating the word used by them: suitable to which are those expressions that occur in classic authors, as, *Tergeminis tollit honoribus*, and *O ter felices*, and *Illi robur et aes triplex circa pectus erat*, with infinite the like instances; in all which, the manner of speaking serves only to express the greatness of the thing spoke of. So that these and such like places of scripture carry not in them any such evident proof of the Trinity, as to persuade us that the Jewish church could from hence arrive to any clear knowledge of this article. The forementioned Galatine indeed affirms the Talmudists to speak several things concerning it very plainly; and from hence concludes, that in regard the Talmud is a collection of the several sayings and writings of the old Jewish doctors upon the Old Testament, it must import, that since they wrote such things of the Trinity and the Messiah, there was then a knowledge of these things in the Jewish church. But I fear the authority of those Talmudical writings will weigh so little in this case, that if the letter of the scripture will not otherwise speak a Trinity, but as it is helped out and expounded by the Talmud, few sober persons will seek for it there. The only solid proof, that makes towards the eviction of a Trinity from thence, I conceive to lie in those texts that prove the divine nature of the Messiah, whose coming was then expected by all the Jews. Otherwise, surely, the knowledge of this article could but very obscurely be gathered from the bare writings of Moses and the prophets, and consequently was by no means received with that explicitness in the ancient Jewish church, that it is now in the Christian.

As for the opinion of the modern Jews touching this matter, we shall find, that these acknowledge no such thing as a Trinity, but utterly reject and explode it. And as for the Mahumetan religion, (which, being a gallimaufry made up of many, partakes much of the Jewish,) that also wholly denies it. And the professors of it, in all their public performances of religious worship, with much zeal and earnestness frequently reiterate and repeat this article; *There is but one God, there is but one God*; not so much out of zeal to assert the unity of the Godhead, as to exclude the Trinity of Persons maintained by the Christians.

I conclude therefore, that it is very probable, that the discovery of this mystery was a privilege reserved to bless the times of Christianity withal, and that the Jews had either none, or but a very weak and confused knowledge of it. It was the great *arcanum* for the receiving



of which the world was to be many ages in preparing. As long as the veil of the temple remained, it was a secret not to be looked into; an holy of holies, into which even the high priest himself did not enter. And thus much for the second condition required to make or constitute a mystery; namely, that it be above the strength of bare reason to find it out before it is revealed.

3. The third and last is this; That after it is revealed, it be yet difficult to be understood. And he who thinks the contrary, let him make trial. For although there is nothing in reason to contradict, yet neither is there any thing to comprehend it. We may as well shut a mountain within a molehill, or take up the ocean in a cockle-shell, as reach the stupendous sacred intricacies of the divine subsistence, by the short and feeble notions of a created apprehension.

Reason indeed proves the revelation of it by God; but then, having done this, here it stops, and pretends not to understand and fathom the nature of the thing revealed.

If any one should plead a parity of the case, as to this article of the Trinity, and that about transubstantiation; and allege, that since we deny not a Trinity, though we understand it not, but account it a mystery, and so believe it; why may we not take transubstantiation also into the number of mysteries, and believe it, though it be intricate, and impossible to be understood?

To this I answer, 1st, in general, that no man discoursing or proceeding rationally upon this subject, refuses to believe transubstantiation merely upon this account, that it is impossible to be understood. 2dly, I affirm, that the case between transubstantiation and the Trinity is very different; the former being contradicted by the judgment of that faculty, of which it is properly the object; the latter being not at all contradicted, but only not comprehended by the faculty, to which the judgment and cognizance of it does belong. To make which clear, we must observe, that both the bread and the body of Christ, about which transubstantiation is said to be effected, being endued with quantity, colour, and the like, are the proper objects of sense, and so fall under the cognizance of the sight and touch; which senses being entire, and acting as naturally they ought, they both can and do certainly judge of their proper objects, and upon such judgment find it to be a contradiction for a small body retaining its own proper dimensions, at the same time to have the dimensions of a body forty times greater. For one body to be circumscribed, and so compassed in one place, and at the same time to fill a thousand more, I say it is a contradiction; for it makes the same thing in the very same respect to be circumscribed, and not to be circumscribed; circumscribed, because encompassed in such a place; and yet not circumscribed, because extending itself beyond that place to many others.

But now, on the other side, the divine nature and the Trinity are not the objects of sense, and consequently sense passes no judgment upon them. But they are the objects of (and so only triable by) the mind and the understanding; taking in these things from the reports

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not of sense, but revelation. Which supreme faculty being thus informed by revelation, tendering these reports to its apprehension, and withal finding that none of those rules or principles, by which it judges of the truth or falsity of what it apprehends, do at all contradict what revelation thus speaks and reports of the divine nature and the Trinity; it rationally judges, that they may and ought to be assented to.

For the stress of the point lies here, and let all the reason of mankind prove, if it can, that wheresoever the denomination of three is ascribed to any nature, it must of necessity multiply the nature itself, and not only its relations. Which being so, those that make the article of the Trinity parallel to that of transubstantiation, in point of its contrariety to reason, if they will speak and argue to the purpose, must undertake to prove, that for one infinite being or nature to be in any respect, or upon any account whatsoever, three, without a triplication of that nature, and so a loss of its unity, is as contrary and repugnant to some known principle of reason discoursing upon the reports of revelation; as for that thing, which all my senses tell me to be a little piece of bread, to be yet both for figure and dimension really a man's body, is contradictory to all those principles, by which sense judges of those things that properly fall under the judgment of sense.

Let this, I say, be clearly and conclusively made out, and the business is done. But till then, they must give us leave to judge, that there is as much difference between the article of the Trinity as stated by us, and that of transubstantiation as stated by them, as there is between difficulty and contradiction.

And now, if there be any whose reason is so unruly and over-curious, as to be still inquisitive and unsatisfied, such must remember, that when we have made the utmost explications of this article, we pretend not thereby to have altered the nature of the subject we have been treating of; which, after all, is still a mystery; and they must know, moreover, that when the sacred mysteries of religion are discoursed of, the business of a Christian is sobriety and submission, and his duty to be satisfied, even though he were not convinced. The Trinity is a fundamental article of the Christian religion; and as he that denies it may lose his soul, so he that too much strives to understand it may lose his wits. Knowledge is nice, intricate, and tedious; but faith is easy; and what is more, it is safe. And why should I then unhinge my brains, ruin my mind, and pursue distraction in the disquisition of that which a little study would sufficiently convince me to be not intelligible? Or why should I by chewing a pill make it useless, which swallowed whole might be curing and restorative? A Christian, in these matters, has nothing to do but to believe; and since I can not scientifically comprehend this mystery, I shall worship it with the religion of submission and wonder, and casting down my reason before it, receive it with the devotions of silence, and the humble distances of adoration.

But here, having drawn the business so far, I can not but take notice of some of those blasphemous expressions which the Socinians use concerning the sacred mystery of the

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Trinity; their terms (as I have collected some out of many) are such as these: *Deus tripersonatus. Idolum portentosum. Figmentum Satanae. Antichristi Cerberus. Triceps Geryon. Idolum trifrons. Monstrum triforme. Deus incognitus, adeoque procul rejiciendus, et Satanae conditori suo restituendus.* Now, that the authors of these ugly appellations shew themselves not only bold and impious, but also (what by no means they would be thought) very unreasonable, will, I think, appear from these two considerations.

First, That the doctrine so broadly decried by them is at least very difficult, and hardly comprehensible; and therefore, though it could not be proved true, yet, upon the same score, it can as hardly be proved false. But now these expressions ought to proceed not only upon the supposition of its bare falsity, but also upon the evidence and undeniable clearness of its falsity; or they must needs be impudent and intolerable.

He that says, that it is clear that there can be no such thing as the quadrature of the circle, makes an impudent assertion; for, though possibly there can be really no such thing, yet since there have been such considerable reasons for it, as to engage the greatest wits in the search after it, no man can rationally say, that it is clear and manifest that there is no such thing. But besides, in this case they deal very irrationally in rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, because it is not intelligible; when not only in divinity, but also in philosophy, (where yet, not faith, but strict ratiocination should take place,) they acknowledge many things which the best reason will scarce be able to frame an explicit notion and apprehension of. Such as are the composition and division of continued quantities, and the like; which these men, I believe, will not deny, though it would set them hard to give a clear account of them.

Secondly. The same charge of absurdity lies against these men upon this account, that they prefer their particular reason before the united reason of a much greater number than themselves; every one of which were of as great industry to search, and of as great abilities to understand the mysteries of divinity, as these men can be presumed to be.

Now, as this is much beside good manners, so indeed it is no less short of good reason; which will prove thus much at least; that when a few learned persons deny a proposition, and others forty times more numerous, and altogether as learned, do unanimously affirm it, it is very probable that the truth stands rather with the majority.

For if I should demand of these men, how they come to judge the doctrine of the Trinity to be false? they must tell me, that they have studied the point, considered the text, examined it by the principles of reason, and that by the use of these means they come at length to make this conclusion.

But to this I answer, that others who have studied the point as much, considered the text as exactly, and examined it by as strong principles of reason as their opposites could pretend to, and so standing upon equal ground with them in point of abilities, have much the advantage of them in point of number.

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But you will say, Must I therefore conclude, that what is affirmed by such a majority of persons so qualified is certainly true? I answer, No; but this I assert; that it is great reason, though their assertion appear never so strange to me, that I should yet suspend my judgment, and not peremptorily conclude it false: since there is hardly any means nor way of ratiocination used by one to prove it a falsity, but by the very same way and means others persuade themselves, that they as strongly prove it to be a truth.

And thus I think, that these men's exceptions against this great article are, to such as understand reason, sufficiently proved irrational. But since these men reject the doctrine of the Trinity upon pretence both of its impiety and absurdity, it is but requisite, that they should acquit themselves in all their doctrine, from holding any thing either impious or absurd. But yet, that they cannot do so, these following positions maintained by them will, I believe, demonstrate:

1. To assert, as Volkelius, in his second book *De Vera Religione*, and the fourth chapter, not obscurely does, the matter of the universe to be a passive principle eternally coexisting with God, the active, is impious, and not consistent with God's infinite power; for if matter has its being from itself, it will follow, that it can preserve itself in being against all opposition, and consequently, that God cannot destroy it, which makes him not omnipotent.

2. To allow God's power to be infinite, and yet his substance to be finite, is monstrously absurd; but to assert, as Crellius, in his book *De Attributis Dei*, in the 27th chapter, does, that his substance is circumscribed within the compass of the highest heaven, is clearly to make it finite.

3. To allow all God's prophecies and predictions recorded in scripture, of future contingent passages, depending upon the free choice of man's will, to have been certain and infallible, and yet his prescience or foreknowledge of the same contingent things not to be certain, but only conjectural, as Socinus, in the 8th chapter of his *Prelections*, does affirm, is out of measure absurd and ridiculous.

4. To affirm Christ to be a mere creature, and no more, and yet to contend, that he is to be invoked and worshipped with divine worship, is exceedingly absurd, and contrary to all the discourses of right reason; and withal, as offensive and scandalous to Jews and Turks, and such like, as the bare affirmation of his divine nature can be pretended to be. But Socinus, though he denies this, yet is so earnest for the divine adoration and invocation of Christ, that he affirms, that of the two, it is better to be a Trinitarian, than not to ascribe this to him.

5. To assert, that the people of God, under the Jewish economy, lay under the obligation of no precept to pray to God, as Volkelius, in his 4th book *De Vera Religione*, and the 9th chapter, positively affirms, is an assertion highly impious, and to all pious minds abominable.

6. To assert, that it is lawful for a man to tell a He, to secure himself from some great danger or in convenience, as the same Volkelius, in the 4th book, and 19th chapter, does,

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is such a thing, as not only consists not with piety and sincerity, but tends to drive even common honesty and society out of the world.

7. To assert, that it is unlawful for Christians in any case to wage war, as Socinus himself does in his 2d epistle to Christophorus Morstinus, a Polonian commander, in which he allows him to bring his army into the field in *terrorem hostium*, provided that he neither strikes a stroke, nor draws blood, nor cuts off a limb: this, I say, is grossly absurd and unnatural, and contrary to the eternal principle of self-preservation; as engaging men, even for conscience sake, to surrender their lives and fortunes to any thief or murderer, that shall think fit to require them. Neither can Socinus, in reason, so urge those words of our Saviour, (in Matt. v. 39,) *of not resisting evil*, in this case, if he will be but true to his own principle. For in his 3d book *De Christo Servatore*, and the 6th chapter, disputing against Christ's satisfaction, he pleads, "that in regard it is," as he says, "contrary to reason, though the scripture should never so often affirm it, yet it ought not to be admitted or assented to." Now, if this be his rule, I demand of him, whether, for a man to preserve himself, and that even with the destruction of the life of the person assailing him, supposing that he cannot possibly do it otherwise, be not as undeniable a dictate or principle of natural reason, as any that he can pretend to be contradicted by Christ's satisfaction. And therefore, if he can lay aside Christ's satisfaction, though the scripture were never so express for it, in regard of the contrariety he pretends in it to reason; why may not we, upon the same grounds, assert the necessity of self-preservation in the instance of war, though the scripture expressly forbids it? Since for a man to relinquish his own defence, is indubitably contrary to the dictates of nature, and consequently of reason.

But we need not recur to this, for the warranting men under the gospel to defend their lives, though with the destruction of those that would take them away. Only this I allege as an argument *ad hominem*, which sufficiently shews how slight and desultorious this man is in his principles and way of arguing, while at one time he frames to himself a principle for his present turn, and at another makes assertions, and raises discourses, which that principle most directly overthrows. Now all the forementioned absurdities (with many more that might be reckoned) are the tenets of those who deny the article of the Trinity, because, forsooth, it is impious and absurd; that is, who strain at one gnat, having already swallowed so many vast camels. And yet these are the persons, who in all their writings have the face to own themselves to the world for those heroes, whom God, by his special providence, has raised up to explain Christian religion, and to reform the doctrine of the church. I suppose, just in the same sense, that the school of Calvin was to reform her discipline.

And now in the last place; because this article is of so great moment, and stands, as it were, in the very front of our religion, so that it is of very high concernment to all to be sound and throughpaced in the belief of it; I shall shew,

1. What have been the causes that have first unsettled, and at the last destroyed the belief of it in some. And,

2. What may be the best means to settle and preserve the belief of it in ourselves and others.

For the first of these. There are three things, which I think have been the great causes that have took some off from the belief of this article. As,

1. That bold, profane, and absurd custom of some persons, in attempting to paint and represent it in figure. He who paints God, does a contradiction; for he attempts to make that visible, which he professes to be invisible. The ministers of Transylvania and Sarmatia, rank assertors of the Socinian heresy, in a certain book,<sup>9</sup> (wherein they make confession of their faith as to these articles,) insist upon nothing so much, nor indeed so plausibly, for their rejection of the article of the Trinity, as those several strange pictures and images of the Trinity, which some persons had set up in several of their churches: sometimes describing it by one head carved into three faces, to which, so set up in a certain church, they subjoin this distich;

Mense trifrons isto Janum pater urbe bifrontem  
Expulit, ut solus regnet in orbe trifrons;

that is to say, that the God having three faces had driven, or, if you will, outfaced poor Janus out of the world, who had but two. And likewise elsewhere such another;

Jane biceps, anni tacite labentis origo;  
Trifrontem pellas, ni miser esse velis.



Sometimes also they represent it by a ring set with three diamonds, in three equidistant places of it; and sometimes by the picture of three men of an equal pitch sitting together at one table, and upon one seat: and sometimes the same is expressed by the image of an old man, a child, and a dove; one signifying the Father, one the Son, and the third the Holy Ghost. All which things, being so contrary to the very natural notions which reason has of God, have brought many sober parts of the world to nauseate and abhor our whole religion, and to reject Christianity as only a new scheme of the old gentile idolatry; and withal have warranted the forementioned heretics to think they had cause for all those vile and wretched appellations, with which we shew how they bespattered this divine mystery: which blasphemies will, no doubt, be one day laid at the door, not of those only who denied, but of those also who painted the Trinity; and by so doing, made others to deny it. And indeed so far has the common sort of mankind took offence at these things, that if the belief of a God

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<sup>9</sup> See a Latin book in 4to, entitled, *Praemonitiones Christi et apostolorum, per ministros quosdam in Sarmatia et Transylvania, &c.*

were not very deeply imprinted in man's nature, such men's cursed irrational boldness, in presuming to paint him, would go very near to bring all those about them, by degrees, to question the very Deity itself.

2. A second cause of the same evil, is the equally bold and insignificant terms which some of the schoolmen have expressed this great article by; who, pursuing their own phenomena as undoubted truths, speak as peremptorily and confidently of this profound mystery, as if it were a thing obvious to the first apprehensions of sense. It was a good and a pious saying of an ancient writer, *Periculosum est de Deo etiam vera dicere*. No wonder, therefore, if these men, discoursing of the nature and subsistence of God, in a language neither warrantable nor apprehensible, have by their modalities, suppositivities, circumincessions, and twenty such other chimeras, so misrepresented this adorable article of the Trinity to men's reason, as to bring them first to loathe, and at length to deny it.

3. A third cause, which has much weakened some men's belief of this article, has been the imprudent building it upon some texts of scripture, which indeed will evince no such thing. Such as those places which I mentioned out of the Old Testament; and such as one of the ancients once brought for a proof of the eternal generation and deity of the Word, from that expression of David, in [Psal. xlv. 1](#). *Quisquamne dubitat*, says he, *de divinitate Filii, cum legerit illud Psalmistae, Cor meum eructavit verbum bonum?* Concerning which and the like allegations, I shall only make one very obvious, but as true, and perhaps too true, a remark, that whatsoever is produced and insisted upon in behalf of any great and momentous point of religion, if it comes not fully close and home to the same, it is always found much more effectual to expose the truth it is brought for, than to support it, and to confirm the heretic it is brought against, than to convince him.

And thus having shewn some of the causes that undermine men's belief of the article of the Trinity, I shall now assign some means also to fix and continue it in such minds, as do already embrace it. And these shall be briefly two.

1. To acquiesce in the bare revelation of the thing itself, and in those expressions under which it is revealed. As for the thing itself, God has expressly said, that there are three above the rank of created beings, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And as for the words, in which he has conveyed this to us, they are few, easy, and intelligible, and to be believed just as they are proposed; that is, simply, and in general, and without entering too far into particulars.

2. To suppress all nice and over-curious inquiries into the peculiar nature, reason, and manner of this mystery. For God having not thought fit to reveal this to us any further, than he has yet actually done, sufficiently declares it to have been his intent, that it should indeed be no further known, nor indeed searched into by us; and perhaps so far as it is yet unknown, it may, to a created reason, be also unknowable. For when we are once assured that the thing itself is; for us to amuse ourselves, and others, with bold perplexing questions, (as they can

be no better,) how, and which way it comes to be so, especially in matters relating to Almighty God, must needs be equally irreverent and impertinent. Those words of an ancient commentator upon St. John contain in them an excellent rule, and always to be attended to, *Firmam fidem*, says he, *mysterio adhibentes, nunquam, in tam sublimibus, illud quomodo aut cogitemus, aut proferamus*. Which rule, had it been well observed, both in this and some other articles of our religion, not only the peace of particular churches and consciences, but also the general peace of Christendom, might in great measure have been happily preserved by it.

Let this therefore be fixed upon, that there is no obedience comparable to that of the understanding; no temperance, which so much commends the soul to God, as that which shews itself in the restraint of our curiosity. Besides which two important considerations, let us consider also, that an over-anxious scrutiny into such mysteries is utterly useless, as to all purposes of a rational inquiry. It wearies the mind, but not informs the judgment. It makes us conceited and fantastical in our notions, instead of being sober and wise to salvation. It may provoke God also, by our pressing too much into the secrets of heaven, and the concealed glories of his nature, to desert and give us over to strange delusions. For they are only *things revealed*, (as Moses told the Israelites, in [Deut. xxix. 29.](#)) *which belong to the sons of men* to understand and look into, as the sole and proper privilege allowed them by God, to exercise their noblest thoughts upon: but as for such high mysteries as the Trinity, as the subsistence of one nature in three Persons, and of three Persons in one and the same individual nature, these are to be reckoned in the number of such sacred and secret things, as belong to God alone perfectly to know, but to such poor mortals as we are, humbly to fall down before, and adore.

*To which God, incomprehensible in his nature, and wonderful in his works, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever more. Amen.*

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*Ill-disposed affections, both naturally and penally the cause of darkness and error in the judgment.*

IN

## TWO DISCOURSES

UPON 2 THESS. II. 11.

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PART I.

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### 2 THESSALONIANS ii. 11

*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.*

**O**F all the fatal effects of sin, none looks so dread fully, none strikes so just an horror into considering minds, as that every sinful action a man does naturally disposes him to another; and that it is hardly possible for him to do any thing so ill, but that it proves a preparative and introduction to the doing of something worse. Upon which account, that notable imprecation of the Psalmist, upon his own and the Church's enemies, in [Psal. lxix. 27](#), namely, *that they may fall from one wickedness to another*, is absolutely the bitterest and most severe of any extant in the whole book of God, as being indeed the very abridgment of that grand repository of curses, the [28th chapter of Deuteronomy](#); and that with the addition of something besides, and of so much a more killing malignity, than all of them put together; by how much the evil of sin is confessedly greater, the evil of any suffering for it whatsoever. The like instances to which we have in the text now before us, of a sort of men, first casting off the love of the truth, and from thence passing into a state of delusion; and lastly, settling in a steady, fixed belief of a lie. By such wretched gradations is it, that sin commonly arrives at its full ἀκμῆ, or maturity. So that in truth it is the only perpetual motion which has yet been found out, and needs nothing but a beginning to keep it incessantly going on. Accordingly, as every immoral act, in the immediate and direct tendency of it, is certainly a step downwards, and a very large one too, so, in all motions of descent, it is seldom or never found, that a thing so moving makes any stop in its fall, till it is fallen so far, that it is past falling any further. And much the same is the case with a man as to his spirituals; after he has been long engaged in a course of sinning, his progress in it grows infinite, and his return desperate.

Now in the words I have here pitched upon, as they stand in coherence with the precedent and subsequent verse, there are these two things to be considered.

First, A severe judgment denounced against a certain sort of men; namely, *that God would send them such strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.* And,

Secondly, The meritorious procuring cause of this judgment in the foregoing verse; to wit, *their not receiving the love of the truth.*

Where it is manifest, that by the words *truth* and *a lie*, are not to be here meant all truth and falsehood generally or indefinitely speaking, nor yet more particularly all that is true or false upon a philosophical account. For these truths or falsehoods the apostle does not in this place concern himself about; but such only as belong properly to religion, with reference to the worship of Almighty God, and the salvation of men's souls. In a word, by truth here is meant nothing else but the gospel, or doctrine of Christianity; nothing being more frequent with the inspired penmen of holy writ, than to express the Christian religion by the name of *truth*; and that sometimes absolutely, and without any epithet or addition, and sometimes with some additional term of specification; as in [Titus i. 1](#), it is called, *the truth according to godliness*; and in [Ephes. iv. 15](#), *the truth as it is in Jesus*; with the like in several other places. So that still the great ennobling characteristic of the gospel is truth; truth eminently and transcendently such; and for that cause, by a distinguishing excellency, called *the truth*; from whence, by irrefragable consequence, it must also follow, that whatsoever is not truth can be no part of Christian religion. A bottom so firm and sure for Christianity to rest upon, that it cannot be placed upon a surer and more unshakeable; besides this further advantage accruing to it thereby, that as truth and goodness, by an eternal, indissoluble union, (as strong as nature, or rather as the God of nature, can make it,) stand essentially and inseparably combined, and even identified with one another: so, upon the same account, we may be assured, that the goodness of the gospel cannot but adequately match and keep pace with the truth of it; both of them being perfectly commensurate, both of them equally properties of it, equally included in and flowing from its very constitution. So that the gospel being thus held forth to the world, as the liveliest representation and fullest transcript of those two glorious perfections of the divine nature, to wit, its truth and goodness; it must needs, by the first of them, recommend itself to our understandings, as the most commanding object of our esteem, and by the other to our wills, as the most endearing object of our choice.

Which being thus premised, if we would bring the entire sense of the words into one proposition, it may, I conceive, not unfitly be comprehended in this, viz.

That the not entertaining a sincere love and affection for the duties of religion, does both naturally, and by the just judgment of God besides, dispose men to errors and deceptions about the great truths of religion.

This, I say, seems to me to take in the main, if not whole design of the words; for the better prosecution of which, I shall cast what I have to say upon them under these following particulars: as,





I. I shall shew, how the mind of man can believe a lie.

II. I shall shew, what it is to receive the love of the truth.

III. I shall shew, how the not receiving the love of the truth comes to have such an influence upon the understanding or judgment, as to dispose it to error and delusion.

IV. I shall shew, how God can be properly said to send such delusions.

V. Since his sending them is here mentioned as a judgment, (and that a very great one too,) I shall shew wherein the greatness of it consists. And,

VI. and lastly, I shall improve the point into some useful consequences and deductions from the whole.

Of each of which in their order. And,

I. For the first of them; to shew, how the mind of man can believe a lie. There is certainly so great a suitableness between truth and an human understanding, that the understanding of itself can no more believe a lie, than the taste rightly disposed can pronounce a bitter thing sweet. The formal cause of all assent is the appearance of truth; and if a lie is believed, it can be so no further, than as it carries in it the appearance of truth. But then, what and whence are these appearances? Appearance, no doubt, is a relative term, and must be between two; for one thing could not be said to appear, if there were not another for it to appear to. So that there must be both an object and a faculty, before there can be an appearance; and consequently, from one of these two must spring all falsehood at any time belonging to it. But the question is, from which of them? And in answer to it, it is certain, that the object itself cannot cause a false appearance of itself. For if so, when the mind has conceived a false apprehension of God, God, who is the object, would be the cause of that false apprehension. But it is certain, that objects operate not efficiently upon the faculties; for if they should, since the object is the same to all, viz. both those who entertain true, and those who entertain false apprehensions of it, it would be impossible for the same thing, so far as it is the same, to produce such contrary effects. It is the same body which appears to one of such a shape, and to another of a quite different. And therefore the difference must needs be on the beholder's side, and rest in the faculty of perception, not in the thing perceived. This we may pronounce confidently and truly, that the object duly circumstantiated is never in fault, why it is not rightly apprehended. Objects are merely passive; and if they were not so, men would certainly be both learned and better than they are; for neither can learning nor religion thrust itself into the heads or hearts of men, whether they will or no. Truth shews itself to be truth, and falsehood represents itself as falsehood, (and so far is a good representor,) whether men apprehend them so or no. For the object is not to be condemned for the failures of the faculty, any more than a man, who speaks audibly and intelligibly, is to be blamed for not being heard; no body being bound to find words and ears too.

Well then; since a lie cannot be believed, but under the appearance of truth, and since a lie cannot give itself any such appearance, it is evident, that if any man believes a lie, it is

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from something in himself that he does so. There are lies, errors, and heresies about the world, both plausible and infinite, but then they naturally appear what they are; and if truth be naked to the skin, error is and must be so to the bone; and the fairest falsehood can no more oblige assent, than the best dressed evil can oblige the choice.

And thus having given both falsehood, and the Devil, the father of it, their due, and cleared even the grossest He from being the cause that it is believed, and thereby left it wholly at the door of him who believes it; let us in the next place inquire, what may be the causes on the believer's part, which make any object, and particularly a lie, appear otherwise to him than really it is, and upon that account gain his belief. Now these are two.

1. An undue distance between the faculty and its proper object.
2. An indisposition in the faculty itself. And,

1. For the first of these. As approximation is one necessary condition of perception; so, too much distance prevents and hinders it, by setting the object too far out of our reach: and if the apprehensive faculty offers at an object so placed, and falls short of the apprehension of it, the fault is not in the object, but in that. And here, by distance, I mean not only an interval in point of local position, which, if too great, certainly hinders all corporeal perception; but likewise a distance, or rather disparity, of natures; such as is between finite and infinite, material and spiritual beings, consisting in the great disproportion there is between one and the other. And from hence it is, that the mind of man is incapable of apprehending any thing almost of God, or indeed of angels; the distance between their natures being so exceeding great. For though God, as the evangelist St. Luke tells us in [Acts xvii. 27](#), *be not far from every one of us*; nay, as it is in the next verse, that he is so near, or rather intimate to us, *that in him we live, and move, and have our being*, so that it is as impossible for us to exclude him, as it is to comprehend him; yet still the vast difference of his nature from ours makes the distance between them so unspeakably great, that neither can our corporeal nor intellectual powers form any true idea of him. And from hence it is, that there is nothing about which the mind and apprehensive faculties of man have so frequently and foully blundered, as about the divine nature and persons, and (what is founded upon both) the divine worship. But,

2. The other cause, which makes any object, and particularly a lie, appear otherwise than really it is, is the indisposition of the intellectual faculty; which indisposition, in some degree or other, is sure to follow from sin, both original and actual. For so much as there is of deviation from the eternal rules of right reason or morality in the soul, so much there will of necessity be of darkness in it too; and so much of darkness as there is in it, so far must it be unavoidably subject to pass a false judgment upon most things that come before it. Otherwise there is nothing in reason, considered purely and simply as such, which is or can be unsuitable to religion, or indeed to the nature of any thing; but so much the contrary, that if we could imagine a man all reason, without any bias from his sensitive part, it were



impossible but that, upon the first sufficient offer, he should, as we may so express it, with both arms embrace religion. But the case has been much altered since the fall of our first parents, and the fatal blow thereby given to all the powers of men's mind; besides the further debilitation and distemper brought upon it by many actual and gross sins. So that now the understandings of men are become like some bodily eyes, disabled from an exact discernment of their proper object, both by a natural weakness and a supervening soreness too.

And thus I have accounted for the true cause which sometimes prostitutes the noble understanding of man to the lowest of dishonours, the belief of a lie; namely, either the remoteness of the faculty (whether in point of distance or difference) from its object, or some weakness or disorder in it; either of which will be sure to pervert its operation: and then a fault in the first apprehension of any thing will not fail to produce a false judgment, and that a false belief likewise about the same. And so I proceed to the

Second particular proposed, viz. to shew what it is to receive the love of the truth.

And this we shall find implies in it these two things.

1. An high esteem and valuation of the real worth and excellency of it; this is the first and leading act of the mind. Truth must be first enthroned in our judgment, before it can reign in our desires; and as it is the leading faculty, so it is the measure of the rest: for no man's love of any thing can rise above his esteem of it, nor can his appetites exert themselves upon any object, not first vouched by his apprehensions. For which cause, the Holy Ghost in scripture, the better to advance religion in our thoughts, represents it by things of all others the most highly accounted of in the world, as crowns, thrones, kingdoms, hidden treasure, and the like; all which expressions, though far from being intended according to the strict and philosophical truth of things, but rather as allusions to them, yet still were founded in the universally acknowledged course of nature, which ever was and will be, for men to be first allured by the worth of things, before they can desire the property or possession of them; and to consider the value, before they design the purchase. But, be the matter as it may, our affections, to be sure, will bid nothing for any thing, till our judgment has set the price. Thus St. Paul evinces his love to Christ from his transcendent esteem of him; *I account all things, says he, but dung and dross, that I may win Christ, Phil. iii. 8.* And he who accounts a thing as dung will no doubt trample upon it as such. The rule of contraries will be found a clear illustration of the case. For hatred generally begins in contempt, or something very like it; and it is certain in matter of fact, as well as reason, that we leave off to love any thing or person, as soon as we begin to despise them. He who in scorn turns away his eye from looking upon an object, will hardly be brought to reach out his hand after it. Let a man therefore set his understanding faculty on work, and put it to examine and consider, to view and review the intrinsic value of religion, what it is and what it offers, before he proceeds to make it his portion so far, as to be ready to quit all the world for it, should they both come to rival his choice as competitors; let him, I say, by a strict and impartial

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inquiry, descend into himself, and see whether he can upon these terms (for lower and easier it knows none) judge it absolutely eligible; and if not, let him assure himself, that without a passport from the judgment, it will never gain a free and full admittance into the affections. For still it is through the eye that love enters into the heart: nay, so mighty an influence has the judging faculty in this case, that it is much disputed, whether the last dictate of the judgment about any object does not necessarily determine and draw after it the choice of the will; and perhaps there is scarce any point in moral philosophy of a nicer speculation and an harder decision: for as the affirmation of this, on the one side, seems to border upon stoicism, and to intrench upon the freedom of the will; which, after the supposal of all things requisite to its acting, ought nevertheless still to retain a power to exert or not exert an act of volition; so, on the other side, to affirm, that after the understanding has made the last proposal of the object to the will, the will may yet refuse it, and go contrary to it, seems to infer this great inconvenience, that the will, in order to its acting, needs not the preceding act or conduct of the intellect to make a sufficient proposal of the object to it, since after it is so proposed, it may not withstanding divert its actings quite another way; and then, if it can in this manner proceed without a guide, the will is not so blind a faculty as the schools make it. For he who goes one way, when his guide directs him another, manifestly shews that he both can and does go without him. But I shall dispute this point no further; it being, as I conceive, sufficient for our present purpose, that the act of the understanding proposing the object, must of necessity precede, whether the act or choice of the will follow it or no. Though for my own part I cannot see, that the holding the necessity of the will's following the last dictate or proposal of the understanding, does at all prejudice its freedom, (which is rather opposed to coercion from without, than to a determination from within;) forasmuch as it was in the power of the will to have diverted the understanding from its application to any object, before it came to form its last judgment of it; and consequently, the whole proceeding of the understanding being under the free permission of the will, the act of the will closing with this last determination, was originally and virtually free, though formally and immediately, in this latter sense, necessary. As God necessarily does what he first absolutely decreed, and yet the whole act is free, since the decree itself was the free issue and result of his will. But I beg pardon, if I have dwelt too long upon this point. It was, because I thought it requisite to shew what is the part and office, and how great the force and power of the understanding, in recommending the truths of religion to the souls of men; that so they may not acquiesce in a slight, superficial judgment or apprehension of them; which, we may rest satisfied, will never have any considerable effect, or work any thorough change upon the heart; and if so, all will come to nothing; for the foundation is ill laid, and the superstructure cannot be firm. And upon this account, no doubt, it is, that the scripture ascribes so much to faith; indeed, in effect, the whole work of man's salvation; and yet it is but an act of the understanding, and properly and strictly speaking can be no more: yet nevertheless,

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of such a mighty and controlling influence upon the will is it, that, if it be strong, vigorous, and of the right kind, it draws the whole soul after it, and works all those wonders which stand recorded of it in the [11th of the Hebrews](#), which from first to last is but a panegyric upon the invincible strength and heroic achievements of this grace. In a word, if a man, by faith, can bring his understanding to receive and entertain the divine truths of the gospel so as to look upon the promises of it as conveying the greatest good and happiness to man that a rational nature is capable of, and the threatenings of it as denouncing the bitterest and most insupportable evils that a created being can sink under, and both of them as things of certain and infallible event; this is for a man truly to value his religion, and to lay such a foundation of it in his judgment, as shall never disappoint or shame his practice. Accordingly, in the



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Second place, the other thing implied in and intended by the receiving the love of the truth, is the choice of it, as of a thing transcendently good, and particularly agreeable to our condition. Generals, we commonly say, are fallacious; but it is certain that they are always faint. And therefore it is not merely what is good, as to the general notion of it, (which can minister to little more than bare theory and discourse,) but particularly what is good for me, which must engage my practice. To esteem a thing, we have shewn, is properly an act of the understanding; but to choose it, is the part and office of the will. And choosing is a considerable advance beyond bare esteem; forasmuch as it is the end of it, and consequently perfects it, as the end does every action which is directed to it. It is the most proper, genuine, and finishing act of love. For the great effect of love is to unite us to the thing we love; and the will is properly the uniting faculty, and choice the uniting act, which brings the soul and its beloved object together. Judgment and esteem, indeed, is that which offers and recommends it to the soul; but it is choice which makes the match. For the truth is, the soul of man can do no more, nor reach further, than first to esteem an object, and then to choose it. And therefore, till we have made religion our fixed choice, it only floats in the imagination, and is but the business of talk and fancy. But it is the heart, after all, which must appropriate and take hold of the great truths of Christianity for its portion, its happiness, and chief good. And then, and not till then, a man is practically and in good earnest a Christian; and that which before was but notion and opinion, hereby passes into reality and experience; and from a mere name, into the nature and substance of religion. For still, if a man would make his faith or religion a vital principle for him to live and act by, it must be such an one as the apostle tells us *works by love*; there must be something of this blessed flame to invigorate and give activity to it. But where a man neither loves nor likes the thing he believes, it is odds but in a little time he may be brought also to cast off the very belief itself; and, in the mean while, it is certain, that it can have no efficacy, no operation or influence upon his life or actions; which is worse than no belief at all; for better, a great deal, none, than to no purpose.



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And thus having shewn what is meant by and implied in the *receiving the love of the truth*, it may, I conceive, help us to an easy and natural account of its opposite or contrary; to wit, the rejecting, or not receiving the same; the great sin, as we before observed, for which the persons here in the text stand concluded under so severe a doom. For the further explication of which, we may very rationally suppose the condition of those men to have been this, viz. that upon the preaching of Christianity, the truth of it quickly overpowered their as sent, and broke in upon their apprehensions with the highest evidence and conviction; but the searching purity and spirituality of the same doctrines equally encountering their worldly interests and their predominant beloved corruptions, soon caused in their minds a secret loathing of the severity of those truths, and so by degrees a direct hatred and hostility against them, as the great disturbers of those pleasures, and interrupters of the caresses of those lusts, which had so bewitched their hearts and seized their affections. It is wonderful to consider what a strange combat and scuffle there is in the soul of man, when clear truths meet with strong corruptions; one faculty or power of it embracing a doctrine, because true; and another, with no less fury, rising up against it, because severe and disagreeable. Thus, what should be the reason that those high and excellent precepts of Christianity, requiring purity of heart, poverty of spirit, chastity of mind, hatred of revenge, and the like, find so cold a reception, or rather so sharp a resentment in the world? Is it because men think they are not truths? By no means; but because they are severe, grating, uneasy truths; they believe them sufficiently, and more than they desire, but they cannot love them; and for that reason, and no other, they are rejected and thrown aside in the lives and practices of men; not because they cannot or do not convince their understandings, but because they thwart and bid defiance to their inclinations. Truth is so connatural to the mind of man, that it would certainly be entertained by all men, did it not by accident contradict some beloved interest or other. The thief hates the break of day; not but that he naturally loves the light, as well as other men; but his condition makes him dread and abhor that, which of all things he knows to be the likeliest means of his discovery. Men may sometimes frame themselves to hear and attend to the mortifying truths of Christianity; but then they hear them only as they use to hear of the death of friends, or the story of a lost estate; they are true, but troublesome and vexatious: so often does the irksomeness of the thing reported make men angry with the truth of the report, and sometimes with the very person of the reporter too. And therefore, let none wonder, if God inflict so signal a judgment upon this sort of sin: for when men shall resolutely reject clear, pregnant, and acknowledged (as well as important) truths, only because they press hard upon their darling sin, and would knock them off from the pleasing embraces of the world and the flesh, and from dying in them; what do they else but sacrifice the glory of their nature, their reason, to their brutality? and make their noblest perfections bow down, and stoop to their basest lusts? What do they, I say, but crush and depress truth, to advance some pitiful, sensual pleasure in the room of it; and so, like Herod, strike off the Baptist's

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head, only to reward the dances of a strumpet? This is the great load of condemnation which lies so heavy upon the world, as St. John tells us, *that men see the light, but love darkness*; bend before the truth of a doctrine, but abhor its strictness and spirituality: the doctrine of Christianity being in this, like that forerunner of Christ just now mentioned by us, who was indeed, as our Saviour himself styled him, a *shining*, but withal a *burning light*. And as the shining both of the one and the other, in the glorious evidence of truth beaming out from both, could not but, even in spite of sin and all the powers of darkness, be infinitely pleasing to all who had the sight thereof; so its burning quality exerting itself in the searching precepts of self-denial and mortification, was, no doubt, to all vicious and depraved minds, altogether as tormenting and intolerable. And so I proceed to the

Third particular proposed by us; which was to shew, how the not receiving the love of the truth into the will and affections, comes to dispose the understanding to error and delusion. Now, I conceive, it may do it these following ways.

1. By drawing off the understanding from fixing its contemplation upon a disgusted offensive truth. For though it is not in the power of the will, when the understanding apprehends a truth clearly and distinctly, to countermand its assent to it; yet it has so great an influence upon it, that it is able antecedently to hinder it from taking that truth into a full and thorough consideration. And while the mind is not taken up with an actual attention to the truth proposed to it, so long it is obnoxious to the offers and impressions of the contrary error. For the first adherencies, or rather applications of the soul to truth, are very weak and imperfect, till they are furthered and confirmed by a frequent converse with it, and so by degrees come to have the general notions of reason endeared and made familiar to the mind by renewed acts of attention and speculation; which ceasing, if a falsehood comes recommended to the soul with any advantage, that is to say, with agreeableness, though without argument, it is ten to one but it enters, and takes possession. And then the poison is infused; let the man get it out again as he can. He who will not insist attentively and closely upon the examination of any truth, is never like to have his mind either clearly informed of it, or firmly united to it. For want of search is really and properly the keeping off the due approximation of the object, without which a true apprehension of it is impossible. So that if a man has corrupt affections, averse to the purity and excellency of any truth, it is not imaginable that they will suffer his thoughts to dwell long upon it, but will do their utmost to divert and carry them off to some other object, which he is more inclined to and enamoured with; and then, what wonder is it, if, under such circumstances, the mind is betrayed by the bias of the affections, and so lies open to all the treacherous inroads of fallacy and imposture? As for instance, he whose corrupt nature is impatient of any restraint from morality or religion, will be sure to keep his mind off from them as much as possibly he can; he will not trouble himself with any debates or discourses about the truth or evidence of such things as he heartily wishes were neither evident nor true. In a word, he will not venture



his meditations upon so unwelcome and so afflicting a subject. And thus having rid himself of such notions, the contrary documents of atheism and immorality still bringing with them a compliance with those affections which all thoughts of religion were so grievous to, will soon find an easy, unresisted admittance into an understanding, naked and unguarded against the several arts and stratagems of the grand deceiver. A man indeed may be sometimes so surprised, as not to be able to prevent the first apprehension and sight of a truth; but he is always able to prevent the consideration of it; without which the other can work upon him very little. For though apprehension shews the object, it must be consideration which applies it. But again,

2. A will vitiated, and grown out of love with the truth, disposes the understanding to error and delusion, by causing in it a prejudice and partiality in all its reflections upon and discourses about it. He who considers of a thing with prejudice, has judged the cause before he hears it, and decided the matter, not as really it is, but as it either crosses or comports with the principles which he is already prepossessed with: the understanding, in such a case, being like the eye of the body, viewing a white thing through a red glass; it forms a judgment of the colour, not according to the thing it sees, but according to that by which it sees. And upon the like account it is, that the will and the affections never pitch upon any thing as odious, but that sooner or later they bribe the judgment to represent it to them as ugly too. We know the miracles, the astonishing works, and excellent discourses of our Saviour could not strike the hearts of those whom he preached to, through the mighty prejudice they had conceived against his person and country. But that they still opposed all, even the most cogent and demonstrative arguments he could bring for his doctrine, with that silly exception, *Is not this the carpenter's son?* And that one ridiculous proverb, *that no good could come out of Galilee*, (as slight as it was,) yet proved strong enough to obstruct their as sent, and arm their minds against that high conviction and mighty sway of evidence, which shined forth in all his miraculous works; so that this senseless saying alone fully answered, or (which was as effectual for their purpose) absolutely overbore them all. In like manner, we find it elsewhere observed by our Saviour himself, of that selfish, rotten, and yet demure generation of men, the Pharisees, that *they could not believe, because they received honour one of another*, [John v. 44](#). They had, it seems, bewitched the people into an extravagant esteem and veneration of their sanctity, and by that means had got no small command over their purses, their tables, and their families; nay, and more than ordinary footing and interest in the Jewish court itself. So that they ruled without control, getting the highest seats in synagogues, that is, in their chief assemblies or consistories; and they loved also to feed as high as they sat, still providing themselves with the best rooms, and not the worst dishes (we may be sure) at feasts. Nor would ever such pretenders have fasted twice a week, but that they knew it afforded them five days besides to feast in; so that having thus found the sweets of a crafty, long-practised hypocrisy, from which they had reaped so many luscious privileges, they

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could not but have an horrible prejudice against the strictness of that doctrine, which preached nothing but self-denial, humility, and a contempt of the honours and emoluments of the world, which they themselves so passionately doted upon; and therefore no wonder if they threw it off as a fable and an imposture, though recommended with all the attestations of divine power, which had in them a fitness to inform or convince the reason of man. So far did the corruption of their will advance their prejudice, and their prejudice destroy their judgment. But,

The third and last reason which I shall assign for proving that the will's not embracing the love of the truth, betrays the understanding to error and delusion, is from the peculiar malignity which is in every vice, or corrupt affection, to darken and besot the mind, the νοῦς, the great guide and superintendant of all the faculties of the soul; for so near a connection, or rather cognation is there between the moral and intellectual perfection of it, (as I have elsewhere observed,<sup>10</sup>) that a great flaw in the former never fails in the issue to affect the latter; though possibly how this is done is not so easily accounted for. Nevertheless, that irrefragable argument *experience* sufficiently proves many things, which it is not able to explain, nor indeed pretends to be so. Aristotle has observed of the vices of the flesh, (and his observation is in a great degree true of all other,) that they do peculiarly cloud the intellect, and debase a man's notions, emasculate his reason, and weaken his discourse; and, in a word, make him, upon all these accounts, much less a man than he was before. And for this cause, no doubt, has the same author declared young men, in whom the forementioned sort of vices is commonly most predominant, not competent auditors of moral philosophy, as having turned the force of their minds to things of a quite contrary nature. But this mischief reaches much further; for sure it is, that when wise men (be their years what they will) become vicious men, their wisdom leaves them; and there appears not that keenness and briskness in their apprehensive and judging faculties, which had been all along observed in them, while attended with temperance, and guarded with sobriety. So that, upon this fatal change, they do not argue with that strength, distinguish with that clearness, nor, in any matter brought into debate, conclude with that happiness and firmness of result, which they were wont to do.

Shew me so much as one wise counsel or action of Marcus Antonius, a person otherwise both valiant and eloquent, after that he had subdued his understanding to his affections, and his affections to Cleopatra. How great was Lucullus in the field, and how great in the academy! But, abandoning himself to ease and luxury, Plutarch tells us that he survived the use of his reason, grew infatuated, and doted long before he died, though he died before he was old.

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10 The reader may please to cast his eye upon a sermon in the second volume, p. 261-292, where this subject is more professedly and largely treated of.

All which tends to demonstrate, that such is the nature of vice, that the love thereof entering into the will, and thrusting out the love of truth, it is no wonder, if the understanding comes to sink into infatuation and delusion; the ferment of a vicious inclination lodged in the affections, being like an intoxicating liquor received into the stomach, from whence it will be continually sending thick clouds and noisome steams up to the brain. Filth and foulness in the one will be sure to cause darkness in the other. Was ever any one almost observed to come out of a tavern, an alehouse, or a jolly meeting, fit for his study, or indeed for any thing else, requiring stress or exactness of thought? The morning, we know, is commonly said to be a friend to the muses, but a morning's draught was never so. And thus having done with the third particular proposed from the text, come we now to the

Fourth; viz. to shew, how God can be properly said to send men delusions. God, says the apostle, [1 John i. 5](#), is *light, and in him there is no darkness at all*. And that which in no respect is in him, cannot, we may be sure, proceed from him. Upon which account, it must needs be very difficult to shew and demonstrate, how God can derive ignorance, darkness, and deception into the minds of men. And the great difficulty of giving a rational and good account of this and such like instances, drove Manes, an early heretic, with his followers, (called all along the Manichees, or Manicheans,) to assert two first, eternal, independent beings, one the cause of all good, the other the cause of all evil; as concluding, that the evil which is in the world must needs have some cause, and that a being infinitely good could not be the cause of it; and consequently, that there must be some other principle from the malignity of whose influence flowed all the ignorance, all the wickedness and villainy, which either is or ever was in the world. But the generally received opinion of the nature of evil, viz. that it is but a mere privation of good, and consequently needs not an efficient, but only a deficient cause, as owing its production and rise, not to the force, but to the failure of the agent; this consideration, I say, has rendered that notion of Manes, of a first independent principle of evil, as useless and impious in divinity, as it is absurd in philosophy.

This principle therefore being thus removed, let us see how it can comport with the goodness and absolute purity of the divine nature, to have such effects ascribed to it, and how, without any derogation to the glorious attribute of God's holiness, he can be said to send the delusions, mentioned in the text, into the minds of men. Now, I conceive, he may be said to do it these four ways.

1. First by withdrawing his enlightening influence from the understanding. This, I confess, may seem at first an obscure, enthusiastic notion to some; but give me leave to shew, that there is sufficient ground for it in reason. And for this purpose, I shall observe to you, that it was the opinion of some philosophers, particularly of Aristotle, and since him of Averroes, Avicenna, and some others, that there was one universal soul belonging to the whole species, or race of mankind, and indeed to all things else according to their capacity: which universal soul, by its respective existence in, and communication of itself to each



particular man, did exert in him those noble acts of understanding and ratiocination proper to his nature; and those also in a different degree and measure of perfection, according as the different crasis or disposition of the organs of the body made it more or less fit to receive the communication of that universal soul; which soul only (by the way) they held to be immortal; and that every particular man, both in respect of body and spirit, was mortal; his spirit being nothing else but a more refined disposition and elevation of matter.

Others, detesting the impiety of this opinion, did allow to every individual person a distinct immortal soul, and that also endued with the power and faculty of understanding and discourse inherent in it. But then, as to the soul's use and actual exercise of this faculty, upon their observing the great difference between the same object, as it was sensible, and affected the sense, and as it was intelligible, and moved the understanding, they held also the necessity of another principle without the soul, to advance the object, *a gradu sensibili ad gradum intelligibilem*, as they speak, and so to make it actually fit to move and affect the intellect. And this they called an *intellectus agens*; so that although the soul was naturally endued with an intellective power, yet, by reason of the great distance of material, corporeal things from the spiritual nature of it, it could never actually apprehend them, till this *intellectus agens* did irradiate and shine upon them, and so prepare and qualify them for an intellectual perception. And this *intellectus agens*, some, and those none of the lowest form in the Peripatetic school, have affirmed to be no other than God himself, that great light which enlightens not only every man, but every thing (according to its proportion) in the world.

The result and application of which discourse to my present purpose is this; that certainly<sup>11</sup> those great masters of argument and knowledge could not but have some weighty and considerable reasons thus to interest an external principle in the intellectual operations of man's mind. And so much of reason do I, for my part, reckon to be at the bottom of this

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11 For it is ascribed to no less persons than to Plato, and Aristotle after him, (as borrowing it from him,) and that by several of the most eminent interpreters of the latter, both ancient and modern; all of them proceeding upon this ground, that in order to the actual intellection of any object, there is a spiritual, intellectual light necessary to enable the object to move or affect the intellective faculty, which yet the object cannot give to itself, nor yet strike or move the said faculty without it. And therefore they say, that there is required an *intellectus agens*, or being distinct both from the object and the faculty too, which may so advance and spiritualize the object, by casting an higher light upon it, as to render it fit and prepared thereby for an intellectual perception. And forasmuch as every thing which is such or such secondarily, and by participation from another, supposes some other to be so primarily and originally by and from itself; and since God is the *primum intelligibile* in the intellectual world, as the sun is the *primum visibile* in the sensible and material world; they affirm the same necessity of a superior and intellectual light issuing from God, in order to move the intellect, and form in it an intellectual apprehension of things, which there is of a light beaming from the sun, for the causing an act of vision in the

opinion, that I have been often induced to think, that if we should but strip things of mere words and terms, and reduce notions to realities, there would be found but little difference (so far as it respects man's understanding) between the *intellectus agens* asserted by some philosophers, and the universal grace, or common assistances of the Spirit, asserted by some divines, (and particularly by John Goodwin, calling it, *the pagans' debt and dowry*;) and that the assertors of both of them seem to found their several assertions upon much the same ground; namely, upon their apprehension of the natural impotence of the soul of man, immersed in matter, to raise itself to such spiritual and sublime operations, as we find it does, without the assistance of some higher and divine principle. And accordingly, this being admitted, that the soul is no otherwise able to exert its intellectual acts, than by a light continually flowing in upon it, from the great fountain of light, (whether that light assists it by strengthening the faculty itself, or brightening the object, or both, it matters not, since the result of both, as to the main issue of the action, will be the same;) I say, this being admitted, that God beams this light into man's understanding, and that, as a free agent, by voluntary communications; so that he may withdraw or suspend what he thus communicates, as he pleases; how natural, how agreeable to reason is it to conceive, that God, being provoked by gross sins, may deliver the sinner to delusion and infatuation, by a suspension and subtraction of this light? For may not God blast the understanding of such an one, by shutting up those influences which were wont to enliven his reason in all its discourses and argumentations. Certain it is, that this frequently happens; and that the wit and parts of men, *who hold the truth in unrighteousness*, are often blasted, so that there is a visible decay of them, a strange unusual weakness and failure in them; and this not to be ascribed to any known cause in the world, but to the just judgment of God, stopping that eternal fountain from which they had received their continual supplies. This to me seems very intelligible, and equally rational: and accordingly may pass for the first way, by which God may be said to send delusion into the minds of men. But,



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visive faculty. And this they insist upon, not only as a similitude for illustration, but as a kind of parallel case, as to this particular instance, how widely soever the things compared may differ from one another upon many other accounts. This, I say, was held by several of the most noted of the Peripatetic tribe; though others, I know, who are professedly of the same, do yet in this matter go quite another way; allowing indeed that there is and must be an *intellectus agens*, but that it is no more than a different faculty of the same soul, or a different function of the same faculty; but by no means an agent, or intelligent being distinct from it. This, I confess, is of very nice speculation, and made so by the arguments producible on both sides, and consequently not so proper to make a part in such a popular discourse as I am here engaged in; nor should I have ever mentioned it barely as a philosophical point, but as I conceived it improvable into a theological use, as I have endeavoured to improve it in the discourse itself; to which therefore I have chose rather to annex this by way of annotation, than to insert it into the body thereof.

2. God may be said to do the same, by giving commission to the great deceiver, and spirit of falsehood, to abuse and seduce the sinner. A signal and most remarkable example of which we have in [1 Kings xxii. 22](#). When Ahab was grown full ripe for destruction, we find this expedient for his ruin pitched upon; viz. that he was to be persuaded to go up to Ramoth-gilead, to fall there. But how and by what means was this to be effected? Why, the text tells us, *that there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And God said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.* We see here the evil spirit sent forth, and fully empowered by Almighty God to accomplish his delusions upon a bold, incorrigible sinner. And what method God took then, we cannot deny, or prove it unreasonable, but that he may take still, where the same sins prepare and fit men for the same perdition.



How the Devil conveys his fallacies to the minds of men, and by what ways and arts he befools their understandings, I shall not here dispute; nor, being sure of the thing itself, from the word of God, that it is so, shall I be much solicitous about the manner how. But thus much we may truly, and, by consequence, safely say, that since it is too evident that the Devil can make false resemblances and representations of things pass before our bodily eyes, so that we shall be induced to believe that we see that, which physically and indeed we do not see; why may he not also suggest false images of things both to the imagination and to the intellectual eye of the mind, (as different as they are from one another,) and so falsify our notions, and disorder our apprehensions? It is plainly asserted, in [2 Cor. iv. 4](#), that *the God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not.* The great sophister and prince of darkness (God permitting him) can strangely blindfold our reason and muffle our understanding; and, no doubt, the chiefest cause that most of the obstinate, besotted sinners of the world are not sensible that the Devil blinds and abuses them is, that he has indeed actually done so already.



For how dreadfully did God consign over the heathen world to a perpetual slavery to his deceits! They worshipped him, they consulted with him, and so absolutely were they sealed up under the ruling cheat, that they took all his tricks and impostures for oracle and instruction. And the truth is, when men, under the powerful preaching of the gospel, (such as the church of England has constantly afforded,) will grow heathens in the viciousness of their practices, it is but just with God to suffer them (by a very natural transition) to grow heathens too in the grossness of their delusions.

3. A third way by which God may be said to *send men delusions* is, by a providential disposing of them into such circumstances of life, as, through a peculiar suitableness to their corruption, have in them a strange efficacy to delude and impose upon them. God, by a secret, unobserved trace of his providence, may cast men under an heterodox, seducing ministry, or he may order their business and affairs so, that they shall light into atheistical

company, grow acquainted with heretics, or possibly meet with pestilent books, and with arguments subtilly and speciously urged against the truth: all which falling in with an ill-inclined judgment and worse-ordered morals, will wonderfully recommend and set off the very worst of errors to a mind thus prepared for their admission; no guard being sufficient to hinder their entering, and taking possession, but where caution and virtue keep the door. The want of which quality has been the grand, if not sole cause, which in all ages has brought so many over to, and in the issue settled and confirmed them in some of the foulest sects and absurdest heresies that ever infested the Christian church; and so deeply have the wretches drank in the delusion, that they have lived and died in it, and transmitted the surviving poison of it to posterity. And yet, as far and wide as such heresies have reigned and raged in their time, and as woful an havock as they have made of souls, they have been often taken up at first by mere accident, or upon some slight, trivial, unprojected occasion, no less unperceivable in their rise, than afterward formidable in their progress. But as what is said of affliction in [Job v. 6](#), may with equal truth and pertinence be said of every notable event, bad as well as good, namely, that it *comes not out of the dust*, so the direction of all such small and almost undiscernible causes to such mighty effects as often follow from them, can proceed from nothing but that all-comprehending Providence which casts its superintending eye and governing influence over all, even the most minute and inconsiderable passages in the world; inconsiderable indeed in themselves, but in their consequences by no means so.

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And therefore, as we find it expressed of him who kills a man unwillingly, and by some undesigned stroke or accident, that *God delivers that man into his hands*, [Exod. xxi. 13](#), so when a man, by such odd, unforeseen ways and means as we have before mentioned, comes to be drawn into any false, erroneous belief or persuasion, it may, with as true and solid consequence, be affirmed, that by all this God sends such a man a delusion. As for instance, when, by the special disposal of God's providence, Hushai the Archite suggested that counsel to Absalom, in [2 Sam. xvii. 11, 12](#), which he believed, and followed to his destruction, we may say, and that neither improperly nor untruly, that God sent him that deception; for it is expressly added, in the fourteenth verse, that *God had appointed to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that he might bring evil upon Absalom*. Likewise how emphatically full and pregnant to the same purpose is that instance of a false prophet accustomed to deceive himself and others, in [Ezek. xiv. 9](#). *If the prophet, says God, be deceived when he has spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet*. God here names and appropriates the action to himself by a way of proceeding incomprehensible indeed, but unquestionably just.

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Let this therefore pass for a third way by which God delivers over a sinner to error and circumvention. Which point I shall conclude with those exclamatory words of St. Paul, so full of wonder and astonishment, in [Rom. xi. 33](#), *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* So many windings and turnings, so many untraceable meanders

are there in the providence of God, to carry on the delusion of those sinners who have been first so sedulous and industrious to delude themselves. In all which passages, nevertheless, (how unaccountable soever they may be to us,) still the delusion is in him alone who embraces it a sin, but in God, who sends it, undoubtedly a judgment only, and a very righteous one too. And now, in the



Fourth and last place; we are not to omit another notable way of God's delivering sinners to delusion, which is mentioned in the ninth verse of the chapter from whence our text is taken; namely, his permitting lying wonders to be done before them. A miracle, in a large and general sense, is no more but *effectus aliquis manifestus, cujus causa ignoratur*; a manifest effect, of which the cause is not understood: but, in a more restrained and proper sense, it is dened a work or effect evident to sense, and exceeding the force of natural agents. Now, whether such an one can be done to confirm and give credit to a falsehood proposed to men's belief, God lending his power for the trial of men, to see, or rather to let the world see, whether they will be drawn off from the truth or no, may well be disputed; though that place in [Deut. xiii. 1, 2](#), seems shrewdly to make for the affirmative.

But as for that former sort of miracles, which indeed are only strange things causing wonder, and so may proceed from mere natural causes applying *activa passivis*, there is no question, but such as these may be done to confirm a false doctrine or assertion. Thus, when Pharaoh hardened his heart against the express command and declared will of God, God permitted him to be confirmed in his delusion by the enchantments and lying wonders of the magicians; all which were done only by the power the Devil. Forasmuch as angels, both good and bad, having a full insight into the activity and force of natural causes, by new and strange conjunctions of the active qualities of some with the passive capacities of others, can produce such wonderful effects as shall generally amaze and astonish poor mortals, whose shorter sight is not able to reach into the causes of them.



The church of Rome has, in this respect, sufficiently declared the little value she has for the old Christian truth, by the new, upstart articles she has superadded to it; and besides this, to confirm one error with another, she further professes a power of doing miracles. So that, laying aside the writings of the apostles, we must, it seems, resolve our faith into legends; and old wives fables must take place of the histories of the evangelists. And the truth is, if non sense may pass for miracle, transubstantiation has carried her miracle-working gift far above all the miracles that were ever yet wrought in the world. But as for the many other miraculous feats which she and her sons pretend to and boast of, I shall only say thus much of them, that though I doubt not but most of them are the impudent cheats of daring, designing persons, set afoot and practised by them to defy God, as well as to delude men; yet it is no ways improbable, but that God may suffer the Devil to do many of them above what a bare human power is able to do, and that in a judicial and penal way, thereby to fix and rivet both the deceivers and deceived in a belief of those lies and fopperies, which, in

opposition to the light of reason and conscience, they had so industriously enslaved their understandings to.

And now, I think, it is of as high concernment to every man, as the salvation of his soul ought to be, to reflect with dread upon these severe and fearful methods of divine justice. We, through an infinite and peculiar mercy, have yet the truth set before us; the pure, unmixed truth of the gospel, with great light and power held forth to us. But if we shall now obstinately shut our eyes against it, stave it off, and bolt it out of our consciences; and all this only from a secret love to some base minion lust or corruption, which that truth would mortify, and root out of our hearts; let us remember, that this is the very height of divine vengeance, that those who love a lie should be brought at length to believe it, and, as a natural consequent of both, to perish by it too.

*Which God, the great Fountain of truth, and Father of lights, of his infinite compassion prevent. To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and do minion, both now and for evermore. Amen,*

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*Ill-disposed affections both naturally and penally the cause of darkness and error in the judgment.*

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**PART II.**

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**2 THESSALONIANS ii. 11.**

*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.*

WHEN I first made an entrance upon these words, I gathered the full sense and design of them, as I judged, into this one proposition, viz.

That the not entertaining a sincere love and affection for the duties of religion naturally, and by the just judgment of God also, disposes men to error and deceptions about the great truths of religion.

Which to me seeming to take in and comprehend the full sense and drift of the words, I then cast what I had to say upon them into these following particulars,

I. To shew, how the mind of man can believe a lie.

II. To shew, what it is to receive the love of the truth.

III. To shew, how the not receiving the love of the truth comes to have such a malign influence upon the understanding, as to dispose it to error and delusion.

IV. To shew, how God can be properly said to send men delusions. And,

V. Since his sending them is here mentioned as a judgment, (and a very severe one too,) the next thing I proposed was to shew wherein the extraordinary greatness of it did consist. And,

Sixthly and lastly, to improve the point into some useful consequences and deductions from the whole.

The four first of these I have already despatched in the preceding discourse upon this text and subject, and so shall now proceed to the

Fifth, which was to shew, wherein the extraordinary and distinguishing greatness of this judgment did consist. For it is certain, that the text here accounts and represents it above the ordinary rate of judgments commonly sent by God.

And this, I conceive, will remarkably shew itself to such as shall consider it these two ways,

1. Absolutely in itself.

2. In the consequents of it.

Under the first of which two considerations, the peculiar dreadfulness of this judgment will more than sufficiently appear, upon these two accounts: as,

1. That it is spiritual; and so directly affects and annoys the prime and most commanding part of man's nature, his soul; that noble copy and resemblance of its Maker, in small indeed,



but nevertheless one of the liveliest representations of him, that the God of nature ever drew; and that in some of his greatest and most amiable perfections. And if so, can any thing be imagined to come so like a killing blast upon it, as that which shall at once strip it of this glorious image, and stamp the black portraiture of the foulest of beings in the room of it? Besides, since nothing can either please or afflict to any considerable degree, but by a close and intimate application of itself to a subject capable of such impressions, still it must be the spirituality of a judgment, which, entering where body and matter cannot, is the only thing that can strike a man in his principal capacity of being miserable; and, consequently, in that part which enables him (next to the angels themselves) to receive and drink in more of the wrath, as well as love of God, than any other being whatsoever. In a spiritual, uncompounded nature, the capacities of pain and pleasure must needs be equal; though in a corporeal, or compounded one, the sense of pain is much acuter, and goes deeper than that of pleasure is ever found to do. Accordingly, as to what concerns the soul or spirit, no doubt, our chief passive, as well as active strengths are lodged in that; though it being an object too near us to be perfectly apprehended by us, we are not able in this life to know distinctly what a spirit is, and what it can bear, and what it cannot. But our great Creator, who exactly knows our frame, and had the first ordering of the whole machine, knows also where and by what a soul or spirit may be most sensibly touched and wounded, better a great deal than we, who are animated and acted by that soul, do or can. And therefore, where he designs the severest strokes of his wrath, we may be sure, that it is this spiritual part of us which must be the great scene where such tragical things are to be acted. So that, if an angry Providence should at any time smite a sinner in his nearest temporal concerns, we may nevertheless look upon such an infliction, how sharp soever, but as a drop of scalding water lighting upon his hand or foot; but when God fastens the judgment upon the spirit, or inner man, it is like scalding lead poured into his bowels, it reaches him in the very centre of life; and where the centre of life is made the centre of misery too, they must needs be commensurate, and a man can no more shake off his misery than he can himself.

Every judgment of God has a force more or less destructive, according to the quality and reception of the thing which it falls upon. If it seizes the body, which is but of a mortal and frail make, and so, as it were, crumbles away under the pressure, why then the judgment itself expires through the failure of a sufficient subject or recipient, and ceases to be predatory, as having nothing to prey upon. But that which comes out of its Creator's hands, immaterial and immortal, endures and continues under the heaviest stroke of his wrath; and so is able to keep pace with the infliction (as I may so express it) both by the largeness of its perception and the measure of its duration. He who has a soul to suffer in, has something by which God may take full hold of him, and upon which he may exert his anger to the utmost. Whereas, if he levels the blow at that which is weak and mortal, the very weakness of the thing stricken at will elude the violence of the stroke: as when a sharp, corroding rheum

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falls upon the lungs, that part being but of a spongy nature, and of no hard substance, little or no pain is caused by the distillation; but the same falling upon a nerve fastened to the jaw, or to a joint, (the consistency and firmness of which shall force to the impression,) it presently causes the quickest pain and anguish, and becomes intolerable, cannon bullet will do terrible execution upon a castle-wall or a rampart, but none at all upon a woolpack.

The judgments which God inflicts upon men are of several sorts, and intended for several ends, and those very different. Some are only probative, and designed to try and stir up those virtues which before lay dormant in the soul. Some again are preventive, and sent to pull back the unwary sinner from the unperceived snares of death, which he is ignorantly approaching to. And some, in the last place, are of a punitive or vindictive nature, and intended only to recompense or revenge the guilt of past sins; as part of the sinner's payment in hand, and as so many foretastes of death, and earnest of damnation.

Accordingly, we are to observe, that the malignity of spiritual judgments consists chiefly in this, that their end, most commonly, is neither trial nor prevention, but vengeance and retribution. They are corrosives, made not to heal, but to consume. And surely, such an one is the judgment of being sealed up under a delusion. Sampson, we read, endured many hardships and affronts, and yet sunk under none of them; but when an universal sottishness was fallen upon all his faculties, and God's wonted presence had forsook him, he presently became, as to all the generous purposes of life and action, an useless and a ruined person.

Whereas, on the other side, suppose, that God should visit a man with extreme poverty; yet still, he, who is as poor as Job, may be as humble, as patient, and as pious as Job too; and such qualities will be always accounted pearls and treasures, though found upon the vilest dunghill: or what if God should dash a man's name and reputation, and make him a scorn and a by-word to all who know him; yet still the shame of the cross was greater, and one may be made the way and passage to a crown, as well as the other. It was so, we are assured, to our great spiritual head; and why may it not, in its proportion, prove the same likewise to his spiritual members? For the conjunction between them is intimate, and the inference natural. Or what again, if God should think fit to smite a man with sores, sickness, and noisome ulcers in his body? yet even these, as offensive as they are, cannot unqualify a Lazarus for Abraham's bosom. And so for all other sorts of calamities incident to this mortal state; should we ransack all the magazines of God's temporal judgments, not one of them all, nor yet all of them together, can reach a man in that, which alone can render him truly happy or miserable. For *though the mountains* (as the Psalmist expresses it) *should be carried into the sea*, and the whole world about him should be in a flame, yet still (as Solomon says) *a wise and a good man shall be satisfied from himself*; his happiness is in his own keeping; he has it at home, and therefore needs not seek for it abroad. But,

2. The greatness of the judgment of being brought under the power of a delusion, consists not only in the spirituality of it, whereby it possesses and perverts the whole soul in all the



powers and offices of it, but more particularly, that it blasts a man in that peculiar, topping perfection of his nature, his understanding: for ignorance and deception are the very bane of the intellect, the disease of the mind, and the utmost dishonour of reason: there being no sort of reproach which a man resents with so keen and so just an indignation, as the charge of folly. The very word *fool* draws blood, and nothing but death is thought an equivalent to the slander: forasmuch as it carries in it an insulting negative upon that, which constitutes the person so charged properly a man; every degree of ignorance being so far a recess and degradation from rationality, and consequently from humanity itself. Nor is this any modern fancy or caprice lately taken up, but the constant and unanimous consent of all nations and ages. For what else, do we think, could make the heathen philosophers so infinitely laborious, and, even to a miracle, industrious in the quest of knowledge? What was it that engrossed their time, and made them think neither day nor night, nor both of them together, sufficient for study? But because they reckoned it a base and a mean thing to be deceived, to be put off with fallacy and appearance, in stead of truth and reality, and overlooking the substance and inside of things, to take up with mere shadow and surface. It was a known saying of the ancients, ἀπὸ σώματος νόσον, ἀπὸ ψυχῆς ἀμάθειαν. Keep off ignorance from thy soul, as thou wouldest a disease or a plague from thy body. For when a man is cursed with a blind and a besotted mind, it is a sure, and therefore a sad sign, that God is leading such an one to his final doom; it is both the cause and the forerunner of his destruction. For when the malefactor comes once to have his eyes covered, it shews that he is not far from his execution. In a word, he who has sunk so far below himself, as to have debased the governing faculties of his soul, and given up his assent to an imperious, domineering error, is fit for nothing but to be trumped and tram pled upon, to be led by the nose, and enslaved to the designs of every bold encroacher, either upon his interest or his reason. And such, he may be sure, he shall not fail to meet with; especially, if his lot casts him upon a country abounding with public, countenanced, religious cheats, both natives and foreigners, broachers of heresies, leaders of sects, tools and under-agents to our Romish back-friends, who can willingly enough allow them all conventicles for the only proper places to serve God in, and the church, if need be, to serve a turn by; of which and the like impostors, it may be truly said, with reference to their abused proselytes, that they wear and carry the trophies of so many captivated reasons about them; that they clothe themselves with the spoil of their wretched intellectuals, and so, in effect, tread the very heads of their disciples under their feet. This is the treatment which they are sure to find from such sanctified deceivers; these the returns, which delusion, submitted to, still rewards her votaries with. And may God, I beseech him, in his just judgment, order matters so, that such practices and such rewards may inseparably accompany and join one another, not only by an occasional, but by a fixed and perpetual communion.



In the mean time, if slavery be that which all generous and brave spirits abhor; and to lose the choicest of nature's freeholds, and that in the most valuable of things, their reason, be the worst of slaveries; then surely it must be the most inglorious condition that can befall a rational creature, to be possessed, rid, and governed by a delusion. For still (as our Saviour has told us in [John viii. 32](#)) *it is the truth which must make us free*; the truth only, which must give a man the enjoyment, the government, and the very possession of himself. In a word, truth has set up her tribunal in the soul, and sitting there as judge herself, there can be no exception against her sentence, nor appeal from her authority.



But besides all this, there is yet something further, which adds to the misery of this kind of slavery and captivity of the mind under error; and that is, that it has a peculiar malignity to bind the shackles faster upon it, by a strange, unaccountable love, which it begets of itself, in a man's affections. For no man entertains an error, but, for the time that he does so, he is highly pleased and enamoured with it, and has a more particular tenderness and fondness for a false notion than for a true, (as some for a bastard, more than for a son;) for error and deception, by all (who are not actually under them) are accounted really the madness of the mind. And madness, it must be owned, naturally keeps off melancholy, (though often caused by it.) For it makes men wonderfully pleased with their own extravagancies; and few, how much soever out of their wits, are out of humour too in bedlam.

Now the reason of this different acceptableness of truth and error in the first offers of them to the mind, and the advantage which the latter too often gets over the former, is, I conceive, from this, that it is natural for error to paint and daub, to trim, and use more of art and dress to set it off to the mind, than truth is observed to do. Which, trusting in its own native and substantial worth, scorns all meretricious ornaments, and knowing the right it has to our assent, and the indisputable claim to all that is called reason, she thinks it below her to ask that upon courtesy, in which she can plead a property; and therefore rather enters than insinuates, and challenges possession instead of begging admission. Which being the case, no wonder if error, oiled with obsequiousness, (which generally gains friends, though deserves none worth having,) has often the advantage of truth, and thereby slides more easily and intimately into the fool's bosom, than the uncourtliness of truth will suffer it to do. But then again, we are to observe withal, that there is nothing which the mind of man has a vehement and passionate love for, but it is so far enslaved, and brought into bondage to that thing. And if so, can there be a greater calamity, than for so noble a being as the soul is, to love and court the dictates of a commanding absurdity? Nothing certainly being so tyrannical as ignorance, where time, and long possession enables it to prescribe; nor so haughty and assuming, where pride and self-conceit bids it set up for infallible.



But now, to close this point, by shewing how vastly the understanding differs from itself, when informed by truth, and when abused by error; let us observe how the scripture words the case, while it expresses the former by a state of light, and the latter by a state of darkness.

Concerning both which, as it is evident that nothing can be more amiable, suitable, and universally subservient both to the needs and to the refreshments of the creature, than light: so nothing is deservedly accounted so dismal, hateful, and dispiriting, as darkness is; darkness, I say, which the scripture makes only another word for the shadow of death; and always the grand opportunity of mischief, and the surest shelter of deformity. For though to want eyes be indeed a great calamity, yet to have eyes and not to see, to have all the instruments of sight and the curse of blindness together, this is the very height and crisis of misery, and adds a sting and a reproach to what would otherwise be but a misfortune. For nothing envenoms any calamity, but the crime which deserves it.

I come now to consider the distinguishing greatness of the judgment of God's sending men strong delusion, by taking a view of the effects and consequents of it; and we need cast our eyes no further than these two. As,

1. That it renders the conscience utterly useless, as to the great office to be discharged by it in the regulation and supervisal of the whole course of a man's life. A blind watchman (all must grant) is equally a nuisance and an impertinence. And such a paradox, both in reason and practice, is a deluded conscience, viz. a counsellor who cannot advise, and a guide not able to direct. Nothing can be more close and proper to the point now before us, than that remark of our Saviour in [Matth. vi. 23](#), *If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great must that darkness be!* Why, as great, no doubt, and of as fatal consequence to the affairs and government of the microcosm, or lesser world, as if, in the greater, God should put out the sun, and establish one great, universal cloud in the room of it; or as if the moon and stars, instead of governing the night, should be governed by it, and the noble influences of the one should, for usefulness, give place to the damps and deadening shades of the other. All which would quickly be granted to be monstrous and preposterous things; and yet not more so, than to imagine a man guided by a benighted conscience in the great concerns of eternity; and to have that put out, which God had set up as the sovereign light of the soul, to sit and preside there as the great pilot to steer us in all our choices, and to afford us those standing discriminations of good and evil, by which alone a rational agent can proceed warrantably and safely in all his actions.

As for the will and the affections, they are made to follow and obey, not to lead or to direct. Their office is not apprehension, but appetite; and therefore the schools rightly affirm, that the will, strictly and precisely considered, is *caeca potentia*, a blind faculty. And therefore, if error has perverted the order and disturbed the original economy of our faculties, and a blind will thereupon comes to be led by a blind understanding, there is no remedy, but it must trip and stumble, and sometimes fall into the noisome ditch of the foulest enormities and immoralities. But now, whether this be not one of the highest instances of God's vindictive justice, thus to confound a man with an erroneous, deceived conscience, a little reflection upon the miseries of one in such a condition will easily demonstrate. For see the

tumult and anarchy of his mind; having done a good and a lawful action, his conscience alarms him with scruples, with false judgments and anxious reflections; and perhaps, on the other hand, having done an act in itself evil and unlawful, the same conscience excuses and acquits him, and soothes him into such complacencies in his sin, as shall prevent his repentance, and so ascertain his perdition. But now, what shall a deluded person do in this sad dilemma of sin and misery? *For, if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who can prepare himself for the battle?* If it sounds a charge when it should sound a retreat, how can the soldier direct his course? But, being thus befooled by the very methods and means of safety, must of necessity find himself in the jaws of death before he is aware, and betrayed into his enemy's hands, without any possibility of help or relief from his own. In like manner, where a delusion enters so deep into, and gets such fast hold of the conscience, that it corrupts or justles out the first marks and measures of lawful and unlawful, and thereby overthrows the standing rules of morality; a man, in such a woful and dark estate, can hardly be accounted in the number of rational agents: for if he does well, it is by chance, neither by rule nor principle; nor by choice, but by luck; and if on the contrary he does ill, yet he is not assured that he does so, being acted, in all that he goes about, by a blind impetus, without either forecast or distinction. Both the good and evil of his actions is brutish and accidental, and in the whole course of them he proceeds as if he were throwing dice for his life, or at cross and pile for his salvation. And this brings me to the other killing consequence, wherein appears the greatness of this judgment of being delivered over to a delusion. And that is,

2. Final perdition mentioned by the Apostle in the verse immediately following the text. *God, says he, shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth.* This is the utmost period to which delusion brings the sinner, but no less than what was intended by it from the very first. Every error is in the nature of it destructive. I do not say that it always actually destroys; since the tendency of an action is one thing, but the event another. For as in the body there is hardly any sore or distemper, (how curable soever by art or physic,) but what in the malignity of its nature, and the utmost improvement of that malignity, tends to the ruin and demolition of the whole constitution: so in the soul there is no considerable error which at any time infects it, (especially if it disposes to practice,) but, being suffered to continue and exert its progressive and diffusive quality, will be still spreading its contagion, and by degrees eating into the conscience, till it festers into a kind of spiritual gangrene, and becomes mortal and incurable.

I must confess, I cannot imagine that those heretics who err fundamentally, and by consequence damnably, took their first rise, and began to set up with a fundamental error, but grew into it by insensible encroachments and gradual insinuations, inuring, and as it were training up their belief to lesser essays of falsehood, and proceeding from propositions only suspicious, to such as were false, from false to dangerous, and at length from dangerous to downright destructive. Hell is a deep place, and there are many steps of descent to the bottom



of it; many obscure vaults to be passed through before we come to utter darkness. But still the way of error is the way to it. And as surely and naturally as the first dusk and gloom of the evening tends to, and at last ends in the thickest darkness of midnight, so every delusion, sinfully cherished and persisted in, (how easily soever it may sit upon the conscience for some time,) will, in the issue, lodge the sinner in the deepest hell and the blackest regions of damnation. And so I come to the

Sixth and last thing proposed for the handling of the words; and that was, to draw some useful consequences and deductions from the five foregoing particulars. As,

First of all. Since the belief of a lie is here undoubtedly noted for a sin; and since Almighty God in the way of judgment delivers men to it for *not receiving the love of the truth*; it follows, by most clear and undeniable consequence, that it is no ways inconsistent with the divine holiness to affirm, that he may punish one sin with another. Though the manner how God does so is not so generally agreed upon by all. For some here affirm that sin is said to be the punishment of sin, because in most sinful actions the committer of them is really a sufferer in and by the very sin which he commits. As for instance, the envious man at the same time contracts the guilt and feels the torment of his sin; the same thing defiles and afflicts too; merits an hell hereafter, and withal anticipates one here. The like may be said of theft, perjury, uncleanness, and intemperance; the infamy and other calamities inseparably attending them, render them their own scourges, and make the sinner the minister of God's justice in acting a full revenge upon himself. All this, I must confess, is true, but it reaches not the matter in question; which compares not the same sin with itself, where of the consequences may undoubtedly be afflictive, but compares two distinct sins together, and inquires concerning these, whether one can properly be the punishment of the other?

Besides, if we weigh and distinguish things exactly, when the envious man groans under the gnawings and convulsions of his base sin, and the lewd person suffers the brand and disrepute of his vice; in all this, sin is not properly punished with sin; but the evil of envy is punished with the trouble of envy, and the sin of intemperance with the infamy of intemperance; but neither is a state of trouble nor a state of disgrace or infamy properly a state of sin; these are natural, not moral evils; and opposed to the quiet and tranquillity, not to the virtue of the soul; for a man may be virtuous without either ease or reputation. This way therefore is short of resolving the problem inquired into; which precisely moves upon this point, viz. Whether for the guilt of one sin God can, by way of penalty, bring the sinner under the guilt of another?

Some seem to prove that he cannot, and that in the strength of this argument, that every punishment proceeding from God, as the author of it, is just and good; but no sin is or can be so; and therefore no sin can be made by God the punishment of another.

But nevertheless, the contrary is held forth in scripture, and that as expressly as words can well declare a thing; for besides the clear proof thereof, which the very text carries with

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it, it is yet further proved by those two irrefragable places in [Rom. i. 24](#). The apostle has these very words, *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness*; and again in the [26th verse](#), *For this cause God gave them up to vile affections*. Besides several other places pregnant to the same purpose, both in the Old Testament and the New. From all which it is certain, that God may make one sin the punishment of another. Though still it is to be remembered, that it is one thing for God to give a man over to sin, and quite another for God to cause him to sin; the former importing in it no more than God's providential ordering of a man's circumstances so, that he shall find no check or hinderance in the course of his sin; but the latter implying also a positive efficiency towards the commission or production of a sinful act; which God never does nor can do; but the other he both may, and in a judicial way very often does.



To the argument therefore alleged, I answer thus; that it is very consonant both to scripture and reason, to distinguish in one and the same thing several respects; and accordingly in sin, we may consider the moral irregularity of it; and so being in the very nature of it evil, it is impossible that there should be any good in it; or we may consider sin, as to the penal application of it to the person who committed it, and as a means to bring the just judgment of God upon him for what he had done; and so some good may be said to belong to it, though there be none at all in it.

Or to express the same thing otherwise, and perhaps more clearly and agreeably to vulgar apprehensions. Sin may be considered either, 1st, With reference to the proper cause of it, the will of man committing or producing it, and so it is absolutely and entirely evil. Or, 2dly, It may be considered as it relates to the supreme Judge and Governor of the world, permitting, ordering, disposing, and overruling the existence and event of it, to the honour of his wisdom and justice; and so far it may be called good, and consequently sustain the nature of a punishment proceeding from God. But you will reply, Can sin be any ways good? I answer, that naturally and intrinsically it cannot, but extrinsically, accidentally, and occasionally, as ordered to a subserviency to God's glory, it may; and the providence of God is no further concerned about it: that is to say, it is good and just, that God should so order and dispose of an obstinate sinner, (as he did once of Pharaoh,) that he should, through his own corruption, fall into further sin, in order to his further punishment: but surely this does by no means infer, that the sins he thus falls into are good, though God's ordering of them may be so; and darkness will be darkness still, though God can and often does bring light out of it. That the Jews having rejected the gospel so powerfully preached to them, should be delivered to hardness of heart and final impenitence, was just, and, by consequence, good. But this is far from inferring, that their hardness of heart and impenitence were so too. Sin may give occasion for a great deal of good to be exercised upon it and about it, though there be none inherent in it; and upon that account, when any good is ascribed to it, or affirmed of it, it is purely by an extrinsic denomination, and no more.



Now these distinctions, rightly weighed and applied, will fully and clearly accord the doctrine laid down by us both with the notions of human reason, and the holiness of the divine nature; and consequently render all objections and popular exclamations against either of them empty and insignificant.

Nor indeed is it very difficult, and much less impossible, to give some tolerable account, how God delivers a sinner over to further sins. For it may be very rationally said, that he does it partly by withholding his restraining grace, and leaving corrupt nature to itself, to the full swing and freedom of its own extravagant actings: whereby a man adds sin to sin, strikes out furiously and without control, till he grows obstinate and incurable. And God may be said to do the same also by administering objects and occasions of sin to such or such a sinner, whose corrupt nature will be sure to take fire at them, and so actually to throw itself into all enormities. In all which, God is not at all the author of sin, but only pursues the great works and righteous ends of his providence, in disposing of things or objects in themselves good or indifferent towards the compassing of the same; howbeit, through the poison of men's vicious affections, they are turned into the opportunities and fuel of sin, and made the occasion of their final destruction.

But now, of all the punishments which the great and just God in his anger inflicts, or brings upon a man for sin, there is none comparable to sin itself. Men are apt to go on securely, pleasing themselves in the repeated gratifications of their vice; and they feel not God strike, and so are encouraged in the progress of their impiety. But let them not, for all that, be too confident; for God may strike, though they feel not his stroke, and perhaps the more terribly for their not feeling it. Forasmuch as in judgments of this nature, insensibility always goes deepest; and the wrath of God seldom does such killing execution when it thunders, as when it blasts. He has certainly some dreadful design carrying on against the sinner, while he suffers him to go on in a smooth, uninterrupted course of sinning; and what that design is, and the dreadfulfulness of it, probably will not be known to him, till the possibilities of repentance are cut off, and hid from his eyes; at present, it looks like the suffering a man to perish and die by a lethargy, rather than jog or awaken him. Believe it, it is a sad case, when the sinner shall never perceive that God is angry with him, till he actually feels the effects of his anger in another world, where it can neither be pacified nor turned away.

2. The second great consequence from the doctrine hitherto treated of by us, of the naturalness of men's going off from the love of the truth to a disbelief of the same, shall be to inform us of the surest and most effectual way to confirm our faith about the sacred and important truths of religion; and that is, to love them for their transcendent worth and purity; to fix our inclinations and affections upon them; and, in a word, not only to confess, own, and acknowledge them to be truths, but also to be willing that they should be so; and to rejoice with the greatest complacency, that there should be such things prepared for us, as the scripture tells us there are. For we shall find, that truth is not so much upon terms of

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courtesy with the understanding, (which upon a clear discovery of itself it naturally commands,) as it is with the will and the affections, which (though never so clearly discovered to them) it is always almost forced to woo and make suit to.

I have been ever prone to take this for a principle, and a very safe one too, viz. that there is no opinion really good, (I mean good in the natural, beneficent sequences thereof,) which can be false. And accordingly, when religion, even natural, tells us, that there is a God, and that he is a rewarder of every man according to his works; that he is a most wise Governor, and a most just and impartial Judge, and for that reason has appointed a future estate, where in every man shall receive a retribution suitable to what he had done in his lifetime. And moreover, when the Christian religion further assures us, that Christ has satisfied God's justice for sin, and purchased eternal redemption and salvation for even the greatest sinners, who shall repent of and turn from their sins; and withal has given such excellent laws to the world, that if men perform them, they shall not fail to reap an eternal reward of happiness, as the fruit and effect of the forementioned satisfaction; as on the other side, that if they live viciously, and die impenitent, they shall inevitably be disposed of into a condition of eternal and insupportable misery. These, I say, are some of the principal things which religion, both natural and Christian, proposes to mankind.

And now, before we come to acknowledge the truth of them, let us seriously and in good earnest examine them, and consider how good, how expedient, and how suitable to all the ends and uses of human life it is, that there should be such things; how unable society would be to subsist without them; how the whole world would sink into another chaos and confusion, did not the awe and belief of these things (or something like them) regulate and control the exorbitances of men's headstrong and unruly wills. Upon a thorough consideration of all which, I am confident, that there is no truly wise and thinking person, who, could he suppose that the forecited dictates of religion should not prove really true, would not however wish at least that they were so. For allowing, (what experience too sadly demonstrates,) that an universal guilt has passed upon all mankind through sin; and supposing withal that there were no hopes or terms of pardon held forth to sinners; would not an universal despair follow an universal guilt? And would not such a despair drive the worship of God out of the world? For certain it is, that none would pray to him, serve, or worship him, and much less suffer for him, who despaired to receive any good from him. And, on the other side, could sinners have any solid ground to hope for pardon of sin, without an antecedent satisfaction made to the divine justice, so infinitely wronged by sin? Or could the honour of that great attribute be preserved without such a compensation? And yet further, could all the wit and reason of man conceive how such a satisfaction could be made, had not religion revealed to us a Saviour, who was both God and man, and upon that account only fitted and enabled to make it? And, after all, could the benefits of this satisfaction be attainable by any, but upon the conditions of repentance and change of life; would not all

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piety and holy living be thereby banished from the societies of men? So that we see from hence, that it is religion alone which opposes itself to all these dire consequences, and (like the angel appointed to guard paradise with a flaming sword) stands in the breach against all that despair, violence, and impiety, which would otherwise irresistibly break in upon and infest mankind in all their concerns, civil and spiritual.

And this one consideration (were there no further arguments for it, either from faith or philosophy) is to me an irrefragable proof of the truth of the doctrines delivered by it. For that a falsehood (which, as such, is the defect, the reproach, and the very deformity of nature) should have such generous, such wholesome, and sovereign effects, as to keep the whole world in order, and that a lie should be the great bond or ligament which holds all the societies of mankind together, keeping them from cutting throats, and tearing one another in pieces, (as, if religion be not a truth, all these salutary, public benefits must be ascribed to tricks and lies,) would be such an assertion, as, upon all the solid grounds of sense and reason, (to go no further,) ought to be looked upon as unmeasurably absurd and unnatural.

But our Saviour prescribes men an excellent and unfailing method to assure themselves of the truth of his doctrine, [John vii. 17](#). *If any one, says he, will do the will of the Father, he shall know of my doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* If men could but be brought to look upon the *agenda* of Christianity as suitable, they would never judge the *credenda* of it irrational. There is a strange intercourse and mutual corroboration between faith and practice. For as belief first engages practice, so practice strengthens and confirms belief. The body first imparts heat to the garment, but the garment returns it with advantage to the body. God beams in peculiar evidences and discoveries of the truth, to such as embrace it in their affections, and own it in their actions. There may be, indeed, some plausible, seeming arguments brought against the truth, to assault and shake our belief of it: but they generally prevail, not by their own strength, but by our corruption; not by their power to persuade, but by our willingness to be deceived. Whereas, on the contrary, true piety would effectually solve such scruples, and obedience answer all objections. And so I descend now to the

Third and last of the consequences deducible from the doctrine first proposed by us; and this shall be to give some account of the true cause and original of those two great evils which of late have so disturbed these parts of the world; to wit, atheism and fanaticism. And,

1. For atheism. Most sure it is, that no doctrine or opinion can generally gain upon men's minds, but (let it be never so silly and fantastical) it must yet proceed from some real cause; and more particularly either from the seeming evidence of the thing forcing a belief of itself upon a weak intellect, or from some strange, unaccountable inclination of the will and the affections to such an hypothesis. For the first of these, I would fain see some of those cogent, convincing arguments, by which any one will own himself persuaded that there is

no God, or that he does not govern the affairs of the world so as to take a particular cognizance of men's actions, in designing to them a future retribution, according to the nature and quality of them here: it being all one to the world, whether there be no God, or none who governs it.

But how pitiful and ridiculous are the grounds upon which such men pretend to account for the very lowest and commonest phenomena of nature, without recurring to a God and Providence! Such as, either the fortuitous concourse of infinite little bodies of themselves, and by their own impulse (since no other nature or spirit is allowed by these men to put them into motion) falling into this curious and admirable system of the universe: according to which notion, the blindest chance must be acknowledged to surpass and outdo the contrivances of the exactest art: a thing which the common sense and notion of mankind must, at the very first hearing, rise up against and explode. But if this romance will not satisfy, then in comes the eternity of the world, (the chief and most avowed opinion set up by the atheists to confront and answer all the objections from religion;) and yet, after all these high pretences, so great and inextricable are the plunges and absurdities which these principles cast men into, that the belief of a being distinct from the world, and before it, is not only towards a good life more conducive, but even for the resolution of these problems more philosophical. And I do accordingly here leave that old, trite, common argument, (though nevertheless venerable for being so,) drawn from a constant series or chain of causes, leading us up to a supreme mover, (not moved himself by any thing but himself,) a being simple, immaterial, and incorporeal; I leave this, I say, to our high and mighty atheists to baffle and confute it, and substitute some thing more rational in the room of it, if they can; and in order thereunto, to take an eternity to do it in.

But if this be the case, why then is it made a badge of wit, and an argument of parts, for a man to commence atheist, and to cast off all belief of Providence, all awe and reverence of religion? Assuredly, in this matter, men's conviction begins not at their understandings, but at their wills, or rather at their brutish appetites; which being immersed in the pleasures and sensualities of the world, would by no means, if they could help it, have such a thing as a Deity, or a future estate of souls to trouble them here, or to account with them hereafter. No; such men, we may be sure, dare not look such truths as these in the face, and therefore they throw them off, and had rather be befooled into a friendly, favour able, and propitious lie; a lie which shall chuck them under the chin, and kiss them, and at the same time strike them under the fifth rib. To believe that there is no God to judge the world, is hugely suitable to that man's interest, who assuredly knows, that upon such a judgment he shall be condemned; and to assert, that there is no hell, must needs be a very benign opinion to a person engaged in such actions as he knows must certainly bring him thither. Men are atheists, not because they have better wits than other men, but because they have corrupter wills; nor because they reason better, but because they live worse.

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2. The next great evil which has of late infested the Christian church, and that part of it in our nation more especially, is fanaticism; that is to say, a pretence to and profession of a greater purity in religion, and a more spiritual, perfect way of worshipping Almighty God, than the national established church affords to those in communion with it. This, I say, was and is the pretence; but a pretence so utterly false and shamefully groundless, that in comparison of the principle which makes it, hypocrisy may worthily pass for sincerity, and Pharisaism for the truest and most refined Christianity.

But as for those who own and abet such separations, to the infinite disturbance both of church and state, I would fain have them produce those mighty reasons, those invincible arguments which have drawn them from the communion of the church into conventicles, and warranted them to prefer schisms and divisions before Christian unity and conformity. No; this is a thing which we may expect long enough, before they will so much as offer at, and much less perform; there being but little of argument to be expected from men professing no thing but inspiration, and the impulse of a principle discernible by none but by themselves. And for my own part, I must sincerely declare, that upon the strictest search I have been able to make, I could never yet find, that these men had any other reason or argument to defend themselves and their practices by, but that senseless and impolitic encouragement which has been all along given them. But for all that, men who act by conscience, as well as pretend it, will do well to consider, that in human laws and actions it is not the penalty annexed which makes the sin, nor consequently the withdrawing it which takes away the guilt, but that the sanctions of men, as well as the providence of God, may suffer, and even serve to countenance many things in this world, which shall both certainly and severely too be reckoned for in the next.

In the mean time, to give a true but short account of the proceedings and temper of these separatists. It was nothing but a kind of spiritual pride which first made them disdain to submit to the discipline, and from thence brought them to despise and turn their backs upon the established worship of our church; the sober, grave, and primitive plainness of which began to be loathed by such brainsick, fanciful opiniators, who could please themselves in nothing but novelty, and the ostentation of their own extemporary, senseless effusions; fit to proceed from none but such as have the gift of talking in their sleep, or dreaming while they are awake.

And for this cause, no doubt, God, in his just and severe judgment, delivered them over to their own sanctified and adored nonsense, to confound and lose themselves in an endless maze of error and seduction: so that, as soon as they had broke off from the church, (through the encouragement given them by a company of men which had overturned all that was settled in the nation,) they first ran into presbyterian classes, from thence into independent congregations: from independents they improved into anabaptists; from anabaptists into quakers: from whence being able to advance no further, they are in a fair way to wheel about

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to the other extreme of popery: a religion and interest the most loudly decried, and most effectually served by these men, of any other in the world besides.

But whosoever, in the great concerns of his soul, would pitch his foot upon sure ground, let him be ware of these whirlpools, and of turning round and round, till he comes to be seized with such a giddiness, as shall make him fall finally and irrecoverably, not from the church only, but even from God himself, and all sense of religion. And therefore, to prevent such a fatal issue of things, let a man, in the next place, consider, that the way to obtain a settled persuasion of the truth of religion, is to bring an honest, humble, and unbiassed mind, open to the embraces of it; and to know withal, that if he chooses the truth in simplicity, God will confirm his choice with certainty and stability.

*To which God, the Father of lights, and the Fountain of all truth, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever more. Amen.*



*Covetousness proved no less an absurdity in reason,  
than a contradiction to religion, nor a more  
unsure way to riches, than riches  
themselves to happiness.*

IN

**TWO DISCOURSES**

UPON

**LUKE XII. 15.**

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**PART I.**

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**LUKE xii. 15.**

*And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

IN these words our Saviour cautions his disciples, and the rest of his hearers, against covetousness; a vice, which, by striking in with some of the most active principles of our nature, and at the same time perverting them too, has ever yet been, and will no doubt ever be too hard for all the rules and arguments brought against it from bare morality. So that as a grammarian once answered his prince, offering to enter into a dispute with him upon a grammatical point, "that he would by no means dispute with one who had twenty legions at his command;" so as little success is like to be found in managing a dispute against covetousness, which sways and carries all before it in the strength of that great queen regent of the world, money; the absolute commandress of fleets and armies, and, which is more, very often of their commanders too. So hard has common experience found it for some to draw their swords heartily even against an enemy, who has first drawn his purse to them; such an universal influence has this mighty vice: a vice which, by a kind of amphibious quality, is equally strong by sea and land, and consequently never out of its element, whatsoever place, station, or condition it may be in. From which and too many the like instances, it will, I fear, prove but too evident, that let philosophers argue and rhetoricians declaim never so much against this always decried, but yet always practised vice, covetousness will hardly ever lose its reputation and credit in men's minds, (whatsoever it may in their mouths,) so long as there shall be such a thing in the world as money, to hold them fast by.

The words contain in them these two general parts.

I. A dehortation or dissuasive from covetousness. *Take heed, and beware of covetousness.*



II. A reason enforcing it, and coupling the latter part of the text with the former, by the causal particle *for*; *for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

If we take the whole complex of the dehortation and the reason of it together, as they are joined in the text, we shall find that they are intended as an answer to a tacit argumentation apt to be formed by the minds of men in the behalf of covetousness, and founded upon these three principles.

1. That it is natural (and I may add also, allowable) for every man to endeavour to make his condition in this life as happy as lawfully he can.

2. That to abound with the good things of this world seems the direct and ready way to procure this happiness. And,

3. That covetousness is the proper and effectual means to acquire to a man this abundance.

Upon these three principles, I say, is built that plea or discourse, with which the heart of every worldling, upon the face of the earth, endeavours to satisfy itself of the reasonableness of covetousness. It being impossible, without some pretence of reason, for a rational agent to maintain a quiet mind in any ill course or practice whatsoever: no man ever doing any thing, which, at the time of his doing it, he does not actually judge that he has reason to do the same, whether that judgment be right or wrong, true or false. And therefore, since our Saviour, in the text we are upon, first supposes, and then sets himself to confute this plea, by overthrowing some of those sophistical, or sophistically applied principles, upon which it leaned, the particular knowledge of them was regularly to be premised by us, as the basis and groundwork of the whole prosecution of the subject now before us. In which we shall begin with the first general part of the text, to wit, the dehortation itself; and so confining our discourse wholly to this at present, we will consider in it these three following particulars.

1. The author of this dehortation, who was Christ himself; the great instructor, as well as Saviour of the world.

2. The thing he deHORTS us from; to wit, the meanest and most sordid of all vices, covetousness. And,

3dly and lastly, The way prescribed by him, as the most sovereign and effectual preservative from it; to wit, a constant guard and a watchful eye over it. *Take heed*, says he, *and beware of it*; the present danger and the consequent mischief making the utmost caution against it no more than sufficient.

All which particulars put together, viz. the quality of the person dehorting us, the nature of the thing he deHORTS us from, and the certainty of the remedy he advises us to, make it disputable, whether we are to take the words of the text as the absolute command of a legislator, or the endearing counsel of a friend. I think we have great reason to account them both, and that the text will sufficiently justify the assigning a double ground of the precept,



where the doubling of that must needs also double our obligation to the practice; while as a counsel we ought to follow it, and as a command we are bound to obey it.

To proceed therefore upon the forementioned particulars; we shall treat of each of them in their order. And,

1. For the great author of the dehoration or dissuasion here set down, who was Christ himself. *He said unto them, Beware of covetousness.* That is, *he* emphatically, *he* with a peculiar significance. For in all persuasions to, or dissuasions from any thing, the arguments enforcing both, must be either founded upon the authority of the person proposing them, or the reason and evidence of the thing proposed. As to the first of which, can any thing in nature be imagined more convincing, than the assertion or word of one, whose infinite knowledge makes it impossible for him to be deceived, and whose infinite goodness makes it equally impossible for him to deceive? The first of which must be abundantly sufficient to oblige our belief, and the other to claim our obedience. But both of them inseparably accompanied the words of our Saviour; who, as the evangelist tells us, *speaking as one having authority*, and, by the very testimony of his enemies, *as none ever spoke before him*, could not sink below this high character in his discourses upon any occasion or subject whatsoever; but upon none more eminently did he or could he shew it, than upon this of covetousness; where nothing but the superlative abilities of the speaker could reach the compass of the subject spoken to, nor any thing but the unblemished virtue of the reprover put the thing reproved out of countenance, or all defence of itself imaginable. For it is innocence which enables eloquence to reprove with power; and guilt attacked flies before the face of him who has none. And therefore, as every rebuke of vice comes or should come from the preacher's mouth, like a dart or arrow thrown by some mighty hand, which does execution proportionably to the force or impulse it received from that which threw it; so our Saviour's matchless virtue, free from the least tincture of any thing immoral, armed every one of his reproofs with a piercing edge and an irresistible force: so that truth, in that respect, never came naked out of his mouth, but either clothed with thunder, or wrapped up in all the powers of persuasion; still his person animated and gave life and vigour to his expression; all his commands being but the transcript of his own life, and his sermons a living paraphrase upon his practice; thus, by the strongest way of argumentation, confuting and living down covetousness long before he preached against it. For though it is most true, that in hearing the word men should consider only the nature of the matter delivered to them, (which, if it contains a duty, will be sure to make good its hold upon them, be the quality of him who delivers it what it will;) yet since also the nature of man is such, that in all addresses to him, the person himself will be still as much considered as his discourse, and perhaps more; and since the circumstances of his condition will always have a mighty, determining influence upon the credibility of his words, we will consider our Saviour discoursing against covetousness under these two qualifications.

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1. As he was Lord of the universe. And,
2. As he was depressed to the lowest estate of poverty.

By the former of which he possessed *the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; by the latter, he humbled, and (according to the apostle's phrase) *even emptied himself to the abject estate of a servant*. For he who was the first, or rather only begotten of the Almighty, and consequently, by all rights, heir of all things, and so had an universal, unlimited claim to all that was great or glorious within the whole compass of nature, yet had so little of this claim in possession, that he tells us he was in a poorer and more forlorn condition than the very *foxes of the field* or *the fowls of the air*, as to the common accommodations of life. It was a saying in the Jewish church, and received with an universal reverence, both by the learned and unlearned, that the world was made for the Messias. And we Christians hold, that it was made by him too. For he was (as the prophet Esay styles him) the *mighty God*, and consequently the creator of all that was not God. The son of Abraham by one nature, and eternally before Abraham by another. And yet this wonderful almighty person, whom the whole world could not circumscribe, by reason of the divinity and immensity of his being, had not so much in the same world as *where to lay his head*, by reason of the meanness of his condition. From all which it follows, that since the quality of the person persuading makes one great part or ingredient in the persuasion, nothing could come more invincibly, by way of argument, against covetousness, than a discourse against it from the mouth of him who created, governed, and had a rightful title to all things, and yet possessed nothing. And thus much for the first thing to be considered in the dehortation; namely, the person dehorting, who was Christ himself. Pass we now to the

Second thing to be considered in it, to wit, the thing we are dehorted from, which is covetousness. And here, one would think, it might well be supposed, that there needed no great pains to explain what this is, if we may rationally conclude, that men know the things they practise, or (in other words) understand what they do; yet since the very nearness of the object sometimes hinders the sight of it, and nothing is more usual than for men to be most of all strangers at home, and to overlook the darling sin lying in their own bosoms, where they think they can never sufficiently hide it, (especially from themselves,) I shall endeavour to give some account of the nature of this vice. And that,

1. Negatively, by shewing what it is not. And
2. Positively, by declaring what it is, and wherein it does consist; for there is often a fallacy on both sides. And

1. For the negative. Covetousness is not that prudent forecast, parsimony, and exactness, by which men bound their expenses according to the proportion of their fortunes. When the river is shallow, surely it is concerned to keep within its own banks. No man is bound to make himself a beggar, that fools or flatterers may account him generous; nor to spend his estate, to gratify the humour of such as are like to be the first who shall despise and slight



him, when it is spent. If God bestows upon us a blessing, we may be confident that he looks upon it as worth our keeping. And he only values the good providence of God for giving him an estate, who uses some providence himself in the management of it; and by so doing, puts it into his power to relieve the poverty of the distressed, and to recover a sinking friend, when the circumstances of things shall stamp his liberality with the name of charity and religion. For indeed he only is in a true sense charitable, who can sacrifice that to duty, which otherwise he knows well enough both how to prize and make use of himself; and he alone can be said to love his friend really, who can make his own convenience bow to his friend's necessity, and thereby shews that he values his friend ship more than any thing that his friend can receive from him. But he who with a promiscuous undistinguishing profuseness does not so much dispense, as throw away what he has, proclaims himself a fool to all the intelligent world about him; and is utterly ignorant, both of what he has and what he does; till at length, having emptied himself of all, he comes to have his purse and his head both alike.

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We never find the scripture commending any prodigal but one, and him too only for his ceasing to be so. Whose courses if we reflect upon, we shall see his prodigality bringing him from his revelling companions and his riotous meats, to the swine and to the trough; and from imitating their sensuality, by a natural consequence, to take up with their diet too. Prodigality is the devil's steward and purse-bearer, ministering to all sorts of vice; and it is hard, if not impossible, for a prodigal person to be guilty of no other vice but prodigality. For men generally are prodigal, because they are first intemperate, luxurious, or ambitious. And these, we know, are vices too brave and costly to be kept and maintained at an easy rate; they must have large pensions, and be fed with both hands, though the man who feeds them starves for his pains. From whence it is evident, that that which only retrenches, and cuts off the supplies of these gaping, boundless appetites, is so far from deserving the ugly name of avarice, that it is a noble instrument of virtue, a step to grace, and a great preparation of nature for religion. In a word, so far as parsimony is a part of prudence, it can be no part of covetousness.

And thus having shewn negatively what the covetousness here condemned by our Saviour is not, let us now shew positively what it is, and wherein it does consist. And we shall find that it consists in these following things.

1. An anxious, carking care about the things of this world: such a care as is expressed in [Matth. vi. 28](#), by *taking thought*; the Greek word is τί μεριμνᾶτε, and in the [31st verse](#), as μή οὖν μεριμνήσητε. A word importing such a thoughtfulness as distracts, and, as it were, divides the mind, and after it has divided it, unconscionably takes both parts to itself. In short, such a care is here meant, as lies like a kind of wolf in a man's breast, perpetually gnawing and corroding it, and is elsewhere expressed by St. [Luke xii. 29](#), by *being of doubtful mind*. As when a man, after all his labours in the sober, rational, and industrious pursuit of

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his lawful calling, yet distrusts the issues of God's providence for a competent support therein, and dares not cast himself upon that goodness of God which spreads its fatherly bounty over all, even the least, the lowest, and most contemptible parts of the creation. Such an one is a direct reproach to his great Lord and Maker, while he can find in his heart to think him so careful of the very mean est rank of beings, as in the mean time to overlook the wants of his noblest creatures, whom he made to lord it over all the rest, and, as a further honour, designed themselves for his own peculiar service; but yet so, that he never intended that they should serve even him, the Lord of all, for nothing. No; the methods of Providence are far from being so preposterous, as, while it *adorns the lilies, and clothes the very grass of the field*, to leave him naked, who was ordered by God and nature to set his feet upon both, and while it *feeds the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the land*, to suffer him to starve, for whose food both of them were made. Besides, that man has a claim also to a promise for his support and sustenance, which none ever missed of, who came up to the conditions of it. And now, can God require an easier and more reasonable homage from the sons of men, than that they should trust him, who neither will nor can fail them? And withal rest satisfied, quiet, and composed in their thoughts while they do so? For surely the infinite power and goodness of God may much more rationally be depended upon, than a man's own pitiful projects and endeavours, so much subject to chance and disappointment, be the man himself never so skilful, never so laborious. See with what strength of reason our Saviour argues down this solicitous, restless temper of mind, in the forementioned [6th of St. Matthew](#), from this one unanswerable consideration, that if God so carefully and tenderly provides for mankind in their greatest concernments, surely he will not relinquish them in those, where the difficulty of a supply is less, and yet their inability to supply themselves altogether as great. *Is not the life*, says our Saviour, *more than meat, and the body than raiment?* And shall we commit the former to the common mercies of Providence, but wholly distrust it for the latter? And in stead thereof, fly for succour to our own short, fallible contrivances? When it is certain, that our thinking can no more of itself work an alteration in our civil, than it can in our natural estate; nor can a man, independently upon the overruling influence of God's blessing, care and cark himself one penny richer, any more than one cubit taller: the same all-disposing power no less marking out the exact bounds and measures of our estates, than determining the just stature of our bodies; and so fixing the bulk and breadth of one, as well as the height of the other. We vainly think we have these things at the disposal of our own wills; but God will have us know, that they are solely the result of his. But,

2. Covetousness implies in it also a rapacity in getting. When men, as it were, with open mouth fly upon the prey, and catch with that eagerness, as if they could never open their hands wide enough, nor reach them out far enough to compass the objects of their boundless desires. So that, had they (as the fable goes of Briareus) each of them an hundred hands, they would all of them be employed in grasping and gathering, and hardly one of them in

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giving or laying out; but all in receiving, and none in restoring; a thing in itself so monstrous, that nothing in nature besides is like it, except it be death and the grave, the only things I know which are always robbing and carrying off the spoils of the world, and never making restitution. For otherwise, all the parts of the universe, as they borrow of one another, so they still pay what they borrow, and that by so just and well-balanced an equality, that their payments always keep pace with their receipts. But, on the contrary, so great and so voracious a prodigy is covetousness, that it will not allow a man to set bounds to his appetites, though he feels himself stinted in his capacities; but impetuously pushes him on to get more, while he is at a loss for room to bestow, and an heart to enjoy what he has already. This ravenous, vulture-like disposition the wise man expresses by *making haste to be rich*, [Prov. xxviii. 20](#), adding withal, that he who does so *shall not be innocent*. The words are a meiosis, and import much more than they express, as there is great reason they should; for so much of violence is there in the course or practice here declared against, that neither reason nor religion, duty nor danger, shall be able to stop such an one in his career, but that he will leap over all mounds and fences, break through right and wrong, and even venture his neck in pursuit of the design his head and his heart are so set upon. And this, I confess, is haste with a witness, but not one degree more than what is implied in *making haste to be rich*. For from hence it is, that we see some estates, like mushrooms, spring up in a night, and some who were begging or borrowing at the beginning of the year, ready to be purchasers before it comes about. But this is by no means the course or method of nature; the advances of which are still gradual, and scarce discernible in their motions; but only visible in their issue. For nobody perceives the grass grow, or the shadow move upon the dial, till after some time and leisure we reflect upon their progress. In like manner, usually and naturally, riches, if lawful, rise by degrees, and rather come dropping by small proportions into the honest man's coffers, than pouring in like a torrent or land-flood, which never brings so much plenty where at length it settles, but it does as much mischief all along where it passes.

Upon the whole matter, the greedy getter is like the greedy eater; it is possible that by taking in too fast he may choke or surfeit, but he will hardly nourish and strengthen himself, or serve any of the noble purposes of nature, which rather intends the security of his health, than the gratification of his appetite.

And in this respect covetousness, a thing of itself bad enough, is heightened by the conjunction of another every whit as bad, which is impatience; a quality sudden, eager, and insatiable, which grasps at all, and admits of no delay, scorning to wait God's leisure, and attend humbly and dutifully upon the issues of his wise and just providence. Such persons would have riches *make themselves wings to fly to them*, though one, much wiser than they, has assured us, [Prov. xxiii. 5](#), that when they *make themselves wings*, they intend *to fly away*.

But certainly, in this business of growing rich, poor men (though never so poor) should slack their pace, (how open soever they found the way before them,) and (as we may so ex-

press it) join something of the cripple to the beggar, and not think to fly or run forthwith to a total and immediate change of their condition, but to consider, that both nature and religion love to proceed leisurely and gradually, and still to place a middle state between two extremes. And therefore, when God calls needy, hungry persons to places and opportunities of raising their fortunes, (a thing which of late has happened very often,) it concerns them to think seriously of the greatness of the temptation which is before them, and to consider the danger of a full table to a person ready to starve. But generally such as in this manner step immediately out of poverty into power know no bounds, but are infinite and intolerable in their exactions. So that, in [Prov. xxviii. 3](#), Solomon most elegantly compares *a poor man oppressing the poor, to a sweeping rain, which leaves no food*; a rain which drives and carries off all clean before it; the least finger of a poor oppressor being heavier than the loins of a rich one; for while one is contented to fleece the skin, the other strips the very bones: and all this to redeem the time of his former poverty, and at one leap, as it were, to pass from a low and indigent into a full and magnificent condition. Though, for the most part, the righteous judgment of God overtakes such persons in the issue, and commonly appoints this for their lot, that estates sudden in the getting are but short in the continuance. They rose, as I shew, like land-floods, and like them they fell.

3. Covetousness implies in it all sinister and illegal ways of getting. And if we dwell fully upon this, we shall find, that it is not for nothing that covetousness is called by the apostle, [1 Tim. vi. 10](#), *the root of all evil*; a root as odious for its branches, as the branches for their fruit; a root fed with dirt and dunghills, and so no wonder if of as much foulness as fertility; there being no kind of vice whatsoever, but covetousness is ready to adopt and make use of it, so far as it finds it instrumental to its designs; and such is the cognation between all vices, that there is hardly any, but what very often happens to be instrumental and conducing to others besides itself. It is covetousness which commands in chief in most of the insurrections and murders which have infested the world; and most of the perjuries and pious frauds which have shamed down religion, and even dissolved society, have been resolved into the commanding dictates of this vice. So that, whatsoever has been pretended, gain has still been the thing aimed at, both in the grosser outrages of an open violence, and the sanctified rogueries of a more refined dissimulation. None ever acted the traitor and the Judas expertly and to the purpose, but still there was a *Quid dabitis* behind the curtain. Covetousness has been all along, even in the most villainous contrivances, the principal, though hidden spring of motion; and lying, cheating, hypocritical prayers and fastings, the sure wheels by which the great work (as they called it) has still gone forward. Nay, so mighty a sway does this pecuniary interest bear even in matters of religion, that toleration itself, (as sovereign a virtue as it is said to be of, for preserving order and discipline in the church,) yet without contribution, would hardly be able to support the separate meetings of the dissenting brotherhood; but that, if the people should once grow sullen, and shut up their purses, it is shrewdly to

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be feared, that the preachers themselves would shut up the conventicles too: at present, it is confessed, the trade is quick and gainful, but still, like other trades, not to be carried on without money. Gold is the best cordial to keep the *good old cause* in heart; and there is little danger of its fainting, and much less of starving, with so much of that in its pocket.

The truth is, covetousness is a vice of such a general influence and superintendency over all other vices, that it will serve its turn even by those which, at first view, seem most contrary to it. So that it will command votaries to itself even out of the tribe of Epicurus, and make uncleanness, drunkenness, and intemperance itself minister to its designs; for let a man be but rich and great, and there shall be enough to humour him in his lusts, that they may go sharers with him in his wealth; enough to drink, and sot, and carouse with him, if, by drinking with him, they may come also to eat, and drink, and live upon him, and, by creeping into his bosom, to get into his pocket too: so that we need not go to the cozening, lying, perjured shopkeeper, who will curse himself into hell forty times over, to gain twopence or threepence in the pound extraordinary, and sits retailing away heaven and salvation for pence and halfpence, and seldom vends any commodity, but he sells his soul with it, like brown paper, into the bar gain. I say, we need not go to these forlorn wretches, to find where the covetous man dwells; for sometimes we may find him also in a clean contrary disguise, perhaps gallanting it with his ladies, or drinking and roaring, and shaking his elbow in a tavern with some rich young cully by his side, who, from his dull, rustic converse, (as some will have it,) is newly come to town to see fashions and know men, forsooth; and having newly buried his father in the country, to give his estate a more honourable burial in the city.

In short, the covetous person puts on all forms and shapes, runs through all trades and professions, haunts all places, and makes himself expert in the mystery of all vices, that he may the better pay his devotions to his god Mammon. And so, in a quite different way from that of the blessed apostle, he *becomes all things to all men*, that he may by *any means gain something*; for he cares not much for gaining persons, where he can gain nothing else.

4thly and lastly, Covetousness implies in it a tenaciousness in keeping. Hitherto we have seen it filling its bags, and in this property we find it sealing them up. In the former, we have seen how eagerly it can catch; and in this latter, it shews us how fast it can gripe. And we need no other proof of the peculiar baseness of this vice, than this. For as the prime and more essential property of goodness is to communicate and diffuse itself; so, in the same degree that any thing incloses and shuts up its plenty within itself, in the same it recedes and falls off from the nature of good. If we cast our eyes over the whole creation, we shall find every part of the universe contributing something or other, either to the help or ornament of the whole. The great business of Providence is to be continually issuing out fresh supplies of the divine bounty to the creature, which lives and subsists like a lamp fed by continual infusions from the same hand which first lights and sets it up. So that covetousness

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is nothing so much as a grand contradiction to Providence, while it terminates wholly within itself. The covetous person lives as if the world were made altogether for him, and not he for the world, to take in every thing, and to part with nothing. Charity is accounted no grace with him, nor gratitude any virtue. The cries of the poor never enter into his ears; or if they do, he has always one ear readier to let them out, than the other to take them in. In a word, by his rapines and extortions, he is always for making as many poor as he can, but for relieving none whom he either finds or makes so: so that it is a question, whether his heart be harder, or his fist closer. In a word, he is a pest and a monster; greedier than the sea, and barrener than the shore; a scandal to religion, and an exception from common humanity; and upon no other account fit to live in this world, but to be made an example of God's justice in the next.

Creditor and debtor divide the world; and he who is not one, is certainly the other. But the covetous wretch does not only shut his hand to the poor in point of relief, but to others also in point of debt. Upon which account the apostle James upbraids the rich men, in [James v. 4](#). *Behold, says he, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back, crieth.* These, it seems, being the men who allow neither servants nor workmen any other wages than, as the saying is, their labour for their pains. Men generally as the world goes are too powerful to be just, and too rich to pay their debts. For whatsoever they can borrow, they look upon as lawful prize, and extremely despise and laugh at the folly of restitution. But well it is for the poor orphan and the oppressed, that there is a court above, where the cause of both will be infallibly recognized, and such devourers be forced to disgorge the widows' houses they had swallowed, and the most righteous Judge be sure to pay those their due, who would never pay any else theirs.

The truth is, the covetous person is so bad a pay master, that he lives and dies as much a debtor to himself as to any one else: his own back and belly having an action of debt against him; while he pines, and pinches, and denies himself, not only in the accommodations, but also in the very necessities of nature; with the greatest nonsense imaginable, living a beggar, that he may die rich, and leave behind him a mass of money, valuable upon no other account in the world, but as it is an instrument to command and procure to a man those conveniencies of life, which such an one voluntarily and by full choice deprives himself of.

Nor does this vice stop here; but, as I verily believe, one great reason which keeps some persons from the blessed sacrament, may be resolved into their covetousness. For God, in that duty, certainly calls for a remembrance of the poor; and therefore there must be something offered, as well as received, by the worthy communicant. But this the covetous wretch likes not, who perhaps could brook the duty well enough, were it an ordinance only for receiving and taking in: but since it requires also something to be parted with, he flies from the altar, as if he were to be sacrificed upon it; and so, turning his back upon his Saviour, chooses rather to forget all the benefits of his precious death and passion, than to cast in his

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portion into the poor's treasury; a strange piece of good husbandry certainly, for a man thus to lose his soul, only to save his pelf.

And thus much for the second thing considerable in the dehortation; namely, the thing we are therein dehorted from, which is that mean, sordid, and degrading vice of covetousness: the nature of which I have been endeavouring to make out, both negatively, by shewing what it is not; and positively, by shewing what it is, and wherein it consists. I proceed now to the

Third and last thing to be considered in the dehortation; which is, the way and means whereby we are taught to avoid the thing we are thus dehorted from. And that is, by using a constant care and vigilance against it; *Take heed, and beware of covetousness*. Concerning which we must observe, that as every thing to be avoided is properly an evil or mischief, so such an evil as is to be avoided by a singular and more than ordinary caution, is always attended with one or both of these two qualifications.

1. An exceeding aptness to prevail upon us.

2. An equal difficulty in removing it, when it has once prevailed. In both which respects we are eminently cautioned against covetousness. And first, we shall find, that it is a vice marvellously apt to prevail upon and insinuate into the heart of man; and that upon these three accounts.

1. The near resemblance which it often bears to virtue.

2. The plausibility of its pleas and pretences. And,

3. The great reputation which riches generally give men in the world, by whatsoever ways or means they were gotten. And,

1. It insinuates, by the near resemblance it bears to virtue. Virtue and vice dwell upon the confines of each other; always most distant in their natures, though the same too often in appearance, like the borderers of two kingdoms or countries, the greatest enemies, and yet the nearest neighbours: so that it must needs require no small accuracy of judgment (and such as few are masters of) to state the just limits of both: and a man must go nearer than the covetous person himself, to hit the dividing point, and to shew exactly where the virtue ends and the vice begins; a small accident or circumstance often changing the whole quality of the action, and of lawful or indifferent, rendering it culpable and unlawful. Covetousness is confessedly a vice, could we but know where to find it. But when it is confronted with prodigality, it is so apt to take shelter under the name and shew of good husbandry, that it is hard to discern the reality from the pretence, and to represent nature in its true shape. Parsimony and saving, determined by due circumstances, are, questionless, the dictates of right reason, and so far not allowable only, but commendable also. For surely there can be no immorality in sparing, where there is no law whatsoever that obliges a man to spend. It is the common and received voice of the world, that nothing can be more laudably got, than that which is lawfully saved. Saving, as I hinted before, being nothing else but a due

valuation of the favours of Providence, and a fencing against one of the greatest of miseries, poverty, which, Solomon tells us, *comes like an armed man* upon the lavish and the prodigal; and when it comes, is of itself a curse and a temptation, and too often makes a man as wicked as he is poor. But such is the frailty of human nature, and its great proneness to vice, that, under the mask of lawful parsimony, that *amor sceleratus habendi*, covetousness insensibly steals upon and gets possession of the soul, and the man is entangled and enslaved, and brought under the power of an ill habit, before he is so much as alarmed with its first approaches; and ready to be carried off by the plague, or some mortal distemper, before he is aware of the infection. But,

2dly, Covetousness is apt to insinuate also by the plausibility of its pleas. Amongst which, none more usual and general, than the necessity of providing for children and posterity; whom, all will grant, parents should not be instrumental to bring into the world, only to see them starve when they are here. Nor are just the necessities of a bare subsistence to be the only measure of their care for them; but some consideration is to be had also of the quality and condition to which they were born, and consequently were brought into, not by choice, but by descent. For it seems not<sup>12</sup> suitable to the common and most impartial judgment of mankind, that one of a noble family and extraction should be put to hedging and ditching, and be forced to support himself with the labour of his hands and the sweat of his brow. It is hard measure to be nobly born and basely endowed; to wear a title above one's circumstances, and so serve only as a foil to an elder brother. But now, by such provisions for posterity, the reason and measure of men's gains, from personal, is like to grow infinite and perpetual; and yet no charge of covetousness seems here able to take place; it being impossible for a man to be covetous in that, in which no getting can be superfluous. The first plea of avarice therefore is, provision for posterity.

But then, if a man's condition be such, that all his cares are to terminate in his own person, and that he has neither sons nor daughters to lay up for, but that his whole family lives and dies with him, and one grave is to receive them all, why then covetousness will urge to him the necessity of hoarding up against old age, against the days of weakness and infirmity, when the strength of his body and the vigour of his mind shall fail him, and when the world shall measure out their friendships and respects to him only according to the di-

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12 But much different was the advice of a certain lawyer, a great confidant of the rebels in the time of their reign; who, upon a consult held amongst them, how to dispose of the duke of Gloucester, youngest son of king Charles the first, then in their hands, with great gravity (forsooth) declared it for his opinion, that they should bind him out to some good trade, that so he might eat his bread honestly. These were his words, and very extraordinary ones they were indeed. Nevertheless, they could not hinder him from being made a judge in the reign of king Charles the Second. A practice not unusual in the courts of some princes, to encourage and prefer their mortal enemies before their truest friends.

mensions of his purse. Upon which account, one would think, that all a man's gettings and hoardings up, during his youth, ought to pass but for charity and compassion to his old age; which must either live and subsist upon the stock of former acquisitions, or expect all that misery, which want, added to weakness, can bring upon it. The sight of an old man, poor and destitute, crazy and scorned, unable to help himself, or to buy the help of others, is a shrewd argument to recommend covetousness to one, even in his greenest years, and to make the very youngest and j oiliest sparks, in their most flourishing age, look about them. It having been the observation and judgment of some, who have wanted neither wisdom nor experience, that an old man has no friend but his money. And I heartily wish I could confute the observation.

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But the like and no less plausible a plea will this vice also put in for providing against times of persecution, or public calamity; calling to a man's mind all the hardships of a civil war, all the plunders and rapines, when nothing was safe above-ground; but a man was forced to bury his bags, to keep himself alive. And therefore, though, at present, there should be peace, and all about us calm and quiet; yet who knows how soon a storm may arise, and the spirit of rebellion and fanaticism put it into men's heads once more to raise armies to plunder and cut throats *in the Lord*; and then, believe it, when the great work shall be thus carrying on, and we shall see our friends and our neighbours reformed out of house and home as formerly, it will be found worth while to have secured a friendly penny in a corner, which may bid us eat, when we should otherwise starve, and speak comfort to us, when our friends will not so much as know us.

With these and such like reasonings, fallaciously applied, will covetousness persuade a man both of the necessity and lawfulness of his raising heap upon heap, and joining house to house, and putting no bounds to his gains, when his hand is once in. And it must be confessed, that there is some shew of reason for what has been alleged. But when again we shall consider, that the forementioned cases are all but future contingencies, which are by no means to be the rule of men's actions, our duty is only to look to the precept, and the obligation of it, which is plain and present, and may be easily known; and for the rest, to commit ourselves to the good providence of God. For while we are solicitously providing against the miseries of age and persecution, how do we know, whether we shall ever live to be old? or to see the calamity of our country? or the persecution of our persons? But however, if God shall see it for his honour to try and humble us with the miseries of any of these conditions, it is not all our art and labour, all our parsimony and providence, which can prevent them. And therefore, how plausible soever the pleas of covetousness may seem, they are far from being ration ah But,

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3dly and lastly, Covetousness is apt to prevail upon the minds of men, by reason of the reputation which riches generally give men in the world, by whatsoever ways or means they were gotten. It is a very great, though sad and scandalous truth, that rich men are at the very

same time esteemed and honoured, while the ways by which they grew rich are abhorred and detested: for how is griping and avarice exclaimed against! how is oppression branded all the world over! All mankind seems agreed to run them down; and yet, what addresses are made, what respects shewn, what high encomiums given to a wealthy miser, to a rich and flourishing oppressor! The lucky effect seems to have atoned for and sanctified its vile cause; and the basest thing covered with gold, lies hid itself, and shines with the lustre of its covering.

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Virtue, charity, and generosity, are indeed splendid names, and look bright in sermons and panegyrics, (which few regard:) but when we come to practice and common life, virtue, if poor, is but a sneaking thing, looked upon disdainfully, and treated coldly; and when charity brings a man to need charity, he must be content with the scraps from the table of the rich miser or the great oppressor. For no invitations are now made, like that in the gospel, where messengers are sent, with tickets, to bring in guests from the hedges and highways. No, it is not the way in our days to spread tables or furnish out banquets for the poor and the blind, the hungry and the indigent. For in our times, (to the just shame of the fops our ancestors, as some call them,) full bellies are still oftenest feasted; *and to them who have shall be given, and they shall have more abundantly*. This is the way of the world; be the discourse of it what it will.

And as this is the general practice of the world, so it must needs be the general observation of the world too; for while men reproach vice, and caress the vicious; upbraid the guilt of an action, but adore its success; they must not think, that all about them are so without eyes or common sense, as not to spy out the prevarication, and to take an estimate of their real value of things and persons, rather by what they do, than by what they talk. Since therefore it is so natural for every one to desire to live with as good esteem and reputation in the world as he can, it is no wonder, if covetousness makes so strong a plea for itself in the hearts of men, by promising them riches, which they find so certain a way to honour and respect. And thus much for the first general reason of the caution, given by our Saviour, against covetousness; namely, its great aptness to prevail upon and insinuate into men's minds.

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2. The other general reason is, the exceeding great difficulty of removing it, when it has once prevailed. In which and the like cases, one would think it argument sufficient to caution any man against a disease, if we can but convince him of the great likelihood of his falling into it; and not only of that, but, in case he should fall into it, of the extreme difficulty (sometimes next to an impossibility) of his recovering, and getting out of it. Both which considerations together, certainly should add some thing more than ordinary to the caution of every wise man, and make him double his guards against so threatening a mischief. And as for covetousness, we may truly say of it, that it makes both the alpha and omega in the Devil's alphabet, and that it is the first vice in corrupt nature which moves, and the last

which dies. For look upon any infant, and as soon as it can but move an hand, we shall see it reaching out after something or other which it should not have; and he who does not know it to be the proper and peculiar sin of old age, seems himself to have the dotage of that age upon him, whether he has the years or no. For who so intent upon the world commonly, as those who are just going out of it? Who so diligent in heaping up wealth, as those who have neither will nor time to spend it?



If we should insist upon the reason of things, no thing seems more a prodigy, than to observe, how catching and griping those are, who are utterly void of all power and capacity of enjoying any of these things which they so eagerly catch at. All which shews, how fast this vice rivets itself into the heart, which it once gets hold of; how it even grows into a part of nature, and scarce ever leaves the man, who has been enslaved by it, till he leaves the world.

Now, if we inquire into the reason of the difficult removal of this vice, we shall find, that all those causes, which promoted its first insinuation and entrance into men's affections, contribute also to its settlement and continuance in the same; as the same sword which enables to conquer, enables also to reign and rule after the conquest. Covetousness, we shew, prevailed by its likeness and resemblance to virtue, by the plausibility of its pleas, and by the reputation of its effects. All which, as they were so many arguments to the soul, first to admit and take in the vice, so they are as potent persuasives not to part with it. But the grand reason, I conceive, which ties the knot so fast, that it is hardly to be untied, is this; that covetousness is founded upon that great and predominant principle of nature, which is self-preservation. It is indeed an ill-built superstructure, but yet it is raised upon that lawful and most allowed foundation. The prime and main design of nature, whether in things animate or in inanimate, being to preserve or defend itself; which since it cannot do, but by taking in relief and succour from things without, and since this desire is so very eager and transporting, it easily overshoots in the measure of what it takes in, and thereby incurs the sin and contracts the guilt of covetousness; which is properly an "immoderate desire and pursuit of even the lawful helps and supports of nature."



Men dread want, misery, and contempt, and therefore think they can never be enough provided with the means of keeping off these evils: so that, if want, misery, and contempt were not manifestly enemies to, and destructive of the enjoyments of nature; and nature were not infinitely concerned to secure and make good these enjoyments; and riches and plenty were not thought the direct instruments to effect this; there could be no such thing as covetousness in the world. But even money (the desire of all nations) would sink in its value, and gold itself lose its weight, though it kept its lustre. For to what rational purpose should men prowl and labour for that, without which nature could continue in its full, entire fruition of whatsoever was either needful for its support, or desirable for its pleasure? But it is evident, that men live and act under this persuasion, that unless they have wealth and

plenty enough, they shall be needy, miserable, and despised, and that the way to have enough, is to let nothing, if possible, go beside them. So that herein lies the strength of covetousness, that it acts in the strength of nature, that it strikes in with its first and most forcible inclination; which is to secure itself, both in the good it actually has, and against the evil it fears.

In short therefore, to recapitulate the foregoing particulars. If caution and vigilance be ever necessary for the prevention of any evil, it must be of such an one as insinuates itself easily, grows upon a man insensibly, and sticks to him immovably; and in a word, scarce ever loses its hold where it has once got it. So that a man must be continually watching and fencing against it, or he shall be sure to fall by it.

And thus much for the first general part of the text, to wit, the dehortation from covetousness, expressed in these words, *Take heed, and beware of covetousness*. A vice, which no character can reach the compass, or fully express the baseness of, holding fast all it can get in one hand, and reaching at all it can desire with the other. A vice which may but too significantly be called the<sup>13</sup> βουλιμία, or *appetitus caninus* of the soul, perpetually disposing it to a course of alternate craving and swallowing, and swallowing and craving; and which nothing can cure, or put an end to, but that which puts an end to the man himself too. In a word, of so killing a malignity is it, that wheresoever it settles, it may be deservedly said of it, that if it has enriched its thousands, it has damned its ten thousands. An hard saying, I confess; but it is the truth of it which makes it so. And therefore happy, no doubt, is that man, who maturely takes the warning which our Saviour so favourably gives him; and by shunning the contagion of a vice so peculiarly branded and declared against, neither contracts the guilt, nor comes within the number of those whom God himself, in [Psalm x. 3](#), expressly tells us he abhors.

*To which God (who so graciously warns us here, that he may not condemn us hereafter) be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

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13 Viz. Insatiabilis edendi cupiditas; sive morbus, quo laborantes, etiam post cibum esuriunt. *Tusanus*.

*Covetousness proved no less an absurdity in reason,  
than a contradiction to religion, nor a more  
unsure way to riches, than riches  
themselves to happiness.*

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**PART II.**

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**LUKE xii. 15.**

*And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

WHEN I entered upon the prosecution of these words, I observed in them these two general parts.

I. A dehortation, or dissuasive from covetousness in these words; *Take heed, and beware of covetousness.*

II. A reason enforcing it, and joining the latter part of the text with the former by the causal particle *for; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

As for the first of these two, viz. the dehortation, or dissuasion from covetousness; I have already despatched that in a discourse by itself, and so proceed now to the

Second general part, to wit, the reason enforcing the said dehortation, and expressed in these words; *for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

In the foregoing discourse I shew, that these words were an answer of our Saviour to a tacit argumentation formed in the minds of most men in the behalf of covetousness; which, grounding itself upon that universal principle, that all men desire to make their life in this world as happy as they can, proceeded to the main conclusion by these two steps; to wit, that riches were the direct and proper means to acquire this happiness; and covetousness the proper way to get and obtain riches.

The ground of which arguments, namely, that every man may design to himself as much happiness in this life, as by all lawful means he can compass, our Saviour allows, and contradicts not in the least; as being indeed the first and most native result of those principles which every man brings into the world with him. But as for the two consequences drawn from thence; the first of them, viz. that riches were the direct and proper means to acquire happiness, our Saviour denies, as absolutely false; and the second, viz. that covetousness is the proper way to obtain riches, he does by no means allow for certainly true; though he does not, I confess, directly set himself to disprove it here; but in the text now before us insists only upon the falsehood of the former consequence, as we, in the following discourse, shall





likewise do; though even the latter of these consequences also shall not be passed over in its due place.

Accordingly, our Saviour here makes it the chief, if not sole business of his present sermon, (and that in defiance of the common sentiments of the world,) to demonstrate the inability of riches for the attainment of true happiness, and thereby to make good the grand point insisted upon, viz. *that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*. Where, by *life*, I suppose, there can be no need of proving, that our Saviour does not here mean *life* barely and physically so taken, and no more; which is but a poor thing, God knows; but by *life*, according to a metonymy of the subject for the adjunct, understands the happiness of life in the very same sense wherein St. Paul takes this word in [1 Thess. iii. 8](#). Now, says he, *we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord*. That is, we live with comfort, and a satisfactory enjoyment of ourselves. And conformable to the same, is the way of speaking in the Latin, as *Istuc est vivere*, and *Non est vivere, sed valere vita*. In which, and many the like expressions, *vivere* and *vita* import not the mere physical act of living; but the pleasure, happiness, and accommodations of life; without which, life itself is scarce worthy to be accounted life; but only a power of breathing, and a capacity of being miserable.

Now, that riches, wealth, and abundance (the things which swell so big in the fancies of men, promising them mountains, but producing only a mouse) are not, as they persuade themselves, such sure, unfailing causes of that felicity, which the grand desires of their nature so eagerly press after, will appear from these following considerations.

1. That no man, generally speaking, acquires, or takes possession of the riches of this world, but with great toil and labour, and that very frequently even to the utmost fatigue. The first and leading curse, which God pronounced upon mankind in Adam, was, that *in the sweat of his brows he should eat his bread*, [Gen. iii. 19](#). And if it be a curse for a man to be forced to toil for his very bread, that is, for the most necessary support of life; how does he heighten and multiply the curse upon himself, who toils for superfluities, and spends his time and strength in hoarding up that which he has no real need of, and which it is ten to one but he may never have any occasion for. For so is all that wealth which exceeds such a competence, as answers the present occasions and wants of nature. Arid when God comes to account with us, (let our own measures be what they will,) he will consider no more.

Now certain it is, that the general, stated way of gathering riches must be by labour and travail, by serving other men's needs, and prosecuting their business, and thereby doing our own. For there is a general commutation of these two, which circulates and goes about the world, and governs all the affairs of it; one man's labour being the stated price of another man's money; that is to say, let my neighbour help me with his art, skill, or strength, and I will help him in proportion with what I possess. And this is the original cause and reason, why riches come not without toil and labour, and a man's exhausting himself to fill his purse. This, I say, is the original cause; for I know, that, the world being once settled, estates

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come to be transmitted to many by inheritance; and such need nothing else to render them wealthy, but only to be born into the world. Sometimes also riches fall into men's hands by favour or fortune; but this is but seldom, and those who are thus the favourites of Providence make but a small number in comparison of those who get what they have by dint of labour and severe travail. And therefore, (as I said at first,) this is the common, stated way which Providence allows men to grow rich by.

But now, can any man reconcile temporal happiness to perpetual toil? Or can he enjoy any thing truly who never enjoys his ease? I mean that lawful ease, which God allows and nature calls for, upon the vicissitudes of rest and labour. But he who will be vastly rich must bid adieu to his rest, and resolve to be a slave and a drudge all his days. And at last, when his time is spent in heaping up, and the heap is grown big, and calls upon the man to enjoy it, his years of enjoyment are past, and he must quit the world, and die like a fool, only to leave his son or his heir a rich man; who perhaps will be one of the first who shall laugh at him for what he left him, and complain, if not also curse him, for having left him no more. For such things have happened in the world; and I do not find that the world much mends upon our hands. But if this be the way of it, (as we see it is,) what happiness a man can reap from hence, even upon a temporal account, needs a more than ordinary invention to find out. The truth is, the absurdity of the practice is so very gross, that it seems to carry in it a direct contrariety to those common notions and maxims which nature would govern the actions of mankind by.

2. Men are usually forced to encounter and pass through very great dangers, before they can attain to any considerable degrees of wealth. And no man, surely, can rationally account himself happy in the midst of danger. For while he walks upon the very edge and brink of ruin, it is but an equal cast, whether he shall succeed or sink, live or die, in the attempt he makes. He who (for instance) designs to raise his fortunes by merchandise, (as a great part of the world does,) must have all his hopes floating upon the waves, and his riches (the whole support of his heart) entirely at the mercy of things which lave no mercy, the seas and the winds. A sudden storm may beggar him; and who can secure him from a storm in the place of storms? A place, where whole estates are every day swallowed up, and which has thereby made it disputable, whether there are more millions of gold and silver lodged below the salt waters or above them; so that, in the same degree that any man of sense desires wealth, he must of necessity fear its loss; his desires must still measure out his fears; and both of them, with reference to the same objects, must bear proportion to one another; which in the mean time must needs lake the man really miserable, by being thus held a continual distraction between two very uneasy passions. Nevertheless, let us, after all, suppose that this man of traffic, having passed the best of his days in fears and dangers, comes at length to triumph so far over both, as to bring off a good estate from the mouth of the devouring element, and now thinks to sit down and solace his old age with the acquisitions of his younger and more



daring years; let him, however, put what is past and what is present into the same balance, and judge impartially, whether the present enjoyment, which he reaps from the quiet and plenty of this poor remainder of his age, (if he reaps any,) can equal those perpetual fears and agonies, which not only anticipated, and brought age upon him before its time, but likewise, by a continual racking solicitude of thought, cut him off from all pleasure in the proper days of pleasure, and from those youthful satisfactions which age must by no means pretend to. *I am this day fourscore years old*, (said the aged and rich Barzillai, in 2 Sam. xix. 35,) *and can I yet taste what I eat or what I drink?* But, it seems, as dull as his senses were, he was severely sensible of the truth of what he said. And whosoever lives to Barzillai's years, shall not, with all Barzillai's wealth and greatness, (sufficient, as we read, to entertain a king and his army,) be able to procure himself a quicker and a better relish of what shall be set before him, than Barzillai had. For all enjoyment must needs be at an end, where the powers of enjoying cease. And if, in the next place, we should pass from the delicacies of fare to the splendour of habit, (another thing which most of the world are so much taken with,) what could the purple, and the scarlet, and all the fineries of clothing avail a man, when the wearer himself was grown out of fashion? In a word, every man must be reckoned to have just so much of the world as he enjoys of it. And the covetous man (we have shewn) will not, and the old man can not enjoy it.

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But some again (the natural violence of their temper so disposing them) are for advancing and enriching themselves (if possible) by war: a course certainly, of all others, the most unaccountable and preposterous. For is it not highly irrational for a man to sacrifice the end to the means? to hazard his life for the pursuit of that, which for the sake and support of life only can be valuable? Well indeed may the man who has been bred up in, and accustomed to camps, battles, and sieges, look death and danger boldly in the face; but yet, let him not think to look them out of countenance too; these being evils, no doubt, too great for mortality, with but common sense and reason about it, to defy. Nay, suppose we, likewise, the man of arms so fortunate, as in his time to have fought himself into an estate, (as several such have done,) yet may not even this also prove a very slight and contemptible purchase, if, as soon as it is made, the man himself should drop out of this world, and so become wholly incapable of taking possession of what he had bought with his life, but only by his grave?

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Thus, I say, it often fares with those soldiers of fortune, or field-adventurers, (as we may call them,) from whom, if we cast our eye a little further, upon another sort of men, no less eager after gain and grandeur from their management of state-affairs, shall we find their condition at all more secure? their happiness more firmly fixed? and less at a venture than that of those of the forementioned tribe? No surely, no less hazards meet the statesman at the council-board, than accost the soldier in the field; and one had need be as good a fencer, as the other ought to be a fighter, to defend himself: the oppositions he is to contest with being altogether as terrible and fatal, though not in the same dress. For he has the changeable

will of his prince or superiors, the competition of his equals, and the popular rage of his inferiors, to guard and secure himself against. And he must walk with a wary eye and a steady foot indeed, who never trips nor stumbles at any of these cross blocks, which, sometime or other, will assuredly be cast before him; and it is well if he carries not only his foot, but his head too, so sure, as to fall by neither of them: many wise men, I am sure, have fallen so. For it is not wisdom, but fortune which must protect such an one; and fortune is no man's freehold, either to keep or to command.

Which being truly his case, I cannot judge that man happy, who is in danger to be ruined every moment, and who can neither bring the causes of his ruin within the reach of his prospect, nor the avoidance of them within the compass of his power; but, notwithstanding all his art, wit, and cunning, lies perpetually open to a thousand invisible, and, upon that account, inevitable mischiefs. And thus I have shewn the dangers which attend the several ways and passages by which men aspire to wealth and greatness; the things upon which the abused reason of mankind so much dotes, and in which it places so much felicity, and finds so little. But,

3. Men are frequently forced to make their way to great possessions, by the commission of great sins, and therefore the happiness of life cannot possibly consist in them. It has been a saying, and a remarkable one it is, that there is no man very rich, but is either an unjust person himself, or the heir of one or other who was so. I dare not pronounce so severe a sentence universally: for I question not, but, through the good providence of God, some are as innocently, and with as good a conscience rich, as others can be poor: but the general baseness and corruption of men's practices has verified this harsh saying of too many; and it is every day seen, how many serve the god of this world to obtain the riches of it. It is true, the full reward of a man's unjust dealing never reaches him in this life; but if he has not sinned away all the sense, tenderness, and apprehensiveness of his conscience, the grudges and regrets of it will be still like death in the pot, and give a sad grumbling allay to all his comforts; nor shall his heart ever find any entire, clear, unmixed content in the wealth he has got, when he shall reflect upon the manner of his getting it; and assure him, that nothing of all that which he possesses in the world is yet paid for; so that, if the justice of God should exact his soul in payment of that vast score, which his sinful gains have run him into, when this sad debt came once to be cleared off, who then would be the gainer? or what could be got, when the soul was lost?

One man, perhaps, has been an oppressor and an extortioner, and waded to all his wealth through the tears of widows and orphans. Another with blood and perjury, falsehood and lying, has borne down all before him, and now lords it in the midst of a great estate; and the like may be said of others, who, by other kinds of baseness, have done the same. But now, can any of these thriving miscreants be esteemed or called happy in such a condition? Is their mind clear, their conscience calm and quiet, and their thoughts generally undisturbed?

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For there can be no true happiness, unless they are so; forasmuch as all happiness must pass through the mind and the apprehension. But God has not left himself so without witness, even in the hearts of the most profligate sinners, as to suffer great guilt and profound peace to cohabit in the same breast. Jonah must not think to disobey, and then to sleep securely and unmolested. No, the storm will quickly be about his ears, and the terrible remembrancer within will be rubbing up old stories, and breaking in upon his false repose with secret intimations of an impending wrath. So that, if the tempter, at any time, be at one elbow, to induce a man to sin; conscience will not fail to be jogging him at the other, to remind him what he has done, and what he is to expect thereupon. This has been the case of the most prosperous sinners in the world; these remorse and forebodings have stuck close to them in the midst of all their plenty, power, and splendour; a sufficient demonstration doubtless, how thin and counterfeit all the joys of these grandees are, in spite of all the flourishes and fine shows they make in the opinion of the foolish world, which sees and gazes upon their glistening outside, but knows not the dismal stings and secret lashes which they feel within.



And thus much for the first general argument, proving, that true happiness consists not in any earthly abundance, taken from the consideration of those evils through which men commonly pass into the possession of it. The

Second general argument shall be taken from the consideration of such evils as attend men, when they come to be actually possessed of this abundance. As,

1. Excessive, immoderate cares. The very management of a great estate is a greater and more perplexing trouble than any that a poor man can be subject to. Great riches superinduce new necessities; necessities added to those of nature, but accounted much above them; to wit, the necessities of pomp, grandeur, and a suitable port in the world. For he who is vastly rich, must live like one who is so; and whosoever does that, makes himself thereby a great host, and his house a great inn; where the noise, the trouble, and the charge is sure to be his, but the enjoyment (if there be any) descends upon the persons entertained by him; nay, and upon the very servants of his family, whose business is only to please their master, and live upon him, while the master's business is to please all that come about him, and sometimes to fence against them too. For a gainer by all his costs and charges, by all that he can give or spend, he shall never be. Such being the temper of most men in the world, that though they are never so kindly used and so generously entertained, yet they are not to be obliged; but go away, rather envying their entertainer's greatness, than acknowledging his generosity. So that a man, by widening or enlarging his condition, only affords the malicious world about him so many more handles to lay hold of him by, than it had before. It is indeed impossible that riches should increase, and that care, with many malign accidents besides, should not increase with them. This is the dark shadow, which still follows those shining bodies. And care is certainly one of the greatest miseries of the mind; the toil and very day-labour of the soul. And what felicity, what enjoyment can there be in uncessant labour? For



enjoyment is properly attractive, but labour expensive. And all pleasure adds and takes in something to the stores of nature; while work and labour is still upon the exporting and the spending hand. Care is a consuming and a devouring thing, and, with a kind of spiteful as well as craving appetite, preys upon the best and noblest things of a man, and is not to be put off with any of the dainties of his full table: but his thoughts, his natural rest and recreations, are the viands which his cares feed upon. And is not that wealthy great one, think we, very happy, whose riches shall force him to lie awake, while his very porter is asleep? and whose greatness shall hardly allow him so much as time to eat? Certainly such an one sustains all the real miseries of want, no less than he who seeks his meat from door to door. For he is as much starved, who cannot find when, as he who cannot find what to eat; and he dies as surely, who is pressed to death with heaps of gold and silver, as he who is crushed under an heap of stones or dirt. The malignity and corroding quality of care is, to all intents and purposes of mischief, the same, be the causes of it never so different. And whether poverty or riches produce the vexation, the impression it makes upon the heart is alike from both. *They who will be rich*, says St. Paul, [1 Tim. vi. 9](#), *pierce themselves through with many sorrows*; and those, it seems, sorrows not of the lighter and more transient sort, which give the mind but feeble touches and short visits, and quickly go off again; but they are such as strike daggers into it; such as enter into the innermost parts and powers of it; and, in a word, pierce it through and through, and draw out the very life and spirit through the wound they make. These are the peculiar and extraordinary sorrows which go before, accompany, and follow riches; and there is no man, though in never so low a station, who sets his heart upon growing rich, but shall, in his proportion, be sure to have his share of them. But then, let us cast our eye upon the highest condition of wealth and abundance which this world affords; to wit, the royal estate of princes: yet neither can this be truly esteemed an estate of happiness and fruition; but as much advanced, above all other conditions, in care and anxiety, as it is in power and dignity. The greatest and the richest prince can have but the enjoyment of one man; but he sustains the united cares and concerns of as many millions as he commands. The troubles of the whole nation centre in the throne, and lodge themselves in the royal diadem. So that it may, in effect, be but too truly said of every prince, that he wears a crown of thorns together with his purple robe, (as the greatest of princes once did,) and that his throne is nothing else but the seat imperial of care. But,

2. The second evil which attends the possession of riches is an insatiable desire of getting more, [Eccles. v. 10](#). *He who loves money shall not be satisfied with it*, says Solomon. And I believe it would be no hard matter to assign more instances of such as riches have made covetous, than of such as covetousness has made rich. Upon which account, a man can never truly enjoy what he actually has, through the eager pursuit of what he has not; his heart is still running out; still upon the chace of a new game, and so never thinks of using what it has already acquired. And must it not now be one of the greatest miseries, for a man

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to have a perpetual hunger upon him, and to have his appetite grow fiercer and sharper amidst the very objects and opportunities of satisfaction? Yet so it is usually with men hugely rich. They have, and they covet; riches flow in upon them, and yet riches are the only things they are still looking after. Their desires are answered, and while they are answered they are enlarged; they grow wider and stronger, and bring such a dropsy upon the soul, that the more it takes in, the more it may: just like some drunkards, who even drink themselves athirst, and have no reason in the world for their drinking more, but their having drank too much already.

There cannot be a greater plague, than to be always baited with the importunities of a growing appetite. Beggars are troublesome, even in the streets, as we pass through them; but how much more, when a man shall carry a perpetually clamorous beggar in his own breast, which shall never leave off crying, Give, give, whether the man has any thing to give or no? Such an one, though never so rich, is like a man with a numerous charge of children, with a great many hungry mouths about him to be fed, and little or nothing to feed them with. For he creates to himself a kind of new nature, by bringing himself under the power of new necessities and desires. Whereas nature, considered in itself, and as true to its own rules, is contented with little, and reason and religion enables us to take up with less, and so adds to its strength, by contracting its appetites, and retrenching its occasions.

There is no condition so full and affluent, but content is and will be a necessary supplement to make a man happy in it; and to compose the mind in the want of something or other, which it would be otherwise hankering after. And if so, how wretched must that man needs be, who is perpetually impoverishing himself by new indigences founded upon new desires and imaginary emptiness, still disposing him to seek for new reliefs and accessions to that plenty, which is already become too big for consumption and the just measures of nature; which never finds any real pleasure, but in the satisfaction of some real want!

But as for the insatiable miser, whom we are now speaking of, what difference is there between such an one, and a man over head and ears in debt, and dogged by his creditors wheresoever he goes? For the miser is as much disquieted, dunned, and called upon by the eagerness of his own desires, as he whose door is haunted and rapped at every hour, by those who come crying after him for what he owes them; both are equally pulled and haled to do that which they are unable to do: for as the poor man cannot satisfy his creditors, so neither can the rich man satisfy his grasping, endless desires. And this is the direct and natural result of increasing wealth. Riches are still made the reason of riches; and men get only that they may lay up, and lay up only that they may keep. Upon which principle it is evident, that the covetous person is always thinking himself in want, and consequently as far from any true relish of happiness, as he must needs be, who apprehends himself under that condition, which of all things in the world he most abhors.

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3. The third evil which attends men in the possession of the abundance of this world is, that such a condition is the proper scene of temptation. It brings men, as the apostle tells us in the forecited [1 Tim. vi. 9](#), *into a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, and such as drown men in destruction and perdition*. So hard is it for the corruption of man's nature not to work, where it has such plenty of materials to work upon. For who so strongly tempted to pride, as he who has riches to bear it out? Who so prone to be luxurious, as he who has wealth to feed and maintain his luxury? Who so apt to be sot himself with idleness, as he who can command and have all things, and yet do nothing? It is a miracle almost for a rich man not to be overrun with vice, having both such strong inclinations to it from within, and such inducements and opportunities to it from without. To be rich in money and rich in good works too, rarely concur. All opportunity and power to gratify a man's vicious humour is a shrewd temptation to him actually to do so. Where riches are at hand, all impediments and obstructions vanish. For what is it which gold will not command? What sin so costly which the rich man may not venture upon, if he can but stretch his conscience to the measures of his purse? Such an one's condition places him in the very high way to damnation; while it surrounds and besets him with all those allurements which are apt to beguile and ruin souls. And a man must have a rare mastery of himself, and control of his affections, to be able to look a pleasing vice in the face, and to despise it, when the affluence of his fortune shall give him his free choice of all those pleasures which his nature so mightily importunes him to. But it is scarce an age that can give us an instance of such an impregnable and resolved abstemiousness under such circumstances; men are generally treacherous and false to themselves and their greatest concerns; wretchedly weak and pliant to their innate viciousness, when it is once called forth and inflamed by the provocations it receives from the wealth and plenty they wallow in.

Whence it is, that many hopeful young men debauch and drown themselves in sensuality, and come at length to lose both their souls and their wits too; and that only because it was their lot to be born to great estates, and thereby to have money enough to keep pace with their lewd desires, and to answer them with full and constant supplies; while others, in the mean time, whose nature and temper was perhaps not at all better than their own, have took to the ways of industry and virtue, and so made themselves both useful in their lives, and happy after their death, only through the mercy of Providence stinting their worldly fortunes, and thereby cutting off those incentives of lust and instruments of sin, which have inveigled and abused others, and brought them headlong to destruction. Certain it is, that a rich man must use greater caution to keep himself clear from sin, and add greater strength and force to his resolutions to make himself virtuous, than men in other circumstances need to do: for he has greater temptations to break through than they have; and consequently cannot make good his ground at the same rate of vigilance and activity, which persons less assaulted may: which being his case, it is hard to conceive what happiness there can be in that condition,

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which renders virtue, a thing in itself so difficult, infinitely more difficult; which turns the strait gate into a needle's eye, and makes hell itself, which is so broad already, ten times broader than it was before.

4. The fourth evil attending men in the possession of this earthly abundance is, the malice and envy of the world round about them. The bounties of Providence are generally looked upon with an evil eye by such as are not the objects of them themselves. And some have no other fault so much as objected against them, to provoke the invectives and satires of foul mouths, but only that they thrive in the world, that they have fair estates, and so need not herd themselves with the rabble, nor lick the spittle of great ones, nor own any other dependences, but upon God in the first place, and upon themselves in the next. So long as malice and envy lodge in the breasts of mankind, it is impossible for a man in a wealthy, flourishing condition not to feel the stroke of men's tongues, and of their hands too, if occasion serves. The fuller the branches are, the more shall the tree be flung at. What impeached Naboth of treason and blasphemy, but his spacious vineyard, too convenient for his potent neighbour, to let the owner enjoy it long? What made the king of Babylon invade Judea, but the royal stores and treasures displayed and boasted of by Hezekiah before the Chaldean ambassadors, to the supplanting of his crown, and the miserable captivity of his posterity? In Sylla's bloody proscription, matters came to that pass in Rome, that if a man had but a fair garden, a rich jewel, or but a ring of value, it was enough to get his name posted up in the cut-throat roll, and to cost him his life, for having any thing worth the taking from him. Seldom do armies invade poor day-labouring countries; they are not the thin weather-beaten cottages, but the opulent trading cities, which invite the plunderer; and war goes on but heavily, where there is no prospect of spoil to enliven it. So that, whether we look upon societies or single persons, still we shall find them both owing this to their great wealth, that it gives them the honour to be thought worth ruining, and a fit prey for those who shall think they deserve that wealth better than themselves; as, they may be sure, enough will.

And thus much for the second general argument, proving, that true happiness consists not in any earthly abundance, taken from the consideration of those evils, which, for the most part, if not always, attend and go along with it. But,

The third general argument for the proof of the same, shall be taken from the utter inability of the greatest earthly riches to remove those things which chiefly render men miserable. And this will appear to us, if we reflect,

1. Upon what affects the mind. And,
2. Upon what affects the body. And here,

1. First for that which affects a man's spiritual part, his mind. Suppose that to be grieved, and labouring under the most pressing and unsupportable of all griefs, trouble of conscience; and what can riches, power, or honour contribute to its removal? Can they pluck out any of those poisoned arrows, which the apprehension of God's wrath fastens in the soul? Can

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they heal the wounds and assuage the anguish of a conscience groaning and even gasping under the terrors of the Almighty? Nay, let the grief arise but from a temporal cause, as suppose the death and loss of a dear friend, the diminution of a man's honour, or the like, and what miserable comforters, in any of these cases, are the heaviest bags and the fullest coffers? The pleasure arising from all other temporal enjoyments cannot equal the smart which the mind endures from the loss of any one of them. For what pleasure did David find in his crown and sceptre, and all his royal greatness, when his dear (though sottishly beloved) Absalom was torn from him? What enjoyment had Haman in all his court-preferments, his grandeur, and interest in his royal master's affection, when Mordecai, his most maligned enemy, refused to cringe to him in the gate? Why, just none at all, if we may take his word for it, who should know his own mind best. For, in [Esther v. 11, 12](#), when he had reckoned up all his wealth, glory, and greatness, together with his numerous offspring, designed, as he thought, to inherit all of it, he adds in the [13th verse](#), (and a remarkable passage it is,) *Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.* The pride of his swelling heart, and the envy of his malicious eye, racked and tormented him more than all that the splendour and magnificence of the Persian court (the greatest then in the world) could delight or gratify him with. And now, what poor contributors must these earthly enjoyments needs be to a man's real happiness, when an hundred pleasures shall not be able to counterbalance one sorrow? But that one cross accident shall sour the whole mass of a man's comforts: and the mind shall as really droop, languish, and pine away, while a man is surrounded with vast treasures, rich attendance, and a plentiful table, as if he had neither where to lay his head, nor wherewithal to fill his mouth. For all the delight he does or can reap from his other comforts, serves only to quicken and increase the sense of that calamity which has actually took possession of him. But, in the

Second place, let us consider the miseries which affect the body; and we shall find, that the greatest pleasure, arising from any degree of wealth or plenty whatsoever, is so far from reaching the soul, that it scarce pierces the skin. What would a man give to purchase a release, nay, but a small respite from the extreme pains of the gout or stone? And yet, if he could fee his physician with both the Indies, neither art nor money can redeem, or but relieve him from his misery. No man feels the pangs and tortures of his present distemper (be it what it will) at all the less for his being rich. His riches indeed may have occasioned, but they cannot allay them. No man's fever burns the gentler for his drinking his juleps in a golden cup. Nor could Alexander himself, at the price of all his conquests, antidote or recall the poisonous draught, when it had once got into his veins. When God shall think fit to cast a man upon his bed of pain or sickness, let him summon about him his thousands and his ten thousands, his lands and his rich manors, and see whether he can bribe, or buy off, or so much as compound with his distemper but for one night's rest. No; the sick bed is so like

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the grave, which it leads to, that it uses rich and poor, prince and peasant all alike. Pain has no respect of persons, but strikes all with an equal and an impartial stroke.

We know how God reproved the foolish world ling, (as our Saviour tells us,) in [Luke xii. 20](#), *Thou fool*, says he, *this night shall thy soul be required of thee; and then whose shall all those things be which thou hast hoarded up?* But we may bring the sentence here pronounced much lower, and yet render it dreadful enough, even within the compass of this life, and say, *Thou fool, this night, this day shall thy health and strength be taken from thee;* and then what pleasure, what enjoyment will all thy possessions afford thee? God may smite thee with some lingering, dispiriting disease, which shall crack the strength of thy sinews, and suck the marrow out of thy bones; and then, what pleasure can it be to wrap thy living skeleton in purple, and rot alive in cloth of gold? when thy clothes shall serve only to upbraid the uselessness of thy limbs, and thy rich fare stand before thee only to reproach and tantalize the weakness of thy stomach; while thy consumption is every day dressing thee up for the worms? All which, I think, is a sufficient demonstration, that plenty and enjoyment are not the same thing. They are the inward strength and sufficiency of a man's faculties, which must render him a subject capable of tasting or enjoying the good things which Providence bestows upon him. But as it is God only who creates, so it is he alone who must support and preserve these; and when he withdraws his hand, and lets nature sink into its original weakness and insufficiency, all a man's delights fail him, all his enjoyments vanish. For no man (to be sure) can enjoy himself any longer than he can be said to be himself.

But now, if riches are thus wholly unable of themselves to effect any thing towards a man's relief under a corporal malady, how can they, as such, deserve the name of felicity? For what are they good for? What can they do for him? The man is sick, and his disease torments, and death threatens him; and can they either remove the one, or keep off the other? Nothing less. But it will be answered perhaps, that when a man is well and healthy, they may serve him for many conveniences of life. They may do so, I confess; but then this also is as true, that he who is healthy and well, may enjoy all the necessary satisfactions which his nature calls for, though he has no other riches in the world but those poor incomes which he daily earns with the labour of his hands or the working of his brain. So that the sum and result of all their efficacy towards a man's happiness amounts but to this; that riches may indeed minister something to the making of that person happy, who is in such a condition of health and strength as may enable him, if he pleases, to make himself happy without them. For a bare competence, and that a very slender one too, will answer all the needs of nature; and where a competence is sufficient, an abundance, I am sure, can not be necessary. And this introduces the

Fourth and last argument, to prove, that man's happiness consists not in any earthly abundance, taken from this consideration; that the greatest happiness which this life is capable of, may be, and actually has been enjoyed without this abundance; and consequently

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cannot depend upon it. Now that undoubtedly is the chief happiness of life, for the attainment of which all other things are designed but as the means and subservient instruments. And what else can this be, but the content, quiet, and inward satisfaction of a man's mind? For why, or for what other imaginable reason, are riches, power, and honour so much valued by men, but because they promise themselves that content and satisfaction of mind from them, which, they fully believe, cannot otherwise be had? This, no doubt, is the inward reasoning of men's minds in the present case. But the experience of thousands (against which all arguments signify nothing) irrefragably evinces the contrary. For was there not a sort of men, whom we read of in the former ages of the world, called the ancient philosophers, who, even while they lived in the world, lived above it, and in a manner without it; and yet all the while accounted themselves the happiest men in it? And from these, if we pass to the professors and practisers of an higher philosophy, the apostles and primitive Christians, who ever so overflowed with spiritual joy as they did? *a joy unspeakable and full of glory*, as St. Peter terms it; a joy not to be forced or ravished from the heart once possessed of it, as our Saviour himself, the great giver of it, has assured us. Hear St. Paul and Silas singing out this joy aloud in the dismal prison, where they sat expecting death every moment. And from hence to proceed to the next ages of the church: who could be fuller of and more transported with a joyous sense of their condition, than the martyrs of those primitive times, who were so far from any of the accommodations of this world, that their only portion in it was to live in hunger, nakedness, and want, and stripped of every thing but the bodies, in and through which they suffered all these afflictions? And as this internal, spiritual comfort is doubtless the highest that human nature is capable of, and may serve instead of all others, so it descends even to those of the lowest condition. And the poor labouring peasant, with his coarse fare, and a good conscience to season and make a feast of it, feeds as cheerfully, and with as much inward satisfaction, as his great landlord or flourishing neighbour can; there being, for the most part, as much of real enjoyment under the meanest cottage, as within the walls of the stateliest and most magnificent palaces. For does not the honest ploughman, whose strength is his whole estate, and his day's work his revenue, carry about him as light an heart and as clear a breast, as he who commands armies, or can call thirty-five millions his own? No doubt he does; and his experience (an evidence too great to be borne down) will vouch the same. Accordingly, let any one shew me that enjoyment or pleasure which men seek for from a vast estate in land or monies; and I will shew the same, or some thing equal to it, full as high and satisfactory, in that man, who cannot call one foot of land in the whole world his own, and whose purse never reached beyond the present, nor knew what it was to lay up for the morrow. Many, doubtless very many such there are, who eat their bread with as much relish, sleep as soundly, think as cheerfully, and rejoice as much in their homely dame and ragged children, together with their high-shoed companions, as

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those who can command sea and land to their tables, domineer over kingdoms, and set their foot upon the necks of conquered nations.

Content is the gift of Heaven, and not the certain effect of any thing upon earth; and it is as easy for Providence to convey it without wealth as with it; it being the undeniable prerogative of the first cause, that whatsoever it does by the mediation of second causes, it can do immediately by itself without them. The heavens can and do every day derive water and refreshment upon the earth without either pipes or conduits, though the weakness of human industry is forced to fly to these little assistances to compass the same effects. Happiness and comfort stream immediately from God himself, as light issues from the sun, and sometimes looks and darts itself into the meanest corners, while it forbears to visit the largest and the noblest rooms. Every man is happy or miserable, as the temper of his mind places him, either directly under, or beside the influences of the divine nature; which enlighten and enliven the disposed mind with secret, ineffable joys, and such as the vicious or unprepared mind is wholly unacquainted with. *We have nothing, and yet we possess all things*, says the apostle, in [2 Cor. vi. 10](#). And can a greater happiness be imagined, than that which gives a man here all things in possession, together with a glorious eternity in reversion? In a word, it is not what a man has, but what he is, which must make him happy: and thus, as I have demonstrated the utter insufficiency of riches to make men happy, so to confirm the high reason of our Saviour's dissuasive from covetousness, against all objections, or so much as pretences to the contrary; we shall further observe, that covetousness is by no means a certain way to procure riches; and if neither riches can make a man happy, nor covetousness make him rich, all pleas for it must needs be torn up by the very roots. And for this we need not assign any other ground or cause of the strange and frequent disappointments which covetousness meets with in the ends it drives at, if we consider the nature of the means and instruments which it makes use of for the bringing of these ends about. Such as are fraud and force, schism and sedition, sacrilege and rebellion, all of them practices carrying the curse of God inseparably cleaving to them and inherent in them. And to shew this in the principal of them, the violation of things sacred, who ever knew any family made rich by sacrilege? or any robber of the altar, but sooner or later he fell a just sacrifice to the shrine he robbed? Covetousness may possibly sometimes procure such an one a broad estate for the present, but a long one never. Wealth may brave and flourish it for a while in the front and forepart of his life, but poverty generally brings up the rear. For the justice of God is never in jest, nor does it work by halves in such cases; but whether by a speedy or lingering execution, by striking or eating through the cursed thing, it will be sure to make good its blow at last. A notable instance of which, we have in the faction which carried all before it in the grand rebellion of forty-one. Men were then factious and rapacious, because they were first covetous; and none more so, than a pack of incendiaries, who had usurped the name of ministers of the gospel. For these were the men, who with such rage and vehemence

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preached down episcopacy and the established government of the church, in hopes to have had a great part, at least, of the revenues of it bestowed upon them for their pains. But, alas, poor tools! they understood not the work they were employed in; for the lay-grandeens, their masters, (who had more wit with their godliness,) meant no such thing: no, the hunters never intended that the hounds should eat the hare; but though their throats, their noise, and their fangs were made use of to run it down, and catch it, yet, being once caught, they quickly found that it was to be meat only for their masters; and that, whatsoever became of the constitution of the church, effectual care was taken that the lands of it should go another way. And in good earnest it would fare but very ill with mankind, if all that the mouth gapes for, the hand should be able to grasp. But, thanks be to God, innumerable are the ways which Providence has, (some of them visible, and some secret and in visible, but all of them certain,) by which it crosses and confounds the greedy wretch even in his most refined contrivances and arts of getting; and there by gives the world a convincing proof, one would think, (if experience could convince men,) that it is God, and God alone, who (as Moses said to the Israelites) *must teach men to get wealth*, as well as enable them to enjoy it. And consequently, that for a man to be covetous and poor too, a miser and yet a beggar, is no such paradox, as to imply either an inconsistency in the thing itself, or a contradiction in the terms.

And now, in the last place, having finished the subject before us, in the several particulars proposed to be discoursed of by us; let us sum up, and recapitulate all in a few words, viz. that since it is natural for men to design to make their lives as happy as they can; and since they promise themselves this happiness from riches, and thereupon use covetousness as the surest means to attain these riches; and yet, upon all the foregoing accounts, it is manifest, that neither can covetousness certainly procure riches, nor riches certainly procure a man this happiness; it must follow, by an unavoidable inference, that covetousness must needs be in the same degree irrational, in which riches are to this great end ineffectual; and consequently, that there is as little reason for avarice, as there is religion in it. And therefore that the covetous person (whatsoever he may seem, either in his own or the world's opinion, is in truth neither rich, reasonable, nor religious; but chargeable with all that folly, and liable to all that misery, which is justly the shame and portion of those, who, according to those other excellent words of our Saviour, in the [21st verse of this chapter](#), *lay up treasure for themselves, and are not rich towards God*.

*To whom (as the sole giver of all happiness, whether with or without riches) be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever more. Amen.*

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**A DISCOURSE**  
**PREACHED AT CHRIST CHURCH, OXON,**  
**BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,**  
**OCTOBER 15, 1699.**

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**MATTH. vi. 21.**

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

**A**S man is naturally a creature of great want and weakness, so he does as naturally carry a most intimate and inseparable sense of that want and weakness about him: and because a state of want must needs be also a state of uneasiness, there is nothing which nature puts a man with so much force and earnestness upon, as to attempt a supply and relief of the wants which he is so sensible of, and so incommoded by. Insomuch that the whole course of his actings, from first to last, proceeds in this method. First, that every action which a man does, is in order to his compassing or obtaining to himself some good thereby. And secondly, that he endeavours to compass or obtain this good, because he desires it. And thirdly and lastly, that he desires it, because he wants it; or at least thinks that he does so. So that the first spring, which sets all the wheels and faculties of the soul agoing, is a man's apprehension of. some good wanting to complete the happiness of his condition.

But as every good is not in the same degree contributive to this happiness, so neither is it in the same degree desirable: and therefore, since want, as we have noted, is still the measure, as well as ground of desire, that which answers all the wants, and fills all the vacuities of a rational nature, must needs be the full and ultimate object of its desires. And this was called by the philosophers, man's *summum bonum*; and here, by our Saviour, man's *treasure*; both expressions importing a good, so comprehensively great, and equal to all the appetites of nature, that the presence and possession of this alone renders a man happy, and the want or absence of it miserable. Upon which account, though it be impossible that this prime or chief good should admit of any plurality, so as to be really more than one, yet in regard men take it in by their apprehensions, which are so exceedingly subject to error and deception, even in their highest concerns, and since error is various, and indeed infinite; hence it is, that this treasure, or *summum bonum*, falls under a very great multiplicity; this man proposing to himself one thing, and that man another, and a third some thing else for his chief good; and that, from which alone he expects all that happiness and satisfaction, which the condition of his nature renders him either capable or desirous of.

Now the words of the text may be considered two ways.

I. As they are an entire proposition in themselves. And,

II. As they are an argument relating to and enforcing of a foregoing precept, in the [19th and 20th verses](#): and accordingly, in the prosecution of them, we shall take in both considerations.

And first, if we take them, as they are an entire proposition in themselves, so they offer us these two things.

1. Something supposed, which is, that every man has something or other which he accounts his treasure, or chief good. And,

2. Something expressly declared, namely, that whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, or chief good, upon that he places his heart, his whole desires and affections. And,

1. For the thing supposed or implied in the words; to wit, that every man has something or other which he accounts his treasure, or chief good. The truth and certainty of which proposition will appear founded upon these two things.

1. The activity of man's mind. And,

2. The method of his acting. And,

1. For the first of these. The mind of man is of that spirituous, stirring nature, that it is perpetually at work. Something it is still in pursuit of, either by contemplation or desire: the foundation of which latter, I shew, was want; and consequently, as man will be always wanting something or other, so he will be always sending forth his desires to hunt after, and bring that thing in, which he wants: which is so true, that some men having compassed the greatest and noblest objects of their desires, (so that desire could no longer ascend, as being already at the top,) they have betook themselves to inferior and ignoble exercises; so that amongst the Roman emperors, (then lords of a great part of the world,) we find Nero at his harp, Domitian killing flies, and Commodus playing the fencer; and all this only to busy themselves some way or other; nothing being so grievous and tedious to human nature as perfect idleness.

But now, there is not any thing (though never so mean and trivial) which a man does, but he antecedently designs himself some satisfaction by the doing of it; so that he advances to every action as to a degree of happiness, as to something which, according to its measure and proportion, will gratify or please him, and without which he would be in that degree uneasy and troublesome to himself. The spirit of a man, like a flame, being of such an operative, and withal of such a catching quality, that it is still closing in with some desirable, suitable good, as the food that nourishes, and the subject that supports it; so impossible is it, that desire should wholly lie still. For though the soul had actually all that it could enjoy, yet then desire would run out into the future, and from the present fruition project the continuance and preservation of its beloved object. In short, what blood is to the body, that desire is to the soul; and as the blood will circulate while the body lives, so desire will act and range about while the soul subsists; and no thing but the annihilation of one can supersede or stop the motion of the other.





And the truth is, this innate restlessness of desire implanted in the soul of man, is the great engine by which God would draw it to himself: and if men would be so far true to themselves, and to the most ruling principles of their nature, as to keep desire still upon the advance, till it fixed upon something which would absolutely and fully satisfy it, it were impossible but that, in the issue, it should terminate in God. But that which makes this great principle so ineffective of any true happiness to man is, that he does not carry it constantly and directly forward, but often suffers it to recur, or turn aside to former false satisfactions; first tasting an object, and then, upon trial, leaving it for its emptiness; and yet afterwards returning to it again, from a vain hope to speed better than he had done before. So that by this means there is a continual restless circulation from one empty thing to another. The soul, in this case, being just like a sick man, still altering his postures in order to his ease; though, when he has tried all, he finds no more ease in one than in another; a certain demonstration, that the soul itself, in the present state of nature, is in a most deplorably sick and disordered condition. But,

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Secondly, the second argument to prove, that every man has something or other which he accounts his treasure, his peculiar, or chief good, shall be taken from the method of his actings, which still proceeds by a direction of means to one great and last end. For as an infinite progress is exploded in all matters of ratiocination, as absurd and impossible, so it is equally absurd in matters of practice; it being not more necessary to assign and fix some first principle of discourse, than to state some last end of acting: all a man's practicks hanging loose and uncertain, unless they are governed and knit together by the prospect of some certain end.

Now it is the same thing which sustains these several denominations of *last end*, *chief good*, or *treasure*; all and every one of them signifying neither more nor less than the grand and ultimate term, to which a rational agent directs all his actions and desires: every man naturally and necessarily intending some one principal thing; to the acquiring of which, all that he does, thinks, or desires, is subservient, and in which, as in a kind of centre, all his actions meet and unite.

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For though a man has not continually and actually the prospect of that end in every one of his actions, yet he has it habitually and virtually; forasmuch as, being once designed by him, all his actions tend to and promote the compassing of it: as it is not necessary that a traveller should have his journey's end in his thoughts every step that he takes; but it is enough that he first designs it, and in the strength of that design is by every step carried nearer and nearer to it: every man has some prime, paramount object, which employs his head, and fills his heart, rules his thoughts, and, as it were, lies in his bosom; and is to him above and instead of all other enjoyments whatsoever. And thus much for the thing supposed or implied in the words, namely, that every man has some peculiarly valued thing, which he accounts his treasure, or chief good. But,

2. The other thing to be considered by us is that which is expressly declared in the text, namely, that whatsoever a man places his treasure or his chief good in, upon that he places his heart also. Where, according to the language of scripture, the word *heart* compendiously denotes to us all the powers and faculties of man's soul, together with their respective motions and operations. And since the word *treasure* is a metaphorical term for a man's prime or chief good, we are to take an account how a man prosecutes this good, from the analogy of those actions which he exerts with reference to a treasure; and which, I conceive, may be reduced to these four. As,

1. A restless and laborious endeavour to acquire and possess himself of it. There is no man, who heartily and in good earnest desires to be rich, or great, or learned, who can be idle. For desire is the spring of diligence, and the heart infallibly sets both head and hands, and every thing else on work. Great desire is like a great fire, and all difficulties before it are like stubble; it will certainly make its way through them, and devour them. From whence it is, that it generally proves so dangerous, and too often fatal, to stand between a man (especially if in place and power) and that which he most desires; and many innocent and brave persons have to their cost found it so. For dangers and death itself shall be nothing; conscience and religion nothing; nay, the very hopes of heaven and the fears of hell shall be accounted as nothing, when a furious, headstrong desire shall resolve to break through them all; and, like Hannibal in his march, cut through rocks and mountains, till it either finds or makes a way to its beloved object. What made Jacob think those seven years of hard service for Rachel but a few days, as it is said in [Gen. xxix. 20](#), but the extraordinary and invincible love which he bore to her? And what makes the trader into foreign countries defy the winds and the seas, and hazard the safety which he actually has and loves, but the wealth which he loves more? All the stupendous instances of courage, patience, industry, and the like, which have so swelled the volumes of history, and amused the world, have been but the effects of great and victorious desire; they are all of them but the instruments of love, to compass the things which men have first set their hearts upon: so that when courage takes the field for battle, we may be sure that it is desire which leads it on; filling the mind with glorious ideas of the prize it contends for. All the noble violences done to nature have been resolvable into this cause; nay, the very restraints of appetite have been but the effects of an appetite more controlling and predominant.

What is it that a man more naturally affects than society and converse? (it being a kind of multiplication of himself into every person of the company he converses with.) And what, by consequence, can be more uneasy to this ζῶον πολιτικόν, this sociable creature, than the dry, pensive retirements of solitude? Nevertheless, when a nobler thing shall have seized his imagination, and his desires have took a flight above the first inclinations of his nature, by inspiring him with the diviner love of knowledge, or being serviceable to his country; why then, he can with delight retreat into his cell, dwell with himself, and converse with his



own thoughts, and, in those higher speculations, forget all his merry-meetings and companions; nay, and his very food and rest, and live not only above the pleasures, but almost above the wants of nature too. In [Prov. xviii. 1](#), Solomon tells us, that, *through desire, a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom*. So that it is this mighty thing, desire, which makes a man break off, and sequester himself from all those jollities, those airy, empty diversions, which use to court and win the appetites of vulgar souls. Thus nature, we see, is forced to bend to art; art is the daughter and issue of necessity; and the standard and measure of this necessity is desire; desire, which nothing almost can withstand or set bounds to; which makes paths over the seas; turns the night into day; and, in a word, charges through hunger and poverty, and all those hardships which human nature is so apt to shrink under; but it will, at length, arrive at the satisfaction which it is in pursuit of.

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What high and vast achievements does the apostle, in the [11th of the Hebrews](#), ascribe to faith! As the *subduing of kingdoms, stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, out of weakness making men strong*, and that to such a degree, as to endure tortures, *cruel mockings, scourgings, bonds and imprisonments; nay, and to be stoned, sawn asunder, and slain with the sword*. But how did faith do all this? Why, in the strength of love; faith being properly the eye of the soul, to spy out and represent to it those excellent, amiable things, the love and desire of which should be hotter than fire and stronger than death; bearing a man through and above all the terrors of both, for the obtaining of so transcendent a good. In short, faith shews the soul its treasure; which being once seen by it, naturally inflames the affections; and they as naturally engage all the faculties and powers of soul and body, in a restless, indefatigable endeavour after it. And thus, in all those heroic instances of passive fortitude, faith wrought by love, and therefore it wrought wonders.

2. Whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, that he places his whole delight in; it entertains his eye, refreshes his fancy, feeds his thoughts, and, next to his conscience, affords him a continual feast. It fills and answers all his capacities of pleasure; and to please, we know, is much more than barely to support. It is the utmost limit of enjoyment; the most refined part of living; and, in a word, the last and highest thing which nature looks for. It quenches a man's thirst, not only as water, which just keeps nature alive, but as wine, which both sustains and gratifies it too; and adds a pleasure, as well as serves a necessity.

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Nothing has so strong and fast an hold upon the nature and mind of man, as that which delights it: for whatsoever a man delights to do, by his good will he would be always doing: delight being that which perpetuates the union between the will and the object, and brings them together, by the surest, the most voluntary and constant returns. And from hence, by the way, we may affirm it as a certain, unfailing truth, that no man ever was or can be considerable in any art or profession whatsoever, which he does not take a particular delight in; for that otherwise he will never heartily and assiduously apply himself to it; nor is it morally possible that he should.

Men indeed, in the course of this world, are brought to do many things, mere necessity enforcing them, and the want and weakness of their condition creating that necessity. But still, in all such cases, the man goes one way, and his desires another; for he acts but as a slave under the eye of a severe master; the dread of some greater suffering making him submit to the disciplines of a less. But unshackle his nature, and turn his desires loose, and then you shall see what he will choose in order to his pleasure, and the free unrestrained enjoyment of himself. An epicure may be brought to confine himself to his chamber, and take physic, (as none generally need it more;) but will he look upon the potion with the same eye with which he uses to see the wine sparkle in the glass? or rejoice in the company of his physician as much as in that of his boon companions? No, the actions of pleasure carry quite differing signs and marks upon them from such as are forced; marks, above all the arts of dissimulation or the powers of compulsion. For so far as any thing pleases the heart, it commands it; and the command is absolute, and the obedience cheerful.

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3. Whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, from that he derives the last support of his mind in all his troubles. Let an ambitious man lose his friends, his health, or his estate; yet, if the darling of his thoughts, his honour and his fame, continue entire, his spirit will still bear up. And let a voluptuous man be stripped of his credit and good name, his pleasures and sensuality, in the midst of all his disgrace, shall relieve him. And lastly, to name no more, let a covetous miser have both pleasure and honour taken from him, yet so long as his bags are full, and the golden heaps glisten in his eyes, his heart will be at ease, and other losses shall affect him little; they may possibly raze the surface, but they descend not into the vitals of his comforts.

The reason of all which is, because an ambitious person values honour, a voluptuous man pleasure, and a covetous wretch wealth, above any other enjoyment in the world; all other things being but tasteless and insipid to them, in comparison of that one which is the sole minion of their fancy, and the idol of their affections. And accordingly it would be found but a vain and fruitless attempt, to go about to move the heart of any of these persons, but by touching upon the proper string that ties and holds it; so that the way to humble and bring down an ambitious, aspiring man, is to disparage him, to expose and shew his blind-side, (which such kind of persons never fail to have;) and the most effectual course to make a covetous man miserable, in the right sense, is to impoverish him: and when such a change of condition once passes upon such persons, they become like men without either life or spirit, the most pitiful, forlorn, abject creatures under heaven, and full of that complaint of Micah, in [Judges xviii. 24](#), *Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* For whatsoever a man accounts his chief good, so as to suffer it to engross and take up all his desires, that he makes his god, that he deifies and adores, whether he knows so much or no. For certain it is, that if he would lay out himself never so much in the acts of religion, he could do no more even to God himself than love him, trust in him, and rely upon him, and, in a word,

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give him his heart; nor indeed does God require any more; for it is a man's all. Take the heart, and you have the man by consequence. Govern the spring, and you command the motion. The whole man (as I may so express it) is but the appendix of his own heart.

4thly and lastly, Whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, for the preservation of that he will part with all other things, if he cannot enjoy that and them together. See a merchant in a storm at sea, and what he values most he will be sure to throw overboard last; every man, when he is exposed to any great and imminent danger, marshals his enjoyments just as Jacob did his family, when he was to meet his brother Esau, whom he was in such fear of, [Gen. xxxiii. 2](#); the handmaids and their children he put foremost; Leah and her children next; but Rachel and her children the hinder most of all. The reason of which was, because he had set his heart most upon her, and therefore would have her furthest from the danger, if it might be escaped, and last in the suffering, if it proved unavoidable. A father will be rather stripped of his estate, than bereaved of his children; and if he cannot keep them all, he will (though with the loss of the rest) redeem the son of his affections.

It is possible indeed, that a man himself may not always perfectly know what he loves most, till some notable trial comes, which shall separate between him and what he has, and call for all his enjoyments one after another; and then presently his eyes shall be opened, and he shall plainly find, that the garment which sits nearest to him, shall by his good-will be last torn from him. Bring a man under persecution, and that shall tell him, whether the peace of his conscience, or the security of his fortune, be the thing which he prefers and values most. That shall tell him, whether he had rather be plundered or perjured; and whether the guilt of rebellion and sacrilege does not strike a greater horror into him, than all the miseries of an ejection or sequestration. But if, at the critical time of trial, such an one shall surrender up his conscience, that he may continue warm in his house and his estate, let him no longer doubt what it is that is his treasure, and what lies deepest in his heart. For it is that which he can most hardly be without. But his conscience, it seems, he can easily shake hands with; and therefore, wheresoever he may place his religion, it is certain that he places his happiness somewhere else.

*Skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life*, (commonly speaking;) but let a man love any thing better than his life, and life itself shall be given for it. And the world has seen the experiment; for some have loved their country better than their lives, and accordingly have died for it: and some their parents, some their honour, to that degree, as to sacrifice their dearest blood for the preservation of one, and vindication of the other. But still, this is the sure, infallible test of love, that the measure of its strength is to be taken by the fastness of its hold. Benjamin was apparently dearest to his father, because he was still kept with him, while the rest of his brethren were sent from him. He was to him as the *apple of his eye*; and therefore no wonder if he could not endure to have him out of it.

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And thus I have done with the first consideration of the words; namely, as they are an entire proposition in themselves. I come now to the

Second; to wit, as they are an argument relating to, and enforcing of the foregoing precept in [the 19th and 20th verses](#), *Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust do corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* The force of which argument is founded upon this clear and convincing ratiocination; to wit, that it is infinitely foolish, and below a rational creature, to place his heart upon that, which is by no means worth the placing of his heart upon; and therefore, since it is undeniably evident, that a man will place his heart upon that which he makes his treasure, it follows, that he cannot without extreme folly make any thing his treasure, which can neither be secured from rapine nor preserved from corruption; as it is certain that nothing in this world can.

This, I say, is the sum and force of our Saviour's argument: in pursuit of which, we are to observe, that there are two things which offer themselves to mankind, as rivals for their affections; to wit, God and the world; the things of this present life and of the future. And the whole strength of our Saviour's discourse bears upon this supposition, that it is impossible for a man to fix his heart upon both. No man can make religion his business, and the world too: no man can have two chief goods. It is indeed more impossible than to serve two masters; forasmuch as the heart is more laid out upon what a man loves, than upon what he serves. Besides that the soul is but of a stinted operation; and cannot exert its full force and vigour upon two diverse, and much less contrary objects. For that one of them will be perpetually counterworking the other; and so far as the soul inclines to one, it must in proportion leave, and go off from the other; so that an equal adhesion to them both implies in it a perfect contradiction. For why else should the word of truth so positively tell us, *that if we love the world, the love of the Father is not, cannot be in us? 1 John ii. 15.* Men, I know, think to join both, but it is because they understand neither. For a man must first have two hearts, and two souls, and two selves, before he can give an heart to God and an heart to the world too. And therefore Christ does not state this matter upon a bare priority of acquisition, as if he had bid men *first lay up treasures for themselves in heaven*, and after that allowed them, with the same earnestness, to provide themselves *treasures here on earth* likewise, (and so by that means successively grasp the full happiness of both worlds:) for he knew that the very nature of the thing itself made this impracticable, and not to be effected; forasmuch as the acquisition of either world would certainly engage and take up the whole man, and consequently leave no thing of him to be employed about acquiring the other.

Whereupon Abraham speaking to the rich man in the gospel, who had flourished in his *purple and fine linen, and fared deliciously every day*, tells him, *that he, in his lifetime, had received his good things.* His they are called emphatically, his by peculiar choice. They

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were the things he chiefly valued and pitched upon, as the most likely to make him happy; and consequently, having actually enjoyed them, and thereby compassed the utmost of his desires, his happiness was at an end: he had his option; and there was no further provision for him in the other world: nor indeed was it possible that he should find any, where he had laid up none. Those words of our Saviour being most assuredly true, whether applied to men's endeavours after the things of this life, or of another; *that verily they have their reward*. That is to say, the result and issue of their labours will still be suitable to the end which governed and directed them. For where men sow, there they must expect to reap; it being infinitely absurd to bury their seed in the earth, and to expect a crop in heaven. And accordingly, in the [11th of the Hebrews](#), we find, that at the same time the saints of old (there spoken of) declared themselves expectants of a land of promise hereafter, they also declared themselves strangers and pilgrims here. And therefore, let not men mock and deceive themselves, by thinking to compass heaven with one hand, and earth with the other; and so to reign as princes in both. For the wisdom of God has decreed it otherwise; and judged one world enough for one man, though it gives him his choice of two.

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It being clear therefore, that a man cannot set his heart both upon God and the world too, as his treasure, or chief good; let us, in the next place, see which of these two bids highest for this great prize, the heart of man. And since there are but these two, there cannot be a more expedite way to evince that it belongs to God, than by proving the absurdity of placing it upon the world. And that will appear upon a double account.

1. If we consider the world in comparison with the heart or mind of man. And,
2. If we consider it absolutely in itself. And,

1. If we consider it in comparison with the heart of man, we shall find that the heart has a superlative worth and excellency above any thing in this world besides; and therefore ought by no means to be bestowed or laid out upon things so vastly inferior to itself. For it is that noble part of man which God has drawn and imprinted a lively portraiture of his own divine nature upon; that part which he has designed for his own peculiar use. For God made the heart for no other purpose but that he might dwell in it; giving us understandings able to pierce into and look through the fairest and most specious offers of this world, together with affections large enough to swallow and take down all that the whole creation can set before them, and yet remain hungry and unsatisfied still. And are such faculties as these, think we, fit to be entertained only with froth and wind, emptiness and delusion? And those things can be no more, which are always promising satisfaction, but never give it. For surely such low enjoyments as meat, drink, and clothes, are not sufficient to satisfy or make a man happy; and yet all the necessities of the natural life are fully answered by these; and whatsoever, upon that account, is desired more, is but the result of a false appetite, founded in no real want, but only in fancy and opinion. Nevertheless, there are, I confess, spiritual wants, which nothing can satisfy but what is supernatural.

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And therefore the great and good God, who gave us our very being, and so can need nothing that we either are or have, yet vouchsafes to solicit, and even court our affections; and sets no other price upon heaven, glory, and immortality, nay, and upon himself too, but our love; there being nothing truly great and glorious, which a creature is capable of enjoying, but God is ready to give it a man in exchange for his heart.

How high is reason, and how strong is love! and surely God never gave the soul two such wings, only that we might creep upon the ground, and place our heart and our foot upon the same level. Let the epicure therefore, or voluptuous man, from amongst all his pleasures, single out that one which he reckons the best, the fullest, and most refined of all the rest, and offer it to his reason and affections, and see whether it can so acquit itself to the searching impartial judgment of the one, and the unlimited appetite of the other, that, when he shall have took his utmost fill of it, and gone off from the enjoyment, he shall be able to say, Here have I found all the satisfaction that could be thought of, or imagined; or his affections be able to tell him, Here have we had all the sweetness that could be wished for or desired. But, on the contrary, do they not rather depart thirsty and melancholy, and abashed with the present sense of their disappointment, and still casting about for something or other, to piece up the flaws and defects of such broken fruitions? So vast a difference is there in these matters between surfeit and satisfaction.

The heart of man is intimately conscious to itself of its own worth and prerogative; and therefore is never put to search for any thing of enjoyment here below, but it does it with a secret regret and disdain, scorn and indignation; like a prince imprisoned, and forced to be ruled and fed by his own subjects: for so it is with that divine being, the soul, while depressed by the body to a condition so much below itself.

But God sent not man into the world with such mighty endowments, so much to enjoy it, as to have the honour of despising it; and, upon a full experience of its woful vanity, to find cause in all his thoughts and desires to return and fly back to his Maker; like the dove to the ark, when it could rest no where else. But,

2. We are to consider the world absolutely in itself; and so we shall find the most valued enjoyments of it embased by these two qualifications. 1. That they are perishing. And, 2. That they are out of our power. One of them expressed by *moths and rust corrupting them*, and the other by *thieves breaking through, and stealing them*. The first representing them as subject to decay from a principle within; the second, as liable to be forced from us by a violence from without; and so upon both accounts utterly unable to make men happy, and consequently unworthy to take possession of their hearts.

1. And first for the perishing state and quality of all these worldly enjoyments: a thing so evident, or rather obvious to common sense and experience, that no man in his right wits can really doubt of it, and yet so universally contradicted by men's practice, that scarce any man seems to believe it. No, though the Spirit of God in scripture is as full and home in the

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character it gives of these things, as experience itself can be; sometimes expressing them by fashions, which, we know, are always changing; and sometimes by shadows, which no man can take any hold of; and sometimes by dreams, which are all mockery and delusion: thus degrading the most admired grandeurs of the world from realities to bare appearances, and from appearances to mere nothings.

Nor do they fail only, and lose that little worth they have, but they do it also by the vilest and most contemptible things in nature; by rust and cankers, moths and vermin, things which grow out of the very subject they destroy, and so make the destruction of it inevitable. And how can any better be expected, when men will rather dig their treasure and comforts from beneath, than fetch them from above? For it is impossible for such *mortals to put on immortality*, or for things, in the very nature of them calculated but for a few days, to last for ever. All sublunary comforts imitate the changeableness, as well as feel the influence of the planet they are under. Time, like a river, carries them all away with a rapid course; they swim above the stream for a while, but are quickly swallowed up, and seen no more. The very monuments men raise to perpetuate their names, consume and moulder away themselves, and proclaim their own mortality, as well as testify that of others. In a word, all these earthly funds have deficiencies in them never to be made up.

But now, on the other side, the enjoyments above, and the treasures proposed to us by our Saviour, are indefectible in their nature, and endless in their duration. They are still full, fresh, and entire, like the stars and orbs above, which shine with the same undiminished lustre, and move with the same unwearied motion, with which they did from the first date of their creation. Nay, the joys of heaven will abide when these lights of heaven shall be put out; and when sun and moon, and nature itself shall be discharged their stations, and be employed by Providence no more, the righteous shall then appear in their full glory; and, being fixed in the divine presence, enjoy one perpetual and everlasting day; a day commensurate to the unlimited eternity of God himself; the great Sun of righteousness, who is always rising, and never sets.

2. The other degrading qualification of these worldly enjoyments is, that they are out of our power. And surely that is very unfit for a man to account his treasure, which he cannot so much as call his own; nor extend his title to, so far as the very next minute; as having no command nor hold of it at all beyond the present actual possession; and the compass of the present, all know, is but one remove from nothing. A rich man to-day, and a beggar to-morrow, is neither new nor wonderful in the experience of the world: for he who is rich now, must ask the rapacity of thieves, pirates, and tyrants, how long he shall continue so; and rest content to be happy for just so much time as the pride and violence, the cruelty and avarice of the worst of men shall permit him to be so; a comfortable tenure, doubtless, for a man to hold his chief happiness by.

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But now, on the contrary, nothing is so absolutely and essentially necessary to render any thing a man's treasure or chief good, as that he have a property in it and a power over it; without which, it will be impossible for him to be sure of any relief from it when he shall most need it. For how can he be sure of that, of which he has no command? And how can he command that, which a greater force than his own shall lay claim to? For let those puny things, called law and right, say what they will to the contrary, if the matter comes once to a dispute, all the good things a man has of this world will be his, who has the strongest arm and the sharpest sword, or the corruptest judge on his side. They are the prey of the mighty, and the prize of victorious villainy; subject to be torn and ravished from him upon all occasions.



Nor has the providence of God thought it worth while to secure and protect the very best of men in their rights to any enjoyment under heaven; and all this to depress and vilify these things in their thoughts; that so they may every day find a necessity of placing them above, and of bestowing their pains upon that which, if they pursue, they shall certainly obtain; and if they obtain, they shall impregnably keep. *My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*, says our Saviour; *not as the world giveth, give I unto you*. Why? What was the difference? He tells us in [John xvi. 22](#), *Your joy no man taketh from you*. It was such a joy or peace as was to be above the reach of either fraud or force, artifice or assault; which can never be said of any earthly enjoyment whatsoever, either as to the acquisition or possession of it: God having made no man any promise, that, by all his virtue and innocence, all his skill and industry, he shall be able to continue in health, wealth, or honour; but that, after his utmost endeavour to preserve those desirable things, he may in the issue lose them all.

But God has promised and engaged to mankind, that whosoever shall faithfully and constantly persevere in the duties of a pious, Christian life, shall obtain *an eternal crown of glory*, and an *inheritance that fadeth not away*. A man cannot indeed by all his piety secure his estate, but he may *make his calling and election sure*; which is infinitely and unspeakably more valuable, than all the estates, pleasures, and greatness of the world. For all these are without him, and consequently may be taken from him, and, which is yet worse, may do him no good, even while they stay with him. But the conscience is a sure repository for a man to lodge and preserve his treasure in, and the chest of his own heart can never be forced open.



Now the use and improvement of the foregoing particulars shall be briefly to convince us of the extreme vanity of most men's pretences to religion. A man's religion is all the claim he has to the felicities of another world. But can we think it possible in nature, for a man to place his greatest happiness where he does not place his strongest affections? How little is the other world in most men's thoughts, and yet they can have the confidence to pretend it to be the grand object of their desires. But why should men, in their greatest concern, be so

false to their own experience, and those constant observations which they make of themselves in other matters? For let any man consult and ask his own heart, whether, having once fixed his love upon any thing or person, his thoughts are not always running after it? Strong love is a bias upon the thoughts; and for a man to love earnestly, and not to think almost continually of what he loves, is as impossible, as for him to live, and not to breathe.

But besides this, we have shewn several other marks and properties, by which men may infallibly judge of the truth and firmness of their love to God and to religion; as for instance, can they affirm religion to be that which has got such hold of their hearts, that no time, cost, or labour, shall be thought too much to be laid out upon it? Is it the prize they run for? Is it the thing they delight in? the thing with which, in all their distresses, they support and keep up their sinking spirits? And lastly, is it that which they value to such a degree, as to be willing to part with all the world rather than lose or renounce it? These are great things, I confess; and yet nothing less will reach the measures of Christianity.

But the lives of men (unanswerable arguments in this case) are a sad demonstration how few they are who come up to these terms. Men may indeed now and then bestow some scattering thoughts upon their souls and their future estate, provided they be at full leisure from their business and their sports, (which they seldom or never are;) and if at any time they should be so, this could amount to no more than their being religious when they have nothing else to do. Likewise, when the solemn returns of God's public worship, and the law and custom of the nation shall call them off from their daily employments to better things, they may perhaps, by a few devout looks and words, put on something of an holy day dress for the present; which yet, like their Sunday clothes, they are sure to lay aside again for the whole week after. All which, and a great deal more, is far short of making religion a man's business, though yet, if it be not so, it is in effect nothing.

And this men know well enough, when they are to deal in matters of this world; in which no pains nor importunity shall be thought too great, no attendance too servile, nothing (in a word) too hard to be done or suffered, either to recruit a broken for tune, or to regain a disgusted friend; though, after all, should a man chance to recover both, he cannot be sure of keeping either. In like manner, let the trading person suffer any considerable damage in the stock with which he trades; what care, what parsimony, what art shall be used to make up the breach, and keep the shop still open? And the reason of all this is, because the man is in earnest in what he does, and accordingly acts as one who is so. Where as, in men's spiritual affairs, look all the world over, and you shall every day see, that the sins which wound and waste, and make havock of the conscience, which divide and cut it off from God, are committed easily, and passed over lightly, and owned confidently; with a bold front and a brazen face, able to look the pillory itself out of countenance; nor does any one almost think himself so mortally struck, even by the foulest guilt, as to need the balsam of an immediate repentance, and a present suing out of pardon at the throne of grace. And yet if a man

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dies, as to his temporal condition, poor and bankrupt, he is not at all the worse; but if he goes out of the world unreconciled to God, it had been good for him that he had never come into it. For what can it avail a man to pass from misery to misery, and to make one wretched life only a preparative to another?

In fine, this we may with great boldness venture to affirm, that if men would be at half the pains to provide themselves *treasures in heaven*, which they are generally at to get estates here on earth, it were impossible for any man to be damned. But when we come to earthly matters, we do; when to heavenly, we only discourse: heaven has our tongue and talk; but the earth our whole man besides.

Nevertheless, let men rest assured of this, that God has so ordered the great business of their eternal happiness, that their affections must still be the fore runners of their persons, the constant harbingers appointed by God to go and take possession of those glorious mansions for them; and consequently, that no man shall ever come to heaven himself, who has not sent his heart thither before him. For where this leads the way, the other will be sure to follow.

*Now to him who alone is the great Judge of hearts, and Rewarder of persons, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for ever more. Amen.*



TO THE REVEREND, LEARNED, AND VERY WORTHY  
DR. ROBERT FREIND,  
HEAD MASTER OF WESTMINSTER SCHOOL;  
TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER  
SUBORDINATE MASTERS OF THE SAME;  
AS LIKEWISE TO ALL SUCH AS HERETOFORE IN THEIR  
SEVERAL TIMES HAVE BEEN, AND THOSE WHO  
AT PRESENT ACTUALLY ARE,  
MEMBERS OF THAT ROYAL FOUNDATION,  
NEXT IN FAME TO ITS  
GLORIOUS FOUNDRESS QUEEN ELIZABETH;  
ROBERT SOUTH  
HUMBLY DEDICATES THIS FIFTH VOLUME<sup>14</sup> OF  
HIS SERMONS,  
AS STANDING FOR EVER OBLIGED  
BY THE MOST SACRED TIES OF GRATITUDE;  
AND THE WORK ITSELF NO LESS OWING ALL, THAT IS VALUABLE IN  
IT,  
(IF ANY THING THEREIN OUGHT TO BE ACCOUNTED REALLY SO,)  
TO THE AUTHOR'S EDUCATION IN THAT  
RENOWNED SEMINARY OF LEARNING, LOYALTY, AND RELIGION.

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<sup>14</sup> This refers to the twelve sermons next following.



AN  
ADVERTISEMENT  
TO  
THE READER

CONCERNING THE FOLLOWING SERMON.

WHOSOEVER shall judge it worth his time to peruse the following discourse, (if it meets with any such,) he is desired to take notice, that it was penned and prepared to have been preached at Westminster abbey, at a solemn meeting of such as had been bred at Westminster school. But the death of king Charles II. happening in the mean time, the design of this solemnity fell to the ground together with him, and was never resumed since; though what the reason of this might be, I neither know, nor ever thought it worth while to inquire: it being abundantly enough for me, that I can with great truth affirm, that I never offered myself to this service, nor so much as thought of appearing in a post so manifestly above me; but that a very great person<sup>15</sup> (whose word was then law, as well as his profession) was pleased *mero motu* (to speak in the prerogative style, as best suiting so commanding a genius) to put this task upon me, as well as afterwards to supersede the performance of it: the much kinder act this of the two, I must confess, and that in more respects than one, as saving me the trouble of delivering, and at the same time blushing at so mean a discourse, and the congregation also the greater, of hearing it. But what further cause there was or might be of so much uncertainty in this whole proceeding, I cannot tell, unless possibly, that what his lordship as chief justice had determined, he thought fit as chancellor to reverse.

Nevertheless, out of an earnest (and I hope very justifiable) desire, partly to pass a due encomium (or such an one at least as I am able) upon so noble a seat of the Muses as this renowned school has been always accounted hitherto, and partly to own the obligation and debt lying upon me to the place of my education, I have here at length presumed to publish it. So that although neither at the time appointed for that solemn meeting, nor ever since, have I had any opportunity given me to preach this sermon myself, yet, how that it is printed, possibly some other may condescend to do it, as before in several such cases the like has been too well known to have been done.

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15 The lord Jefferys.

*The virtuous education of youth the surest, if not sole way to an happy and honourable old age.*

IN

A DISCOURSE

UPON

PROVERBS XXII. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

WHEN I look back upon the old infamous rebellion and civil war of forty-one, which, like an irresistible torrent, broke in upon and bore down the whole frame of our government both in church and state, together with the principal concerns of private families, and the personal interests of particular men, (as it is not imaginable, that where a deluge overtops the mountains it should spare the valleys;) and when I consider also, how fresh all this is in the remembrance of many, and how frequent in the discourse of most, and in both carrying the same face of horror, (as in separable from such reflections;) I have wondered with myself, and that even to astonishment, how it should be possible, that in the turn of so few years there should be so numerous a party of men in these kingdoms, who (as if the remembrance of all those dismal days between forty and sixty were utterly erased out of the minds of men, and struck out of the annals of time) are still prepared and ready, nay, eager, and impetuously bent to act over the same tragical scene again. Witness, first of all, the many virulent and base libels spread over the whole nation against the king and his government; and in the next place, the design of seizing his royal person, while the parliament was held in Oxford in the year 1682; and likewise the Rye-conspiracy, formed and intended for the assassination of the king and of the duke his brother, in the year 1683; and lastly, (though antecedent in time,) the two famous<sup>16</sup> city cavalcades of clubmen, in the two years of 1679 and 1680, countenanced and encouraged under that silly pretence of burning the pope, but carried on with so much insolence and audacious fury, and such an open, barefaced contempt of all authority, as if the rabble had in plain terms bid the government do its worst, and touch or meddle with them, if it durst. So hard has the experience of the world found it, for the pardon of a guilt (too big for the common measures of pardon) to produce any thing better than the same practices which had been pardoned before.

But since nothing can happen without some cause or other, I have been further considering with myself what the cause of this terrible evil, which still looks so grim upon the government, should be. And to me it seems to be this; that as the forementioned rebellion

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<sup>16</sup> R. C. said he had tossed up the ball, and his successor P. W. said he would keep it up. That is to say, Extortion began the dance, and Perjury would carry it on.

and civil war brought upon the nation a general dissolution of order, and a corruption and debauchment of men's manners, so the greatest part of the nation by much now alive has been born, or at least bred, since that fatal rebellion. For surely those who are now about or under fifty years of age make a much greater number in the kingdom than those who are above it; especially so much above it, as to have passed their youth before the time of the late confusions; which have since so perfectly changed and new modelled, or rather extinguished the morality, nay, the very natural temper of the English nation.

For this is certain, that wise and thinking men observe with sorrow that the change is so very great and bad, that there is no relation in society or common life but has suffered and been the worse for it. For look into families, and you will find parents complaining, that their children pay them not that duty and reverence, which they have heard and read that children used to shew their parents heretofore. Masters also complain, that servants are neither so obedient nor so trusty as in former times. And lastly, for the conjugal relation, (a thing of the greatest and most direct influence upon the weal or woe of societies of any other thing in the world besides,) it is but too frequent a complaint, that neither are men so good husbands, nor women so good wives, as they were before that accursed rebellion had made that fatal leading breach in the conjugal tie between the best of kings and the happiest of people. But now, how comes all this to pass? why, from the exorbitant licence of men's education. They were bred in lawless, ungoverned times, and conventicle, fanatic academies, in defiance of the universities, and when all things were turned topsyturvy, and the bonds of government quite loosed or broken asunder. So that, as soon as they were able to observe any thing, the first thing which they actually did observe, were inferiors trampling upon their superiors; servants called by vote of parliament out of their masters service to fight against their prince, and so to complete one rebellion with another; and women running in whole shoals to conventicles, to seek Christ forsooth, but to find somebody else. By which liberties having once leaped over the severity and strictness of former customs, they found it an easy matter, with debauched morals and defloured consciences, to launch out into much greater. So that no wonder now, if, in an age of a more grown and improved debauchery, you see men spending their whole time in taverns, and their lives in duels; in flaming themselves with wine, till they come to pay the reckoning with their blood: and women spending both time and fortune, and perhaps their honour too, at balls, plays, and treats. The reason of all which is, that they are not now bred as they were heretofore: for that which was formerly their diversion only, is now their chief, if not sole business; and in case you would see or speak with them, you must not look for them at their own houses, but at the playhouse, if you would find them at home. They have quite cashiered the commandment, which enjoins them six days doing what they have to do, and substituted to themselves a new and very different one in the room of it; according to which they are for six days to go to plays and to make visits, setting apart a seventh to go to church to see and to be seen. A





blessed improvement doubtless, and such as the fops our ancestors (as some use to call them) were never acquainted with. And thus I have in some measure shown you the true grievance which this poor and distracted kingdom groans under. A grievance (without the help of a vote) properly so called. A grievance springing from a boundless, immense, and absurd liberty. For though the zealous outcry and republican cant still used to join those two tinkling words *liberty* and *property* together, (in a very different sense from what belonged to them,) to make a rattle for the people; yet I am sure the intolerable excess of liberty has been the chief thing which has so much contributed to the curtailing their properties; the true, if not only cause, which of late years has made such numbers so troublesome to the government as they have been.



Well, but if it be our unhappiness that the mischief is become almost general, let us at least prevent the next degree of it, and keep it from being perpetual. And this is not to be done but by a remedy which shall reach as far and deep as the distemper: for that began early, and therefore the cure must do so too, even from the childhood of the patient, and the infancy of the disease. There must be one *instauratio magna* of the methods and principles of education, and the youth of the nation, as it were, new cast into another and a better mould.

And for this we have the counsel and conduct of the wisest of men, Solomon himself, who knew no other course to insure a growing flourishing practice of virtue in a man's mature or declining age, but by planting it in his youth; as he that would have his grounds covered and loaded with fruit in autumn, must manure and dress them in the spring. *Train up a child*, says he, *in the way that he should go*: the way, *non qua itur, sed qua eundum est*. Man is of an active nature, and must have a way to walk in, as necessarily as a place to breathe in. And several ways will be sure to offer themselves to his choice; and he will be as sure to choose one of them. His great concern is, that it be a safe one: since, as the variety of them makes the choice difficult, so the illness of some of them must make it dangerous. *For*, as the same Solomon tells us, *there is a way which seems right in a man's own eyes*, when yet the tendency of it is fatal. An easy, pleasant, and a broad way, a way always thronged with passengers, but such that a man is never the safer for travelling in company. But this is not the way here chalked out to us: but rather a rugged, strait, and narrow way; and, upon that account, the lesser, and consequently the younger any one is, the easier may he get into it, and pass through it. In a word, it is the path of virtue, and the high road to heaven, the *via ad bonos mores*; the entrance into which, some say, is never too late, and, I am sure, can never be too soon. For it is certainly long and laborious; and therefore, whosoever hopes to reach the end of it, it will concern him to set out betimes; and his great encouragement so to do is, that this is the likeliest means to give him constancy and perseverance in it. *He will not*, says Solomon, *forsake it when he is old*. And such is the length of the stage, that it will be sure to hold him in his course, and to keep him going on till he is grown so.



It is, in my opinion, very remarkable, that not withstanding all the rewards which confessedly be long to virtue in both worlds, yet Solomon, in the text, alleges no other argument for or motive to the course here recommended to us, but the end of it: nor enjoins us the pursuit of virtue in our youth, upon any other reason mentioned in the words, but that we may practise it in our age. And no doubt it is an excellent one, and will have many others fall in with it, for the enforcement of the duty here prescribed to us.

For can any thing in nature be more odious and despicable, than a wicked old man; a man, who, after threescore or fourscore years spent in the world, after so many sacraments, sermons, and other means of grace, taken in, digested, and defeated, shall continue as errant an hypocrite, dissembler, and masquerader in religion as ever, still dodging and doubling with God and man, and never speaking his mind, nor so much as opening his mouth in earnest, but when he eats or breathes.

Again, can any thing be so vile and forlorn, as an old, broken, and decrepit sensualist, creeping (as it were) to the Devil upon all four? Can there be a greater indecency than an old drunkard? or any thing more noisome and unnatural, than an aged, silver-haired wanton, with frost in his bones, and snow upon his head, following his lewd, senseless amours? a wretch so scorned, so despised, and so abandoned by all, that his very vices forsake him.

And yet, as youth leaves a man, so age generally finds him. If he passes his youth juggling, shuffling, and dissembling, it is odds but you will have him at the same legerdemain, and shewing tricks in his age also: and if he spends his young days whoring and drinking, it is ten to one but age will find him in the same filthy drudgery still, or at least wishing himself so. And lastly, if death (which cannot be far off from age) finds him so too, his game is then certainly at the best, and his condition (which is the sting of all) never possible to be better.

And therefore, whosoever thou art, who hast enslaved thyself to the paltry, bewitching pleasures of youth, and lookest with a wry face and a sour eye upon the rough, afflicting severities of virtue; consider with thyself, that the pleasures of youth will not, cannot be the pleasures of old age, though the guilt of it will. And consider also, what a dismal, intolerable thing it must needs be, for a man to feel a total declension in his strength, his morals, and his esteem together. And remember, that for all the disciplines of temperance, the hardships of labour, and the abridgments of thy swelling appetites, it will be a full, sufficient, and more than equivalent recompence, to be healthful, cheerful, and honour able, and (which is more than all) to be virtuous when thou art old.

The proposition then before us is this.

That a strict and virtuous education of youth is absolutely necessary to a man's attainment of that inestimable blessing, that unspeakable felicity of being serviceable to his God, easy to himself, and useful to others, in the whole course of his following life.

In order to the proof of which, I shall lay down these six propositions.

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I. That in the present state of nature there is in every man a certain propensity to vice, or a corrupt principle more or less disposing him to evil: which principle is sometimes called the *flesh*, sometimes *concupiscence*, and sometimes *sensuality*, and makes one part of that which we call original sin. A principle, which, though it both proceeds from sin, and disposes to sin, yet, till it comes to act, the doctors of the Romish church deny to be in itself sinful. And the Pelagians deny that there is any such thing at all; especially our modern, orthodox, and more authentic Pelagians. For though our church indeed, in her ninth article, positively and expressly asserts both; yet there having been given us, not very long since, a new and more correct draught of discipline, to reconcile us to the schismatics, it is not impossible but that in time we may have a new draught of doctrine also, to reconcile us to the Socinians.



II. The second proposition is this, That the forementioned propensity of the sensual part, or principle, to vice, being left to itself, will certainly proceed to work, and to exert itself in action; and, if not hindered and counteracted, will continue so to do, till practice passes into custom or habit, and so by use and frequency comes to acquire a domineering strength in a man's conversation.

III. The third proposition is, That all the disorders of the world, and the confusions that disturb persons, families, and whole societies or corporations, proceed from this natural propensity to vice in particular persons, which being thus heightened by habitual practice, runs forth into those several sorts of vice which corrupt and spoil the manners of men. *Whence come wars and fightings?* says the apostle, [James iv. 1](#); *come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?* And indeed it is hard to assign any mischief befalling mankind, but what proceeds from some extravagance either of passion or desire, from lust or anger, covetousness or ambition.

IV. The fourth proposition is, That when the corruption of men's manners, by the habitual improvement of this vicious principle, comes from personal to be general and universal, so as to diffuse and spread itself over a whole community; it naturally rally and directly tends to the ruin and subversion of the government where it so prevails: so that Machiavel himself (a person never likely to die for love of virtue or religion) affirms over and over in his Political Discourses upon Livy, "that where the manners of a people are generally corrupted, there the government cannot long subsist." I say, he affirms it as a stated, allowed principle; and I doubt not, but the destruction of governments may be proved and deduced from the general corruption of the subjects' manners, as a direct and natural cause thereof, by a demonstration as certain as any in the mathematics, though not so evident; for that, I confess, the nature of the thing may not allow.



V. The fifth proposition is, That this ill principle, which being thus habitually improved, and from personal corruptions spreading into general and national, is the cause of all the mischiefs and disorders, public and private, which trouble and infest the world, is to be altered and corrected only by discipline, and the infusion of such principles into the rational

and spiritual part of man, as may power fully sway his will and affections, by convincing his understanding that the practice of virtue is prefer able to that of vice; and that there is a real happiness as well as honesty in the one, and a real misery as well as a turpitude in the other; there being no mending or working upon the sensual part, but by well principling the intellectual.

VI. The sixth and last proposition is, That this discipline and infusion of good principles into the mind, which only can and must work this great and happy change upon a man's morals, by counterworking that other sensual and vicious principle, which would corrupt them, can never operate so kindly, so efficaciously, and by consequence so successfully, as when applied to him in his minority, while his mind is ductile and tender, and so ready for any good impression. For when he comes once to be in years, and his mind, having been prepossessed with ill principles, and afterwards hardened with ill practices, grows callous, and scarce penetrable, his case will be then very different, and the success of such applications very doubtful, if not desperate.

Now the sum of these six propositions in short is this: That there is in every man naturally (as nature now stands) a sensual principle disposing him to evil. That this principle will be sure, more or less, to pass into action; and, if not hindered, to produce vicious habits and customs. That these vicious habits are the direct causes of all the miseries and calamities that afflict and disturb mankind. That when they come to spread so far, as from personal to grow national, they will weaken, and at length destroy governments. That this ill principle is controllable and conquerable only by discipline, and the infusion of good and contrary principles into the mind. And lastly, that this discipline or infusion of good principles is never like to have its full force, efficacy, and success upon the minds of men, but during their youth.

Which whole deduction or chain of propositions, proceeding upon so firm and natural, and withal so clear and evident a connection of each proposition with the other, I suppose there can need no further demonstration to prove it as absolutely necessary, as the peace of mankind, public and private, can be, that the minds of youth should be formed and seasoned with a strict and virtuous, an early and preventing education.

Let us now, in the next place, see who they are whose province it is to be so great a blessing to society, so vast a benefit to the world, as to be the managers of this important trust.

And we shall find that it rests upon three sorts of men, viz.

1. Parents. 2. Schoolmasters. And, 3, the clergy; such especially as have cure of souls.

1. And first for parents. Let them endeavour to deserve that honour which God has commanded their children to pay them; and believe it, that must be by greater and better offices than barely bringing them into this world; which of itself puts them only in danger of passing into a worse. And as the good old sentence tells us, that it is better a great deal to

be unborn, than either unbred, or bred amiss; so it cannot but be matter of very sad reflection to any parent, to think with himself, that he should be instrumental to give his child a body only to damn his soul. And therefore, let parents remember, that as the paternal is the most honourable relation, so it is also the greatest trust in the world, and that God will be a certain and severe exacter of it; and the more so, because they have such mighty opportunities to discharge it, and that with almost infallible success. Forasmuch as a parent receives his child, from the hand of God and nature, a perfect blank, a mere *rasa tabula*, as to any guilt actually contracted by him, and consequently may write upon him what he pleases, having the unvaluable advantage of making the first impressions, which are of so strong and so prevailing an influence to determine the practice either to vice or virtue, that Buxtorf, in the third chapter of his *Synagoga Judaica*, tells us, that the Jewish fathers professedly take upon themselves the guilt of all their children's sins till they come to be thirteen years old; at which age the youth is called *filius praecepti*, as being then reckoned under the obligation of the law, and so by a solemn discharge left to sin for himself.



Now these and the like considerations (one would think) should remind parents what a dreadful account lies upon them for their children; and that, as their children, by the laws of God and man, owe them the greatest reverence, so there is a sort of reverence also that they as much owe their children; a reverence, that should make them not dare to speak a filthy word, or to do a base or an undecent action before them. What says our Saviour to this point? [Matt. xviii. 6.](#) *Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* And surely he, who teaches these little ones to offend God, offends them with a witness: indeed so unmercifully, that it would be much the less cruelty of the two, if the wretch their father should stab or stifle those poor innocents in their nurse's arms. For then he might damn himself alone, and not his children also; and himself, for his own sins only, and not for theirs too.

And therefore, with all imaginable concern of conscience, let parents make it their business to infuse into their children's hearts early and good principles of morality. Let them teach them from their very cradle to think and speak awfully of the great God, reverently of religion, and respectfully of the dispensers of it; it being no part of religion any where, but within the four seas, to despise and scoff at the ministers of it. But above all, next to their duty to God himself, let them be carefully taught their duty to their king; and not so much as to pretend to the fear of the one, without the honour of the other; let them be taught a full and absolute (so far as legal) obedience and subjection to him (in all things lawful,) the true and glorious characteristic of the church of England; for I know no church else, where you will be sure to find it. And to this end, let parents be continually instilling into their children's minds a mortal and implacable hatred of those twin plagues of Christendom, fanaticism and rebellion; which cannot be more compendiously, and withal more effectually



done, than by displaying to them the late unparalleled rebellion in its flaming and true colours.

For this was the method which God himself prescribed to his own people, to perpetuate the remembrance of any great and notable providence towards them; and particularly in the institution of the prime instance of their religion, the passover, [Exod. xii. 26, 27](#). *And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that you shall say, It is the Lord's passover; who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our fathers, &c.* So say I to all true English parents: When your children shall ask you, Why do we keep the thirtieth of January as a fast? and the twenty-ninth of May as a festival? What mean you by this service? Then is the time to rip up and lay before them the tragical history of the late rebellion and unnatural civil war. A war commenced without the least shadow or pretence of right, as being notoriously against all law. A war begun without any provocation, as being against the justest, the mildest, and most pious prince that had ever reigned. A war raised upon clamours of grievances, while the subject swam in greater plenty and riches than had ever been known in these islands before, and no grievances to be found in the three kingdoms, besides the persons who cried out of them. Next to this, let them tell their children over and over, of the villainous imprisonments, and contumelious trial, and the barbarous murder of that blessed and royal martyr, by a company of cobblers, tailors, draymen, drunkards, whoremongers, and broken tradesmen; though since, I confess, dignified with the title of the sober part of the nation. These, I say, were the illustrious judges of that great monarch. Whereas the whole people of England, nobles and commons together, neither in parliament nor out of parliament, (as that great judge<sup>17</sup> in the trial of the regicides affirmed,) had power by law to touch one hair of his head, or judicially to call him to account for any of his actions. And then, in the last place, they are to tell their children also of the base and brutish cruelties practised by those bloodhounds in the plunders, sequestrations, decimations, and murders of their poor fellow subjects: likewise of their horrid oaths, covenants, and perjuries; and of their shameless, in satiable, and sacrilegious avarice, in destroying the purest church in the world, and seizing its revenues; and all this under the highest pretences of zeal for religion, and with the most solemn appeals to the great God, while they were actually spitting in his face.

These things, I say, and a thousand more, they are to be perpetually inculcating into the minds of their children, according to that strict injunction of God himself to the Israelites, [Deut. vi. 6, 7](#). *These words shall he in thine heart, and thou shalt diligently teach them thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* Such discourses should open their

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17 Sir Orlando Bridgman, lord chief baron.

eyes in the morning, and close them in the evening. And I dare undertake, that if this one thing had been faithfully and constantly practised, even but since the late restoration, (which came upon these poor kingdoms like life from the dead,) the fanatics had never been so considerable, as to cause those terrible convulsions in church and state, and those misunderstandings between the king and his people, which we have seen and trembled at, and must expect to see, as long as the same spirit, which governed in forty-one, continues still so powerful (as it does) amongst us. For I am sure no king and that can ever reign quietly together.

But some perhaps may here very sagely object. Is not this the way to sour and spoil the minds of children, by keeping the remembrance of the late rebellion always fresh upon them? I answer, No; no more than to warn them against poisons, pits, and precipices is likely to endanger their lives; or to tell them by what ill courses men come to the gallows is the ready way to bring them thither. No; nothing can be too much hated by children, which cannot be too much avoided by men. And since vice never loses its hold where it keeps its reputation, the minds of youth can never be sufficiently fortified against villainous and base actions, but by a deep and early abhorrence, caused by a faithful representation of them. So preposterous a method will it be found to bring a crime out of fashion, by making panegyrics upon the criminal.

In short, let parents prevent and seize the very first notions and affections of their children, by engaging them, from the very first, in an hatred of rebellion; and that, if possible, as strong as nature, as irreconcilable as antipathy; and so early, that they themselves may not remember when it began, but that, for ought they know, it was even born with them. Let them, I say, be made almost from their very cradle to hate it, name and thing; so that their blood may rise, and their heart may swell at the very mention of it. In a word, let them by a kind of preventing instinct abhor it, even in their minority, and they will be sure to find sufficient reason for that abhorrence when they shall come to maturity. And so much for parents.

2. The second sort of persons intrusted with the training up of youth are schoolmasters. I know not how it comes to pass, that this honourable employment should find so little respect (as experience shews it does) from too many in the world. For there is no profession which has, or can have, a greater influence upon the public. Schoolmasters have a negative upon the peace and welfare of the kingdom. They are indeed the great depositories and trustees of the peace of it, as having the growing hopes and fears of the nation in their hands. For generally, subjects are and will be such as they breed them. So that I look upon an able, well principled schoolmaster as one of the most meritorious subjects in any prince's dominions that can be; and every such school, under such a master, as a seminary of loyalty and a nursery of allegiance.



Nay, I take schoolmasters to have a more powerful influence upon the spirits of men than preachers themselves. Forasmuch as they have to deal with younger and tenderer minds, and consequently have the advantage of making the first and deepest impressions upon them. It being seldom found that the pulpit mends what the school has marred, any more than a fault in the first concoction is ever corrected by the second.

But now, if their power is so great and their influence so strong, surely it concerns them to use it to the utmost for the benefit of their country. And for this purpose let them fix this as an eternal rule or principle in the instruction of youth; that care is to be had of their manners in the first place, and of their learning in the next. And here, as the foundation and groundwork of all morality, let youth be taught betimes to obey, and to know that the very relation between teacher and learner imports superiority and subjection. And therefore, let masters be sure to inure young minds to an early awe and reverence of government, by making the first instance of it in themselves, and maintaining the authority of a master over them sacred and inviolable; still remembering, that none is or can be fit to be a teacher, who understands not how to be a master. For every degree of obstinacy in youth is one step to rebellion. And the very same restive humour which makes a young man slight his master in the school, and despise his tutor in the university, (a thing lately much in fashion,) will make him fly in his prince's face in the parliament house. Of which, not many years since, we have had some scurvy experiments.

There is a principle of pride universally wrapt up in the corrupt nature of man. And pride is naturally refractory, and impatient of rule; and (which is most material to our present case) it is a vice which works and puts forth betimes; and consequently must be encountered so too, or it will quickly carry too high an head, or too stiff a neck to be controlled. It is the certain companion of folly; and both of them the proper qualifications of youth; it being the inseparable property of that age to be proud and ignorant, and to despise instruction the more it needs it. But both of them are nuisances which education must remove, or the person is lost.

And it were to be wished, I confess, that the constitution of man's nature were such, that this might be done only by the mild addresses of reason and the gentle arts of persuasion, and that the studies of humanity might be carried on only by the ways of humanity; but unless youth were all made up of goodness and ingenuity, this is a felicity not to be hoped for. And therefore it is certain, that in some cases, and with some natures, austerity must be used; there being too frequently such a mixture in the composition of youth, that while the man is to be instructed, there is something of the brute also to be chastised.

But how to do this discreetly, and to the benefit of him who is so unhappy as to need it, requires, in my poor opinion, a greater skill, judgment, and experience, than the world





generally imagines, and than, I am sure, most masters of schools can truly pretend to be masters of. I mean those *plagosi orbilii*, those executioners, rather than instructors of youth; persons fitter to lay about them in a coach or cart, or to discipline boys before a Spartan altar, or rather upon it, than to have any thing to do in a Christian school. I would give those pedagogical Jehus, those furious schooldrivers, the same advice which, the poet says, Phoebus gave his son Phaeton, (just such another driver as themselves,) that he should *parcere stimulis*, (the *stimulus* in driving being of the same use formerly that the *lash* is now.) Stripes and blows are the last and basest remedy, and scarce ever fit to be used, but upon such as carry their brains in their backs; and have souls so dull and stupid, as to serve for little else but to keep their bodies from putrefaction.

Nevertheless, since (as I have shewn) there are some cases and tempers which make these boisterous applications necessary, give me leave, for once, to step out of my profession so far, (though still keeping strictly within my subject,) as to lay before the educators of youth these few following considerations; for I shall not, in modesty, call them instructions.

1. As first, let them remember that excellent and never to be forgotten advice, *that boys will be men*; and that the memory of all base usage will sink so deep into, and grow up so inseparably with them, that it will not be so much as in their own power ever to forget it. For though indeed schoolmasters are a sort of kings, yet they cannot always pass such acts of oblivion as shall operate upon their scholars, or perhaps, in all things, indemnify themselves.

2. Where they find a youth of spirit, let them endeavour to govern that spirit without extinguishing it; to bend it, without breaking it; for when it comes once to be extinguished, and broken, and lost, it is not in the power or art of man to recover it: and then (believe it) no knowledge of nouns and pronouns, *syntaxis* and *prosodia*, can ever compensate or make amends for such a loss. The French, they say, are extremely happy at this, who will instruct a youth of spirit to a decent boldness, tempered with a due modesty; which two qualities, in conjunction, do above all others fit a man both for business and address. But for want of this art, some schools have ruined more good wits than they have improved; and even those which they have sent away with some tolerable improvement, like men escaped from a shipwreck, carry off only the remainder of those natural advantages, which in much greater plenty they first brought with them.

3. Let not the chastisement of the body be managed so as to make a wound which shall rankle and fester in the very soul. That is, let not children, whom nature itself would bear up by an innate, generous principle of emulation, be exposed, cowed, and depressed with scoffs and contumelies, (founded perhaps upon the master's own guilt,) to the scorn and contempt of their equals and emulators. For this is, instead of rods, to chastise them with scorpions; and is the most direct way to stupify and besot, and make them utterly regardless of themselves, and of all that is praiseworthy; besides that it will be sure to leave in their

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minds such inward regrets, as are never to be qualified or worn off. It is very undecent for a master to jest or play with his scholars; but not only undecent, but very dangerous too, in such a way to play upon them.

4. And lastly; let it appear in all acts of penal animadversion, that the person is loved while his fault is punished; nay, that one is punished only out of love to the other. And (believe it) there is hardly any one so much a child, but has sagacity enough to perceive this. Let not melancholy fumes and spites, and secret animosities pass for discipline. Let the master be as angry for the boy's fault as reason will allow him; but let not the boy be in fault only because the master has a mind to be angry. In a word, let not the master have the spleen, and the scholars be troubled with it. But above all, let not the sins, or faults, or wants of the parents be punished upon the children; for that is a prerogative which God has reserved to himself.

These things I thought fit to remark about the education and educators of youth in general, not that I have any thoughts or desires of invading their province; but possibly a stander-by may sometimes look as far into the game as he who plays it; and perhaps with no less judgment, because with much less concern.

3. The third and last sort of persons concerned in the great charge of instructing youth are the clergy. For as parents deliver their children to the school master, so the schoolmaster delivers them to the minister. And for my own part, I never thought a pulpit, a cushion, and an hourglass, such necessary means of salvation, but that much of the time and labour which is spent about them might be much more profitably bestowed in catechising youth from the desk; preaching being a kind of spiritual diet, upon which people are always feeding, but never full; and many poor souls, God knows, too, too like Pharaoh's lean kine, much the leaner for their full feed.

And how, for God's sake, should it be otherwise? For to preach to people without principles, is to build where there is no foundation, or rather where there is not so much as ground to build upon. But people are not to be harangued, but catechised into principles; and this is not the proper work of the pulpit, any more than threshing can pass for sowing. Young minds are to be leisurely formed and fashioned with the first plain, simple, and substantial rudiments of religion. And to expect that this should be done by preaching, or force of lungs, is just as if a smith, or artist who works in metal, should think to frame and shape out his work only with his bellows.

It is want of catechising which has been the true cause of those numerous sects, schisms, and wild opinions, which have so disturbed the peace, and bid fair to destroy the religion of the nation. For the consciences of men have been filled with wind and noise, empty notions and pulpit-tattle. So that amongst the most seraphical *illuminati*, and the highest Puritan perfectionists, you shall find people of fifty, threescore, or fourscore years old, not able to give that account of their faith, which you might have had heretofore from a boy of nine or



ten. Thus far had the pulpit, by accident, disordered the church, and the desk must restore it. For you know the main business of the pulpit in the late times (which we are not thoroughly recovered from yet, and perhaps never shall) was to please and pamper a proud, senseless humour, or rather a kind of spiritual itch, which had then seized the greatest part of the nation, and worked chiefly about their ears; and none were so overrun with it, as the holy sisterhood, the daughters of Sion, and the matrons of the new Jerusalem, (as they called themselves.) These brought with them ignorance and itching ears in abundance; and Holderforth equalled them in one, and gratified them in the other. So that whatsoever the doctrine was, the application still ran on the surest side; for to give those doctrine and usemen, those pulpit-engineers, their due, they understood how to plant their batteries and to make their attacks perfectly well; and knew that, by pleasing the wife, they should not fail to preach the husband in their pocket. And therefore, to prevent the success of such pious frauds for the future, let children be well principled, and, in order to that, let them be carefully catechised.

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Well; but when they are thus catechised, what is to be done next? Why then let them be brought to the bishop of the diocese to be confirmed by him, since none else, no not all the presbyters of a diocese, (nor Presbyterians neither,) can perform this apostolical act and office upon them. For though indeed a bishop may be installed, and visit, and receive his revenues too, by deputation or proxy; yet I am sure he can no more confirm than ordain by proxy: these being acts purely and incommunicably episcopal.

The church of Rome makes confirmation a sacrament; and though the church of England does not affirm it to be such, yet it owns it of divine and apostolical institution. And as to the necessity of it, I look upon it as no less than a completion of baptism in such as outlive their childhood; and for that cause called by the ancients *τελείωσις*. It is indeed a man's owning that debt in person, which passed upon him in his baptism by representation; and his ratifying the promises of his sureties, by his personal acknowledgment of the obligation.

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It is also expressly instituted for the collation of those peculiar assistances and gifts of the Spirit, by the imposition of episcopal hands, which the rubric represents as requisite to bear him through his Christian course and conflict with comfort and success. For till a person be confirmed, he cannot regularly and ordinarily partake of that high and soul-supporting ordinance, the sacrament of the Lord's supper. And these are the considerations which render the confirmation of children necessary, and the neglect of it scandalous, unchristian, and utterly unjustifiable upon any account whatsoever. For is there so much as the least shadow of excuse alleageable for parents not bringing their children to the bishop to be confirmed by him? or for the bishop not to confirm them when duly brought? The chief and general failure in this duty is no doubt chargeable upon the former; the grand rebellion of forty-one, and the dissolution of all church-order thereupon, absolutely unhinging the minds of most of the nation, as to all concern about religion; nevertheless, if, on the

other side also, both the high importance of the ordinance itself, and the vast numbers of the persons whom it ought to pass upon, be duly pondered, it will be found next, at least, to a necessity, (if at all short of it,) that there should be episcopal visitations more than once in three years, if it were only for the sake of confirmations; especially since the judges of the land think it not too much for them to go two circuits yearly. And some are apt to think that no less care and labour ought to be employed in carrying on the discipline of the gospel, than in dispensing the benefits of the law. For certainly the importance of the former, with those who think men's souls ought to be regarded in the first place, is no ways inferior to that of the latter; at least many wise and good men of the clergy, as well as others, (who hope they may lawfully wish what they pretend not to prescribe,) have thought the proposal not unreasonable. For confirmation being, as we hinted before, the only proper, regular inlet, or rather authentic ticket of admission to the Lord's supper, and yet withal the sole act of the bishop; if people who desire to obtain it should find that they cannot, would they not be apt to think themselves hardly dealt with, that, when Christ has frankly invited them to his table, they should, for want of confirmation, find the door shut against them when they come?

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Besides that nothing can be imagined more for the episcopal dignity and preeminence, than that after Christ has thus prepared this heavenly feast for us, he yet leaves it to his bishops (by lodging this confirming power in their hands) to qualify, and put us into a regular capacity of appearing at that divine banquet, and of being welcome when we are there. And therefore, in short, since the power of confirming, no less than that of ordaining itself, is, as we have shewn, so peculiar to the episcopal character, as to be also personal and incommunicable; all wellwishers to the happy estate of the church must needs wish, that as the laws of it have put a considerable restraint upon unlimited ordinations, so they would equally enforce the frequency of confirmations; since a defect or desuetude of these latter must no less starve the altar, than a superfluity of the former overstock the church: both of them, I am sure, likely to prove fatal to it.

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But to proceed; as the minister, having sufficiently catechised the youth of his parish, ought to tender them to the bishop, to be confirmed by him; and the bishop, for his part, to give his clergy as frequent opportunities of doing so as possibly he can; so after they are thus confirmed, he is to take them into the further instructions of his ministry, and acquaint them with what they have been confirmed in. And here, the better to acquit himself in this important trust, let him take a measure of what good the pulpit may do, by the mischief which it has already done. For in the late times of confusion, it was the pulpit which supplied the field with swordmen, and the parliament house with incendiaries. And let every churchman consider, that it is one of the principal duties of the clergy to make the king's government easy to him, and to prepare him a willing and obedient people. For which purpose, the canons of our church enjoin every minister of it to preach obedience, and

subjection to the government, four times a year at least. And this I am sure cannot be better and more effectually done, than by representing the faction, which troubles and undermines it, as odious, ridiculous, and unexcusable, as with truth he can; and by exposing those villainous tricks and intrigues by which they supplanted and overturned the monarchy under king Charles I. and would have done the same again under king Charles II. though he had obliged them by a mercy not to be paralleled, and an oblivion never to be forgot.

Let every faithful minister, therefore, of the church of England, in a conscientious observance of the laws laid upon him by the said church, make it his business to undeceive and disabuse the people committed to his charge, by giving them to understand, that most of that noise which they have so often heard ringing in their ears, about grievances and arbitrary power, popery and tyranny, persecution and oppression of tender consciences, court-pensioners, and the like, has been generally nothing else but mere flam and romance, and that there is no kingdom or government in Christendom less chargeable with any of these odious things and practices than the English government, under his present majesty, both is and ever has been; and consequently, that all these clamours are only the artifices of some malecontents and ambitious demagogues, to fright their prince to compound with them, by *taking them off* (as the word is) with great and gainful places; and therefore, that they bark so loud, and open their mouths so wide, for no other cause than that some preferment may stop them; the common method, I own, by which weak governors and governments use to deal with such as oppose them; till in the issue, by strengthening their enemies, they come to ruin themselves, and to be laughed at for their pains. For that governor, whosoever he is, who prefers his enemy, makes him thereby not at all the less an enemy, but much more formidably so, than he was before.

And whereas yet further, there have been such vehement invectives against court-pensioners; let the people, who have been so warmly plied with this stuff, be carefully informed, that those very men, who raise and spread these invectives, do not indeed (as they pretend) hate pensioners so much, but that they love pensions more; and have no other quarrel to them, but that any should be thought worthy to receive them but themselves.

And then, as for the next clamour, about the persecution and oppression of tender consciences. Let every conscientious preacher throughly and impartially instruct his congregation, that there is no such thing; that from the very restoration of the king, they have been all along allowed (and that by a law made for that purpose) to worship God after their own way in their own families with five more persons besides: so that all the oppression and persecution of these men amounts but to this, that the government will not suffer them to meet in troops, regiments, and brigades; and so form themselves into an army, and under colour of worshipping God, to muster their forces, and shew the government how ready they are, when occasion serves, for a battle: so that, in truth, it is not so much liberty of conscience, as liberty from conscience, which these men contend for. Likewise, let the

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faithful minister teach his people, that as the main body of the nation hates and abhors popery with the utmost aversion; so that old stale pretence of the danger of its being every day ready to return and break in upon us, while this general aversion to it continues, and the laws against it stand in full force, (as at present they certainly do,) is all of it, from top to bottom, nothing else but an arrant trick and term of art, and a republican engine to rob the church, and run down the clergy, (the surest bulwark against popery;) as the very same plea had effectually served them for the same purpose once before. And lastly, let the youth of the nation be made to know, that all the bustle and stir raised by schismatics and dissenters against the rites and ceremonies of the church of England, (which after so much noise are but three in number, and those not only very innocent, but very rational too,) has been intended only for a blind and a cheat upon those lamentable tools, the unthinking rabble, whom these leading impostors are still managing and despising at the same time. For can any man of sense imagine, that those whose conscience could serve them to murder their king, (and him the most innocent and pious of kings,) do or can really scruple the use of the surplice, the cross in baptism, or kneeling at the sacrament? Alas! they have a cormorant in their conscience, which can swallow all this, and a great deal more. But the thing they drive at by this noisy, restless cant, is to get the power and revenues of the church into their comprehensive clutches; and, according to a neighbouring pattern, having first possessed themselves of the church, to make their next inroads upon the state. I say, it is power and wealth, and nothing else, which these pretenders design, and push so hard for; and when they have once compassed it, you shall quickly see, how effectually these men of mortification will mortify all who differ from them; and how little favour and indulgence they will shew those who had shewed them so much before. Such is the cruelty and ingratitude of the party.

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All which and the like important heads of discourse, so nearly affecting not only the common interest, but the very vitals of the government, had the parochial clergy frequently and warmly insisted upon to their respective congregations, and to the younger part of them especially; such a course could not, but in a short time, have unpoisoned their perverted minds, and rectified their false notions, to such a degree, as would in all likelihood have prevented those high animosities, those divisions and discontents, which have given such terrible shocks both to church and state, since the late happy, but never yet duly improved restoration.

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And now I must draw towards a close, though I have not despatched the tenth part of what I had to say upon this useful, copious, and indeed inexhaustible subject. And therefore for a conclusion, I have only two things more to add, and by way of request to you, great men; you who are persons of honour, power, and interest in the government; and, I hope, will shew to what great and good purposes you are so.

1. And the first is, that you would employ the utmost of this your power and interest, both with the king and parliament, to suppress, utterly to suppress and extinguish, those private, blind, conventicling schools or academies of grammar and philosophy, set up and taught secretly by fanatics, here and there all the kingdom over. A practice which, I will undertake to prove, looks with a more threatening aspect upon the government, than any one fanatical or republican encroachment made upon it besides. For this is the direct and certain way to bring up and perpetuate a race of mortal enemies both to church and state. To derive, propagate, and immortalize the principles and practices of forty-one to posterity, is schism and sedition for ever, faction and rebellion *in saecula saeculorum*; which I am sure no honest English heart will ever say *Amen* to. We have, I own, laws against conventicles; but, believe it, it would be but labour in vain to go about to suppress them, while these nurseries of disobedience are suffered to continue. For those first and early aversions to the government, which these shall infuse into the minds of children, will be too strong for the clearest after-convictions which can pass upon them when they are men. So that what these underground workers have once planted a briar, let no governor think, that, by all the arts of clemency and condescension, or any other cultivation whatsoever, he shall be able to change into a rose. Our ancestors, to their great honour, rid the nation of wolves, and it were well, if (notwithstanding their sheep's clothing) the church could be rid of them too; but that neither will nor can ever be, so long as they shall be suffered to breed up their litters amongst us. Good God! can all history shew us any church or state since the creation, that has been able to settle or support itself by such methods? I can, I thank God, (looking both him and my conscience in the face,) solemnly and seriously affirm, that I abhor every thing like cruelty to men's persons, as much as any man breathing does or can; but for all that, the government must not be ruined, nor private interests served to the detriment of the public, though upon the most plausible pretences whatsoever. And therefore it will certainly concern the whole nobility, gentry, and all the sober commonalty of the nation, for the sake of God, their prince, their country, and their own dear posterity, to lay this important matter to heart. For unless these<sup>18</sup> lurking subterraneous nests of disloyalty and schism be utterly broken up and dismantled, all that the power and wit of man can do to secure the government against that faction, which once destroyed it, will signify just nothing. It will be but as the pumping of a leaky vessel, which will be sure to sink for all that, when the devouring element is still soaking and working in an hundred undiscerned holes, while it is cast out only at one.

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18 The reader is desired to cast his eye upon a printed piece, entitled, A Letter from a Country Divine to his Friend in London, concerning the education of the dissenters, in their private academies, in several parts of this nation; humbly offered to the consideration of the grand committee of parliament for religion, now sitting. Printed at London for Robert Clavell in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1703.

2. My other request to you, great men, is, that you would, in your respective stations, countenance all legal, allowed, free grammar-schools, by causing (as much as in you lies) the youth of the nation to be bred up there, and no where else; there being sometimes, and in some respects, as much reason why parents should not breed, as why they should not baptize their children at home.

But chiefly, and in the first place, let your kind and generous influences upon all occasions descend upon this royal and illustrious school, the happy place of your education. A school, which neither disposes men to division in church, nor sedition in state; though too often found the readiest way (for churchmen especially) to thrive by; but trains up her sons and scholars to an invincible loyalty to their prince, and a strict, impartial conformity to the church. A school so untaintedly loyal, that I can truly and knowingly aver, that in the very worst of times (in which it was my lot to be a member of it) we really were king's scholars, as well as called so. Nay, upon that very day, that black and eternally infamous day of the king's murder, I myself heard, and am now a witness, that the king was publicly prayed for in this school but an hour or two (at most) before his sacred head was struck off. And this loyal genius always continued amongst us, and grew up with us; which made that noted corypheus<sup>19</sup> of the independent faction, (and some time after, viz. 1651, promoted by Cromwell's interest to the deanery of Christ-Church in Oxford,) often say, that it would never be well with the nation, till this school was suppressed; for that it naturally bred men up to an opposition to the government. And so far indeed he was in the right. For it did breed up people to an opposition to that government which had opposed and destroyed all governments besides itself; nay, and even itself too at last; which was the only good thing it ever did. But if, in those days, some four or five bred up in this school, (though not under this master,) did unworthily turn aside to other by-ways and principles; we can however truly say this of them, that though *they went out from us, yet they were never of us*. For still the school itself made good its claim to that glorious motto of its royal foundress, *Semper eadem*; the temper and genius of it being neither to be corrupted with promises, nor controlled with threats.

For though, indeed, we had some of those fellows for our governors, (as they called themselves,) yet, thanks be to God, they were never our teachers; no, not so much as when they would have perverted us, from the pulpit. I myself, while a scholar here, have heard a prime preacher<sup>20</sup> of those times, thus addressing himself from this very pulpit, to the leading grandees of the faction in the pew under it. "You stood up," says he, "for your liberties, and you did well." And what he meant by their liberties, and what by their standing up for them, I suppose, needs no explication. But though our ears were still encountered with such doc-

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19 Dr. John Owen.

20 Mr. William Strong.



trines in the church, it was our happiness to be taught other doctrine in the school; and what we drank in there, proved an effectual antidote against the poison prepared for us here.<sup>21</sup>

And therefore, as Alexander the Great admonished one of his soldiers (of the same name with himself) still to remember that his name was Alexander, and to behave himself accordingly; so, I hope, our school has all along behaved itself suitably to the royal name and title which it bears; and that it will make the same august name the standing rule of all its actings and proceedings for ever; still remembering with itself, that it is called the king's school, and therefore let nothing arbitrary or tyrannical be practised in it, whatsoever has been practised against it. Again, it is the king's school, and therefore let nothing but what is loyal come out of it, or be found in it; let it not be so much as tintured with any thing which is either republican or fanatical; that so the whole nation may have cause to wish, that the king may never want such a school, nor the nation may ever want such a king. A prince, great in every thing which deserves to be accounted great; a prince, who has some of all the Christian royal blood in Europe running in his veins; so that to be a prince, is only another word for being of kin to him: who, though he is the princely centre of so many royal lines, meeting in his illustrious person, is yet greater for his qualifications than for his extraction; and upon both accounts much likelier to be envied, than equalled, by any or all the princes about him. In a word, and to conclude all; a prince so deservedly dear to such as truly love their country and the prosperity of it, that, could it be warrantable to pray for the perpetuity of his life amongst us, and reign over us, we could not do it in words more proper and significant for that purpose, than that God would vouchsafe to preserve the one, and continue the other, till we should desire to see a change of either.

*To which God, the great King of kings and Lord of lords, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.*

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21 Viz. Westminster-abbey, where this sermon was appointed to have been preached.

**A SERMON**  
**PREACHED BEFORE**  
**KING CHARLES THE SECOND,**  
**AT HIS**  
**CHAPEL IN WHITEHALL,**  
**ON THE**  
**THIRTIETH DAY OF JANUARY, 1662-3.**  
**BEING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE EXECRABLE MURDER OF THE LATE KING**  
**CHARLES I. OF GLORIOUS MEMORY.**

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**TO THE**  
**ILLUSTRIOUS, BLESSED, AND NEVER-DYING MEMORY**  
**OF**  
**CHARLES THE FIRST,**  
**KING OF GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND IRELAND, DEFENDER OF THE FAITH,**  
**&c.**

Causelessly rebelled against, unhumanly imprisoned, and at length barbarously murdered before the gates of his own palace, by the worst of men, and the most obliged of subjects.

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**JUDGES xix. 30.**

*And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.*

**T**HE occasion of these words was a foul and detestable fact, which had happened in one of the tribes of Israel; and the occasion of that fact was (as the text not obscurely intim-

ates) the want of kingly government amongst the Israelites at that time: it being noted as a thing of particular remark, in [Judges xxi](#). and the last, that this villainy was committed *when there was no king in Israel*; and when (as a natural consequent thereof) men resolved to live at large; every one, without check or control, doing, as the text tells us, *what was right in his own eyes*; or (according to the more sanctified language of our late times) *as the Spirit moved him*. Such a liberty of conscience, it seems, had they then got, for serving the Devil after his and their own way.

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As for the infamous actors in this tragical scene, we have them boldly owning their shameless fact in open field, avowing it with sword in hand, and for some time defending the same with victory and success against their brethren, then the peculiar people and church of God, twice routed and slaughtered before them in a righteous cause; a cause managed by all the rest of the tribes engaged in it, and that not more with the proper arms of war in one hand, than with a commission from God himself in the other. In which and the like respects, so great a resemblance must needs be acknowledged between this and the late civil war amongst ourselves here in England, that the proceedings of forty-one, and some of the following years, may well pass for the Devil's works in a second edition, or a foul and odious copy, much exceeding the foulness of the original.

I profess not myself either skilled or delighted in mystical interpretations of scripture; nor am I for forcing or wiredrawing the sense of the text, so as to make it designedly foretell the king's death and murder; nor to make England, Scotland, and Ireland (as some enthusiasts have done) the adequate scene for the prophetic spirit to declare future events upon; as if, forsooth, there could not be so much as a few houses fired, a few ships taken, or any other calamitous accident befall this little corner of the world, but that some apocalyptic ignoramus or other must presently find and pick it out of some abused, martyred prophecy of Ezekiel, Daniel, or the Revelation. No; I pretend not to any such illuminations. I am neither prophet nor prophetic prelate, but account it enough for my purpose, if I can bring my present business and the text together, not by design, but accommodation; and as the words themselves are very apposite and expressive, so I doubt not but to find such a parallel in the things expressed by them, that it may be a question, whether the subject of the text, or of this mournful day, may have a better claim to the expression.

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The crime here set off with such high aggravations, was an injury done to one single Levite, in the villainous rape of his concubine; a surprising passage, I confess, to us, who have lived in times enlightening men to the utmost hatred and contempt of the ministry, as a principal part (or rather whole) of their religion: nevertheless we see how, even in those *dark times of the law*, (as our late saints used to call them,) the resentment of the wrong done to this poor Levite rose so high, that it was looked upon as a sufficient ground for a civil war; and accordingly made the concern of all Israel to revenge this quarrel upon the whole tribe of Benjamin, for abetting the villainy. This was the unanimous judgment of the

eleven tribes, and a war was hereupon declared; in which the conduct and preeminence was by divine designation appointed to the royal tribe of Judah; the sceptre being judged by God himself most concerned to assert the privileges of, and revenge the injuries done the crosier; the crown to support the mitre; and, in a word, the sovereign authority to vindicate and abet the sacerdotal, as well as to be blessed by it.



But now, to come to the counterpart of the story, or the application of it to our present case. He who dates the murder of king Charles the First from the fatal blow given upon the scaffold, judges like him who thinks, that it is only the last stroke which fells the tree. No; the killing of his person was but the consummation of the murder first begun in his prerogative: and Pym, and some like him, did as really give a stroke towards the cutting down this royal oak, as Ireton or Cromwell himself. Few, I believe, but have heard of that superfine, applauded invention of theirs, of a double capacity in the king, personal and politic: and, I suppose, the two noted factions, which then carried all before them, distinguished in him these two, that so, to keep pace with one another, each of them might destroy him under one.

For as for those<sup>22</sup> whose post-dated loyalty now consists only in decrying that action, which had been taken out of their hands by others more cunning, though no less wicked than themselves; who, having laid the premises, afterwards ridiculously protest against the conclusion; they do but cover their prevarication with a fig-leaf, there being no more difference between both parties, but only this, that the former used all their art, skill, and industry to give these infamous contrivers of this murder the best colour and disguise they could; whereas their younger brother, the Independent, thought it the safest and surest way to disguise only the executioner.



Well, then, when a long sunshine of mercy had ripened the sins of the nation, so that it was now ready for the shakings of divine vengeance, the seeds of faction and rebellion having for a long time been studiously sowed by seditious libels, and well watered with schismatical lectures; the first assault was made against the clergy, by a pack of inveterate avowed enemies to the church, the fury of whose lust and ambition nothing could allay, but a full power and liberty (which they quickly got) to seize her privileges, prostitute her honours, and ravish her revenues; till at length, being thus mangled, divided, and broke in pieces, (as the Levite's concubine was before her,) she became a ghastly spectacle to all beholders, to all the Israel of God.

Such, therefore, was then the woful condition of our church and clergy, upon the Puritans invasion of their rights, at the breaking out of the late civil war: in which, as we hinted before in the Levite's case, so amongst ourselves also, the cause of our oppressed church was owned and sheltered by the royal standard, and the defence of the ministry (as most properly it

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22 The presbyterian faction.

should be) managed by the defender of the faith. But, alas! the same angry Providence still pursuing the best of kings and causes with defeat after defeat, the lion falling before the wolf, as Judah (the royal tribe) sometimes did before Benjamin, the king himself came to be in effect first unkinged, and all his royalties torn from him, before the year forty-five; and then at last, to complete the whole tragedy in his person as well as office, Charles was murdered in forty-eight.

And this is the black subject and occasion of this day's solemnity. In my reflections upon which, if a just indignation, or indeed even a due apprehension of the blackest fact which the sun ever saw since he hid his face upon the crucifixion of our Saviour, chance to give an edge to some of my expressions, let all such know, the guilt of whose actions has made the very strictest truths look like satires or sarcasms, and bare descriptions sharper than invectives; I say, let such censurers (whose innocence lies only in their indemnity) know, that to drop the blackest ink and the bitterest gall upon this fact, is not satire, but propriety.

And now, since the text here represents the whole matter set forth in it, in these most significant and remarkable words, that *there was no such deed done or seen for many ages before*; and with which words I shall clothe the sad subject before us; I conceive the most proper prosecution thereof, as applied to this occasion, will be to shew wherein the unparalleled strangeness of this deed consists. And for this, since the nature is not to be accounted for, but from a due consideration of the agent, the object, and all that retinue of circumstances which do attend and specify it under a certain denomination, I shall accordingly distribute my discourse into these materials.

- I. I shall consider the person that suffered.
  - II. I shall shew the preparation and introduction to his suffering.
  - III. Shew the quality of the agents who acted in it.
  - V. Describe the circumstances and manner of the fact. And,
  - V. Point out the dismal and destructive consequences of it.
- Of all which in their order; and,

I. For the first of them; the person suffering. He was a king; and, what is more, such a king, not chosen, but born to be so; that is, not owing his kingdom to the vogue of the populace, but to the suffrage of nature. He was a David, a saint, a king, but never a shepherd. Some of all the royal blood in Christendom ran in his veins, that is to say, many kings went to the making of this one.

And his improvements and education fell no ways below his extraction. He was accurate in all the recommending excellencies of human accomplishments, able to deserve, had he not inherited a kingdom; of so controlling a genius, that in every science he attempted, he did not so much study as reign; and appeared not only a proficient, but a prince. And to go no further for a testimony, let his own writings witness so much, which speak him no less



an author than a monarch; composed with such an unfailing accuracy, such a commanding majestic pathos, as if they had been writ, not with a pen, but with a sceptre. And for those whose virulent and ridiculous calumnies ascribe that incomparable piece to others, I say, it is a sufficient argument that those did not write it, because they could not write it. It is hard to counterfeit the spirit of majesty, and the unimitable peculiarities of an incommunicable genius and condition.

At the council-board he had the ability still to give himself the best counsel, but the unhappy modesty to diffide in it; indeed his only fault; for modesty is a paradox in majesty, and humility a solecism in supremacy.

Look we next upon his piety and unparalleled virtues; though without an absurdity I may affirm, that his very endowments of nature were supernatural. So pious was he, that had others measured their obedience to him by his obedience to God, he had been the most absolute monarch in the world; as eminent for frequenting the temple, as Solomon for building one. No occasions ever interfered with his devotions, nor business of state ate out his times of attendance in the church. So firm to the protestant cause, though he conversed in the midst of temptation, in the very bosom of Spain, and though France lay in his, yet nothing could alter him, but that he espoused the cause of religion even more than his beloved queen.

He every way filled the title under which we prayed for him. He could defend his religion as a king, dispute for it as a divine, and die for it as a martyr. I think I shall speak a great truth, if I say, that the only thing that makes protestantism considerable in Christendom is the church of England; and the great thing that does now cement and confirm the church of England is the blood of this blessed saint.

He was so skilled in all controversies, that we may well style him in all causes ecclesiastical, not only supreme governor, but moderator, nor more fit to fill the throne than the chair; and withal so exact an observer and royal a rewarder of all such performances, that it was an encouragement to a man to be a divine under such a prince.

Which eminent piety of his was set off with the whole train of moral virtues. His temperance was so great and impregnable, amidst all those allurements with which the courts of kings are apt to melt even the most stoical and resolved minds, that he did at the same time both teach and upbraid the court; so that it was not so much their own vice, as his example, that rendered their debauchery unexcusable. Look over the whole list of our kings, and take in the kings of Israel to boot, and who ever kept the bond of conjugal affection so inviolate? David was chiefly eminent for repenting in this matter, Charles for not needing repentance. None ever of greater fortitude of mind, which was more resplendent in the conquest of himself, and in those miraculous instances of passive valour, than if he had strewed the field with all the rebels armies, and to the justness of his own cause joined the success of theirs. And yet withal so meek, so gentle, so merciful, and that even to a cruelty

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to himself, that if ever the lion and the lamb dwelt together, if ever courage and meekness united, it was in the breast of this royal person.

And, which makes the rebellion more ugly and intolerable, there was scarce any person of note amongst his enemies, who, even fighting against him, did not wear his colours, *i.e.* carry some peculiar mark of his former favours and obligations. Some were his own menial servants, and *ate bread at his table*, before they *lifted up their heel against him*. Some received from him honours, some offices and employments. I could mention particulars of each kind, did I think their names fit to be heard in a church, or from a pulpit. In short, he so behaved himself towards them, that their rebellion might be malice indeed, but it could not be revenge.

And these his personal virtues shed a suitable influence upon his government. For the space of seventeen years, the peace, plenty, and honour of the English, spread itself even to the envy of all neighbour nations. And when that plenty had pampered them into such an unruliness and rebellion as soon followed it, yet still the justness of his government left them at a loss for an occasion; till at length ship-money was pitched upon, as fit to be reformed into excise and taxes, and the burden of the subject to be took off by plunders and sequestrations.

The king, now, to scatter that cloud which began to gather and look black both upon church and state, made those condescensions to their impudent petitions, that they had scarce any thing to make war for, but what was granted them already; and having thus stript himself of his prerogative, he made it clear to the world, that there was nothing left them to fight for, but only his life. Afterwards, in the prosecution of this unnatural war, what overtures did he make for peace! Nay, when he had his sword in his hand, his armies about him, and a cause to justify him before God and man, how did he choose to compound himself into nothing, to depose and unking himself, by their hard, unconscionable, unhuman conditions! But all was nothing; he might as well compliment a mastiff, or court a tiger, as think to win those who were now hardened in blood, and thoroughpaced in rebellion. The truth is, his conscience uncrowned him, as having a mind too pure and defecate to admit of those maxims and practices of state, that usually make princes great and successful.

Having thus, with a new, unheard of sort of loyalty, fought against, and conquered him, they commit him to prison; and then the king himself notes, that it has been always observed, that there is but little distance from the prisons of kings to their graves. To which I further subjoin, that where the observation is constant, there must needs be some certain standing cause of the connexion of the things observed. And indeed it is a direct transition from the prison to the grave, *a carceribus ad metam*, the difference between them being only this; that he who is buried is imprisoned under ground, and he who is imprisoned is buried above it. And I could wish, that as they thus slew and buried his body, so we had not also buried his funeral.

But to finish this poor imperfect description, though it is of a person so renowned, that he neither needs the best, nor can be injured by the worst; yet in short, he was a prince whose virtues were as prodigious as his sufferings, a true *pater patriae*, a father of his country, if but for this only, that he was the father of such a son.

And yet, this the most innocent of men, and the best of kings, so pious and virtuous, so learned and judicious, so merciful and obliging, was rebelled against, driven out of his own house, pursued like a *partridge upon the mountains*, and like an exile in his own dominions, unhumanly imprisoned, and at length, for a catastrophe of all, barbarously murdered; though in this his murder was the less of the two, in that his death released him from his prison.

II. Having thus seen the quality and condition of the person who suffered, let us in the next place see the engines and preparations by which they gradually ascended to the perpetration of this bloody fact. And indeed it would be but a poor, preposterous discourse, to insist only upon the consequent, without taking notice of the antecedent.

It were too long to dig to the spring of this rebellion, and to lead you to the secrecies of its first contrivance. But, as David's phrase is upon another occasion, it was *framed and fashioned in the lowest parts of the earth*, and there it was *fearfully and wonderfully made*, a work of darkness and retirement, removed from the eye of all witnesses, even that of conscience also; for conscience was not admitted to their councils.

But the first design was to procure a Levite to consecrate their idol, that is to say, a factitious ministry to christen it the cause of God. They still owned their party for God's true Israel; and being so, it must needs be their duty to come out of Egypt, though they provided themselves a red sea for their passage. .

And then for their assistance they repair to the northern steel;<sup>23</sup> and bring in an unnatural, mercenary army, which like a shoal of locusts covered the land. Such as inherited the character of those whom God brought as scourges upon his people the Jews. For still we shall read that God punished his people with an army from the north. *Jer. i. 3. Out of the north there cometh up a nation which shall make her land desolate. Jer. iv. 6. I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.*

Now, to endear and unite these into one interest, they invented a covenant, much like those who are said to have made *a covenant with hell, and an agreement with death*. It was the most solemn piece of perjury, the most fatal engine against the church, and bane of monarchy, the greatest snare of souls, and mystery of iniquity, that ever was hammered by the wit and wickedness of man. I shall not, as they do, abuse scripture language, and call it

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23 This is no reflection upon the Scotch nation, nor intended for such, there having been persons as eminent for their loyalty, piety, and virtue, of that country as of any other: but it reflects upon that Scotch faction, which invaded England with an army, in assistance of the rebels, and together with them made a shift to destroy the monarchy and the church in both kingdoms.



*the blood of the covenant*, but give it its proper title, it was *the covenant of blood*. Such an one as the brethren Simeon and Levi made, when they were going about the like design. Their very posture of taking it was an ominous mark of its intent, and their holding up their hands was a sign that they were ready to strike.

It was such an oglio of treason and tyranny, that one of their assembly,<sup>24</sup> of their own prophets, gives this testimony of it, in his narrative upon it, and his testimony is true; “that it was such a covenant, whether you respect the subject-matter or occasion of it, or the persons that engaged in it, or lastly, the manner of imposing it, that was never read nor heard of, nor the world ever saw the like.” The truth is, it bears no other likeness to ancient covenants, but that as at the making of them they slew beasts, and divided them, so this also was solemnized with blood, slaughter, and division.

But that I may not accuse in general, without a particular charge, read it over as it stands before their synod’s works, I mean their catechism; to which it is prefixed, as if, without it, their system of divinity were not complete, nor their children like to be well instructed, unless they were schooled to treason, and catechised to rebellion. I say, in the covenant, as it stands there, in the third article of it. After they had first promised to defend the privileges of parliament, and the liberties of the kingdoms, at length they promise also a defence of the king; but only thus, “that they will defend his person in the preservation and defence of the true religion and liberties of the kingdoms.” In which it is evident, that their promise of loyalty to him is not absolute, but conditional; bound hand and foot with this limitation, “so far as he preserved the true religion and liberties of the kingdoms.”

From which I observe these two things.

1. That those who promise obedience to their king, only so far as he preserves the true religion, and the kingdoms liberties; withal reserving to themselves the judgment of what religion is true, what false, and when these liberties are invaded, when not; do by this put it within their power to judge religion false, and liberty invaded, as they think convenient, and then, upon such judgment, to absolve themselves from their allegiance.

2. That those very persons, who thus covenant, had already, from pulpit and press, declared the religion and way of worship established in the church of England, and then maintained by the king, to be popish and idolatrous; and withal, that the king had actually invaded their liberties. Now, for men to suspend their obedience upon a certain condition, which condition at the same time they declared not performed, was not to profess obedience, but to remonstrate the reasons of their intended disobedience.

And for a further demonstration of what has been said, read the speech of that worthy knight,<sup>25</sup> at his execution upon Tower-hill, on the 14th of June last. Where, in the third

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24 Mr. Philip Nye.

25 Sir Henry Vane.

page, he says, that what the house of commons did in their acting singly, and by themselves, (which was no less than trying and murdering the king, proscribing his son, and voting down monarchy; with much more, which he there says lay yet in the breast of the house,) was but a more refined pursuit of the designs of the covenant. For the testimony of which person in this matter, I have thus much to say; that he who, having been sent commissioner from hence into Scotland, was the first author and contriver of the covenant there, was surely of all others the most likely to know the true meaning of it; and being ready to die, was most likely then, if ever, to speak sincerely what he knew.

We see here the doctrine of the covenant; see the use of this doctrine, as it was charged home with a suitable application in a war raised against the king, in the cruel usage and imprisonment, killing, sequestering, undoing all who adhered to him, voting no addresses to himself; all which horrid proceedings, though his majesty now stupendously forgives, yet the world will not, cannot ever forget; for his indemnity is not our oblivion.

And therefore, for those persons who now clamour and cry out that they are persecuted, because they are no longer permitted to persecute; and who choose rather to quit their ministry, than to disown the obligation of the covenant; I leave it to all understanding, impartial minds to judge, whether they do not by this openly declare to the world, that they hold themselves obliged by oath, as they shall be able, to act over again all that has been hitherto acted by virtue of that covenant; and consequently, that they relinquish their places, not for being non conformists to the church, but for being virtually rebels to the crown. Which makes them just as worthy to be indulged, as for a man to indulge a dropsy or a malignant fever, which is exasperated by mitigations, and inflamed by every cooling infusion.

But to draw the premises closer to the purpose. Thus I argue. That which was the proper means, that enabled the king's mortal enemies to make a war against him, and upon that war to conquer, and upon that conquest to imprison him; and lastly, upon that imprisonment inevitably put the power into the hands of those, who by that power in the end murdered him; that, according to the genuine consequences of reason, was the natural cause of his murder. This is the proposition that I assert, and I shall not trouble myself to make the assumption.

And indeed those who wipe their mouths and lick themselves innocent, by clapping this act upon the army, make just the same plea that Pilate did for his innocence in the death of Christ, because he left the execution to the soldiers; or that the soldiers themselves may make, for clearing themselves of all the blood that they have spilt, by charging it upon their swords.

I conclude therefore, that this was the gradual process to this horrid fact; this the train laid, to blow up monarchy; this the step by which the king ascended the scaffold.

III. Come we now in the third place to shew, who were the actors in this tragical scene: when, through the anger of Providence, a thriving army of rebels had worsted justice, cleared



the field, subdued all opposition and risings, even to the very insurrections of conscience itself; so that impunity grew at length into the reputation of piety, and success gave rebellion the varnish of religion; that they might consummate their villainy, the gown was called in to complete the execution of the sword; and, to make Westminster-hall a place for taking away lives, as well as estates, a new court was set up, and judges packed, who had nothing to do with justice, but so far as they were fit to be the objects of it. In which, they first of all begin with a confutation of the civilians notion of justice and jurisdiction, it being with them no longer an act of the supreme power, as it was ever before defined to be. Such an inferior crew, such a mechanic rabble were they, having not so much as any arms to shew the world, but what they wore and used in the rebellion, that when I survey the list of the king's judges, and the witnesses against him, I seem to have before me a catalogue of all trades, and such as might better have filled the shops in Westminster-hall, than sat upon the benches. Some of which came to be possessors of the king's houses, who before had no certain dwelling but the king's highway. And some might have continued tradesmen still, had not want, and inability to trade, sent them to a quicker and surer way of traffick, the wars.



Now, that a king, that such a king, should be murdered by such, the basest of his subjects, and not like a Nimrod, (as some sanctified, railing preachers have called him,) but, like an Actaeon, be torn by a pack of bloodhounds; that the steam of a dunghill should thus obscure the sun; this so much enhances the calamity of this royal person, and makes his death as different from his who is conquered and slain by another king, as it is between being torn by a lion, and being eaten up with vermin: an expression too proper, I am sure, as coarse as it is; for where we are speaking of beggars, nothing can be more natural than to think of vermin too.

For that the feet should trample upon, nay, kick off the head, who would not look upon it as a monster? But indeed, of all others, these were the fittest instruments for such a work: for base descent and poor education disposes the mind to imperiousness and cruelty; as the most savage beasts are bred in dens, and have their extraction from under ground. These therefore were the worthy judges and condemners of a great king, even the refuse of the people, and the very scum of the nation; that is, at that time both the uppermost and the basest part of it.

4. Pass we now, in the fourth place, to the circumstances and manner of procedure in the management of this ugly fact. And circumstances, we know, have the greatest cast in determining the nature of all actions; (as we commonly judge of any man's port and quality by the nature of his attendants.)

First of all then, it was not done, like other works of darkness, in secret, nor (as they used to preach) in a corner, but publicly, coloured with the face of justice, managed with openness and solemnity, as solemn as the league and covenant itself. History indeed affords us many examples of princes who have been clandestinely murdered; which, though it be



villainous, yet is in itself more excusable; for he who does such a thing in secret, by the very manner of his doing it, confesses himself ashamed of the thing he does: but he who acts it in the face of the sun, vouches his action for laudable, glorious, and heroic.

Having thus brought him to their high court of justice, (so called, I conceive, because justice was there arraigned and condemned; or perhaps therefore called a court of justice, because it never shewed any mercy, whether the cause needed it or no,) there, by a way of trial as unheard of as their court, they permit him not so much as to speak in his own defence, but with the innocence and silence of a lamb condemn him to the slaughter. And it had been well for them, if they could as easily have imposed silence upon his blood as upon himself.

Being condemned, they spit in his face, and deliver him to the mockery and affronts of soldiers. So that I wonder where the blasphemy lies, which some charge upon those who make the king's sufferings something to resemble our Saviour's. But is it blasphemy to compare the king to Christ in that respect in which Christ himself was made like him? or can he be like us in all things, and we not like him? Certainly there was something in that providence which so long ago appointed the chapter of our Saviour's passion to be read on the day of the king's. And I am sure the resemblance is so near, that had he lived before him, he might have been a type of him. I confess there is some disparity in the case; for they shew themselves worse than Jews. But however, since they make this their objection, that we make the king like Christ, I am willing it should be the greatest of their commendation to be accounted as unlike Christ as they meritoriously are.

Let us now follow him from their mock tribunal to the place of his residence till execution. Nothing remains to a person condemned, and presently to leave the world, but these two things. 1. To take leave of his friends, a thing not denied to the vilest malefactors; which sufficiently appears, in that it has not been denied to themselves. Yet no entreaties from him or his royal consort could prevail with the murderers to let her take the last farewell and commands of a dying husband; he was permitted to make no farewell, but to the world. Thus was he treated, and stript of all, even from the prerogative of a prince to the privilege of a malefactor. 2. The next thing desired by all dying persons is freedom to converse with God, and to prepare themselves to meet him at his great tribunal: but with an Italian cruelty to the soul as well as the body, they debar him of this freedom also; and even solitude, his former punishment, is now too great an enjoyment. But that they might shew themselves no less enemies to private, than they had been to public prayer, they disturb his retirements, and with scoffs and contumelies upbraid those devotions which were then even interceding for them. And I question not but fanatic fury was then at that height, that they would have even laughed at Christ himself in his devotions, had he but used his own prayer.

With these preludiums is he brought to the last scene of mockery and cruelty, to a stage erected before his own palace; and for the greater affront of majesty, before that part of it

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in which he was wont to display his royalty, and to give audience to ambassadors, where now he could not obtain audience himself in his last addresses to his abused subjects. There he receives the fatal blow, there he dies, conquering and pardoning his enemies; and at length finds that faithfully performed upon the scaffold, which was at first so frequently and solemnly promised him in the parliament, and perhaps in the same sense, that he should be made a glorious king.

But even this death was the mercy of murderers, considering what kinds of death several proposed, when they sat in consultation about the manner of it; even no less than the gibbet and the halter; no less than to execute him in his robes, and afterwards drive a stake through his head and body, to stand as a monument upon his grave. In short, all those kinds of death were proposed, which either their malice could suggest, or their own guilt deserve.

And could these men now find in their hearts, or have the face to desire to live, and to plead a pardon from the son, who had thus murdered the father? I speak not only of those wretches who openly imbrued their hands in the bloody sentence, but of those more considerable traitors who had the villainy to manage the contrivance, and yet the cunning to disappear in the execution, and perhaps the good luck to be preferred after it, and (for ought I know) for it too. And as for those who now survive, by a mercy as incredible as their crime, which has left them to the soft expiations of solitude and repentance, (with plenty too attending both;) though usually all the professions such make of repentance are nothing else but the faint resentments of a guilty horror, the convulsions and last breathings of a gasping conscience; and as the mercy by which they live is made a visible defiance to government, and a standing encouragement to these daily alarms of plots and conspiracies; so I beseech God, that even their supposed repentance be not such, that both themselves and the kingdom may hereafter have bitter cause too late to repent of it. But if they should indeed prove such as have no conscience but horror; who by the same crimes will be made irreconcilable, for which they deserved to be impardonable; who would resume those repentings upon opportunity, which they made on extremity; and being saved from the gallows, make the usual requital which is made for that kind of deliverance; I say, if such persons should be only for a time chained and tied up, like so many lions or wolves in the Tower, that they may gather more fierceness to run out at length upon majesty, religion, laws, churches, and the universities; whether God intends by this a repetition of our former confusions, or a general massacre of our persons, (which is the most likely,) the Lord in mercy fit and enable us to endure the smart of a misimproved providence, and the infatuate frustration of such a miraculous deliverance.

But to return to this sacred martyr. We have seen him murdered; and is there now any other scene for cruelty to act? Is not death the end of the murderer's malice, as well as of the life of him who is murdered? No; there is another and a viler instance of their sordid, implacable cruelty.

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In the very embalming his body, and taking out those bowels, (which, had they not relented to his enemies, had not been so handled,) they gave order to those to whom that work was committed diligently to search and see (I speak it with horror and indignation) whether his body were not infected with some loathsome disease.<sup>26</sup> I suppose they meant that which some of his judges were so much troubled with, and which stuck so close to them.

Now every one must easily see, that for them to intimate the inquiry was, in effect, to enjoin the report. And here let any one judge, whether the remorseless malice of embittered rebels ever rose to such a height of tyranny, that the very embalming of his body must needs be a means to corrupt his name; as if his murder was not complete, unless, together with his life, they did also assassinate his fame and butcher his reputation.

But the body of that prince, innocent and virtuous to a miracle, had none of the ruins and gentile rottenness of our modern debauchery. It was firm and clear, like his conscience; he fell like a cedar, no less fragrant than tall and stately. Rottenness of heart and rottenness of bones are the badges of some of his<sup>27</sup> murderers; the noisomeness of whose carcasses, caused by the noisomeness of their lives, might even retaliate and revenge their sufferings, and, while they are under execution, poison the executioner.

But the last grand, comprehensive circumstance of this fact, which is, as it were, the very form and spirit which did actuate and run through all the rest, is, that it was done with the pretences of conscience and the protestations of religion; with eyes lift up to heaven, and expostulations with God, pleas of providence and inward instigations; till at length, with much labour and many groans, they were delivered of their conceived mischief.

And certainly we have cause to deplore this murder with fasting, if it were but for this reason, that it was contrived and committed with fasting. Every fast portended some villainy, as still a famine ushers in a plague. But as hunger serves only for appetite, so they never ordained an humiliation, but for the doing of something, which, being done, might dine them at a thanksgiving. And such a fury did absurd piety inspire into this church militant upon these exercises, that we might as well meet an hungry bear as a preaching colonel after a fast; whose murderous humiliations strangely verified that apposite prophecy in [Isaiah viii. 21](#), *When they shall be hungry, they shall curse their king and their God, and look upwards*; that is, they should rebel and blaspheme devoutly. Though, by the way, he who is always looking upwards can little regard how he walks below.

But was there any thing in the whole book of God to warrant this rebellion? any thing which, instead of obedience, taught them to sacrifice him whom they were to obey? Why yes: Daniel *dreamed a dream*; and there is also something in the Revelation, concerning a

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26 Gregory Clement knew what the disease was.

27 Clement, Peters, &c.

*beast, a little horn, and the fifth vial*, and therefore the king undoubtedly ought to die. But if neither you nor I can gather so much, or any thing like it, from these places, they will tell us, it is because we are not inwardly enlightened.

But others, more knowing, though not less wicked, insist not so much upon the warrant of scripture, but plead providential dispensations: and then God's works, it seems, must be regarded before his words. And the Latin advocate,<sup>28</sup> who, like a blind adder, has spit so much poison upon the king's person and cause, speaks to the matter roundly: *Deum sicuti ducem, et impressa passim divina vestigia venerantes, viam haud obscuram, sed illustrem, et illius auspiciis commonstratam et patefactam ingressi sumus.*<sup>29</sup> But must we read God's mind in his foot steps, or in his word? This is as if, when we have a man's hand-writing, we should endeavour to take his meaning by the measure of his foot.

But still, conscience, conscience is pleaded as a covering for all enormities, an answer to all questions and accusations. Ask what made them fight against, imprison, and murder their lawful sovereign? Why, conscience. What made them extirpate the government, and pocket the revenue of the church? Conscience. What made them perjure themselves with contrary oaths? what makes swearing a sin, and yet forswearing to be none? what made them lay hold on God's promises, and break their own? Conscience. What made them sequester, persecute, and undo their brethren, rape their estates, ruin their families, get into their places, and then say, they only robbed the Egyptians? Why still this large capacious thing, *their conscience*; which is always of a much larger compass than their understanding. In a word, we have lived under such a model of religion, as has counted nothing impious but loyalty, nothing absurd but restitution.

But, O blessed God, to what an height can prosperous, audacious impiety arise! Was it not enough that men once crucified Christ, but that there should be a generation of men who should also crucify Christianity itself? Must he who taught no defence but patience, allowed no armour but submission, and never warranted any man to shed any other blood but his own, be now again mocked with soldiers, and vouched the patron and author of all those hideous murders and rebellions, which an ordinary impiety would stand amazed at the hearing of? and which in this world he has so plainly condemned by his word, and will hereafter as severely sentence in his own person? Certainly, these monsters are not only the spots of Christianity, but so many standing exceptions from humanity and nature: and since most of them are Anabaptists, it is pity that, in repeating their baptism, they did not baptize themselves into another religion.

V. For the fifth and last place, let us view the horridness of the fact in the fatal consequences which did attend it. Every great villainy is like a great absurdity, drawing after it

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28 Mr. Milton.

29 In Praefat. ad Defensionem pro Populo Anglicano, (as his Latin is.)

a numerous train of homogeneous consequences; and none ever spread itself into more than this. But I shall endeavour to reduce them all to these two sorts.

1. Such as were of a civil,
2. Such as were of a religious concern.
1. And first for the civil, political consequences of it.

There immediately followed a change of government, of a government whose praise had been proclaimed for many centuries, and enrolled in the large fair characters of the subject's enjoyment and experience. It was now shred into a democracy; and the stream of government being cut into many channels, ran thin and shallow: whereupon the subject having many masters, every servant had so many distinct servitudes.

But the wheel of Providence, which only they looked upon, and that even to a giddiness, did not stop here; but by a fatal, ridiculous vicissitude, both the power and wickedness of those many was again revolved, and compacted into one: from that one<sup>30</sup> again it returned to many, with several attending variations, till at length we pitched upon one<sup>31</sup> again, one beyond whom they could not go, the *ne plus ultra* of all regal excellency, as all change tends to, and at last ceases upon its acquired perfection.

Nor was the government only, but also the glory of the English nation changed; distinction of orders confounded, the gentry outbraved, and the nobility, who voted the bishops out of their dignities in parliament, by the just judgment of God thrust out themselves, and brought under the scorn and imperious lash of a beggar on horseback; "learning discountenanced, and the universities threatened, their revenues to be sold, their colleges to be demolished; the law to be reformed after the same model; the records of the nation to be burnt."<sup>32</sup> Such an inundation and deluge of ruin, reformation, and confusion had spread itself upon the whole land, that it seemed a kind of resemblance of Noah's deluge, in which only a few men survived amongst many beasts.

2. The other sort of consequences were of a religious concernment. I speak not of the contempt, rebuke, and discouragement lying upon the divines, or rather the preachers<sup>33</sup> of those days; for they brought these miseries upon themselves, and had more cause a great deal to curse their own seditious sermons than to curse Meroz. They sounded the first trumpet to rebellion, and, like true saints, had the grace to persevere in what they first began; courting and recognising an usurper, calling themselves his loyal and obedient subjects,<sup>34</sup>

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30 Cromwell.

31 King Charles II.

32 All this was Sir Henry Vane's villainous and monstrous advice.

33 Presbyterians and Independents.

34 Baxter in his book dedicated to Richard Cromwell did so.



never enduring so much as to think of their lawful sovereign, till at length the danger of tithes, their *unum necessarium*, scared them back to their allegiance.

I speak not therefore of these. But the great destructive consequence of this fact was, that it has left a lasting slur upon the protestant religion. *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines triumph*, lest the Papacy laugh us to scorn: as, if they had no other sort of Protestants to deal with, I am sure they well might.

I confess, the seditious writings of some who called themselves Protestants, have sufficiently bespattered their religion. See Calvin warranting the three estates to oppose their prince, 4 Instit. ch. 20. sect. 31. See master Knox's Appeal, and in that his arguments for resisting the civil magistrate. Read Mr. Buchanan's discourse *de jure regni apud Scotos*. Read the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, under the name of Junius Brutus, writ by Ottoman the civilian. See Pareus upon the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, where he states *atrocem aliquam injuriam*, a large term, and of very easy application, to be a sufficient reason for subjects to take up arms against their king. A book, instead of the author, most deservedly burnt by the hangman. But shall we call this a comment upon the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans? It is rather a comment upon the covenant. Both of which, as they teach the same doctrine, so they deserved, and justly had the same confutation.<sup>35</sup>

But these principles, like sleeping lions, lay still a great while, and were never completely actuate, nor appeared in the field, till the French holy league and the English rebellion.

Let the powder-plot be as bad as it will or can, yet still there is as much difference between the king's murder and that, as there is between an action and an attempt. What the papal bulls and anathemas could not do, factious sermons have brought about. What was then contrived against the parliament house, has been since done by it. What the papists powder intended, the soldiers' match has effected. I say, let the powder-treason be looked upon (as indeed it is) as the product of hell, as black as the souls and principles that hatched it; yet still this reformation-murder will preponderate; and January, in villainy, always have the precedency of November.

And thus I have traced this accursed fact through all the parts and ingredients of it. And now, if we reflect upon the quality of the person upon whom it was done, the condition of the persons who did it, the means, circumstances, and manner of its transaction; I suppose it will fill the measure and reach the height of the words of the text: *that there was no such deed done nor seen since the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt to this day*.

For my own part, my apprehension of it overbears my expression; and how to set it off, I know not; for black receives no other colour. But when I call together all the ideas of horror, rake all the records of the Roman, Grecian, and barbarian wonders, together with new-

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35 Burnt by the common hangman in Oxon, by command of King James the First.

fancied instances and unheard of possibilities, yet I find no parallel; and therefore have this only to say of the king's murder, that it is a thing, than which nothing can be imagined more strange, amazing, and astonishing, except its pardon.<sup>36</sup>

And now, having done with the first part of the text, does it not naturally engage me in the duty of the second? Must such a deed, as was neither seen nor heard of, be also neither spoken of? or must it be stroked with smooth, mollifying expressions? Is this the way to cure the wound, by pouring oil upon those that made it? And must Absalom be therefore dealt with gently, because he was an unnatural and a sturdy rebel?

If, as the text bids, we consider of the fact, and take advice, (that is, advise with reason and conscience,) we cannot but obey it in the following words, and speak our minds. For could Croesus's dumb son speak at the very attempt of a murder upon his prince and father? and shall a preacher be dumb, when such a murder is actually committed?

Or do we think it is enough to make long doleful harangues against murder and cruelty, and concerning the prerogative of kings, without ripping up the particular, mysterious, diabolical arts of its first contrivance? Can things peculiar and unheard of be treated with the toothless generalities of a common place?

I will not be so uncharitable as to charge a consent in this particular wheresoever I find a silence: I will only conclude such to be wiser than others, and to wait for another turn; and from their behaviour rationally collect their expectation. But whosoever is so sage, so prudential, or (to speak more significantly) so much a *politicus*, as to fit himself for every change, he will find, that if ever another turn befalls the nation, it will be the wrong side outwards, the lowest uppermost. And therefore, for these silent candidates of future preferment, I wish them no other punishment for the treason of their desire, than to be preferred under another change.

But I have not yet finished my text, nor, according to the command of it, spoke all my mind. I have one thing more to propose, and with that to conclude.

Would you be willing to see this scene acted over again? to see that restless, plotting humour, which now boils and ferments in many traitorous breasts, once more display itself in the dismal effects of war and desolation? Would you see the rascality of the nation in troops and tumults beleaguer the royal palace? Would you hear ministers absolving their congregations from their sacred oaths of allegiance, and sending them into the field to lose their lives and their souls, in a professed rebellion against their sovereign? Would you see an insolent overturning army, in the heart and bowels of the kingdom, moving to and fro,

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<sup>36</sup> This was far from being intended as a reflection upon the act of indemnity itself, and much less upon the royal author of it, but only as a rhetorical attempt for expressing the transcendent height of one thing by an equally transcendent height of another; viz. by that of the mercy pardoning, and by that of the crime pardoned; both of them, in their several kinds, superlative.

to the terror of every thing which is noble, generous, or religious? Would you see the loyal gentry harassed, starved, and undone by the oppression of base, insulting, grinding committees? Would you see the clergy torn in pieces, and sacrificed by the inquisition of synods, triers, and commissioners?

And to mention the greatest last; would you have the king, with his father's kingdoms, inherit also his fortune? Would you see the crown trampled upon, majesty haled from prison to prison; and at length with the vilest circumstances of spite and cruelty, bleeding and dying at the feet of bloody, unhuman miscreants? Would you, now Providence has cast out the destructive interest from the parliament, and the *house* is pretty well *swept and cleansed*, have the old *unclean spirit return, and take to itself seven spirits*, seven other interests worse than itself, and dwell there, and so make our *latter end worse than our beginning*?

We hear of plots and combinations, parties joining and agreeing; and let us not trust too much in their opposition amongst themselves. The elements can fight, and yet unite into one body. Ephraim against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim; but both equally against the royal tribe of Judah. Now, if we dread these furies again being let loose upon us, oh! let us fear the return of our former provocations. If we would keep off the axe from our princes and nobles, let us lay it to our sins. If we would preserve their lives, let us amend our own. We have complained of armies, committees, sequestrators, triers, and decimators. But our sins, our sins are those that have sucked the blood of this nation; these have purpled the scaffold with the royal gore, these have ploughed up so many noble families, made so many widows, and snatched the bread out of the mouths of so many poor orphans. It is our not *fearing God*, that has made others not to *honour the king*; our not benefiting by the ordinances of the church, that has enriched others with her spoils.

And now, since I have slid into a mention of the church of England, which at this time is so much struck and railed at, and in danger (like its first head) to be crucified between two thieves, I shall say thus much of it; that it is the only church in Christendom we read of, whose avowed principles and practices disown all resistance of the civil power; and which the saddest experience and the truest policy and reason will evince to be the only one that is durably consistent with the English monarchy. Let men look both into its doctrine and into its history, and they will find neither the Calvins, the Knoxes, the Junius Brutuses, the synods, nor the holy commonwealths of the one side; nor yet the Bellarmines, the Escobars, nor the Marianas of the other. It has no fault but its revenues; and those too but the remainders of a potent, surfeited sacrilege. And therefore, if God in his anger to this kingdom should suffer it to be run down, either by the impious nonsense and idolatry of one party, or the sordid tyranny and fanaticism of the other; yet we will acquiesce in this, that if ever our church falls, it falls neither tainted with the infamy of popish plots, nor of reforming rebellions; and that it was neither her pretended corruption or superstition, but her own lands, and the kingdom's sins, that destroyed her.

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For when I hear of conspiracies, seditious designs, covenants, and plots, they do not much move or affright me. But when I see the same covetousness, the same drunkenness and profaneness, that was first punished in ourselves, and then in our sanctified enemies; when I see joy turned into a revel, and debauchery proclaim itself louder than it can be proclaimed against; these, I must confess, stagger and astonish me; and I cannot persuade myself, that we were delivered to do all these abominations.

But, if we have not the grace of Christians, have we not the hearts of men? Have we no bowels, no relentings? If the blood and banishment of our kings cannot move us, if the miseries of our common mother the church, ready to fall back into the jaws of purchasers and reformers, cannot work upon us, yet shall we not at least pity our posterity? Shall we commit sins, and breed up children to inherit the curse? Shall the infants now unborn have cause to say hereafter, in the bitterness of their souls, *Our fathers have eaten the sour grapes of disobedience, and our teeth are set on edge by rebellions and confusions?*

How does any man know, but the very oath he is swearing, the lewdness he is committing, may be scored up by God as one item for a new rebellion? We may be rebels, and yet neither vote in parliaments, sit in committees, or fight in armies. Every sin is virtually a treason; and we may be guilty of murder, by breaking other commands besides the sixth.

But at present *we are made whole*: God has by a miracle healed the breaches, cured the maladies, and bound up the wounds of a bleeding nation: what remains now, but that we take the counsel that seconded a like miraculous cure; *Go, sin no more, lest a worse evil come unto thee*. But since our evil has been so superlative as not to acknowledge a worse; since our calamities, having reached the highest, give us rather cause to fear a repetition, than any possibility of gradation; I shall dismiss you with the like though something altered advice, *Go, sin no more, lest the same evil befall you*.

*Which God of his infinite mercy prevent, even that God by whom kings reign and princes decree justice; by whom their thrones are established, and by whom their blood will assuredly be revenged. 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**  
**BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,**  
**AT**  
**ST. MARY'S CHURCH, OXON,**  
**ON AN ACT-SUNDAY.**

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**2 CORINTHIANS xi. 14.**

*And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

**H**E who has arrived to that pitch of infidelity as to deny that there is a Devil, gives a shrewd proof that he is deluded by him; and so by this very denial does unawares infer the thing which he would deny. There have indeed been some in all ages, sects, and religions, who have promoted the Devil's interests by arguing against his being. For that which men generally most desire, is to go on in their sin without control; and it cannot be more their desire, than the Devil accounts it his interest, that they should do so. But when they are told withal, that he who tempts to sin now, is to execute God's wrath for our sin hereafter, the belief of a spirit, appointed to so terrible an office, standing so directly between them and their sins, they can never proceed smoothly in them, till such a belief be first taken out of the way; and therefore, no wonder if men argue against the thing they hate; and, for the freer enjoyment of their lusts, do all they can to baffle and throw off a persuasion, which does but *torment them before their time*: this undoubtedly being the true, if not only ground of all the disputes men raise against demons, or evil spirits, that their guilt has made it their concern that there should be none.

Nevertheless, on the other side, it must be considered, that the proving of spirits and immaterial substances from the common discourses of the world upon this subject, has not hitherto proved so successful as might be wished. For that there are such finite, incorporeal beings, as we call spirits, I take to be a point of that moment, that the belief of it ought to be established upon much surer proofs than such as are commonly taken from visions, and apparitions, and the reports which use to go of them; it having never hitherto been held for solid reasoning, to argue from what seems to what exists; or, in other words, from appearances to things; especially since it has been found so frequent, for the working of a strong fancy and a weak judgment to pass with many for apparitions. Nor yet can I think the same sufficiently proved from several strange effects, chances, and alterations, which (as historians



tell us) having sometimes happened in the world, and carrying in them the marks of a rational efficiency, (but manifestly above all human power,) have therefore by some been ascribed to spirits, as the proper and immediate causes thereof. For such a conclusion, I conceive, cannot be certainly drawn from thence, unless we were able to comprehend the full force and activity of all corporeal substances, especially the celestial; so as to assign the utmost term which their activity can reach to, and beyond which it cannot go; which, I suppose, no sober reasoner or true philosopher will pretend to.

And therefore in the present case, allowing the forementioned common arguments all the advantage of probability they can justly lay claim to; yet if we would have a certain proof of the existence of finite spirits, good or bad, we ought, no doubt, to fetch it from that infallible word of revelation, held forth to us in the scriptures; and so employ faith to piece up the shortness and defects of science; which, as no thing but faith can do, so that man must by no means pretend to faith, who will not sell his assent under a demonstration; nor indeed to so much as prudence, who will be convinced by nothing but experience, when perhaps the experiment may prove his, destruction. He who believes that there is a Devil, puts himself into the ready way to escape him. But as for those modern Sadducees, who will believe neither angel nor spirit, because they cannot see them; and with whom *invisible* and *incredible* pass for terms perfectly equipollent; they would do wisely to consider, that as the fowler would certainly spoil his own game, should he not, as much as possible, keep out of sight; so the Devil never plants his snares so skilfully and successfully, as when he conceals his person; nor tempts so dangerously, as when he can persuade men that there is no tempter.

But I fear I have argued too far upon this point already; since it may seem something inartificial for the sermon to prove what the text had supposed. But since the infidelity of the present age has made the proof of that necessary, which former ages took for granted, I hope the usefulness of the subject will atone for what may seem less regular in the prosecution. It must therefore be allowed (and that not only from the foregoing probable arguments, but much more from an infallible and divine testimony) that there is a devil, a satan, and a tempter. And we have him here presented to us under such a strange kind of mask or vizard, that we cannot see him for light; and then surely he must needs walk undiscovered, who can make that, which discovers all things else, his disguise. But the wonder ought to abate, if we consider, that there is a light which dazzles and deludes, as well as one which informs and directs; and that it is the former of these which Satan *clothes himself with, as with a garment*. A light so far resembling that of the stars, that it still *rules by night*, and has always darkness both for its occasion and companion. The badge of truth is unity, and the property of falsehood variety; and accordingly the Devil appears all things, as he has occasion; the priest, the casuist, the reformer, the reconciler; and in a word, any thing but himself. He can change his voice, his dress, and the whole scene of his fallacies; and by a dexterous management of the fraud, present you with an Esau under the form of a Jacob; for the old serpent

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can shift his skin, as often as he has a turn to serve by his doing so. For it is a short and easy transition from darkness to light, even as near as the confines of night and day. So that this active spirit can quickly pass from one to the other, and equally carry on a work of darkness in both. We read of a *daemonium meridianum*, though the sun, we know, is then highest, and the light greatest. The Psalmist, in [Psalm xci. 6](#), tells us not only of a *pestilence which walks in darkness*, but also of a *destruction which wasteth at noon-day*; and consequently that he who is the great manager both of the one and the other, is as much a devil when he shines as Lucifer, as when he destroys as Satan.

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Now the Devil, I conceive, is represented to us thus transformed in the text, not so much in respect of what he is in his person, as in his practice upon men; for none ever dissembles or conceals himself, but he has a design upon another. And therefore, to prosecute the sense of the words by as full a representation of his frauds as I am able to give, I shall discourse of him in this method.

I. I shall endeavour to shew the way of his operation upon the soul, in conveying his fallacies into the minds of men.

II. I shall shew the grand instances in which he has played an angel of light, in the several ages of the church successively. And

III. and lastly, give caution against some principles, by which he is like to repeat the same cheat upon the world, if not prevented in time to come.

And first, for the influence he has upon the soul.

To lay open here all the ways whereby this spiritual engineer works upon us, to trace the serpent in all his windings and turnings, is a thing, I believe, as much above a mere human understanding, as that is below an angelical; but so far as the ducture of common reason, scripture, and experience will direct our inquiries, we shall find that there are three ways by which he powerfully reaches and operates upon the minds of men. As,

1. By moving, stirring, and sometimes altering the humours and disposition of the body. That the soul in all its operations is strangely affected by and held down to the particular crasis and constitution of the corporeal part is indubitable. And that the Devil can model and frame the temperament of it to his own purpose, the woman whom Satan is said to have bound for so many years, [Luke xiii. 16](#), is a convincing instance. Now this expert anatomist, who has examined and looked into all the secret recesses, caverns, and little fibres both of body and soul, (as I may so express the matter,) knows that there is no grace but has its counterfeit in some passion; and no passion of the mind, but moves upon the wheel of some humour of the body. So that it is easy for him to refine, and, as it were, sanctify the fire and fury of a choleric humour into zeal, and raise the operations of melancholy to the semblance of a mortified demureness and humiliation. On which case of supposed sorrow for sin, but real disturbance from some other cause, it is not to be questioned, but many repair to the divine, whose best casuist were an apothecary; and endeavour to cure and carry off their

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despair with a promise, or perhaps a prophecy, which might be better done with a purge. Poor self-deluding souls! often misapplying the blood of Christ under these circumstances, in which a little effusion of their own would more effectually work the cure; and Luke as physician give them a much speedier relief, than Luke as an evangelist.

2. The Devil can act upon the soul, by suggesting the ideas and spiritual pictures of things (as they may be not unfitly called) to the imagination. For this is the grand repository of all the ideas and representations which the mind of man can work either upon or by. So that Satan, our skilful artist, can as easily slide his injections into the fancy, as present a deluding image to the eye., From whence it is, that poor deluded women (followers of conventicles, or rather of such as meet them there) talk much of sudden joys, and raptures, and secret whispers of the Spirit, with a great deal more of such cant; in all which this grand impostor is still at his old work, and whether he speaks in the gentle charming voice of a comforter, or roars in the terrible thunders of damnation, is, and ever was, a liar from the beginning, and will be so to the end. Again, some perhaps have had a text, of something a peculiar significancy, cast into their fancy; as that for instance in [Jerem. xlviii. 10](#), *Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from shedding blood*; whereupon they presently thought themselves commissioned, by an extraordinary call from Heaven, to cut and slay all such as fought for the crown and the church, in the late infamous rebellion.<sup>37</sup> Likewise it is very credible, that the same spirit can in discourse suggest smart sentences and strictures of wit, far surpassing the invention of the speaker; for otherwise, whence can it be that persons, known to be deplorably dull in other things, can yet be witty upon a subject obscene or profane? And no doubt, what the Papists falsely and ridiculously said of Luther, may with great truth be said of many leading heretics, that the Devil furnished them with arguments. For where the cause is his, he will never be wanting to give it an helping hand, but will be still with the heretic in his study, guiding his pen, and assisting his invention with many a lucky turn of thought and sophistical reasoning. So that upon the whole matter, the Devil himself may, perhaps, more properly pass for the heretic, and Arius or Socinus only for the amanuensis. For he is able to present images of words and sentences to the imagination, in as clear and perspicuous an order, as the most faithful and methodical memory. And why should the common word be, that the Devil stands at the liar's elbow, if he were not to be his prompter? But

3. The Devil can work upon the soul, by an actual ingress into and personal possession of the man, so as to move and act him; and like a kind of vicarious soul, use his body, and the several faculties and members thereof, as instruments of the several operations which he exerts by them. Upon which account persons so possessed were heretofore called

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<sup>37</sup> Such persons, principles, and practices, can want nothing to enable them to overthrow any government, but to be countenanced by it.



πνευματόφοροι, and ἐνεργούμενοι. And if any one here should doubt, that a spirit can move and impel a body, since without quantity and dimensions on both sides there can be no contact, and since without contact some think all impulsions impossible, this maxim, if too far insisted upon, would bear as hard upon the soul itself, as to its moving the body, (allowing it to be a spiritual immaterial substance; which, I hope, in a Christian auditory, needs not to be proved.) And now, the premises thus supposed, how easy must it be for this spirit to cast any person possessed by him into a kind of prophetic ecstasy, and, with other amazing extravagancies, to utter through him certain sentences and opinions, and in the utterance thereof to intermix some things pious and good, to take off the suspicion, and qualify the poison of the bad? For so the sibyls used to wait, till at a certain time the demons entered into them, and gave answers by them, suspending the natural actings of their souls, and using their bodily organs of speech, with strange prodigious convulsions, and certain circumstances of raving and unseemly horror attending them; as Virgil elegantly describes the Cumaean sibyl, in his 6th Æneid.



—Subito non vultus, non color unus,  
Non comptae mansere comae; sed pectus anhelum,  
Et rabie fera corda tument; majorque videri,  
Nec mortale sonans, &c.

Of which words, the Quakers amongst us (as little as they deal in Latin) have yet been the best and fullest interpreters, by being the liveliest instances of the thing described in them of any that I know. And so likewise in the case of the person possessed, [Acts xix. 16](#). Certainly he could never have prevailed over so many men, had he not had something in him stronger than man. But what needs there any further arguing, or how is it possible for that man to question whether the Devil can enter into and take possession of men, who shall read how often our Saviour cast him out?

These, I say, are the physical ways of operation which the Devil can employ, so as to insinuate there by his impostures in a clever unsuspected manner: which three general ways doubtless may be improved by so experienced a craftsman into myriads of particulars. But I shall confine myself to his dealings with the church, and that only within the times of Christianity; and so pass to the second general head proposed.

II. Which was to shew the grand instances in which the Devil, under this mask of light, has imposed upon the Christian world. And here we must premise this general observation, as the basis of all the ensuing particulars; viz. that it has been the Devil's constant method to accommodate his impostures to the most received and prevailing notions, and the peculiar proper improvements of each particular age. And, accordingly, let us take a survey of the several periods of them. As,



1. The grand ruling principle of the first ages of the church, then chiefly consisting of the gentile converts, was an extraordinarily zealous devotion and concern for the honour and worship of one only God, having been so newly converted from the worship of many: which great truth, since the Devil could neither seasonably nor successfully oppose then, he saw it his interest to swim with the stream, which he could not stem, and, by a dexterous turn of hand, to make use of one truth to supplant another. Accordingly, having met with a fit instrument for his purpose, he sets up in Arianism, and with a bold stroke strikes at no lower an article than the god head of the Son of God; and so manages this mighty and universal hatred of polytheism, to the rejection of a trinity of divine coequal Persons, as no ways consistent with the unity of the divine essence. The blasphemy of which opinion needed, no doubt, a more than ordinary artist to give it the best gloss and colour he could, and therefore was not to be introduced and ushered into the world, but by very plausible and seemingly pious pleas.

As for instance, that the ascribing of a deity or divine nature to Christ, was not so much a removal of polytheism, as a change. That for Christ to decry the pagan gods, and yet assume the godhead to himself, was, instead of being their reformer, to be their rival; and that by thus transferring divine worship to his own person, he did not so much destroy idolatry, as monopolize it. Moreover, that Christ himself professes his Father to be greater than he; and therefore, that either he himself is not God, or, if so, that the deity then includes not the highest degree of perfection. For if Christ was God, and upon that account comprehended in him all perfections, how could the Father be greater? which relation yet must imply a degree of perfection above that of the Son. And if it should be here replied, that the Father is greater in respect of a personal excellency, but not of a natural; such as reply so should do well to consider, how it can be, that where essence includes all perfection, personality can add any further. Besides, that the granting Christ to be the Son of God will not therefore infer him to be God. For the son of a king is but his father's subject; and consequently, to assert any more concerning Christ, seems to be only paganism refined, and idolatry in a better dress.

These, I say, were the Arian objections against the deity of our Saviour; all of them extremely sophistical and slight, and such as the heathen philosophers had urged all along against the Christian religion, for near three hundred years before Arius was born: and we shall find them grounded only upon their not distinguishing between perfection absolute and relative, and their absurd arguing from finite and created beings to a being infinite and uncreate; as might easily be shewn in each of the foregoing particulars, would the time allotted for this exercise permit. So that it was a most true and proper remark, that if we take from hereticks disputing against any article of the Christian faith what is common to them with the heathens disputing against the whole body of Christianity, they will have little or nothing left them which is new, or can be called peculiarly their own. Nevertheless, such plausible

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stuff, backed with power, and managed by the Devil, drew over most of the Christian churches, for a considerable time, to Arianism; and so, by a very preposterous way of worship, made them sacrifice the Son to the honour of the Father. But,

2. As the Arian ages had chiefly set themselves to run down, or rather quite take away our Saviour's divinity; so the following ages, by an ἀμετρία τῆς ἀνθολκῆς, a kind of contrary stretch, were no less intent upon paying a boundless and exorbitant devotion to every thing belonging to his humanity; and in a very particular and more than ordinary manner, to those who had eminently done and suffered (especially to the degree of martyrdom) for his person and religion. And this was the course all along taken by the papal heresy, from the very first that it got footing in the church; touching which, let none think it strange, that I make an immediate step from the times of Arianism to those of Popery, as if there ought to be a greater interval put between them. For though it must be confessed, that Arianism received its mortal wound by the first council of Nice, pretty early in the fourth century; yet these following heresies of Macedonianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, Monotheletism, &c. (which, as different as they were amongst themselves, were yet, in truth, but so many shoots out of the old Arian stock,) continued much longer, and reached considerably beyond the sixth century; about the end whereof, and the beginning of the seventh, Popery began to work and shew itself by degrees; (Gregory the Great, who lived till the year of our Lord 604, being, not without cause, reckoned the last of the good popes of Rome, and the first of the bad;) so that in truth there was no vacancy, or intermediate chasm of time, between the Arian poison ceasing, and the Popish ferment beginning to infest the church. Well then, the deity of Christ having been thus irrefragably proved, and Arianism, with its appendant heresies, at length drawing off the stage, and another predominant principle coming on, it was now time for the grand deceiver to change his hand, being to work upon quite different materials, as well as with quite different instruments; and so to turn that vast honour and zeal, which, as we observed, the world bore to Christ's human nature, to the perverting, depraving, and undermining of Christianity itself. For from hence men came to give that inordinate veneration to the sacrament of Christ's body and blood; and for the defence thereof invented that monster of absurdities, transubstantiation. After which, with great industry, they got together and kept all relicks, which any way represented his memory, as pieces of the cross, and pictures of his body, till at length they even adored them; and, to justify their so doing, they cast their practice into a doctrine, that the crucifix was to be adored with relative divine worship; more than which, by the way, the heathens themselves never gave to their idols; but worshipped them only so far as they were representations, or rather significations of those effects and benefits, for which they adored the Deity, the great cause and original of them. But this superstition stopped not here, but extended itself likewise to Christ's friends and followers, the saints; those especially, who, as I noted before, had sealed their profession with their blood: the memory of whom they celebrated with solemn invoc-

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ations of them at their sepulchres, making offerings to them there, and bowing and falling prostrate at the very mention of their names, till at length this reverential respect grew into downright adoration. And thus by degrees Paganism came to be christened into a new form and name, by their setting up their *divi*, or begodded tutelal saints, and prosecuting their apotheosis with divine worship. And lest in this they might seem to intrench upon the honour of Christ, by treating his saints and servants upon equal terms with himself, they made their very zeal for his honour a plea for their making these saints their intercessors with him; alleging, forsooth, their own unfitness and utter unworthiness to approach him by a direct address, without such a mediation: as subjects do then most acceptably petition their earthly prince, when their suits are handed to him by some particular and beloved favourite: a shrewd argument, no doubt, if God and man proceeded by the same methods. But to go on: since religion would be but a very lame and imperfect institution, should not points of faith be seconded with suitable rules of practice; hereupon mortification and austerity of life were, in shew at least, equally advanced, and Satan began to play the white devil, by prohibiting, upon pretence of higher sacerdotal purity, the marriage of the clergy, (though at the same time reckoned by themselves a sacrament,) forbidding also certain sorts of meat, and enjoining others; as likewise imposing hair shirts, whips, scourges, with many more such corporal severities; for the recommending of all which to men's use, they taught them, that these practices were satisfactory for sin and meritorious of heaven. And lest this might seem to derogate from Christ's satisfaction, (as it certainly did,) they distinguished sins into mortal and venial. And whereas they held, that these venial sins could not deserve eternal death; and withal, that many men die before they have completed their repentance; for them they invented a certain place in the other world, for the temporal, penal expiation of such sins; to wit, purgatory. And since the pains of this were not to be eternal, but that a deliverance and redemption of the souls held therein might be procured, and that by the merit of the good works of others, to help out those who had none of their own, they came from hence to assert works of supererogation, as they called them; which good works, and the merit of them, not being always actually employed for the benefit of any, (and as if the world abounded more with good works than bad,) they are said to be reserved in the treasury of the church, to be disposed of (as there should be occasion) to such as were able and willing to ransom their suffering friends with silver and gold, (the very best of metals, and always held by them a valuable price for souls,) and this produced indulgences; the most useful and profitable part of the whole Romish religion.

By all which particulars put together, you may see the curious contexture and concatenation of the several mysteries and intrigues of Popery; and how artificially one is linked to and locked within the other, in this chain of darkness made to hold and keep poor souls *to the judgment of the great day*; and (if God be not so merciful as to save them in spite of their religion) to condemn them in it too. And now these tenets being advantaged by the suitable-

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ness of them to man's natural disposition, (which in matters of belief is too prone to credulity and superstition, and in matters of practice to an arrogant opinion of merit, every man being too apt to think that a good action obliges God, and satisfies for an ill one;) these tenets, I say, were upon these terms easily imbibed by the vulgar in those dark times of ignorance; which ignorance also was carefully cherished and kept up, by maintaining the sufficiency of an implicit faith, and securing the scriptures under the double lock of an unknown language and a bad translation. Besides all which, that they might not in the last place want a sure shelter and strong hold to defend them, in case this terrible book of the scriptures should come to be unsealed and let loose upon them, they had two other refuges to fly to; to wit, that of unwritten traditions, without which they held the scriptures imperfect; and of an infallible judge, without which they affirmed them to be obscure; two qualifications which must unavoidably render the scriptures an incompetent rule of faith. And thus the nail is driven home, and riveted too; and upon their being hereby made judges in their own cause, they do and must stand incorrigible; forasmuch as all conviction upon these terms is utterly impossible. And thus we have seen what a lofty Babel has been raised by this grand architect of mischief and confusion, the Devil; a Babel, with the top of it reaching to heaven, and the foundation of it laid in hell. And we have seen likewise the materials with which, and the arts by which, this stupendous structure was reared: and since neither old nor new Babel was built in a day, we have given some account also how this master-builder has all along suited his tools and engines to the proper genius and condition of each several age; sometimes working in the light, and sometimes in the dark; sometimes above ground, and sometimes under it; but in all, like a Romish priest, still under a disguise.

And here, I think, it may be further worth our considering, that since the aspects and influences in heaven (which are some of the chief instruments whereby Providence governs this lower world) must needs work considerably upon the tempers, humours, and constitutions of men, under their several positions and revolutions; it cannot but follow, that the same must work very powerfully about the affairs of religion also, so far as the tempers and dispositions of men are apt to mingle and strike in with them. And accordingly, as I have observed that Satan played his papal game chiefly in the times of ignorance, and sowed his tares while the world was asleep; *cum Augustmus haberetur inexpugnabilis dialecticus, quod legisset categorias Aristotelis. Cum qui Graece sciret, suspectus; qui autem Hebraice, plane magicus putaretur*; when the words *haereticum devita* were looked upon as sufficient to warrant the taking away the life of an heretic: so on the other side, when this mist of ignorance began to clear up, and polite learning to recover, and get footing again in the world, by the great abilities and industry of Erasmus, Melancthon, Politian, Budaeus, Calvin, and several others, men generally then began to smell out the cheat; and after a long growing suspicion of the imposture they had been held under, came at length to a resolution quite to throw it off. But then again, lest so sudden and mighty a stream of light, breaking in upon the prince

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of darkness, might wholly overbear and baffle all his projects, he also began wisely to light up his candle too, in the new sect and society of Ignatius Loyola; a sect composed of the best wits and ablest heads, the most learned and industrious that could be got, to list themselves to serve the pope under him. And by this course he quickly brought his myrmidons to fight the Protestants at their own weapons, and for parts and literature to vie with the reformation. For he saw well enough that it was learning which must do his business, when ignorance was grown out of fashion: and that when such multitudes were resolved to have their eyes open, it was time for him to look about him too. Accordingly Satan, who loves to compass his ends and amuse the world by contrary methods, (like the evil spirit in the gospel, sometimes casting the person possessed by him into the fire, and sometimes into the water,) having, as we have noted, long imposed upon Christendom by Popery, and at length finding a new light sprung in upon a great part of it, and mightily chasing away that darkness before it, he thought it his interest to trump up a new scene of things; and so, correspondently to the two main parts of religion, speculative and practical, he fell upon two contrary, but equally destructive extremes, Socinianism and enthusiasm. Thus, like a subtle disputant, casting his argument into such a dilemma, as should be sure to gain him his point, and gall his enemy one way or other. And,

1. For the first extreme, Socinianism. Faustus Socinus seems to have been a person so qualified by Providence with a competent stock of parts and measure of reason, (for the man was no miracle, either in divinity or philosophy,) to shew, how woefully such an one (being left to himself) might blunder, and fall short of the right notions of religion, even in the plainest and most important points of it. He was indeed so bred and principled by his uncle Lelius, that Satan thought him a fit instrument for the advancement of the light of reason above that of revelation, by making (as he notoriously did) the former the sole judge of the latter. Socinus's main design (or pretence at least) was to bring all the mysteries of Christianity to a full accommodation with the general notions of man's reason; and so far the design was no doubt fair and laudable enough, had it kept within the bounds of a sober prosecution. For that which is contrary to reason cannot be true in religion; nor can God contradict that in the book of his revealed word, which he had writ before in the book of nature: so much, I say, is certain, and cannot be denied. Nevertheless, a little reason will prove also, that many things may seem contrary to reason, which yet really are not so; and where this seeming contrariety is, the question will be, whether revelation ought to control reason, or reason prescribe to revelation; which indeed is the very hinge upon which the whole Socinian controversy turns.

But to proceed, and shew that even Socinianism itself, by a kind of antiperistasis, took its rise from Popery, as the occasion or accidental cause of it, it is to be observed, that those nice, bold, and unjustifiable notions, which many of the schoolmen had advanced concerning the divine essence and persons, (things which the mind of man can form to itself no express

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idea, nor consequently any clear comprehensive knowledge of,) caused in Socinus such an high loathing of and aversion to that whole scheme of Christian theology which then obtained in the world, that, breaking through all, he utterly denied the divine nature of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; and so exploded the whole doctrine of the Trinity, as no part or article of the Christian religion; frequently alleging also, that the urging the necessity of believing notions so contrary (as he pretended) to the discourses and maxims of natural reason, mightily scandalized and kept off the Jews, Turks, and rational infidels from embracing Christianity. And this consideration he laid no small stress upon.

But in answer to it; by his favour, the contrariety of the notions here excepted against to the maxims of natural reason (as confidently as it has been all along supposed by him) was never yet proved; and as for the offence taken at it by Jews and Turks, he might have remembered, that the doctrines preached by St. Paul himself found no better acceptance, as being *to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness*; but neither by him who preached it, nor by those who received it, at all the less valued for its being so: and certainly the Christian church would make but an ill bargain, to barter away any one article of her faith, to gain either Turk or Jew: and I shrewdly guess, that the Jews themselves understood bargaining too well, to part with their Moses for a Socinian Christ. But further, as touching this heresy: the time when it was vented in the world is no less observable than the instruments by whom; Satan suiting the work he had to do to the peculiar qualification of the age which he was to do it in. For as the schoolmen, who were the greatest and most zealous promoters of the papal interest, sacrificing both reason and religion to the support of it, were in the highest vogue for some ages before; so the age wherein it began to decline and go downwards had entertained a general contempt of, and aversion to, that sort of learning, as may appear out of Sir Thomas More's Defence of Erasmus, and other critics, against Dorpius, a great patron and admirer of school-divinity. And as for Socinus himself, the Polonian who wrote his life testifies, *illum scholasticam theologiam nunquam attigisse*. Thus therefore was he qualified, it seems, to baffle the learned part of the world; and having made his first adventure in denying Christ's divinity, and bringing it much lower than ever Arius did, the denial of his satisfaction unavoidably followed; no mere creature being able, in a strict sense, to merit of God, and much less to satisfy for sin. So that we see here how Satan, under the plausible plea of reason, introduced a doctrine into the world, which has shook every article of our faith; and in the full compass of it grasps in the most considerable heresies that ever were; especially those two topping ones of Photinianism and Pelagianism. And whosoever shall, by a true and impartial logic, spin it out into its utmost consequences shall find, that it naturally tends to, and inevitably ends in, the destruction of all religion: and that where Socinianism has laid the premises, atheism cannot be kept out of the conclusion. But now, that even reason itself is but pretended only, and not really shewn in the doctrines

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of Socinus, give me leave to demonstrate in one or two instances, instead of many more that might be assigned.

1. That this doctrine asserts Christ to be a mere creature, and yet ascribes to him divine worship, and that both as to adoration and invocation; and this upon absolute and indispensable necessity.<sup>38</sup> So that whereas Socinus says, that the Jews and Turks are so scandalized at our asserting Christ's deity, I am sure, that, by a peculiar and better grounded aversion, they are more scandalized at idolatry. And if Socinus will advance this proposition, that Jesus Christ is not by nature God, let Jews, Turks, and all infidels of common sense alone to make the assumption, that then he is not to be worshipped with divine worship. Christianus Francken shame fully baffled Socinus upon this head. And it is impossible for him, or any of his tribe, to maintain it. But,

. This doctrine asserts also, that God cannot certainly foreknow future contingents; as Socinus positively concludes in the eleventh chapter of his Prelections;<sup>39</sup> where, in answering,

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38 See Socinus in his catechism, discoursing of those who allow not of the adoration and invocation of Christ. "Quid censes," says he, "de iis, qui ista Christo non tribuunt?" To which he answers: "Censeo illos non esse Christianos; quippe qui revera Christum non habeant: et Jesum esse Christum licet fortasse aperte verbis non audeant, re tamen ipsa omnino negent." And elsewhere: "Praestat Trinitarium esse, quam asserere Christum non esse adorandum."

39 "Cum igitur nulla ratio, nullus sacrarum literarum locus sit, ex quo aperte colligi possit, Deum omnia, quae fiunt, scivisse, antequam fierent, concludendum est minime asserendam esse a nobis istam Dei praesentiam," &c. *Socinus, Praelectionum capite 11mo*. In stating of which point, the heretic indeed grants, that where God has peremptorily purposed or decreed to do a thing, he infallibly knows, that the thing so decreed shall certainly come to pass, and accordingly may as infallibly fore tell it. A great matter, no doubt. But, by his favour; what is this to God's foretelling of sinful actions, together with many passages of great moment depending thereupon (all of them declared by the prophets, many ages before the event of them?) For these things, as bad as they are, have their events, as well as the best that happen; and yet cannot be ascribed to God, as the cause or producer of them. Where upon, since such events, according to Socinus, proceed wholly from the free will of the immediate agents, he denies God to have any certain prescience of them; for that he will not so much as allow them to be in the number of things in their nature knowable, nor consequently to fall within the object of omniscience itself. Which though it extends to all that is knowable, yet reaches not beyond it. In answer to which I grant, that such future contingents as depend wholly upon the free turn of man's will, are not antecedently knowable to a finite understanding; but that they are simply and absolutely in the very nature of them not knowable, this I utterly deny; and on the contrary affirm, that to an infinite understanding they are both knowable, and actually known too. And the reason of this difference is, because an infinite understanding never looks upon a future contingent, but it looks beyond it too; that is to say, by one single act of knowledge God sees it, both in the instant of nature before its production, and in the instant of nature after it: which is the true account of this matter, as being founded in the comprehensiveness of God's knowledge, taking in past, present, and future, by one single view. "Scientia Dei ad omnia praesentialiter se habet." And how difficult soever, if at all possible, it may be for human



or rather eluding such scriptures as declare the contrary, he all along with a bold impiety degrades the divine knowledge into mere conjecture, and no more; and so ranges the all-knowing God with the heathen oracles, soothsayers, and astrologers, not allowing him any preeminence above them, but only a better faculty at guessing than they had. So that hereby the here tic is either for giving us a deity without infinite perfection, or an infinite perfection without a power of infallible prediction, or an infallibility of prediction without any certain knowledge of the thing foretold: which, amongst other wretched consequences, must needs render God such a governor of the world, as, in those many important affairs of it, depending upon the free motions of man's will, shall not be able to tell certainly what shall come to pass in it, so much as one day before it actually happens. He may indeed, as I shew before, shrewdly guess at events, (and so may a wise man too,) but further than guessing he cannot go. All which are such monstrous assertions, and so scandalously contumelious to the divine nature and attributes, and yet so inevitably resulting from the position first laid down by him, that nothing can equal the profaneness of them, but the absurdities.

As for several others of the Socinian errors; to wit, about the nature of the sacraments, the divine covenants, the ministry, and the church, with sundry other parts of divinity, I purposely omit them; and mention only these two, as being in themselves not grosser errors in divinity, than inconsistencies in philosophy. So that upon this turn at least we may worthily use that remark of Grotius, in his book concerning the satisfaction of Christ; *Mirum esse, toties a Socino ostentari rectam rationem, ostendi nusquam*. But to shew compendiously how he stabs, not only the Christian, but also all religions, by one assertion; we must know, that the chief corner stone laid by him in this supposed rational (and by some so much adored) doctrine, is his affirming, that by the light of natural reason no man can know that there is a God; as you may see in the second chapter of his aforementioned Prelections. For the proof of which, amongst other places of scripture, he wrests and abuses that in [Heb. xi. 6](#), where the apostle tells us, *that he who comes to God must believe that he is*. Mark it, says Socinus; it is here said only, that he must believe this, not that he must know, or scientifically assent to it. But by his favour, as this is not here said, so it is as true that it is not here denied. And this new teacher of the world should, one would think, have known, that the words πίστις and πιστεύω, *belief* and *believe*, are not always used in a strict philosophical sense, for an *assent upon testimony*, in contradistinction to an *assent upon grounds of science*; but generally, and at large, for any firm assent, whether upon one account or the other. I say, as this is certain from the use of the word in common speech, so there is nothing to prove, that the apostle in this sixth verse of the aforementioned chapter uses it otherwise than in this general, popular, and more enlarged sense. Nevertheless, admitting, but not granting,

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reason, to form to itself a clear notion of the immanent acts of God; yet all that is or can be excepted against the account now given by us, will be found but mere cavil, and not worth an answer.

that he took the word in this text, in the strict philosophical sense of it, for an assent upon testimony, must this therefore exclude all assent upon scientific grounds? Whereas it is certain, that the same thing may be the object both of our knowledge and belief; and that we may assent to the same proposition, upon the discourses of reason, drawn from the nature of the things contained in that proposition; and withal, upon the affirmation of one, whom, for his knowledge and veracity, we know worthy to be believed. No true philosopher, I am sure, (which Socinus never was,) either will or can deny this.

But on the contrary, and in opposition to these new notions, I shall proceed further, and venture to affirm, that to believe that there is a God, only because God says so, is a mere *petitio principii*, and manifestly circular and ridiculous; as supposing, and taking for granted, the very thing, which as yet is under inquiry, and ought to be proved. For the being of a God is the thing here to be proved; and the testimony of God, whereby it is to be proved, must presuppose, or rather imply the antecedent being of him whose testimony it is. Supposing therefore, that the first revelation made to man of the being of God, (for it is of that only we now speak,) was by an express, audible declaration of himself to be God; yet this bare affirmation could not of itself, and in the way of a testimony, oblige a man to believe or assent to the thing affirmed, while he was yet ignorant who or what he was, from whom it proceeded. For surely, in order of nature, I must know that it is God who says a thing, before I can believe it true, because God says it. Otherwise, suppose some angel had affirmed himself to be God, as the Devil in effect did, when he challenged to himself the dominion and disposal of all the kingdoms of the world, and required divine worship of our Saviour thereupon; none certainly will pretend that such a declaration could oblige our assent. But when God affirmed or declared himself to be God, in the first age or ages of the world, no doubt this declaration was made in such a transcendent and supernatural way, and with circumstances so wonderfully glorious and extraordinary, that he or they to whom it was made, and Adam in particular, could not but perceive that the person making it was a being much above the condition of a creature, and consequently God. And such an acknowledgment of, or assent to the being of a God, was really an act of knowledge, as inferring the cause from the effect; and that too, such an effect, as could issue from nothing but such a cause. For which reason, the assent given in this case could not be founded upon bare testimony, nor be formally an act of belief, but an act properly and strictly scientific. From all which I conclude, that it is absurd and irrational to suppose, that we can believe the being of a God upon the bare affirming this of himself, unless we have some precedent or concomitant knowledge, that the person so affirming it is God. And this utterly overthrows the assertion of Socinus; that the being of a God is knowable only by faith, or belief. An assertion much fitter to undermine than establish the belief of a Deity upon the true grounds of it; but it was perhaps for this very purpose that he intended it.



And thus much for the first extreme mentioned; by which Satan has poisoned the principles and theoretick part of religion; though the poison will be found of that spreading malignity, as to influence the practick too. And so we come to the

Second extreme mentioned; under which, as an angel of light, he more directly strikes at the practice of religion; and that is enthusiasm. A thing not more detestable in its effects, than plausible in its occasion. For men being enraged at the magisterial imposing of traditions upon them, as a rule of faith equal to the written word, and being commanded withal to submit their reason to the cheat of an infallible interpreter, they too naturally struck off to his extreme, to slight and lay aside the judgment of all antiquity, and so to adhere only to the bare letter of the scripture; and then, both to secure and authorize their errors, they made their own reason, or rather humour, (first surnaming it the Spirit,) the infallible, unappealable judge of all that was delivered in the written word. And now upon these terms, what could keep a man so disposed from coming over to Socinianism; since the prime art and engine made use of by Socinus himself, for the venting of all his abominations, was a professed defiance of the judgment of all antiquity in matters of religion? And what likewise could hinder a man (if his temper inclined that way) from taking up in anabaptism, when he could neither find any clear precept for infant baptism, nor express instance of it in the scripture; but only probable inferences from thence, and remote consequences; all of them perhaps too little, without the universal tradition of the church, to found the necessity and perpetuity of such a practice upon? Especially having been encountered by such specious objections, as have been too often produced against it. And thus we see, how both the two forementioned extremes commence upon one and the same principle; to wit, the laying aside the judgment of antiquity, both in matters of faith, and in all expositions of scripture: but Socinianism being, as was observed, an heresy much too fine for the gross and thick genius of vulgar capacities, the Devil found it requisite sometimes to change his engine, and amongst such as these to set up his standard in Familism, or enthusiasm. A monster, from whose teeming womb have issued some of the vilest, the foulest, and most absurd practices and opinions, that the nature of man (as corrupt as it is) was ever poisoned and polluted with. For these enthusiasts having first brought all to the naked letter of scripture, and then confined that letter wholly to the exposition of the Spirit, (as they called it,) they proceed further, and advance this *mystery of iniquity* to its highest ἀκμή, by asserting the immediate indwelling of the said Spirit in their persons; so that by his impulse and authority they may, like Abraham, Phinehas, or Ehud, be carried out to actions, otherwise, and in other men, indeed unlawful, but in themselves sufficiently warranted by the Spirit's dispensing with his own laws in their behalf, and much more with the laws of men; besides that, according to the same doctrine, he only who has this Spirit can be a competent judge of what is suggested to him by it. A principle of that diabolical malignity, that it sets men beyond all reach of the magistrate, and frets asunder the very nerves of all government and society. For it

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owns an impulse lawful, and yet unaccountable; whereby they are empowered to shake off laws, invade the rights and properties of all about them, and, if they please, to judge, sentence, and put to death kings; *because the spiritual man, forsooth, judgeth all things., but himself is judged of none.* And these were the persons who would needs set up for the new lights of this last age: blazing comets always portending, or rather causing wars and confusions both in church and state; first setting all on fire, and then shining by the flames they raised. But light, as we have seen, being so often made the Devil's livery, no wonder if his servants affect to be seen in it.

And now, after this short view of Popery and enthusiasm, I hope I shall not incur the suspicion of any bias to the former, if (as bad as it is) I prefer it to the latter, and allow it the poor commendation of being the less evil of the two. I confess, that under both, the great enemy of truth strikes at our church and state; and that whether he acts by the fanatic illuminati or by Vaux's lantern, the mischief projected by him is the same; there being in both a light (and something else) within, for the blowing up of churches and kingdoms too. Nevertheless, if we consider and compare these two extremes together, we shall find enthusiasm the more untractable, furious, and pernicious of the two, and that in a double respect.

1. That the evils of Popery are really the same in enthusiasm. And
2. That the little good which is in Popery is not in this.

And first; that the evils of both are equal, may appear upon these two accounts.

1. That the enthusiasts challenge the same in fallibility which the papal church does, but are more intolerable in their claim; for Popery places it only in one person, the pretended head of the church, the pope; but enthusiasm claims it, as be longing to every Christian amongst them, every particular member of their church. So that upon a full estimate of the matter, the papacy is only enthusiasm contracted, and enthusiasm the papacy dif fused; the evil is the same in both, with the advantage of multiplication in the latter. But

2. Both of them equally take men off from the scriptures, and supplant their authority. For as one does it by traditions, making them equal to the written word; so the other does it by pretending the immediate guidance of the Spirit, without the rule of the said word. For see with what contempt the father of the Familists, Henry Nicholas, casts off the use and authority of it. See also the Quakers, (who may pass for the very elixir, the *ultimum quod sic*, and hitherto the highest form of enthusiasts amongst us.) See, I say, how they recur only to the light within them; a broad hint to men of sense and experience, how they intend to dispose of the scriptures, when the angel of this light within them shall think fit to screw them up to an higher dispensation; for then no doubt they will judge it convenient to bury this dead letter out of their sight. But,

2. As for the other proposition mentioned by us, viz. that the little good which is in Popery is not in enthusiasm; this will appear upon these grounds.

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1. Upon a political account. The design of the popish religion is, in the several parts and circumstances of it, to reach and accommodate itself, as much as possible, to all the humours and dispositions of men: and I know no argument like this universal compliance, to prove it catholic by. So that a learned person,<sup>40</sup> in his *Europae Speculum*, or survey of the religions of the western church, pronounces Popery, upon a strict view of the artificial, wonderful composure of the whole frame of it, the greatest piece of practical wit that was ever yet set on foot in the world. For to shew how in a depraved sense it *becomes all things to all men*; is any one of a pious, strict, and severely disposed mind? There are those retirements, austerities, and mortifications in this religion, which will both employ and gratify such a disposition. Or is he, on the other side, of a loose, jolly temper? Why there is that sufficiency placed in the *opus operatum*, and the external acts of religion, pieced out with suitable supplies from the bank of merit, which shall make the whole practice of it easy and agreeable. And lastly, if a man has lost his estate, broke his credit, missed of his preferments, failed in his projects, or the like, he may fairly and creditably take sanctuary in some monastery or convent, and so pretend piously to leave the world, as soon as he finds that the world is leaving him.

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And as for the doctrinal part of the Christian religion, Escobar, with his fellow casuists, has so pared off all the roughness of that, and suited the strictest precepts to the largest and loosest consciences, that it will be a much harder matter to prove a man a sinner, than to condemn him for his being so; so carefully and powerfully do these men step in between sin and sorrow; so that if conscience should at any time become troublesome, and guilt begin to lift up its voice, and grow clamorous, it is but to go and disgorge all in confession, and then absolution issuing of course, eases the mind, and takes off all that anguish and despair, which (should it lie pent up, without vent) might overwhelm, or, as Ovid expresses it, even choke or strangle a man, and either send him to an halter, or prove itself instead of one.

And thus these spiritual sinks receive and divert all those ill humours of desperate, discontented persons, which the world will never want, and which, in all probability, would otherwise discharge and spend themselves upon the state. For he who is malecontent and desperate, will assuredly either let fall his spirit, and consume himself, or keep it up, and so (as occasion serves) wreak his spite upon the public: for spite will be always working, and either find or make itself an object to work upon. Cain was the only person I have read of, who sought to divert his discontent by building cities; but the reason was, because then there were none for him to pull down. These, I say, are some of the benefits and benign influences which the papal constitution bestows upon the outward and civil concerns of such as fall within its communion.

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40 Sir Edwin Sandys.

But on the contrary, where the quicksilver or rather gunpowder of enthusiasm (for the fifth of November must not claim it all) has once insinuated itself into the veins and bowels of a kingdom, it presently rallies together all the distempers, all the humours, all the popular heats and discontents, till it kicks down crowns and sceptres, tramples upon thrones, much like those boisterous vapours shut up within the caverns of the earth, which no sooner in spire it into a quaking fit, (as I may express it,) but it overturns houses and towns, swallows up whole cities, and, in a word, writes its history in ruins and desolations, or in something more terrible than all, called a *further reformation*. But,

2. Popery is likewise preferable to enthusiasm, in respect of the nature, quality, and complexion of the subjects in which it dwells.

The popish religion has not been of that poisonous influence but it has brought up men of accomplished learning and morals, of a sublime wit, and all other excellent parts and endowments, which human nature can recommend itself by: whereas enthusiasm, on the contrary, seldom or never falls upon such dispositions, but commonly takes up its abode in the gloomy regions of melancholy, of an ill habit of body, and a worse of mind; so that the spirit of darkness, brooding upon the ill humours of the one and the distractions of the other, commonly hatches this monster. For, to look back upon some of the most noted ringleaders and promoters of our late disorders in church and state, were they not such as were first under some disorder themselves? persons for the most part cracked either in fortune or in brain, acted by preternatural heats and ferments; and so mistaking that for devotion, which was only distemper, and for a good conscience, which too often proved little else but a bad constitution. And in such cases certainly we may well collect the malignity of that principle, which never dwells but in such venomous tempers; and rationally conclude that the leprosy must needs have seized the inhabitants, where the infection sticks so close to the walls.

3. Popery is likewise much more tolerable than enthusiasm, upon a religious account. The great basis and foundation upon which the whole body of Christianity rests, is the divinity of Christ's person, the history of his nativity, life, and death, his actions and sufferings, and his resurrection and ascension concluding all. But though the popish church has presumed to make several bold additions to, and some detractions from, the old system of our faith, yet it always acknowledged and held sacred the foregoing articles, without ever venturing to make any breach upon them. Whereas on the contrary, Familism and Quakerism, the two grand and most thriving branches of enthusiasm, have reduced the whole gospel to allegories and figures; and turned the history of what Christ actually and personally did and suffered, into mystical and moral significations of some virtues to be wrought within us, or some actions to be wrought by us. And this in truth does, and must directly strike at the very vitals of our religion, and without more ado will (if not prevented) effectually send

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Christianity packing out of the world. Popery indeed has forced some bad consequences from good principles, but this destroys the very principles themselves.

Add to this, that the corruptions in a church are not of so destructive an influence as schisms and divisions from it, the constant effects of enthusiasm. It being much in the body spiritual as in the natural; where that which severs and dissolves the continuity of parts tends more to the destruction of the whole, than that which corrupts them. You may cure a throat when it is sore, but not when it is cut.

And so I have done with this parallel; after which, give me leave to recapitulate to you, in short, some of Satan's principal and most specious abuses of religion, hitherto discoursed of by us. As first, how he made use of the church's abhorrence of polytheism, for the introducing of Arianism, in the denial of our Saviour's divinity; and next, how, upon the declension and fall of that heresy, he took occasion, from the zealous adoration of Christ's person, to bring in a superstitious worship of the virgin Mary his mother, and of his picture in crucifixes, and the like; and so at length appeared, in Popery, a sort of religion making men in nothing more zealous than in worshipping such things. And lastly, how, when this also was shaken off, with the tales and legends that chiefly supported it, and the bare scripture, with the guidance of the Spirit, made the sole rule of faith, without the help of a pretended infallible judge, he then in the greater and more refined wits turned Socinian, and in the vulgar played the enthusiast. And thus, having pursued the impostor through all his labyrinths, pulled off his vizard, and turned his inside outwards, that we may now, by reflecting upon what is past, the better fence against his methods for the future; I shall here proceed to the third and last general head proposed, and under it very briefly set down some certain principles, by which he is likely enough to play over his old game again, and, if not counterworked, to trump up the same religious cheats upon the world, with more advantage than before. And these are eminently three.

1. The stating of the doctrine of faith and free grace so as to make them undermine the necessity of a good life. God's mercy is indeed the crown and beauty of all his attributes, and his grace the emanation of his mercy; and whosoever goes about in the least to derogate from it, may he (for me) find no share in it. But, after all, has not the Devil endeavoured to supplant the gospel in a considerable part of it, by the very plea of grace; while some place an irreconcilable opposition between the efficacy of that and all freedom of man's will, and thereby make those things inconsistent, which the admirable wisdom of God had made so fairly subordinate. But notwithstanding such fancies, we shall find that religion, in the true nature of it, consists of action, as well as notion; of good works, as well as faith; and that he believes to very little purpose, whose life is not the better for his belief.

But to state (as some do) the nature of justifying faith in this, that he who is confident his sins are forgiven him, is by that act of confidence completely justified, and beyond the danger of a final apostasy, so that all sins must for ever after be surnamed infirmities; what



is this, but to give a man a licence to sin boldly and safely too, and so to write a perpetual divorce between faith and good works? The church of England owns and maintains free grace as much as any. But still let God be free of it, and not men; who, when he gives it, never makes a bare *Crede quod habes* the only title to it, or character of it.

Antinomianism, as both experience and the nature of .the thing has sufficiently taught us, seldom ends but in Familism. And the sum and substance of that doctrine is, that it makes men justified from eternity; and faith not to be the instrument, but only the evidence of our justification, as no more than barely declaring to the conscience of the believer what is already done and transacted in heaven. Now let us see whether the former definition of faith can stand upon any other or better bottom than this of Antinomianism. For if the faith which justifies me be a firm belief and persuasion that my sins are remitted, it must follow, that my sins are remitted antecedently to that act of belief; forasmuch as the object must needs precede the act: assent or belief being such an act as does not produce, but presuppose its object. But if my sins are not actually remitted before I believe, how can I truly believe they are so? unless the believing of a false proposition can make it true; which would be a piece of logic as new as this divinity. Bellarmine indeed fixes this upon the doctrine of all the protestant churches, and much triumphs in the charge, but falsely and invidiously, and like a Jesuit, as (in spite of the character some have given him for learning and candour) he still shews himself upon this subject. For all the reformed churches (especially the church of England) disclaim it as a paradox in reason, a pest in morality, and an assertion so grossly absurd and contradictory, that not so much as the least shadow of an argument can be brought for it, unless *Credo, quia impossibile est*, may pass for one, which it will hardly ever do, but in the case of transubstantiation.

2. A second principle, by which in all likelihood the Devil may and will (as opportunity serves) impose upon the church, is by opposing *the power of godliness* irreconcilably to all forms. And what is this, but in another instance to confront subordinates, and to destroy the body, because the soul can subsist without it? But thus to sequester the divine worship from all external assistances, that by this means, forsooth, it may become wholly mental, and all spirit, is, no doubt, a notable fetch of the Devil, who, we know, is all spirit himself, but never the less a Devil for being so. On the contrary, we have rather cause to fear, that, in the strength of this pretence the worship of Christ may be treated as Christ himself once was; that is, first be stripped, and then crucified. For would you know what the Devil drives at in all this seemingly seraphic plea? Why, first he pleads, that a set service or liturgy for divine worship is superstition and formality; and then, that churches and a ministry are so too; and lastly, that the very letter of the scripture is but a mere form, (if so much,) and accordingly to be laid aside, as in Familism and Quakerism we have shewn it actually is. But then again some other shortsighted schismatics were for proceeding upon that doughty principle, that nothing ought to be allowed in the church or worship of God, but what is

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expressly enjoined in his written word: and accordingly in the strength thereof having run down several of the constitutions of the church of England, as forms and rules uncommanded in the scriptures, they soon had the same principle every whit as strongly, and more justly, retorted upon themselves by some of the brotherhood of another class, who (their interest leading them to carry the argument much further) inferred from thence, that tithes were to be taken away too. But this, you will say, was a pinching, ill-natured inference; and therefore the Presbyterians themselves (who it seems could find matter, as well as form, in the revenue, though none in the service of the church) not only granted, but stiffly contended also, that tithes were by all means to be continued and retained in the house of God; especially since they were so throughly convinced, that without them they could not keep their own. Now that certainly must needs be a very unkind and ungrateful principle, which starves the persons who maintain it; and a very weak one too, which affords no consequences but what make for its own confutation. It must be confessed, that *the power of godliness*, so much and so often boasted of by some amongst us, has been a very plausible, well-sounding word; and many a foul fact has been committed under the splendid cover of it. But it is now high time to redeem truth from the slavery and cheat of words; and certainly that can never be imagined to be *the spirit or power of godliness*, which teaches either to rob or desert the church, and shews itself in nothing but sacrilege and separation; it being, no doubt, a very odd and strange sort of *zeal for God's house*, which *eats it up*; and a fire much likelier to come from hell than heaven, which consumes the altar itself. But,

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3. The third and last principle which I shall mention, whereby Satan has so much disturbed and abused the world, and may (for ought appears to the contrary) do so again, is the ascribing such a kingdom to Christ, as shall oppose and interfere with the kingdoms and governments of the world. Christ is indeed our king, and it is our honour and happiness to be his subjects; but where a zealous rebellion destroys monarchy, it renders his greatest prerogative, which is to be *King of kings*, impossible. There cannot, one would think, be a better design, or a more unexceptionable pretence, than to advance the sceptre of Christ in promoting the due authority of his church: and yet even upon this the Devil can forge such blessed maxims and conclusions as these.

1. That since Christ has two kingdoms in the world, one his providential over all things, as he is God; the other his mediatorial, belonging to him as head of his church, with a full subordination of the former to this latter, during this world; men are apt to reckon of kings as his vicegerents only in the administration of the former of these, but church-officers as his deputies for governing the latter; and consequently that the sceptre ought to submit to the keys, and Christ's providential kingdom to come under his mediatorial: a principle which the pope and some others (should opportunity serve) know how to make no small use of.

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2. That these ecclesiastical deputies of Christ, by virtue of a power immediately derived from him, may meet together, and consult about church affairs, when and where they shall think fit, in any part or place of their prince's dominions without his consent, and, if they shall judge it requisite, excommunicate him too. And then Buchanan tells the world, "that he who is thrown out of the church by excommunication is not worthy to live." And he might, if he had pleased, have told us also, in what soil such doctrines root deepest and thrive best.

3. That these ecclesiastical deputies of Christ have the sole cognizance and decisive power in all spiritual causes, and in all civil also *in ordine ad spiritualia*.

4. That a minister of Christ uttering any thing, though sedition or treason, in the execution of his ministerial office, and in the pulpit, is not to be accountable for it to any civil court, but only to the tribunal of Christ; to wit, the church, (or, in other words, to those who call themselves so;) forasmuch as *the spirit of the prophets*, they tell us, is to be *subject to*, and judged by, *only the prophets*.

5. That when religion is in danger, (of which they themselves are to be the sole judges,) they may engage in an oath or confederacy against the standing laws of the country which they are actually of and belong to, and then plead, that they cannot in conscience turn to the obedience required by those laws, because of the obligation of the said oath.

And now, if this be the grand charter and these the fundamental laws of Christ's kingdom, and the execution thereof be committed wholly to a sort of ecclesiastics, (and those made such by none but themselves,) it will in good earnest behove kings and princes to turn their thrones into stools of repentance; for, upon these terms, I know not where else they can expect to sit safe. As for the late troubles and confusions caused in these poor kingdoms by the same rebellious ferment, and carried on much more by black coats than by red, we shall find that they all moved by the spring of a few specious, abused words; such as *the Spirit*, *Christian liberty*, *the power of godliness*, *the sceptre and kingdom of Jesus Christ*, and the like. Touching which, it will be found no such strange or new thing for Satan to teach rebellion, as well as to manage a temptation, in scripture phrase. He can trapan a Jephthah into a vow and solemn oath, and then bind him, under fear of perjury, to perform it by an horrid and unhuman murder. And, in a word, by a bold and shameless pretence of God's cause, he can baffle and break through any of his commands.

And thus, at length, I have upon the matter des patched what I had to say upon this text and subject; a subject of such vast importance, that it would be but to upbraid any hearer, to enforce it by any further argument than itself. For can we have an higher concern at stake, than our happiness in both worlds, or a subtler gamester to win it from us, than he who understands his game so perfectly well, that though he stakes nothing, yet never plays for less than all, in any of his temptations? Which being our case, should not he who is so wise as to see the danger he is in, be so wise also as not to cast the least pleasing look or glance

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upon any of his insidious offers? especially in their first addresses, when they paint and flatter most: considering that nothing ever flatters, but what is false; nor paints, but what, without it, would appear exceeding ugly. There cannot certainly be a greater and a juster reproach to an intelligent being, than to barter away glory and immortality for baubles and fancies, to lose paradise for an apple, to damn one's soul to please one's palate, and, in a word, to be tempted with such proposals as the proposer himself shall extremely scorn and laugh at us for accepting. For what is all this but the height of mockery as well as misery, the very *sting of death*, and like being murdered (as the best of kings was) by a disguised executioner? For such an one the tempter ever was and will be; never accosting us with a smile, but he designs us a stab; nor on the other hand ever frightening those whom he would destroy. Such a course, he well knows, will not do his work; but that if he would attempt and ruin a man effectually, silence and suddenness are his surest ways; and he must take heed of giving an alarm, where he intends a surprise. No; we may be sure that he understands the arts of tempting too well not to know, that the less he appears, the more he is like to do; and that the tempter himself is no temptation. He is indeed an old, thoroughpaced, experienced sophister, and has ways to make the very natures and properties of things equivocate. He can, if need be, shroud a glutton in a fast, and a miser in a feast; and though the very nature of swine hurries them into the foulest dirt and mire, yet, to serve a turn, we read, he can make them run as violently into the water.

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Still his way is to amuse the world with shews and shadows, surface and outside; and thereby to make good that old maxim in philosophy, that in all that occurs to the eye, it is not substance, but only colour and figure, which we see. This has been his practice from the beginning, from the very infancy and nonage of the world to this day; but whatsoever it was then in those early times, shall we, whose lot has cast us upon these latter ages, and thereby set us upon their shoulders, giving us all the advantages of warning, and observations made to our hands, all the benefits of example, and the assurances of a long and various experience; shall we, I say, after all this, suffer ourselves to be fooled with the wretched, thin, transparent artifices of modern dissimulation? with eyes turned up in prayer to God, but swelling with spite and envy towards men? with a purity above mortal pitch, professed (or rather proclaimed) in words, without so much as common honesty seen in actions? with reformation so loudly and speciously pretended, but nothing but sacrilege and rapine practised?

This was the just and true character of the blessed times of forty-one; and one would think it a great pity, that the same cheat should pass upon the same nation twice. For nothing but the utter subversion of church and state was driven at by Satan and his instruments, in that was then done; and lies, oaths, and armies (raised in the strength of both) were the means by which they effected it. In short, the nation was to be blindfolded, in order to its being buffeted; and Samson to have his eyes put out, before he could be made fool enough to kill himself for company. All grant, that the acts of the understanding should, in order

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of nature, lead and go before the acts of the will; and accordingly Satan is always so much a philosopher as to know, that there is no debauching the one, but by first deluding the other.

It is indeed no small degree of impudence, (as common as it is,) for men to dare to own pretences contrary to what they actually and visibly practise; and yet, to shew how much "the world is made for the bold," (as the saying is,) this has been the constant course of it, with an unfailing success at tending it. For as long as knaves will pretend, and fools believe, (as it is seldom but they keep pace with one another,) the Devil's interest is sure to be served by both. And therefore if, after all this long scene of fallacy and imposture, (so infinitely dishonourable to our very nature,) we would effectually obviate the same for the future, let us, in God's name, and in the first place, resolve once with ourselves to act as rational creatures; that is to say, let us carry an open, steady, and impartial eye upon what men do, in spite of any thing which they shall or can say. And in the next place, let us, as Christians, encounter our grand enemy the tempter with these two best of weapons put into our hands by the great Captain of our salvation, watchfulness and prayer: and if, by these blessed means, God shall discover and lay open to us his delusions, we may thank ourselves, if we fall by his temptations.

*To which God, the great Fountain and Father of light, who alone can scatter all those mists and defeat those stratagems which the prince of darkness has hitherto blinded and abused the world by, 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**  
**OUR SAVIOUR'S RESURRECTION.**

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**JOHN xx. 29.**

*Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

**C**HRIST, the great Sun of righteousness and Saviour of the world, having by a glorious rising, after a red and a bloody setting, proclaimed his deity to men and angels, and by a complete triumph over the two grand enemies of mankind, sin and death, set up the everlasting gospel in the room of all false religions, has now, as it were, changed the Persian superstition into the Christian devotion; and, with out the least approach to the idolatry of the former, made it henceforth the duty of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, to worship the rising sun.

But as the sun does not display his rising to all parts of the world together, nor to the same region shews his whole light at the same instant; but by weaker glimmerings at the first, gradually ascends to clearer and clearer discoveries, and at length beams it forth with a full diffusion; so Christ here discovered himself after his rising, not to all his apostles at once, nor to any of them with the same evidence at first, but by several ascending instances and arguments; till in the end he shone out in his full meridian, and made the proof of his resurrection complete in his ascension.

Thomas we have one of the last in this chorus, resolving to tie his understanding close to his senses; to believe no further than he could see, nor to venture himself but where he could feel his way. He would not, it seems, take a miracle upon hearsay, nor resolve his creed into report, nor, in a word, see with any eyes but his own. No; he must trace the print of the nails, follow the spear into our Saviour's side, till he even touched the miracle, and felt the article of the resurrection.

But as in the too inquisitive beholder, who is not content to behold the sun by reflection, but by a direct intuition of his glorious body, there comes such a light, as at the same time both informs and chastises the over-curious eye; so Christ here, in his discovering himself to this doubting apostle, condescends indeed to convince him in his own way; but so, that while he complies with his infirmity, he also upbraids his infidelity; humouring his patient, but not sparing his distemper: and yet all this with so gentle an hand, and such an allay of sweetness, that the reproof is only collateral or consequential, not directly reproaching him for his unbelief, but implicitly reflecting upon it, by commending the belief of others: nothing in the mean time sharp or corrosive dropping from his healing lips, even in passing



such a reprehension upon his disciple. He only shews him his blind side in an opposite instance, and so leaves him to read his own case in an antithesis, and to shame himself by a comparison.

Now, inasmuch as the distinguishing eminency of the blessing so emphatically here pronounced by our Saviour upon a faith or assent springing not from sight, but a much higher principle, must needs import a peculiar excellency of the said faith; for its surmounting all those high difficulties and impediments attending it, though still with a sufficient reason to found it upon: (for that Christ never rewards any thing with a blessing, but so far as it is a duty; nor makes any thing a duty, but what is highly rational:) this, I say, is most certain. But then, as for those various and different objects which a genuine faith ought to come up to the belief of, we must not think that the same strength, as to the kind or degree of it, will be able to match them all; for even the particular resurrection of our Saviour, and that general one of all men at the last day, will be found to stand upon very different bottoms; the many difficulties, if not also paradoxes, alleageable against the resurrection of a body, after a total dissolution thereof, being infinitely greater and harder to be accounted for, than any that can be brought against the resurrection of a body never yet dissolved, but only once again united to the soul, which it had belonged to before.

Besides which, there have, as to this latter sort of resurrection from the dead, been several instances of persons so raised again, both before and in our Saviour's time. And in truth, as to the very notion of the thing itself, there appears not the least contradiction in it to any known principle of reason: no, nor yet (which is more) does there seem any greater difficulty to conceive how God should remand a departed soul into its former body, while remaining entire and undissolved, than that after he had formed a body for Adam, he should presently breathe into it (so formed) *a living soul*, as we read in the second of Genesis.

So that St. Paul's question, in [Acts xxvi. 8](#), proceeded upon very obvious, as well as great reason. *Why*, says he, *should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* pointing therein, no doubt, only to the latter sort of resurrection, specified in the person of our Saviour, and which alone he was at that time discoursing of.

But, on the contrary, if we consider that other sort of resurrection of a body raised after an utter dissolution of it into its first materials; neither has the world yet, as to matter of fact, ever seen any example thereof; nor, as to the theory of the same, does the reason of man well comprehend how it can be done. So that the belief of this must needs have been exceedingly more difficult than that of the former.

Which observations having been thus premised, I shall now proceed to close them all with something more direct to the main subject of the text, our blessed Saviour's resurrection: touching which, though (as it has been already noted) his short continuance under death fully rescued his sacred body from all putrefaction, and consequently rendered his resurrection a thing of much easier speculation, and liable to fewer objections, as well as attended

with lesser difficulties, than the resurrection of men's bodies, after a total dissolution of them, can be imagined to be: nevertheless, it being a thing so confessedly above all the powers of nature, and so much an exception from the common lot of mortality, it could not but offer itself to the apprehensions of bare reason under great disadvantages of credibility; especially when the arguments brought from particular attestations were to encounter the prejudice of a general experience; nothing being more certain than that men commonly do not so much believe or judge of things as they really are, but as they use to be: custom for the most part passing for the world's demonstration, and men rarely extending their belief beyond the compass of what they observe; so that bare authority urged against or beside the report of sense, may sometimes and in some cases control, yet it seldom convinces the judgment; and though possibly, meeting with a modest temper, it may in some cases impose silence, yet it very rarely and hardly procures assent.

And probably Thomas's reason, arguing from the common topics of the world, might suggest to his unbelief such kind of doubts and objections about his master's resurrection as these. "Jesus of Nazareth was put to death upon the cross, and being dead, was laid and sealed up in his sepulchre, strictly watched with a guard of soldiers. But I am told, and required to believe, that, notwithstanding all this, he is risen, and is indeed alive. Now surely things suitable to the stated course of nature should be believed before such as are quite beside it; and for a dead man to return to life is preternatural; but that those who report this may be mistaken, is very natural and usual. Dead I saw him; but that he is risen, I only hear: in what I see with my eyes, I cannot easily be deceived; but in what I only hear, I may, and often am.

"Neither can bare report of itself be a sufficient reason of belief; because things confessedly false have been as confidently reported; nor is any thing, though never so strange and odd, ever almost told of, but somebody or other is as positively vouched to have seen it. Besides that the united testimony of all ages and places will not gain credence against one particular experiment of sense; and what then can the particular report of a few conclude against the general experience of so many people and nations, who had never seen any thing like it?

"Moreover, as the reporters were but few, so they were generally looked upon as persons of little depth and great simplicity, and such qualifications too frequently render men very credulous: they were also frightened and disturbed, and therefore the more likely to mistake; and might likewise be very desirous, both for their master's honour and their own credit, that he should make good his word and promise of rising from the dead by an actual resurrection; and upon that account (as great desire naturally disposes to a belief of the thing desired) they might be so much the proner to believe that he actually did so. But, above all, why did he not, after he was risen, shew himself to the Sanhedrim, to the Scribes and Pharisees, and to the unbelieving Jews, openly in the temple or in the market-place? For this

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doubtless would have been a much more effectual way of convincing the Jews, than the bare testimony of his own disciples, which might be liable to many, and those very plausible exceptions, (with the Jews at least,) since nothing commonly more detracts from the credibility of a report, than the credulity of the reporter.

“Besides all which, there appears also something of inconsistency in the main report; for that some report him to have appeared in one shape, and some in another: whereas truth uses to be uniform, and one man naturally should have but one shape; all agreeing, that in the telling of any story, variety (especially as to the chief subject of it) is ever suspicious.”

These and the like objections, I say, might be, and no doubt actually were made, both by Thomas himself, and several others, against the resurrection of our blessed Saviour; and how little weight soever we may allow them in point of strict argument, they have so much however of plausibility and verisimilitude in them, as may well warrant that remark of Calvin upon this subject. Namely,

“That Christ, in manifesting his resurrection to the world, proceeded after a very different way from what mere human sense or reason would probably have suggested or looked for in such a case.”<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, I do not much question but the fore going objections may be fully answered and fairly accounted for, by the respective solutions which shall be here given of them and applied to them: and in order to this, I shall lay down these preliminary considerations.

1. That the truth of a proposition being once sufficiently and duly proved, no objections afterwards brought against it can invalidate or disprove the truth of the said proposition; and consequently, that a man is obliged to believe the same, though several objections should be so produced against it, which he is by no means able to answer.

2. That our Saviour, having done so many miraculous works in the sight of his enemies, beyond all possibility of doubt concerning them, as to matter of fact, ought not, even by his enemies themselves, who had been witnesses of the said works, (upon the strictest terms of reason,) to be looked upon in this dispute about his resurrection, as a person confined to or acting by the bare measures of nature; and consequently, that all arguments against it, taken from these measures, (they themselves being judges,) are to be rejected, as inconclusive and impertinent.

3. That God intended not the gospel (of which most things relating to the person and works of our Saviour, no less than his doctrines, make an integral part) should be received by mankind upon the evidence of demonstration, but by the rational assent of faith.

4. That this faith ought to be so far under the influence of the will, as thereby to render it an act of choice, and consequently free; and on that account fit for a reward.

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41 Quamquam aliterquam carnis nostrae sensus expeteret, resurrectionem suam Christus patefecit; haec tamen quae illi placuit ratio, nobis quoque optima videri debet. *Calv. in Harm. Evangelistarum*, p. 373.



5. That in order to its being so, not all possibility, but only all just reason of doubting, ought to be excluded by it, and reckoned inconsistent with it. And,

6. And lastly, that such an irresistible, overpowering evidence of the object, as is conveyed to the mind by clear and immediate sight, is not well consistent with such a freedom of the act of faith as we are now speaking of; forasmuch as it determines the mind to an assent naturally beyond its power to withhold or deny, let men object or pretend what they will to the contrary.

These considerations, I say, or some of them, duly applied, will account for every thing which is or may be objected against the resurrection of our Saviour. And accordingly, in answer to the first of the foregoing objections, to wit, that things, according to the common stated course of nature, ought to be believed before such as are beside it; and that it is beside, as well as above the course of nature, for a dead man to return to life: but that those, on the contrary, who report such strange things, may be deceived in what they report, is very natural and usual.

To this I say, that although I readily grant this latter proposition to be true; yet the former, upon which the objection chiefly bears, I cannot allow to be universally so, but only *caeteris paribus*; that is to say, supposing the ground of the arguments on both sides to be equal; and that for this reason, that it is not always the bare difference of nature, in the things or objects proposed to our belief, which is the cause that one of them should be believed by us rather than another; but it is the disparity of the grounds and motives, upon which the said things are to be believed, which must determine our belief in such a case. It must be confessed, that for a man to be mistaken, or judge wrong of a thing, is but too natural to mankind; and that on the other side, for a man to rise from the dead, is both beside and above nature. Nevertheless, in some cases and instances, there may be greater reason to believe this latter, (as strange and preternatural as it is,) than, in certain cases, to believe some other events, though perfectly natural. As, for instance, that Lazarus being dead, and laid in the grave, should continue there till he rotted to dust, was a thing in all respects according to the course of nature; and on the contrary, that he should rise from thence, after he had lain there four days, was a thing as much above and beside it: and yet for all this, there was a great deal more reason for the belief of this, than of the other; forasmuch as this was undeniably attested by a multitude of eyewitnesses, who beheld this great work, and neither could be deceived themselves, nor have any the least purpose of deceiving others, in what they reported. Nor did the Jews at all except against what was told them concerning Lazarus, upon any of those two forementioned accounts, but fully and firmly believed what they had heard, and that with such an absolute assurance, that they took up designs of killing Lazarus himself, to prevent people's flocking after him, and being converted by the sight of him; which, had they believed him still dead, was surely such a method of dealing with him, as common sense and reason would never have thought of. But

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2. Whereas the next objection represents Thomas pleading, as a reason of his present unbelief, that he saw our Saviour dead and buried, but only hears that he is risen; and that he can hardly be deceived in what he sees, but in what he hears he easily may.

I answer, that as to the simple apprehensions of these two senses, one takes in its respective object by as sure a perception as the other, though perhaps not so quick nor so refined. But the mistake in either of these is not from any failure in the bare simple perception of its proper object, but from the judgment passed by the understanding faculty upon the said perceptions, in wrongly affirming or denying something concerning them. Thus in the present case, Thomas, on the one side, had seen his Lord dead, and buried, with his own eyes; and on the other, heard that he was risen from the dead, from the mouth of several known witnesses unanimously affirming it: in which argument the point turns not upon this, that the sight represents and reports its object more surely than the hearing, but upon the qualifications of the witnesses attesting what had passed concerning the objects of either. And this being so much more advantageous, in point of credibility, on the disciples side than on Thomas's, had there really been an inconsistency between both their testimonies, that of the disciples ought in reason to have outweighed and took place of his. But to render his unbelief so much the more inexcusable, there was no inconsistency at all between what had been affirmed by Thomas himself, and what was afterwards testified by his fellow-disciples. For as Thomas was an ocular witness of Christ's death and burial, so were the other disciples of his resurrection, having actually seen him after he was risen. And as he had no cause to doubt of their veracity in what they told him, so neither had he any reason to doubt of the credibility of the thing told by them. Forasmuch as Thomas himself had seen three instances of persons raised from the dead by our Saviour, during the time of his converse with him. All which must needs, upon the strictest terms of reason, render his unbelief and doubting of our Saviour's own resurrection (so unquestionably attested) utterly indefensible. But to proceed.

3. It being above objected also, that several reports, found at last to be confessedly false, have yet for some time been as confidently vouched for true, as this now before us was or could be; and moreover, that there is hardly any report so false, strange, and unusual, but that some have been as positively affirmed by others to have been eyewitnesses of the same:

In answer to which, all this must be granted to be extremely true, but withal nothing to the purpose, since if it proves any thing, it must prove a great deal too much, viz. That there is no credit to be rationally given to any thing that we hear, how credible soever in itself. For certain it is, that many, even the grossest falsehoods, have been reported, received, and actually believed as true; and many stories certainly true have (for a considerable time at least) been absolutely rejected as false: and if this must pass for a sufficient reason to deny, or so much as to suspect and question every thing else reported to us to be so likewise, then



farewell all rational belief, credit, and certainty, as being hereby quite sent packing out of the world. But

4. It is yet further argued, that as the united testimony and report of all places and ages will not gain credence against so much as one particular experiment of sense; so, much less can the particular report of a few persons conclude any thing against the universal experience of all.

To this I answer, that the account given by those few disciples, of our Saviour's resurrection, was so far from being contrary to the universal experience and sense of mankind, especially those of the Jewish church and nation, that the Old Testament, as well as the New, has several examples upon record, of persons who had been raised from the dead; which being so well known to the Jews, might justly pass rather for so many proofs and confirmations of the credibility of our Saviour's resurrection, than that our Saviour's resurrection, after such preceding instances of so like a nature, should be supposed to carry any thing in it contradictory to the common sense and opinion of the world. Besides all which, those words of Herod, upon his hearing of the miracles of Christ, seem here very observable. *It is John, says he, whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead, &c.*

These words, I say, so readily uttered by him, without any previous demur, or strain of thought, could not but shew, that the resurrection from the dead, of some particular persons, even as to this life, was no such strange, unheard of notion with him and the rest of the Jews, but that they were so far at least acquainted with it, as to account it neither impossible nor incredible. But

5. It is again alleged, for the invalidating of the report made by the disciples concerning our Saviour, that the fright and disturbance they were under, upon our Saviour's crucifixion, and the rage expressed by the Jews against his disciples, as well as against himself, might naturally enough bring upon them such a confusion of thought and aptness to mistake, as might very well lessen the certainty, and consequently take off much of the credit of their testimony.

To which I answer, that fears or frights do not so operate upon the outward senses, as to supersede or hinder them in their first and simple apprehensions of their respective objects, which are also naturally the clearest and most impartial. I grant, indeed, that fear, and some other passions, may so divert the steadiness and intention of the intellectual judging faculty for some time, that it cannot presently form so exact a judgment upon the objects tendered to it by the senses, as otherwise it might do. But still this is only an interruption of the acts, rather than any disablement of the faculty; which, as soon as the present passion is over, comes to debate and judge of all objects presented to it, as perfectly as it did before. It is disputed, I know, in natural philosophy, whether the sense being duly qualified, and the object as duly proposed, and the medium fitted to both, the sense can be deceived in the apprehension of its object; and it is generally held in the negative. But supposing that the



sense might be deceived, this would make nothing against us in the present case; forasmuch as natural fallibility may very well consist with actual certainty; nothing being more true, than that as a man is capable of being mistaken, so on the contrary he is oftentimes actually not mistaken; and whosoever is not mistaken, is, as to that particular act, and with reference to that particular object, truly and properly certain. And this was the very case of the disciples affirming Christ's resurrection, from a full conviction of their sight and other senses; a conviction too strong and sure to admit of any reason sufficient to overbear it. For as to the foregoing objection, from the greatness of the fear, then supposed to have been upon them, we have shewn the weakness or rather nullity of that already; and not only so, but the very proceedings of the Jews themselves give us an irrefragable confutation of the same. For if a report, coming from persons under an extreme fear, ought upon that score to lose all credibility, surely this should, on a very eminent and peculiar occasion, have took place in the guards set by Pilate to watch Christ's sepulchre; who (as we read in [Matth. xxviii. 4](#)) were seized with such an amazing, dispiriting fear, *that they shook, and became as dead men*. Nevertheless the priests (no fools, though something else) looked upon them as very credible witnesses of what they had seen, and after wards related to them: and consequently judged their testimony, if contrary, like to prove so disadvantageous to their design, that they thought they could not bribe them too high, nor buy their silence at too dear a rate; which, had they thought that all that was told them was but idle tales, and founded only in a panic, unaccountable consternation, no doubt, they would never have done at such a price. For Jews, of all men, are not wont to part with their money for nothing, or an idle tale, which was no more.

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6. Some again argue, that since Christ had so expressly and openly beforehand declared and fore told his resurrection from the dead, that his adversaries, as well as his followers, had took particular notice thereof; no doubt his disciples thereupon could not but be highly concerned, that their master should make good that his word and promise in the face of the world: and accordingly (as great desire naturally disposes to facility of belief) they might be apt to persuade themselves, that the event had indeed answered the prediction; and that he was now actually risen, as he had several times promised them, while he lived and conversed with them. Thus their zeal for their Lord's honour might cause them strongly to desire, and that desire as strongly incline them to believe, his resurrection. So, I say, some argue.

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To which I answer, that as the objection before this represented the disciples in this whole business as persons extremely weak, so this would represent them as equally wicked; the former, as men wretchedly deceived, and this latter, as designing to deceive others; and that by a vile, fraudulent intrigue, contrived and carried on by them, both for their master's and their own reputation; an intrigue so very fraudulent, that the known, unblemished simplicity, integrity, and veracity of the persons concerned, and so remarkable throughout the whole course of their lives, makes it morally impossible, and consequently incredible,

that persons of such a character should ever be guilty of so foul a practice and so base a collusion. And no more needs be said for their vindication from so impudent a calumny. But

7. Whereas it is suggested, that nothing could be so powerful and effectual a means to cause and propagate a belief of Christ's resurrection, as to have shewn himself, after he was risen, to the Scribes and Pharisees, and the unbelieving Jews, openly in the temple or the market-place, which yet he did not; I answer, that supposing that Christ, after he was risen, had appeared so publicly amongst the Jews, as the objection here requires, no doubt they would have offered to lay violent hands upon him, as they had before designed to kill Lazarus, and that for the same reason. In which case, had our Saviour vanished out of their sight and hands, (as question less he would have done, and as he had once or twice done from the eyes of his own disciples,) what would the Jews have concluded from hence, but that they had seen a ghost, a spectre, or apparition? And what conviction would that have wrought in them? Why, none at all, but that their senses had been abused, and imposed upon by some magical illusion. And what good effect could this have had upon their minds, for the bringing them to a belief, that Christ was truly risen? and much less that he was the Messiah? which yet was the grand doctrine to be proved by the resurrection, and of which he had given them abundant proof before, by raising Lazarus and others from the dead; which yet we find had no such effect upon the generality of them at all. This to me seems as clear reason, and as natural consequence, as the mind of man, in such a case, can well be determined by. And no doubt, Almighty God foresaw this, and many more such consequences, which our short reason can neither reach nor pierce into; forasmuch as his ways and counsels may, and ought in all reason to be allowed, to proceed by measures quite different from ours; and accordingly, that he might not think fit to vouchsafe the Jews the highest evidence of Christ's resurrection, which it was capable of, who had rejected such high evidence of the like nature before; but rather judged it enough for him to afford them such evidence of it, as was in itself sufficient to convince them, and consequently to render their disbelief thereof irrational and unexcusable; besides that the highest evidence of an object proposed to be believed, may not consist with such a worth and merit in the said belief, as may fit it for a reward; as our Saviour's words to Thomas in the text manifestly import. From all which, I think we may, upon solid grounds, conclude, that the foregoing objection (how plausible soever it may seem at first) argues nothing against the belief of our Saviour's resurrection. But

8. It is moreover objected, that there is no small disagreement found in the main report about our Saviour's resurrection; as, that some of his disciples relate him to have appeared in one form, or shape, and some in another, whereas one man naturally can be allowed but one form and shape: and withal, that he came in to his disciples while the doors were shut; which seems wholly inconsistent with the essential dimensions of an human body, which

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cannot possibly pass through crevices or keyholes; the nature of quantity making such a penetration confessedly impossible.

To which I answer, according to the second preliminary consideration above laid down by us, that the bare measures of nature, after so many miracles done by our Saviour on the one side, and attested and owned by the Jews, as surpassing all power, merely natural, on the other, ought by no means to be a rule for us to proceed by in the present case. And therefore, to give the objection its full force and advantage, supposing it urged by some Jew against the truth of Christ's resurrection, may we not hereupon ask the said Jew this plain question? Were the Jews eyewitnesses of the miracles and supernatural works done by our Saviour, or were they not? The latter cannot possibly be said, there being hardly a man in Jerusalem who had not personally seen some of them done. And if the former be granted, upon what ground of reason could those Jews deny, but that he, who acted by such a supernatural power in some things, might as well do the same in others? Or pretend that he who had raised Lazarus from the dead might not, if he pleased, present himself in different shapes and forms; whether it were by differently qualifying his own body, as the object then offered to be seen, or by differently disposing the visive faculty and organs of sight, in such as were to see it? (as we read he actually did to two of his disciples, whose eyes were so held, that though they looked upon him, yet they could not actually know him, [Luke xxiv. 16.](#)) And upon the same ground likewise, might he not as well by his supernatural power appear amongst his disciples, *while the doors were shut?* [John xx. 19.](#) Though these words, taken *in sensu diviso*, as the logicians speak, and not *in sensu composito*, may be accounted for upon very intelligible grounds; that is to say, that Christ came not through the doors continuing shut, or through chinks, or keyholes, (as some profanely word it,) while he passed into the room; but that, finding them shut, he, without any noise or difficulty, caused them by his supernatural power to fall open before him. And even this was enough to surprise his disciples so far, as to fright, and make them think that they saw a spirit. Which sense of the words, as it is fair, and unforced, and agreeable to the common way of speaking, so it infers not in the least that great absurdity in philosophy, of a penetration of bodies; though still it must be confessed and owned, that, in all this dispute, our Saviour's body, after his resurrection, was not to be looked upon as a natural, but supernatural body; that is to say, of quite different qualities from what it had before, albeit we still grant it to have been the same in substance. Upon which account, for bare human reason to be able to assign what could or could not be done by a body so supernaturally qualified, (and as it were spiritualized,) I think it no reproach to it at all, freely to confess itself wholly at a loss; and consequently, that to argue from the state and natural properties of such bodies as we carry about us, to those of our Saviour's body, after he was risen from the dead, would be a manifest transition *a genere ad genus*; and so a notorious fault, and fallacy in argumentation.

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And thus, I hope, I have at length thoroughly examined and gone over all or most of those plausible arguments, which are or may be brought for the justification of this doubting disciple's backwardness in believing his master's resurrection; and trust, that I have given sufficient and satisfactory answers to them all. But as for that objection, or rather senseless lie, invented and made use of by the Jews, (as the evangelists record,) of Christ's body being stolen and conveyed away by his disciples in the night, while the soldiers (set to guard it) slept; it is attended with so many improbabilities and absurdities, and those not more directly contrary to reason than to common sense and experience, that it hardly deserves a serious confutation.

For can any man of sense imagine that the soldiers, set to watch the sepulchre, and that with so strict and severe an injunction of care and vigilance from the priests and rulers of the Jews, should all of them (and those no inconsiderable number doubtless) fall asleep at one and the same time? No; it is wholly improbable, and consequently upon no terms of reason supposable. Nevertheless, admitting on the other side that so unlikely a thing had really happened, and the soldiers had all fallen asleep, (as the story pretends they did,) yet this could not have given the least encouragement to the disciples (at that time but a very few unarmed men) to venture upon such an enterprise: forasmuch as they neither then did nor could foresee this accident of the guards falling asleep; nor if, when they came upon this design, they had found all of them actually asleep, could they have imagined otherwise, but that the putting of the said design in execution would have raised such a noise, as must needs have awakened some of the watch; which if it had, the disciples assuredly must and would have perished in their fool-hardy undertaking; though yet all this while we may very well imagine, that even they, as well as other men, put too great a value upon their lives, to throw them away in so obstinate and senseless a manner. Be sides, had the whole matter succeeded as was desired, can we think it morally possible, that the Jewish priests, who had so set their hearts upon exposing Christ to the people for an arrant impostor, and particularly with reference to what he had fore told of his resurrection, would not have used their utmost interest with Pilate, for the inflicting some very extraordinary and exemplary punishment upon those guards, for betraying so great a trust, as the Jews accounted it? But we hear of no such thing; but on the contrary, of a very different way of treating these soldiers, from what the priests and rulers would otherwise have certainly taken; who, if the said story had been true, would have been much more liberal in scourging their backs, than they were in oiling their hands. To all which may be added, the utter unsuitableness of the season (as a foreign divine observes) for such a night-work; it being then at the time of the full moon, (when in those eastern countries the night was almost as bright as the day,) and withal at the time of the passover; when Jerusalem not able to accommodate so vast a multitude from all parts resorting thither upon so solemn an occasion, great companies of them (no doubt) were walking all night about the fields and other adjacent places; which must needs have

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made it next to impossible (if not absolutely so) for the disciples (had they got the body of our Saviour into their hands) to have carried it off without discovery. All which considerations, together with many more incident to this matter, render this Jewish story not more false and foolish, than romantic and incredible. And accordingly, as such I dismiss it.

Nevertheless, not to rest here, but having thus answered and removed whatsoever could with any colour, or so much as shadow of reason, be brought for an objection against this great article of our Saviour's resurrection, we shall now pass to such arguments as may positively prove the same; and in order to it, shall premise this observation; namely, that to constitute, or render an act of assent properly an act of faith, this condition is absolutely necessary; to wit, that the ground, upon which the said assent proceeds, be something not evident in itself. And indeed so necessary a condition is this, that without it faith would not be formally distinguished from knowledge; knowledge (properly speaking) being an assent to a thing evidently and immediately apprehended by us, either in itself, its causes, properties, or effects. And upon this, and this account only, assent is properly said to be evident. But now, where such an evidence is not to be had, (as in things not falling under our personal, immediate cognizance, it is not,) then there can be no other way of assenting to any such thing, or proposition, but from the testimony of some one or more, who may be rationally presumed to know it themselves; but then such an assent is (as we have shewn) by no means evident, or scientific, as not being founded in our own, but in another's knowledge of the thing assented to by us. Where, for our clearer understanding of this whole matter, we ought carefully to distinguish between these three terms, evidence., certainty, and firmness of assent. As to the first of which, to wit, evidence: a thing is said to be evident, when there is an immediate perception of the object itself assented to, by an act of our sense or reason apprehending it. And in the next place, as for certainty of assent; that is, when a thing is so assented to, that although it be not in itself evident, yet that there is a sufficient ground for such an assent, and no rational or just ground to doubt of it; as where a thing is affirmed or attested, either by God himself, or by some person or persons whose credit is unquestionable. And thirdly and lastly, firmness of assent consists in an exclusion of all actual doubting about the thing assented to; I say actual doubting, whether there be a sufficient reason against such doubting, or no; forasmuch as men may be every whit as confident in a false, ungrounded belief, as in a well-grounded and true. Now the difference between these terms thus explained must, as I noted before, be very carefully attended to, or it must needs occasion great blunder and confusion in any discourse of this nature. And accordingly, to apply the forementioned terms to our present purpose, we are to observe, that although our assent to matters of faith be not upon grounds in themselves evident, yet it may nevertheless be upon such as are certain; and not only so, but in all matters necessary to be believed, (such as our Saviour's resurrection, and other divine truths,) it must and ought to be sufficient. And the reason of this manifestly is, that if we might be bound to assent to a thing neither evident nor certain,

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we might, some time or other, and in some cases, be bound to believe or assent to falsehoods as well as truths; which God never requires, as by no means obliging us to the belief of any thing, but where there is much more reason for our believing than our not believing it; that being, as I conceive, sufficient to warrant the rationality of a man's proceeding in what he believes; especially if it be necessary, that either the affirmative or the negative be believed by him. And for this cause the apostle commands us, *1 Pet. iii. 15, to be always ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us*: and the same holds equally in faith too, both of them resting upon the same bottom. For neither St. Peter nor St. Paul ever enjoin belief merely for believing's sake; though still they are far enough from requiring us to give a reason of the things we believe, (for that, I own, a Christian must not always pretend to,) but to give a reason of his belief of the said things. This every Christian may and must; for still his belief ought to be rational.



Thus far therefore have we gone, having proved, that although the resurrection of our Saviour be a thing in itself invident to us now, and not shewing itself at such a distance of time by any light either inherent in it, or personally and immediately perceivable by our senses or understandings; yet being proposed to our belief upon certain and sufficient grounds, it ought, according to the measure of the said certainties, to be believed and assented to by us. So that it remains now for us to demonstrate, that the ground or reason, upon which we are to believe our Saviour's resurrection, is certain, and by consequence sufficient. And accordingly I shall state the belief of it upon these two arguments; common I confess, but never the less forcible for being so.

1. The constant, uniform affirmation and word of those, who have transmitted the relation of it down to posterity. For this being merely a matter of fact, (the thing in dispute being, whether Christ rose from the dead or no,) is by no means knowable by us, who live at so great a distance from the time when it came to pass, but by one of these two ways, viz. either, 1. by immediate divine revelation; or, 2. by human testimony or tradition. As to the first of which, it is not nowadays, by any of the sober professors of Christianity, so much as pretended to; nor if it were, ought such pretences to be allowed of. And therefore we must fetch it from the other way, to wit, tradition; to the rendering of which certain, and beyond all just exception credible, these two conditions are required.

1. That the persons, who made it, and from whom it originally came, had sufficient means and opportunities to know, and to be informed of the truth of what they reported to the world. And



2. That they were of that unquestionable sincerity, as truly and impartially to report things as they knew them, and no otherwise.

Now for the

First of these two conditions, viz. that the reporters had sufficient opportunity to know the things reported by them, this is undeniable; forasmuch as they personally conversed

with Christ, and were eye and ear-witnesses of all that was done by him, or happened to him, as it is in the [first epistle of St. John, i. 1. 3.](#) *That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, declare we unto you.* And surely, if knowledge might make a man a competent witness, there is none for evidence, as well as certainty, superior to that of sense: and if the judgment of any one sense rightly disposed be hardly or never deceived, surely the united judgment of them all together must needs upon the same terms pass for infallible, if any thing amongst us poor mortals may or ought to be accounted so. But

2. As for the other forementioned condition of a competent witness, viz. that he be a person of such unquestionable sincerity, as to report the naked truth of what he knows. This, with respect to the apostles in the present case, appears in a great measure from the meanness of their parts, abilities, and education, naturally disposing men to plainness and simplicity; and simplicity has ever yet been accounted one good step to sincerity. They were poor, mean fishermen, called in [Acts iv. 13.](#) ἰδιῶται καὶ ἀγράμματοί, in plain terms, persons wholly illiterate, and unacquainted with the politic fetches of the world, and utterly unfit to conceive, and more unfit to manage any further design, than only to deceive and circumvent the contemptible inhabitants of the watery region. And could such men, (think we,) newly coming from their fishermen's cottages, and from mending their nets, entertain so great a thought, as to put an imposture upon the whole world, and to overturn the Jewish laws, and the gentile philosophy, with a new religion of their own inventing? It is not so much as credible, and much less probable.

But besides, admitting these persons to have been as subtle and deeply knowing, as they were in truth shallow and ignorant, yet still they were men, and consequently of the same passions and desires with other men; and being so, that they should relinquish all the darling pleasures, profits, and accommodations of life, and voluntarily expose themselves to scorn, tortures, persecutions, and even death itself, only to propagate a story, which they themselves knew to be a lie, and that an absurd, insipid, incredible lie, (if a lie at all,) this certainly was a thing unnatural, and morally impossible. For can any man, not abandoned by the native sense of man, bring himself to be in love with a gibbet, or enamoured with a rack? Can these tortures, which are even able to make a man abjure the truth, allure him to own and assert, and even die for a lie? Wherefore, there being no imaginable objection against the disciples' sincerity and veracity, (which was the other qualification of a competent witness mentioned by us,) it follows, that their testimony concerning our Saviour's resurrection is to be accepted and believed as true, certain, and unexceptionable. And so much for the first argument. But

2. The other argument shall be taken from those miraculous works, by which the apostles confirmed the testimony of their words. He who affirms a thing, and to prove the truth of it does a miracle, brings God as a voucher of the truth of what he says. And therefore he who shall affirm, that the apostles proclaimed to the world things false, must affirm also,

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that they did all those miracles by their own or the Devil's power; or if they did them by God's, then that God lent the exercise of his power to impostors, to confirm and ratify the publication of a lie, for the beguiling and deceiving of mankind; and that in a matter of the highest and most important concern to them that can possibly be. Which is so blasphemous for any one to assert, and so impossible for God to do, that the very thought of it is intolerable.

So that now the only thing remaining for our full conviction, is to shew that there is sufficient reason to persuade men, that such miracles were really done by the apostles, to confirm the doctrines delivered by them. And for this we are to hear the only proof which things of this nature are capable of; to wit, the voice of general, long continued, and uninterrupted antiquity; that is to say, the united testimony of so many nations, for so many ages successively, all jointly agreeing in one and the same report about this matter; which report, if it were untrue, must needs have been framed by combination and compact amongst themselves. But that so many nations of such various tempers, such different interests, and such distant situations from one another, should be able all to meet and combine together, to abuse and deceive the world with a falsehood, is upon all the rules and principles of human reasoning incredible. And yet, on the other side, that this could be done without such a previous combination is still more incredible; and consequently, that neither the one nor the other ought to be reckoned in the number of those things which we account possibilities. And now all that has been disputed by us hitherto, with reference to the apostles and disciples, as to their believing and preaching Christ's resurrection to the world, may be naturally drawn from, and as naturally resolved into these following conclusions.

1. That no man of common sense or reason undertakes any action considerable, but for the obtaining to himself some good, or the serving some interest thereby, either in this world or in the next.

2. That our Saviour's disciples, though they bore no character for political knowledge or depth of learning, yet shewed themselves, in the whole course of their behaviour, men of sense and reason, as well as integrity.

3. That being such, and so to be considered, had they known Christ's resurrection to have been a falsehood, they would never have preached it to the world, to the certain bringing upon themselves thereby the extremity of misery and persecution in this life, and a just condemnation from Almighty God in that to come.

4. That had the resurrection of our Saviour been indeed false and fabulous, his disciples could not but have known it to be so.

To which I shall add the

Fifth, that in things proposed to our belief, a man safely may, and rationally ought to yield his assent to that, which he finds supported with better and stronger arguments (though short of a demonstration) than any that he sees producible against it.

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From all which it follows, that our Saviour's resurrection having been attested by persons so unexceptionably qualified for that purpose, whether we consider the opportunities they had of knowing throughly the things testified by them, or their known sincerity and veracity in reporting what they knew, as likewise the miraculous works done by them, in confirmation of what they delivered, and all this brought down to us by unanimous, undisputed tradition; and moreover, since such tradition has greater ground for its belief, than the discourse of any man's particular reason can suggest for its disbelief, (universal tradition being less subject to error and fallacy than such discourses or argumentations can pretend to be;) and lastly, since it is a manifest absurdity in reasoning, to reject or disbelieve that, which a man has more ground and reason to believe than to disbelieve; I conclude that the doctrine of the apostles concerning our Saviour's resurrection ought, upon the strictest terms of reasoning, to be believed and assented to, as a most certain, irrefragable, and uncontestable truth; which I take to be the grand conclusion to be proved by us.

In fine, if I have brought the point hitherto disputed of, so far as to make it appear that there are greater and stronger arguments for the belief of our Saviour's resurrection, than for the doubting of it, (as I hope I have effectually done,) I conceive this to be sufficient in reason to strip men of all justification of their unbelief of the same, and consequently to answer all the great ends of practical religion, the prime business and concern of mankind in this world. Albeit it must be still confessed, (as we have noted from Calvin before,) that there are several passages relating to this whole matter, neither so demonstrative, nor yet so demonstrable, as might be wished. Nevertheless, since it has pleased Almighty God to take this and no other method in this great transaction, I think it the greatest height of human wisdom, and the highest commendation that can be given of it, to acquiesce in what the divine wisdom has actually thought the most fit in this affair to make use of.

And now to close up the whole discourse; with what can we conclude it better, than with a due encomium of the superlative excellency of that mighty grace, which could and did enable the disciples so firmly to believe, and so undauntedly to own and attest their belief of their blessed master's resurrection? and that in defiance of the utmost discouragements, which the power, malice, and barbarity of the bitterest enemies could either threaten or encounter human nature with.

And to advance the worth of this faith, if possible, yet higher, we are to know, that it consists not (as has been hinted already) in a bare act of assent or credence, founded in the determining evidence of the object, but attended also with a full choice and approbation of the will, for that otherwise it could not be an act properly free; nor consequently valuable (and much less meritorious) in the esteem of God or man. And therefore some of the ablest of the schoolmen resolve faith, not into a bare credence, or act of the understanding only, but also into a pious disposition of the will, preventing, disposing, and, as it were, bending the former, to close in with such propositions, as bring with them a suitableness as well as



truth; and it is not to be doubted, but inclination gives a powerful stroke and turn towards credence, or assent. So that while truth claims and commands the same, and suitableness only draws and allures it, yet in the issue this obtains it as effectually as even truth itself. Not that I affirm, or judge, that in strictness of reason this ought to be so, but that through the infirmity of reason it is but too manifest, that very often (if not generally) it falls out to be so.

In the mean time we may here see and admire the commanding, and (I had almost said) the meritorious excellency of faith. That while carnal reason argues, sense is stubborn and resists, and many seeming impossibilities occur, it can yet force its way through all such obstacles, and like Lazarus, (though bound hand and foot, as it were,) break even through mortality and death itself.

But as for those whom nothing will satisfy but such a faith as shall outvie omnipotence itself, by believing more than even omnipotence can do, I mean contradictions, and especially that grand astonishing one to all human reason, called *transubstantiation*; we poor Christians, I say, of a much lower form, presume not to aspire to such a pitch, and sort of faith; but think it sufficient humbly to own and admire that faith, which the apostle tells us can make its way, through the whole eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and that by subduing of kingdoms, putting to flight armies, and not only believing, but also working miracles, and that to such a degree, as even to become a miracle itself. For (as we read there also) it was able *to stop the mouths of lions*; and, which was more, the mouth of a disputing reason. And certainly that faith, which our Saviour told us could *remove mountains*, might, (had our Saviour but given the word,) without the interposal of an angel, have removed *also the stone from before the door of his sepulchre*, as great as it was.

He who would have a masculine, invincible faith indeed, must in many cases balk his sight, and the further he would leap, the shorter he must look. Christ wrought many of his miraculous cures upon such blind men as believed: and as their faith contributed not a little to the curing of their blindness, so their blindness seemed a no improper emblem of their faith.

For which reason, may not he who requires no less than a sensible, irresistible evidence for all his principles, and, not content with a sufficient certainty for the same, will be satisfied with nothing under strict syllogism and demonstration for every article of his creed; may not such an one, I say, be very pertinently and justly replied to, in those words of our Saviour to the Jews, *What do you more than others?* And yet further, would not even the heathens and ancient philosophers have done as much? Would not they have believed whatsoever you could have demonstrated to them? allowed you so much persuasion for so much proof? and so much assent for so much evidence? And in a word, would not Aristotle himself have been convinced upon the same terms on which Thomas the disciple was?



But a Christian should go a large step higher and further, read all his *credenda* in an  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\varphi\eta$ , sacrifice even his Isaac, the first-begotten of his reason, and most beloved issue of his brain, whensoever God shall think fit to be honoured with such a victim. For such a belief, though it has not the evidence of sight, yet it has all which sight and evidence can be valued for; that is to say, it has something instead of it, and above it too; so that where sense and carnal reason oppose themselves, fly back, and will by no means yield, faith comes in with the demonstration of the Spirit and power, scatters the dark cloud, and clears up all.

And in nothing certainly is the heroic excellency of such an entire submission of our reason to divine revelation so eminently shewn, as in this, that a man hereby ventures himself and his eternal concerns wholly upon God's bare word; and questionless nothing can so powerfully engage one of a generous spirit, even amongst men, as an absolute confidence in him, and an unreserved dependence upon him. And if there be any way possible for a creature to oblige his Creator, it must be this.

Wherefore let us, in this state of darkness and mortality, rest content to see the great things of our religion, but in part, to understand the resurrection but darkly, and to view the rising sun (as I may so express it) but through a crevice, still remembering, that God has in this world appointed faith for our great duty, and in the next, vision for our reward.

*To which may He, of his infinite mercy, vouchsafe, in his good time, 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 SERMON

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

NOVEMBERS, 1663.

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### ROMANS xiii. 5.

*Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

THIS chapter is the great and noted repository of the most absolute and binding precepts of allegiance, and seems so fitted to this argument, that it ought to be always preached upon, as long as there is either such a thing as obedience to be enjoined, or such a thing as rebellion to be condemned.

In the words that I have pitched upon, there are these two parts.

1. A duty enjoined; *ye must needs be subject*.
2. The ground of motive of that duty; *for conscience sake*.

For the first of these. Since men are apt to draw arguments for or against obedience from the qualifications of the persons concerned in it, we will consider here,

1. The persons who are commanded to be subject.
2. The person to whom they are commanded this subjection.

1. For the persons commanded to be subject, they were believers, the faithful, those who were the church of God in Rome, as we see in [chap. i. 7](#), *Beloved of God, called to be saints*. Neither were they saints only, but saints of the first rank and magnitude, heroes in the faith; [verse 8](#), *Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*. Their faith made Rome no less the metropolis of Christianity, than of the world. The Roman faith and fortitude equally spread their fame. And as the pagan Romans overcame the world by their fortitude, so did the Christians by their faith.

But for the modern Roman saints, it is their powder, not their faith, that has made such a report in the world; a race much different from their primitive ancestors, whose piety could not cancel their loyalty. No religion could sanctify treason; Christian liberty was compatible with the strictest allegiance; they knew no such way as to put the sceptre into Christ's hand, by pulling it out from their prince's.

2. In the next place; the person to whom they were commanded to be subject was Nero; a person so prodigiously brutish, that, whether we consider him as a man or as a governor, we shall find him a Nero, that is, a monster, in both respects.

And first, if we consider his person; he was such a mass of filth and impiety, such an oglio of all ill qualities, that he stands the wonder and the disgrace of mankind. For, to pass over his monstrous obscenity, he poisoned Britannicus for having a better voice; he murdered his tutor Seneca; he kicked his wife big with child to death; he killed his mother, and ript

her up in sport, to see the place where he lay: so impious, that he would adore the statues of his gods one day, and piss upon them another. But then, take him as an emperor, and he was the veriest tyrant and bloodsucker, the most unjust governor that ever the world saw: one, who had proceeded to that enormity, that the very army, the only prop of his tyranny, deserted him; and the senate sentenced him to be ignominiously drawn upon a hurdle, and whipt to death.

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He was one, who had united in himself the most different and unsociable qualities, namely, to be ridiculous and to be terrible; for what more ridiculous than a fiddling emperor, and more terrible than a bloody tyrant? In short, he was the plague of the world, the stain of majesty, and the very blush of nature. One, who seemed to be sent and prepared by Providence, to give the world an experiment, *quid summa vitia in summa fortuna possint*; and by a new way of confirmation, to seal to the truth of Christianity by his hatred of it.

And yet after all this, the believing Romans are commanded subjection even to this Nero, the best of saints to the worst of men: and indeed it was this that gave a value to their obedience; for to be loyal to a just, gentle, and virtuous prince, is rather privilege than patience. But the reason of the whole matter is stated in these words, [verse 1](#), *The powers that are, are ordained of God*. Obedience to the magistrate is obedience to God at the second hand; and as a man cannot be so wicked, so degenerate, but that still he is a man by God's creation; so neither can the magistrate be so vile and unjust, but that still he is an officer by God's institution. And it is no small part of the divine prerogative, to be able to command homage to the worst of kings, as the majesty of a prince is never more apparent, than in his subjects' submission to an unworthy deputy or lieutenant. The baseness of the metal is warranted by the superscription, the office hallows the person; neither is there any reason, that the vileness of one should disannul the dignity of the other; forasmuch as he is made wicked by himself or the Devil, but he is stamp't a magistrate by God. We are therefore to overlook all impieties and defects, which cannot invalidate the function. Though Nero deserves worthily to be abhorred, yet still the emperor is and ought to be sacred. And thus much for the duty, and the persons to whom it relates. *Ye must needs be subject*.

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2. I come now to the second part, viz. the ground or motive upon which this duty is enforced; *Ye must needs be subject for conscience sake*. A strange argument, I must confess, if we were to transcribe Christianity from the practice of modern Christians, with whom it would proceed thus rather; Ye must needs shake off all government, and rebel for *conscience sake*. No such instrument to carry on a refined and well-woven rebellion, as a tender conscience and a sturdy heart. He who rebels conscientiously, rebels heartily; such an one carries his god in his scabbard, and his religion upon the point of his sword. He strikes every stroke for salvation, and wades deep in blood for eternity. But what now must be said of those impostors, who, in the name of God, and with pretended commissions from Heaven, have bewitched men into such a religious rage? Who have preached them out of the deadly sin



of allegiance into the angelical state of faction and rebellion? Whose saints were never listed but in the muster-roll for the field; and whose rubric is writ only with letters of blood. I believe, upon a due survey of history, it will be found, that the most considerable villainies which were ever acted upon the stage of Christendom, have been authorized with the glistening pretences of conscience, and the introduction of a greater purity in religion. He who would act the destroyer, if he would do it effectually, should put on the reformer; and he who would be creditably and successfully a villain, let him go whining, praying, and preaching to his work; let him knock his breast and his hollow heart, and pretend to lie in the dust before God, before he can be able to lay others there.

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But some may reply and argue, that conscience is to be obeyed, though erroneous; and therefore, if a saint (for with some all rebels are such) stands fully persuaded in his conscience, that his magistrate is an enemy to the gospel and the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and so ought to be resisted; is not such an one engaged to act according to the dictates of his conscience? And since God would punish him for going against it, is it not high tyranny for the magistrate to punish him for complying with it?

To this I answer, that he who looks well into this argument, looks into the great *arcanum* and the *sanctum sanctorum* of Puritanism; which indeed is only reformed Jesuitism, as Jesuitism is no thing else but popish Puritanism: and I could draw out such an exact parallel between them, both as to principles and practices, that it would quickly appear, that they are as truly brothers, as ever were Romulus and Remus; and that they sucked their principles from the same wolf.

But to encounter the main body of the argument, which, like the Trojan horse, carries both arms and armed men in the belly of it, I answer, that to act against conscience, erroneous or not erroneous, is sinful; but then the error adds nothing to the excusableness of the action, when the same charge of sin lies upon the conscience for being erroneous. No man can err in matters of constant duty, which God has laid open to an easy and obvious discernment, but he errs with the highest malignity of wilfulness; and if any plea to the contrary be admitted, it will unhinge all society, and dissolve the bonds of all the governments in the world.

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The magistrate is to take no notice of any man's erroneous conscience, but (if reason and religion will not set it right) to rectify or convince it with an axe or the gibbet. He who would without control disturb a government, because his erroneous conscience tells him he must, does all one as if he should say, that it is lawful for a man to commit murder, provided that he who does it be first drunk. It were a sad thing, if the laws should be at a stand, and the weal public suffer, because such and such persons are pleased to be in an error; (though, by the way, they are seldom or never seen to be so, but very beneficially to themselves.) He who brings down the law to the exceptions of any man's conscience, does really place the legislative power in that man's conscience; and by so doing, may at length bring

down his own neck to the block. For certainly that subject is advanced to a strange degree of power, whose conscience has a prerogative to command the laws.

And I do not expect ever to speak a greater truth than this, that the non-execution of the laws upon such hypocrites has been the fatal cause which drew after it the execution of the supreme legislator<sup>42</sup> himself; and believe it, if a governor ever falls into the mercy of such persons, he will find that their hands are by no means so tender as their consciences pretend to be. All indulgences animate such persons, but mend them not; all reconcilements, and little puny arts of accommodation, are but as spiders' webs, which such hornets will quickly break through, and as truces to an old enemy to rally up his forces, and to fall on, when he sees his advantage: nothing will hold a sanctified, tender-conscienced rebel, but a prison or a halter. And these are not angry words, but the oracular responses and bitter truths of a long and bleeding experience; an experience which began in a rebellion against an excellent prince, proceeded to his imprisonment, and concluded in his murder.

But because conscience is a relative term, and so must refer to something which it is to be conversant about, I shall shew, that men are commanded a subjection to, and dehorted from a resistance of the civil magistrate, by two things.

1. The absolute unlawfulness; and,
2. The scandal of such a resistance.

1. For the first of these, its absolute unlawfulness. Rebellion surely is a mortal sin; mortal to the rebel, and mortal to the prince rebelled against. It is the violation of government, which is the very soul and support of the universe, and the imitation of Providence. Every lawful ruler holds the government by a certain deputation from God; and the commission by which he holds it is his word. This is the voice of scripture, this is the voice of reason. But yet we must not think to carry it so; for although in the apostles time this was divinity and truth, yea, and truth also stamp with necessity, yet we have been since taught, that kings may be lawfully resisted, cast off, and deposed; and that by two sorts of men.

1. The sons of Rome: and,
- . Their true offspring, the sons of Geneva.

1. For the first of these. It would be like the stirring of a great sink, which would be likelier to annoy than to instruct the auditory, to draw out from thence all the pestilential doctrines and practices against the royalty and supremacy of princes.

Gratian, in the Decrees, expressly says, *Imperator potest a papa deponi*. And Boniface VIII. in lib. 1. *Extrav. Com. titulo de Majoritate et Obedientia*, has declared the subjection, or rather the slavery of princes to the pope fully enough. 1. For first he tells us, that kings and secular powers have the temporal sword, but to be used *ad nutum sacerdotis*. 2. He adds,

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42 King Charles the First.

*Porro subesse Romano pontifici omni humanae creaturae, declaramus, dicimus, definimus, et pronuntiamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis.*

And how far princes are to be under him, we have a further account. 1. They ought to kiss his feet. 2. He may depose them. 3. No prince may repeal his sentence, but he may repeal the sentences of all others. 4. He may absolve subjects from their allegiance. These, and some such other impious positions, they call *dictatus papae*; and were published and established by pope Gregory VII. in the Roman synod, in the year one thousand seventy-six, as Baronius tells us, *ad annum Christi millesimum septuagesimum sextum. Numero trices. 1<sup>mo</sup> et trices. 2<sup>do</sup>.*

And that we may see that he was not wanting to execute, as much as he had the face to assert, Platina tells us in his Life how he deposed Henry IV. emperor of Germany; and some of the words of his bull are these: *Henricum imperatoria administratione, regiaque dejicio. Et Christianos omnes imperio subjectos juramento absolvo.* The whole bull is extant in the bullery of Laertius Cherubinus, tom. i. p. 12, printed at Rome 1617. And then at last, with an equal affront to the majesty of scripture, as well as to that of princes, he put his foot upon the emperor's neck, quoting that passage in the psalm, *Super aspidem et basiliscum; Thou shalt tread upon the asp and the basilisk*; a great encouragement surely for princes to turn papists. But to contain ourselves within our own country, where we are most concerned. The pope, we know, deposed king Henry VIII. and queen Elizabeth, as far as the words and the *bruta fulmina* of his bulls could depose them; absolving their subjects from their allegiance, and exposing their dominions to the invasion of any who could invade them. The words of Pius V. in his bull against queen Elizabeth, are remarkable; which, translated into English, run thus: "Christ, who reigns on high, and to whom all power in heaven and earth is given, has committed the government of the one catholic and apostolic church only to Peter, and his successor the pope of Rome. And him has he placed prince over all nations and kingdoms, to pluck up, destroy, scatter, overturn, plant, and build up; in order to the keeping of God's faithful people in the bond of charity and in the unity of the spirit."

And is not this a bold preface, able to blast the prerogative of all kings at a breath? But it is well that cursed bulls have short horns. Yet all this is but the voice of his thunder; the bolt is to come afterwards. Let us see how he proceeds.

"Wherefore, (says he,) being upheld in the supreme throne of justice by Christ himself, who has placed us in it, we declare the aforesaid Elizabeth an heretic, and all who adhere to her to have incurred an anathema, and to be actually divided and cut off from the unity of Christ's body. Moreover, we declare her to be deprived of all right to her kingdom, and of all dominion, dignity, and privilege belonging thereto. Withal, that the subjects of that kingdom, and all others, who have any ways swore obedience to her, are fully absolved from their oath, and from all debt of homage and allegiance to her; and accordingly by these presents we do absolve them. Furthermore, we charge and enjoin all her subjects to yield



no obedience to her person, laws, or commands. Given at Rome, in the year 1575, in the fifth year of the pope's reign, and the thirteenth of queen Elizabeth's."

It is possible now that some English and French papists may dislike this doctrine of deposing kings; but they owe this to their own good natures, or some other principle; or indeed chiefly to this, that they live under such kings as will not be deposed. But that they owe it not to their religion, which (by little less than a contradiction in the terms) they miscall *catholic*, is clear from hence, that by the very essential constitution of their faith, they are bound to believe and to submit both their judgments and practices to all that is determined by a general council confirmed by the pope. This being premised, we must know, that the fourth Lateran council, which they acknowledge general, and to have had in it above twelve hundred fathers, (as they call them,) in the third chapter *de Haereticis*, thus determines: "That all secular powers shall be compelled to take an oath to banish heretics out of their territories. *Moveantur, et, si necesse fuerit, compellantur potestates saeculares, cujuscunque sint officii, ut pro defensione fidei publice juramentum praestent,*" &c. But what now, if persons will not do this? If they refuse to be thus commanded like subjects, and to place their royal diadems upon their bald pates.

Why then the fathers, or rather the lords of the council thus proceed: "If (say they) princes refuse to purge their dominions from heresy, let this be signified to the pope, that he may forthwith declare their subjects absolved from their allegiance, and expose their territories to be seized upon by catholics."

This is the canon of that *concilium Lateranum magnum*, (for so they term it,) in which were above twelve hundred fathers, (so they tell us,) a council by them acknowledged to be general, and confirmed by the pope. Now I demand, is this council infallible, or is it not?

1. If not, then good night to their infallibility, if the pope and twelve hundred fathers, met together in a general council, be not infallible.

2. If it be infallible, (as they all do and must say, unless they will deny a fundamental article of their faith,) then they must all believe it, and by consequence acknowledge, that the pope has power to excommunicate and depose kings, and to give away their kingdoms, in case of heresy; and what heresy is, they themselves are to be judges: this we may be sure of, that all protestant kings are heretics with them; and so the pope may, when he will, and undoubtedly will, when he can, give away their kingdoms. I think it concerns kings to consider this, and when they have a mind to submit to the pope's tyranny, to subscribe to the pope's religion.

Thus much for the Lateran council; and to place the argument above all exception, this very council is expressly confirmed by that of Trent, in the 24th Session of Reformation, chap. 5, p. 412; also in the 25th Session about Reformation, chap. 20, p. 624.

Now shew me any thoroughpaced catholic, who dares refuse to subscribe to the council of Trent; which being so, it is a matter of amazement to consider, that the men of this pro-

fession should be of such prodigious impudence as to solicit any protestant prince for protection, nay indulgences to their persons and religion; when, by virtue of this religion, they hold themselves bound, under pain of damnation, to believe those principles as articles of their faith, which naturally undermine, ruin, and eat out the very heart of all monarchy. But if any one should plead favour for them, it is pity but these bulls and decrees, and the Scotch covenant, were all drawn into one system, that so they might be indulged all together; and perhaps in time they may. You have seen here their principles, *i.e.* you have heard the text; and you need go no further than this fifth of November for a comment.

I could further add, that the popish religion, in the nature of it, is inconsistent with the just rights and supremacy of princes; and that upon this invincible reason, that it exempts all the clergy from subjection to them, so far that (be their crimes what they will) kings cannot punish them. For the proof of which, I shall bring that which is *instar omnium*, and which I am sure they must stand to, *viz.* the decree of the council of Trent, which in the 24th Session about Reformation, chap. 5, p. 412, determines thus: *Causae criminales majores contra episcopos ab ipso tantum summo pontifice Romano cognoscantur et terminentur; minores vero in concilio tantum provinciali cognoscantur et terminentur.* So that the king, for any thing that he has to do in these matters, may sit and blow his nails; for use them otherwise he cannot. He may indeed be plotted against, have barrels of powder laid, and poniards prepared for him: but to punish the sacred actors of these villainies, that is reserved only to him who gave the first command for the doing them.

These things, I say, I could prosecute much further, but that I am equally engaged by the exigence of my subject to speak something of their true seed, the sons of Geneva; who, though they seem to be contrary to those of Rome, and, like Samson's foxes, to look opposite ways, yet, when they are to play the incendiaries, to fire kingdoms and governments, they can turn tail to one and the same firebrand.

In our account of these, we will begin with the father of the faithful; faithful, I mean, to their old antimonarchical doctrines and assertions; and that is, the great mufti of Geneva: who, in the fourth book of his Institutions, chap. 20. §. 31, has the face to own such doctrine to the world as this. "That it is not only not unlawful for the three estates to oppose their king in the exorbitances of his government, (of which they still are to be judges,) but that they basely and perfidiously desert the trust committed to them by God, if they connive at him, and do not to their utmost oppose and restrain him."

Let us see this wholesome doctrine and institution further amplified in his Commentaries upon [Daniel, chap. 2, verse 39](#). He roundly tells us, "That those men are out of their wits, and quite void of sense and understanding, who desire to live under sovereign monarchies; for that it cannot be (says he) but order and policy must decay, where one man holds such an extent of government."

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Upon this good foundation he proceeds further, [chap. 6. verse 22](#). “Princes, (says he,) when they oppose God, (and oppose God, according to him, they do, when they refuse his new discipline,) then, (says he,) *abdicant se potestate*, they deprive themselves of all power; and it is better, in such cases, to spit in their faces, than to obey them.” Yet for all this, Daniel, who surely was as godly a man as Mr. Calvin, did not spit in Nebuchadnezzar’s face.

But that we may know when princes oppose God, and so may bring his assertions together, he tells us further, [chap. 5, verse 25](#), “That kings forget that they are men, and of the same mould with others: they are (says he) styled *Dei gratia*; but to what sense or purpose, save only to shew, that they acknowledge no superior upon earth? Yet under colour of this, they will trample upon God with their feet; so that it is but an abuse when they are so called.” It seems then, we must lay aside all appellations of honour, and hereafter say only, *Good man such an one*, king of England, or *Laird such an one*, king of Scotland. But let us follow him a little further; where in the same chapter we shall see him go on thus. “See (says he) what the rage and madness of all kings is, with whom it is a common thing to exclude God from the government of the world.” Again, [chap. 6, verse 25](#), “Darius (says he) will condemn by his example all those that profess themselves at this day *catholic kings, Christian kings, and defenders of the faith*, and yet do not only deface and bury all true piety and religion, but corrupt and deprave the whole worship of God.”

Could any thing be with greater virulence thrown at all the princes of Christendom than this? And yet I believe there is never a puritan or dissenter in England, but would lick his spittle in every one of these assertions.

But let us now rally them together into one argument. When princes oppose God, we are not (in Calvin’s judgment) to obey them, but to spit in their faces. But now, to exclude God from his government of the world, and to corrupt his whole worship, (which he affirms all princes do,) is surely to oppose God: and therefore, according to his doctrine, joined with his good manners, we are not to obey them, but spit in their faces. A doctrine fit only to come from him, who nested himself into the chief power of Geneva after the expulsion of the lawful prince.

In the last place, to speak one word of his epistles, which were published by Beza; one who had been a long time licked by him into his own form, and so was likely to do him what advantage he could in their publication: he who shall diligently read them will find, that there was scarce any traitorous design on foot in Christendom, but there are some traces of correspondence with it extant in those epistles.

And so we dismiss him. Beza his disciple succeeds him both in place and doctrine; and to shew that he does so, he expressly owns and commends the French rebellion, in his epistle before his Annotations. And in the forty Articles of Berne, published in the year 1574, and drawn up by Beza, in the fortieth article he affirms, “that they were bound not to disarm, so long as their religion was persecuted by the king.”

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If we would now see how this doctrine grew, being transplanted into Scotland; Knox, in his book to the nobility and people of Scotland, in the point of obedience to kings, instructs them thus: "Neither promise (says he) nor oath can oblige any man to obey or give assistance unto tyrants against God." And what tyrants were in his sense, his practices against the queen regent sufficiently shew.

In the next place, Buchanan, who was once prolocutor of the Scotch assembly, that is to say, some thing greater than their king, is copious upon this subject, in his history of Scotland, and in his book *de jure regni*, &c. In the former of which, at the 372d page, he wonders that there is not some public reward appointed for those private men that should kill tyrants, as there is for those that kill wolves. And in his book *de jure regni*, he maintains an excellent dispute against such as defend kings. The royal advocates, says he, hold, that kings must be obeyed, good or bad. It is blasphemy to affirm that, says Buchanan. But God placeth oftentimes evil kings, say the royal advocates: so doth he often private men to kill them, says Buchanan. But in 1 Timothy we are commanded to pray for princes, say they: so are we commanded to pray for thieves, says he; but yet may hang them up, when we catch them. But, say the royal advocates, St. Paul strictly commands obedience to all princes: St. Paul wrote so, says Buchanan, in the infancy of the church, when they were not able to resist them; but if he had lived now, he would have wrote otherwise.

Now, if this be their prolocutor's doctrine, I leave it to any one to judge, whether every king has not cause to take up those words of Jacob to Simeon and Levi, with a little change; *O my soul, come not thou into their secret, and unto their general assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.*

But that we may come home to the very place of my text; I shall produce one more of them, and that is Pareus; a German divine, but fully cast into the Geneva mould. He in his comment upon Romans xiii. full fraught with a pestilent discourse against the sovereignty of kings, assigns several cases in which their subjects may lawfully take up arms against them, page 1338. As 1. "If their prince blasphemeth God, or causes others to do so. 2. If he does them some great injury: his words are, *Si fiat ipsis atrox injuria*. 3. If they cannot otherwise enjoy their lives, estates, and consciences." Now with all these large conditions, still join this, that themselves are to be judges in all these cases against their prince; and then, if they have but a mind to rebel, they may blame themselves, if they are to seek for a lawful cause. This made king James award this worthy piece to the fire and the hangman. A prince who, though bred up under puritans, yet hated their opinions heartily, because he understood them throughly.

And now last of all, as it is the nature of dregs, and the worst part of things, to descend to the bottom, it were easy to bring up the rear with our English Genevizers, and to shew how these doctrines of disloyalty to princes have thriven amongst them; were it not impertinent to think, that you could be further instructed by hearing that for an hour, that you



have felt for twenty years. And here by the way, it is a glorious justification of the church of England, still to have had the same enemies with the monarchy of England. For an account of their tenets, I shall not send you to their papers, to their sermons, though some of the greatest blots to Christianity, next to their authors; but I shall send you rather to the field, to the high courts of justice, where they stand writ to eternity in the massacre of thousands, in the blood and banishment of princes; actions that much outdo the business of this present anniversary; but to be buried in silence, because not to be reprehended with safety.

However, as for puritanism, since it had so long deceived the world with a demure face, I have been often prone to think, that it was in some respect a favour of Providence, to let it have its late full scope and range, to convince and undeceive Christendom, and by an immortal experiment to demonstrate whither those principles tend, and what a savage monster puritanism, armed with power, would shew itself to the world.

So that if any Christian prince should hereafter forget the English rebellion, and himself, so far as to be deceived with those stale, threadbare, baffled pretences of *conscience* and *reformation*, he would fall in a great measure unpitied, as a martyr to his senseless fondness, and a sacrifice to his own credulity.

And for those amongst us, they are of that incorrigible, impregnable malice, that, forgetting all their treasons, they have made the king's oblivion the chief subject of their own; and rewarding all his unparalleled mercies with continual murmurs, libels, plots, and conspiracies, seem only to be pardoned into fresh treasons, and indemnified into new rebellions.

We have seen here the adversaries, which this great duty of allegiance to kings has on both sides: which that we may enforce against all arts of evasion, which the papist and puritan, the mortal, sworn, *covenanted* enemies of all magistracy, but especially of monarchy, can invent, it will be expedient briefly to discuss this question;

Whether, and how far, human laws bind the conscience?

To the determination of which, if we would proceed clearly and rationally, we must first state, what it is to bind the conscience. To bind the conscience therefore, is so to oblige a man to the performance of a thing, that the nonperformance of it brings him under the guilt of sin, and liableness to punishment before God.

Now to proceed. Some are of opinion, that human laws oblige only to the penalty annexed to the violation of them; and that the conscience contracts the guilt of no sin before God; a man's person being only subject to the outward penalties, which the civil magistrate shall inflict for the expiation of his offence.

But the confutation of this opinion I need fetch no further than from the text. For I demand of the most subtle expositor and acute logician in the world, what sense he will make here of the words, *for conscience sake*; if by conscience is not meant conscience of sin, but only of liableness to punishment before the magistrate.

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For then the sense of the words will be this. *You must needs be subject, not only for wrath,* that is for fear of punishment; *but also for conscience sake,* that is, for fear of punishment too; since according to them, the term, *for conscience sake,* referred to the laws of the civil magistrate, can signify no more. But this is so broad a depravation of the rules of speaking, that it banishes all sense and reason from the whole scheme and construction of the words.

To the whole matter therefore I answer by a distinction.

1. That a law may bind the conscience, either immediately, by virtue of its own power conveyed to it by its immediate legislator. Or,

2. Mediatly, in the strength of a superior law, owning and enforcing the obligation of the inferior.

This distinction premised, I affirm, that the laws of man neither do nor can thus immediately bind the conscience; that is, by themselves, or by any obliging power transfused into them from the human legislator. That this is so, I demonstrate upon these reasons.

1. No power can oblige any further than it can take cognizance of the offence, and inflict penalties, in case the person obliged does not answer the obligation, but offends against it. This proposition stands firm upon this eternal truth; that nothing can be an obligation that is absurd and irrational. But it is absurd for any power to give laws and obligations to that of which it can take no account, nor possibly know, whether it keeps or transgresses those laws, and which, upon its transgression of them, it cannot punish.

But what man alive, what judge or justice, what Minos or Rhadamanthus, can carry his inspection into the conscience? What evidence, what witness, or rack, can extort a discovery of that, which the conscience is resolved to conceal, and keep within itself? Nay, admit that it were possible to force it to such confessions against itself; yet what penalty could human force, and the short reach of the secular arm, inflict upon a spiritual, immaterial substance? which defies all our engines of torment and arts of cruelty; which laughs at the hostilities and weak invasions of all the elements. Conscience is neither scorched with the fire nor pricked with the sword; it feels nothing under a Deity, nothing but the stings and insinuations of an angry, sin-revenging Omnipotence.

2. A second reason is this. That if human laws, considered in themselves, immediately bind the conscience, then human laws, as such, carry in them as great an obligation as the divine. The consequence is most clear; for the divine law can do no more than bind the conscience; the nature of man not being capable of coming under greater obligation. But now a law can have no more force or power in it, than what it receives from the legislator; and since the obliging force of it follows the proportion of his power and prerogative; to affirm that any sanction of man has the same binding force and sacred validity that the laws of God have, amounts to a blasphemous equalling of him who is a worm and a pitiful nothing, to him who is God blessed for ever.

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Let these arguments suffice to demonstrate, that human laws cannot of themselves, and by any power naturally inherent in them, immediately bind the conscience. But then, in the next place, I add, that it is as certain, that every human law, enjoining nothing sinful or wicked, really binds the conscience, by virtue of a superior obligation superadded to it, from the injunction and express mandate of the divine law, which commands subjection to the laws and ordinances of the civil magistrate; whether of the king as supreme, or of such as be his vicegerents and deputed officers.

And thus to assert, that human laws have the same obligation with divine, is neither absurd nor blasphemous; forasmuch as this is not affirmed to be by any prerogative immanent in themselves, but derivative, and borrowed from the divine. As it is not either treason or impropriety to affirm, that the word of the constable obliges as much as the word of the king, when the king commands that his constable's word, in such or such matters, should be as much obeyed as his own.

Having thus therefore, by a due and impartial distribution, assigned to God the prerogative of God, and to Caesar the prerogative that is Caesar's, and withal pitched the obligation of human laws upon so firm and so unshakeable a basis; we shall pass from the first ground, upon which obedience to the civil magistrate is enforced, namely, conscience of the unlawfulness of resisting it, and proceed to the

Second; with which I shall conclude. And that is, conscience of the scandal of such a resistance; which surely is an argument to such whose principles are not scandalous. How tender does St. Paul in all his epistles shew himself of the repute of Christianity, and what stress does he still lay upon this one consideration? *1 Thess. iv. 12, I beseech you that ye walk honestly towards them that are without.* And in *2 Cor. vi. 3, Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.* And surely, could we strip rebellion of the sin, yet this would be argument enough against it, that it gives the enemies of Christianity cause to blaspheme, and with some shew of reason decry and reject that excellent profession.

How impossible had it been for the Christian religion to have made such a spread in the world, at least ever to have gained any countenance from the civil power, had it owned such anti-magistratical assertions, either by its own avowed principles, or by the practices of its primitive professors.

And very probable it is, that at this very day the most potent enemy it has in the world, which is the Mahometan, takes up his detestation of it, in a great measure, from his observance of those many rebel lions, wars, tumults, and confusions, that have so much and so particularly infested Christendom.

For may he not naturally argue, Can that religion be true or divine, that does not enforce obedience to the magistrate? Or can that do so, whose loudest professors are so rebellious? Is it not rational to imagine, that the religion men profess will have a suitable influence upon their practice? Are not actions the genuine offspring of principles? I wish that answer would

satisfy the world that must satisfy us, because we have no better; that Christians live below Christianity, and by their lives contradict their profession.

In the mean time let those incendiaries, those spiritual Abaddons, whose doctrine, like a scab or leprosy, has overspread the face of Christianity, and whose tenets are red with the blood of princes; let such, I say, consider what account they will give to God for that scandal and prejudice, that they have brought upon so pure and noble a religion, that can have no other blemish upon it in the world, but that such persons as they profess it.

If they had but any true ingenuity, (a principle much lower than that of grace,) surely it would tie up their consciences from those infamous exorbitances that have given such deep gashes, such in curable wounds to their religion. For shall Christ have bled once for our sins, and shall Christian religion bleed always by our practices? I could now beseech such by the mercies of God, and the bowels of Christ, did I think this would move those who have torn in pieces the body of Christ, that they would bind up the broken reputation of Christianity, by shewing henceforth, that subjection is part of their religion. That they would reflect upon the desolations they have made, with one eye, and upon their great exemplar with the other; remembering him who, while he conversed upon earth, was subject to the civil power in his own person, and commanded subjection to it by his precepts. So that what was said of Christ in respect of the law of Moses, may be equally said of him in reference to the laws of the magistrate, that he came not to destroy, but to



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