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IMPRIMATUR.

Hic liber vere Christianus qui si Prima-
vam spectes pietatem, Summam Eloquenti-
am, Rationum pondus nihil in eo deest quo
minus possit nos Omnes quales tam accurate
describit, vere Christianos efficere; Puriori
aevo sane dignissimus est nisi quod tam potens
sit qui vel nostrum Seculum transformaret in
melius. Benedicat Deus Operi & Authori.

THO. TOMKYNYS.
R. Rmo.in Christo Patri ac Domino Dno.
GILBERTO Divina Providentia Ar-
chiepiscopo Cantuariensi à Sacris Dome-
ficis.

OR AN IMPARTIAL SURVEY Of the Ruines of CHRISTIAN RELIGION, Undermin'd by Unchristian Practice.

Written by the Author of THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

Inimicus Homo fecit hoc. Math. 15.

LONDON,
Printed by R. Norton for T. Garthwait, in S. Bartholomew's Hospital, near Smithfield, 1667.
Mr. Garthwait,

HAVING in my hands a Practical Treatise concerning The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety so visible in this our Age; written by the Excellent Author of The WHOLE DUTY OF MAN: and having obtain’d permission to make it publick, I was in some doubt whether the present disturb’d State of affairs, would not make it reasonable to delay the Edition: but considering that times of difficulty and trouble bring thoughts of Vertue into their minds, who forgot their Duty and their God in affluence and quiet: I am apt to think a Discourse of this Kind seasonable enough at this time. —

Almighty God give you some repair for your * late great Calamity: As it was the Author’s kindness that you should have the offer of this Tract, whatever it prove, so I think it will be a little the more seasonable, that it comes as a New-years Gift, &c.

January, 1667.

Your very loving Friend,

H. E.
THE PREFACE.

THOUGH this be the first appearance this Tract has made in the world, yet its Being is of somewhat a more ancient date; it having received its lineaments and perfect form some years since: when the Author not having partiality enough to think it worthy publick view; had adjudged it, if not to perpetual darkness, yet at least to a long indefinite suspension from seeing light. In this interval, 'tis more than probable some passages may have lost much of their propriety to the present state of affairs, they having been adapted to circumstances which may since have received some change: and herein I must bespeak the Readers candor, to make such allowances as the matter shall require; of which yet I suppose there will not occur very many, or very important occasions.

But would God I were to apologize for a yet far greater absurdity, that our scene were so shifted, that the whole design of the ensuing discourse, might become one entire impertinence, and that our more eminent conformity to the rules of our Christian institution, might supersede these disquisitions above our failances and aberrations. But alas, I find I have pitcht upon a subject not like to be out-dated; vice daily gaining not only strength, but impudence: nay we are not only become witnesses against our selves by declaring our Sin as So-
THE PREFACE.

... but we have forced God also to attest against us by punishing us in a manner no less conspicuous and manifest. And surely then 'tis more than time for us to take the Prophets advice, Hag. 1. 7. to consider our ways, to reflect not only on those robust, giant-like provocations which have thus bid defiance to Heaven; but also to sift out those secret incendiaries that have inflamed us to this mad daring; to examine what that which inflamable bitumen, the untemper'd mortar is with which we build our Babel, by discovering those misperceptions and false confidences, wherein many of our other guilts are founded: in order to which this slight Tract offers its feeble, yet well meant aids; being forced out of its retirement, and like Cræsus his dumb Son, compell'd to speak by impulse of the present exigent: and how despicable ever the Mite contributed be in its self, yet if 'tis may provoke the more wealthy to cast in richer gifts, it may prove no unprofitable agent for the Corban. 'Tis evident this is a season which not only warrants, but exacts the most importunate endeavours of persuading men to those things that belong to their Peace.

... FOR although 'tis true that every state of sin sets us also in a state of hostility with God, yet our present condition seems to have advanced us beyond the common degrees even of that. 'Tis we know, high insolence against a Prince to despise and violate his laws, but when to that are superadded contumelies, and design'd affronts to his person, this is such an accumulated outrage, as will vanquish the most resolv'd Patience. And this alas appears to be our case: we have long indulg'd to our selves the breach of all Divine laws, gratified every appetite, every passion and lust with the forfeiture...
of our allegiance, and as if this would not serve to render
us irreconcilable enough to God, we are now grown to sub-
joyne malice to licentiousness; project not so much to please
our selves, as to displease him; profess a contempt not
only of his commands, but himself; and seek no less to
dethrone Him, than abrogate those. Thus have we
made it a kind of personal quarrel, and by those impious
blasphemies we daily dart against Heaven, do as it were
dare the Divine Majesty to vindicate its self. Whether
his great longanimity may have given our Heòtors a fan-
cy, that they had vapour’d God (as they are us’d to do
men) into a tameness, I shall not examine: but his late
proceedings with us sufficiently testifie that he means no
longer to decline our challenge. He now appears to avow
the enmity as openly as we have done; and has already
given us competent essays, how fearful a thing it is to
fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. 10. 31.
'Tis true indeed that he has formerly own’d his contro-
versie with our Land, and by a long series of great and
heavy calamities attested himself the God to whom ven-
geance belongeth, Psal. 94. 1. Yet as great Monarchs
use to quell lesser insurrections by their Lieutenants, and
subordinate Officers, but when the rebellion grows high
and desperate, then to encounter it in their own persons;
so is it here observble that God then Chastised, and tri-
ed to reduce us by inferior instruments, found us out
Lictors among our selves, and made one mans sin the pu-
nishment of anothers: but now as if he had the same jea-
lousie for his honour which Joab had at the siege of Rabbi
for Davids, 2 Sam. 12. 28. as if he fear’d to be rival’d
in the glory of our ruine, he takes us into his own hand,
marks us out, as he did Pharaoh, to be the Trophies of his

A 2
own peculiar vengeance, appearing signally against us in all the dreadful solemnities of an enraged enemy.

FOR first, has he not as Moses speaks, Deut. 32.41. what his glittering Sword? Nay, has he not moreover (in the Scripture style) made it drunk with blood? by sweeping away multitudes of us in a raging PESTILENCE, which Marched from one part of the Nation to another in a kind of Triumphant progress, as if it had receiv'd the same mandate God gave Abraham, Gen. 13.17. Arise walk through the land, in the length thereof and in the breadth thereof, for unto thee will I give it. Whether it may not thus fatally complete its course, notwithstanding the halt it seems to make, and pass from our Dan to our Beerheba, is a question that can with no probability be resolv'd in the negative; for as it is not to be doubted but there were in Judea as great sinners as those on whom the Tower of Siloam fell, Luke 13. that those who have hitherto escaped have an equal share in the provoking cause of the Judgement: So also that great unsensiblefs many of us shew of what others groan under, is a very ominous abode; it being not only a dangerous symptome, but a probable means of drawing that calamity to our selves. When God sees we will suffer nothing by way of consent and sympathy with others, 'tis but equal we have our part in a more direct and immediate infliction, and feel what we would not compassionate. Thucydides mentions it as the effect of the great Plague at Athens that it had extinguish'd humanity; brought in a kind of serenity and barbarousnes among them, rendring them openly villanous to men, and blasphemous against God; ἐξαρατάτον νᾶμος ὑμᾶς ἐπεις, there was no restraint of law or religion, one part being despe-
rate upon prospect of their danger, the other presumptuous upon the contemplation of their Escape; and sure if we look impartially, ours will appear to have had somewhat of the same operation. Those compassions which the novelty it seems at first gave us to sufferers in this kind, seems now quite extinct; so unconcern'd are we grown to every thing that touches us not in our individuals, as if we owned no relation to the species of mankind, though backt also with that closer tye, which the spiritual consanguinity has superadded. A pregnant indication of this may, I doubt not, be collected (as from many other circumstances, so particularly) from the great hast has in many places been made, to lay aside those publick Humiliations & intercessions which were recommended to us as well by the command of Authority, as the common distress; but have been cast off without the substraction of either of those motives. Whether we are duly mindful of the afflictions of Joseph, that cannot afford one day in a moneth for a solemn reflection on them, I must leave to every mans conscience to discuss. But sure we are no less wanting to our selves than them in this neglect; the office being no less designed for Antidote than cure, to prevent the judgement where it is not, than to remove it where it is: and if we will neither deprecate on our own behalvs, nor intercede on others; we are sure as improvident, as uncharitable, and may justly expect the fatal event of both.

IN the interim, although the present respite from destruction, and our own deceitful hearts flatter us and say Peace, Peace; we have all reason to conclude that God is not attoned, the quarrel and hostility goes on, and his hand is stretched out still, Ef. 5. 25. And so indeed we find
find it in other dismal events. Slaughter we know is not
the only effect of War; which as it destroys the lives of
many, blasts the supports and joys of more. This conse-
quence of hostility we find well express by the Prophet Joel
2. 3. The land is as the Garden of Eden before them,
and behind them a desolate wilderness, and herein
also hath the Lord of Hosts, the great God of battle shov-
ed himself mighty against us, he has invaded us not only
with Sword, but FIRE: and in so stupendous manner de-
solated the glory of our Land, that no humane fury, could
have procured, or even have wish the like devastation and
ruines. That City which was great among the Na-
tions, and Princess among the Provinces, Lam. i. i.
lies buried in her own Ashes, and is both Funeral-pile
and Urne to her self; and what neither foreign nor dome-
stick enemies could in a succession of many ages effect, one
blast of the breath of his displeasure, Psal. 18. has per-
formed in a moment. So verifying even in a literal
sense the Apostles affirmation, Heb. 12. 29. that our
God is a consuming fire. Plutarch tells us when Fa-
bius sackt Tarentum, he took not away their Images,
but said, Στολεντωμεν τως Θεως Ταραντιων κεκολαμαθαι, let us
leave the Tarentines their Gods that are offended
with them. 'Tis our Calamity to be signally under the
indignation of our incensed God, which in that great
Captains judgement, was somewhat more dreadful than
the worst inflicts of War: for what industry soever has
been used to entitle either the negligence or designs of men
unto our overthrow, yet sure never any judgement had
more legible marks of Gods immediate hand: such as
shew he meant to revenge the abuse of his former gentle
methods: that those who would not be reformed by the
slighter
Slighter corrections wherein he dallied with them, might find a judgment worthy of God, Wisd. 12. 26. And sure such was this, which both for its greatness and irresistibleness does well own its Author, and shews his wrath was ascended to a very excessive heat, that thus poured out its self not only like, but in Fire, Lam. 2. 4.

I shall not here assume the Polititians part, and weigh the detriment we have sustained by it in our civil interest, of which perhaps nothing but time and experience can give us a full estimate; it rather suits my design to observe what relates to our spiritual concerns, whilst God's dwelling places were involved in the same ruine with ours; his own peculiar portion not exempted, but as the Prophet complains, Es. 64. 11. Our holy and beautiful houses where our fathers praised him are burnt with fire: this though perhaps least considered, is sure not the least sad circumstance, had only the scenes of our luxury, or our fraud been destroyed, it might have sent us with more fervency to the places of our devotion, and we might have frequented God's houses the better, for being destituted of our own; but when these also are made parts of the common heap, 'tis a sad testimonial that our very religion was provoking; That that pageant-like piety which we deposited in our CHURCHES, only to make a shew with on holy-days, served only to defile those holy places, and rendred them so polluted as required no slighter purgation than that of FIRE. 'Tis we know not long, since those mansions sacred to the Prince of Peace, were even in the vulgar obvious sense, made magazines for War; but yet more so in reference to that Pulpit-wild-fire, which set the Nation in combustion; whether that strange Fire which some of our Nadabs and Abihu's introduced
introduced there, may not (even at this distance) have done its part to the drawing down this FIRE from Heaven, I leave to their serious reflection. But neither the Hypocrite nor the Seditious must ingross the guilt of this ruin: The Atheist vies with both; for alas! what should God do with Temples among those, who pay him no worship? or why should he let those sacred monuments remain among them, to whom all memorials of him serve but as occasions, and incentives to blaspheme him? They have long said with those in Job, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; and now 'tis but equitable (I had almost said Civil) to take them at their word, and no longer reside among those who so avowedly disclaim him.

AND this, 'tis much to be feared, may be the portent of this dismal devastation: we know men use not to deface those houses, where they intend to inhabit: and sure this abhorring his Sanctuary, and casting off his Altar, Lam. 2. is a dreadful sign, that he means no longer to continue his residence among us; indeed we find in Scripture that his promise of cohabiting is always limited to those who own themselves his people; and therefore when so many of us have openly renounced that relation, we can with no justice expect the blessing appendant to it.

BUT perhaps this will seem to such no formidable thing; God so withdrawing of himself is but agreeable to their wishes, a kind of quitting the field to them, and so rather matter of complacency than regret: but 'tis to be considered that there is another presence of God that will infallibly succeed this; when he removes that of his grace, 'tis to make way for that of his anger; like the Philistines we shall know the God of Israel is among us by
by his Plagues, 1 Sam. 5. or to make a yet more dreadful comparison, we shall like the damned in hell, discern his presence only in the punitive effects of it, and read his nearness in our sufferings. And sure this will be but an ill exchange, even to the profanest of us, those that have most despised or loathed the soft breathings of his Word and Spirit; will find it yet harder to endure the whirlwinds of his wrath, which will snatch from us those secular advantages for whose pursuit we have neglected the better part, Luke 10. 42. and leave us as little of worldly enjoyments, as we desired to have of spiritual.

Of this our late calamities have given us a sad Preludium, and God knows how soon we may see the last scene of the fatal tragedy, it being too probable that this is God's last experiment upon us, like the Causticks and Scarifying to a lethargick patient; if this bring us not to sense we are like to sleep on to destruction: And alas what uncomfortable symptoms appear even in this point also. Who is there that (unless awakened by his personal concerns) seems at all to startle at the noise of publick ruine? When God in displeasure threatened the Israelites that he would remit their conduct to his Angel, and not go himself with them. The text says, they mourned and no man put on his ornaments on him, Exod. 33. 4. or as the LXX, κατεπνεύσαντες εις τενακίοις, and the Syriack, ☁☁☁☁☁☁ ☁☁☁☁ ☁☁ ☁☁ ☁, they stript themselves of their Armour, their ruffling garb of War, and appeared in the penitential dress of sackcloth and ashes: but now that we are given up not to a conducting but destroying Angel, what signs of remorse do we shew? What vanity (I fear I may ask what vice) have we substraeted, upon the sense of God's anger? What
What nicety in cloaths or diet have we cut off in sympathy with the nakedness and hunger of our afflicted brethren? Nay, do not the unreasonable follies of too many among us, look as if we triumpht in their miseries, found Mu- sick in the discordant sounds of their groans, and our own laughter; and emulated that infamous barbarity of Ne- ro, who played while Rome burned? 'Tis mentioned by the Prophet as a most preposterous thing, a kind of impi- ous Solecism to revel under the menace of judgements. Thus faith the Lord, A sword, a sword, it is sharp- ned to make a fore slaughter, it is furbished that it may glitter, shoule we then make mirth? Ezek. 21.9, 10. and certainly it less besits us against whom God has not only prepared, but used his sword; who are not only under the threats, but actual Execution of his vengeance, and what is it but interpretatively to prompt him, to yet sharper inflictions, by shewing him that these have not edge enough to penetrate us? With how much indignati- on God resents this perverse, this contumelious behavi- our, we may read, Efay 22.12, 13, 14. In that day did the Lord call to weeping, and mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth, and behold joy and gladness, slaying Oxen and killing Sheep, eating Flesh and drinking Wine; eating and drink- ing for to morrow we shall dye: Upon which follows, that severe denunciation: Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you dye. Of so deep a tincture is this guilt, that 'tis as lasting as our lives, and like the fretting leprofie in the house, Levit. 14.45. can be removed by nothing but its dissolution.

O then let us not adde this to the heap of our other pro- vocations, mistake impudence or despernation for courage; and
and frantickly desie that omnipotence which we are sure we can not resift: but since it has pleased God even in wrath to remember mercy, let us transcribe his copy, be as kind to ourselves as he has been to us, and stop in our career as he has done in his; not so madly affect a full parallel with Sodom and Gomorrah, as to force him to destroy that remnant, Ef. i. 9. which alone distinguishes our case: but rather take pattern from Nineveh; cry, and cry mightily to God, joyn humiliation to our prayers, and reformation to both. And could we be persuaded to do this with the same sincerity, and universality, we might hope it may be with the same success also: would every one who has contributed to the accending, as industriously contribute to the appeasing of Gods wrath: would all who have brought their fire-brands bring also their tears to quench them, as there would be no dry Eyes in the Nation at the present, so might it prevent as great a Generality of weeping ones for the future; secure us such a tranquility here, as may calmly convoy us to that impas-sible state, where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, where there shall be no more death, nor for-row, nor crying, nor pain, Rev. 21. 4.
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PSALM. 119. v. 136.
Rivers of water run down mine eyes because
men keep not thy Law.
Son of man can these dry Bones live? — Lord Thou Knowest
CHAP. I.
The Character of Christian Religion, demonstrating its aptitude to plant exemplary Virtue and Sanctity.

The holy Psalmist gives it as part of the Character of Pious persons, and therewithal a description of their felicity, Psal. 92. 13. That they shall bring forth more fruit in their Age: and what he thus observes of the members disjunctively and apart, reason suggests to be in a higher, and more eminent manner appliable to the whole body united: And it being as well the mark as duty of every single Christian to grow in grace, 2 Pet. 3. 18. we may by all rules of Proportion, conclude that the collective masse of such, the whole Church is by this time near attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, Eph. 4. 3. And indeed this is so regular an inference, that whilest the premises stand firm 'tis impossible to shake the conclusion, the entire body must necessarily augment answerably to the growth of its several parts. And if we should so far let loose to speculation as to forget our experience: If we measure the effect only by the power and energy of the cause, we should surely be as far from doubting the premises also. Christianity is in its self of so prolific a nature, so apt to impregnate the hearts and lives of its proselytes, that it is hard to imagine that
that any branch should want a due fertility that is engrafted into so vigorous a stock.

**FOR** first, in its spring and original it is most supernatural and divine, derived immediately from him, who had nothing more of man than he purposely assumed to draw us the nearer to him as God. He it was that disseminated this doctrine, and that in order to the purifying to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works; and certainly his choice abundantly justifies its propriety to that end, and his descent from Heaven on that errand puts so venerable a solemnity upon it, that though his descent were very astonishing, yet it will be much more so, that it should fail of the designed effect.

AND indeed did our Faith give us no clue to lead us to the author, yet its composition would speak it to be of no humane extraction, its precepts are so excellent and refined, so agreeable to the more spiritual part of our temper, and so apt, as to fore-stall, so to cleanse and sublimate the more gross and corrupt, as shews flesh and blood never revealed it. Nay farther, so effectually providing for all those advantages to mankind, which the wisest of mens laws have in vain attempted, that methinks they all stand before it like the Magicians before Moses, and by their impotence tacitly confess it to be the finger of God. 'Twere too large a Theme to confront them in the several instances, let it suffice to observe one which has a common influence on all; and that is the immaculate cleanness of heart, which Christ's and only Christ's law requires. This is the only proper basis on which to superstructure, first innocence, and then
then virtue, and without this the most rigid ex-
actors of outward purity, do but transcribe the folly
of him, who Pumps very laboriously in a Ship, yet
neglects to stop the Leak: or the worse tyranny of
Pharaoh in requiring Brick without Straw: so far is
it from a severity in our law-giver, thus to limit and
restrain our thoughts, that it is an act of the great-
est indulgence: by no means the laying on a new
burden, but the furnishing us with an Engine to
bear with ease that weight which otherwise the
 stoutest Atlas must sink under. And were but this
one precept sincerely conformed to, it would not
only facilitate but ascertain the obedience to all the
rest. If the first sparks of ill were quenched within,
what possibility is there they should ever break out
into a flame? How shall he kill that dares not be
angry? Be Adulterous in act, that did not first
transgress in his desire? How shall he be perjured
that fears an oath? Or defraud that permits not
himself to covet? In the like manner all positive acts
of virtue, are but the natural effects of the interior
habit. Where the love of God is seated in the
Heart, ’twill operate in all the faculties, keep them
in a busy endeavour of doing acceptable service:
when fear is planted there, it will break forth in out-
ward reverence and duty; and so proportionably
’twill be in every other instance. ’Tis therefore an
advice well becoming the wisdom of Solomon, Prov.
4. to keep the heart with all diligence: but then it is
withal the work of him who is greater than Solomon,
to teach us how to do this: for unless he keep that Ci-
ty the watchman maketh but in vain. If he instruct
not

not to secure those issues of life, they will betray and ruine, appear indeed the savour of death unto death. Now of this divine art of Taekicks and defence, Christianity is the only School, and therefore most fitly qualified for the producing all those supernatural excellencies to which the timely possession of the heart, is the rudiment and principle.

AND as the preceptive part enjoyns the most exact, and elevated vertue, so is it most advantageously enforc't by the Promissory, which both in respect of the kind and value of the rewards; and also the manner of proposing them, is most exquisitely adapted to the same end.

FOR first, if we consider the nature of the things promised, we shall find they are not gross and carnal, such as may court and gratifie the bestial part of us; but such as are proportioned to the supremam and leading principle, as feast a Soul, and suit with the capacities of an intelligence. All the beatitudes the Gospel tenders to its votaries, either relate to the purity or peace of the mind in this life; or else to its completer felicity hereafter. And though 'tis true, the body is not wholly unconsidered, though the addition of all temporal necessaries be promised, yet even those are for the Souls sake, either to secure it from the sin of solicitude and distrust, or to preserve it a useful instrument for the others service. And as for the future glory in which the body is to partake, 'tis to be observed, that flesh and blood can not inherit it; that load of earth which now engages to corruption must be put off, must
must be calcin’d and spiritualiz’d; and they made glorious, be clothed upon with Glory. So that in all the Gospel dispensation, there is no provision for the flesh, its lusts and sensualities. And then sure there cannot be a more unanswerable argument against our providing for it, than to see it left out of God’s care. Indeed had we proposals of a Mahumetan Paradise, were we to expect our bliss only in the satiating our appetites, it might be reasonable here to whet them before hand, to stretch them to the utmost wideness, or in the Prophets phrase, to enlarge our desires as Hell, and by frequent antepasts excite our gulf for that profuse perpetual meal. Or were we only to have our portion in this life, to enjoy an uninterrupted affluence of outward comforts, ’twere but good husbandry to improve them to the height, and the Wise mans advice would then cease to be Eirony, Eccles. 11. 9. Rejoice O young man, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine Eyes. Had we only the prospect of a Canaan, such an eternal inheritance as a conquering Sword could give, as the salvation of a Jossua, and the affluence of milk and hony could produce. ’Twould be no wonder, if we never voluntarily endured the thirst and famine of the wilderness, but be always as they desiring meat for our lust, projecting the gratifying those desires in whose repletion we placed our happiness. But when our Religion makes us no such tender, when all its hopes are of another make, invite to those Diviner joys
joys of which sensuality has no capacity or taste. What pretence can we have to cherish that here, which we must wholly be divested of hereafter, those immaterial felicities we expect, do naturally suggest to us, the necessity of preparing our appetites, and hungers for them, without which Heaven can be no Heaven to us: for since the pleasure of anything results from the agreement between it and the desire, what satisfaction can Spiritual enjoyments give unto a Carnal mind? Alas, what delight would it be to the Swine to be wrapt in fine Linnen, and laid in Odours: his senses are not gratified by any such delicacies, nor would he feel any thing besides the torment of being with-held from the mire. And as little complacency would a brutish Soul find in those purer and refin'd pleasures, which can only up-braid, not satisfie him. So that could we by an impossible supposition phancy such a one assumed to those fruitions, his pleasure sure would be as little as his preparation for it was. Those Eyes which have continually beheld vanity, would be dazled, not delighted with the Beatifick vision; neither could that Tongue, which has accustom-ed its self only to Oaths and Blasphemies, find Harmony or Musick in a Hallelujah. 'Tis the peculiar priviledge of the pure in heart, that they shall see God; and if any others could so invade this their enclosure, as to take Heaven by vio-lence, it surely would be a very joyless possession to these men, and only place them in a condition to which they have the greatest aversion and Antipathy.
Antipathy. So that holiness here, is not only necessary to the acquiring, but the enjoyment of Bliss hereafter: and therefore unless men will contrive to annihilate their joys, and affect the monstrous riddle of being tormented in Heaven, they cannot but from this Spirituality of the promises, infer a necessity of purifying themselves; and being capable at least of innocent Celestial joys: and since that only can be done by vertuous practice here on Earth, the Obligation thereto must needs be very pressing and indispensible. And as the nature of the promises directs to this, so does the great transcendent value encourage and animate. Hope is the grand exciter of industry, and as the object of Hope is more or less desirable, so is the endeavour more intense or remiss; and upon this ground we must conclude the Christian has all reason to be the most indefatigable, seeing his expectations are the noblest and most encouraging. That they are so, we cannot but acknowledge, if we admit of the description which the Spirit gives: that Spirit which as he seals us to it, so is himself the earnest of that Inheritance. He in the Sacred Scriptures has drawn us a Map of the Countrey which we are to enter: and sure we may say of it as Caleb and Joshua did of Canaan, Numb. 14. 7. the land is an exceeding good land. For first, if we consider the Negative advantages it has, we shall find there is an absence of all the IIs, destructive or afflictive unto humane Nature. There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain; }

Revel.
Revel. 21. 4. Here alack we are infested by all these. Sorrow and Pain, prey and insult on all the comforts of our lives; leave us not a Gourd, which is not like that of Jonah, smitten with these Worms: and then comes death, the grand devourer, and spares not life itself. Nay, those little respite which we have from these, are so embittered by unpleasant expectations and Presages, that we are sad before we are afflicted: in pain without a disease, and in death in the midst of life: and then a State exempted, not only from the Calamities but the Fears of these, may well deserve to be looked upon with appetite.

BUT Heaven is designed for our reward, as well as rescue, and therefore is adumbrated by all those positive excellencies which can endear or recommend. It is a Crown, and that not of thorns, such as our Saviours was, and such as the more affected Diadems of the world oft prove un-to the wearer, but one of Glory: nor is that Crown, nor that Glory like our sublunar splendors, which suddenly vanish, and leave the possessors to the greater obscurity and contempt: but 'tis permanent, such as fades not away, 1 Pet. 5. 4. or in St. Pauls phrase, an eternal weight of Glory. But to give you its more comprehensive Character, 'tis a being with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4. 17. Nay, 'tis a possessing even God himself. He shall be their God, Rev. 21. 3. and what can he want who possesseth him who is all things? How can he fail of of the most ravishing delight, that stands before him in whose presence is the fulness of joy, and at whose
whose right hand are pleasures, and those not short or transient, but for evermore? So indefeifible is our estate in those joys, that if we do not like mad prodigals sell it in reversion, we shall when we are once invested, be beyond the possibility of ill husbandry, not have it in our power to undo our selves. Now surely these are great and precious promises, such as may well sustain the weight of that inference the Apostle builds upon them; and engage us to cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. 7. 1. for they address to that Principle which is confessedly Predominant in our Nature; so that if the love of Christ cannot, yet the love of our selves may constrain us. How must it then affront and baffle the enticements of sin, when we compare its empty vanishing pleasures with those solid and durable joys? What a foretelling will it be of Satans markets, that God bids so much fairer for us: offers us that to which his 7αβία τίνα από του θανατου, all this will I give (could he make such a whole-sale) can bear no proportion, and how then shall we ever barter it away for those little petty commodities he retails to us; or make any other reply to his profers, than a get thee behind me Satan? For alas! can we remember that we are candidates for a Kingdom, and yet retain the abject spirits of slaves? Do we expect to reign hereafter, and yet depose our selves before hand here? Suffer every the vilest lust to rule over us? Is so glorious a prize annext to the victory, and will
it not animate the faintest heart, and feeblest hands to the combate? What Lions can we fear in the way which this hope is not Sampson enough to encounter? How light are our heaviest, how momentary our most lasting Afflictions, if balanced with that eternal weight of Glory? Are we spoil'd of our goods, here is a reserve of treasure which no Thief, neither the flye, nor the avowed, the pilferer, nor the sequestrator can invade. Are we reduced to our Saviours destitution, not to have where to lay our head, yet we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens. Are we reproach'd for the name of Christ, that Ignominy serves but to advance our future Glory, every such Libel here, becomes Panegyrick there. Nay, are we persecuted to death, that sends us but to take possession of the Crown of Life. Upon such sure grounds does our Christianity set us. While we make good its condition it pults out the sting of all that is most deadly. And in a more comprehensive sense, possesses us of the priviledge promised the Disciples, that nothing should by any means hurt them, Mar.16. The most adverse chances being but like the ploughing and breaking the ground, in order to a more plentiful harvest. And yet we are not so wholly turned off to that reversion, as to have no supplies for the present; for besides the comfort of so great and certain an expectation in another life, we have promises also for this. Even of all those internal and spiritual satisfactions which attend the practice of piety. The feast of a good Conscience
Conscience is the true Christians daily diet, and sure whatever the rich men of the world think, he only can be said to fare deliciously: nay, he has yet more supernatural food, Manna rain'd down immediately from Heaven: the Holy Spirit sent on purpose to refresh and support him: those Joys which differ rather in degree than kind, from those which are to be his final portion. And that the Soul may not be too much incommode'd in her house of clay, there is provision made for that also, such necessaries secured to the body, as may keep it in Tenantable repair: we have Christ's express promise for it, that to those that seek the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all these things shall be added: if not that superfluity which may oppress and load, (render the body rather the Tomb than Mansion of the Soul) yet such as may sustain and support us: and sure 'tis easy to decide which is the happier lot. In short, we are sure of enough to defray the charge of that voyage, which lands us at Eternal Bliss: and certainly he must be of a very sluggish or querulous humour, that shall demur upon setting out, or demand higher encouragements.

And as the nature and value of the Promises render them most proper engagements and incentives to all virtue; so if we consider the manner of proposing, we shall find them in that respect also highly contributive to the same end. For first, they are clear and express, not wrapt up in dark enigmatical insinuations, wherein men must exercise their sagacity as well as their faith: but
revealed with that plainness, that 'tis impossible for any who knows but the letter of the Gospel to be ignorant of the Eternal rewards it proposes. And herein the difference belongs to Christianity above all other Religions, some whereof have left men so much in the dark, that many Sects among them have denied the immortality of the Soul, and sure they were but faint encouragements they could propose unto that virtue which was to perish with them. What should animate them to the rugged severe tastes of restraining appetites, subduing passions, eradicating habits who discerned no rewards for blameless Souls. 'Tis true indeed virtue is in her self perfectly amiable, though she brought no dowry, but experience shews us she has not many Platonick lovers: and when so few are ambitious to wed Her, when she brings an Eternal inheritance with her, we may easily guess how little she will be taught without it. When men once conclude that their Spirits shall vanish into the soft Air; the inference is very obvious, Come on, let us use the creatures as in youth; as we find it elegantly pursu'd, Wisd. 2. But of those who acknowledged a future being, their preceptions were very misty and obscure. The Heathens had such confus'd notions of their Elysium, that the Epithet of shades belong'd more properly to the darkness than the refreshment, and was a reward fit for the votaries of those ambiguous Oracles they consulted. And proportionably to the obscurity of their hopes were the Exercises of their virtue; their Piety was even overwhelmed and
and confounded by the multitude of their Deities; nay, which is yet stranger, their Gods themselves seem to have been lost in their own crowd: else sure the Athenians would never have inscrib'd an Altar to the unknown God: and indeed their offices were generally such, as if they had been devoted to no other, they having as little discerning of their Worship as of their God. 'Twas wrapt up in clouds and darkness; had mysterious recesses to which the common worshipper had no admittance; such as were to acquire a veneration only by not being understood: and though this must needs deprive their services of that spirit and quickness, which constitutes the vertue of devotion, yet alas their Religion had more than that negative contrariety to Vertue. Many of their worship being nothing but a solemnity of the foulest vices: and their Divinity taught them to violate Morality. A deceit Satan could not probably so long have triumphpt in, had they had the Gospel notion of Heaven, for sure they could not have suppos'd their Gods of such mutable inclinations, as to affect purity in their cohabitants, and pollution in their Votarvies: or such incongruous dispensers of rewards, as to apportion an impec-cable state hereafter to the most flagitious criminals on Earth.

As to the Jews 'tis true, they derived their light from a clearer Fountain, were under the Oeconomy of immediate Revelation, and therefore might be suppos'd to have had a freer prospect into that Heaven, from whence their Law descend-
ed, yet even they were in this, as in many other particulars, under Moses his veil, had rather dark adumbrations, and those too overwhelmed with the multitude of express temporal promises. The earthly Canaan lay so fair and open to their prospect, as easily intercepted their view of the Heavenly; and their faith must remove, at least overlook, that mountain before it could come to any sight of the Horizon and extended Sky. Nay, when 'tis remembred that the Sadduces a great and learned part of their Doctors denied all future being, we must think the intimations of it were very obscure; it being scarce imaginable, that any considering men should think the Souls expir'd with the Body upon any other ground, but that they knew not what after State to assign it. So that though they wanted not figures and shadows, or as the Apostle calls them, patterns of Heavenly things, Heb. 9. 23. yet they seem'd not to have been well understood, and the generality of men were not only in their Persons, but their Understandings denied entrance into the holy of holies; penetrated not that mystical representation, which was within the Veil: and answerable to this dimness of their perceptions, was the whole systeme and body of their Religion, which rather entertain'd its self in those external bodily performances, which affected the sense, than in those Divine and Spiritual raptures, which purified and elevated the Soul. 'Tis the Apostles affirmation, Heb. 9. that the sacrifices there offered could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining
pertaining to the conscience, and he gives the reason in subjoyning, that they stood only in meats and drinks, and carnal ordinances. Alas what propriety had all their legal purifications towards the cleansing of the mind? That might be in the Mire while the body was in the Laver: and while the surface of the man was sprinkled with blood, the heart might be more beastial than those creatures who lent the ablution. And indeed if we consider their morality, we shall find that outside formal ceremony had proceeded to infect and poison that also. The outward restraint, the bare forbearance of an actual commission, being by them thought a full compliance with all the Negative precepts: so that we see Christ is fain to assert the Internal part of the Obligation, and extend the duty to the thoughts and inclinations. Besides, those acts of vertue they perform'd were commonly such as had an Aspect, rather on their temporal well-being, than distant and unseen rewards their Justice, and Charity confin'd to their own Nation, directed to the flourishing of their own Common-wealth: whereas Aliens were devoted to their rapine and despight; so that if they were vertues, they were rather Political than Moral, and indeed while they placed so much of their hopes on Earth, lookt on secular plenty and tranquillity as their reward, 'twas but consonant they should square their endeavours by that measure, and consider things not simply in their native properties of good or ill, but according to their tendency towards that they esteem'd their felicity.

BUT
BUT God has provided, as the Apostle says, Heb. 11. 40. better things for us, has not only made a better Covenant with us, but has established it upon better promises, Cap. 8. 6. given us clearer revelations, not only of our duty, but our compensation, the veil in Christ is done away, and we all with open face, Behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. 3. 18. The Gospel puts the evidences of our inheritance into our own hands, seal'd by his explicite and direct promise, who cannot lye: and that not only engag'd by way of munificence, but bargain and contract, as the purchase of that price, which our Redeemer fully paid in our behalf. And sure this is in the Apostles phrase strong consolation; and if so, it must be forcible incitement likewise, he cannot but run alacriously, who has the prize in his Eye, nor can S. Paul use a more pressing argument to his Corinthians, To be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, than this assurance, That their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. 15. 58.

AND as this clear proposal of the promises is most proper to encourage and inspirit our endeavours, so is the conditionality most efficacious to necessitate and engage them. Had Heaven been only promis'd as a largess, and with a blind promiscuous bounty dispenc'd without discrimination, how much it might have rais'd our gratitude, I know not, but sure it would not have excited our industry, which in all instances we find is whetted by interest: and where that is otherwise
otherwise secur'd, men generally estimate it a part of the benefit that their labour is superseded; and please themselves no less in a lazy bequest, than a full enjoyment. So that indeed it is this circumstance of the promises that must give life to all the rest, and make them operative toward the producing of good life; for admit the joys we expect never so Divine and Spiritual for their kind; never so great and transcendent for degree, and these also represented to us in the most clear and convincing manner, yet if they be tendered not as objects of our choice, but the certainty of our fate, felicities which we are only concerned to enjoy, but not to acquire, they may make us glad, but surely not diligent; it being but a cold inducement to any undertaking to be assurance'tis perfectly needless: we have therefore all reason to confess it our greatest advantage towards vertue, that God has so linkt our hopes and our duty together: and indeed when we consider the great disproportion between the one and the other; the infinity of the reward, with the despicableness of the service, we must resolve that he had no other design in making his promises conditional, than to engage us by our interest to that holiness, to which he saw our inclinations did not bind us: that it was an artifice of his love to ensnare us into two felicities by proposing of one, enforce us to take one good in the way to another, vertue in passage to glory.

A ND indeed who would not think this method so invincibly efficacious, as might supersede the
the necessity of any other, but God who understands our thoughts, long before, Psal. 139. 1. forew1aw, that notwithstanding this proposal of a Canaan, there would be Rubenites and Gadites, who would set up their rest on this side of Jordan; so intent on the commodity of their Cattle, as to be content themselves to be part of the Herd, and become like the Beasts that perish: That there would be men of so ignoble, disingenuous tempers, as none of these cords of a man would be able to draw; and therefore there is another part of the Gospel-Oeconomy fitted to their capacities; the threats and interminations, those terrors of the Lord, which as Goads may drive those brutish Creatures who will not be attracted: that those who think themselves perfectly unconcern'd in David's question, who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord, Psal. 24. 3. may yet startle at Esays, who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings? Of so formidable a kind are those menaces, as is sufficient to awake the most drowsie stupid Soul, and are most apt to operate upon that part of their temper, which evacuated the gentler method: that very sensuality which made them despise Heaven, may help to enhance the dread of Hell; the lack of a drop of water will be most insupportable to him who fared deliciously every day; those flames will be yet more scorching to those bodies, who by studious effeminacies and softness have superadded an artificial tenderness to the natural; nor will the gnawing of the worm appear more intolerable to any, than those who here
here make it their business to tye up its Jaws, gag or stupifie that Conscience which would now admonish, but will there torment. And when to this is added the perpetuity of these pains, that the worm shall never die, the fire never be quencht, certainly this puts such an edge upon the terror, as may well make it in the Apostles phrase, quick and powerful, searching even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit, the joints and marrow.

When we are assur'd that the Axe is thus laid unto the root of the tree, and that every tree that brings not forth good fruit must be hewn down and cast into the fire, we shall sure be warn'd to bring forth meet fruits of repentance, and fly from the wrath to come.

But because neither invitations nor threats can avail with those who are any way invincibly impeded to apply them to their benefit: since the most glorious prize, the most formidable danger, is insignificant to him, who wants power to run unto the one, or from the other; it has pleased God to inspirit and actuate all his Evangelical methods, by a concurrence of supernatural strength, makes it not only eligible but possible, I may say easie and pleasant for us to do whatever he commands us: and notwithstanding our natural debility, makes us through Christ which strengthens us, able to do all things: by his Spirit he prevents, assists, restrains, excites, comforts, convinces; gives grace and adds to that the happier largess of a will to use it, and knowledge to discern the want of more: infusing to the Soul an ardent thirst of greater powers, and readier means of
of service, which the performance actuates to greater strengths, and yet enflames to new desires, and more importunate pursuits, while God at once bestows and crowns his own donations; still giving unto him that has, till that at last he gives himself; and grace is swallowed up in glory. And to assure us of this aid, he has been pleased to oblige himself: descends to the solemnity of a Pact and Covenant; has indented with us, and constituted it a principle part of the new and everlasting Covenant made with mankind in the blood of the Son of God, to send the comforter, his Holy Spirit, to be with us till the end of the world, and do all this. So that the Gospel is at once the assigner of our tasks, and the Magazine of our strength; so much Spirit goes along with that Letter; so much internal grace is annexed to its outward administration, as will to all, who do not resist it, infallibly render it the power of God to salvation. For 'tis not the sole privilege of a S. Paul, but the common portion of all Christians, That God's grace shall be sufficient for them; which is sure a more Gospel-like promise, than that it should be too strong for them: so violent and irresistible as to commit a rape upon their Spirits; such a mighty wind as drives them headlong upon duty. Indeed this competency is of all other proportions the most incentive to industry; we see in Temporals, too little makes men desperate, and too much careless; and certainly 'twould be the same in Spirituals: but now when we have stock enough to set up with, and that too of so improvable
vable a nature, that is capable of infinite advancement, and yet on the other side no less capable of total decay also; it being given with this express condition, that upon neglect it shall be withdrawn: so that our own sloth may make us poor, but nothing else can keep us from being abundantly rich: what can be imagin'd more animating to diligence and endeavour? And this being the condition wherein our Christianity has placed us, added to the former considerations, will beyond exception or subterfuge, evince its perfect aptitude and fitness for the End to which it was aim'd, the Planting and nourishing all true Vertue among men, the introducing the tree of life into the world again, and so forming us a Paradise even amidst the briers and thorns of our Exil'd state.

CHAP. II.

The Character of Christian-mens Practice, shewing their multiplied failance both from the rule of that holy profession, and its genuine effect.

And now who can suspect that a cause so rightly dispos'd, should miss of its effect? That this so auspicious Planet should be counter-influenc't by any malevolent Star? Or that what has so many tenures in us, should be finally disfeis'd? For, admit we have not the Piety,
to be prevail'd upon by the reverence of the Author; yet the excellency of its composition does so much recommend it to our reason, that we must put off the best part of our Nature to evacuate the force of our Religion: nay, supposing us to have done that too, to have struck our selves out of the lift of Rationalists, yet if we keep but the rank of Animals, if we have not extinguish'd passion and sense, it descends even to them; addresses to our hopes and fears with most importunate solicitations, and convincing motives: So that unless we have the absurd ill luck to have much of the Stoick, and nothing of the Philosopher, 'twill be impossible to resist its impressions, and sure he that contemplates this, will be apt with some confidence to conclude Christendom to be the Goshen of the world, not only in respect of its light, but of its immunity from all those Locusts and Caterpillers, those swarms of mean and fordid Vices which both cover and devour the rest of the Earth.

BUT this must be the inference of a meer contemplative, a Recluse that converses only with his own meditations: for let him be so much secular, as once to look abroad, the most transient glance will serve to unravel all this hopeful speculation, & shew him that Christendom may be as much Heathen as America: whereas 'tis usually said, that ill Manners produce good Laws, we have reversed the Aphorism, and our good Law has introduc'd the most corrupt manners. Our holy faith which like a foundation should support good works,
works, has like a gulf swallowed them up. And so universal a depravation is there among us, that we have scarce any thing left to distinguish us from the most barbarous people, but a better name and worse vices.

A ND here, what terms of wonder or of grief can be significant enough to express or to bewail, so strange and so perverse degeneration, that the light of the world should thus darken it: the salt of the Earth be the means of putrifying and corrupting it: that those who were by God drawn out from the Heathen world should so outvie the Gentiles crimes, as if they had forsaken them; only because they were too innocent. This indeed is one of Satan's subtilest stratagems, to fill Christ's Camp thus with his Souldiers, by whose intestine treacheries, he has been more triumphant than by all his open assaults and avowed hostilities. What a late States-man said (Prophetically, if we may judge by the event) of England, that it was a vivacious animal that could never dye except it kill'd it self, is no less true of the Church, which has always been invulnerable against all darts, but what have been taken out of its own quiver. Of this the Primitive times were pregnant testimonies, where all the most witty cruelties, the most bloody persecutions, never made any breach in her: but she stood firmer for all those batteries, and like an Arch'd Building, became more strong and compact, by that weight which was design'd to crush her: but the Vice of Professors undermines her very foundation,
tion, and does as much exceed the destructive
ness of the most hostile assaults, as intestine trea-
chery is more ruinous and fatal, than foreign vio-
ence.

As long as the lives of Christians were the
transcripts of their doctrine they render'd it vener-
able to all, and gave a presumption there was
something more than humane in it, that could
work such signal effects, that could so transform
men as to make the adulterer chaste, the drunkard
temperate, the covetous liberal, the contentious
peaceable. This, this was the way to adorn the
doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, as the Apo-
stle speaks, Tit. 2. 10. And then the rule of contra-
rives directs us to conclude very distant effects
from our now so distant practices, that our very
religion should partake of the infamy of our lives,
and be thought rather a mystery of iniquity than
godliness.

Thus is Christ wounded in the house of his
friends, and has more reproach cast on him by
those that profess his name, than by the loudest
blasphemies of those that oppose it. For when
those who have not opportunity to examine our
faith, see the enormousness of our works, what
should hinder them from measuring the Master,
by the disciples? it being scarce imaginable that
any one Sect of men should so universally run
counter to all the rules of their profession: For
let any sober Heathen look upon Christendom, as
it is at this day weltring in the bloud, not of Mar-
tyrdom but War, and will it be possible for him
to
to think it owns a Gospel of Peace; or that those who so perpetually do those outrages they are unwilling to suffer, profess obedience to the
the Royal Law of love thy neighbour as thy self,
Jam. 2. 8. Can he see the violence and oppressions, the frauds and underminings, the busy scramblings for little parcels of Earth; and yet believe we count our selves strangers and pilgrims in it, and have laid up our treasure in Heaven?
Can he observe the strange and almost universal distortion of speech, whereby it has lost its native property of being interpreter of the mind, and under intelligible words so far exhibits the Babel confusion, that no man understands another's meaning? And can he imagine we have any such Precept, as lye not one to another, or any such penalty upon the infringer, as exclusion from the new Jerusalem? Shall he hear our God mention'd more frequently and earnestly in our imprecations than our prayers, and every part of our crucified Saviour, recrucified in our horrid oaths; and shall he not think that his second executioners bear him as little reverence as his first: or that he has given no such command as swear not at all? When he discerns self preservation bow'd to as the Supreme Law, can he ever dream of another so inconsistent obligation as that of taking up the cross? Or that suffering for righteousness sake is one of our greatest felicities when he sees us run so affrighted from it, that no crime, perjury, rebellion, murder, is block enough in our way to stop our flight? In fine, when he considers how

much
much of our business it is, first to excite, and then to cloy the flesh, to spurr it on to riots even beyond its own propensions, that the whole year is but one mad carnival, and we are voluptuous not so much upon desire or appetite, as by way of exploit and bravery: when I say he considers this, can he possibly guess our institution directs us to beat down the body, to mortifie the flesh with the affections and lusts, interdicts us all rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, and all provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. Certainly all rules of discourse will direct him to the quite contrary conclusion. And when he sees a Set of men that have enhans’d the common humane pravity, he will be apt to infer their Principles have taught them the improvement: And upon that supposal he wanted not temptation to his Option that said, Let my soul be with the Philosophers.

AND while we thus misrepresent our holy profession to others, it will be no wonder if we finally do it to ourselves, that we forget its native shape, and look on her only in the ugly dress our selves have put on, and that effect seems already too visible among us: our lives have so long confuted it that we triumph over it as a baffled thing; and like Amnon loath it because we have ravish’d and desil’d it. Many of us take notice of the better Morals of Turks and Infidels not in reproach of our selves but our Religion, and because we have so many Lepers, think Abanah and Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel, this
this is openly in the mouths of many, but is so prodigiously irration
al as well as unjust, that one can scarce think it possible to be in their hearts, un-
less they be pursued by the fate of habitual liars, that at last come to persuade them-
selves.

CERTAINLY there is no other parallel instan
t in which men conclude so perversely: he
that shews a man that precipice upon whose brink he stands, that intreats, yea importunes
him to retire from the danger; nay bribes him
with the greatest rewards to choose safety, has
done all that can be expected from a friend, or
charitable man: and if after all, the wretched per-
son so advis'd, shall cast himself headlong upon
ruine; assuredly no Inquest would return his mur-
der in any other form than that of Felo de se.

And why then should our Christianity be accus'd
of those ills which it would infallibly avert,
if our obstinacy would permit it: indeed the
charge is so wilde, that it seems rather design'd as
an artifice of diversion, a sprout of that first
fig-tree which was to hide the nakedness of lapsed
Adam. Men think it policy to transfer their
guilts, and are willing, the violence of their lusts
should pass for the impotence of their religion.
Like irregular patients blaming their Physician
for those ill accidents which they know owing
only to their own unruliness. A pregnant testi-
mony of the reproachful nature of sin, that men
are content to betake themselves to the most
forlorn shifts to avoid the owning it: but the

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Consciousness is so pressing and intolerable, that with many it drives on to yet higher outrages: 'tis not enough for men to decry their Christianity as a feeble insignificant thing, but they load it even with contradictory imputations, and that which sometimes they call the foolishness of preaching, to bring it in scorn and contempt, shall at another be stiled an Art and trick to bring it into suspicion and hatred, be arraign'd for imposture and deceit, a project of imposing upon credulous souls, and gaining real advantages to the managers while they feed the silly Proselyte with imaginary ones. How groundless a calumny this is, as it appears from the sanctity, and eminent simplicity of Christian Religion, which above all things excludes fraud and falsehood; so also from the designments and aims of its first promulgators, who as they can not be suppos'd dextrous enough to lay such a scene of taking Pageantry; so all their visible acquests were scourgings and imprisonments, persecutions and death. If this were the case it would indeed go near to reconcile the before mention'd contradictory imputations, whilst the imposing upon credulous souls at this dear rate, would be in very deed the foolishness of Preaching, the greatest madness in the world. Men of common reason would be ashamed to use such frivolous cavils: but who can without horror hear them from profest Christians? that while Infidels are modest in their reproaches, look upon our Doctrine only as erroneous, Disciples should be bitter and charge it as insidious and trea-
treacherous. Thus does the Church experiment the truth of her blessed Lords Predictions, and finds her foes are those of her own house; and though she be Christ's Dove, yet is subjected to the fate of the Viper, and has her bowels torn out by those that spring from them.

These are the growing consequences of resolute impiety, he who will not be kept within the bounds of duty, seldom contents himself with that bare violation: he not only breaks the bonds in sunder, but casts them away too; is impatient they should keep a reputation to upbraid him, when he has rob'd them of the power of restraining him: and this sure is the bottom of all that deep reasoning, by which men have learnt to argue themselves and others out of their Creed: And though this be indeed the great Arcanum the Philosophers Stone they aim at; yet they have met with another good experiment by the way: and have, by I know not what Chymistry, extracted a reputation out of these most unapt materials. He passes for a considering man that disputes principles, and is thought most to own his reason that least owns his faith: and then 'twill be no wonder if this success animate, and give them not only confidence, but vanity to avow what is thus credible.

Indeed Satan is too subtle a manager to lose this advantage, and the event sadly shews, he has not neglected to improve it, as appears not only by the number of such pretenders unto reason, but even by their advancing to higher degrees.
The voluptuary who likes his portion in this world, and fears that in another, is at first only prompted by his interest to quarrel the last Articles of the Creed, and so in his own defence denies the life everlasting: but when he finds his necessity made a virtue, and himself struck into the repute of a wit; upon that account he doubts not, his fame will encrease with his irreligion, and so proceeds still to unravel farther, till at last he leaves not so much as I believe in God, that many have advanc'd so far is too evident: and by some so own'd that they will not thank his charity, that shall hope better of them.

'Twas once the triumph of infant Christianity, that it silenc'd all the Heathen Oracles, and within a while demolish'd even the Synagogue too: but alas! its mature age gives us that effect in a most inverted sense, it now has serv'd to suppress even the common notions of a Deity, turn'd out the one as well as the many Gods, and instead of Polytheists and Idolaters has made Atheists, and that which Christ tells us was design'd to perfect and fill up the Law, has by the strange pravity of its professors at once obliterated both Law and Law-giver out of mens minds, thereby exemplifying the old Axiom, Corruptio optimi est pessima; and the Saint as well as the Angel, if he desert his innocence, commences Feind and Devil. These are such sad, such direful transmutations as excite not so much wonder, as grief and lamentation; and what
what rivers, what Oceans of Tears are competent

to bewail such unutterable evils.

THE removal of the Candlestick is so for-

midable a judgement that the threatening of it,
is us’d by Christ as the most awaking menace

to the Seven Churches Revel. 2. 3. but the remo-

ving it by our own hands is yet an enhancement

of that highest calamity; when men are come to

such an insensate obduration, that they court

their Plagues, become their own Liètors and

make that their choice which is their extremest

punishment, they are certainly too secure of that

ruine they call for; And may we not fear it

may prove general, and involve us all: that while

so many cry out to be deliver’d from their Chris-

itianity as their load and pressure, and so few ex-

press their disfent to that demand: God may in

judgment grant it, hearken to those that cry

loudest, rescue his Gospel from our profane and

impious violations and give it to others that may

bring forth the fruits of it.

NOR is this to be fear’d only from the ex-

plicit importunities of the blasphemous, for it

is interpretatively the vote of many others; who-

ever give themselves up to the dominion of any

lust, do implicitly renounce their obedience to

Christ, and say we will not have this man to rule

over us. And when he is thus depos’d from his

regal and directive power, we have reason to be-

lieve he will despise a meer titular sovereignty,

not suffer the Scepter of his Word to remain as

an Empty Ceremony among those, who pay it no

real
real obedience: nor be again clad'd with Purple, crown'd, and saluted King to advance the triumph of his scorn and crucifixion.

Nor will the fawning Professions of the demure hypocrite avert, but accelerate this Fate: He that makes the Golden Scepter in Christ's hand, a rod of iron in his own, that thinks his Saintship licenses him to all the severe censures, and the yet severer (because more effectual) oppressions of others, he is certainly to be looked on not only as a Rebel, but an Usurper too, and is of all others the highest provoker. He that tramples under foot the Son of God, does not so much violate him, as he that pretends to erect him a Throne upon blood and rapine, on perjury and sacrilege: nor does he that accounts the Blood of the Covenant an unholy thing, so much profane it, as he that uses it as a Varnish to paint over his foulest lusts. The Apostle has long since told us, there is no concord between Christ and Belial, and can we think he will be patient thus to be made subservient to his enemy; or suffer his Ark to be set for the support, which should be the confusion of Dagon. Do we find him so severely upbraid the hypocristie of the Jews, that stole, murdered, committed adultery, and sware falsely, and yet came and stood before him in his house, Jer. 7. 9. and shall we hope he will connive at it in Christians? Was it intolerable profanation in them to account his house a den of robbers, and shall we be permitted to make it so: they are sent to Shiloh to read their own
own destiny, and surely we are as likely to find ours there too; to be deprived of those advantages which we have so unworthily abus'd: nor can we expect, that though God cause the natural Sun to rise still as well on the evil as the good, yet that the Sun of righteousness shall continue to shine on those who will only bask themselves in his Rays, grow Æthiops from his neighbourhood; but will not work by his light.

When all this is consider'd, what a sad abode does it make? When the blasphemies of the Profane, the sensualities of the Voluptuous, and the mockeries of the Hypocrite, send, as it were, daily challenges to Heaven, we cannot but look it should at last overcome its long-suffering, awake God to vindicate the honour of his Name, and not suffer it any longer to be thus prostituted and polluted: that when he sees his light serve only to aid us the more subtilly to contrive our deeds of darkness, he should withdraw it, smite us with blindness like the Sodomites, whom he finds in such impure pursuits: and were that blindness such as our Saviour speaks of, *Jo. 9. 41.* that infer'd the no sin, 'twere a desirable infliction, but alas it has none of that property: That which is design'd for the punishment can never be the extenuation of our guilt; but as in Hell there is an happy Separation of effects, the scorching of the flame without the light, and the blackness of night without the rest: so in this nearest approach to it; this Portal to those Chambers of death, there is the ignorance without the excuse, the
The darkness divested of its native quality of hiding: and when we are enter'd among Heathens here, we must yet expect the sadder portion of Apostatiz'd Christians hereafter.

And that this consideration might at last have its proper operation, rouse and awake us timely to prevent those evils which it will be impossible to cure. That by bringing forth some more genuine and kindly fruits, we may avert that dismal sentence, Cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground. That men would generally lay to heart both the sin and infamy of being promoters of public ruine; and quench that fire with their tears which their sins have kindled, that the fasting and prayers, the sighs and groans of the Primitive Christians may supplant the profane luxuries, the carnal Jollities of the Modern: and that Sackcloth and Ashes may become the universal mode, the only fashionable dress among us. This both Reason and Religion suggest as matter of our most importunate wishes; would God our hopes were but half as pregnant.

But the less appearance there is of this universal reformation, the more jealously ought every single person to look on himself, lest he be one that obstruct it: for so he does who stays till it be a fashion, but neglects to contribute his part to the making it so. Men are willing to discourage themselves from attempts of this kind, and with an unseasonable modesty can reflect what a nothing one man is to so many millions, when alas all that vast Empire Vice has got in the world,
world, is founded in the pravity of single persons, & would certainly be ruin'd by their reformation. The more reasonable Collection would be, that he who considers himself but as one, should not suffer himself to grow into less; to fall from that Unit to a Cypher, by permitting sloth or cowardize to enfeeble and Emasculate him, but on the contrary should recollect his spirits, actuate all his strength, and therefore be sure to do his utmost, because that utmost is but a little.

And to this certainly there want not encouragements, we see in common affairs the wonders that industry and resolution are able to effect, and a single courage being exerted has often without Romance, overcome giantsly difficulties. 'Tis a great prejudice is cast upon vertue by the pusillanimity of those that like, but dare not abet her. When most men commit all impieties daringly, and openly, and those few that do mourn for it, do it but in secret, the example of the one is contagious, but the other has no means to diffuse itself. Would men stoutly own duty, and not like Peter, follow Christ afar off, they might yet hope to make a party and gain ground in the world. And how noble an attempt were this, thus to encounter Satan in his highest triumph, and recover a lost field: and methinks those who have any warmth of Piety glowing within, may easily thus improve it into a flame, επιχειρουσι έν τη πίσε τινάδεακ ανδειη, adde to their faith vertue, as that signifies courage: and then readily would succeed, that train of Christian excellencies reckon'd up by St.
St. Peter, 2 Ep. 1. 5. knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, and superstition on these, as it there follows, brotherly kindness, and the most comprehensive charity. We should be not only devout towards God, but zealous towards Men, endeavouring by all prudent means to recover them out of those snares of the Devil, whereby they are taken captive. And since among all those snares there is none more entangling, than the creditableness and repute of customary vices, to set themselves especially against that overgrown covering and ornament; those Locks wherein its great, its Sampson-like strength lies: and strive to render it as contemn'd as it is base: and to this purpose nothing is so apt, as the exalting its competitor, fetching vertue out of the Dungeon, that darkness and obscurity wherein it has long lain forgotten, and by making it illustriously visible in their own practice, put it into the possibility of attracting others. Indeed there only it appears in its true splendor, they are but dead colours the Sublimest speculation can put on it, he that would draw it to the life, must imprint it upon his own. And thus every pious person may, nay ought to be a Noah, a preacher of righteousness: and if it be his fortune to have as imperissable an Auditory, if he cannot avert the deluge, it will yet be the providing himself an Ark, the delivering, yea advancing his own soul, if he cannot benefit other mens.

NAY, this being a Noah may qualify him to be a Moses too, give him such an interest with Heaven,
Heaven, that he may be fit to stand in the gap, to be an intercessor and Mediator for a provoking people. And God knows never any generation more needed that office: nor any part of this more than our sinful Nation, which having long been in the furnace, is indeed now come out, but so unpurified, that we have all reason to expect a return, and that not upon the former frustrated design of refining; but upon that more infallible and fatal one of consuming us. This is so dreadful, but withal so just an expectation, that if there be any Jacobs among us; any, who can wrestle and prevail with God, there never was so pressing need of their intercession. O let all that are thus fitted for it, vigorously undertake this pious work, let no Moses's hands ever wax heavy, but be always held up in a devout importunity, let them transcribe that holy Oratory, which he so often effectually used, plead to God his own cause, with a what wilt thou do to thy great Name, and when there is nothing in us that can pretend to any thing but vengeance,ransack Gods bosom, rifle his bowels for arguments of compassion, repeat to him his own titles, that he is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, Numb. 14. 18. And by these solicite, yea, conjure him to pity. And how great an ardency is required to this intercession? What strong cries must they be that shall drown so loud a clamor of impieties. And how does it reproach the flightness of our sleepy heartless addresses? Can we hope to bind Gods hands

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with Withs and Straws? To arrest his vengeance with such faint and feeble assaults? And when nature and danger suggest to Heathen Nineveh, not only to cry, but cry mightily to God, shall the superaddition of our Religion damp ours into a whisper, a soft unaudible sound. A storm will teach the profane Mariner to pray in earnest, and alas, we have not wanted that discipline. 'Tis not long since we might have said with those, Acts 27. No small tempest has long lain on us, neither Sun nor Stars in many days, nay in many years appearing, nothing but black and dismal portents of a final wreck to a poor weather-beaten Church, and then sure 'twas time to be importunate, to learn so much of instruction from the waves that tossed us, as to make our prayers keep pace with them, in swift uninterrupted succession, in loud and not to be resisted violence. That we did so then I dare not affirm, but sure I am the necessity of it is not yet out-dated; for though the Sky however black with clouds carry no thunder in it, though the impetuous winds that blow from every quarter, should not break out in tempest, and bring shipwrack to us; yet we too fully exemplifie the truth of the Prophets Axiome, That the wicked are like the troubled Sea, that cannot rest: we have within us a principle of ruine, which can operate though nothing from without excite it. A tempest is not always necessary to sink a Ship, one treacherous leak may do it in the greatest calm, and what security can there then be to our torn Vessel, whose rents our continued divisions do
do still keep open. Indeed our preservation must be as our restoration was, the work of Omnipotence; thither therefore let us address with St. Peter's pathetick Prayer, Save Lord or we perish. O that all who are concern'd in the grant of that Petition, would qualify themselves to present it. Lift up such pure hands, that God who hears not sinners, Jo. 9. may yet hear them, afford a gracious ear, and give an answer of Peace.

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CHAP. III.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Inconsideration.

The last Section having defeated all the promising hopes of the former, by shewing us how sadly we have frustrated all the designs and engagements of our profession, enervated all those apt and powerful methods, and how perfectly contrary our practices are to our rules, mere curiosity would more prompt us to enquire what are the hidden causes of those strange effects, what unhappy propriety there is in the soil, that after so much culture and husbandry it should produce nothing but wild Grapes: and by what arts and wiles Satan has not only evaded, but even retorted those blows which were aim'd at him. But as in diseases the pains and
languishings are obvious to the grossest sense, but the springs and originals of them most frequently lye deep, and are so complicated and interwoven, that they require much art to search and to distinguish them: nay, do often mock the most subtile inquisitor, and send him back with meer conjectures and uncertain guesses: so in this Epidemick Spiritual distemper, the malady is notorious and visible, but the causes of it not so easily determin'd, yet that not so much from the darkness as the number of them; so many do pretend, and that with very good colour, to this unhappy, this monstrous birth, that a Solomon himself must have made the proposal of dividing it, as not being able to have assign'd it entire to any one Mother.

indeed so many are the concurrents towards it, that it would far exceed the limits of this little Tract, but to point at them: I shall not therefore undertake any such exact enumeration, but shall only take notice of those which either for the generality or degree of their efficacy appear the most eminent.

and first the great and stupid Inconsideration which most men have concerning their Religion, may well pass for a main cause of its frustration. Christianity may make Archimedes his challenge, give it but where it may set its foot, allow but a sober advertence to its proposals, and it will move the whole world: it comes with most invincible and controlling arguments, but still they are arguments, and those must first obtain attention,
attention, before they can force a sent; they will most infallibly weigh down the scales, though the whole world were the counter-balance, but then that must presuppose their being put into those Scales: being entertain'd with so much of deliberation, as may try and examine their weight. In a word, they address to us as men, that is creatures endued by God, with rational Souls and discursive faculties, but if we will suppress these, and set up only the brute to give audience, we must not expect Balaams prodigy shall be every day repeated, that the beast should be wiser than the rider, and consequently cannot wonder if the Success vary with the Auditors.

And 'tis to be fear'd, this is the state of most of us, that all the convincing Logick, that demonstration of the Spirit, as St. Paul calls it: and all the perswasive Rhetorick of the Gospel, find us so stupid and unconcern'd, that they can make no impression: all the avenues are so blockt up, that they can find no way of approaching us. We are like the Indian Serpents Phylostratus mentions, proof against all charms, but such as with their glittering splendor assault our Eyes: nothing moves us but what courts our Senses, and what is not gross enough to be seen, we think too nice to be consider'd. The form and name of Christianity men find ready to their hands, and it costs them no labour to put it on: but should they be interrogated of the import and significance of it, I fear many would be at a loss what to answer. Men call themselves Christians
as they do French or English, only because they were born within such a territory, take up their Religion as a part of their fate, the temper of their Climate, the entail of their Ancestors, or anything most remote from their choice, the profession of it descends to them by way of inheritance, and like young careless Heirs, they never are at the charge to survey it, to inform themselves either of the Issues, or Revenues of it; what burdens it lays or what advantages it promises. Every man sees they are vast multitudes that have entered the Baptismal vow, and I fear no small numbers of them, that weigh it as little when they should perform it, as they did when they made it. Have no other notion of Baptism, but as a custom of the place, or a time of festivity: consider no farther significance in these spiritual bands, than they do in the Swadling-cloaths of their infancy, and can give no better account why they took on them Christ's livery, than why they wear such garments as the common fashion of their Country prescribes them.

THIS is in many the effect of gross ignorance, that really know nothing that borders upon Religion: and where that is the principle, we cannot think it strange to see their practices proportionable; this returns them into the state of Heathenism, and while they walk in that darkness, it is no wonder if they often fall: the only matter of admiration is, that there should be any such darkness among us; that the glorious light, as St. Paul terms it, of the Gospel of Christ, should not
not long ere this have dispell'd it out of our Horizon, and certainly that it has not, must be owing to some very great guilt, so that concerning such persons the Disciples question, Jo. 9. is very pertinent, Who did sin, this man or his Parents? Where men are so ignorant it must necessarily infer their Parents negligence in infusing, or their own stubborn perverseness in resisting instruction, but 'tis more probable to conclude the former, since if Children were early instituted, knowledge would insensibly insinuate its self, before their years had arm'd them with obstinacy enough to make head against it: but when by the Parents remissness the proper Seeds-time is lost; the soil grows stiffe and untractable; the labour of learning averts their Childhood, and the shame of it their Manhood, and so they grow old in their ignorance, are ready to leave this world before they come to know any thing of that which is to succeed it. This is a common, but certainly a most deplorable case, and as it loudly accuses those Parents, who thus wretchedly hazard their Childrens greatest concerns, so certainly it reflects not very laudably upon those, who by slighting that excellent Order of Confirmation in this Church, have besides all other advantages of it, robb'd them of that happy reserve, which the care of their Spiritual Parent, had provided to repair the negligence of their Natural; but guilt has a miserable kind of infinity, and lessens not by being communicated; and therefore though these unknowing persons may with justice enough
accuse others, yet can they never the more absolve themselves. Indeed they cannot tax others omissions towards them, without a tacite reproach of their own: for if it were a fault in the Parent, to let their infancy want those necessary infusions, 'tis surely so in themselves, to let their riper years continue in that destitution. And sure 'tis not probable there could be a more irrational motive to the former, than that which prevails with the later; to wit, the fear of shame, which certainly much more properly belongs to him that lies stupidly under his want, than he that industriously sets to cure it: so that while they go thus preposterously to avert reproach, they invite it; nay, and do besides betray one of their most important secrets, discover themselves more solicitous about appearances than realities; to be thought knowing than to be so. A strange kind of speculative Hypocrisy, which yet leads to all the practical profaneness incident to those, who live without God in the world.

BUT would God the unchatechiz'd were the only persons we had to complain of in this matter: There is another sort as ignorant, who have not that plea; who by a wretchless Inconsideration, have made a shift to unlearn what they had once been taught. That this is naturally very possible no man can question, that observes how desuetude will rob a man of any Science, or other habit. But in this case there is yet a farther concurrent towards it, Christ's parable tells us of Fowles that devoured the Seed, which himself interprets to be the
the wicked one, which catcheth away the word sown in mens hearts: When that spiritual seed lies loose and scatter'd upon the surface, and is not by deep and serious meditation, harrowed as it were into the ground, it offers itself a ready prey to the devourer, and God knows the event is too ready to attest the truth of the observation: For do we not see many whose childhoods have wanted nothing of Christian nurture, that have had all advantages to the making them wise unto salvation, yet suffer their manhood to wear out and obliterate all those rudiments of their youth; and that not only out of their practice, but even out of their memory too: this (would we be patient to have the experiment made) would, I doubt not, be found too true in divers, and they would appear less able to approve themselves not only to the Confessor, but even to the Catechist in their adult age, than they were in their Minority: as having scarce ever thought of the principles of their religion, since they conn'd them to avoid correction; and then 'tis no wonder if they pass into the same forgetfulness with other the occurrences of that slippery age.

BUT if with some the memory have been so invincibly faithful, as not to have resign'd its depositum: if it do happen obstinately to retain those early impressions which were made on it. Yet alas! that alone will be of little avail: 'tis true that is the store-house, and 'tis good to have that well replenish'd; but if its plenty be only within its self uncommunicated, if the granary
nary though never so full, be seal'd up, it gives no security against a famine: a man's remembrance of his Creed may tell him there is a God, and that he is Almighty; but if his reason be so much a sleep, as not to infer from thence the necessity of reverencing and obeying him who is all powerful to revenge our contempts: he may repeat the Article every day and yet never the less Atheistically. In like manner he may go on to the Birth, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, but if he weigh not the obligations to gratitude and duty which devolve on him from thence he may remember his Birth, and yet never be regenerate: his Death, and yet not dye to sin: and his Resurrection, and yet lie rotting in his own corruption, and not rise with him to newness of life. So he may proceed to his coming to Judge the quick and the dead, but if he reflect not on his own particular concernment in it, if he consider not that for every the secretest thing, Eccl. i. 11. God will bring him, as well as others to judgment: he may talk of Dooms-day as men do of such Affixes as they have no trial at, but it will never set him a trembling, or give him the providence to anticipate his sentence; so judge himself here, that he may not be judged of the Lord. And so proportionably in all the parts of our Christian Faith: he that does not extract from them their proper and just inferences, shall never feel their efficacy. He has indeed in that excellent Systeme, a most infallible Catholicon, against all his spiritual Maladies, but 'tis a Medicine, not a Charm;
Charm; to be taken, not laid by him; and if he fail in application, he will as certainly miss of the cure: and this gives us one too clear a reason, why so many, in the most fatal sense, are weak and sick among us, and fast asleep; are first lethargick, and then stark dead in trespasses and sins. Men do not by sober consideration suck out the virtue which would heal them: they look on the Creed as Christ's badge, and so long as they bear that they think none must question their Christianity: whereas 'tis indeed more properly his Military Symbolum, or recognition of the cause, and General they fight for; an engaging them to all the obedience, fidelity and constancy of resolute soldiers: and to this purpose it is that we stand up at the recital of the Creed, as owing our Baptismal promise to fight manfully under our Saviour's Banner against Sin, the World, and the Devil; and if we do not thus, 'tis not material what professions we make, we are the same deserters whether we stay in our own Camp, or run over to the enemies; throw away our Arms, or not use them; renounce our Christian faith, or not improve it. Sloth is as mischiefous in war as treachery or cowardize, and he that keeps his sword in the sheath, is as unformidable an enemy, as he that brings none into the field.

AND how many such insignificant combatants are there in the Christian Camp: that only lend their Names to fill up the Muster-roll: but never dream of going upon service. 'Tis certain
certain there are as many such, as there are careless unconsidering Professors: and these 'tis to be fear'd make so great a number, that were the Church put to estimate her forces, and examine what effectively her strength is, she would find the deceit of false musters as great among the Spiritual as the Civil Souliery. It is indeed a most amazing thing to see, that that which is the one great and important interest of all men, should of all other things meet with the least regard. If we make a proposal of worldly profit, though incumbred with many difficulties and liable to many uncertainties, we shall not only have an attentive hearing, but active care and diligent pursuit of the design, it will be driven to the last glimpse of hope and if the first attempt miscarry, the next occasion is laid hold of; but here where the prize is so rich, the conditions so easie, the acquiesc so certain, yet (as if these were deterring, averting qualities) we cannot be got to take the matter into our deliberation. Alas, what stupid folly has possesst men? and by what measures do they make their estimates? how are their precious Souls become so vile in their eyes, that they are the only part of them, which they think below their regard? In an Epidemick disease every man looks out for Antidote or Medicine for his own peculiar, and does not acquiesce in that silly confidence that he shall do as well as other men: yet in this greater danger, that is their avowed comfort, and keeps them as cheerful as if they had the most solid grounds of security,
security. Alas, can numbers out-face damnation, or do men hope that by going in troops to hell they shall master the native inhabitants, subdue those legions of tormentors, and become conquerors instead of sufferers? This is sure too wild an imagination for any to entertain, yet what more sober one can any pretend, in favour of so stupendous an improvidence?

BUT 'twill be much more seasonable to reform than Apologize or Rhetoricate; and therefore 'twill import those men, who like the inhabitants of Laish, dwell careless, quiet, and secure, to look about them: to enter into serious consultation how they may avert that ruin which waits upon such a supine temper, not to suffer themselves to perish in the midst of such possibilities, nay solicitations to be saved: but at last afford an audience to that Embassie which is sent them from Heaven. Ponder well those ease terms of reconciliation which are proposed: the inestimable advantages consequent to the embracing that amity; and the as inestimable detriment of refusing it: in a word, not to please themselves with the empty title, but to penetrate the full purport and significance of their Christianity, and when they have done this soberly and attentively: having removed this first and most general obstruction to piety, they will find themselves assaulted by such force of reason that they must either be very ill Logicians, or very good Christians.
CHAP. IV.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Partial Consideration.

Next to the stupid and meerly vegetable state of total incogitancy: we may rank that partial and piece-meal consideration, by which Christianity is mutilated and deformed, depriv'd of all its force to attract and subdue mens hearts: for as in artificial Movements, there is such a dependance of one part upon another, that the substracting of any one destroys the whole frame: so in this spiritual Machin design'd to raise our dull mortality to heaven; the divine wisdom of its maker has combin'd its several parts, that he who severs ruines, he that applies it not in its united strength will find no aid from its unjoynted scattered particles. S. Paul tells us 1 Cor. 12. that in the natural body the making it all Eye, or Hand, the reducing the many members to one is destructive to its being (if they were all one member where were the body v. 20.) and we in reason must expect the same event will follow here. If we advance one part of our Christian Faith to the annihilation of the rest, 'tis impossible that should supply the place of the whole; but the more that member is swoln above its native size, the more unwildy, not the more strong it grows: and loses that active vigor, which
which it receiv'd by a social communication with the other parts.

'TIS God's charge against the Priests, Mal, 2. that they have been partial in the Law, 抬起 some lifters up of faces in it; preferr'd some more agreeable parts, and discountenanced others; were not only judges of the Law, but unjust judges too. And I fear the enditemt may now run more generally against the People also; that they have been partial in the Gospel: culled and chosen out those softer and more gentle dictates which should less grate and disturb them: like well the Oil that makes them have a cheerful countenance, but are not so forward to deal with the Wine which should search and cleanse their fores. We make all our addresses to the promises, hug and caress them, and in the interim let the commands stand by neglected. A divinity indeed fitly apportion'd to the devotion of these times, which loves to make an offering to God of that which costs them nothing, and yields a preference to that way of worship which assures Salvation best cheap, and at the easiest terms; but would men consider, they would find, that the commands are the suprene and most eminent part of the Evangelical Covenant, the promises come but as hand-maids and attendants: an honourable retinue to invite the more respectful entertainment, and it should be remembred that of this sort are the threatnings too; and therefore they have surely an equal right to our regard especially when many of them have the accession of
of Gods Oath, to bind and strengthen their performance. And what a scandalous and absurd partiality is this, that when the precepts come with this solemnity the more to command our reverence, we single out this one part of the Train and pay our homage unto it; lay hold on the Promises, not those that speak damnation to impenitence, but the other half of them which give assurances of favour. And like the Benjaminites to the daughters of Shiloh, run away with them, possess our selves of these by rape, in spite of all the incapacities we lye under; though God has sworn, that no disobedient provoker, shall enter into his rest.

THAT this is really the case of many is more than probable, for by what other artifice is it possible for them to reconcile their large hopes, with their no purifying, their confident expectations of heaven, with their greedy rapacious pursuits of Earth: their secure dependance on the Bloud of their Saviour with their remorseless effusions of that of their Brethren? did they consider the inseparable connexion between the Precepts and the Promises, 'twere hard for them to be so wicked, but impossible to be so sanguine. Did the unclean person believe that none but the pure in heart shall see God, if he could be so much Swine, as still to chuse the mire: yet sure he could not expect to be Rapt from thence into heaven. Did the Drunkard consider the sentence of the Apostle excluding all such from the Kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6. 10. if he can be content so sadly to
to oberbuy his sin; as to pay that Kingdom for his
shot: yet certainly even he cannot be set enough
to expect the possession of what he has so sold, or
hope that from one of his drunken trances, he
shall awake to glory: did the Covetous extortioner
observe that he is involv'd in the same sentence,
remember that such Violents shall take not heaven,
but hell, by force; if the terrors of the Lord could
not have force enough to melt his bowels, to un-
clutch his gripping hand, or dissuise him of his
prey: yet sure it must discourage him from
grapping of heaven too, from hoping to defraud
God as he has done men, and striking himself into
an estate in the land of the living: and in like
manner all other hoping sinners if they would
ruine, yet must cease from flattering themselves,
must chuse damnation bare-faced, and not fancy
that their postion on in the broad way shall ever
bring them to life. And sure this discovery of
their estate, were a very good step to the curing
it: for though 'tis possible some few may be of so
sturdy an impiety as to chuse their sin with all
its consequents, yet sure all sinners are not of
that strong complexion, and therefore Satan is
put to his wiles and artifices, is fain to hoodwink
those that are apt to start: and disguises the dan-
ger when he sees the true appearance of it will
terrifie and avert. This was his old policy with
our first parents; he dazles their eyes with the
glorious but abusive proposal of becoming like
Gods, that they might not discern how near they
were approaching to become like Devils: and

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this
this under the pretence of confidence and friendship, discovering as it were a secret to them, that God envied them that promotion, which his greater kindness was solicitous to procure for them. And as if the ruine of mankind, in Massa had been too slight a Trophy for that one Stratagem, he repeats it again to the individuals, persuades men that the path of obedience which God has chalked out is strait, and narrow, rugged and incumbered; that there is a shorter cut, an easier passage to life: that they may be led into Canaan a nearer way, step into it immediately from the flesh pots of Egypt, and escape the tedious weary March in the Wilderness: never so much as call at Mount Sinai, or be affrighted with the Thunders of the Law. In a word, they need not work out their Salvation, but be they never so slothful they may inherit the promises, Heb. 6. 12. this is his one grand Conclusion, though he has several mediums to infer it by: wherewith as with so many tools and Engines he furnishes men for the filing or breaking of that sacred link between duty and reward; and of these he has great variety fitted to the hands, and skill of those that manage them. I shall not undertake to ransack his workhouse, or give an inventory of his utensils, but shall rather in general beseech all those, who have made this unhappy separation to remember from whose Forge they took their Instruments: and then consider whether his officiousness in supplying them, can argue any thing but that 'tis his work they are about. Can any think that he
he whose eternal pastime it will be to torment men, can really be solicitous of their ease that he would chuse out for them the pleasantest paths, were it not that he knows they lead to the chambers of death? when Christ whose sole business it was to save mens souls, has prescrib'd us a course which shall assuredly conduct us unto happiness, what can it be but phrensie to resort to Abaddon, the destroyer for an easier method, or expect more gentleness and compassion from the roaring Lion than from the Lamb of God.

NAY indeed this is not only to attribute to him more tenderness, but fidelity too: to believe him in opposition to all the express affirmations of God; and when he who is truth its self has told us, that except we repent we shall all perish, Luk. 13. 5. and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. 12. 14. to disbelieve this only upon his bare credit, who was a lyar from the beginning: This indeed is a prodigious composition of blasphemy and folly: a strange contumely to God, but fatal treachery to our selves: For alas Satan entertains us all this while but with a trick of Leger de main, and as Juglers make us believe we have cut the string, which yet presently after they shew us whole: so he persuades us he has thus sever'd the Condition from the Promises, when to our grief it will finally appear their union was inviolable. 'Tis not all our vain confidence that can reverse the immutable divine Law, we may, 'tis true, delude our selves, keep up our spirits high; in a secure jollity eat
and drink, and rise up to play, and so not only loyalty, but revel out our day, till the night overtake us wherein no man can work, but we shall never be able to propagate the deceit, where only it could avail us, to persuade God to pay the hire to those that have been no labourers, or give the prize to any who have not run to obtain it. Let every man therefore in a just tenderness to his own Soul, strictly examine his hopes, try not how high they tower, but how deep they are founded; whether on the sand or on the rock; the flattering delusions of Satan, and the dreams of his own Phancy, or on the Promises of God: for though all pretend to build on the latter, yet God knows, a multitude of foolish Architects there are, which mistake their ground, take that for assurance that is not: and this truly is a thing deserves to be soberly consider'd, they that most greedily catch at the Promises, do often embrace a cloud instead of the Deity which they so eagerly grasp, and thereby think to enjoy. But faithful obedience, and not insolent hopes, commend us unto God. The Gospel indeed describes to us great and inestimable felicities, but he that can think this gives him Title to them, may as well pretend to the whole World, because he has the Map of it in his house: for though it mentions them to all, yet it promises them to none but the obedient. And those Israelites which fled from the sight of Goliath, 1 Sam. 17. 25. might as reasonably challenge the reward propos'd to the victor, as men can pretend to
to enter into life without keeping the Commandments: this then is the one Criterion, by which a man may judge of his hopes; if they be but proportionable to his obedience, they are then regular, and such as will not make him ashamed, but prove incentives and engagements to every good work. Let him obey as much as he can, and then he need not deny himself the comfort of hoping as much as he can too. But if his hopes exceed this measure, and square themselves only by his wishes; if he look for Heaven, not because he is qualified for it, but because he wants or covets it; this is rather to dream than hope, and such whimsies will as soon invest the beggar in wealth, the defam'd in honour, the sick in health, or any man in any thing he has but a mind to, as compass Heaven for the bold Fiduciary.

It is indeed like those Lunacies wherein mens fancies adopt them Heirs to those Kingdoms, they know nothing more of, than the names: and sure the Analogy holds as well in the cure as the disease; let these Patients awhile be kept dark, taken from the dazzling contemplations of their imaginary priviledges, to the sad reflection on their sins: and as God expostulates with Israel, Ezek. 33. 26. Ye stand upon the sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every man his neighbours wife, and shall ye possess the land? So let them recite to themselves the Catalogues of their impieties, and then ask their own hearts, whether these be the qualifications of those that shall rest in Gods holy hill? Whether these marks of the
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Beast can ever rank them among the followers of the Lamb? And let these Considerations be prest home, reiterated so often, till by repeated strokes they have made good the other part of the method, made their Souls bleed, and by that Spiritual Phlebotomy, temper'd their swelling veins, allayed the over-sanguineess of their constitution: and then there remains but one thing more to complete the course, and that is bringing them into the Work-house, setting them really to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, which they had so near played away by confidence and presumption: And when they have done thus, they have verified their hopes, and then may safely reassume them: They are return'd again with advantage to their first point, and are that in soberness and reality, which they then were only in fiction and imagination.

And now would God men would once be content to be thus disabus'd, that they would not be so in love with deceit, as in the Prophets phrase, Jer. 8. 5. to hold it fast: that they would not chuse Chymæra's and phantastick Images before real and substantial Felicities: and prefer that hope which will be sure to ship-wrack them, before that which will be an Anchor of the Soul, sure and steadfast, Heb. 6. 19. and if this so reasonable a proposal may be embrac't; if the World shou'd, as the Spaniard said, but rise wise one morning, what a deal of dead merchandize would Satan have upon his hands: Many of those they call the comfortable Doctrines would want vent, which are now
now the staple commodity of his Kingdom. What those are, 'tis no part of my design to examine, it will be every man's particular concern to do it for himself; which he may do by this one test; whether they more animate men to hope well, than to live well? Whether they bring Alexander's sword to cut asunder the Gordian knot, to sever between the promise and the condition? Or the sword of the Spirit to subdue all to the obedience of Christ? If the former, we may expect the fruits of such will be all that licentiousness which St. Paul describes, as the works of the flesh, Gal. 5. 19. it being not to be imagin'd, that the precepts of the Gospel, which they divide from the promises only, that they might fall off, shall then be voluntarily taken up in meer good nature and heroick Generosity; that those who are so industrious to avoid the necessity of Christian practice, will make it their free-will-offering. If there should happen to be some few of so ingenuous a gratitude; yet 'tis certain, that is not our common mould; few men will be better than they think their interest bids them be, and therefore such principles are dangerous Seminaries of Libertinism: and 'tis mens very important concernment not to admit them. Let not then their cheerful aspect recommend them to our embraces; men may be kill'd with too much Cordial; that which seems to refresh the Spirits may enflame the Blood, and though cold poisons have gotten the fame of being the most malignant, yet there are hot that are as infallibly mortiferous. Let it be our
our care in opposition to both, to keep ourselves in that moderate, equal temper, which belongs to healthy Souls: and since that is the vital heat which is gotten by exercise, set to our business, employ our selves diligently in all those duties the Gospel exacts, and then we shall not want such an hope as may warm our hearts, keep us in a cheerful expectation, till we come to the glorious fruition of that Eternal Salvation which God has promised to all them, and only them that obey him. And till we do thus, till we consider as well what we are to do, as what we are to receive: there will be no hope of restoring Christianity to its native vigour; we shall make it evaporate all its strength in insignificant hopes, convert it into Air, to bear up our Bubbles, instead of that firm ground, whereon we should build virtue here, and glory hereafter.

CHAP. V.

A survey of the Mischief arising from Carnal Consideration.

AFTER the disadvantages of partial Consideration, may fairly be subjoyn'd the ills of that advertency, which is impregnated by sensuality and sloth, and makes pretence unto right reason, but tends indeed as much as any thing to the frustrating the design, and en-
feebling the force of our Religion: such close reserves of deceit and malice have men to their own Souls, that when they quit one strong hold of Satan, 'tis only to retreat to another. When they are not so brisk and Aerial, as lightly to skip over those precepts, that lye in their way: they are so gross and unwary as to fall at them; if they may not pass for Straws and Chaffe, such as every blast of vain confidence may blow away, they shall then be improved into Heaps and Mountains, become stones of stumbling and rocks of offence; and when they are call'd upon to Consider them, they do it in so perverse a manner, as if they meant to revenge themselves on that unwelcome importunity: their consideration is worse than neglect. They look into them insidiously, not as Disciples, but as Spies, not to weigh the obligingness, but to quarrel the unreasonableness or difficulty of the injunctions, not to direct their practice, but excuse their prevarications.

From this unsincere kind of inspection it is, that the Precepts have got so formidable appearance with many, that they have fallen under such heavy prejudices, as to resolve them intolerable yokes, insuperable tasks: that this Canaan is a land that eats up its inhabitants, wherein there is so little of enjoyment that it scarce affords a being. Men count a life under such restraints, so joyless and uneasie, that it differs from death only, by being more passive. They think Zeal like a Hectick Feaver, in a flow but certainly fatal Fire exhausts and consumes the Spirits. Mortification
fication and self-denial macerate and decay the body; and liberality dissipates and wastes the estate: and with these Apparitions which themselves have conjur’d up; men run frightened from duty, resolve the burden is unsupportable, or at least grievous to be born, and therefore, as our Saviour says of the Pharisees, will not touch it, no not so much as with one of their fingers, Mat. 23. 4. never make any attempt to try what indeed they are; but take their measures from their own, or perhaps other mens prejudice opinions, and thence take out an Authentick Record and Patent for sloth, fancy the journey too long for them, and therefore sit still; first call Christ’s commandments grievous, and then improve that slander into a manumission; absolve themselves from obeying them. And unless they may have the Gate to life cut wider, made capacious enough to receive them with all their lufts about them, will never essay to enter it.

BUT if the Prince of darkness have enacted it a Law, that difficulty shall pass for excuse, yet if real uneasiness may be admitted to be as determining as imaginary ones, his own decree will retort the most ruinously on himself, and men may plead it as their discharge, from all those base drudgeries, those tyrannous impositions whereby he loads them. The Drunkard may experimentally tell him, the pain of an aking head, of an overcharged stomack, the ruine of a wasted Estate, and claim a dispensation from pursuing that uneasie and costly sin. The Wanton may bring
bring his macerated body like the Levites Concubine Jud, and urge it as an evidence how cruel a Master he serves; and from thence emancipate and free himself: and indeed every sin carries in it so much of visible toil, or secret smart, as would by force of this rule supplant and undermine its self; and sure Satan would never have arm'd men with so dangerous a weapon, had he not discern'd them so in love with slavery, as secures him it should never be us'd against him; for if it should, nothing could give him a more mortal wound, more irrecoverably shake his Kingdom. Nor would only that infernal Region feel the force of that destructive principle; it would make as strange confusions in secular Regiments.

For if such pleas as these may be admitted, they will easily cancel all Humane, as well as Divine Laws, and every malefactor will transfer his guilt on the severity of the Legislator: the Thief may say it is too great a difficulty for him to resist the temptation of an apt opportunity; a rich prize that his fingers are too slippery even for himself, and he cannot restrain them, and then quarrel the strictness of the Law, which has rais'd so high a fence about mens properties, that he who climbs it must endanger his neck. The Rebel may complain that the bands of Allegiance are too strait, the yoke fits too close, galls and frets his tender flesh, exclaim loudly at the Tyranny of those that laid it on, and in that out-cry drown the noise of his own Treason. And so every other transgressor may accuse the rule, as necessary
necesary to his swervings, till at last the *Laws* be made the only *Criminals*.

I leave every man to judge both of the equity and consequences of such discoursings in *Civil* matters, and shall only desire he will apply them to *Spiritual* also, where certainly they are neither more just, nor less ruinous; and whilst such absurd pretences as these pass currant, no wonder if *Christianity* languish and grow impotent, want strength to impress its self on the lives of its *professors*. The most infallible receipt can work no cure on him, who upon the suspicion of its bitterness, refuses to taste it. The most excellent *Laws* must look their regulating *power*, where the *execution* of them is obstructed; and we may as reasonably look for the efficacy of *Christianity* among those who never heard the name, as among those, who owning the name, do yet disclaim its *precepts*; and so all those interpretatively do, who by accusing them of too great rigour, avert both themselves and others from their Obedience.

**THAT** the Charge is scandalously unjust will appear to any, who shall allow themselves the just means of information; but alas the way of *Process* men take in this affair is so inequitable, as certainly presages the partiality of the *sentence*, what Person ever was there so innocent, so excellent, who if arraign'd at the *Tribunal* of his mortal enemy could be acquitted, *Christ* himself shall be pronounc'd a *Blasphemer*, when a *Caiphas* is to examine him: and no wonder if his *precepts* find propor-
proportionable dealing, if they be decried as impossible, tyrannical, perhaps ridiculous too, where the scanning of them is referr'd to those, whose interest it is to defame them. Men enthrone their lusts, set them up in the judgement seat, and none can expect they shall pass such a sentence, as shall include their own condemnation: if they own the Commandment to be holy, just and good, they must tacitely accuse themselves to be impure, unjust and wicked, and as such to be consign'd to wrath and judgment.

Here then we have the true account how Christ's commands, which are in themselves so far from grievous, have gotten so unkind a reputation among us; this is so direct a course for it, that we may cease our wonder, though not our grief to see it, for we behold them stand to the award of those with whom they have a profest enmity: the Goal gives sentence on the Bench; the Bar arraigns the Judgment Seat. Certainly when that Law which is Spiritual is submitted to the arbitration of gross carnality, the Law of liberty is taxed and rated by those worst bondmen who are sold under sin; 'tis impossible to find any fairer treatment. That which comes on purpose to dethrone sin, dispossesses it of the Empire it has usurpt, will certainly be entertain'd with the same exclamation on the Devils us'd to Christ: Why art thou come to torment us? But as if this general Antipathy were not enough to ascertain the rejection of Christ's command; as if the National feud, as I may call it, between Heaven and Hell were not thought irrecon-
irreconcilable enough, men offer yet harder measure, call in the aid of personal quarrels, and when the precepts come to be consider'd, refer each of them single to that particular Vice to which it has the directhest contrariety.

THUS when Christ's command of meekness and forgiveness, of loving enemies, and turning the cheek, bearing the Cross, or self-denial calls for audience; they consult (as Rehoboam did with his young hot-spurs) with their anger and malice, their rankor and revenge, and they soon give their Verdict; that to be meek is to be servile, a temper fit only for the abject. That to forgive enemies is a principle of cowardize that would Emasculate the world; to love them a piece of Spaniel-like fawning; but to turn the Cheek; not only to hazard, but invite new injuries by owning them as benefits, paying blessing for curses, kindness and good-turns for hatred, is such a ridiculous patience, as must expose to the insolence of many, and the scorn and derision of all men. And then the resolution is ready they will be no such fools for Christ's sake. So when the precept of humility and lowliness comes to be consider'd, their Pride is deputed to hear its plea, and then though it bring the authority of Christ's example as well as his command, it will be judg'd invalid: Christ indeed took upon him the form of a Servant, and to that humility was a proportionable Adjunct; but what is that to them whose aspiring humour abhors subjection, 'tis not calculated for their Meridian, they are of another man-
ner of Spirit, and would not have it embased by
the admission of so mean a quantity: and though
Christ have put poverty of Spirit among his Beat-
titudes, they resolve he shall not ensnare them
with that artifice, they will not take his measures
of felicity; or resign that pleasure they have in
valuing themselves, for any thing he proposes in
exchange. In like manner the precepts of tem-
perance, sobriety and chastity, are not permit-
ted to the judgment of sober reason, nay, nor of
meer natural desire; but to appetites vitiated and
inflam'd, by radicated habits; and then the Glut-
ton thinks to eat moderately, is to be starv'd;
and will as soon put a knife, Prov. 23. to his throat,
in the vulgar sense of cutting it, as in Solomons
notion of restraining his excess. Thus the Drun-
kard with his false thirsts looks on sobriety as a
kind of Hell, where he shall want a drop to cool
his tongue, and thinks the abandoning his de-
baucht jollities is an implicite adieu to all the
comforts of life. The Unclean person when his
blood is high scoffs at Chastity as a religious kind
of impotence, and only so far considers the pre-
cept of pulling out the Eye, as to infer that it were
as easie literally to part with it, as to restrain its
lustful range: not look at all, as not look to lust.
And proportionably it fares with Charity and
bounty, which though our Saviour recommend,
Mammon arraigns of robbery, and stigmatizes as
a Thief that picks the Purse, and rifestes Coffers.
But amidst all these the taking up the Cross, suffer-
ing for righteousness sake, and the doctrine of self-de-

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The text is from a religious or moral work discussing the importance of spirit over material possessions. It critiques the idea that one should submit to the desires of the flesh in the name of spiritual purity. The passage uses a variety of rhetorical devices, including comparisons and contrasts, to argue against the pursuit of material comforts and virtues in moderation.
mial; fall under the heaviest prejudice. These are oppos’d not by some one single vice, but the confederate arms of all; even those whose interests are flatly opposite do here unite: Herod and Pilate, Saduces and Pharisees accord against Christ, and all are freely suffer’d, nay invited to exhibit their complaints against these Mandates. Covetousness cries out that this is the most ruinous prodigality, casts away an estate in a lump, and lays all open to forfeiture and confiscation: and Prodigality takes it as ill to be forestall’d, and have nothing left for it to dissipate. Prophaness avows a contempt of it as a folly, and most open madness to part with real pleasure for an empty name, or profit for that Bankrupt thing call’d Conscience: and Hypocrisy has a more secret hatred of it, as its detector; that which will bring it to a Test which it cannot pass. Malice puts in a Caveat, that this is to gratifie enemies, and lose the satisfactions of revenge: and Self-Love puts in another, that it is to destroy ones self. In short, every limb of the body of sin discharges a blow at this innocent and Divine Sanction; as if they meant it should exemplifie its own doctrine by assuming that passive temper it recommends.

BUT alas, who can expect any more upright verdicts from such past, such corrupt Juries, and why may not Christ be permitted to claim the common benefit of our Laws, to make his challenge and exceptions against this so incompetent impanel. ’Tis the counsel of the Wise man, not
to advise in common affairs with those whose tempers may be suppos'd to bias them, consult not, saies he, with a coward in matters of war, nor with a sluggard of much business, Eccl. 37. 11. and sure if they be ill Counsellors, they must be worse Judges: but why then do we set pride to judge of humility, lust of purity, covetousness of liberality: and make our vices the arbitrators of those Laws which should restrain them? This is such a gross injustice as common humanity abhors; we deal by other measures with men, the most notorious and flagitious criminals: and reserve this way of process for those things only wherein our God may be concern'd. 'Tis a severe exprobration of a prophane people, Malach. 1. 8. Where God accuses them for treating him with less reverence than they would do a mortal Prince. Offer it now to thy Prince: but alas! we shall force him to descend far lower in his expostulation, so far we are from paying him the duty and regard belonging to a Prince, that we yield him not the rights of common men: force him to stand to those measures which we think too unequitable to press upon a murderer, a thief, or rebel at the Bar.

BUT this waving of common rules is a plain confession that we need more indulgence, than those will allow: when mens lufts thus usurp the Tribunal and judge in their own cause, 'tis a palpable discovery they dare not remit themselves to any more equal determination. And indeed in this point of their interest, they pass a
right judgment: for 'tis certain were the case refer'd to any competent Judge, indeed to any but themselves they would inevitably be cast; and sure 'tis high time that some should assist oppress vertue in its appeal; find it out some Court of equity where its plea may be heard: and we need not travel far for that purpose, every man may do it in his own breast, where in his little Common-wealth he shall find a Court of Gods erecting: let him but draw the Cause thither, discuss the matter in his own conscience; and he will soon find the former unrighteous sentences revers'd: let him but seriously reflect on his violations of those sacred Precepts of Christ; and observe what a sting and secret remorse every such breach leaves within him: and that will be a competent attestation of the equity and obligingness of those Mandates: for from whence else can the regret arise? those things that are either impossible in their nature, or unconcerning to us cannot beget it. No man accuses himself for not flying in the air, or walking upon the water: nor owns himself guilty in the non-observance of any Laws, but such as have power to oblige him: and therefore these close pangs and checks of Conscience are an irrefrangible evidence, that men do inwardly assent to the justice and authority of those divine rules; which their actions, yea often their words too, do most oppugn.

BUT over and above the throws and after-pains of conscience, when sin is brought forth, the self-accusation of the Criminal, when none beside
fide controls, nay many flatter and commend: I say beyond this secondary and reflex use Apology, for Christ's Law, owed to the foregoing prevarication of it; there is an early and immediate verdict past in its behalf, in the esteem and liking which those documents command, where ere they pass: creating an assent and veneration not only when obey'd, but from profest despisers; who cannot chuse to think well of that vertue they desert, and the necessity of their affairs compel them to speak ill of. An event visible in the condemnation of our Saviour, where the Judge who gave Sentence against him, at the same moment wash'd his hands, and openly profest he found no fault in him.

AND indeed this very reflexion on the Author of these precepts, if well consider'd would supersede all other arguments. The Mandates of the Gospel on this one score, that they are Christ's, are certainly both pure in themselves, and possible to us: and so most worthy not only of all Obedience, but all Love too. He who is our Lord upon both the titles of Creation and Redemption, may certainly with all justice impose what laws he pleases on us. Yet he, who laid down his life for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first Testament, cannot be imagin'd so inconsiderate of our frailty which himself had smarted for, as to introduce another of equal rigor, or be so prodigal of his bloud, as to pour it out for those who by a new set of impossible commands should infalli-
bly resorfeit themselves again: and if this cannot be suppos'd, the contrary may be concluded, that he hath so far condescended to our imbecility, as not to prescribe us any thing which he either finds or makes us not able to perform. 'Tis true indeed, his Laws are above the reach of our corrupt and debased nature; and they were unfit to be his, were they not so: but when he by his grace offers to elevate and refine this nature, bring it up to the pitch and purity of those Laws, this is a far greater mercy than if he had descended to our corruption; so he might have contaminated himself, given laws unworthy of him: but alack what advantage would it be to us, to have the Blasphemy mention'd, Psal. 50. so verified to have our God in this sense, such a one as our selves? but by this other Method he purifies, and exalts us: puts us in a capacity of being like unto him, in which is summ'd up at once, all both vertue and felicity.

AND on this glorious end every particular command of his, has a direct aspect, every one of them tending to re-impress on us some part of that divine image which was raz'd out by the first sin: and this one would think enough to recommend them to our highest value. Certainly, if Conscience may be Judge, it will be so: there being in this case no middle between devout reverence, and horrid blasphemy; for he that despiseth such an assimulation, must necessarily also despise him who is so resembled: he who thinks meekness, purity, humility, &c. unamiable qualities
lities, can have little esteem for him, in whom they are so transcendently eminent, but will take the Prophet at his word, and say, there is no form nor comeliness in him, Ef. 53. But this sure can never be the Verdict of Conscience; he that can thus pronounce, must be suppos'd to have suppress'd and silenced that. It being one of the most indelible notions there, that all that is in God, is sublimely excellent. But because 'tis indeed too possible that conscience may be put under such an undue restraint, suffer the violence of a Prisoner, when it should sustain the place of a Judge: because many men dare not permit their consciences to speak, lest they should say more than they are willing to hear. And lastly, since these persons make their appeal to reason, pretend the aids, and boast in the advantages of that, it may not be amiss to bring the Cause unto that Bar: whose Empire and Authority none must disclaim that own the Style, and least of all those Scepticks in Religion with whom we have to do: who will allow of no conviction but from it.

And God, who as the Apostle saies, leaves not himself without witnefs, has so temper'd and dispos'd his Precepts as to qualifie them to pass even this Test also, they being not the contradictions but improvements of natural Reason: and so most apt to recommend themselves to all that is Man, not Brute about us. Indeed they have the very same aim and design with that. It has ever been the grand business of sober reason first to discover, and then to attain that one supreme good,
good, which would give rest and felicity to the soul: in this inquisition have the Philosophers and greatest Masters of Reason, laid out their most serious studies and deepest contemplations; and in their indefatigable pursuits seem joyntly to sigh out David's question, Who will shew us any good? and now the Gospel comes a solution of this so important a Query, brings these glad tidings of joy to all people, and that not only in its credenda, by informing us what that Good is: but in its agenda too, by tracing us out the Way to it: beating us a path which will certainly lead us to that sumnum bonum which our very Nature implicitly gasps after; and sure Reason can never jar with this, which comes thus as a happy Auxiliary to succour its impotence: as an infallible Guide to conduct its steps: and as a glorious Light to give it a clear view, of what it before blindly groped after. 'Tis a certain Indication of Madness, to tear and mischief those things that would be useful to us, to curse and revile a friend, or fly in the face of those whose charity brings them to our aid; and therefore 'tis most evident that Reason must first cease to be reason, and commence Phrenzy, before 'tis possible it can set its self in defiance of those Laws of Christ, which are thus accommodated to its greatest Interests.

AND as the accord is thus observable in the ultimate, so is it in the intermediate design also. Reason had by its twilight discern'd that, that Sovereign Bliss it aim'd at, would never be hit by
an unsteady hand; by him who was perpetually
tossed and agitated by his turbulent inordinate
appetites. Therefore young men, yet in the
heat and ferment of their blood were solemn-
ly proscrib'd and banish'd from the Schools and
Lectures of Philosophy; therefore lustrations and
Catharticks of the mind were sought for, and all
endeavour us'd to calm and regulate the fury, if
not extirpate (which some contended for) the ve-
ry being of the Passions: that so a preparation
might be made first for the knowledge and then
the attainment of felicity: Now the Gospel Pre-
cepts have visibly the same end and purpose: eve-
ry one of them expressly singling out some irre-
gular affections to combate and subdue: so that
right Reason and They are evidently of a Sect and
Party, insomuch that several of the ancientest
Fathers of the Church attributed the excellent
documents of Heathen Philosophers to the Di-
vine λόγος, the reason and essentia l Word of God
which after was incarnate upon earth; and
brought auxiliary strengths of Grace, to aid the
weaknesses of Nature. The blessed Jesus whose
bare word Checkt the Sea in its highest fury, and
by that Miracle attested his Divinity; as much
exerts himself in silencing the louder Tempeests,
and calming the intestine storms within our
breasts. And certainly Reason will not quarrel
to have been thus reliev'd, it being the property
only of proud Folly to chuse rather to lose a vi-
c tory than owe it to the aid of an Allie.
FROM this general view, it were easie to
descend
descend to observe the exact concurrence of particulars. God loves a reasonable service, and has so temper'd his commands, that every Act of obedience we perform may be so qualified: and gain unto its votaries the Elogium promis'd in the Law of Moses, Deut. 4. 9. Surely this people is a wise and understanding People. And first that the command of Meekness is a most rational Precept can never be doubted by any who remember but the common definition of Anger, that it is Furor brevis, and sure 'tis very reasonable not to be mad, and he that has observ'd the unmanly transportations of that wilde passion, how that the first violence it offers is to the man within him, will certainly think it the interest, not only of his Religion, but common prudence, and right Reason to suppress it. And the like is to be said of the more solemn Phrense of deep malice and deliberate Revenge, where the fury wants the allay of being transient and short liv'd, is embodied into Complexion and temper, and grows inveterate into Nature. Anger indeed is a fire, and he that touches it though but lightly, will find it scorch him: but the Malicious lays himself as it were to roast at it; prolongs and spins out his own Torment as if he meant to anticipate his Punishment in his very crime, and commence his Hell here, in unquenchable fire. Truly no sin does more represent that state of horror to which it tends; it gives a man not only a certain Title, but an ample Earnest, pays him part in hand of those dismal wages. This was so well understood
good even by the Heathens that we see the Poets knew not how more Emphatically to describe the future torment of an envious and malicious person, than by the representation of his sin. Prometheus Vultur begins her quarry in this life; every malignant Thought, every sspiritful Wish preys upon his Heart that harbours it: every revengeful project puts him in the pangs of labour till it be brought forth; and when it is, it commonly rebounds so mischievously upon the Parent, that the birth seems like that of Agrippina when she bare Nero that murder'd her. And surely not only reason, but common sense, will say this is a state to be detested, and consequently must give its suffrage to those Laws of Meekness and Charity which are the only expedients to prevent it. Peace is deservedly reckoned among the highest blessings of communities, and sure it has a proportionable value, in every single member of those greater bodies, it being that which is indispensably requisite to the enjoying of any other good. A War we know interrupts at once all the profits and pleasures of a Nation: and this hostile Temper in a man's mind does the very same, and like Choler in the stomach, takes off all gust of the most delightful things, and so becomes a Hell in the pena damni, as well as that of Sense: and then how absurd an impatience is it, for men to think every the slightest injury from another insupportable, and yet heap such heavy pressures upon themselves, like froward Children roar out for the least touch from another hand, yet knock
knock and batter themselves without complaint: as if their only contention were, that they may be the sole Authors of their own Calamity. And that which adds yet more, if it be possible, to add to so vast a folly, is, that Revenge never repairs any Injury: if I have been reproacht or defam’d, ’tis not the wounding of my enemies body that will heal my fame, I may by that means help to spread the Libel by inviting many to enquire the cause of our quarrel: but that is no Medium to prove him a slanderer, the world being too well acquainted with the nature of revenge to imagine it an argument of his innocency that acts it: so far it is from being such, that it gives a most violent presumption of guilt, according to that notable Observation of the Historian, Convitia spreata exolescunt, si irascare agnita videntur. In like manner suppose me hurt in my body, Retaliation brings no balm to my fores: my pains abate not by his having the like or greater; nor would my Wounds fester the less though his should Gangrene. So if I am endammag’d in my goods, I may contrive to repay him that ill turn, and yet not recover my own los$; and generally the spiteful spoils that are made, are of that nature. ’Tis true, the Law may in some cases repair the injur’d person: but then that is owing to the Justice of the Law, not to the malice of the Plaintiffe: for he that sues upon the naked intuition of recovering his Right, without any aspect of Revenge on the invader, has as fully the benefit of the Law (and indeed none can innocently have it
it otherwise) and then to what serves the vindicative humor, what increment or advantage can the superaddition of his revenge bring him in? 'Tis sure in all these instances it often does the quite contrary: plunges him in farther troubles and dangers, and when all this is consider'd, we may certainly pronounce Christ's precept of Meekness, partakes as well of the Serpent as the Dove, is as well prudent as innocent; nor is this Conclusion at all shaken, by that Objection which men make from the danger of inviting more injuries and affronts by this tameness: for first suppose there were truth in it; that hazard could not balance the many certain mischiefs which have been evinc'd inseparably to follow the contrary temper: and it were certainly less penal to endure multitudes of light and transient Abuses, than those far more uneasie waies of Redress, which mens revenges suggest to them: and then 'twill be perfectly reasonable, of these two evils to chuse the less. As for the greater and more important violations, there are legal waies which may prove redress in some cases, or prevention in others: He that is slandered or impoverished, may take a course to clear his Innocence, or recover his Goods: he that is hurt or maim'd, though he is uncapable of reparations, yet the Law provides for his future security, by awarding such Penalties, as may discourage the Offender from repeating the violence: and to these aids, a man may resort with these Proviso's, first, that he abstract from all design of Revenge; and secondly, that the matter be
of Weight; and certainly he that by these legal means cannot be secur’d, can be much less so by any private attempt of his own: For he that despiseth the coercive power of Laws, will much more contemn the enmity of a single person. The only difficulty in this case is, when a state is in such a confusion that there is no lawful Judicature to appeal to, but that implies: so many sadder miseries, than the want of such a redress amounts to, that every man may patiently enough cast this into the heap of greater evils; and not consider that one pressure, when so much weightier calamity exacts his grief: But sure the Suspension of Law in this particular does no more qualifie a private person to be his own Revenger, than it invests him in any other part of Authority, and he may with as good right place himself on the Bench, and become a Judge in other mens causes, as thus become both Judge and Executioner in his own.

BUT in the last place, the ground of this objection seems weak and sandy; for that meekness is not the way to expose a man, generally speaking, to more suffering: ’tis possible indeed through the barbarity of some few insulting cowards, who love to vapour good cheap, that they may trample on those who give least resistance; but this is not the common bent of humane Nature, (which ought to be the measure in this case) we find men usually exasperated by Opposition, who are calm’d and appeas’d by Gentleness. Anger is not of the nature of that monstrous Fire the
the Historian tells us of, which nothing but blows could extinguish. It is the Observation of the wisest of Men, that a soft answer turneth away wrath, and mens Passions are like Bullets which batter the walls which stand inflexible, but fall harmlessly into Wool or Feathers; and I doubt not common experience will attest it, that none do generally fall under fewer of these storms than they, who are thus prepar’d to bear them. Let a meek and an angry person cast up their Accounts together, and compare the number of affronts and contumelies they have met with, and I believe the Odds will be as great, as between Sauls thousands and Davids ten thousands. ’Tis certain that the return made to the first injury provokes a new one; men being so partial to themselves, that he who receives a harm by way of Retaliation, never reflects on his own first guilt, but looks on it as a naked Injury, and so pursues his Revenge, which has again the same effect on the other, and so this wild-fire runs round, till it have set all in a flame; made the saddest vastations, not only in mens Minds, but their outward Concernments too, in the many fatal outrages, which these eager contentions occasion, all which would be avoided by a meek disregard of the first provocation: So that although some injuries may fall upon the Passive man, yet infallibly there would be no broils and quarrels, which are alone the great accumulators and multipliers of injuries; which alone demonstrates how unjustly Meekness is charg’d with so much as an accidental producti-
production of them; and vindicates that precept of Christ which has falk under so much, not only Cavil but Scorn; it appearing that to abstain from revenge, and refer the hazards of that to Gods providence (which is the importance of his command to turn the Cheek) is the greatest even moral Security against Violence, and so approves our Law-giver (in this so decrived particular) to be as well the wonderful Counsellour, as the Prince of Peace.

In the next place, if we weigh the precept of humility and lowliness in the balance of sober discourse, we shall certainly find it hold a just weight. Indeed Pride is nothing but Deceit, a meer cheat and delusion, and so every man can discern it in another, we there are able to trace the windings of this Serpent, and say this man thinks himself more wise, this more learned, a third more holy than he is: yet alas in our own breasts we discern not the Abuse, suffer him to perswade us what he but promis’d to our first Parents, that we are as Gods, something so super-excellent, that all must reverence and adore: And herein we take him at his word, never suspect these glorious Attributions may be no more than Complement or Flattery; or what is no less obvious, Derision and Scorn. To a considering man ’twould be a shrew’d presumption against whatever Pride suggests, that ’tis attended always by self-love, which is, as it were, the common fetter to all those cheats which circumvent and fool us: But there want not also more convincing proofs of its deceit and un sincerity. When e’re we overween and believe well of our
our selves, it is in contemplation of some imaginary or else real good; somewhat a Man has not, or somewhat that he has: If we do it upon the former account, that is undeniably a gross Delusion; a kind of deceptio visus, a filling the Eye with phantastick Aerial Images, which have no solid Being: And God knows, such Phasmes, such Apparitions are most of those excellencies which men applaud in themselves; things conjur'd up by the Magick of a strong imagination, and are only seen within that Circle in which the Enchanter stands: And though Satan be the grand Master of this black Art, yet his Pupils are now grown so dextrous, that he seldom needs to be call'd in; our own partialities and fondnesses to our selves, are abundantly sufficient for the purpose. But if in the second place we suppose the things to be really existent in us, yet Pride runs us upon an other error no less dangerous than the former, for it betrays us to mistake the true Owner of them, emboldens us to set our own mark upon those rich Wares, in whose acquirest we have not been so much as Factors; God is the one great Author and proprietor of all that is or can be valuable in us; to his Providence or his Grace we owe all the accomplishment of our outward or inward man, and though he allows us the use and benefit of them, yet the Glory is a special Royalty, which (as the Gold or Silver Mines of a Nation) is reserved to his Crown, an incommunicable piece of his Regality. And how wofully does our Pride befoul us, when it brings us in such false Inventories.
ries of our goods, makes us dream our selves rich by anothers wealth; like Children that call every thing theirs which looks splendidly, or the mad Athenian celebrated by Horace for his happy phrensie, that resolv'd all the Ships and Wares his own that came into the Cities harbour: But how more sadly does it betray us, when it thus puts us upon the invasion of his propriety, who is not as the impotent Monarchs of the earth, unable to assert his own Rights, but can certainly Vindicate himself to our Confusion, against whom no rebellion can be any longer prosperous than he willingly permits it, and who has solemnly avowed he will not give his glory to another: And when our Pride makes us thus both ridiculous and miserable, when it seduces us not only into the folly of Children and extravagancies of Lunaticks, but at once into the guilt of bold, and punishment of improperous Rebels: Certainly Reason can never become its Advocate, or put in any demur to that Sentence which excludes so treacherous a guest out of mens hearts; which is the sole aim of those laws of humility which Christ has given us.

N O R will the Precepts of Temperance and Purity find any worse doom at this Bar, the contrary Vices being such indignities and contumelies unto humane nature, as can never find any countenance from this Supreme part of it: 'Tis the prerogative of our Reason, that it discriminates us from, and elevates us above beasts: Nor can it ever be brought to resign this so glorious a privilege, assent to the admission of those brutish appetites
petites which would over-run the Soul, level its superior with its inferior faculties; confound the distinction of Rational and Sensitive, and in a word, render the Beast so ravenous as to eat up the Man. Yet thus it is in those fordid Sins of Intemperance and Uncleanliness, unless perhaps they are so much worse than Beastial that I wrong the generality of the Brutes in the comparison, it being only some few of them, the very Beasts of the Beasts that are guilty of any such Excesses, for generally their Appetites do not transgress the regular ends of Nature, they know no such diſeafe as Surſetting, but eat to satisfie Hunger, and couple at such feaſons as best tend to preserve their kind; and then 'tis to be consider'd how base, how degenerous a deſcent it is for us to stoop, not only below our own nature, but theirs; what aſſolitude these vices reduce us to, that not so much as the nobler fort of Beasts will bear us company, we must wander upon the mountains to court a Goat, we must rake the mire to find a Swine, before we can furnish our felves with any Associates: And sure all this so open an Hostility against Reaſon, that it can by no means be her intereſt to abet it. Ask her whether she would be preſt to death with loads of meat, whether she would be drownd in floods of drink, whether she would be suffocated with the noifome vapours of putrefaction and rottenneſſ, and the answer she gives to these tells you her fenee of Gluttony, Drunkenneſſ and Uncleanneſſ: Alas she suffers from them the most barbarous outrages, is invaded not only
in her Authority, but her very Being, and therefore even upon the so celebrated principle of self-preservation, must muster all her forces to vindicate the injury and defend herself. And then certainly Christ's Commands of Sobriety and Purity must needs be entertain'd with all Alacrity and Gladness, as an accession of strength to her party, an aid to assist her in that just and necessary War.

And as Reason thus pronounces against the sins of the Flesh, so in the next place does it certainly against those of the World. Mammon himself will not be able to bribe this Judge, but when Christ's Precept of Charity and liberality comes before this Tribunal, it will infallibly be not only acquitted but magnified and applauded, be call'd from the Bar to the Bench, Commission'd like the Jews, Heft. 9. To bear rule over them that hated them, to dissipate at once the wealth and the covetousness of the Worldling; have the Keys put into its hand, that it may have free access to his Coffers; this certainly must be the event of this trial, for 'tis confessedly the part of Reason to dispose every thing to those uses which are most proper and advantageous, such as may bring in most real benefit to the owner. Now what other employment of wealth is there (after competent accommodations are provided) which can contribute to a man's Felicity? If it be laid out like the Rich man in the Gospel in delicious Fare, or Purple and fine Linnen; certainly it makes no least approach towards it. First, for excessive Fare, if a man be not excessive too in the eating,
eating, what does he enjoy of it? Meat has no natural propriety to the Eye, and can make no impressions of pleasure there; but if he be voracious and intemperate, 'tis then so far from making him happy, that it dejects him into the forlorn condition, even now mentioned, sets him at odds with his reason, his very manhood, nay, I may add with his sense too; the displacencies that he receives by the consequences of his excess, far outweighing all that is grateful in it. This is well describ'd by the Ws. man, Ecclus. 31. 19.

A S for the gayety of Apparel that can never in sober judging be thought any advantage, 'tis that which only Youth and Folly puts a value upon, and as we out-grow the one, so we do the other: All that is convenient in Cloaths is as well, nay, better provided for without it: A rich suit is only heavier, not warmer than a plain; and it is a kind of prodigy to see how heavily vanity, which is in its self so light, sits upon some men; who are content even to make themselves Porters, so their Tailors may lay on the burthen: And thus in many other instances the fineness of Cloaths destroys the ease, so that it often helps men to pain, but can never rid them of any; the body may be languishing and infirm under the most splendid cover: Herods royal apparel secures him not from being eaten with Worms; and Lazarus his Ulcers would have been never the less painful, though they had been wrap't in Dives his fine Linnen.

O R if the Wealth be laid out on any other part of that the world calls greatness, as an Honourable
retinue, Troops of attendants, and the like; the
return will be no less empty: Multitudes of un-
profitable Servants being a great burthen; but no
degree of advantage; alas does my Meat relish
ever the better, because my Table is surrounded
with Waiters; or when I go out, does my train of
followers make the Air the more refreshing to me,
does not rather the Dust they raise make it less, an-
noy and stifle me? As for matter of business, the
number of Servants tends rather to hinder than
advance it; daily experience attesting, that in
crowds of domesticks every one of them thinks his
idleness will be hid: The care of doing and the
guilt of omitting is transferr'd from one to anot-
er, and none has any farther thought, than how
he may quit himself either of the burthen or the
blame; so that upon the final account all that
accrues to a Master by the greatness of his family is
the encrease of his care in the regiment of it: A
great deal of vigilance and circumspection being
requir'd, to keep it in any tolerable order, and if
it be not so kept, his House becomes a wilderness,
and himself a prey to the Beasts he feeds: The li-
centiousness of the Servant redounding more
ways than one to the damage of the Master.

If we should now proceed more minutely to
every other single expence which vanity and pride
suggests, we should certainly find the like suc-
cess of our inquest; nothing of real felicity, but
on the contrary the vanity so interwoven and in-
corporate with vexation of Spirit, that 'tis impos-
sible to sever them: So that thus to employ ones
riches
riches is rather to suffer than enjoy them; but if we suppose a man on the other side such a Reverer of his wealth, that he dares not employ it at all, unless it be at the bank, for the bringing in of more, that keeps it as men do beasts reserv’d for breed, manumit them from all work but that of propagation. Such a person is surely of all others, the farthest from receiving any advantage by it: he converts it from a Servant into a Tyrant, and sad experience shows us the calamity of such a transmutation. It has been always held the severest treatment of Slaves and Malesfactors damnare ad Metalla, force them to dig in Mines; now this is the Covetous mans lot, from which he is never to expect a release, as being his own remorseless and more than Egyptian task-master: and the parallel holds too, in the gainlesness as well as laboriousness of the work; Those wretched creatures buried in Earth and darkness were never the richer for all the Ore they digg’d, no more is the insatiate Miser, he has no power to dispose of any of his acquests; and though he calls them his, yet alack he possesseth them no otherwise than a Prisoner does his Goal, a Mad-man his Chains, they are only Instruments of his Thralldom, and the getting more serves only to add more weight to his Shackles; and certainly Wealth can be no way worse dispos’d, than thus to buy so base a Servitude.

AND now since neither the luxurious spending, nor the covetous keeping can advantage us one step towards any thing that can be call’d happy;
happy; but do on the contrary engage us upon toil and misery: Wealth seems to be a very oppressive burden, such as we can neither cast off, nor safely bear; and truly so it is till Charity comes into our Aid; which as the proper Element of Wealth, renders that light which gravitates elsewhere, and as the Elixir unto Metals transforms them into Gold, stamps purity and price upon them: by freely giving, endows the Donor with what ever he beffows; enriches him, and what is more, enriches wealth itself. Without this Art of using, and disposing our estates, we are those Indians who change their Gold for Glass: that silly Fisher-man, who having found a Mass of Ambergreece, employed it to the liquoring of his boots; are foolish to the height of Midas in the Fable, who being promised to have what ever he would wish, made his demand that every thing he toucht might presently be Gold, and run the hazard that he did of being starvd by our unhappy affluence: men say indeed that Gold by preparation becomes a sovereign Cordial, but certainly it never does rejoice the heart so much as when Charity is the Chymift, the poor mans hand is the best Limbeck to extract this Magiftery and tincture, the flames of love will really perform those Miracles, they of the Furnace boast of, and would they employ themselves in this laboratory, they would find the omnipotent efficacy they dream of, sooner in this way of dissipating than in all their Arts, or rather Fancies of generating Gold. 'Tis certainly a most generous and enlivening pleasure which re-
fuilts from a *reasonable liberality*: When I see a man struggling with want, his very spirit as well as body stooping under the pressure; if I then relieve him, the *humane nature* within me which is common to us both, does by a kind of *Sympathetic* motion exult and raise up its self, but if I have any piety that must do it much more; for as the former shew'd me my own image in my poor brother, so this shews me Gods; and how transcendent a satisfaction must it be, to have thus rescued him who bears so divine an impress, to have paid some part of *gratitude* to my Creator for my own being, by making my self in my low sphere the giver or preserver of that life, which he first breath'd into another. *This, and this only is the way to raise a felicity out of wealth*; and surely since the attaining of happiness, is the one grand pursuit of our *Reason*, that must even before it has subjected its self to the Faith of Christ, give assent to the *Prudence* of his Command in this as well as the former instances.

*But* there remains a *Precept* of our Saviour allied to this; which seems by no means to comport and hold a correspondence with the dictates of right *Reason*: the taking up the cross, and suffering for righteousness sake; which contradicts the fundamental law of self preservation; and the great end of being, felicity and happiness. But this *suggestion*, how specious soever it appear, is utterly fallacious; for 'tis no good consequence, that because *Reason* aims at our being happy, therefore it forbids us all voluntary sufferings, since
that the case may be so set, that such a suffering may be the fairest medium left us to our happiness. 'Tis a known rule that of two evils, the least is to be chosen; and the election of the lesser ill, though it be no absolute, yet is a comparative good; and its attainment as far as the necessity of our affairs permit, is our felicity: and reason can provide no farther. Now this is the estate of the present instance: two evils are propos'd, a Natural and a Moral; the Natural, though in its self to be averted, yet much inferior to the Moral, and then Reason soon resolves the Dilemma, that the Natural is to be chosen: all that can be question'd in this affair, is whether Reason define the moral evil to be the greater, but this can bear no long dispute with any who consider but the Nature of Reason, which being seated in the upper soul of a man, is no way concern'd in those ills, which make their impression on the sensitive part, but Moral ills strike higher, invade the mind, cloud the reason; nay, often depose it from its regiment, as is too frequently exemplified in the force of vicious habits, and therefore by how much our reason is superior to our sense, so much are those to be accounted the greatest evils, which assault that nobler part of us. This certainly will now be the determination of Reason, if she may be permitted the freedom of her vote: for thus was it formerly where she bare the most sway, and uncontrouled rule: The wisest and best considering of humane, as well as divine Authors having establisht it as an undoubted Aphi-
risin, that honest is to be preferr'd before both gainful and pleasant: so that nothing renders a man so deplorable, as that which violates his integrity; nay they have generally gone higher, exhorted men to become voluntiers in vertues warfare, not to suspend their sufferings till they were forc't out by the competition of a crime; but offer themselves free oblations. Thus to suffer for ones Countrey or ones Friend, was thought so worthy, so heroick a thing, that noble and ingenuous spirits were amorous of it: and it was so stated a case that Epictetus forbids a man, on such an occasion to consult with the Oracle, whether he should do it or no, it being necessary to be done, what ever ill success or ruine be predicted, ὅτι ὃν ἱκέται οἱ κατανικοὶ, ὃ ἀπεκτείνει πλῆθος σῶματος, ἥ δυνα, and how serious they were in these perswasions, some of them have practically evidenced, as having suffered very inconsiderable pressures, nay death its self rather than they would bow to the prædominant vices of their Age, or omit the occasion of eminent vertue. Aristides would be just in spight of Ostracism. Regulus obseravant of his Oath made to a faithless Enemy, though Death and Torment attended the Performance. Lycurgus to perpetuate to his Citizens the benefit of his good Laws, as subtly designs perpetual Banishment unto himself, as others use to contrive for Honour and for Empire there. Codrus redeems the safety of his Army with his own Death: Curtius makes himself a Martyr for his Countrey, and Socrates in the strictest sense becomes one for his God: laid down his life in attestation
testation of that most fundamental truth and leading article of Faith, οίκεν εἰς ἑναίδην, the belief of one God. And yet we find not that those Times, which were so ill as to shed his Blood, were yet so bad as to defame his Memory, he's not recorded either as fool or hypocondriack; nor have his sufferings struck him out of the list of Philosophers: but he stands there the more conspicuously in those bloody Characters; and however the credit of the Oracle may be otherwise disparaged, it never was on this account, that it had declared Socrates to be the wisest of Men. And yet both he and the rest, had either none, or very imperfect confus'd apprehensions of a future reward, when they engaged on present Suffering, and death its self: So that we might be tempted to imagine, that some strange change and transmutation has now befalln Vertue, that it has put on so much a distant appearance from its ancient self, that the accession of new obligations, and higher hopes, should absolve, avert and utterly dispirit us; insomuch that what was Constancy in a Heathen, should be Folly in a Christian. Certainly this is a Metamorphosis of our own making, we look through deforming optick glasses, such as our Avarice or effeminate Sensualities convey into our hands, which give not only strange and gaitly, but withall ridiculous shapes; but if we would consult our Reason, that would shew us things in their proper forms. Vertue and Reason are both the same they were so many hundred years ago, and where the Object and
Chap.5. from Carnal Consideration.

the faculty admit of no mutation, 'tis impossible there should really be any such variable appearance. If Socrates were so zealous for the one God, that he chose rather to relinquish his life, than to consent to, or but connive at the profane rivalry of Polytheism, and yet be no Fool; certainly we may as sucurly transcribe his copy: and though the particular Article may not be the same; yet if it be any thing wherein vertue is concern'd, the cause is no less warrantable: he that suffers for a practical Point, is no more a prodigal of his pains, than he that lays them out on the highest Speculative. The Commandments may have as good Martyrs as the Creed; for the same Authority has requir'd our Obedience to the one, that exacts our Faith of the other. Nor is there any necessity of Heathen or Jewish Tribunal, to convert our sufferings to Martyrdom; we may receive that crown from the hands of those that own the same faith with us. Those that say with the most seeming vehemence let the Lord be glorified, may yet hate and cast out their brethren for his name sake, Isa. 66. 5. He that tells me I fear not God so much as he, may yet persecute me for honouring the King more; and my Blood pour'd out upon that account, becomes an acceptable Sacrifice to him, who has commanded my Subjection to the Higher Powers. He who calls Christ his Head, may yet rend and tear his Body; and if I love its communion so well, as to take my share in the Massacre, I approach toward that dignity and comfort S. Paul so glories
in, of filling up that which is behind, of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his bodies sake which is the Church, Col. 1. 24. He that mulcts the more Indeliberate Oaths, may yet enjoyn a solemn Perjury: and if I chuse he should rather make havoc of my Goods than my Conscience; my Spoils become not more monuments of his rapine, than my piety; they plead my Innocence before him who will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain: and how profanely soever my Wealth is dispos’d by him that seizes it: ‘tis accounted to me as cast into the Treasury; and so ’tis possible I may at once vie with the Rich-men in the greatness of the oblation, and with the poor Widow too in that higher circumstance of its being all. In sum, the opportunities of Martyrdom are not restrained to those points wherein Christians differ from Jews or Heathens, but extend to all wherein we Christians differ from our rule, the commands of our blessed Master. If I suffer for my Constancy to any of them, I have certainly my place in Gods Martyrology, as well as if I had falkn under any of the ten Persecutions. God was not so partial to the primitive Christians as to allow them the Monopoly and enclosrure of that dignity; if they as our elder Brethren had a double portion, yet there is still a child’s part left, for every one of us enough to testify our Legitimation, and secure us from the brand of Bastardy, Heb. 12. ’twas S. Pauls indefinite Affirmation, and all times since have born witness to the truth of it. That all that will live godly in Christ
Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Some un-
fashionable Vertues there have been in every Age, which have whetted, if not the Swords, yet the Tongues of men: and those that happen not to fall under Abels persecution, must not hope to escape that of Isaac: if they meet with no Cain to kill, they will undoubtedly with an Ishmael to mock them. But in what dress soever our Sufferings appear, a good Cause diverts them of their frightful shape, pulls off the ugly vizard, and shews us a Beauty that lay there conceal'd; and that not only to the Eye of our Faith but our Reason too. Fortitude was a Vertue before Christianity had a name in the world; and the very instinct of our Nature whispers within us, the baseness of being baffled out of a Truth or Vertue; yet such a despicable Coward, is every man that wants this passive Valour, without which the active must find another name, Rage or Phrensie it may be, in some perhaps natural Courage, or sanguinenees of temper in others, but true Valor it is not, if it knows not as well to suffer as to do. That mind is truly great, and only that which stands above the power of all extrinſick violence; which keeps its self a distinct principality independent upon the outward man, so that it is not subjected to its fate, that can be free, when the body is fast bound in Misery and Iron, sound and healthy when that groans under torture, and is never more strong and vital, than when that languishes and expires; and this is so desirable, so transcendent a privilege, as Reason cannot but aspire to: and this is it
it to which this excellent Precept of Christ advances us when we thus suffer for righteousness sake, our Minds are all light what darkness over involve our exterior part, and is like Gosben exempt and secure, when that falls under all the Plagues of Egypt.

AND what reason thus embraces for its self, 'tis not imaginable that it should reject, because 'tis richly clad, that the Race should seem the more tedious, because there is a Crown within view; or that the glorious Rewards our Christianity proposes to our constancy, should be esteemed as Menaces and Threats, Temptations to desert or turn Apostates. No certainly, Reason cannot dispute, and make an Inference so utterly Ilogical, but will rather use it as an enforcement of its former Conclusion, establish it the more firm and immovable by having the Basis thus enlarged, having Reward added to Vertue; and Happiness entail'd on Duty. If in the competition between two Evils, Reason pronounce the lesser eligible: Much more will she resolve, when the contest is 'twixt good and evil, the greatest Evil and the greatest Good; and chuse that Excellence which though Superlative in its self, is more endear'd and heightned by Comparison. If I violate my Reason, if I renounce Vertue, though bare and naked, then surely I do it yet more when she is thus accomplisht and adorn'd; when beautified on purpose to allure the eye and take the Heart. When over and above the positive donation of Happiness, she adds a rescue and release from Misery, and equally
equally obliges by the distant prospects of a Hell and Heaven. So that not only the Gospel promises, but even menaces and threats become a Weapon in the hand of Reason, when she stands upon her guard, and fights for Virtue. If present its self as my Protector from a temporal Calamity, Reason will tell me hence, that the profer is insidious, it exposes me to that which is infinitely worse than what it pretends to save me from; and that not only in the former respect of Guilt, but in that of Punishment also. What a cheat is it to keep me out of the Dungeon, and send me to the bottomless Pit, to save me from a temporary Fire, and thereby mark me out as Fuel for eternal Flames; to take me out of their hands who can kill the Body, to put me into his who can destroy both Soul and Body in Hell. Reason tells me I am to abhor the Turpitude and foulness of a Crime; and it tells me too, I am to dread the Misery and Smart of it also. It would not have me wallow in the mire, though it were safe, much less when it is full of Asps and Vipers, which will infallibly sting me to death. It cries out with Joseph, How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it cries out with Esay too, Who can dwell with everlasting Fire? In a word, by the domestick native light of the Candle of the Lord set up within our breast, it shews the ugliness of Sin; and shews it too by the affrightful dismal blaze of those unquenchable flames it kindles: Thus by the different Arguments of terror and endearment, of love and fear, of interest and duty, Reason afferts this scorn'd,
scorn'd, decried, neglected Precept: Take her as meer Paynim abstracting from the expectation of reward or punishment; or take her as a Proselyte to Christ, contemplating his promises and threats, if there be Honesty or if there be Religion, in either instance the Soul must still conclude, that Affliction is to be chosen rather than Iniquity.

And if it be reasonable thus to resist even unto blood striving against sin, if Reason blow the Trumpet, sound the Alarm to this solemn War, then sure it prescribed something of Martial discipline to prepare and dispose us for those Combats. No expert General will bring a company of raw untrain'd men into the Field, but will by little bloodless skirmishes instruct them in the manner of the Fight, teach them the ready management of their Weapons; and of this sort are all those voluntary Self-denials, and lighter austerities which Christianity commend to us, which become necessary not simply for themselves, but as instruments towards a higher end. The Military fame the Romans had in the world was achieved by the exact discipline of their Camps, ensuring their Souldiers to labour and hardship. And, as Tacitus tells us, when a long Peace had slackned the reins of discipline, that active Humour, which was wont to be spent on the Enemy, recoil'd, and flew in the face of their Commanders, begat nothing but Mutinies and disorders; and certainly 'twill be the same in our Christian warfare, if we abandon our selves to Ease and Sloth, never attempt to wrestle with a difficulty, but
but keep our selves in the posture the Israelites Camp was in at Moses's descent from the Mount, eating and drinking, and rising up to play; our appetites will grow licentious and insolent, past our controle and guidance. If we treat them with such an indulgence as is recorded of David to Adoniah, never say so much as why hast thou done this; 'tis not to be expected but they will Rebel though a Solomon sit in the Throne. For alas, how is it imaginable, that he who never denied himself any the smallest or most trifling pleasure he had a mind to, shall on a sudden deny all in the gross; he who has projected many, but never wav'd one Opportunity of shewing his Wit, how shall he find in his heart to become a Fool for Christ. He that has gratified his Palate with all that pretends to be gultful to it, how shall he descend to the bread of Affliction; or he that never tried to miss a Meal, how will he entertain the unwelcome contrariety of not knowing where to get one. He who has never abated any thing of the utmost Pomp he could reach, how will he brook the want of necessaries; or from his House feil'd with Cedar, and painted with Vermilion, be content with his Saviours Lot, not to have where to lay his head. In short, how shall he who never could pare off any of the Excrescencies, the meer Vanities and Gaieties of an estate, part with it all; or lay down that life for Christ's sake, from which he never subtracted one smallest Pleasure. Suffering is a thing to which the sensitive part of us has an Innate Aversion, and Aversions are not to be
be subdued at once, but by gentle and eafie degrees; and custom muft have introduc'd a second nature, before that original part of our temper will be supplanted. As 'tis therefore highly reasonable for every man to aspire to the Dominion of himself, to keep his Affections within his own Power and Command; and though he have no Interest at all in the greater, enjoy a sovereignty in the lefer World: So in order to that, 'tis as reasonable to discipline and tame them by some voluntary Acts of restraint, like Hannibal, sometimes to paß by that water to which his thirsts do most importunately invite him. To try by little skirmishes what strength and skill he has, before he runs the fatal hazard of a Battel. To deny himself in the lefer instances, that so when the greater come, they may not have the disadvantage of Uncouthness and perfect Strangeness to inhanfe their Difficulty; and this must certainly be acknowledg'd reasonable, or else we must condemn almost all the receiv'd Rules of humane transactions, which generally have this for their ground-work, that men muft pass through the first Principles and lowest Rudiments of any Art, before they can arrive at its height. Men serve Apprentifhips to Trades, and think not themselves the first day Masters of their craft; we advance in Learning by leisurable and flow steps, and skip not from the A B C to the Metaphysicks: And certainly the skill of Christian suffering is not the easiest of all Trades or Sciences; but will require some time of Initiation, many repeated Trials and Effays to bring us into an
an acquaintance with it: To convince our understandings, and persuade our Wills, that to lose our lives is to save it; and to be faithful unto the death, is the best way to gain a Crown of life.

IF I should now proceed to every other Precept of Christ, and examine it by the Rules of sober Discourse, we should infallibly find them so rational as besits the Laws of him who is the eternal Reason, but having made these Essays in some of the most oppos'd Instances, I shall presume these may pass as the Representatives of all the rest; and the acquittal these have receiv'd at the Tribunal of Reason virtually involve them all.

AND now since both Conscience and Reason have pronounce'd the same of Christ's Laws that Pilate did of his Person, that they find in them no fault at all; methinks Judges should have the same privilege that is allowed to private Men, that in the mouth of two every word may be established: But if any man be so scrupulous as not to rest in the sentence of less than a Triumvirate, let him in God's name bring in a Third, and when his vicious Appetites (which were before excepted to as parties) are set aside, he cannot be distracted in his Choice, there being but One more that can possibly be call'd in, and that is Experience, which being a Judge that himself must create, he can not fear it should be prejudic'd against him; so that he may entertain full confidence of its Integrity: And no less may he do of its Ability, this being the most infallible of humane determinations, such as often corrects the error of Speculati-
on; and shews us the vanity of concluding what is practicable in matter from being demonstrated in the Scheme or Diagram: The guidance of an illiterate Traveller in the way that he has gone, being far more useful to a Stranger in his journey, than the best Maps and most exact Descriptions of Geographers. But then it must be indeed Experience, and not only some slight and transient Essay. We call not him an experienc'd Physician that has had one Patient, or a Lawyer that has pleaded one Cause. Experience is the daughter of Time, and is made up of many successive Trials, as a Habit is of multiplied Acts: And to the Verdict of such an Experience Christ's Precepts will not fear to stand; let a man put himself into a settled course of Obedience to them, abstain so long from all prohibited Commissions, as may wear out the rank Taste wherewith his Palate has been season'd, and leave it free and disengag'd, and then infallibly he will find such a savour and sweetness in those virtues, that he will wonder how he came to be cheated into an opinion of their being bitter and unsavoury; and will have no appetite to return to his Onions and his Garlick after he has thus been fed with Quails and Manna. That this will be the event of this experiment there is all ground of certainty, and when the trial is once made, so irrefragable an evidence will follow, that it will not leave a man the power to doubt: Only in the interim so much belief is requisite, as may let him in to the demonstration, make him set to that Practice from whence he is to reap all this: And if any
any man be so much a Sceptick, as not to have faith enough to put him on the adventure, I should at once for his conviction and punishment, wish but that he might a while extend the same distrust to Affairs of common life: Let him doubt whether his meat be savory and refuse to eat; whether his clothes be warm and so go naked; whether his house be firm and lye without doors: and when he has a while thus smarted under his own discipline, let him but apply the wisdom he has thus bought to the present instance, and it will unquestionably resolve his scruple; or if he be still too impatient to attend the ripening of his own Experience, let him make use of other mens. Let him appeal to any who has inured his neck to Christ's yoke, and ask him whether it be galling and pinching, or whether it be not easy, nay gracious. Let him ask one who by repeated restraints hath subdued and tamed his natural rage or pride, how he likes the change, and undoubtedly he will tell him, 'tis no less happy than a calm is after the noise and danger of a violent Tempest, or the ease of a broken Imposthume, after the painful gathering and filling of it. Let him ask one who has divested himself of all his sensual sins, whether by their absence he now discern not their necessity, and he will tell them, 'tis but the same the primitive Christians had of those Beast's skins wherein their persecutors had clad them, whose only use was by deforming to fit them for devouring. Let him come to the converted Mammonist, and ask him which he finds the better Treasury, his own Coffer or
or the poor man's Bowels, and he will be able to assure him, he is become much richer by having less in store. Let him come to the devout Ascetic, and ask him what taste he finds in Daniel's unpleasant bread, Dan. 10. 3. and he will tell him infinitely more than ever he did in Dives delicious fare, that cloy'd and surfeited the flesh, this nourishes and supports the spirit. Nay finally, let him come to him that is actually suffering for righteousness sake, and he will exemplifie to him the Beatitude which Christ has pronounce'd of such: Let him visit Paul and Silas in the prison and he shall hear them singing; Peter and the other Apostles after their stripes and beating, and he shall find them rejoicing: And Stephen amidst the Throng of his murderers and Tempest of their stones, and he shall observe him overlooking them all, and entertaining himself with a more pleasant prospect, seeing the Heavens open'd and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and why should not other mens successes animate our endeavours here? In temporal affairs it seldom misses to do it. The Trophies of Miltiades at Marathon disturb'd Themistocles his sleeps, till he had rais'd unto himself and Countrey more glorious ones at Salamine: Cæsar while he views Alexander's Image upbraids his own slackness with the memory of his conquests, and inspirits himself to great attempts. He that returns with a rich fraught from a new-found-Land encourages others to Trade thither also: Nay, even a beggar speeds not well at an Hospitable door, but he is able to send scholes up-
on the like hopes: Much less does he that has found a treasure need to use his Oratory to invite partakers; and why then should those few that have made this more precious discovery be forc'd to monopolize it, as not being able to draw in partners; yet God knows, thus it is, those that hear of no rarity but they long for it, as David after the waters of Bethlehem, can yet hear the same David cry out, how sweet the Lord is! and yet have no curiosity to taste it: Those whom the very name of Liberty so captivates, that they sacrifice all that is really valuable to that Chimera; can hear the Apostle speak of the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and yet like hardened Gally-slaves despise the Manumission. Those that hunt after pleasures till the very pursuit become an unsupported pain, can be told of those rivers of pleasures wherewith God offers to quench their thirst, and yet inflict on themselves the rich man's torment, and deny so much as to dip the tip of their finger toward the cooling their own flames. Good God what strange infatuation is this, that while there is so much of vicious envy in the world, there should be nothing of vertuous emulation: That mens heat and vigour should all spend its self in childish pursuits, and leave them thus cold and stupid to their great and serious concernments. And what remains to him that ponders this Epidemick folly, but to breath out Moses's Wish; O that men were wise; or if that be too hopeless a vote, O that men were not so destructively foolish; that their rashness and Error might be confin'd to their
their lower interests: And as fools are treated, be kept from dealing in things of consequence; that they would not govern their Souls by such an absurd kind of managery, as they will not trust with the meanest of their outward concerns. And if this might but be obtain'd, if this fatal Oscitancy which has benumm'd and frozen them were but cast off, they would then from the report of the good Land be animated to their journey; and rather chuse to make the concurrent Testimonies of others arguments to encourage them, than leave them as Hand-writings to appale, or Witnesses to condemn them. And he that shall thus borrow other mens experience with this design of copying it out, and lays it as a foundation for his own, thereby possesseth himself of one of the greatest advantages of the communion of Saints; kindles himself at their fire till he grows bright and high as it; combines his flame with theirs, and so encreases the Ardors of them both; follows Example till himself grows exemplary, and in one Act receives and gives. But he that thus sets out, must remember, that it is more than the Journey of one day he has to go; he must not think (as I said before) that every little superficial attempt is that Experience which he is in quest of: He that thus phantsies will be expos'd to a very dangerous deceit, for 'tis sure there is in all habits such a force, that they are not to be disposset, but by a contrary violence, and therefore he that has been under the power of any vicious custom, enters at first into a state of hostility, has such a tough opposition,
as rather finds him **Work** than **Pleasure**: Now if he shall upon this first Essay pronounce, he is like to pass a very **unjust sentence**: Let him fight on a while till he have got some ground, and then though the **War** afforded him **little** pleasure, the **Victory** will yield him **much**. Every repeated defeat he gives his Adversary will be a new **triumph** to him, and what the **Romans** courted as so great a Dignity he may every day **enjoy**. But then as he advances farther to the completing of his **victories**, so he does of his **Pleasures** too: when his irregular **appetites** are so subdued, that they rarely make **insurrection**, this is such a state of **tranquillity** as gives him leisure to discern, and enjoy the delights of Christian vertue, and will teach him to reproach the highest **Panegyrick** he ever heard of it as flat and imperfect: so infinitely will he find it exceed the utmost **description**, that he will say with the **Queen of Sheba**, *the one half was not told him*. This is the rich prize which they shall obtain that **run** the race, but it is not awarded to the **first step**; and hence it is so many fail of it, that when they find the uneasiness which attends the breaking off a **custom**; this is such a **Gyant**, a son of **Anak**, as turns them back discourag'd from the **Canaan** they went to view. But alas this discovers how small a stock of Resolu- lution they carried out with them; for where men set out with **heart** and **appetite**, 'tis not such little **difficulties** that will dismay them: if it be but their **sports** they are engag'd in, it serves to deceive the sense of many uneasinesses, nay often **dangers**,
dangers, he that is but in chase of a filly Hare is so keen upon it, that he feels not the weariness of a whole days motion, and if he meet with a hedge in his way will rather leap it with hazard than be diverted from his Game. But 'tis sure in their sins they suffer far greater hardships without discouragement. The puny drunkard is not disheartened by the first qualm, but repeats his excesses till he have overcome his queasiness. The cast Litigant fits not down with one cross verdict, but recommences his suit, passes it through all Courts, and considers not his own pains, so he may either weary or force the other out of his right. The Unclean person falls not out with his sin, how sadly soever it hath macerated him, but steps out of the hot-house into the Stews, and shall men be so indefatigable in their pursuits of Infelicity, buy one Torment with another, and drive on the year in a circle of such woful Traffick, and shall vertue and pleasure be thought not worth the smallest labour? Can they keep themselves in a perpetual contention with their ease, their reason, and their God; and can they not endure a short combate with a sinful custom, which if it have some uneasiness, yet its both infinitely short of what they have suffered in the contrary compliance, and besides carries its remedy in its hand: For if the Difficulty arise only (as doubtless it does) from the confirm’dness of the Habit, every Act of resistance as it weakens the Habit, so it abates the Difficulty. It is therefore a most unreasonable inference, from the trouble of the first opposition,
tion, to conclude the Impossibility of the future; for if the first were but troublesome and not im-
possible, the second will have yet less of the
trouble, and so be yet farther remov’d from im-
posibility, and the third than the second, and so
on till the difficulty vanish and disappear. And
if men would but assume such a moderate courage,
as but to keep the field, and not to run away upon
the first gun-shot, they would soon find how im-
potent Assailants they had to deal with, who can
never subdue any man by strength, who is not first
Emasculated by his own fears. Let us therefore
to shun the reproach of so dishonourable a Defeat
awake and rouse our selves, put us in a posture of
defence: And Satan, who is as cowardly as any
thing in the world but we, will as St. James as-
sures us, fly from us. Let us upbraid our selves
with our unseasonable hardiness and resolution in
our impieties, till we have chang’d the scene,
grow impatient of those servile drudgeries, and
ambitious of these honourable adventures. And to
animate us the more, let us fix our eyes upon the
glorious prize of the victory; and that not only
the final and eternal in future Glory; but that
Intermediate which offers its self as the earnest of
That, the calm and pleasure of a conquering pie-
ty. The Roman story tells us that the Flavia-
nists had so posseted their minds with the spoils of
Vienna, that they grew insensible of all dangers in
the way to it, and even forc’t their General Anto-
nio to put them upon those hazards, which his
wiser conduct would have declin’d. And why
should
should not our more worthy Hopes excite as great an earnestness? why should not we have as great an Appetite to the pillaging of Satans Camp, plundering that infernal Magazein of all its Engins both of Mine, and battery, its stores of arms and Ammunition, leaving him naked and defenceless, unable to make any impression upon us? and this he certainly does, who by a steddy practice of vertue, comes to discern the contemptibleness of those baits wherewith he allures us. He that seeks only the praise of God, looks upon the applause of men as a blast of Air, which possibly may demolish and destroy a glorious building, but cannot give foundation or materials to it; and therefore will not seek for, or solicit its unhappy courtships. He who desires to be great only in the Kingdom of Heaven, laughs at the busie Aspirings to secular greatness, and wonders at the force of that enchantment, which engages men with so extreme toil, to climb a tottering pinnacle, where the standing is uneasy, and the fall deadly. He that covets to be rich towards God, and has inur'd his eyes to that divine Splendor which results from the beauty of holiness, is not dazled with the glittering shine of Gold: considers it as a vein of the same earth he treads on, and despises that absurd partiality whereof the Prophet accuses Idolaters, to employ one part to the meanest uses, and fall down to the other. In a word, he that looks on the eternal things that are not seen, will through those Opticks exactly discern the vanity, and inconsiderableness of all that is visible
visible and temporary; and so will be equally unmoved with the terrors or allurements of the world, and neither frightened nor flatter'd out of his duty. And he that is thus fortified discourages and wearies out his Tempter, deprives him not only of weapons but of heart too, and drives even Satan himself to desperation; and when the Enemy is thus beat out of the field, there remains nothing but to enjoy the victory. When that reluctance and resistance of the corrupt Appetite is so weakned and subdued that a man acts with freedom, he acts with pleasure too. A heart thus set at liberty, alacriously runs the ways of God's commandments: it faring with it as with a Patient that is prescrib'd exercise for health; who at first perhaps finds lassitude and trouble in it: but when the obstructions are remov'd, and nature disburthened of those noxious humors that encumbr'd her, that which was at first his task, becomes his recreation. For we are not to think, that it is any innate harshness in piety that renders the first essays of it unpleasant, that is owing only to the indisposedness of our own Hearts. We are in the Prophets phrase bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke; and if we be galled and fretted by it, 'tis because of our impatient strivings, and irregular motions under it, the yoke is really no heavier than it is afterwards when it is more tamely born: and yet the Ease is very different and unequal. And this teaches us a short way to that felicity we now speak of, to wit, That we compose our selves to such a submissive and malleable temper
temper, that Christ may come only to govern us as sheep, not to be put to tame us as Tigers. Let us withdraw all supplies from our lusts, and not by any secret reserv’d affection give them clancular aids to maintain their Rebellion, and then they will not be able long to make any vigorous opposition, nor consequently much to disturb the tranquillity of those who have thus resign’d themselves to the government of the Prince of Peace: and if this cannot be done in such an instant, but that there will be some previous displacencies, and uneasie struglings, yet even those like the Scorpion, carry Antidote against their one stings, when ’tis consider’d that they are but the pangs of the new-birth, they will become very supportable by the expectation of that Joy to which they tend. An enslaved people think themselves fairly advance’d to happiness, if they can get but to make head against their oppressors, though they must expect many sore conflicts and sharp engagements before they become Victors: and certainly ’tis matter of inestimable joy to him, who has been under that sad spiritual slavery to be set thus upon even terms, with his sword in his hand against those, who once had him in such vassallage that he durst not lift up a thought against them; but especially when ’tis remembred with what invincible aids he is backt, such as will ascertain him of victory, if he do not treacherously defeat himself. And surely he must be of a strange phlegmatick temper, whom all these considerations will not enliven, convey in-
to him so much spirit as to make an attempt, and engage him to do that upon so pressing, so great a concern which meer curiosity prompts men daily to in common affairs. And he that is not moulded of this cold and stubborn clay, he that has not lost one of the elements of mans composition, and has but a spark of fire in his temper, will surely have some warmth towards this so inviting an experiment: and when he has once made it, I doubt not, it will then joyn with the suffrages both of reason and conscience in approbation of Christ's Laws, and will with Solomon pronounce of this spiritual wisdom, her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, Prov. 3. 17.

And now it must be a strange Violence of impiety, that must break this threefold cord, that shall disannul the joint sentence of all that are competent judges in this matter. This is not the strength of Samson that brake withs and cords, but of the Legion that pull'd in pieces fetters and chains; and though too many men make it their own work; yet certainly 'tis only the Devils Interest: he aspires to the rule and government of us; and to that end nothing can be more contributive than these prejudices we take up against Christ's conduct. A Soul like a Nation, can neither bear two Legislators, nor be without one: And Satan having but that single competitor, our quarrelling with Christ's Laws, is virtually an embracing of his. When we send Christ that rebellious message, Nolumus hunc
hunc regnare, we say to the other as the Trees to the Bramble, Jud. 9. 14. come thou and reign over us. And to this defiance of the one, and invitation of his opposite, he very nearly approaches, that thus defames Christ's commands as irrational or severe. The traducing of a government being, we know, the immediate præludium to the casting it off; libelling the forlorn-hope to rebellion. But would God men would soberly weigh whither such a mutinous humor tends; and when our outward Condition has given us so many pregnant and costly Proofs of its ruinous effects, take caution that it make not the like wrack within us: that we do not madly exchange Christ's gentle service, and glorious Rewards; for Satan's cruel bondage, and crueller Wages: the golden chains of the one which do more adorn than tie us; for the Iron, the Adamantine links of the other, which bind us till they deliver us over to those Chains of darkness, where our captivity shall be irreversible. If this so reasonable, so necessary a care may be admitted; 'twill certainly confute the profane sophistry of our Age, silence our impious Cavils, and instead of providing us of the colour of an austere Master to excuse our sloth: will engage us to that diligence that shall supersede the use of such shifts, and then we may hope to see Christianity have a Resurrection day again, assume a Body somewhat of solidity and substance; which now wanders about like a ghost or spectre, a shade or vanishing apparition which leaves no footsteps behind it: and to the re-union, O let us all emul-
lously contribute, take up every one of us his dry Bones and bring it to the Prophet, or rather to Him who spake by that Prophet, to breath upon them, till at last they be cemented and in-spirited in active Duty to shew forth the Praises of that God who hath call'd us out of darkness into his marvellous light, 1 Pet. 2. 9.

CHAP. VI.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Partial Obedience.

A NO THER sort of preposterous Considerers there are, by whom the power and force of Christianity is no less obstructed: and those are they that contrive not how they may most comply with it, but how they may best bend it to comport with them. That rebate its edge, or turn it only against such of their corruptions as they have least kindness for. That weigh the Precepts with no other design but that of taking the lightest: those to which their constitutions or other circumstances carry least repugnance; and come unto the Gospel not to as a law, but to a Market; cheapen what they best like, and leave the rest for other customers.

THAT thus it is with, many needs no other proof than the variety visible in the lives of several professors. One man behaves himself mo-
desly, and tells you his religion commands him humility, yet at the same time transgresses the as strict precept of Justice, and will defraud him he bows to. On the contrary another is Just but In-

solent, and though his Sentence do not bend, expects his Clients should. That man owes the purity of his religion in visiting the fatherless and widows, yet disclaims it again by not keeping himself unspotted of the world. This person is Abstemious but Uncharitable, will drink no wine but thirsts for blood. He prays much, yet curses more; whilst he is meek but indevout. Now while the Rule is one and the same, how should it come, that mens Practices should so vary, were it not for the unequal Application: did they take it entire, though there might be difference in the degrees, yet sure not in the kinds of their Vertues, and as men would not differ so from one another, so neither would they from themselves, there would be then no such thing as a charitable Drunkard, a devout Oppressor, a chaste Miser; Monsters engendred by this unnatural commixture of light with darkness, but Piety would be uniform and extensive, and bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. io. 5. And till it be thus, Christianity can never be thought to have achiev'd any part of its design, which was not aim'd against any one sin-
gle limb, but against the whole body of sin. Alas, 'tis not the lopping off one of the remote mem-

bers, that will render the remaining ones any whit the less vital, the having a part less to ani-
mate, will rather serve to concerter the spirits, and make them more active in the rest: as we see the pruning of Trees, makes them more prolific. And this effect is very obvious among men: he who has no general dislike to vice, if he repudiate one, 'tis commonly that he may cleave closer to another; and what he defalks from some dry, insipid sin, is but to make up a Benjamin's Mess for some other more gustful. If the Wanton be sober, 'tis odds he thinks excess a Rival to his lust, if the Proud man be liberal, 'tis because covetousness is inglorious; such unevennesses are caus'd not by an unkindness to any Sin (unless possibly that aversion which natural constitution raises in some) but by a partiality to one or more favourite Vices, for whose better accommodation, and secure reign, not only Vertue, but other Vices also must give place.

And this 'tis much to be fear'd will upon a true account, be found to be the sum of many mens piety, something they think they must pay to the importunity of their Religion, which upbraids them so loudly that they are willing to stop its mouth, but yet would do it with as much frugality, and good managery as may be, and so consider what 'tis they can best spare: what refuse Sin which brings them in little of satisfaction, and is perhaps in competition with some other more agreeable: and thus they can be content to devote to the slaughter, set it to receive all the impressions of the sword of the spirit; and so use it as a buckler to their darling lus, to ward off those blows.
blows which must else fall heavy on them; but alas this is not to obey, but to delude: to ransom a greater Sin with a less, and to transcribe in this matter the Counsel of Caiphas: to let one die for the People, that the whole nation Perish not. To make one forlorn guilt a Patriot to the rest, whilst in the tempest which threatened a general shipwreck, the precious wares are preserv’d, by throwing the less valuable over board.

AND truly that is commonly the event, men are so jolly and triumphant when they have worsted a trivial inconsiderable sin, as if they had defeated the whole army: this poor despicable spoil, is set up as their Trophe, and must they think witness for them both to God and man, that they are good soldiers of Jesus Christ: they can like Saul with full confidence meet the Prophet, and tell him they have fulfilled the Commandment of the Lord, 2 Sam. 15. 13. though Agag and the best cattle, the reigning and fatterst sins be spar’d: and while they are thus secure, their sins will certainly be so also, have no disturbance or disquiet from them, but lie at Ease and rest, feed like Canibals upon their own kind, be nourish’d by the car-kasses of those unlucky vices, on whom the exterminating lot hapned to fall: and by that means grow to a prodigious bulk and corpulency. And upon these terms Satan himself will allow us to mortifie some sins, nay will himself cast the first stone at them: and like a rooking gamester purposely lose these petty stakes, that he may afterwards sweep the board.
F OR if men should give themselves up universally to all sorts of ill, if they should set themselves in a total opposition to all the documents of their profession, he would lose one of his most useful engins; there could be no such thing as a false delusive hope: they might possibly by obstinacy harden, or by diversion gag Conscience, but they could not bribe and corrupt it, make it fit down well pleas’d and satisfied with its self. For when the threats against disobedience shall occur to the mind of one who has in all instances disobey’d, ’tis impossible he should find any salve, any way of Evading the Threats, they make so directly at him: but he who can alledge for himself that he obeys in some things, confronts that to all Objections; and resolves he is not in the list of the disobedient: One or two such comfortable instances are as mighty; as God promised the Israelites should be, Deut. 32. 30. one able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight; all fears and misgiving thoughts are dissipated and fled before them: and as once the French King in his return to the numerous swelling titles of the Spaniard, thought the bare repetition of France, France, France, was a full ballance to them all; so when whole files of great and scandalous Crimes present themselves, one single vertue is thought a sufficient counterpoise. He whose Conscience upbraids him with all Profaneness towards God, and in Sobriety towards himself: yet if he can but answer that he is just to his neighbour, he thinks he has quit scores, and
and fears no farther reckonings: he who is immersed in all the filthiness both of flesh and spirit, has abandon’d his Mind to pride and envy, his Body to lust and intemperance; and so sacrificed both those to Devils: yet if he cast but some grains of this estate upon the Altar; devote any small part of that to God, for the uses of Piety or Charity; he concludes that Incense will send up a Cloud thick enough, to obscure the other from the Eyes of Divine Justice, and yield so sweet a savour as will perfume him in spite of all that Noisomeness: so extending old Tobits words beyond his meaning, that alms, though alone, delivereth from death, and cleanseth from all sin. He who is deep in sacrilege and rebellion, that can daringly swallow repeated deliberate perjuries; yet if he can get but the demure tenderness, to fear a sudden oath, he is Chymist enough to extract a confidence out of that fear, and presumes that formal Civility to God’s name, shall expiate all the real Violations and Contempts of him: and while men make such use of their partial piece meal obedience, it can never be the Devil’s interest to disturb them in it, to awake them out of their pleasant dream, or to exact of them to deposite those poor insignificant remains of their Christianity, which serve only to make them more Supine, not more Safe.

NAY indeed his affairs are so stated, that to some he can and does, and without danger allow a yet far greater indulgence, he can permit them to bid much fairer than this for Heaven, and yet
yet knows the purchase is far from being made; he can see them cashier not some one sin, but whole troops together, and yet not fear the sinking of his Cause: He can trust them so far, that as the young man in the Gospel, they may be pronounced, Not far from the Kingdom of God: yet as long as there is but one un-mortified Lust, that can send them away sad from Christ, his tenure is firm enough. Herod may hear John Baptist gladly, nay do many things upon it, yet let him but keep Herodias, and she will soon be able to secure both her self and Satan against the danger of that Competition. This is indeed his main advantage that he can hold fast by the smallest thread; and whereas to our bliss a conspiracy and union of all Vertues is required; our ruine can spring from any one solitary Crime: many rounds make that Ladder wherewith we must scale heaven: whereas one step serves to precipitate us into the Abyss; so sadly verifying the Poetical Axiome, Facilis descensus Averni. In sum, while there is but any one sin indulg'd to: that is the Devils tedder; and though it should be imagin'd so loose, as to give men scope to range over all other sorts of Vertues, to taste the sweet and feed liberally on them; yet still the beast is in the power of him who has fixt the line, not only to be finally led away to slaughter, but also to have the length shortned, and be either put out of the reach, or quite removed from the view of those pleasant pastures.
F O R though the security rais'd by such an un-
uniform piety is in many so exactly apportioned to Satans interest, that he has no cause to wish
the change of his tenure; yet where the circum-
stances are such, as will make it useful, he can
easily twist his thread into a Cable. When he thinks
one Monarch Lust too mild a regiment, he can
set up an Athenian Tyranny, or which is yet
worse, let in the whole populacy of Sin upon the
Soul, which like the Egyptian Locusts shall over-
run and devour it, not leave any green thing on
the ground, and that this is in his power we have
too much reason to conclude. He is we know a
cunning sophister, and if he has abus'd us so far
as to impose one sin upon us, he may thence very
regularly deduce many more, as one false Pre-
mise admitted, may be improved into thousands
of false Conclusions. Indeed supposing a man
resolute to adhere to one sin; he may with very
good Logick persuade him to multitudes of
others. There are but two Objections usually
made to any Temptation; either the offence, or
the danger; and these are usually objectable to
one sin as well as to another; so that this dilemma
readily offers its self: either it is reasonable to
buy a pleasure at that price, or it is not: If it
be, then contrive that the crime be pleasant, and
that brings its dispensation with it: If it be not,
then why doest thou live in this one sin in de-
spight of both guilt and punishment; the later
part of the Dilemma 'tis no part of Satans busi-
ness to press, but the former he has too much ad-
vantage of pursuing successfully; if he can but
dress
dress up a temptation to look invitingly, the business is done. So ridiculous a thing is an uneven Piety, that it even laughs it self out of countenance, and wants only temptation to become uniform Vice. How absurdly looks it, to see a man run away with Joseph from the embraces of his Mistress, and yet with full as great a speed accompany Gehazi in the pursuit of a bribe; and how obvious is it to conclude that the former assault was imprsperous only because not managed with the right weapon; that he might have been hid that would not be woed? What a mockery is it for a man to be zealous for God, and rebellious against his King? as in the reverse, for a man to be true to his King, and a rebel to his God: and who can but think, that had either of the averted Crimes been coo't to their Palats, they might have chang'd Messes. Indeed 'tis not imaginable by what rules of discourse, he that embraces one sin should reject another: if it be done only upon phancy and humour, as the repulsive Vice will have reason to complain of great partiality, when as bad as its self is receiv'd and cherish'd; so it points out a way to attacke him more prosperously: let it shape its self to the phancy, and sure Satan, who can transform himself to an Angel of light, can soon work that easie change: let the younger Brother get on the cloaths of the favourite Esau, transform its self into the shape and interest of the darling sin, and it need not doubt of a free admission. But all this while to pretend conscience for such an abstinence, is of all other pleas the must absurd, for why
why should he scruple at one, that abandons himself to another. As S. James argues concerning the guilt, so may we for the act of Sin: He that said do not commit adultery, said also do not kill; and 'tis abusive mockery, the Souldiers Ave Rex, to bow to his authority in the one, and resist it in the other. Thus unhappy is the case of him who entertains one sin, his enclosure is broken down, and he's a common for all: he is left destitute of a reply to any temptation, and like a basful person will be in danger of yielding, because he is ashamed to deny: and this I doubt not, many have found experimentally true, some sins have been committed not so much upon the force of inclination, as to be consentaneous to themselves, to silence the upbraidings of their understandings for acting so unevenly, it being impossible to give a reasonable account, why this and not that, or that; for when by one bold wilful sin a man enter'd into a state of hostility with God, 'tis not a tenderness in all others will make up the breach: and then they think the rule of known enemies takes place, where all civilities are disclaim'd, and the quarrel manag'd to the most advantage. The resolv'd Adulterer could perhaps without much difficulty be just, but when he considers that that one Helena of his, will certainly make a war, he thinks 'tis an impertinent niceness to lose a good prize, or dismiss his covetousness while he resolves to retain his lust. The incorrigible drunkard could perchance easily enough be chaste, but when he remembers that drunkenness excludes
cludes him from the Kingdom of Heaven: having made that sale of his eternal inheritance, he thinks 'tis but good husbandry to get as much as he can for it: So treacherous a guest is any one Sin admitted, and lodg'd in the heart, it despoils it of all its armour of defence, leaves it nothing wherewith to guard its self against any assailant; and be it never so small a one, 'tis like those little thieves which being put in at the window set the doors open to all the rest.

But perhaps this danger may be thought in some degree warded by the natural temper and constitution of men, which necessarily renders them unapt to contradictory vices, and so will secure them at least from so many as are disagreeable to their Temper: but if this should be granted, yet it confessedly leaves them open to all others, and that were certainly bad enough: he that is as wicked, as his complexion can not only encline, but permit him to be, will not want much of the utmost number of sins: but whatever we can suppose that to strike off from the tale; yet in the second place, 'tis very much to be fear'd, that will defalk nothing of the weight; he that sins to the height of his appetite, perhaps power, shall he be ever the more innocent because there were some nauseated sins which he had not Self denial enough to commit. God absolves us in proportion to the rectitude of our Wills, not the nice-ness of our Complexions: he that wills to pursue whatever he can find gustful, how impious soever; shall it be virtue in him that some Sins are
unsavoury and disagreeing to his *Palate*; if it should, there may so many extrinsick things be by Analogy brought in, either to swell or abate the accounts of our sin, that we shall be much to seek in the estimate of it.

**BUT** in the third place, even these very aversions are no infallible preservative, for if they happen to be more moderate and remiss, than the love of some other sin; that predominant inclination will subdue those dislikes, when ever its interest is to be serv’d, by those otherwise not gustful commissions. There is nothing more ordinary than to see one appetite pursued to the violation of another. A man perhaps hates drunkenness, not only as a bestial, but uneasie vice; yet if his love to Gain exceed his dislike to that; when that is requisite to make up the price of a good bargain, that aversion must stoop, and give way. A man despises swearing, as an insipid impertinent Sin, yet if he set any great value upon being in the mode, and complying with the gentle *Dialect*, that will soon debase him to what he so much contemn’d: and truly there is scarce any other account to be given of that great and foolish sin. But in no other instance is this so notoriously visible as in that of *duelling*. I need not single out any one mans particular inclination, the nature of mankind doth certainly avert both killing and being kill’d: yet when that *Phantasm*, that *Chimera* honour, has once possest the mind, no reluctance of humanity is able to make head against it: but it commands as uncon- trouldly
trou'ldly, as the Centurion in the Gospel, saies to
this mangu and he goes, to another come and he
comes: nay as Tyrannically as the great Cham
of Tartary, who as an Essay of his Soveraignty
commands whole troops to ride down precipices;
nay these Aversions are not only thus violently
subdued by some foraign lust, but are many times
destroy'd even by force of that very vicious prin-
ciple which gave them birth: for we mistake if
we think they are alwaies vertuous, or so much
as innocently founded; Vice is often at civil wars
with its self; and the vehement inclination to
one, ingenders a displaceacy to another; but yet
such a riddle is this mystery of Iniquity, that upon
the very same basis is built both the abhorrence
and commissioun of the same Sin. For example, a
Proud man as much hates to fawn and flatter
others, as he loves to be flatter'd himself; yet let
his pride but once work the other way, and set
him upon an ambitious project, then all the mean
condescennions imaginabill are with ease digest-
ed, he can crouch and profstrate, and as the Psal-
mist speaks, fall down and humble himself, that by
that descent he may rebound to the height he
aims at: but still pride is the common cause of
these so distant effects. In like manner the Ri-
tous Prodigal detests covetousnes$, looks upon it
as so fordid and base, that he brands even pru-
dent frugality as approaching too near it; yet
let him but once find the springs to grow dry
which should feed his luxury; when he feels his
Riot begins to exhaust and prey upon its self, then
then even that despised Covetousnes shall be call'd in to its aid, to dig *metal* for the Furnace to melt, and so by a strange *Antiperistasis*, prodigality shall beget rapine. Thus unhappily prolific is every Sin, that it carries in its bowels the seed and principle even of those that seem the most *Heterogeneous*; and then how shall a man that has admitted but any one such teeming lust be secur'd that it shall not thus propagate, till his *Soul* become a meer desart, fill'd with all sorts of *wild* and *noxious* creatures.

**THERE is but one hope imaginable to interpose;** and that is that *God's grace* shall prevent this exorbitant growth of *impiety* in him, and I acknowledge that is sufficient to do it, where it may have its kindly *operation*; but where it has so, it will uniformly suppress *all sin*, and therefore where *any one* continues in Force and Vigour, 'tis manifest that *operation* of Grace is obstructed, and such a man I should desire soberly to consider what assurance he has, that he who has so evacuated *God's grace* in one instance, shall not do so in another? If in *fright* of that grace he can be lustful, why shall he not be as able to resist it in *favour* of Drunkenness, *Sacriledge*, Rebellion, or any other crime to which he shall at any time have appetite. Can he imagine that God sends forth an *irresistible* strength against some sins, whilest in others he permits men a power of repelling his Grace? That were to *transcribe* the *Syrians absurd* Phanse, that *he is a God of the hills and not of the valleys*: No certainly, he who has his own unhappy
unhappy experience to attest the possibility of frustrating the Divine succours in one particular, has too sure grounds to infer the like in others. Nay alas, it does not only infer it by way of argument and deduction, but it is very apt to produce it by way of cause and efficiency: We gain a readiness to any thing by custom and assuefaction, and he who has habitually oppos’d Grace in the defence of a Lust, has deliver’d himself from that modesty which makes the first defiance uneasy, and so runs on with ease and boldness to future resistance. It faring with men in this violation of God’s grace as it does in that of his Patrimony, the first Sacrilege is lookt on with some horror, and men are fain to devise arguments and colours to delude their reluctant Consciences; but when they have once made the breach, their scrupulosity soon retires; one draught of that impious gain, has such a stupifying effect, that they can without check swallow on, till the Sin flame so fiercely, that nothing but meer want of Matter can extinguish it. But admit it were possible for a man to be secur’d of his own compliance with some parts of restraining grace whilst he impugnes it in others, yet who shall ascertain him of that grace? It being Gods, implies ’tis not in our power, he may surely do what he will with his own, and though his promise has made a sure entail of it to all those, who humbly seek and diligently use it: yet it no where engages that it shall be the portion of any other; much less that it shall importunately and endlessly renew its assaults on those
those who have often repulsed and put it to flight: In that case God's resolution concerning the old world becomes appliable, *My spirit shall not always strive with man*; and Christ who forbids us to cast our pearls before swine, will certainly never prostitute what is infinitely more precious, his Grace to those, who have so long trampled it under their feet; and so those must be concluded to have done, who have persevered in any one sin: for Grace is uniformly opposite to all, and therefore the cleaving to any is defiance and affront to it. But we need not the help of inferences and deduction, the threats of God are express in this matter: The Talent is decreed to be taken from the unprofitable servant, who has not implored it to the proper use, and such infallibly is every man who has not actuated the Grace given him to the subduing of every reigning sin; and the reprobate mind mention'd in Scripture as the most dismal of all Plagues, the *φιλοκόρος*, which yields not to the melting and the purging force of Fire, and therefore does consign to that of Hell, is founded upon the voluntary rejection of God in particular instances, *Rom. 1.* How then can he, that in any one single thing so rejects him, assure himself that shall not be the event of it: That he who would not have Christ rule entirely in his heart, shall at once be put out of his Government and protection: have all those spiritual aids withdrawn, which should either assist him to good, or fortify him against ill; and like an outlaw'd person be expos'd to the outrage of all that will assault him.
AND now would God this might be sadly pondered, that men would not be their own Sirens, and entertain themselves with those deceitful melodies, which will end in howlings and gnashings of teeth; that they would not think their having some few virtues, and but some few vices will serve to satisfy the design, or procure them the rewards of their Christianity: for if they should continue in this posture, and not be tempted to grow worse, they may certainly conclude 'tis because Satan finds they need not. And can they be proud of that Vertue which the Devil himself will allow them? And think themselves good enough when they are as bad as he wishes them? But even in this they have no other tenure than his Will. When he pleases for his interest, or even for his divertissement and recreation he may hurry them to all that is most enormous; convert their Hypocrisie to profaneness, their partial Piety to universal Ungodlinesse; they have nothing to interpose in their own Defence, not so much as a reasonable Argument to oppose to him, they have made a voluntary sale of themselves for one or more beloved sin, and now as his vassals he may impose on them what others he pleases: and by their doting affection to their Rachel take advantage also to obtrude the despis'd Leah upon them. And how wretched, how deplorable is this state? What a Piety is this that we must owe to the Devil, while we can be no better than he will let us?

YET this is without Hyperbole, the condition...
of every man that is not sincerely uniformly Christian; every indulg'd sin gives Satan livery and seisin of his heart, and a power to dispose of it as he please. I know men are apt to flatter themselves with other hopes, and think that those obduciences they pay to God shall like a pre-engagement disannul all after contracts made by guilt, and put them into the possession of Him who is able to bind that strong man. But God will not be accessory to such a fraud, even towards the Devil while they keep the price, enjoy that pleasure or profit wherewith he bought them, God will never interpose to defeat him of his purchase.

And as God will not thus forcibly wrest them out of his hands, much less will he descend to a capitulation and composition with him. God is a jealous God, and what jealous husband did ever by compact divide his right with the Adulterer. Where he finds a persevering disloyalty he gives a bill of divorce and disclaims his relation. Yet so besotted are men, as to hope God will ratifie that alienation they have made of one part of their heart, and contentedly enjoy the rest; and as competitors use sometimes to do, share with his Rival. But alas that immortal quarrel will not be thus taken up, the difference between these irreconcilable Antagonists will not be so compromised. God disdains such a Treaty, nor will ever come so much as to an interview with his enemy, within the lifts and recesses of one Heart. And while men labour such an accord, they are but combining
combining with Satan against God and their own Souls: he knows well that while he holds any part, God will have none, and so the whole falls to him, and then he may very safely be modest, and demand but moderately, and by that seeming difference and yielding, gain more than by all his most eager contending. I suppose every man will disown the having this ridiculous design of compounding the strife between Heaven and Hell; but certainly it is the natural interpretation of such partial obediences, when two Litigants contend for something which I have in my keeping, if I divide it between them, is it not obvious to conclude I desire to compose the dispute and satisfy both parties, and is not this the very case here? 'Tis true indeed, it carries a very absurd sound, but then how more absurd is it for men to act at such a rate, that when 'tis represented to them in the truest colours, themselves are ashamed to own what they have done? And this calls loudly upon them to put themselves out of the lash of their own discipline: to recover such an innocence that they may not be forc'd with David to sentence themselves, when that their crimes appear in the light disguise of a Parable.

And this indeed is the only proper use of all these considerations, the danger and folly are as useless as unpleasant speculations, unless it be in order to the reforming that wherein both are founded. Let men consider themselves, as engaged in those wild projects which even themselves look on with scorn; as ensnared in that unhappy contract.
contract which has rendered them part of the Devil's possession, and contrive how they may obliterate that reproach, and disentangle their Mortgag'd Souls.

And for this there is but one way imaginable, and that is by quitting their hands of that which they took as the valuable consideration in that mad bargain; restoring Satan's coyn to him, not only principal but use also: casting away the main sin and all the little appendages, which like offsets have shot out from that root; retaining nothing that has his mark and impress upon it, that so he may not pretend to any thing of theirs by right of barter or exchange. This, and this only is the way to disseise him of his Estate, to cancel those fatal Indentures which bound them to him, and till this be done, as long as they keep any part of his wages of iniquity, his title remains in full force, they are still his servants, his vassals.

EVEN that redemption of Christ has no efficacy towards the disfranchising of such, for though it proclaim a universal Jubile, yet it forces liberty upon none, he that will nail his Ear to the door-post and defy a manumission, may continue his slavish state still, and indeed though Christ's death was design'd to rescue us from the power of Satan; yet the first essay of that rescue was to redeem us from our vain conversation: And where that is not done, which is so essentially fundamental to all the rest, 'tis not possible any other part of that Redemption should be achieved,
chiev'd, unless we will confound the order of Nature as well as Grace, and make the consequent precede the antecedent.

LET no man therefore upon any vain hopes delay the one only expedient to his security, but pay back the earnest-penny he has received from Satan, fling away his sin, how pleasant or profitable for ever, with the greatest Abhorrence, as knowing 'tis the price of blood, and that not only his Saviours, but his own too; and this immediately, lest the forfeiture be irreversible. We know the danger of lapsing time in case of Mortgage, but here our danger is greater, because the time is so uncertain, for though God had nothing else to do in the whole transaction ('twas wholly our own work) yet 'tis he that assigns the time of forfeiture: he alone knows how far we may go in sin, before we pass the possibility of a retreat; how long he will be provok'd before he suffer his whole displeasure to arise; and how many repellings of his Grace, and quenchings of his Spirit they are to which his desertions are apportion'd. Pharaohs heart was hardened by God after the Eighth resistance, and we have no security but ours may be sooner: yet if that should be taken as the standing measure, how dreadful an abode would it make to many of us? Who is there that has espoused any one beloved sin, that has not much oftner repeated the acts of it, every one of which is a resistance and a contumacy against God? Who is there that has not done it against so many express warnings and loud calls of God in his own

K 3 Consci-
Conscience, which renders it yet a fuller parallel, and 'tis to be fear'd, too many agree with it even in the last and highest circumstance, that of the Plagues too, by an obstinate persisting after so many Judgements sent to mollifie and reclaim them; and then where the premises are the same, 'tis too likely the conclusion may be so also.

I SHALL not wish any Person so strictly to apply this case, as to conclude, that he is already in this state, but I should wish all men would apply it so far, as to infer how possible, nay how probable it is, that the very next resistance shall put them in it. 'Tis not Pharaohs being a Heathen and they Christians that will give them any security; it being no part of the Gospel-Covenant, that men shall be ever the longer allowed to trample upon Grace. All the difference it makes is rather on the other side; the contempts are enhans'd to a higher guilt, and consequently, the fewer acts may now serve to fill up the measure. And if their experience testify to them, that in their particular God has us'd a greater long suffering, than he has given any grounds to expect, if the guilt of their Consciences testify that they have committed many more acts; and yet some remaining tendernesses and regrets witness also, that they are not yet given up to an utter hardness and obduration, O let them not presume themselves safe, because they are not utterly desperate; but lay their hearts open to be stamp'd and impress'd by grace, before they grow utterly inflexible; timely consider what is the design
design of this longanimity, and without any more stragglings and resistances suffer it to attain its aim and lead them to repentance.

FOR though their Souls be not yet wholly petrified, yet how know they in what an instant that unhappy Metamorphosis may be wrought, or if it should not be so sudden, yet 'tis certain every act of sin makes gradual approaches towards it: so that if God should not inflict it by way of punishment, yet the mere force of Habit would produce it by way of natural efficacy: And to be convinc'd of this, I should require no more, but that men would reflect, and see what effects it has already wrought, how far it has advanced towards that fatal point. Let them send their thoughts back through every stage and period of their sin, and observe whether as that has grown, so their tenderness and reluctance of Conscience has not abated and decreased: Let them but recollect what regrets and disquiets they had, when they ventur'd upon the first unlawful commission, and compare it with their present, and I doubt not they will discern a great inequality; they will find that every act of sin hath allayed somewhat of the sharpness of those pangs, and proportionably to the frequency of the repetition they approach toward insensible: and then let him whose older Habit has multiplied those acts, sadly consider how few steps he has to the end of his unhappy journey, though no extrinsick concurrent should hasten his pace. But when Gods desertion shall, as for ought he knows, it may the
next minute supervene: that as a full and violent Wind drives him in an instant, not to the Harbour, but on the Rock where he will be irrecoverably split.

NOR let any man fortifie himself against these terrors, by hoping that his one single (perhaps small) sin shall not have this destructive force; for if it be wilful it carries in it that which is properly the malignity of all sin, to wit, a resistance and opposition against God, and this is so mortal a Venome, that the least Dose of it is deadly, as a man may as certainly be poison'd by a dram of Arsenick, as with the largest draught.

THE more natural inference lies the other way, if it be but a single or petty sin, 'tis so much the easier to part with; he that is bound with a strong Cable, or with a multitude of lesser Cords, may pretend some necessity of his Captivity from the strength of his bonds; but he that is tied with one slender string, such as one resolute struggle would be sure to break: he is prisoner only to his own sloth or humour, and who will pity his thraldom, where 'tis so apparently his choice? Do not therefore say my sin is inconsiderable and therefore I need not relinquish it, but my sin is inconsiderable therefore I need not keep it. So slight a pleasure I may part with and find no miss: this pedling profit I may resign and 'twill be no breach in my Estate. And if Christ require a renunciation of those sins which are as the Hand and Eye, shall I scruple to deposite those which are but as the Hair or Nails.
 Nay he may yet argue higher, and from the smallness of the sin deduce the enhancement of the Guilt: great acquisitions carry some temptation in their face, but despicable prizes do rather avert than tempt. 'Twas the sign of a common harlot to be hired with a Kid, Gen. 38. and sure he must be of a strange prostitute Soul, that can adulterate for such low trivial wages. To dishonour God, though the whole world were to be acquire'd by it, were great impiety, but to do it for handfuls of Barley and pieces of Bread, Ezek. 13. 19. himself brands as a yet higher pitch. And sure it argues a very light esteem of God, when one poor contemptible lust shall be able to overpoize him in our hearts.

Nor is the folly less than the profaneness, when there is but one Jonah to be cast over-board, 'tis the greater madness to hazard a wrack; and let such a man pretend what he pleaseth in extenuation of his sin, make that appear never so minute and despicable, yet 'tis apparent all the love which other men scatter and distribute upon several, he has united and concentrated in this one lust. The most doting affection when it is summed up can amount to no more than this, that it makes a man expose himself to the greatest pain, the greatest loss for the thing beloved. And this is most visible here, Hell is as certainly acquire'd, and Heaven as certainly forfeited by one sin as many; and then though there may be odds in other respects, yet what is there in this, between this more modest and the most licentious Sinner, but that
that the former puts the same value upon one, that the other does upon many sins, and sells his Soul so much the cheaper.

And now would God such men would review their bargain, soberly consider what there is in this Idoliz'd sin of theirs, which should exact such costly sacrifices. Let him whose long intimacy and experience has given him access to its most secret recesses, that has rifled its bowels, and knows the utmost whether of pleasure or profit that lies there conceal'd. Let him I say, that is thus qualified for it, make an exact inventory of its wealth, and then let him compare it with what he is to pay for it; weigh its flat and momentary Pleasures, with those most transcending and perpetual Joys which are at God's right hand; its base and perishing commodities, with those unfailing treasures in the Heaven; and then judge of his purchase in respect of that part of his prize: And if that be not conviction enough, let him weigh the other also; those sad pains which are too intolerable to be suffer'd, and yet so eternal, that they can never cease to be suffer'd, and think whether that be not too dear a rate for that pleasure, whose gust is so little, and whose duration is less: or what profit he will have in the revenue of his sin, that Gold and Silver which will finally eat his flesh as it were fire, Jer. 5. 3. and prove the unhappy fuel of his flames.

From all these premisses, certainly Reason and Religion do equally infer the same conclusion, to wit, that men should not tolerate themselves one
Chap. 6. from Partial Obedience.

one minute in any known sin of how small a size for ever it be; nor so impertinently betray their Souls to ruine for that which they call light and trivial; and is so indeed in respect of the acquirest, but overwhelmingly ponderous in regard of the effects and pernicious consequents. And O that mens practices might evince them to have made this just deduction, that those who have in many things preserv'd an innocence, would not be so ill husbands as to forfeit all the advantage of that Care for want of extending it a little farther, nor suffer the whiter parts of their Soul to be discolour'd or tainted by the reflection of one crimson sin; but rather let their tears wash that into a whiteness, that they may be uniform and of a piece. For though Jacob clad his darling Joseph in a party-colour'd garment; yet God owns none either for favourite Son, or so much as Servant that he finds so arrayed. The followers of the Lamb are all clad in white, and in that attire we must be sure to put our selves if we mean to go in with him to the marriage. And since the Gospel is the invitation to that feast, let none imagine he has complied with it till he have thus fitted himself: till then he affronts and baffles his Christianity, sends it away empty without its errand; nay, which is worse prostitutes and profanes it, makes it serve only for a Gourd, that he may sit under the shadow of it, and commit his sins the more undisturbed; but let him remember that he is all this while breeding that worm, which will smite this Gourd, and leave him unshelterd to that scorch-
ing wrath of God, which will make the improve-
ment of Jonah's passionate Wish, that God would
take away his life, his most rational Desire; ren-
der not Death only, but Annihilation also, as eligi-
ble as it will be impossible.

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CHAP. VII.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Mistakes concerning Repentance.

Another dangerous Underminer of Christian Practice is the many affected mistakes in the business of Repentance. Men look upon that as the grand recipe of the Gospel, an infallible Catholicon against all their spiritual maladies; and so far they judge right, for so indeed it is. But when they proceed to compound this sovereign Medicine for their own use, they do it most deceitfully; leave out the principal and most operative ingredients: and by being such ill Apothecaries defame the Gospel as the Dispensatory, and Christ as the Physician, and likewise ruine themselves as the Patients. But of those who make this imperfect and Defective composition, all do it not alike; some leave out one part, some another, and some so many that they retain nothing of its substance and reality. Eat out all the heart and vertue of it, and leave only an empty shell, the gilding as it were of the Pill, the
the Form and meer outside of Repentance.

In this later rank I place those who suffer repentance to pass no farther than their Frontiers, and Outworks; assign it its quarters in the superficies of the man, the Face, or Tongue, or Gesture; but if it attempt to penetrate any deeper, if it send but one serious thought to alarm the heart, then like the Edomites against Israel, Num. 20. all the forces are mustered to impede its passage; such formal Penitents as these all ages have produc't. Christ tells of those who disfigured their faces, Mat. 6. 16. put on as it were a vizard only to act this part: and Esay 58. 5. long before describes them, by the bowing down the head like a bull-rush, and certainly the race of them is not worn out in our daies; a demure or rather a lugubrious look, a sad or whining tone, makes up 'tis to be fear'd, the sum of many mens Humiliations. Nay as the world has of late gone, that alone were but a modest pretence: such theatrical forms stickle hard for the prize, not of that one part but of all religion: a dissorted countenance is made the Mark of an upright heart, and none is thought to speak the Language of Canaan, that dresses it not in an uncooth found: and then what wonder is it that they are impatient others shou'd worship God, as David invites, in the beauty, while themselves chuse to do it in the Deformity of holiness.

BUT
BUT others make somewhat a fairer advance towards repentance, by taking in some of those things which are indeed its necessary concomitants; of this kind is in the first place confession of Sin: and this after some sort is fluck at by few; no man who hath not herded himself with the worst sort of Fanaticks, imagines himself sinless, or pretends to be thought so by others, but will very readily acknowledge to all the world that he is a sinner: and as to men, so especially and more solemnly to God. Every man that but offers at praying at all, thinks confession a necessary Branch of his devotion: all publick forms have ever carried that in the front, as supposing it the most principal, universal, and daily requisite to the lapsing state of humane corruption: And perhaps 'tis the general innate persuasion of this, that hath secur'd that part of our Liturgy, from those impertinent cavils, which have particularly aim'd at most other members of it. And I suppose this is as frequent in the Closet as in the Church: the only fear is, that there it is as loose and general too: that those private and particular guilts which are neither fit nor possible to be distinctly inserted in publick, do many times lose their place even in private Confessions also. The shortness and the ease of general forms being very likely to recommend them to those whose numerous sins threaten too great a length, and whose confus'd snarl'd consciences render it difficult, thus to pull out thread by thread: but where Sins are thus moulded up in a lump,
lump, they will like great masses of Pills or confections keep the more undecay'd, retain more of their strength and vigor. So that such Confessions are very indulgent to Satans interest, who fears not the impressions that can be made upon him, while his body remains entire: the great execution then beginning when 'tis broken and scatter'd, and each sin is singled out for a particular pursuit: and where that is not attempted, the war can never be successful, nor thought in earnest.

BUT suppose this be done; and by exact enumeration, each sin is parted from its fellows, as when a conqueror pursues the flying troops of routed Enemies: yet if this be all, if quarter be allowed, and any mercy given, no real prize is gain'd by this achievement. He who recounts his sins with milder purpose towards them than utter excision, he makes no approach towards the essential part of Repentance. He may bring out large Catalogues of his sins, and call them confessions; but he may better express his own sense, if he term them rather inventories of his goods, for such 'tis apparent he reckons them, whilst he resolves to keep them. Indeed there is not a more absurd piece of Pageantry, than these formal Confessions, and such as shews how little, God is consider'd in his great Attribute the searcher of hearts. 'Tis certain no man would hope to atone an offended superior, by a submissive acknowledgment of his fault, did he know that his purpose of reiterating it were discern'd:
discern'd: and what a tacit **blasphemy** is it then, to treat **God** at such a rate as presumes him as **deceivable** as a poor **Mortal**; and sure this were a strange Ingredient in **repentance**. We look on it as a high pitch of impiety boastingly to avow our sins, and it deserves to be consider'd whether this kind of confessing them have not some affinity with it. Should I tell a man I have injur'd and provok'd you thus and thus, and so I resolve to do again at the next opportunity: I refer it to common construction, whether this were not to **justify**, not **retract** the unkindness. Now what I suppose thus said to man, is in the secret purpose of our heart, no less articulately spoken to God, who needs not our words to discern our meaning. Therefore whoever intends to **repeat** his sins, nay does not seriously intend to **forbear** them, does in truth maintain and defend his vicious practice, how loudly soever his Tongue accuses it. And such **clamors** are but like the feigned **Quarrels** of combin'd **cheats**, in order to delude some third person. But alas, the scene is here unluckily laid, for **God** will not be mock'd, nor will the **Mercy** promis'd to him that **confesseth** and **forfeaketh**, ever reach him that **confesseth** and **retaineth**. **Confession** is no farther acceptable than as it either flows from, or tends to beget an abhorrence of **Sin**, and abstracted from those qualifications it becomes loathsome and distasteful to **God**. Alas, can we think our **Historical** vein so pleasant, that he shall be delighted with the **narrative** of those crimes, whose perpe-
perpetration he detested. Can it be Incense in his nostrils, to have our Dunghils displayed? or can his pure eyes be gratified with such polluted prospects? True indeed, he gladly descends to all this as a Physician; nauseats not our foulest ulcers, when we bring them for cure: but when like beggars we make them openly our form of address, and dread nothing more than their healing; certainly their View will only excite his indignation, not his pity. And this, 'tis to be fear'd abodes sadly to many of us, 'tis our vulgar Objection to the Romanist, that they make their confessions contributive rather to their confidence than to their reformation: what their share is in that guilt, I shall not here examine, but I may too truly pronounce they have not enclos'd it, that black circle of Sin and confess, Confesses and sin, encompasses as well Protestants as Papiists; if possibly not quite so many, the cause 'tis doubtful is (what we need not boast) not that More of us confess aright, but that Fewer confess at all. But of those that do, if we may but cross, examine, and interrogate their actions against their words, these will soon confess (and that not auricularly, but in a loud and audible voice) the invalidity of their solemnnest Confessions. When we see a man that yesterday kept a Humiliation, to day trampling on the necks, invading the possession of his Brethren, we need no other proof how vainly and unprofitably, if not how hypocritically and provokingly, he confessed his Pride, or Covetousness; and the like
we may infer when we see any man persevere in any gross wilful sin. And of such, God knows there are such multitudes, as will give us instances more than enough, how wide a difference there is, between a meer Conflent & a true Penitent.

**BUT** in the next place, a passionate regret at Sin, a grief and sadness at its Memory, more speciously pretends to enter us into Gods roll of Mourners: Sorrow has (in vulgar acceptation) so engross the whole notion of repentance, that men are apt to secure themselves, that the Wind of a penitential Sigh is so mighty, as will blow away the guilt of the most mountainous Sin: that if they have but wept a little upon their crimes, they have quite extinguished the wrath they kindled: but alas these are vain dreams, God who delights not to grieve the children of men, does not project for our sorrow, but our innocence; and would never have invited us to the one, but as an expedient to the other. 'Tis natural even to meer Animals to shun that by which they have smarted, and therefore sorrow for sin is a very proper means to avert our appetite from it: but if we have learnt the unhappy skill of separating the effect from the cause, if our Grief abate not our Love; if we can cast kind looks at our sins, even through those Tears wherewith our Eyes are glas'd, this will sure be as far from accomplishing our design, as Gods: leave us equally unpardon'd, as unrefor'm'd.

**NAY** alafs, such Sorrows as these will rather serve to enhance than Expiate our guilts; they
they are loud witnesses against us that we know the malignity of those sins we commit; that we have pois’d them, and find them as a talent of lead upon our Souls, and yet prefer them before Christ’s light burthen: that we have outvied that perverse Election wherewith Elihu charges Job, and chosen affliction rather than innocence, Job 36. 21. and though we have felt the gnawing of the Worm, yet still resolve to cherish it, till it gain its woful Concomitant of unquenchable fire, and sure this resolvedness, this high fortitude in Sin, can with no reason be imagin’d a preparative to its remission, ’twill rather serve to lift us among Satans Martyrs, than Gods Penitents.

AND indeed if we examine the original of this kind of Sorrow, what is there that can with any face pretend to an acceptation? alas, ’tis apparent there is no dislike to the sin; for the natural effect of that, would be the abandoning it. If I have faln into the mire, common reason directs me, not to sit down and cry that I am so defiled; but to cleanse and wash my self, and beware of such another misadventure. Now Gods enmity is purely with the sin: and if we think to contract a league with him; we must espouse his quarrel, hate what he hates: But in this case ’tis quite otherwise, we dislike only the consequence, not the crime; are dissatisfied to see that what is so pleasant, will not be safe: detest those temporal or eternal miseries, which God has annexed to it: which is upon the matter to grieve, not because

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we are guilty, but God is just; and to avert only that part of the evil, of which he owns to be the author, that of Punishment: whilst that of Sin, as our own creature we dandle and careess. And can we think it sufficient to atone an incensed Majesty, that we love our own ease, while yet we love our sin so much better? is it a vertue to have some ineffective regrets to damnation, and such a Vertue too, as shall serve to ballance all our vices? this were indeed a compendious course to block up Hell gates, and leave none a possibility of ever getting thither, but those who scaled the wall and desperately resolved to possess themselves of that place of Torment. But alas, they are other fruits of Repentance that must deliver us from the wrath to come: for though I deny not, that the apprehension of Danger, is extremely both reasonable and useful, yet 'tis only by way of preparative: 'tis like the Trumpet that gives the Alarm, and sets us to the battail, but it must not pretend to be like those of Gideon that atchiev'd the whole victory. To see our danger, may occasion, but does not cause, or necessarily infer an escape. I may madly leap into that pit which I see gaping to swallow me, and then my fore-fight serves only to render me my own murderer. In short, if that formidable aspect of our Sins, make us run from them, it has done us the happiest office; pluckt us as S. Jude says, out of the fire: but if our love be so doting, as to counter-charm our fear; if we be so bewitcht with the deceitfulness of sin, that we will
will have its Embraces, though we know them *deadly*; if we weep that we have *sin'd*, and yet go on to *sin*; our wilful *Guilt* will defile our *Tears*, but our tears will never cleanse our guilt. We only *assist* in the judicature against our selves; and to Gods condemnation add our own: and what we call our Penitence, becomes a sad Attestation of our Incorrigibleness.

A N D as this *meer Sorrow* will never avail, so neither will a *partial* and *imperfect reformation*, and that whether it be defective in respect of the *kind*, or of the *Duration*: to the former we have spoken elsewhere, and shall not need to repeat: but of the latter there will need no less caution; men being apt to obtrude fallacies on themselves in this as much as in the other. Every transient *gleam* of Piety is concluded to be that *flame* in which the Holy Ghost descended, and though it want the main circumstance of resting on them, yet serves to personate the Comforter. He that whilst the soreness of his late pangs of *conscience* remains, finds himself a little indispos'd for a new career in *sin*, presently concludes *repentance* hath had its *perfect work* in him, made that *change and transmutation*, which certainly denominates him a *new creature*, and pronounces his *vicious appetites* *extinct* and *mortified*: when alas they are but *strew'd* over with a little *penitential Ashes*, and will as soon as they meet with *combustible matter*, any apt temptation, *flame out* as fierce as ever, and God knows the event does too often actually attest this after all.
the ablutions, and purification of their repentance, their next work is to divest themselves of their white robe, and those whom yesterday you saw in the laver, to day you shall find wallowing in the mire: and as with far the more guilt, so sometimes with much the greater confidence, for having been so washed: yet so strongly are some mens phancies possessed with their imaginary purity, that they are the last that take notice how the scene is chang'd: they comfort themselves, that sin and they have had some little skirmishes, though but preparatory to a closer league; that they had fixt good purposes, though there remain nothing visible but their violation; and so will call themselves Christ's Sheep, though their notorious impurities witness them to belong only to that herd into which the Legion entered.

THIS is a deceit which one would think should immediately detect itself, but 'tis strange to see, how our misdeeds can prescribe to our faith; and what a more than omnipotent power our self-love has in reconciling contradictions: yet I can scarce think this innate strength of corruption had been sufficient for the purpose, had it not had the auxiliary aid of some commodious doctrines. My present design is so far from controversial, that I am loth to point out any to which I must express unkindness: yet upon this occasion, I shall refer it to consideration, whether that method which has been us'd to quiet some Consciences, be not very apt to stupifie more. When I see
fee one who from his present reigning sins, regularly infers the illness of his state; that is yet by his Casuist, diverted from that prospect, and bid look back to see, whether no part of his life afforded any Evidence of true Grace, and if he can but remember any such time; is warranted to make that his Epocha, from whence to date his infallible assurance; is told that that immortal seed, though it may be covered, yet cannot be choaked; but will most certainly spring up unto Eternal life: When I say I see this easy remedy prescribed to his fears, 'twill be obvious for me to compound my self an Antidote from the same Ingredients: To fix my Eye upon some mark of Regeneration which at some time or other, I either have, or phancied to have had upon me, and with the stead-fast beholding of that, as of the brazen Serpent be fortified against all the venome of my fiery lusts. Cast in this one stick, and with it sweeten all the waters of Marah, secure me against all the bitter effects of my present guilts. How fatal an influence such discoursings as these are apt to have on practice, is too obvious both in the cause, and effect: I need not examine the authority of that grand Principle on which they are founded; since if that were admitted, yet it will not justifie the before mention'd Superstructure: for suppose it receiv'd as an infallible truth, that grace if true can never be lost: yet 'tis, by the confession of all, so easy to be deceiv'd in judging what is so, and our partialities to our selves are so likely to betray us to that deceit; that these Corallaries men
men deduce thence for their personal assurance, can never partake of the suppos'd infallibility of those premises they derive from, and consequently are much too slight a basis for men to trust with so great a weight, as is that of their present comfort and future state.

SEVERAL other pernicious errors there are in the matter of Repentance which men fall into, shall I say, or rather aspire to; make it their ambition to be under their covert and patronage, and with extreme Violence to their reason as well as religion, climb up to those castles in the air, and there fortifie themselves impregnably against all the sacred Artillery of Divine threats. Their false confidences serve them as feather-beds, not only to sleep securely in, but to dead all bullets that are shot against them. But of all those deceitful refuges, there is none more treacherous, & yet more confidently and universally resorted to, than that of a Repentance in reversion, to commence no body knows when, some months or years hence, when this business is dispatcht, that lust fatiated; or indeed to bear the fame date (if not a later) with their last Will and Testament. This is that unhappy retreat to which thousands fly as the routed Syrians to Aphek, 1 Kings 20. 30. till they are entomb'd in that wall, whose shelter they solicited: How desperate the hazard of such procrastination is, hath been so convincingly demonstrated by better Pens; that trumpet hath been blowed so loud by all our spiritual watchmen, that there remains nothing seasonable, but to wonder whence men
men have got that Lethe which secures them their sleep in spite of that Alarm: and certainly 'tis matter of the greatest astonishment to observe the stupid, yet common boldness of men, who so fearlessly expose themselves to this most formidable of perils; who yet in things of far less danger and lighter consequence are so nicely timorous, that no security is thought enough, every the remotest danger to their outward concerns, excites their present vigilance to avert it; but here that order is most absurdly inverted, and the present eminent danger is assign'd and put off to their future care. Let the Physician tell them he observes some Symptoms of a latent Malady, some aptitudes or first Causes of a Disease; what has is there made to meet that Enemy in the frontiers, before it advance too far? All Arts of prevention are us'd, and such uneasie remedies submitted to, as perhaps out-bid the pain of the Disease. In like manner let a Lawyer tell them he has spied some defect in an entail, which may perhaps in the next age give some interruption to their design of having their houses endure for ever, Psal. 47. how solicitous are they to repair that error, and leave nothing to the mercy of a Law-quirk? And in both cases thank the vigilant care of their informer that gave them notice of their danger: but let the Divine tell them he sees their Souls languishing under the most mortal diseases; that they have actually forfeited their inheritance in the land of the living, they can hear it unconcernedly; say, or at least think those cares are to be
be remitted to *Felix* his more convenient season, that when their *Bodies* are as infirm as their *Souls*, then care may be taken for both together. That \textquoteleft tis enough for their *Spiritual* Life to commence when the *natural* is expiring, and then to provide for *everlasting* Habitations, when they are putting off their *Earthly* Tabernacle: as for the thanks they give their *Monitor*, \textquoteleft tis generally the same that St. *Paul* received from the Galatians, to count him their *enemy* for *telling them the truth*, Gal. 4. 16. but alas! he has no reason to resent the injury, since \textquoteleft tis but the same they offer to their nearest and most intimate friend, that *Angel guardian* which God and Nature has placed within their own breasts, I mean their *Conscience*: let that at any time whisper the same admonition, and immediately they cry out as *Ahab* to *Elias*, *Haft thou found me O my Enemy*. All arts are us'd to convey themselves out of its Reach, Business, or Company, or Drink, or any thing is solicited to come in to their rescue, that in that throng they may deceive its pursuit, or at least in that louder noise drown its voice; and is not this to look on it as their Enemy, while they shun it as a *Malefactor* does the *Officer*. Yet I appeal to the breasts of those, who lean upon the broken reed of a late *Repentance*, whether this be not the case with them: let them tell me whether they dare trust themselves alone with their *Conscience*, give it opportunity of speaking freely to them, of laying before them the mad adventure they make of their precious *Souls*; which they do not only exposè
expose to as many hazards of a swift damnation, as there are accidents which may surprize their bodies with a sudden death; but do besides by this resistance repel and quench that Spirit, without which they can never hope to effect that so necessary, so difficult a work; nay, I may, I fear, ask some of them whether they have not so often shunned these parleys, that their Consciences like an abus’d Friend, has at last given them over, ceas’d to pursue them with more of those unwelcome importunities; and by its silence left them secur’d from all noise which may disturb that treacherous sleep into which they have lulled themselves. To those who are thus given up to the Spirit of slumber, I cannot hope to speak loud enough to rouse them; but to those that are but of the former rank, that have not yet so prosper’d in their unkind design against themselves, as quite to have alienated their bosom friend, that are yet within the reach of those amica verbera, the stripes and reproofs of their own Conscience; to such I would address with this most affectionate petition, that they would not seek to remove themselves from that wholesome discipline; that they would not fly that Chyrurgion whose Lancet threatens none but the imposthumated parts; but rather chuse to be shewed the formidableness of their Danger, than by a blind embracing it, to perish in it. And if they have but any general confus’d inclinations to this so reasonable a request, I shall then put on more solemnity, assume to come as an Envoy from those dreaded Consciences of theirs,
their, to mediate an interview, to propose the fixing some time of parley, and bespeak their patience to hear it out: And let them but grant this, let them but dare to do so much in order to their own safety, and I can scarce think it possible they should after retain that daring, which only tends to their ruine. In a word, let men seriously and attentively listen to that voice within them, and they will certainly need no other medium, to convince them either of the error or danger of thus procrastinating their Repentance, which themselves acknowledge must not upon their utmost peril be finally omitted, and yet nothing but an immediate dispatch can secure it shall not.

'TWILL be needeless to descend to a particular view of more of these deceits, they will easily be detected by this one general Rule, that whatsoever falls short of a present, universal, permanent Change, falls as much short of Repentance. All the pretences that are made upon any other score are but the Garments of the elder brother put upon the back of the younger, which though they might delude a blind Isaac, will never be able to deceive an all-seeing God. All that remains is to offer to the Readers consideration, how nearly he is concern'd to guard himself against all delusions in this so important an affair. It was an ancient Stratagem of War to poison the waters in an Enemies Camp, that so they may drink their own deaths: but Satan has here far out-vied that Policy. Were but our Nourishment infected, we had still a recourse left us to Medicine, but here
here he has envonom'd our very Physick, and what cure remains for those whose very remedies are their disease: when that Bath which was design'd to cleanse us, is its self polluted, we may well cry out as Dyonisius of the corrupted River of Alexandria, άνέναν ζωόλογον μάντα καθαλευστος ἐθανάτος ἑαν ἐναν καθαλευστον, what Flood shall cleanse these Waters? Where can we be secure, when our Repentance (which the Apostle, 2 Tim. 2. 26. supposes the Means of disentangling us) is its self become our Snare. This as it loudly proclaims our danger, so surely in all reason it should awake our care, teach us not to suffer our selves to be abus'd with delusive appearances and shadows of Repentance, left we finally find that Ixion-like we have embrac'd a Cloud. What an amazing defeat will it be to him, who presumes his Tears have blotted out the hand-writing against him; to find the full Bill brought in at the great Affize; and those he call'd his penitential sorrows here, to prove but the Prologue to that Tragedy which ends in weeping and gnashing of teeth. And therefore let every one timely provide against that fatal surprize, use this excellent receipt, not as a Cosmetick only to beautifie the face, give him some fair appearance to himself, but as Medicine to restore health; reduce him to such an Athletick vigorous Habit, as may evidence its self in all vital Actions, which will prove the best evidences in our last trial, where the inquisition will not be so much upon our Mouths or Eyes, as upon our Hands; not how many confessions we have made,
made, or how many tears shed, but what acts of Vertue we have substituted in the room of our Vices: whether we have broke off our Sins by righteousness, and our Iniquities by shewing mercy to the Poor, and without this 'tis infallibly certain, our Christianity will be as ineffectual to our Bliss, as it is to our Piety: if we will not permit it here to bring us to the obedience of Servants, it shall never instate us hereafter in the inheritance of Sons.

CHAP. VIII.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Mistakes concerning Almighty God, and the methods of his Providence.

To these Mistakes of our selves and interests, we have added others also concerning God, which are no less destructive to Christian Practice, for as the right knowledge of God is by our Saviour, Jo. 17. 3. put as the Epitome and summe of all that leads to bliss, so our misprisnings and misapprehensions of him, are no less remarkable for the contrary effects; nor can we suppose it otherwise, when we remember that this is the grand work and basis of all Religion, and therefore if this foundation be deceitfully laid, the superstructure must necessarily sink and perish: and in this sense 'tis possible for us at once to build on the Rock and the Sand too, we may fix our
our faith intentionally on God, and yet by absurd notions and unwarranted conceits of him, defeat in the particulars what we establish in the gross: represent him so utterly distant from what he is, that under that disguise he will not much appear, either an Encourager or Rewarder of our Piety, and then we may guess how 'tis like to flourish, since the Apostle gives it as a Fundamental Axiome, Heb. 12. 6. That he who comes to God must believe that he is a rewarder of them which diligently seek him.

Of these Mistakes concerning God, there are divers; many more than the design'd brevity of this discourse will admit me to examine. I shall only mention three, those are, First, concerning his Decrees, Secondly, his Attributes, Thirdly, his Providence.

By his Decrees, I mean not those standing rules which he has in his Word set forth as the measures by which he will distribute rewards and punishments; but those secret purposes of his Will, which he neither commands us to search after, nor will permit us to know. That there are many Mistakes concerning these, the numberless Disputes that have been rais'd about them will sufficiently attest, it being impossible for two Contradictory Opinions to be both true, though in things of this abstrufe nature 'tis very possible both may be false. 'Tis not my purpose to wade into those bottomless controversies, which like a Gulph have swallowed up so much time and industry of learned men: I shall only in general commend
commend it to the Readers consideration, whether it be probable or indeed possible for those Opinions to be true which infer falsehood in God: And then let the second enquiry be, whether that be not too evidently the result of those discourses, which set an Opposition between his revealed and his secret Will, his Commands and his Decrees, making the one a blind for the better execution of the other, as if all the Transportation and Zeal he expresses for us, all the passionate enamoring invitations he makes to us, were only to sport himself with our credulity: like the divertissement of those Men, who court them for Wives, whom they would abhor to marry: nay, as if all the protestations and most solemn oaths of God, were design’d but to advance the delusion, and raise expectations meerly to defeat them. This is such a severe sort of Irony, as we would all think not only unkind but unjust in a man; and ’tis not possible that God, who appeals to us concerning the equality of his ways, should fall short of the strictest measures among us, or exemplifie to us an unsincerity he forbids us to follow.

HOW very inauspicious influence such doctrines are apt to have on practice is too visible, for since ’tis as well the instinct as duty of our nature to aspire to an assimilation with God, even that most laudable and generous ambition shall by this means become our snare; for when God shall be thus misrepresented to us, drawn out by the black Lines, not only of severity, but deceit, rendred a Falsifier of his Word, nay Oath; ’twill give
give not only temptation but warrant to the like Practices: we shall easily swallow up all the particular commands of God, in that fundamental one of being like him; as we are taught himself has done both his commands and promises in his hidden Decrees. This is so natural a piece of Logick, that 'tis very unsafe men should be trusted with those premises whence 'tis deriv'd. And though we are not over apt to transcribe that Copy God does really set us, yet this spurious one will not miss to be taken out: that pravity of our nature which hinders in the one, exciting and spurring us on in the other. This is a way to reconcile our Vices with our reputation, and sin cum Privilegio; and there is little doubt of mens aptness to use that advantage, we see it in lower instances. The Vices of a Prince draw souls of followers, when his vertue leaves him the more eminent, because single, and renders him rather revered than imitated: And certainly 'twas none of the Devils slightest stratagems on the Gentile world, to give them such Gods as might exemplifie to them all those odious crimes, wherein he desir'd to immerse them. Whether this may not be a branch of the same Illusion, I wish the Propugners of this doctrine would seriously consider.

And as several ills are hereby countenanc'd and authoriz'd, so is all vertue in general discouraged and disheartned; this benumbs us in our Christian course, substracts that spirit and vigour, which should carry us through the weary stages of duty: indeed it cuts the very sinews of Industry.
Industry, baffles and makes ridiculous all purposes of Labour; for what should invite a man to strive for that, from which he knows he is either irreversibly precluded, or else so infallibly ascertain'd, that his negligence cannot defeat him. These are such extremes as afford no middle, wherein the vertue of industry may exist, hope being equally out-dated by the desperateness or unneceffariness of an undertaking: and how necessary hope is to excite endeavour we may learn of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 5. where he presseth his Corinthians to the constancy of Christian Practice upon this ground, that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. But according to some mens doctrine, 'tis scarce possible for a man to know whether his labour be in vain or no; since the effect of it depends not upon the revealed promise but secret purpose of God, and who knows whether there may not lie some dormant Decrees against him, which when he thinks he has run his race shall yet defeat him of his Crown. Whether a reward thus stated will much animate mens diligence, I may leave every man to judge by the like circumstances in their secular concerns; and if they find they would there damp their courage, dispirit and dishearten them from attempting, there will be sure more reason to conclude it in these spiritual Affairs, wherein our industry is commonly much less indefatigable.

BUT I shall not farther insist on the ill consequences of particular mistakes; there is one fundamental error, which if it could be cured, would supersede
concerning Almighty God, &c.

supersede all the rest; I mean our bold Folly in meddling with God's Decrees, which we call hidden, and yet ridiculously confute that Epithet by pretending to know them. This is so much an inolence as forfeits the comparison, which might belong to it as an error; we see secular States jealously reserve their private Councils, and shall we think God so scrutable, or our selves so penetrating, that none of his secrets can escape us: or if we think him, as indeed he is, unfathomable, why do we thus madly attempt what we confefs impossible; especially since we shall not only lose the thing we so vainly pursue, but others which we might else enjoy. 'Tis as if a man should be so transported with a busie earnestness of knowing his Princes Secrets, as quite to forget his Laws, and incurr capital punishment. God has given us rules of life, which upon the severest penalties he requires us to study and practice; and we divert from these, and make it our business to trace his Counsels. We are gazing at the Stars to read our destiny, and look not to our feet; and by that negligence experiment the worst fate they could have portended: for I think we may say our wild Phancies about Gods Decrees, have in event reprobated more than those Decrees upon which they are so willing to charge their ruine, and have bid fair to the damning of many, whom those left salvable. And indeed 'tis to be expected from Divine Justice, that such bold Inquisitors should find nothing but their own Destruction.

That Ark which devoutly reverenced brought bles-
sings, when curiously pried into diffus’d Pestilence and Death, 1 Sam. 6. 19. Nay the very Poets will tell us, that if we will have Prometheus his Fire, we must take Pandora’s Box also: and sure Industry cannot be worse laid out than thus to fetch home Plagues, and while so much of it runs waste to such unhappy purposes, ’tis no wonder if we want for better; forget our calling by contemplating our predestination; and let the Opinion of our fate be at once the Encourage-
ment and Excuse of our sloth, than which nothing can more evacuate the purpose and design of our Christianity, which Divines have truly defin’d to be not a contemplative but active Science.

To the same unhappy Effect concur our Mistakes of God’s Attributes, if I may call them Mistakes, which seem to be rather wilful Nescience, they being so delineated to us both in his Word and his Providences, that ’tis not want of light, but winking against it that must leave us ignorant. What the speculative errors are in this matter concerns not my present design to examine: but there seem to be some Misperceptions concerning the Divine Attributes, which do remarkably tend in their consequence and effect, to the corrupting mens manners; nay, look as if they were design’d, and affectedly chosen for that purpose; I mean especially those concerning his Justice and Mercy, which being the Attributes in which we have the most immediate Concern, the Errors in them are the more noxious and destruc-
tive. Of this sort is that narrow scanty notion too
too many have of God's Justice, which we measure not by him but our selves, and therefore proportion it not according to his infinity, but our own concerns. That is an Attribute from which we promise to our selves no advantage, and therefore we are willing to contract and shrink it up, make it serve only as a Cypher to advance mercy, but are unwilling to understand it in its proper Extent; think it a word of form put in to compleat the greatness of Gods Stile, rather than any intrinsick part of his nature, which he must deny himself to put off.

Thus do we sacrilegiously steal from God a part of his being, and while other Sacrileges invade only his patrimony, this commits a riot upon his very nature, yet as if we meant the Proverb should indemnifie us, and Exchange extinguish the Robbery, we add to another attribute what we have default from this, and amplify and extend his Mercy, as much as we confine and limit his Justice; that is the one infinite Ocean, wherein not only we, but himself must be swallowed up. We will think of him under no other notion, nor allow him to be any other thing, but what shall be in subserviency to this: we will have him Powerful to relieve our Distresses, but not to revenge our Crimes; Wise to defeat the machinations of our Enemies, but not to circumvent our own indirect or impious Policies; All-seeing to behold our Wants and Griefs, but not to discern our closer Guilts; True to perform his Promises, but not his Threats. In short, we
model all that is in God to our own wishes; and instead of believing him what he is, phancy him what we would have him. Like Micha, Jud. 17.5. making us a God for our own peculiar use, and forming the Deity we mean to worship. A strange bold Inversion, for Creatures thus to fashion their Creator, put their own stamp and impress upon him, and shape him to their Phancies. And indeed 'tis nothing but Phancy that has to do in this Attempt, and accordingly it must vanish as the operations of that illusive Faculty use to do. We may represent God to our selves as we please, but that has no more real influence on him, than a deforming Optick-glass has on the Object it disguises, he is still the same amidst all our wilde conceits of him, and will alwaies make good the title, by which he deliver'd himself to Moses, Ex. 3.14. I am that I am. All that is in him is equally immense and infinite, his mercy need not invade his justice to gain its self a larger field of action, which is already (as the Psalmist speaks) over all his works; neither his justice encroach upon his mercy, that having also a Province wide enough; all impenitent finners being within its Verge, and God knows how much foever we streighten it in our opinions, we do it indeed too much extend it in its real force, by rendring our selves the proper objects of it. In short, God who is the author of order and peace, cannot be suppos'd to be in confusion within himself; the divine Attributes are not in strife, but perfect harmony; 'tis we only that have rais'd this more than
than Gygantick war, not only against Heaven, but in it. The several Luminaries pursue the regular motions of the Spheres; but we confound at once the Laws of their Creation, and their Author too, strive to eclipse and darken the father of light. But if the removing of an earthly Land-mark be a crime punishable both by God and man, what Thunder-bolts belong to those who thus attempt to set new Boundaries in heaven, to limit and measure out even the divine Nature by the proportions of their own Fancies, and indeed such temerity as this, is too like to confute its self, and feel that Justice it will not believe: yet as great and daring a crime as it is, I fear there are few that can totally acquit themselves of it: for though all avow it, yet he that shall narrowly search his own heart, will scarce find it clear from all degrees of it: We are all apt to cherish a flattering hope, that God is not so severe as he is represented, or that if in respect of his Justice he be a consuming fire, yet that Mercy will be sure to snatch us out of the burning; like the Angels to Lot, assist our Escapes, and provide us a Zoar, that our souls may live: and this Hope though founded only in our wishes, is very apt to slide into our faith, and make us believe what we would have: by which means this becomes a kind of Epidemick Heresie, the most frequent and common misperfwasion that occurs concerning the divine Attributes.

IT would be a work more long than useful to recite the several errors that have sprung from this
this one. That of Origen, that the Devils should finally be saved, is a noted and pregnant Instance, which could be deriv'd from nothing but this unequal apprehension of Gods Justice and Mercy: And besides all other ancient, we have many branches of a later growth, that spring from the same root, a set of plausible falsities, which would quench the unquenchable Fire, and kill the never dying Worm; I mean those allaying softning descriptions some of this age have made of Hell, some changing the kind, others abating the intensity, or at least the duration of those Torments, each substracting so much from this Tophet, that they have left Atheism an easie task to take away the rest: and may give suspicion they mean to visit that place, which they are so industrious to make easie.

BUT whatever they do themselves, 'tis sure this is the way to send others thither, to take off their fears of it, to make them think it not so dreadful a place as they once suppos'd, and consequently less careful to decline the ways that lead to it. 'Tis indeed too obvious that such persuasions do mightily impugn Christian practice, and embolden men in sin: and God knows we need no such encouragement; the more general fallacious hopes of Mercy being too sufficient for that purpose without these supernumerary deceits: but between the one and the other, Libertinism is like to outgrow all restraints, and the Opinion of Gods goodness instead of leading men to repentance, will slacken those reigns where-
with our brutish Nature should be bridled and restrain'd, and we thus left unto the sway of lust and passion, must run headlong upon ruine, as the Horse rusheth into the Battel. For alas, we are not so generous as to do well for Vertues sake, nay nor so provident as to do it for Reward, 'tis our fear that is the most prevalent incentive, and accordingly we find religion generally makes her first impressions there. They are the terrors of the Lord that do most usually, and most effectually persuade men, 2 Cor. 5. 11. our Hearts must be pricked, and at those Orifices pietty enters. Now when all these terrors shall be superseded by the opinion of an overwhelming mercy, when Hell shall either be annihilated, or suppos'd so to annihilate us, that we shall lose our passiveness with our being, and be as uncapable of suffering, as even Heaven its self can make us, what will be left to engage us to vertue, or deter us from vice: Alas, do we not often see a daring Lust bid battel to all the artillery of Heaven, meet God in his loudest Thunder, and venture on damnation in its dreadfulest form? and can we think it will be more modest, when it shall be told that they are only edgeless weapons it hath to encounter? that Gods Thunder amidst all its noise carries no bolt? and that the Flames of the bottomless pit, are but a painted fire, that at a distance may fright but not hurt us, or at least so hurt us, that we shall not feel it? When those rubs which fear interpos'd are thus removed, there is nothing to stay the course of headlong riot, but pre-
precipitously it will on, where ever strong desire shall drive, or flattering lust allure: he that loved his sin, even when it threatned him ruine, serv’d it assiduously, when it promised no other wages than death, Rom. 6. 23. how will he hug this viper when he thinks ’tis stingless, and give up his ear to be bored by that Master, which affords him present pleasures without future stripes: we see even in Civil matters the presumption of Impunity is the great nurse of Disorders, and if it were not for the coercive power of Laws we should soon see how little the directive would signify; and doubtless ’tis the same in spiritual or rather worse, by how much we are more bent upon the breaking of Gods Laws than mens, and consequently will be the more apprehensive of any Encouragement.

Of the truth hereof our experience gives too sad proof, none rushing so boldly upon Gods justice, as those who have most fortified themselves against the dread of it, as if they meant their practice should experiment the truth of their speculation, and make the utmost trial whether God can be provoked or no. Indeed men use mercy as amaz’d Passengers sometimes do a plank in a shipwrack, lay so much weight upon it, as sinks both it and themselves; so perishing by too great a confidence of their rescue, and finding a Gulph where they expected an Ark: not that I suppose Mercy unable to support the weight of all the Persons, nay, and of all the sins in the world, which have not the one ponderous adherent of Impenitence superadded; but that
that is a burthen which even the divine Clemency sinks under, refuses to plead such a cause, and refers it to Justice as its proper Court: And therefore to sin on, in hope of mercy, is to undermine our selves, and commit a folly as absurd as ruinous, I wish I could say 'twere not also as frequent: but God knows 'tis every where too apparent; men openly avow it, so that 'tis become the vulgar Answer to every convicting Reproof, that God is merciful: And surely they that observe the growth of vice, since our new descriptions of Hell came abroad, will have cause to think the one has had no small influence on the other, and that while some have made it borrow the uneasiness of our humane state to make up its torments; they have taken care it should be just, and lend us back sins of a greater magnitude: This miserable traffic have these Factors settled, between the present world and the infernal region, that Hell should have Earths pains, and Earth Hells wick- edness; the later alas we are too fully possest of, which is like to send too many souls to discover the deceit of the other. In fine, our groundless confidences of mercy, and those other Chimera's we forge out of that, are certainly the most frequent and dangerous underminers of Christian practice: these like the Sun give heat and vigor to those inordinate lusts, which a just fear of vengeance would as a winters frost nip, and destroy: And till we lay by these easie flight thoughts of God, and consider him in those more awful attributes which exact our reverence, his mercy will only
only serve to ripen us for his judgment, that smooth and gentle property in God, which to all who abuse it not is indeed the oil of gladness, will thus perverted acquire the more fatal quality of Oil, serve only to intend our flames, and remove us as far from the rewards of Piety, as our bold phancies have done from the practice.

A third sort of mistakes there are by which Piety is obstructed, and those are such as concern God's providence, about which the world has long since had many disputes; some entirely denying it, as presuming God so wholly taken up with the contemplation and enjoyment of his own felicity, that he was utterly inconsiderate of that of his creatures, and an unconcern'd spectator of humane affairs; others limiting and restraining it to those things only which themselves were pleas'd to think worthy of the divine inspection and conduct: But these questions have been more bandied among Philosophers than Christians, and therefore are beyond our present enquiry. Yet give me leave by the way to express my fears, that these errors have yet some secret rooting in too many hearts; that there are many who rather formally say, then cordially believe, that God governs the World, and disposes as well of humane as divine things; a suspicion that is rendred too probable by those indirect arts men use, to possess themselves of secular advantages; for did they seriously think that all those things are in God's hands, from whence they are neither strong nor cunning enough, either to wrest or pilfer them,
them, 'tis scarce imaginable they should attempt such painful impossibilities, disquiet themselves in vain as the Psalmist speaks, and which is worse, forfeit all title to them as God's gifts, by thus assuming to make them their own. But this is a disquisition I must leave every man to make in his own heart; only let me say, that he that has there any doubt of God's universal or particular providence, has also in it the root of all unchristian Sins, of Distrust, Solicitude, and Fraud: there being nothing that can effectually supersede our own carenings and contrivances for our selves, but the assurance that God cares for us. Men being still apt to scramble, where there is none from whom they expect an orderly and sufficient distribution, and therefore this error where ever it is found, may well be reckon'd among the impeders of Christian duty.

But besides those who thus doubt of Providence, there are others liable to great mistakes, I mean those who to their just belief of God's Providence, superadd a groundless confidence of their own skill in fathoming it, that are not content to know it in its product and event, but pretend to discern it in its most secret designs and purposes; and do not so much reverse God's dispensations, as interpret them: I do not here mean to condemn all particular applications of providential Events, which are sometimes so extraordinary and remarkable, that they are their own expositors, and point out the construction we are to make: and an humble advertence unto such,
such, is not only innocent but necessary: but when men shall attempt to read every line in God's hand, to make their own inference from every efflux of Providence; these pretenders to divine Palmistry, seem to differ only thus much from those who make a trade of the natural, that they Cheat themselves as well as others.

Yet there want not some who have gone yet farther, and think not only to understand Providence, but assist it: not only trace it in all its intricate windings, and concealed intentions, but help it in the execution, and give birth to its conceptions: Of this sort especially are those, who having possessed their brains with some conjectural expostions of obscure prophecies, will administer to providence, and call out those events they expect: and as if they were conscious that God would not make good their dreams, endeavour to do it themselves. This Age has afforded too many instances of this, when the fulfilling of prophecies has by some been made the solemn summons to rebellion and blood: and in order to the hating and destroying the whore, Rev. 17. 1. Men have been animated to hate and destroy all who were not infected with their own Phrensie. This we know has been call'd the helping of the Lord against the mighty, and something more than votive Curses awarded to those who refus'd to assist. Thus have they first wildly mistaken, and then no less wildly out-run Gods designs: as if like Baal, Jud. 6. he were unable to plead for himself, to vin-
vindicate his own cause, or effect his purposes without their help: and having resolved what he shall do, obtrude themselves upon him as his instruments; how repugnant such anticipations of Providence are to the interests of Christianity is too apparent from the many detestable effects they have produc'd.

BUT setting aside these, let us return to those we spake of before; who presuming to expound providential Events, make them the Criterion by which to judge both of persons and of causes, concluding the one loved or hated, the other approved or disallowed by God, according to their prosperous or adverse Success. The first of these was by our Saviour exploded, as an undue way of process in the Jews, in the case of the Galileans, and before him Solomon had given it as a Maxim, that no man could know love or hatred by all that is before him: Eccl. 9. 2. And if under the Jewish Oeconomy, where temporal Blessings made up so great a part of their Promises, it was so; much more is it under the Gospel, whose frame and composure is quite distant; which instead of proposing secular prosperities to its proselytes, affures them the contrary; sets up the Cross as the Standard under which they are to fight, and affords no temporal Hopes but with an allaying proviso of Persecutions and Afflictions; nay, the Apostle to the Hebrews goes farther, makes them not only incident but necessary to Christians, the badge and cognizance of Sonship, whilest the no chastening is the fatallest Sign, a token of bastardy and
and abdication, *Heb. 12. 7, 8.* And doubtless the experience of every Christian asserts the doctrine; we are all apt with the *Prodigal* to forsake our fathers house, and as long as we can have the riot and not the wants, shall never think of returning; we must be famisht into consideration, and our husks alone will send us home to the fatted Calf. And can there be a greater indulgence in God, than thus to make our Iniquity our Punishment, that it may not be our Ruine; to embitter those sensualities whose lusciousness serves to intoxicate us, and to clip those wings which he ses carry us from him. Stories tell us that the *Trojan Wives* after the destruction of their Country, being wearied with their restless vagrant life, necessitated their Husbands to a settlement by burning their Ships. And the same kind stratagem God has upon us: he sees that our worldly accessions do rather enlarge than fill our appetites, and carry us on to farther pursuits, and by drawing us still more from him the Center of rest, exposes us to endless wandrings, and then what can be kinder than to rescue us from such a condition, that *Curse of Cain,* to be a fugitive, and a vagabond in the earth, to deprive us of our treacherous prosperities, and fire those Ships wherein we are preparing like *Jonah,* to fly from the presence of the Lord: so by a happy necessity forcing us to fix our selves on him. And this is the worst God designs us in every adversity: and did we mean but as well to our selves, we should not miss of receiving the happiest Effects, even that
that peaceable fruit of righteousness the Apostle speaks of, Heb. 12. This holy men so well understood, that we find them dread nothing so much as an uninterrupted prosperity; they like the Muscovite Women, grew jealous of Gods love when he forbare to strike, upon which score it is, that in the Ancient Fathers, there are so many solemn petitions for stripes; such importunate solicitations for those medicinal corrections, where-in they judg'd both Gods kindness and their own safety to consist.

AND then how perverse, how preposterous are our measures, when we conclude quite the other way, estimate Gods love only from outward successes, and think he is never angry but when he finites: a Perfwasion, which as it is very false in its grounds, so very pernicious in its effects, and creates hopes and fears, as fallacious as its self. For first, if we apply it to our selves, it produces mischiefs proportionable to the divers states under which we are. If a man be full and prosperous, it makes him proud and secure, for when he has not only the possession of those things the World values, but takes them as an attestation of Gods peculiar kindness and approbation, what should make him either consider or reform his guilts? If he have sanctity enough to possess him of Gods favour, and all these profitable effects of it, he will not easily be perswaded he needs more: and any man that shall tell him he does, shall be heard with the same indignation wherewith Cæsus entertain'd Solon, when he found him question that happiness,
happiness, which he expected he should have admir'd. Prosperity is in its self an emboldening thing, but when backt by this Opinion of it, grows into all insolence, till at last it even recoil in the face of the Donor, and dare God by all those enormous riots, to which it enables Men.

ON the other side, this Opinion presents a less merry, but not less dangerous Temptation to those in adversity; for when they shall look on themselves only as the Anvil for Gods strokes, they will be too apt to complete the parallel by answering it in hardnes and inflexibility; have the αὐτιτυπον υπώ, as the Father calls it, which reverberates the blow on him that gave it. Persevering wickedness is so naturally the issue of Desperation, that we find the Jews take up the one meery to countenance the other, pretend hopelessnes to avoid reformation: Thus we find it, Ezek. 33. 10. Our iniquities are upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we live? And again more plainly, Jer. 18. 12. There is no hope, and then the Inference is ready, let us walk every one in his own ways. Endeavour is the child of hope, and we attempt not to attone one whom we conclude implacable, so that Wrath may consume, but will never melt us, 'tis Love only that has that softening, dissolving Power, and unless we discern a mixture of that in Gods afflictions, they will never render us malleable to his impressions. We kiss a Fathers hand and rod, when an Executions stroke we suffer rather than bear. St. John tells us we love God because he loved us, 1 John 4. 19.
19. I wish all men would make good the Inference; but 'tis sure they are too apt to do it in the reverse, and will hate if they apprehend themselves hated; a state which at once exemplifies, and anticipates the worst part of Hell to us, yet very incident to those who interpret every stroke of Gods, as the effect of enmity and utter aversion. This is to do that to our selves which the Devils so deprecated from Christ, to torment us before our Time, it being peculiar to the vengeance of the other World to be meerly punitive, that here being rather discipline than vengeance design'd to reduce, not destroy us: and indeed besides the pain of sense which this Error creates, it does (to perfect the Hell) give that of loss also; deprives us of one of the great Evangelical felicities, that of rejoicing in Tribulations, which our Saviour thought so considerable, as to insert amongst his Beatitudes; and his Apostles frequently mention triumphantly as the great privilege and prerogative of a Christian. For if all adverse successess be a note of Gods disfavour, there will be no place for joy even in the most pious sufferings. St. Stephens ravishing prospect will be intercepted, and a Martyrs death be as uncomfortable as a Malefactor's. But if these were the only sufferings to which joy were annexed, there would be but too few concern'd in the deprivation; those wherein we are more universally interested, are those Chastisements of God which our Guilts provoke; which though in respect of their cause they are Matters of the great-
elf sadness, yet in regard of their significance and effect, they are Grounds of comfort, they signify that God (however displeas'd) yet has not abandoned the care of us; thinks us worth his correction, and designs our reduction: and the effect will (if not obstructed by us) be answerable to that design: our Chastening here rescues us from the sins, and consequently the condemnation of the world, 1 Cor. i. 32. and this is sure no slight motive of rejoicing; and we are very unjust to God and our selves, if we will exchange it for the sullen murmurs of a desperate incorrigibleness.

AND as this persuasion is thus pernicious in reflection on our selves, so neither is it more innocent when applied to others; for first, if we look on the men that prosper in the world, as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. 73. 12. we shall too often find them answer the character he gives them in the former part of the Psalm, and when from their temporal affluence, we shall conclude God's favour to them, 'twill be hard resisting the temptation, which (without that Argument) the Psalmist was under, of thinking it vain to cleanse our hearts, or wash our hands in innocency. Nay, we shall be apt to join our suffrage to those in Malachi 3. 15. and call the proud, happy: and if we esteem them so, 'tis natural to desire to be like them; so we shall quickly grow to despise a poor or afflicted innocense, and embrace all thriving prosperous sins.

ON the other side, if we look on others in an adverse calamitous state, this Opinion suggests hard and severe sentences concerning them, inclines
chines us to judge where we should succour, and how great an accumulation of Misery that is, we may learn from Job, whom we find not so often nor so passionately complaining of any of his presumptions, as of the unkind censtores of his Friends, who weighing in this deceitful balance of temporal successses, made very false judgements of him, and as if they were to glean after Satan, endeavoured to despoil him of that only comfort his malice had left, the Conscience of his Innocency. This is as the Psalmist speaks, to persecute him whom God has smitten, and to talk to the grief of those whom he hath wounded; a thing repugnant to the common temper of humanity, and much more to that tenderness, those affections and bowels Christianity requires; and therefore in this respect also, we may reckon this persuasion very injurious to Christian duty.

Nor is it less so when applied to Causes, in which it is full as deceitful a Rule as it is in Persons: God has design'd us another measure of our undertakings; his word and law, by the general proportions whereof, we are to square and accommodate our particular actions: he sends us not to his providence, and the various distributions of that, or allows us to judge of the Justice, by the Success of our Attempts. If that were the trial, 'twere impossible for any enterprise to be lawful, since that which should legitimate it, is subsequent to it, and can have no influence on it, to the making it good or bad: and as it does not make, so neither does it infallibly signify it to be either:
either; and of those who presume it does, I should ask whence it came to do so? If by any assignation of God let them produce it; and if not thence, I'm sure it can make no pretence to certainty, God having no where oblig'd his Providence to make good our phantasies and conjectures. Nay, if we look into Scripture examples, we shall find this irrefragably confuted; the same Cause having at several times differing success. Thus the Israelites were discomfited at their first assault upon Ai, and yet successul after; 'twas something extrinsick to the cause that made the variation, that still continuing the same. The like we find in the case of the Benjaminites, who though in as ill an engagement as can well be imagin'd, had yet two victories over the other Tribes, Judg. 20. But there is one instance that may serve for all, and that is the taking of the Ark by the Philistines, he that shall contemplate that, will sure never think fit to measure causes by success, unless he will give the difference also to Dagon, who then triumph'd in the spoils of the God of Israel. In short, 'tis evident victories are not so entail'd upon the justest causes, but that they may be, and often are cut off, either by the guilts of the undertakers, or by some other secret disposfal of the Divine wisdom; but the former is so frequently the obvious cause of it, that we are not often put to resort to the later. 'Tis no strange thing to see all Israel troubled by an Achan, or have the Ark taken captive from off the shoulders of a Hophni and Phineas, nor will it ever be possible
possible for the best cause to secure its self from the blasting influence of its Abettors crimes.

THIS is so clear and evident a Truth, that 'tis matter of some wonder, how the contrary perswasion should ever insinuate its self; and indeed it is not probable it ever had, if Interest, that grand Sophister, had not introduced it. Men engage in designs not on intuition of their lawfulness, but profit, and when they are such as nothing can warrant a priori, their only reserve is to make them good a posteriorem, to bring a licence after the fact, and justify their beginning by their end; which how ridiculous soever it may seem to sober reason, yet such is the natural shame, or secular inconvenience of owning an unjust Act, that men will wrap themselves, though in the thinnest and most diaphanous veils, make use of the absurdest pretences, and faintest colours to shadow their Guilt, and whilst consciousness bids them say somewhat for themselves, and the case affords no solid plea, they are driven to these deplorable sleights and subterfuges. Indeed this is an argument that stands single, and is seldom us'd but in those causes that admit of no better; which we may reasonably conclude to be the reason, why it was so much insisted on by our late disturbers, who in such abundance of light, as they own'd, could not be supposed ignorant enough to believe themselves: 'twas certainly the desititution of better arguments that cast them upon this, forc't them to ransack the Alcoran, and rifle a piece of Turkish Divinity to make good their Saintship.

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They now discern the unskilfulness of that plea, which a little time has converted to an accusation. The great change it has pleas'd God to make among us, retorting their conquering Syllogisms, and making them need a new success to justify their vaunts of the old. God grant we may not here relieve them again, and by our personal sins, help them to that which the justice of their Cause never did, nor is like to acquire them.

But though this plea of success be frequently urg'd in policy, yet it prevails with many who know not that it is so; indeed the vulgar are so much subjected to their senses, that generally the conclusions drawn thence are easily embrac'd, when those from Reason and Conscience have a double difficulty, first to be understood, and next to be admitted, and the most elaborate discourse shall not convince them of the right of that cause, which in the last appeal to Gods Tribunal by War, has been openly condemn'd; whilst the spoils of victory as much satisfy the Understanding of the justice of the Prize, as the Desire with the wealth or glory of it. And this is it which renders such kind of arguings very pernicious, they being so fitted to the common temper, that they seldom miss to be effectual; and engage the heady multitude in the Prosecution of the worst designs, that are recommended to them by the one Catholick vertue of Success. This is indeed as the Prophet speaks, Ez. 13.22. to strengthen the Hands of evil doers, that they turn not from their wickedness; to dazzle their Eyes so with the splendor of prosperous
prosperous iniquity, that they can never come to take an exact view, and discern it in its true form: And doubtless this was none of the less-prevailing arts of seducement among us, and drew in many to abet those seditious practices, which all Laws of God and Man prohibited, and whereby Christian Religion has at once been violated and defam’d; has not only her precepts broken, but her self asperst with the foul consequences of that disobedience, and so buys one injury with another; the contempt of her Authority with the loss of her Reputation.

We have now seen the ill consequences issuing from these mistakes of Gods Providence, but we must take notice that there remains yet as great or greater danger on the other side; and that a total neglect is worse than an erroneous construction of it. For though God have secluded us from that more exact minute discerning of his purposes, yet he means not his dispensations should be lookt on as wholly insignificant, and therefore has given us the general scope and meaning of them, according to which we are to limit and restrain our wandering guesses, and also judge of particular events. Now as Gods original and primary design in the creation of Man, was to render him a subject capable of eternal happiness; so also have all his subsequent Acts toward him aim’d at the same end: and because there is nothing removes man so far from that grand purpose of his being as Sin; therefore God has made the suppressing of that, the universal intendment of his disposals concerning
ing us: so that the most different dispensations
do severally pursue that one end; *prosperity* and
*adversity* in their successive changes are sent to re-
claim us from the *error of our ways*, with this only
difference, that the one leads, the other drives.
This is asserted by St. Paul, who tells us, that
*the goodness and long-suffering of God is to lead us to*
*Repentance*, Rom. 2. 5. And also that when we
are judged, *we are chastened of the Lord, that we*
*may not be condemned with the World*, I Cor. 11. 32.
And indeed the whole Scripture runs in the same
strain; and both from prosperous and adverse
successes urges the obligation to obedience. This
is the notice God expects we should take of all
his dealings towards us. And the want thereof
we find often sharply upbraided by God to the
*Jews*: how often does he recount his redeeming
*them from Egypt*, his enstating them in Canaan,
and all his wonderful works for them, with an ac-
cusing reflection upon their ingratitude; and
that we may know his *Judgements* are no less to
be accounted for than his *Mercies*, we find him,
*Amos 4.* making a *Catalogue* of them, and closing
every period with this *Pathetick* reproof of their
obstinacy, *Yet have ye not returned to me faith the*
*Lord*. In short, God requires that we should ob-
serve every turn of his hand, in order to the re-
forming our own *lives*, and by the several *medi-
iums* of *Gratitude* or *fear*, infer that *necessary Con-
clusion* of a *sincere universal Obedience*; and the
*neglect* of this is the crime the *Psalmist* mentions,
*Psalm 28. 5.* with so severe a menace. *They regard*
*not*
not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.

And as this is requir'd from single persons, so also from societies and communities, which as they are in their publick capacities the most eminent subjects of Judgements or Mercies, so are they the most eminently accountable for both. And though the Neglect and Abuse of Gods methods be a very provoking guilt when 'tis only personal, yet is it much more so, when it becomes national: And therefore as it is every mans concern for his own peculiar to examine how he has answered Gods methods towards him, so is it an enquiry very pertinent in relation to the Publick also; especially where the dispensations have been remarkable and extraordinary; in which respect the Inquisition cannot appear more necessary for any than this Nation; upon which consideration I hope the Reader will think it no unpardonable digression, if we awhile turn aside after it.

It is the affirmation of our Blessed Saviour, that where much is given, there shall be much requir'd; a thing so consonant with natural Equity, that we all give our suffrage to it, by making it the measure of our expectations in secular things, where-in every man looks for returns proportionable to his expence or Industry. The Husbandman expects a Crop answerable to his Seed and Labour: and in the nobler cultures of the Mind, we justly exact of our Pupils to let their manners attest the discipline they have been under: According to which estimate we must resolve, that Gods expec-
Mischiefs arising from Mistakes Chap. 8.

Stations from us of this Nation cannot but be very high, there being no people under the Sun, whom he has more signaliz'd as his own immediate care, on whom the Divine Oeconomy has more constantly and even solicitorously attended in all the variety of reasonable and powerful applications.

I SHALL not assume the work of a Chronicle, by giving a series of all those mercies, we receiv'd in the loins of our Ancestors; and of which we have provided one unhappy memorial, I mean our nauseating and despising them; it having been the business of our days, to disentail those two most inestimable Blessings, of a pure Religion and outward Peace, which our immediate Progenitors left us; and to derive to our posterity the contrary mischiefs of impiety and confusion.

BUT not to ravel so far back, I shall confine my reflections to so late a date, that I shall not need to bespeak the faith afforded to Historians; scarce any that can be my Reader, but is qualified to be my witness too; and must acknowledge that there has on God's part been no Method wanting, that might purifie us to himself a Peculiar people zealous of Good works. To that end of refining and cleansing us it was, that he kept us so long in the furnace, permitted us to those many Fiery trials of our late calamitous days. 'Twere impertinent here to give a Description of those sufferings, which every man's Memory can so readily represent to him; or to paint that Flame whose scorchin's we have felt; 'tis enough to say, that God appear'd in
in them, earnestly industrious to have reduced us; like a skilful Captain besieg'd us closely, straitned us so in all our interests, that it was scarce possible for us to fly any where but to himself. Indeed he that would make up an exact Catalogue of our Calamities must calculate in how many instances humane nature may be passive; there being scarce any of our suffering capacities, to which they were not liberally apportioned, our Estates, our Persons, our Friends, and which is more than all our Consciences, all groaning under the weight of that Yoke, which our own Sins prepar'd, and other mens sins put on. Which way foever we lookt, we saw nothing but that which might consume our Eyes and grieve our Heart: If on the Church, we saw that torn by Schism, spoil'd by Sacrilege; the abomination of desolation standing in the Holy place, and the house of Prayer made in the most literal sense a den of Thieves. If on the State, we saw the breath of our Nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord taken in their Pits, Imprison'd, and Arraign'd, and barbarously Murder'd, by those who slew him like the Heir in the Gospel, that they might seize on his Inheritance. We saw this and all other Mischiefs establisht by a Law, and made as irreverrible as powerful malice could render them. And now in such a distress, who would not think that such a necessity should have become our vertue? And so perfect a destitution compell'd our resort to the Divine aid. And as little opprest States us'd to make themselves homagers to the Romans, to
to engage their protection; so we should have made an entire surrendry of our selves to God, that we might have gain'd a title to his rescues and deliverances.

THIS genuine and kindly effect I doubt not but it had in some, I would fain think in many; but we are not now considering particulars, but the community; and therefore how sincere forever such personal reformations were, they must not come under the account of publick and general, unless for their Number and Eminency they had been sufficient to have overwhelmed the contrary perverseness: Many there might be whose hearts (as 'tis said of Josiabs, 2 Chron. 34.27.) did melt, and yet the far greater number of the obdurate, still justly denominate us a stiff neck'd people; an Epithet wherewith God often reproaches the Jews, and sure we have no less evidenced our title to it; for al as, as if we had meant to revenge the inexorableness of our oppressors towards us, in our obstinacy to God; as if when we could keep nothing else, we had yet reserv'd this sullen comfort, of having our hearts impregnable, we made a shift to hold out against all these batteries; there was little appearance, and less reality of Repentance; and if some of our lusts were at all less raging, 'twas only because they were starved into a little tameness, the supplies cut off which should maintain our Riot: but when any recruits could be had, they were devoted that way, and even in the worst of times we must not to be as luxurious as we were able: and as though we resolv'd that
that vice like the Sea, should gain in one part what it lost in another; we took order that what was thus inevitably defalkt from those expensive Sins, should be made up in the cheaper: we could curse, and swear, & blaspheme in spight of Sequestration, and this wretched Immunity we made abundant use of, till we even became Proverbial for it; and gave our enemies pretence, to fasten it on us as our distinctive Character. Yet to shew our selves generous sinners, there was one vice we bought at a dear rate, I mean our as imprudent, as unchristian animosities, and picques among our selves; a sin that helpt to revenge all the rest: and was as well upon a humane, as divine account a grand instrument of our ruine. To these we may add our impatient murmurs at our sufferings, which did in some work so preposterously, as to reconcile them to the inflicters, made them unworthily desert that cause, they found chargeable to maintain, and contrary to the advice of Solomon, Chufe the ways of those oppressors whose prosperity they envied, Prov. 3. But of these real Apostates the number I hope was not great, I wish I could say so also of those seeming desertors, whose knees bowed to Baal, though their hearts did not: who belied their own loyalty, and in a shew of compliance prostituted conscience in several Engagements as inconsistent with each other, as they all were with duty; and such as they pretended no excuse for their taking, but their resolutions of breaking. I was indeed a sad spectacle to see what shouls every menacing Edict
Edict brought in; while men ran in as much haste to take the opportunity of Perjury, as the primitive Christians were wont to do of Martyrdom: Indeed herein we seem'd to do of our enemies peculiar, would not suffer them to enjoy those marks of distinction, they had framed to themselves; so that as far as Oaths could signify we were all one Party. And yet while we thus disclaim'd Gods reliefs by these indirect attempts of our own, we took it very ill that he left us to the success of them: That he prosper'd not those methods he had interdicted, and made us Triumphant, not only over our Enemies but himself too: and upon this score many mutinous blasphemies were utter'd and perhaps some more thought, though I confess, generally we were not so modest, as to stick at laying the worst we could think, and indeed they that heard the frequent doubts men own'd of Gods justice, providence, nay his very being, would not think they suppress'd any thing as too ill to be spoken: we laid boundless expectations upon the justice of our cause, and as if we had extremely oblig'd God by not being Traytors, or Schismaticks, thought he wrong'd us extremely that he made us not Victors. Samuel tells Saul that Rebellion was like Witchcraft, but we seem'd to think Loyalty was so; that like a spell it was to keep us invulnerable, not only against our enemies but our Selves: and so countercharm all our crimes, that they should only be active to please, not hurt us. But if in the last place we reflect on our selves
selves even in relation to that cause in which we so much confided, 'tis to be fear'd all men will not be able to evince they suffer'd for God and the King, though they did it in their quarrel: 'tis the Intent must denominate whose Martyrs they were, it being too frequent for private passions and interests, to march under the banner of conscience; and we call that sometimes taking up the Cross, which is only the taking up an animosity or humor. Indeed 'tis not possible for any to be Gods Martyr, who is not first his Servant: none of us will suffer the greatest things for a person for whom we will not do the least; and 'tis absurd Hypocrifie for a man to pretend he has left all for God, who we see cannot be woed to leave the most despicable lust for him. He that will not part with the noise of a loud Oath, the pleasure of an intemperate Cup, the applause of a profane Jest for God, will surely much less expose his liberty, his estate, his life for him: and therefore what hazards forever any man ran in any of those, he can with no justice set it upon Gods account, unless he can produce such other acts of obedience, as may witness this to be true and genuine. And upon this trial, I fear God's party will appear to have been but small among us, and perhaps the King's not much greater, it being not very probable that those should have any great sense of duty to him, that had none to God: or that those should religiously revere one Commandment, who despised the other nine. But we need not the help of inference and probability in this
this matter, the mutinous and insolent behaviour of many who professe loyalty, did too clearly evince it: And as it is said of Joab, that he turn'd after Adonijah, though he turn'd not after Absalom, 1 King. 2 28. and some of ours had little private rebellions of their own even while they oppos'd the more publick. I love not to pass censures on mens thoughts, yet I doubt some would be too conscious to confute me, if I should say there wanted not those, who owed their zeal to their Spleen, and did not so much love those they fought for, as hated those they fought against. And it may perhaps deserve enquiry, whether that demure pretence of holiness their Adversaries had put on, did not more avert some of our Libertines from them, than all their real crimes: They perhaps so far mistook them, as to suspect they might be in earnest, when they professe to advance the power of Godliness, and at that took an Alarm, and such Men (if such there were) contended not for the Liberty of their Countrey, but their Lusts; and could with no justice, expect either a reputation, or success from that cause which they at once helpt to defame and defeat. I am loth to go farther, and suspect that even some of the devoutest sort were inspir'd more by the Spirit of opposition than Piety; yet I confess 'tis hard to resist that surmise, when 'tis consider'd that our Liturgy never had its due veneration, but when the Directory was set up against it. Indeed he that shall remember how our private Oratories were then throng'd and crowded;
concerning Almighty God, &c.

Crouded; and shall now compare it with our empty Churches, will be tempted to think our devotion was of that sort, which is excited by interdict, and deadned by invitations; a perverse kind of Zeal kindled only by Antiperistasis or collision; none of that pure flame which descends from heaven. And then as our Saviour in another case saies, if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness, Mat. 6. If this fairer and more specious part of us were thus reprovable, how obnoxious were the other? and if our Earnestness in a righteous cause, by its Sinister motives or adherencies be unable to justify its self, how shall it bear that heavier task we laid on it, and plead for our other Guilts.

This is the true though not full account of our behaviour under Gods Discipline, thus did we frustrifie upon his pruning us; brought forth indeed, nothing but degenerous fruit. The holy Writ leaves it as a brand of most inveterate Impiety upon Abaz, that in the time of his distress he sinn'd yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. 28. 22. and sure we have too just title to the same Character of infamy; those sufferings which were sent to chastifie our sins, serv'd but to encrease them, and like the Israelites in the Brick-kilns, they multiplied the more for their oppression; we debaught even our Executio-ners, and made every new calamity supply us with some new vice. And now when Gods rod was thus despis'd, we were in all reason to expect he should draw his sword, revenge our re-
distance of his methods, by somewhat we could not resist, make our Plagues as obstinate as our selves, and involve us in hopeless inevitable ruine. This certain fearful looking for of Judgment, Heb. 10. 27. was all we had left our selves, of all the rich patrimony we were once possesse of; and our present misery seem’d impossible to expire any way but by dying into greater.

But as great artificers are us’d to magnifie their Art, by choosing the most unlikely materials; so did it please God in this total indisposedness of ours, when we were so unapt subjects to illustrate his mercy, and as if he design’d this national deliverance should (in its proportion) be the Transcript of our more universal redemption, he visited us not only in this state of misery, but enmity; when we had set our selves in defiance of his judgments, he laid as it were an Ambush of mercy for us, and surpriz’d us with safety: by such undiscernible ways return’d the captivity of our Sion, that we were indeed delivered like them that dream, Psal. 126. 1. gave us a victory without a war: without the intervention of garments rolled in blood, Esa. 9. 5. invested us in our Triumphant robes, and in a word, made us insensibly to glide into our long forgotten prosperity.

And now who can imagine, but this miraculous Mutation without us, must also work a Change within us. Indeed they must have a very ill opinion of humane nature, that can think it possible it should have perverseness enough to resist such endearments; such kindly Heat must needs
needs be supposed to melt us; and if before our Pride disdain'd to be compell'd, yet even that stubbornest part of us can not object against the being courted into amendment. So that when God has thus yielded to our terms, left us not so much as a Punctilio in our way to Piety; 'tis but a reasonable expectation we should embrace it with as great an Earnestness, as it was formerly rejected by us.

AND would God we could say we did so; but alas, we still affect prodigies, take a kind of wanton Joy in defeating Gods designs, and as if we aspired to vye Miracles with him, have made our returns as unparallel'd as his mercies; so that the sum of our account is this. No Nation was ever more signaliz'd by Gods goodness, or its own perverseness, it being hard to determine in which of those respects it is most eminent. That this is in the general perfectly true, there are too many particulars ready to testify, indeed a whole cloud of Witnesses do concurr to the proving the charge, I shall not undertake to examine all, yet some of the principal it will not be amiss to take notice of.

BEFORE we enquire into the use we have made of Gods Mercies, let us a little consider what our sense of them is; and sure of all the interrogatories we can put to our selves, this appears the easiest, the most gentle favourable Test, that even our own partialities could elect for us; it being so natural to men in misery to value a rescue, and celebrate their deliverers, that the
contrary would be the only wonder: we see even the Jews, who were none of the most malleable people, yet deliverances made impressions on them, set them to their devout processions and solemn hymns in praise of God: nay such a piece of native Religion is this, that the Heathens exemplifie it to us. The Philistins when they had taken Samson, magnified their Dagon, as having delivered their enemy and the destroyer of their country into their hands, Judg. 16. 24. So upon the victory over Saul, 1 Sam. 31. 9. they sent round about to publish it in the house of their Idols. And in all stories we find, the Heathen Altars were never so loaden with Sacrifices, as upon such occasions: and the Gospel tells us that those on whom Christ bestowed miraculous cures, were so transported with them, that their gratitude supplanted their obedience, and made them notwithstanding his prohibition proclaim the wonders he had done for them: But I fear if we reflect upon our selves, we shall not be able to match any of these instances. 'Tis true our late change was entertain'd with a Joy profuse enough, but not enough religious. We saw that great things were done for us, and thereof we rejoiced, but we did not so much consider that the Lord had done them, Ps. 114. and so were rather affected with the rarity and profitableness, than the mercy and kindness of the Dispensation: and though the care of our Governours have provided for the religious part also, assign'd days of Purim for the perpetual commemoration of our deliverance, yet
yet our slight observance of them does too fully evince our Joy was meerly secular; and surely he that observ'd the numerous and loud aclamations in the streets, and the few faint Hallelujahs in the Temple, must needs say they were very disproportionate, and that how much soever the most of us rejoic't, it was not in the Lord: and then we are not to wonder that it was so transient; since it was meerly earthly it must needs partake of the fadingness of its original: whereas had we deriv'd it higher, it would have been lasting and durable; it could not so suddenly have expir'd, had we fetcht it from him, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore. But alas, our transports were such as exhausted themselves in their own noise, we express our Joy in Bonfires, and it vapour'd away in the smoke; there wanted that mixture of Piety which should have fix'd that volatile passion, and we who at first were much more glad than thankful, within a very short time ceased to be either.

AND then as violent Heats when once expir'd, are succeeded by the extremest Cold, so has it fared with us; we fell from our Extasies not to the mean, but the contrary extreme; our vast complacencies at their parting, carried with them, even ordinary contentation, and left us not only joyless, but impatient. It was indeed matter of Equal shame and wonder, to see a scene so suddenly chang'd, wherein as in many other instances, we seem'd to have transcrib'd the co-
Mischiefs arising from Mistakes Chap. 8.

py of the mutinous Israelites, who we find in the very same Chapter, Ex. 15. triumphing and repining; and no sooner were the Timbrels out of their hands, but Complaints were in their mouths, ver. 24. What shall we drink? and in the beginning of the next, with the same querulous importunity they require meat. But not to wrong them in the comparison, their Murmurs had some extenuating circumstances which ours have not; they lookt indeed with some appetite upon Egypt, and made some proposals of Return, but it was while they suffered the hardships of the wilderness; they preferr'd a repleted slavery, before a hungry freedom; but even they were not so frantick in their mutinies, as to make any such offer in Canaan, or have any Emulation to the Garlick and Onions, amidst the affluence of Milk and Honey: No 'tis we Alone that have the unhappy skill of reconciling the sins of Canaan, and the Wilderness; murmur as much under our Vines and Fig-trees, as at Rephidim, or Marah, and make all the outcries of want and slavery, whilst we wallow in the utmost luxury of plenty and freedom. I need not hear specific the particulars of our Murmurings, this discourse being not likely to find many whose innocence will need that information, this malignant humor having spread so, that 'tis now become almost a scandalous (because a singular) thing to be contented. And certainly a considering Foreiner, that should come among us, could not but be astonish'd to see a Nation so full of all those things which use to create tem-
temporal satisfactions, and yet to find no body in it satisfied; to see so many parties among us, and none prosperous. This is such a riddle as would tempt a man to suspect his senses, and think we had all this while but dreamt of a restoration: been under the delusion the Prophet describes of the hungry and thirsty man, that at his making, finds he is empty and his soul hath appetite, Ely 29. 8. 'Tis a sad, but visible truth, that all that God has done for us, hath been so far from filling our desires, that it has only serv'd to enlarge them: for I appeal to any of our loudest mutineers, whether if some years since the present state of affairs had been represented to them, drest in the worst circumstances they now complain of, they would not then have thought it extremely amiable, worth Rachel's prize of seven years more hardship; nay whether they would not willingly have made some abatements, relinquish't part of what they now enjoy, to have had the rest secur'd? And when God has granted us all we then askt, shall we murmur because we could now perhaps ask something more; and like ingrate Debtors, pick a quarrel to evade payment? Was it not enough that he engag'd his Omnipotence for us, but must his Omniscience also be prest upon the same service? and provide all he could foresee we would wish? Alas, do we think we have the same hank upon God that some Gallants have on their trusting Merchants, that upon Peril of losing all former scores, he must still go on to supply us? shall we think no-
thing fit for oblivion but our obligations, and in this perverse sense transcribe S. Paul, Phil. 3. 13. forgetting those things which are behind, reach forward to the things that are before: this indeed too fully speaks us the off-spring of our first Parents, we can find no gust in all the fruits of Paradise, if any one be denied us; and still look not on what we have, but what we want; and as it is observ'd of the greedier sort of creatures that they relish not one bit for the vehement expectation of another: So is it with us, we devour, but do not enjoy our Blessings; and to require him to satisfy us, is to assign him the Poets Hell, set him with Belus daughters to the task of filling a sieve with water, or rolling Syphus's stone; our growing appetites still keeping us empty and restless amidst all endeavours to make us otherwise; so that whereas God uses to commit his favours to Men, as seed to the Earth, in expectation of an harvest, some fruits of gratitude and obedience; they seem with us rather to be flung into a Gulph, whose property is only to swallow never to fructifie.

I KNOW mens Minds are so poissed with their discontents, our daily mutinous blasts have pust up and swelled our grievances to such a vastness, that he must expect to be very impatiently heard, that shall attempt to represent them in a lesser size; yet sure 'twere not impossible even upon a direct view, to demonstrate them very light and moderate: but upon a comparative, perfectly trivial and inconsiderable; and 'tis a little
little strange, that we who bare our late suffering estate with so much Impatience, should not have impressions enough left in our memory, to confront to all our present regrets. Do we not quietly now possess the fruits of our own, or our Progenitors industry, without danger of any Secetration, but what our own Luxuries inflict? Are not our Persons at freedom; deliver'd from that kind word, and unkind thing, SECURING? So that when we rise in the Morning, we need not fear our next lodging shall be in the Goal or dungeon; nor when we sit down to our Meal, suspect the intrusion of arm'd uninvited Guests, who, ere whiles we know, were wont to sur prise us, as the Plague did the Israelites, even while the meat was yet in our mouths; are not our Lives under the custody of known Laws, so that no man is in danger that will but keep himself within those Boundaries; nor need fear to be mockt into his grave by shews and Pageantries of Justice? And besides these real escapes from slavery, are we not rescued from the most imbittering circumstance of it, the having servants rule over us, a thing which rendred our subjection as mean and servile, as it was sharp and pressing, and which we were then so sensible of, that it never mist to bring up the rear of our Complaints. Lastly, if we reflect upon our higher Spiritual concerns, are we not freed from those boistrous robust temptations, which with the violence of Famine and Sword, Beggary and Death assaulted our constancy, and left no mean between Martyr-
Martyrdom and Apostasie? Are we not also restored to all those spiritual advantages which we once professed so much to value? That well of life now lies open before us, after which we once panted like the Hart after the water-springs; our ancient worship is revived, and wants only our attendance to make it solemn; whereas the abomination of Desolation stood in the holy place, our prayers were turned to sin; needed, but were denied the Liturgy to pray against them, or atone their guilts. We have no longer stones given us for bread, nor experiment that sad riddle of being at once cloyed and starved amidst excess of preaching, suffering a Famine of the Word. And now are all these worth no regard, if they are not, why did we exclaim so loudly when we wanted them? if they are, why are we still as querulous now we have them? 'Tis sure, these include all our great and substantial interests as men, and Christians, and those being provided for, 'tis not easily imaginable what others we should have important enough to make us querulous, unless it be those of Passion and Humour. One mans ambition perhaps wants a satisfaction, another mans avarice, a thirds spleen; and this discord makes up the very unmusical Harmony of our murmurs. If we see but a Mordecai in the Kings gate whom we wish removed, we can like Haman find no gust in anything we enjoy. If we see some, who we think have born less of the burden and heat of the day, rewarded equally or perhaps above our selves, we are sure to make out the Parable,
rable, by murmuring at the good man of the house: Or if Nineveh be spared, if all be not executed to whom we have denounced destruction, we like Jonah sit down in a sullen discontent, and grow weary of our lives, because others are permitted to enjoy theirs. To these and other heads of the like nature, 'tis apparent our grievances may be reduced; and then if the balance be put into any dispassionate hand, 'tis sure they can never become a counterpoise to the other real benefits we enjoy, but will in the Prophets phrase, appear lighter than vanity and nothing.

BUT I suppose some will say, 'tis not only present uneasinesses of which they are impatient, but the possibility of future, a fear of relapsing into our former estate by the ill managery of our present: To these I shall answer, That admit it were so, yet sure 'twill be no wisdom to anticipate our miseries, to forestall discontents, and make foresight as painful as actual suffering. In other forbidden instances we chuse to enjoy the present, and with an Epicurean Indifference cry, Let us eat and drink for to morrow we dye, 1 Cor. 15. 32. How is it that we here become so unluckily sagacious, unless it be that murmuring is a Sensuality we count equivalent, nay superior to all rational satisfactions; and therefore that we may have no intermission of that delight, suborn our phancies to find occasions, and fetch in from the future those supplies which the present affords not: But besides this, I should in the second place ask these great Diviners, why they do not also
also foresee, that this very mutinous temper of theirs is the most direct and infallible means of bringing those mischiefs they pretend to fear; that it is so, is most evident, and so well observ'd by our Adversaries, that there is little doubt, they have not only pleasure, but designs upon it; and to that purpose have their Engins on work to blow up the hot Spirits among us, in expectation from thence to raise a flame. So blind a thing is Passion, that it hurries on to the things which in their issue we most abhor; makes us our Enemies, drudges, and the forgers of our own shackles; and whilst we cry out of petty Indulgences, we our selves give them in the lump, what we grudge them in parcels: This is a miserable infatuation, and while we act thus unreasonably, we are sure no competent declamers against ill managery. But besides this natural effect of our murmurs, we are also to remember that there is a Divine vengeance attending it: when bounties and largesses are quarrell'd at, we necessitate God to another Method, nay indeed, not only his vengeance, but even his kindness seems to suggest it, when he sees our constitutions such, that his gentle applications work contrary effects: 'tis very apposite for him to try whether the Antiperistasis will operate on the other side; if we smart thus under lenitives, 'tis but fit to essay, if corrosives will ease us; and the only remaining experiment for the making us happy, is to make us miserable.

But would God we might yet prevent the need of such unkindly expedients, and by a sober estimate,
Cfjap.8. concerning Almighty God, &c. 211

effimate, and thankful sense of what we have, provide to conserve it: not fastidiously despite great and eminent blessings, because perhaps they come not home to every part of our wishes. Alas, those plenary satisfactions agree not with the nature of Earthly things: 'tis an observation long since rais'd from the Globular and Triangular form of the World and our Hearts, that 'tis impossible the one should be fill'd with the other, there will still be some angles, some vacuities left; our very accessions create new wants, and like an unsound limb, the healing of one Sore is the breaking out of another. Every thing under the Moon partakes of her vicissitudes, augments and decreases only with this Difference, that though their mains be to as low a degree as hers, they never are perfectly at the full. There never was, nor never will be a State here completely happy: And as the Philosopher handsomely reproach the impatience of the Persian King for the death of his Wife, by undertaking to revive her, if he could help him but to the names of three men that had never griev'd to write upon her Tomb; so surely we may make the like offer to our malecontents, and engage to redeem all their uneasinesses, if they can point us out (I say not three, but) one age wherein there were no complaints. What then are our clamorous Repinings, but so many loud invectives against Gods decree; a De-

dire to subvert his fundamental Law, and confound the distinction he has irreversibly set be-
tween our Earthly and our Heavenly state: and alas,
Mischiefs arising from Mistakes

Chapter 8.

When mad insolence is this, to expect that the whole Oeconomy of the world must be chang'd only to humour us? that God must replant us a Paradise, pluck up every one of the Briers and Thorns which were our native curse? nay, bring down Heaven to us, and enstate us in undisturb'd unmix'd felicities? This is indeed simply considered a very wild expectation, but yet more so when 'tis considered how we qualify ourselves for such a privilege: for let me ask, are we as eager to anticipate the holiness, as the happiness of Heaven? Do we as passionately desire to do God's will, as that God should do ours? And emulate the Angelical obedience and purity, as much as bliss? These are Interrogatories which need no verbal Answer, our lives do too fully resolve them in the negative, and then how shameless a partiality is it, thus to carve to our selves, and choose out of either state what we best like, reserve all the sensualities of this world, and yet cry out for the impassibleness of the next; but alas, these are pretensions as inconsistent as they are bold, our vices having such a native inseparable adherency of pain and vexation, that 'tis not the most dexterous managery of a sin that can ever sever them, but if we will retain the one, we must the other also: A Truth which might be exemplified to us throughout the whole Catalogue even of sensual sins; but it is most eminently visible in this of murmuring, which stays not as others do to take Pain at the rebound, and by way of result, but has it as its first Element and principle; it being its self
felf almost as great a pain, as any it can betray us to: and yet to secure an advance and perpetuity of Torment, every Event serves to foment and heighten it, and the most desperate things are equally combustible to that flame. Indeed he that is possed with that humour, has a kind of fury within him, that will never let him rest: And alas, what Legions of such evil Spirits are now among us? How are we as it were inspir'd with Mutiny, it being the universal dialect of the Nation; and of many in it, who cannot be suppos'd to found it in any observation of their own, but are led by the common genius, and bellow rather by consent with the rest of the herd, than for any uneasiness, at least of injustice and oppression (for such only give pretence for Mutiny) that themselves feel. And since 'tis become a Plebeian vice, would God our Gentry would use it as they do their fashions, and leave it off (if for no better reason) for its being vulgar: And indeed 'twere but æquitable, that those who have taken up so many sins upon punctilio, should for once lay down one upon the same score. The Athenian State put down their Ostracisme (which otherwise they were fond enough of) because it was debased, by happening to fall on Hyperbolus, a despicable and abject person: and there seems not much difference in the cases, save only that we are more tenacious of Sins, than they of Punishments; and I fear we shall so long retain this, till we find it its own Lictor, not only in the present uneasiness, but in that more fruitful harvest of Mischiefs, where-
of it has now sown the seeds. We see here what our thankfulness is, for those eminent miraculous mercies we have receiv'd, and the account of that is an unhappy specimen, what we are like to find, when we survey the uses we have made of them, which God knows have been so unnatural and perverse, as does too fully parallel the former instance.

For first, if we reflect upon our spiritual blessings, what has the enjoyment of those advantages produced, but the contempt of them; we have an easie free access to God in his Sanctuary, our Churches are no longer Garrisons to keep out the worship, to which they were devoted, but like hospitable doors, are open to the regular piety of any that will enter. And now we have this liberty, now the flaming sword is removed, we have lost all appetite to the Tree of life, can willingly let those Everlasting gates (as the Psalmist styles them) Psal. 21. stand as everlastingly open ere we enter them: And though the Fabricks are by Gods providence rescued from their dust and ruines, yet many of us endeavour to reduce them to a yet worse desolation, strive to depopulate those sacred Mansions, and execute against them that prophetick threat concerning Nineveh, Nahum. 1. Leave them empty, void and waste. And indeed so they are, if not in an absolute, yet in a Comparative sense; for could we at any time of Divine Service make an estimate of all the persons that are absent, 'twould scarce be discern'd that any are there; were all corners ransackt, what a multitude
multitude of Recusants should we find upon a far differing account from that of Conscience? Some we should see stretching themselves upon their beds, keeping a Sabbath indeed, but to their sloth, not their God; others perhaps we may find rous'd from their Couches, upon the summons not of Religion but Vanity; some new garment is to be fitted, some exotic dress essayed, and they who grudge one hour to the Preachers glass, can spend many at their own; where they are so taken up with their Idolatries to themselves; that they think of no other worship; nay, as the world goes, 'twere well this were the worst diversion, that some did not keep from Church, that they might in the interim, defile those lesser Temples of God they carry about them, and cut themselves off from the Communion of Christ's body, to make themselves members of an Harlot: or that others were not Bacchus his Votaries when they should be Gods, spend that time in their frantick revels, and sing a Dithyrambick instead of Te Deum. As for the Mammonist, if he keep any holy day, 'tis like the Israelites to his Gods of Gold, Exod. 32. 31. He is looking with veneration on his Idoliz'd treasure, numbring those bags he dares not use, or perhaps with a more active Zeal pursuing the means of increasing them. Thus alas, may we go from one to another, and as it was in Ezekiel's vision, see still greater abominations, Ezek. 8. And certainly that All-seeing Eye, which discerns what multitudes do thus busie themselves, at the times even of his solemn-
est worship, cannot but adjudge us most profane despisers of his mercy in restoring it: Yet would to God 'twere only the absent upon whom that sentence would fall; but alas, the behaviour of many in the Church does too loudly testify how little of devotion brings them thither, and at how mean a rate they value all that is done there: Those Eyes which should wait on God, as those of a Servant on the hands of his Master, Psal. 123. 2. are rolling about to fetch in all the vanities and temptations which can occur to them, and look every way, but towards Heaven. Our Tongues which should be toucht with a Coal from the Altar, devoted wholly to Hymns and Prayers, are busied in private Colloquies with those about us: Business, News, nay, all the impertinent chat of our most vacant hours, is then taken up to entertain us; so that he who would know the talk of the Town or neighbourhood, need go neither to Exchange nor Market, the Church will as certainly supply him: And this ill employment of our Tongues, engages the like of our Ears, which when they should be hearkening what the Lord God will say concerning us, are listening to those vain discourses we hold with one another, from all which outward indecencies we may too surely collect the inward irreverence of our heart. And is it possible that this should now be the Temper of those, who not long since seem'd to bewail their exclusion from those sacred Assemblies: Did we long for them as David for the waters of Bethlehem, when they appear'd unattain-
able, and when they are brought to us, refuse to
taste them, poure them out not as he did in devo-
tion, but in contempt? 'Tis true indeed, in tem-
poral Delights possession usually proves a nauseat-
ing thing, and takes off our appetite; but it uses
not to be so in spiritual, whose peculiar property
it is not to satiate, but excite by fruition: But
alas, though the Things we converse with are
spiritual, our Hearts are carnal, and that is the
cause why instead of crying out with the Psalmist,
When shall I come to appear in the presence of God,
Psal. 42. We, like those in Malachy, Chap. 1.
13. Snuff at his service, and say, What a weariness
is it? A weariness indeed it appears in the literal
sense with many, who sleep at it as men over-la-
bour'd, and scarce take so found repose in their
own houses as in Gods; indeed such is the variety
of rude behaviour that is there us'd, that should
an unbeliever come into their Assemblies, he must
surely (as St. Paul supposes in another case,
1 Cor. 14. 23.) say we are mad; to see some ga-
zing, some whispering, some laughing, others
sleeping, and perhaps the far fewer number pray-
ing; is such a medly, as the most brutish Idolaters
never admitted in their worships; and the way of
worshipping Mercury, by throwing stones, or
Hercules by cursing, is a sober and decent kind
of service compar'd with this. And now alas,
when will the Church recover its ancient Title,
and become the house of prayer; 'tis sure according
to the present appearance it may have many more
proper names, that being the least part of the bu-
P3

fine
Tis true, there are some that make it a Sanctuary, but 'tis only against the penalties of the Law, or reproach of errant Atheism; they come to save their money or their credit; others perhaps shun the solitariness of being at home, and come not as to a place of Devotion, but Concourse; and 'tis to be doubted, some visit that place as they do many others, because they have nothing else to do: They want their week-days diversion, and so are driven thither upon meer destitution of more grateful entertainments; make it a kind of Sunday play-house, fit there as Spectators or Judges, to see the company, or censure the Preacher, but never remember that themselves have any other part to act; or are beheld by Him, who will not always be patient of such profanation; but will, as the Scripture speaks, Repay them to their face, who thus contemn him to his. We know among men, every one counts his House his fortress; and an Affront offered him there, doubles the Injury, and is not only a contempt, but an invasion: and shall it not be a proportionable enhacement with God also, thus to defile him within his own doors, and approach his presence in an impious bravery, the more fully to shew him, how little we regard him. At this rate while we address our selves, we may as ill manner'd Guests be forbid his house: Interrogated by God as the Jews were, Is. i. Why dost thou tread my Courts? A total abandoning of Worship being more fair and ingenuous than such Devotion: wherein like the barbarous sooldiers, we
we bring Christ a Scepter only to smite him on the head with it; and make a proface of homage to give ourselves the sport of the mockery: nay, 'tis sadly to be fear'd, that God may thrust us out of his House, shut his Doors against us, rescue his Service and himself from our profanation, and put us again under the same, (or a worse interdict than that) which lately lay upon us.

HAVING now seen our scandalous irreverence towards God's worship in general, 'tis too easy to make Application to the several parts of it; every one of which must necessarily partake of the contempt which falls upon the whole; for while we bring no thoughts but secular with us; those are equally disagreeing to all the Divine offices: 'twill be needless therefore to trace our wanderings in each of those, since our whole behaviour in the Church is one great deviation from the business we should come about: yet that supersedes not to every guilty person himself the necessity of a more distinct and particular reflection. 'Tis sure at the last dreadful audit, we must account for every of those spiritual advantages we have abus'd; and alas, what a dismal reckoning will many of us have then to give up, when our prayers which we now turn into Sin, shall be turn'd into perdition: and We who would not supplicate our God, shall in vain invoke the mountains and hills to hide us from the face of the lamb, when that Word which we now so fastidiously despise, that it must be dress'd up in the colours of humane Rhetorick, to make us at all patient...
tient of it, and becomes then only tolerable to us when it is farthest removed from being Gods: when that word, as our Saviour speaks, shall judge us, and that gracious invitation to life end in that fatal sentence, Go ye Cursed. Nay, when our very Propitiation shall plead against us, and the crucified Body of our Saviour, which we have in Effigie so often recrucified, in our unworthy approaches, or impious neglect of the holy Eucharist, shall witness against us as its murderers, when we shall be found not sprinkled as with the blood of a sacrifice, but imbrued as with that of slaughter: when all these means of our salvation, shall thus miserably convert, and from the favour of life, become that unto death, 2 Cor. 2. 16. then we shall to our amazement find, how differing our estimates of them were from Gods; and in his vengeance read the value he put upon them. What then have we now to do, but to anticipate our dooms-day, and judge our selves that we may not be judg'd of the Lord: To make an impartial account of all these our profanations, and accuse our selves before his mercy seat, that so we may prevent the arraignment at his bar of Judgement. And as Offenders are usually enjoyn'd to acknowledge their guilts in the very places where they committed them; so let us make the Church the Scene of our penitence, as we have of our faults: By our strong crying and tears, deprecate our former indevotion, and by an exemplary Reverence, redress the scandal of our Profaneness. This, and only this is the way to secure us against the
the final Vengeance of these sins; nay, and against the intermedial also: for we are not to expect that so unkind abuse of mercy shall be wholly repented to another world, it being so exasperating a crime, as must in all probability awake Gods fury, and pull down present Judgments, I wish the Event do not too soon attest the reasonableness of this supposal.

If from our spiritual Blessings, we now descend to our temporal, we shall not appear much better managers of those; they being generally employed to purposes the most distant from those, for which they were given. And first for our peace, that great comprehensive enjoyment, upon which all others are dependent, and which is to our civil Capacities, the same that health is to our natural; the thing by which we relish and taste the rest of our comforts, we may from the Song of Zachary, Luk. i. learn for what intent God bestows it: Deliverance from enemies is to no other end, but that we may serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life: But alas, he that observes how we employ our quiet, must surely say it serves little to the advancement either of Holiness or Righteousness: For the first of these we have already seen, how little of holiness we shew even in that place where nothing else should be admitted; and we are not so preposterously religious, to shew more in others. That Piety which is so cold and benumm'd under the warm breath of the publick Ordinances; we may well presume stark frozen, in our
our more retir'd offices: and if it thus faint and
sink in comfort, 'tis sure more liable to the Wise
mans Vae soli, and utterly dies when we are alone.
'Tis true indeed, these Closet transactions are im-
mmediately visible to none but the searcher of
hearts, yet in true Devotion there is such a Sym-
metry and proportion, that the Inferences we make
by analogy may be very irrefragable; nay, 'tis
to be fear'd many lye open to a yet clearer con-
viction, and may be proved to have few or none
of those private intercourses with heaven; for
though a negative be not simply evincible, yet as
in civil cases we prove a man not to have been at
this time in such a place, by his having actually
been in another; so were the whole Week,
Moneth, perhaps Year: of some men exactly
traced, we should find them so engrossed with
other diversions, that there will scarce be found
any Minute for devotion to interpose: Mens
worldly or fleshly Concerns so divide their time,
that God from whom 'tis all deriv'd can be af-
forded no tribute out of it. Yet alas, 'twere well
if this privative sort of impiety were all we had
to answer for: but 'tis too apparent we do not
only neglect God, but reproach and violate him:
what else are those bold and insolent blasphemies
wherewith we daily assault him, making him the
mark at which all our wild Passions are shot.
Do we want any thing either for our use or de-
light, presently God is accused, his providence
or his goodness questioned; and he declaim'd
against either as impotent or illiberal. Does any
body
body vex or disquiet us, God must have his share of our displeasure, his sacred name must be profaned, and we count our fiercest Revilings of men, faint and insignificant, if not inspired with the most dreadful and horrid Oaths; Nay, he stands obnoxious to all the displacencies we receive even from inanimate creatures, if a Die or a Card run amiss, our resentments are presently vented upon him; he is profaned and vilified, as if he were the Cheat that rookt us of our money, because he does not secure us from those losses, to which we wantonly expose our selves; nor is it only our eager and warmer passions that thus invade him: Our pleasanter moods do the very same, and we blaspheme by way of divertisement; every impertinent story or insipid jest, must have the haut-gouft of an Oath to recommend it, as every incredible Narration has to attest it: to say nothing of those more solemn and deliberate perjuries, wherein we impiously suborn Gods venerable and dreadful name, to be the Engin of our fraud and malice: and as if we thought he would forswear as well as we, bring him to countenance those Crimes he has vowed to punish. Thus do we with a prodigious impie ty contaminate even divinity its self, make it the sink for all our puddles to run into; and prostitute that name which as the Psalmist speaks, is great, wonderful and holy, to all the unholy purposes, our Passions, our Interest, or our Phancies can suggest to us.

THIS
THIS profaneness is so proper a foundation for Atheism, that we are not to wonder to see so many advance from the one to the other, they pay so little of the reverence due to God, that at last they turn their impiety into argument, and infer him not to be God, whom they treat so unlike one. And truly this seems to be the grand piece of Logick, which has disputed many, not only out of Christian, but all native Religion. How unhappily successful it has proved among us is too apparent in those impious discourses which are every where heard, wherein men are arriv'd to such a licentiousness, that David's Atheist was a modest Puny, who only said in his Heart there is no God, and perhaps upon that account shall by some be adjudged to deserve the Epithet the Psalmist gives him, and be indeed thought a fool that would not own what would now a-daiies so certainly denominate him a Wit, or in the solemn stile a Master of Reason. And indeed they will attest the propriety of the stile, they rather governing Reason, than being govern'd by it; otherwise 'twould be hard to discern, how from different premises the same conclusion should be induced: and those who in the late adverse times denied God in revenge of their sufferings, should now pay their gratitude also in the same manner, and renounce him as (or more) loudly since his signal attestation of that righteous cause; his not owning whereof was then their principal plea. The truth is, 'tis a little strange how Atheism could admit such enhancing accessions as we find it has; for
for it being the completion and highest step of ill, and that to which all others do but subordinately tend, one would think it should from its first appearance in the world, have been so mature and full grown a sin, as could be capable of no improvement; but so subtily wicked are these later daies, that we can never be brought to a non ultra, but still find something to add to the compleatest sin: therefore though of those that are really Atheists, one cannot be said to be more so than another, yet some may be more daringly, and mischievously so; and sure in that respect our modern, surmount all former: They were generally on the defensive part, took up the tenet as a buckler against the unwelcome invasions and Checks of conscience, and design'd nothing but the more peaceable enjoyment of their lufts; but now men do not only use, but love it; make themselves its avowed Champions, seek to win it Prose-lytes; and in short, appear so zealous for it, as if they made it their religion to have none. And God knows, too many such reversed kinds of Evangelists we now have, who with as great design unteach Divinity, as the first Propugners taught it, and their number and boldness have so encreas'd since the return of our peace, that sure the next Age will have little cause to think Religion had any share in the Restoration. Thus have we done our parts to supersede that obligation of serving God in holiness, by leaving no God to serve; and after the most signal attestation of his Deity in our rescue, we do like those ingrate persons,
persons, who seek to subvert those by whom themselves were establisht, and deny him because he has own'd us.

This is the holiness wherewith we have serv'd him, since our being deliver'd from the hands of our Enemies, and our righteousness has been very proportionable, for if we look into the dealings of all ranks of men; we shall find the same vein of deceit run through all transactions. A few years since Sequestration and plunderings, those whole-sale robberies had so over-topt the rest, that like an Epidemick disease they had overwhelm'd, if not the kind, yet at least the notice of all other Injustices: but since those Leviathan's are withdrawn, the lesser Devourers supply their place; Fraud succeeds to Violence; and in all places, all occasions of commerce, we still meet with Sequestrators. The adulterated wares, and false measures in Shops; the dilatory proceedings, and evasive tricks in Law; the various and unworthy Cheats of Creditors, and the mean and dishonest advantages which are watcht in all sorts of Contracts, are too irrefragable proofs hereof. Nay, not only our Business, but our very recreations expose us to these deceits, as some of our bankrupted Gamesters can too sadly witness, what troops of Harpies attend those sports is every mans observation: 'Tis strange so many should yet be to learn the prudence to avoid so known a danger, wherein a man is at once made active and passive in the same Robbery, and does himself defraud his family of that, whereof
whereof he is defrauded by another. But amongst these many injustices, there is none wherein Men seem generally to find such a guilt and sensuality, as those wherein God is concern’d; twenty Lay-booties humor them not so much as one from the Clergy; and if the Quakers should be mustered according to that one Tenet of not paying Tythes, we should indeed find their numbers formidable. How subtle even the rudest persons are in defaulting those dues, we see by every daies experiment, the over-reaching their Minister being the grand Triumph of a Rusticks wit; so that not only their covetousness but their vanity is concern’d in it: I know ’tis the usual apology for this kind of Sacrilege, that either the maintenance of the Clergy is too much, or their merit too little; for the first, I think it may be demonstrated, That there is no liberal Science, and but few Mechanick trades, from which a man may not hope as plentiful a subsistence, as this affords to the generality of its professors: However I shall leave those that make this objection to dispute it with that authority, which has allotted them this proportion; desiring them to consider, that whatever the support of the Clergy is, it costs them nothing; no man having Purchaft more, than what remains of the Estate, after his Tyth is paid. As to the second, I confess ’tis extremely to be wished, that the negligence and vice of Some did not give too much pretence to the Allegation; and to such I cannot but apply the words of our Saviour, Mat. 18. 7. woe be to the 

man
man by whom the offence cometh; yet certainly 'tis very incompetent, to justify the detention of their legal rights: for till the Law which has assign'd them, delegate the Forfeiture to me, the greatest enormities of my Pastor, cannot entitle me to any thing that is his: And indeed what blame soever is really due to some, we must expect it should extend to all, if the Accusers were to have the benefit of the Mulct; and (as in the late confusions) all Ministers should be made scandalous, in order to the making them poor.

'Twere easy to draw up a far larger Catalogue of those injustices we daily commit; for as a man has divers other concerns besides his goods, so he may be injur'd in all those: and truly the iniquity of these daies, seems fully commensurate to all the suffering capacities of mankind: we weigh our own and others Concerns, in very differing balances, and offer those Injuries without any regret, which we can with no patience suffer: How nicely Jealous is every one of us of his own Repute, and yet how maliciously Prodigal of other mens? so that Defamation is become one of our main Topicks of discourse, furnishes entertainment to all companies; the present owe their Divertisement to the absent, and many would be drein'd quite dry, were it not for this reserve, which like an unexhaustible spring, still supplies fresh matter of talk. In like manner how carefully do we avert any hurt or mutilation of our own bodies, and yet how barbarously inconsiderate are we of others, to whom we do the greatest
greatest outrages rather than use any violence to our Passion, or restrain an angry Humor: only I confess there is one Instance, wherein though we are unjust, we are not so partial; but expose our selves also, and that is in the case of Duells, a barbarous custom wherein 'tis hard to define, whether the Wickedness or Folly be greater; yet it maintains its way in spite of all the methods God has us'd to make us better or wiser: Of this there are too many, and too noted instances since our restoration, as if we were so enamour'd of destruction, that when we are prevented of it from our Enemies, we seek it from one another, or thought publick Peace so intolerable, that when 'tis cast upon us (as sure ours, if ever any may be said to be) we are fain to take in private quarrels, as our rescue from that dull quiet, and court the utmost mischiefs, to avoid the oppression of the greatest happiness. Thus perversly do we countermine Gods purposes of kindness, and when he has secur'd us, solicitously seek to be deliver'd from our safety; project new dangers, and dare his power with a yet harder Task, the delivering us from our selves: And whilst we thus avert our quiet, 'tis no wonder that we produce no better effects of it; nor fructifie under that, which we will not permit our selves to enjoy.

A N D as upon this general view, we appear very ill managers of our Peace, so shall we much more, if we reflect on those many particular blessings which are wrapt up in that, of which we make so perverse use, that we therein no less violate
violate Sobriety, than we have already appear'd to do piety and righteousness; so filling up the measure of our iniquity by transgressing all the fundamental rules of Christianity, living neither soberly, righteously, nor Godly in this present world, Tit. 2. 12. And of those advantages which are the appendages to Peace, there are two most eminent; Plenty and Liberty, both of which are the more remarkable in our present quiet, by how much the deprivation of each was the greater. For the first, we know the late times of rapine, had torn from many among us their whole subsistence, so entirely despoil'd them that they were reduc'd to Job's condition, and connected the two extreme points of Birth and Death, by a middle state of the like nakedness and destitution: and to such, our late restoration was a kind of Civil resurrection; rais'd them like Elisha's dry bones, from the most hopeless state, and by a successive possession of their own Inheritances, made them heirs to themselves. And though all were not so wholly divested, yet like those Canaanites whom the Jews did not extirpate, they were put under Tribute: and while persons who knew so well how to exact were Lords Paramount, a bare being was all could be expected, they seem'd rather Stewards than Owners of their fortunes, and had rather the trouble than advantage of their Management: And who would not think that this so long want of plenty, should have taught us sobriety in the using it; that desuetude should have worn out the skill of luxury, and we should not have known
known how to be riotous: but alas, our memories have been too faithful to us in this particular, no one of our vanities is fall’n into oblivion, but on the contrary the art of Voluptuousness so improved, as if all the time that was lost from the Practick, had been spent in the Theory, and we had for so many years been contriving new kinds and degrees of excess. Indeed it is too sure we retain’d the affectation when we had lost the power of rioting; and ’tis not our prosperity seduces us, but we it. For as the Sun though it lends its rays to the begetting of the vilest Insects, yet makes no such production but upon apt matter, slime and putrefaction: so neither would the most opulent fortune make us sensual, did it not find us dispos’d and prepar’d for it. How forcible those propensions are, appears by the multitude of objects on which they work; For they had need be strong Inclinations that take in all Opportunities, nay possibilities of actuating themselves, and such ’tis evident ours are, there being nothing capable of ministring to luxury, which we use not to that purpose. Our Meat is no longer apportioned to our Hunger, but our Tastes: so that the Stomach is made meerly passive in the matter of Eating; serves only to receive those loads we charge it with, whilest its Elections and Choices are forestall’d by the palate or phancy; nay, ’tis not permitted so much as a negative voice, not allowed to refuse what is either for kind or quantity destructive to it: We do with studied mixtures force our reluctant
appetites, and with all the Spells of Epicurism, conjure them up that we may have the pleasure of laying them again. Thus unworthily treacherous are we to Nature, which while we pretend to relieve, we oppress, by giving her not only beyond her need, but sufferance: And to shew we are no less dextrous in mixing sins than meats; our very Pride (though in its self an intellectual vice) mingles with our Gluttony, every thing is insipid that is not costly; and it is thought an ignoble Peasant-like thing to eat a plain meal: Nor is he now to be lookt on as a Gentleman, whose single Ordinary costs not as much as would be (and himself would perhaps some years since have thought) a fair exhibition for some whole families. And that we may not be charg'd with partial intemperance, we go not less in that of drink, wherein we are so nice and critical, that 'tis become a special skill and faculty to judge of liquors: But how great for ever our curiosity be, 'tis sure our excess is greater, and does not only over-match but supplant it; there being no drink so unpleasant which the love of a debauch will not reconcile us to. So great a malice do we bear to our reason, that to oppress it, we are content to expose our darling, and do violence to our very sense. How unhappily predominant this brutish Vice is, need not here be told, since it too evidently attests its self, to every mans observation, it no longer seeking the shelter of night and darkness, but impatient of such delay, appears in the broadest light; and he is now a
flow-paced drunkard, that has not finish'd his course, perhaps begun another, before the Sun has ended his: nay, so is the Scene chang'd, that sobriety is become the reproachful thing, such as even those who value it dare not own, and are either driven to preserve it by shifts and artifices, or else choose to abandon it rather than hazard the scandal. And certainly this is the great advantage this sin has for the propagating itself; for 'tis impossible bestiality should be so universally agreeable to mankind, that all should pursue it out of appetite and liking: 'tis this Fear that engages many in it; and though it have too many voluntiers, yet sure 'tis this press that helps to make up its numbers, which as it speaks the great baseness of those who are thus ashamed both of piety and humanity, and had rather cease to be men, than appear to be Christians; so is it a sad indication of national impiety, a fatal Symptome that we have neer fill'd up the measure of our iniquities, and are ripened for the woes denounced against those who call evil good, and good evil, Esa. 5.20. which sure was never more palpably done than in this instance, wherein temperance is branded for ill nature, and dulness of humor; whilst the most swinish Excess must pass for sociableness, friendship, and hospitality; names which have been so long prostituted that they have lost their native use, and men have forgot those very distant things to which they originally belong'd, yet sure such once there were: God made us sociable creatures, and we might still continue so upon
upon the strength of that first principle, and need not owe our intercourse to our debaucheries; no, nor our friendships neither, which have been so far from being preserv'd that way, that there is nothing more obviously, and frequently violates them; nay, indeed the whole species of real Friendships seems to be extinct, since this fictitious sort took place. Men think it enough (as indeed 'tis too much) to damn themselves with their friends, and all other communications are transmuted into that of Sin, for we daily see those, who cleave the most inseparably in this kind to each other, will yet neither do nor suffer any thing else: And sure if this be friendship, 'tis such a reverse kind of it as must have as preposterous a Definition; for none that have yet been given by Divines or Philosophers will fit it. The like may be said of hospitality, which sure is in its proper nature of a very distant make from this; design'd to relieve Strangers, not burthen them; to cure their wants indeed, but not by the worse exchange of a Surfeit: So that the ancient and the modern Hospitality, differ as much as that of Melchizedeck from that of Circe; the one refreshes, the other transforms: And how great a shew forever of liberality this later may have, yet he is not to be thought to have drunk gratis, that has paid his reason for his shot.

AND to both these parts of Intemperance, our Uncleanliness bears full proportion, the one makes provision for the flesh, and the other fulfils the lusts thereof. To how brutish an impudence this
this sin is grown is too visible: we need not trace men into their privacies and recesses, themselves willingly proclaim their guilts; nay, dread nothing so much as the opinion of being innocent: yea so out-dated a vertue is Modesty now become, that even that Sex to which it was once accounted the greatest ornament, have put it off, look on it as a piece of Rusticity, and country breeding: whether this pulling down the fence be an Indication they are willing to lie common, I shall not determine: but sure that very free, and confident behaviour now in use, is too apt to invite assaults, and takes off all that Extenuation of crime, which was wont to be allowed that Sex upon the supposition of their being seduced? Thus do we publish our sin as Sodom, and if we consider how much boldness it has gain'd since the return of our prosperity; twill be probable that ours also has been fomented by fulness of bread, and abundance of Idleness, Ez, i. 6. That our Plenty is very subservient to it, appears by the vast expence wherewith many men manage this vice: And that our Idleness is so too, is no less evident by the large portions of time that are spent in those pursuits, it being as the great design, so the especial business of too many mens lives. As for the remedy which God has assign'd, it serves now only to exasperate the disease. Marriage with too many only advances simple-fornication to adultery, and superadds perjury to uncleanness; those sacred bands are like Samsons withs, broken upon every assault of
the Philistins, and the very thought of being confined makes men more apt to range; For alas, 'tis not their needs but their phancies they are to provide for, and that is so endless, that the greatest liberty of Polygamy would never satisfy it: the same quarrel would lie then to multiplied wives, which does now to single; I mean, that they were their own: And how numerous forever their flock were, 'twould not secure their poor neighbours only Lamb, especially when 'tis consider'd, that in this they gratifie two sins at once, their vanity as well as their lust; their complacence in undermining the Husband, being generally as great, as that in enjoying the Wife. And if Pride abstractedly and in its own nature be, as Solomon says, an abomination to the Lord, certainly when 'tis thus complicated, it must be infinitely more so, and ascertain a concurrence of those judgments, which are singly threatened to each of those sins; what those are, I wish guilty persons would seriously ponder, and then they would surely think their momentary pleasures much overbought. But alas, such a fascinating sin this is, as allows men no liberty of consideration, they go on as the wise-man says, Prov. 7. 22. with the same stupidity that an Ox goeth to the slaughter: or, a fool to the correction of the stocks; and while every body else observes the Effects of their Vice in their wasted bodies, and ruin'd estates; themselves are the last that discern it, pursue the course till the very last remains of strength and wealth are exhausted, and nothing left them but disease
concerning Almighty God, &c. 237
disease and beggary. Of the truth of this, there have been too many sad examples, though it seems not yet enough, to give caution to others.

And to these lusts of the flesh, we spare not to add those of the Eye also, for so surely we may properly call all those Luxuries which adapt themselves peculiarly to that Faculty, such are the gaiety of Apparel, richness of Furniture, and all the splendor of Equipage, which has no propriety to any other sense, but that of seeing, and is lost if it be not looked on: And though these seem to differ much from that Covetousness which St. John is supposed to comprehend in that Phrase, the one being the tenacity, the other the profusion of Money; yet they are but several branches of the same Sin, and are diversified only by a various application to the Object: for in strict speaking, he that covets Gold and Silver to lay on his back, is as properly covetous, as he that designs it only to fill his coffers. But besides the propriety these excesses have to that title, they have no less claim to that ensuing, The Pride of Life; it being evident that they are both Effects and Fomenters of Pride: and sure this sets but an ill Character upon them, that when the Apostle has divided all the lusts of the world into three sorts, these bid so fair to two of them. I would not here be understood to condemn that Decency and moderate Expence, which agree to the several ranks and qualities of Persons, there being not only a lawfulness, but some kind of civil necessity for such Distinctions: nor is the levelling principle fitter to be admitted in
in Habit, than in Title or Estate: That which I accuse is quite another thing; it being that inordinate profusion which does not only exceed the ability and fortune of the Person, but the proportion of his rank and condition; and so confounds that distinction it should preserve, and levels us the wrong way: it being more tolerable that all should be Peasants, than all Lords. And this is the irregularity that many seem to affect, there being not only an emulation of pomp and bravery among equals, but those of the most distant qualities, there seeming now no other measure than the utmost extent of their money or credit; the later whereof is often so stretcht, that it not only cracks its self, but by an unhappy contagion, breaks those it deals with, and like a Granado tears Towns in pieces: The many ruin'd Families of Tradesmen do too sadly attest this; would God our Gallants would consider how unequal it is, that many should want necessary clothing, only to maintain the superfluity of theirs; an Injustice which not only upon a religious, but politick account deserves the severest Reproof, and since Divine Laws will not restrain it, 'twere well if Humane were provided: though I confess, 'twere not easie to find out penalties to deter those whom the wants so usually attending these excesses will not discourage. This sort of vanity was once thought peculiar to women, and though I cannot say that the sexes have exchang'd faults, (because each still keeps its own, together with those of the other) yet 'tis evident they have communicated
municated them, and as the women of this Age have transcrib'd masculine Vices, so the men have feminine; this particularly, wherein they seem fully to answer the Copy, they being as Critical-ly knowing in all the mysteries of vanity, and as diligent in reducing their speculations to practice, as any the most extravagant female. Indeed both the one and the other pursue this folly with so great an expence of Care, Time, and Money, as if to be fine and happy were the same thing, and their bodies had been design'd for their Cloaths, rather than their cloaths for their Bodies.

AND now when all these luxuries are to be serv'd, it had need be an exorbitant plenty that shall supply them; and that will unfold the riddle so frequent among us, of so many being poorer since they recovered their estates, than when they wanted them: Our revenue how large soever, is so clogg'd and encumber'd with our vices, that they moulder away, and only serve to carry other mens with them, by giving credit to run in debt. There are indeed no such unmerciful exactors as our own Lusts, the one gleans after the other, till they induce such a scarcity as the Prophet Joel describes 1. 4. That which the Palmer-worm hath left, hath the Locust eaten, and that which the Locust hath left, hath the Canker-worm eaten, and that which the Canker-worm hath left, hath the Caterpillar eaten: So that in effect we have only changed our oppressors, and are as much or more exhausted by our sins, as we were before by other mens; with this woful circumstance that now we
we have the *guilts* as well as the *sufferings*: Thus do we rob our selves, and create *want* in the midst of all that *abundance* God has given us, using our plenty as the *Benjamites* did the *Levites* Concubine, *Judg. 19.* force and prostitute it till we destroy it; and the similitude holds in this also, that what we thus violate is not our own; for let us phancy what we will, certainly our *superfluities* are more the *poors* Right than ours, assign'd to them by God the grand *Proprietor*. So that our *Excesses* have besides their proper *guilt*, that of *injustice* superadded; and when the cry of the *poor* shall be joyn'd to those of our riots, they will certainly be too clamorous to let vengeance any longer sleep.

**THIS** is the account we can give of our *plenty*, and that of our *liberty* is not much better; 'tis not long since that *arbitrary tyranny* expir'd, which gave us no other *measures* of our duties or punishments, than the *will* or *avarice* of the *Imposers*: And then how did we gasp to be under the conduct and *Protection* of *known determinate Laws*? Yet now we have them, who considers them, or is regulated by them? Between the *licentiousness* of *Inferiors*, and the *remissness* of *Superiors*, they are rendred things only of *form*, not *use*; for while the one violates, and the other connives, what can they signify, and though there be never so many *new Laws* made to *assert the old*, yet we see they serve for little but to *partake* of the *same contempt* with the others, and are but like the *Chimeras* of an *Utopian State*, *fage-*
ly contriv’d, but to no purpose. 'Tis the Execution of Laws that gives them a real and effective being; and without that, amidst our great volumes we are yet destitute, and may too probably experiment the truth of that Axiome, that 'tis better to live where nothing is lawful, than where all things are. Indeed if we remember how the Statutes of Omri were kept, with what a tameness the severest Impositions of the late Usurpers were submitted to, we have reason to think coercion is the surest Principle of vulgar obedience; though withal it sets but an ill mark upon us, who know so much better how to be slaves than subjects. And as we are restor’d to our civil Liberty, so as a branch or consequent of that, we are to our personal also: We were lately in the condition Christ foretold to St. Peter, carried by others whither we would not, Jo. 21. 18. but now we gird our selves and go whither we will; and alas! what use do many of us make of this freedom? Is it not visible, that neither our publick or private affairs are the better attended: But on the contrary we are in a restless pursuit of impertinent or vicious pastimes, go pilgrimages to our pleasures, wander about from this sport, that meeting to another, till many of us forget we have any other concerns in the world, and are as much strangers to our own homes, as when we were forcibly detain’d thence: And for such I know not whether the former restraint be not eligible, to be a prisoner being a kind of rescue to him, that would otherwise be a vagrant.

THESE
THESE are the uses we make of those advantages whereof God has reposest us. I know 'tis too envious a task to distribute these accusations to every Rank and Order of men among us; I have here given them in the lump, and wish that not only such degrees, but each person would adapt to himself his peculiar share, wherein contrary to other dividends, I fear the only Immodesty and Injustice too will generally be, for every one not to carve liberally for himself. However, 'tis sure in the gross they make up the Character of a most barbarously ungrateful Nation. God was pleased to return our peace, before we had forfaken our sins, as if he meant to try our ingenuity; that we who had been so much worse than beasts under the former method, that no stripes would discipline us, might have this advantage to redeem our credit, and be drawn with these cords of a man: but we have put off not only piety but humanity, and are equally untractable to all methods. And now who can refrain from Moses's passionate Apostrophe, Do ye thus requite the Lord O foolish people and unwise, Deut. 32. 6. Unwise indeed, that from the most benign purpoaes of God, extract nothing but our own mischief: are the poorer for his Liberalities, and the worse for his Goodness; by a preposterous use so wear out our Blessings, that they cease to be, at least to be Blessings: And if they once fall from that, there is no middle form for them to assume, they convert into the direct contrary, and become the fatallest Curses, more heavy than those which were
were originally design'd as such; that degeneration adding malignity, and no Fury being so extreme, as that which bottoms upon repell'd and irritated Love. Gods mercies are like those pictures, which according to the different position of the beholder, carry different Representations, if we will still stand on the wrong side, and not take them in their more amiable appearance, we shall find they can put on a dreadful: his Goodness will not be finally unoperative, if we will not permit it to lead us to repentance, 'twill drive us to destruction. I am sure we have all reason to expect he should exert his power as eminently against us, as he has done for us, unless perhaps he sees that is not necessary to our ruine, for indeed let him but stand by and not interpose his omnipotence for us, he may trust us to be his Executioners, our Vices having a natural as well as moral Efficacy to destroy us. And who knows whether that be not the reason of his seeming connivance, that he forbears to strike us, to give us up to those more fatal wounds we inflict on our selves; this alas we have too much cause to fear, for 'tis sure 'tis not our innocence that gives us Impunity, but 'tis more than probable 'tis our incorrigibleness; that God gives us over with a why should ye be smitten any more? Will not prostitute his Judgments, but as the basest of Malefactors leave us to the basest of Executioners, and let our iniquities become our ruine. This as it is the severest purpose God can entertain towards us, so 'tis our most important concern to avert. And
O that we, who have so perversely resisted all the designs of his love, would now try to defeat that of his anger, rob him of those intestine avengers within our own breasts, those fleshly lusts which fight against the Soul, 1 Pet. 2. 10. which do not only provoke, but execute his Wrath, and make us more miserable than Hell itself could do without them; and God knows 'tis more than time for us, to seek an escape from so formidable mischiefs: O let us not contract one minute's delay, let us cast our selves at the feet of our offended God, and as those who are condemn'd to disgraceful Executions, use to petition for some death of less Infamy, as a boon and favour, so let us beg, that he will please to think us worth his own correction; that whatsoever we suffer from his hand, yet that we may not (like to Herod) be deliver'd up to the loathsome fortune of being devour'd by our own putrefaction. In a word, let us form Davids choice into an importunate prayer, and earnestly beg that we may fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of men, at least not of our selves, who are more to be dreaded than all our other Enemies.

Indeed till we do thus, our prosperities are far from real, and do in this justify our most mutinous repinings, that we are never the better for them, nay, much the worse, yet since 'tis only we that have enervated them, they will stand upon our account in their proper weight and value: When our receipts are summed up, God will charge us with them, not as those empty useless things
things we have made them, but as those great and solid blessings he intended them. And certainly this is most deplorable ill managery, to reserve nothing to our selves but the burden and account of our good things; to enjoy nothing, and yet be answerable for all. In secular things men usually pay with some regret, for those things of which they have only anticipated the use: But with what dismal reluctancies shall we come to pay for these, of which we have made no advantage, and must therefore pay the dearer because we have not; it being not so much the things, as our employing of them to our benefit, whereof God will exact account. His anger is then only incens'd, when we resist his love; and his only quarrel to us is, for frustrating his design of making us happy. And sure those well deserve his wrath, that will provoke it on such terms; yet so perverse is the choice, as of all sinners in general, so especially of this Nation at this time, who have all before us which might make us happy in both worlds, if we did not Madly affect to be so in neither, God grant we may recover the Sobriety to make wiser elections, before it be out of our power to make any, and we be found to stand to the mischiefs of our own wild Option. 

THE Reader will perhaps think, I have gone beyond the limits of a moderate digression, but the too great copiousness of the Theme, must be my excuse: such overgrown Vices cannot well be drawn in little, and where there is such a multitude, the most superficial view of Each, is rather R propor-
proportional to a distinct Tract, than to the few Pages it has borrowed in this. My greater fear is, that the event may prove it impertinent, there being not much hope that a private whisper shall be heard by those, who are deaf to the loudest calls of Heaven, and have made no other use of those various and signal Providences we have been under, than to defeat the design of them.

CHAP. IX.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes in general.

These are some of those many artifices, whereby Satan like a cunning Picklock, flyly robs us of our grand treasure, the power and efficacy of our Christianity, and leaves us only the empty Casket, the name and formal Profession, that which serves only to make us proud, not rich, confident, not safe: And God knows, so many are daily thus befool'd by him, so many fall as preys to these his Stratagems, as might, one would think, glut the eagerest malice, and supersede all farther designs: but so infatiate is this grand Devourer, that retail-prizes, though never so frequent, do rather enrage than satisfy his appetite: He is Enemy not only to this or that man, but to mankind in gross, and therefore as if he fear'd that even his malice might not prove indefatigable
defatigable enough for so many distinct pursuits, he contrives more compendious methods of destruction: Frames such Engines as take off whole ranks, nay, troops; compounds such active Poison, as like a Pestilence, kills multitudes at once. It is too trivial a Mischief to annoy the outward parts, it is his Mastery to spread an unseen venom in the Bowels, thence to diffuse its self through't, mix with the vital spirit, and convert that kindly heat which should animate, into those wild irregular flames which ravine and consume. And this is done, by that Pestilential spirit of division, that heat of disputation, which has for so many ages poss'd and wasted the Catholic Church; and by an unhappy kind of Magick transform'd the zeal of Christian practice, into an itch of unchristian Dispute; made the questions about our Creed more numerous than the letters of it; and by multitudes and contrariety of Paraphrases so confounded and obscur'd the Text, that what was anciently the badge and tessera of Christian Communion, serves us for no other purpose but as an occasion of breaking it.

So long as the Church retain'd the simplicity of Christian doctrine, lookt on her faith as the Foundation of her obedience, and endeavour'd to propagate to her Children such an understanding of the one, as was most apt to promote the other; She happily made good the title Christ gives her, Can. 6. of his love, his dove, his undefil'd one: but when the Serpent had once got into this Paradise, infus'd his subtilties, and nice intricacies
into mens Brains; and least that should not be
ruinous enough, his venome also into their
Hearts: Then began all those unhappy Metamor-
phoses, in comparison of which, those of the Po-
ets are as trivial as they are Fabulous: then that
faith which was once inseparably joyn'd with the
patience of the Saints, forsook that tame compa-
ny, and linkt its self with the most contrary qua-
lities of wrath and bitterness; and those whose
Profession it was to resist unto blood, striving
against sin, pursued to blood those that resifted
them in any of their speculations: Then that
passive Valour which had rendred them so vene-
rable to their Heathen Enemies, converted some,
tired out others, and amaz'd all; sadly degene-
rated into that active malice, which from persecu-
ted Christians, entituled them to that monstrous
style of Christian persecutors. And that ardent
love, which had offered up so many Holocausts
to God, was supplanted by that fiery hatred, that
made no less acceptable oblations to Satan.

This miserable and destructive change was
so much the interest of the Enemy of Souls, that
we cannot wonder he should so studiously pro-
mote it; and indeed never did he at once so ap-
prove his malice and subtilty, I would I could not
say success also, as in this design; in comparison
whereof, all his other Projects speak him but a
Puny, this is his one Goliah Stratagem which has
serv'd him not only to defe, but even defeat the
Armies of the living God.

Nor is his Sagacity more observable in the
choice,
choice, and main drift of the Design, than in the ways of Effecting it; had he brought into the Primitive Church those large scrolls of disputable points, wherewith he has fill’d the Modern; that more charitable Age must needs have startled and discern’d, that that seeming Jealousie for Truth, was indeed nothing but a real design against Peace, and would surely never have parted with that sacred depositum, that precious legacy so lately bequeath’d by Christ, for those vain janglings, those School subtleties which now entertain the world. But as he that would divert a man from the guard of some important Treasure, alarms him in some other of his greatest interests; so he at first raises up Heresies of the greatest magnitude, whose blasphemous consequences so shook the whole Fabric of Religion, that what was Uzziah’s Rashness seemed then every man’s advised Duty, to put his hand to the upholding of the tottering Ark. How could those who had been baptiz’d into the faith of the Blessed Trinity, suffer the Arians to rob them of the Second Person, the Macedonians of the Third, the Valentinians and Manichees so to despise the First, as to set up against him a Rival principle of being: How could those who had so solemnly renounced the World, the Flesh and the Devil, see them all bowed to by the temporizing, unclean, idolatrous Gnosticks? these were such invasions as seemed to commissionate all that could wield the sword of the Spirit to take it up, and engage in this Warfare. But all this while ’twas a sad Lemma
lemma to which the Church was driven; if she gave countenance to these seducers, she betrayed her faith; if she entered the contest she violated her unity; the one would undermine her foundation, the other would make a breach in her walls.

A ND the Devil was too old an Artist to lose the advantage, he knew well that even a just and necessary defence, does by giving men acquaintance with War take off somewhat from the abhorrence of it, and insensibly dispose them to further Hostilities, and therefore he fail'd not to provide sparks for that matter, which was now grown so combustible; nor did he always send them from the bottomless pit, but sometimes borrowed fire from the Altar to consume the Votaries, and by the mutual collision of well meant zeal set even Orthodox Christian in flame. A memorable instance of this was the dispute about Easter, wherein while the veneration they had of the glorious Resurrection of Christ, prompted them to commemorate it in the exactest manner they could, the Serpent creeps into this Paradise, and though they had the same common end, yet on occasion of some little dissenting in the way, the heat of devotion insensibly degenerated into that of contention; and by being very tenacious of a circumstance of that celebration, they lost the more essential requisite that of Charity: kept the Feast indeed, but with the leaven of malice, and absurdly commemorate the redintegration of his Natural Body, by mutilating and dividing his Mystical. So likewise in the business of Rebaptization,
on, while on one side in a pious abhorrence of *Here-
sie*, thought the stain like that of Original Sin
could not be done away by any Purgation less so-
lemn than that of Baptism, and the other in a just
reverence of ancient custom, and jealousie of inno-
vation opposed it: the Dispute lasted till the
Scene was changed, and those who deliberated of
the manner of receiving Hereticks into the
Church, were themselves as such *turn'd* out of it.
No less well meant were the *Originals* of the *No-
vatian* and *Donatist* Heresies, as equally unhappy
were their *issues*: For in them all, when bitter
*Zeal* was once fermented, through its aptitude
to receive, and the Devils vigilance to administer
occasions, the *Orthodoxy* or *Heresie* of lives soon
became terms out-dated, and men were measur'd
only by *opinions*: That *sword of the Spirit* which
was at first design'd against vicious practices had
its edge *turn'd* against *speculative* notions, in so
much, that at last like that of *Joab*, 2 *Sam. 28.8.*
it had got such an aptness to fall out, that it was
always a ready instrument of Execution, till
even a *Philosophical point*, as that of the *Antipo-
des* was *resolv'd* with an *Anathema*, and not to
know the *Systeme* of this *present World*, made
forfeiture of that *to come*.

**BUT** alas these, though great defections
from Primitive unity, were but modest essays,
and feeble assaults, compar'd with those which
infested the succeeding ages: This *root of bitter-
ness* was then but a *probationer* in the *soyle*, and
though it sent forth some offsets to preserve its
kind,
kind; yet Satan was fain to be at some pains to cherish and nurse them up, placed them under the shadow of the Sanctuary, and got them like the treacherous Ivy, supported by that piety they were designed to destroy; but it was not long ere they had got firmer rooting and strength, not only to propagate, but multiply. Every Dispute in Religion grew *prolifical*, and in ventilating one question, many new ones were started: And as *questions* grew numerous, so did *Sects* too; every Opinion almost constituted a new party, and those again subdivided into many others, so that of all the first Violators of Primitive unity, we scarce find any, who did not revenge their *Schism* upon themselves, by separating from one another, as they had all done from the Church; till at last the progeny both of *Sects* and *Opinions* grew so numerous, that he who would exact an account, must be sent like *Abraham*, to the Sky or to the Shore: The Stars or Sands, being as apt a subject of *Arithmetick* as they. Whence it is brought to pass, that Satan now may leave his toilsome labour of compassing the Earth; men do his business for him, giving him leisure to be only a Cheerful *Spectator* of their *Divinity-prizes*; the bloody combates of *Ecclesiastick Gladiators*.

AND that he may be secur'd never to want that pleasing divertisement, the *later Ages* have been careful to train him up *Combatants*, it being now become a distinct sort of *Learning*, a new *Species*
Species of Divinity, to raise nice questions, create new difficulties, branch out with fond distinctions our holy Faith, which the pious Simplicity of the first Christians, receiv’d to practice; not to read upon as an Anatomy, unbowel and dissect to try experiments, much less to bring into the Theatre, there made to fight and bleed, to shew men sport, and try the skill of the unhappy sword-men, and Masters of defence. The form of sound words, which in its native frame and constitution, was most enlivening and Salubrious, dissolv’d and melted by Chemical preparation, ceases to be nutritive; and after all the labours of the Alembeck, and hopes of an Elixir, insensibly evaporates, and vanishes to Air; or leaves in the recipient a foul Empyreuma, or fretting corrosive. An endless dotage about names and words, and then as endless quarrel for them; appearing the commensurate effect of the long studies of those Distillers in Divinity, who boast its Sublimation.

It is indeed a thing worthy of the greatest both wonder and lamentation to see how the plainest, and most simple proposition, when it falls into the hands of these Artists, is mangled and disjointed, is rarified, exalted, and resin’d: He whose leisure, or indeed whole life, would serve him to survey all the subtile Divisions, and Distinctions of the School-men, would sure resolve, they had the power of working Miracles. Questions in their hands multiplying in the breaking, like the loaves in our Saviours. But sure the event of the
Miracles are very desperate, no solid nourishment being deriv’d by the one, but on the contrary, Stones given us in stead of Bread, and those too for the worst purposes, even to sling at one another, as if because stoning was the death of the first Christian Martyr, we design’d his Charity to the same fate with himself; that divine Gospel grace having since falt under as thick a showr, and with this sharp aggravation too, that whereas he suffered from Jews, Christians are become its executioners: whilst those who pretend to be Champions of the Faith, Irrefragable, Angelical, and Seraphical Doctors, not only fill the Church with quarrels whilst they live, but bequeath them in their writings to posterity; as Zisca is said to have done his skin, to be made an Incentive to war and confusion.

It was the policy of Julian to shut up the Fountains of humane learning from the Christian youth, lest they should there gain such acuteness, as might render them the more formidable Adversaries to Paganism: but could he have foreseen that they would have employed those Weapons not against the common Enemy, but one another, he would surely have revers’d the Stratagem, freely opened those Magazins whence they might furnish themselves for their mutual ruine, and have as solicitously promoted their Learning, as ever he obstructed it. I am very far from abetting their arrogant folly, who either decry humane learning in general, or make it such a Moabite, or Ammonite, that however it be admitted in civil
vil Converse, must be interdicted the Sanctuary. Our Religion prescribes us rational not brutish Sacrifices, and therefore despises not any of those advantages which may improve our reason, exalt the man and depress the beast in us: yet sure we shall derogate very impiously from Christ's prophetick office, if we allow not divinity to be the Supreme and noblest Science; such as is to be serv'd and attended, not regulated and govern'd by those inferior: but that just order seems now to be inverted; divine learning is brought down to humane; the Simplicity of Christian doctrine so perplexed and confounded with Philosophical niceties, that Plato and Aristotle are become the Umbires of our Religion, and we must go ask Heathens how far we shall be Christians. Those deep things of God as the Apostle calls them 1 Cor. 2.10. and of which he pronounces the natural man an incompetent Judge, are yet brought before that Tribunal, subjected to be scanned by rules of Art: but alas, our line is too short to sound those Depths. Men rashly undertake to understand incomprehensible, to order infinite, define ineffable things: and then no wonder if their conceptions differ; for where there is no visible truth, wherein to Center, error is as wide as mens Phancies, and may wander to Eternity: while multitudes run cariers in the dark, it is not strange to have them jumble, and overthrow each other.

AND doubtless were the Controversies which have so long harrased the Church throughly examin'd
min’d, many of them would be found of this nature. An humble belief has been judg’d too sluggislic and dull an exercise for men of acute parts, and therefore they would not take faith’s word that so it is, unless reason will be her surety, and shew them how; but sure it had been much for the peace of the Church and safety of Souls, if Mysteries had been permitted to be Mysteries; that those sublimier parts of our faith had been entertain’d with more veneration, and less of disquisition, and that while even the learned’st do acknowledge them to be Abysses, they would not confute that confession, by attempting to fathom them. But alas, so preposterous has been the procedure, that those things which were indeed inexplicable, have been rackt and tortur’d to discover themselves, while in the mean, the plainer, and more accessible truths, as if despicable while easie, are clouded and obscur’d; so many subtile queries rais’d about them, that the Theorick of Christianity is become harder than the Practick; a grace is much more readily acquir’d than defin’d, and that key of knowledge which should give us entrance into the closets and recesses of religion, is by so much tampering and wrenching made useless; serves only to busie us at the door, and so in effect proves rather a bar to keep us out, than a key to let us in. Thus perverse are the contradictions of humane deprav’d nature, which like our first parents take it unkindly, that God has reserv’d any thing from us, and boldly attempt to break down
down his enclosures, to rob him of his peculiar; and yet in the mean, as industriously contrive to rob our selves of our own, to cancelling both parts of Gods distribution, neither leaving secret things to the Lord our God, nor the revealed ones to us and our children, Deut. 29. 29. Certainly the first propagators of our Faith, proceeded at another rate, they well knew that not the brain but the heart, was the proper soil for that celestial Plant, and therefore did not amuse their Proselytes with curious questions, but set them to the active part of their religion. We see what brief and plain instructions S. Peter gives his Catechumen, Act. 2. 38. Repent and be baptiz'd every one of you for the remission of sins: and this it seems as a full preparation for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which he there promises upon these only conditions. This was that vigorous Seed which at once sprung up suddenly, and rooted deep too, and produc'd the liberal harvest of that day: but sure had those three thousand souls, been Catechiz'd by our modern Casuists, we had seen a wide difference, not only in the expedition but success. In like manner we see Act. 8. how short a Creed qualified in S. Philips judgment for the Eunuchs baptism: and we find S. Paul whose education enabled him for the subtlest definitions, yet delivers his whole doctrine in this compendium, Act. 20. 21. Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; and tis observable how he introduces this with a profession that he had kept back nothing.
nothing that was profitable for them, Vers. 20. and
seconds it V. 27. with another, that he had not
shunned to declare unto them the whole council of
God; from whence 'tis obvious for the shallowest
discourser to inferr, that the whole council of
God as far as it is incumbent for man to know, at
least necessitate medii is compriz'd in that one
breviat of Evangelical truth: and certainly
whilest all the devison of these generals, was the
distributing them into practice, they were found
most fertile seminaries of all Vertue; but when
they came to be dichotomiz'd, and cantond out
into curious aerial notions, they lost their prolific
nature: that fruitful land became a wilderness, a wild and intricate maze, where men
sooner lose themselves than find either truth or ho-
liness.

WHEN Christianity first attested its self
by miracles, it produced in the hearts of its con-
verts, a firm assent to the truth of the Doctrine,
and an awful reverence and adoration of that
God, who had given such power unto men, awa-
king them to an Enquiry after duty, so to pro-
pitiate that omnipotence whose Fury it appear'd
impossible to bear: And this sure was a much
more genuine effect, than if they had busied them-
selves in those many unprofitable curiosities, nice,
yet bold enquiries into the divine attributes
which now a-daies serve only to supplant that pi-
ous veneration we owe to them.

IN like manner the comprehensive enuncia-
tion of Christ, Mar. 16. 16. He that believeth
shall
shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damn'd, was received by the first Christians, as the condition on which the two so distant states of Salvation or damnation depended, and accordingly excited their diligence, to attain the one, and avoid the other. And this certainly was a much more concerning employment, than to have entertain'd themselves with the modern dispute, whether some antecedent decree of God had not irreversibly determin'd them, to the one or other; a disquisition that has serv'd only to keep us Idly busy, set our heads a working, but folds up our hands like Solomon's sluggard in our bosoms. So also when S. Paul affirms it the design of Christ's giving himself for us, to purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; the Primitive Christians had no other design than to comport with that his purpose; to be what he died to make them, and to attest their Zeal to good works, by being actually rich in them. They took Christ's word, that he that gave the meanest dole for his sake, should not lose his reward; thought themselves sure enough upon his promise, and never disputed the proportion either of Worth or Congruity between the work and wages; and had the Modern done the like, our works had not so unhappily evaporated into words, we had talkt less and done more.

TWERE easie to draw the Parallel through all the points which busied the devotion of the first Ages, and the curiosity of the later: By all which it would be evident, how much Chris-

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Christian doctrine has lost in its Efficacy, since it gain'd in its Bulk: how we have embaled our Coin by multiplying it; and have divided our sum into so many, and so small Fractions, as our Arithmetick can scarce number, never unite. We should think him very ridiculous, that should hope to advance his crop, by grinding the corn he sows: yet methinks, this has bin the Method of our Spiritual husbandmen, who have scarce suffered one grain of our faith to escape Entire. 'Tis said that the Ant, when she lays in her winter Stock, bites the ends of the Corn, as being Naturalist enough to know that will certainly prevent its sprouting: And sure that little contemptible creature whom Solomon appoints to preach industry to the sluggard, may in this point read Philosophy too, to our greatest Doctors; convince them that that seed which they mangle with so many Distinctions and Divisions, will never spring up into Christian practice: It will rather be like the Dragons teeth, Cadmus is said to have sown, whose immediate production was a hostile band combating one another. A fable which God knows we have found too sadly moraliz'd in our School contentions, only with this unhappy difference, that ours are more immortal, our Serpentine breed fight but never die, oppose but destroy not one another.

AND then 'twill not appear strange to see the first seeds of discord, so prodigiously encreas'd, that they now overspread the face of the Earth: for whereas in all other things there
is a succession, one generation goes and another comes, and so though the species continue, the individuals perish; these seem to have the accursed Privilege of propagating and not expiring, and to have reconcil'd the procreativeness of corporeal, with the duration of incorporeal Substances: This is such an advantage toward their multiplication, that we may grieve, but cannot wonder to find them Swarm; not like Bees to bring profit, but like Locusts to devour every green thing in the land; nor is it now in the power of all the Magicians of Ægypt to cast them out: for were it possible ever to become Satan's interest to suppress them, he would certainly find himself in the case of one of his young Conjurers, to have rais'd more spirits than he could lay. Mens now irritated Passions, and formed interests, the great-somenter of disputes, would prove too sturdy Devils, even for Beelzebub himself to Exorcise.

BUT 'tis too sure his Kingdom will never so divide against its self; it suits not only with his Nature, but with his Ends to perpetuate our Strifes, and therefore as if our doctrinal debates were not enough to secure his purpose, he has an auxiliary troop of ritual differences to attach us. The Leprosie which infests the sollider parts of our Religion, has past from the body to the very Garments; the most exterior adherences, Habits, Gestures, Days, every thing that has but the remotest subserviency to Piety, are become the objects of fierce Contests, and have so increas'd
increas'd the number and heat of our quarrels, that 'tis unnecessary, perhaps impossible to add more if he can but keep up these, as God knows he is too like to do, his Kingdom will be competently guarded, they being his greatest security against that power of Godliness, that vital force of Christianity, he so much dreads: that they are so, is obvious enough to him that takes but the grossest confus'd view of them. But that we may better discern the degrees of his advantage and our own mischief, 'twill not be amiss to consider them more attentively, make some distinct observations, not of all, for that were endless, but of some of their most eminent Effects, which we shall find so pernicious and destructive, as sufficiently speak their relation, and subserviency to the great Abaddon.

A N D in the first place if we consider them only privatively as they supplant and jostle out our greater concerns, we shall find them sadly mischievous, indeed to such a degree that were they not chargeable with any positive ill, they were by this their mere negative Force, competent Instruments of our ruine. Did they actually convey no venom, yet while they subtract our nourishment, their effects will be sure to be deadly; Grace as well as Nature being liable to be starv'd as well as poysoned. Christianity is not a dull unaéive, but stirring busie State, and therefore we still find it in the Gospel represented under the Metaphors which imply the greatest Industry and Activity; tis a trade, a
watch, a race, a combat, and it assigns us tasks enough to justify the propriety of the Tropes: And therefore as on the one hand the sleepy Professor will at last find he has but dreamed of those glorious Rewards he expects; so on the other, he that frames himself another Scheme, that labours but not in God's vineyard, that busies himself in things extrinsic to that one great Sphere of motion the Evangelical Precepts, will finally discern that he has but rolled Syphbus his stone, espous'd a toyle under which he may indeed be weary and heavy laden, but will never find rest to his Soul.

AND then what can be more perfectly adapted to his aim, who desires to propagate his own eternal restlessness unto us, than thus to commute our tasks, exchange these pleasant and gainful ones, which God assigns us, for those uneasy and fruitless, we impose on our selves. 'Tis true we find too many of those unprofitable works of darkness to busie and employ us: but I think no one, nay I am apt to say not all others together, have proved so effectual to his purpose, as this of raising and maintaining parties in Religion. 'Tis too usual a policy of States to secure themselves from the fear of a potent Neighbour, by fomenting a civil discord in his Kingdom: Satan has in this instance found it a lucky Stratagem, it having proved the most powerful revulsive of his danger. I will not examine, whether he borrowed it from, or lent it to our Machavilions, but sure he may from his S 2 own
own experience recommend it with the attestatio-
on of *Probatum est*.

**indeed** this art of diversion gives him a full security against all he fears in our Christianity, for 'tis not the title he envies to us, or dreads himself; we know he long since had courage to contemn the name even of Christ, when invoked by those whose practices joyn'd with him in defying it; while we are but *Jewish Exorcists*, make no other use of Christ, but to get us a reputation and a trade, he can deal well enough with us. Seven sons of *Sceva* are not half so terrible to him as one St. Paul, 'tis him only he fears, that to the *form* has joyn'd the *power of Godliness*; That *Exorcisme* he knows he cannot resist, and therefore has very dexterously found a way to divert it, by engaging us in those contentions which allow us not to think of the practical part of our profession. By the *confus'd noise* of Battel, quite drowning that *voice behind us*, which says, *This is the way walk in it*. Nay, by this subtilty he does not only divert, but forestall also; like the *Philistines*, allows no Spear or Sword that may be us'd against him, but takes up all those *Instruments* by which we should work the *work of God*. We know to all affairs of Importance there are three necessary *concurrents* without which they can never be dispatcht; *Time, Industry, and Faculties*; and the more weighty and difficult the *Business* is, the greater Degree of each of these is requisite. Now certainly the *interest* of our *Souls* is not the slightest *concern* we have: the avoiding eternal
Step 9

Difficulties in general, eternal misery, the acquiring endless bliss is not so trivial, or so easy a matter, as to be the Work of a moment, the purchase of some few yawning miseries, or volatile phancies: He who is to dispense the Rewards, has propos'd us other Conditions, assign'd us Work which takes up no less time than that of our whole lives; no less intention than of our whole powers: And then if we suffer any thing else to interpose, and default what is thus entirely requisite, if we cut new Channels for that which should run in this one full current, 'tis easy to divine what the Event will be: For man being finite both in his nature and operations, the time and attention he bestows on one thing, must necessarily be subtracted from another. And therefore if our Disputes about Religion entertain and busie us, they must unavoidably interrupt our attendance on practick Duties; and so whilst we quarrel with one another, give our great Master too just ground of quarrel with us all, by neglecting the great, and indeed only Business entrusted to us.

Now indeed that our contentions do thus divert us, is too apparent to any that shall consider it in any of the three forementioned particulars; for, first for our time, they do not only insensibly steal away much of it (a modesty which most other diversions do still retain) but Magisterially exact it, and accordingly have large parcels of it solemnly and avowedly devoted to them; the scanning old questions, and raising new ones, having been the profest Business of many mens lives; their
their very Vocation and Trade wherein they have arrived to such eminence, as shews they made liberal omissions of their time to it: And of this every age has left so many Records, as the meer reading them would allow few vacant minutes to the succeeding: And had not time a little reveng’d his own quarrel, and consum’d many of those writings, by which himself was wasted, the Hyperbole would not be very extravagant in this case, which we find warrantably us’d in another, Jo. 21. that even the world its self could not contain the Books which have been written. As it is, there are more than enough to employ, nay, devour time; for when men once launch into the vast Sea of Controversie, they are tossed there endlessly, and seldom recover a harbour, Difficulties like waves crowding one upon the neck of another; And accordingly we see in Polemick Disputes, how every rejoynnder swells bigger and bigger, till like Gehazies cloud, from a hand breadth it over-spread the Heavens; every little Manual becomes the Parent of vast Volumes; and unless the evil cure its self by majoration, unless the greatness of the task bring in despair to supplant curiosity, and keep men from reading, the Spectators will have as little respite, as the Combatants, both Writers and Readers will be so ingrost, that they will have little leisure for any thing else. And I dare in this appeal to any that have engag’d deep either way, whether they have not found it experimentally true: I wish they would but snatch some broken parcel as a plank from the common shipwreck.
wrack of their time; rescue a few minutes for a sober reflection, and audit what real Profit accrues to them, from the expence of so many precious Hours; how much it advances that grand business for which their Time here was allotted, and according to which their Eternity hereafter will be awarded: always remembering, that if it promote it not, it hinders it, by diverting that time which should have been so employed: And indeed there cannot be a more comprehensive mischief than this of the loss of time, it being that which virtually contains the frustrating of all other Advantages, whereby we should work out our Salvation. The operations even of Christ himself were, he tells us, limited to a certain season: I must work the work of my Father while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work; and if the Night overtake us, it matters not how we are stored with instruments of Action, since they all at once then become useless. Our Laws anciently set a greater penalty upon the stealing Beasts of breed, than on other Cattel of the same species, as calculating the damage by the possibilities of which the Owner was robb'd. Time is the universal womb of things and actions; and therefore when we lose that, we suffer an accumulative prejudice, forfeit our Rights in reversion as well as our Possessions, our capacities as well as enjoyments. As in an Abortion the unhappy Mother, besides the frustration of her hopes, and child-birth pains sustaint'd, acquires an aptitude to miscarry for the future, and never to be able to bring
bring forth a vital birth: And thus God knows multitudes of Embryon purposes perish, and the misery of it is, they are our best that do so. We generally pursue our frivolous projects with an active vigour, but keep our great and concerning affairs only in design till death come and surprize us, which like the fatal Metamorphoses the Poets talk of, fixes us in the posture it finds us, and so presents us to Judgment. Now I would know of the most eager Contender, whether he would not chuse then to be found with his hands stretcht out in prayer to God, or alms to the poor, rather than dealing blows amongst his fellow servants; if he would, certainly 'tis his concern to put himself into that form he would then appear in, to husband his little span of time so, as may stand him in stead when time shall be no more.

BUT if men will needs be improvident, yet why will they be ridiculous too, if they will barter away their time, methinks they should at least have some ease in exchange: but to be industrious ill-husbands, to lose all their advantage, and none of their toil, is such a solemn piece of folly, as is at once matter of Scorn and Wonder; yet this is the very case here, our wranglings do not only exhaust our time, but our strength too: We pursue them with so vehement an intention, as if our Faith propos'd not to us any other victory, but over this sort of Opponents: We run our selves breathless in this race, where the prize is only a few fading Leaves, or what is more transitory, a little popular applause; and make not to-
wards the incorruptible Crown, till we are grown too feeble and decrepit for the other pursuit. Men macerate their Bodies, and waste their Spirits in Polemick studies, prescribe themselves no time of discharge from that War, till they are able no longer to weild their weapons, and then when meer Impotence makes them peaceable, begin to cry out of contention, snatch up Devotion when Controversie begins to be too heavy for them, and at their Death pray for that peace of the Church, which they have made it the business of their life to disturb. This as it sufficiently attests what mens thoughts are in their cool blood, what apprehensions they have of the way when they draw near their journeys End; so does it abundantly evince the unspeakable prejudice, Piety receives from our Disputes; Those have the active and vigorous Abetters, while That is turn'd off to languishing bed-rid Votaries. So that the division between these two, is like that of the Cattel between Jacob and Laban, all the stronger to the one, and feebler to the other: Would God the Scene were not in one respect chang'd, and that the Syrian had not here got the better share. But in the mean time what greater advantage can Satan wish for, our strength and industry is diverted upon these foreign expeditions, and Sion is left to be guarded by the lame and the blind, such only as are not able to follow the Camp, and then 'tis not strange to see what succesful assaults he has made, that that true practick vertue which once made such victorious salleys on the heathen World,
World, is now baffled in its own Quarters, beaten from its Works, and driven to seek shelter in obscure corners, immures its self in some few private breasts, and so like an exil'd Prince, makes only shift to live when it should reign. But alas, shall we for ever suffer our selves to be thus befool'd, shall this his stale stratagem after so many hundred years use, nay, and detection too, lose nothing of its Efficacy? Must we always waste our strength in forging shackles for our selves? This is such an infatuation as Hosea speaks of, Chap. 9. 7. The Prophet is a fool, the Spiritual man is mad: Would God we would once put our selves under the discipline of serious recollection, it might perhaps cure the Phrensie: Let him who has with unwearied diligence watcht all advantage against his Antagonist; rack'd and tortured every period of his discourse, to make it confess an absurdity: Let him, I say, consider, how much better that industry had been employed in discovering the fallacies of our common Adversary, that old Sophister, who puts the most abusive Elenchs on us, whilst we are most busie in putting them upon one another. Good God, how might true vital Christianity at this day have flourisht, if we would have bestowed our pains the right way? At how much a cheaper rate might we have cherish'd, than we destroy her. All parties pretend to be very careful of this Vine, are very busie in setting traps for the little Foxes, all whom they are pleas'd to call Hereticks; and in the mean time take no care of the wild Boar, let that
that not only spoil her branches, but stock up her roots, suffer the most savage beastial vices to destroy both Power and Form of Godliness together. Thus unhappily do we divert our intentions, from our most important concerns. And as Archimedes is said to have been so vehemently intent upon a Geometrical figure, that he heard not of the taking of the City, till an Enemy gave him his information and death together: So do we so busie our selves in drawing our several Schemes of Religion (every of which will pretend to no less than Demonstration) that in the mean, that which alone is true Religion, is expos'd to the fury of the Enemy, sack'd, ruinated, and like the plough'd up Jewish Sanctuary, not one stone left upon another. Certainly most of the questions which at this day disturb Christendom, have in respect of their matter no Propriety toward the propagating good Life, but, in reference to their way of management, all aptness to hinder it; how much were it then for our Ease as well as profit, to turn us into the plain road, where none of these Thorny difficulties will encumber us. Alas, why should the Romanist so sweat to maintain his Purgatory flame, as if he already felt its heat, and would in this world antedate those pains, when the same Industry bestowed here to purifie himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, would substract the matter of that Fire, and leave little for that furnace to refine; which were doubtless a much securer way, even according to his own principles, than to trust to the uncertain devotion of others, to fetch him out.
out when once deeply ingulph't: 'Tis surely much better to starve that Fire, by ones own innocence, than to leave it to be extinguish'd by the Tears and Piety of surviving friends. Why should the Scrinian so eagerly contend for the possibility of keeping the Law, when one example would convince more than a thousand arguments. Let him bend his study to make himself an instance of his own doctrine; and then though he do finally fail in proving his Hypothetis, yet, if he do his utmost, he will not fail of a better triumph, than that which the Schools can give; and so will even from his error extract advantage, his very straying will by a happy Antiperistasis, lead him into the way. Why does the Predestinarian so adventerously climb into Heaven, toransack the celestial Archives, read Gods hidden Decrees, when with less labour he may secure an Authentick transcript within himself; let him according to Saint Peters advice, add to his faith vertue, and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, &c. and that chain of virtues will stand him in much more stead, than if he could as infallibly (as some have confidently) demonstrate every link of Pre destination: 'Tis the assiduous practice of Duty will make his calling and election sure; and unless he can confute that divine Axiome, that without holiness none shall see the Lord; he cannot but confess he may more profitably busie his thoughts in labouring to become holy, than in disputing whether he can chuse to be so or not. Or lastly, why do we Christians of several perswa-
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Fions, so fiercely argue against the salvability of each other, as if it were not only our Opinion, but our Interest and our Wish, that all should be damn'd, but those of our particular Sect; when God knows not only every society, but every single person has enough to do, to work out his own salvation, which if we will take the Apostles word, is to be done with fear and trembling, Phil. 2. 12. A temper very widely distant from that of censoring and judging. And sure we should not think that malesfacitor more meriting, or more likely to be acquitted, who should leap from the Bar to the Bench, and there condemn the whole Goal but himself. 'Twas a sober and Christian reply of a late learned Gentleman, who being askt by one whether a Papist might be saved, answered, you may be saved without knowing that. And would we confine our cares and enquiries, to those things which concern that one great Interest, we might take less pains, and yet do more work, be less busie-bodies, but more fruitful Christians, and then sure 'tis time we ask our selves the Wise mans question, Eccles. 5. 16. What profit hath he that laboureth for the mind; and at last give over this unthriving diligence, and not so emulate the most stupid of Beasts, as to make our selves burthens, only that we may couch under them.

And were this only Issachars lot, 'twere the less to be regretted, but also Zabulon herein invades his portion; 'tis they that handle the pen of the Writer, that have engross this error, and will not suffer it to be a Plebeian one. None do
so much this way mis-employ the two vulgar talents of Time and Industry, as those who have a third superadded to them, that of Extraordinary Faculties and endowments which they do as prodigally lavish as either of the former. The Beginners or Abettors of contentions have generally been Persons of the most acute refin'd wits and excellent learning, which has enabled them for those quirks and subtilties, of which großer understandings would have remain'd more happily ignorant: A strange production that the greatest beauties of Nature and Art, should ingender the foulest deformity in Religion. Thus alas have Satan's altars the pre-emption of Gods, the fattest Oblation brought to feed the fire of contention, while the that of devotion expires for want of Nourishment. It was indeed no wonder, that the blind zeal of Pagans had made him so wantonly nice, that none but the choicest victims would serve his turn; none but an Andromeda and an Iphigenia, Royal and Virgin sacrifices propitiate his infernal Deities: but that among Christians he should still have the same Election, have the richest treasures of those, who say they war against him, laid at his feet, have his choicest weapons out of his Enemies magazine, is a riddle that can scarce be solved, but by concluding Idolatry has only chang'd its form, and that he sits as securely enshrin'd in mens passions and animosities, as ever he did in an Idol Temple; so that he seems rather to have lost the pomp, than the power of Regiment. But admit, that he were not herein so
so immediately Gods rival, that these speculative debates had none of those adherencies, which do so directly gratifie him, yet still he is secur'd of gaining somewhat at rebound; for alas, when mens faculties are thus employed, what Weapons are there left for the defence of true practick vertue, and God knows, she needs them but too much: Mens lusts are grown subtile Disputants, so that the most improved reason may find work enough to manage the Contests; And surely would men of parts timely have bent their endeavours this way, vice could not have got so strong a party. Men are ashamed to be Proselytes to a weak Arguer, as thinking they must part with their reputation, as well as their sin: and certainly nothing is a more general discouragement from Piety, than the opinion of its votaries not being Persons of Parts, and exalted Understandings; a Prejudice as old as the time of our Saviour, as may appear from Jo. 7. Would God our greatest Rabbies would sadly consider how much they have contributed to this scandal, while by laying out their parts on Polemick niceties, they have neglected the more weighty part of their business, 
& given too much Attestation to that scandalous Maxim, that Ignorance is the mother of Devotion: Certainly this is quite to mistake their Commission, which is not that of a Herald, to proclaim War amongst men, but that of an Embassador, to reconcile them first to holiness, and by it to God: And doubtless one soul gain'd to Piety, would more promote their account, than many thousands
thousands secure'd to a Sect or Party. We find
how sad the doom was of that Servant who wrapt
up his Talent, but we have no cause to think
it would have been at all easier, if he had melted
the Talent into bullets, to maintain the skirmish
with his fellows: Whether that be not the case
of some who have receiv'd not the one Talent but
the five, I leave it to be discussed between God and
their own Consciences; but in the interim, 'tis
sad to see how unhappily men engage their en-
deavours, which seems to represent the reverse
of Ejay's Prophesie, we having beat our plough-
shares into swords, and our pruning hooks into
spears, all the Instruments of fertility and
growth in Grace, into Engins of War and dis-
cord; and then it must needs be a most deplora-
able condition to which Christianity is reduced;
which seems in this to be under the same cala-
mity, which her distress professors suffer from
the Turkish tyranny, whilst her hopefulllest and
most pregnant Children, are like Janizaries and
Timariots trained up to fight against her. And
let none wonder that I call it fighting against
her, when yet perhaps none of them do formally
renounce her; for that Circumstance only de-
termines the War to be intestine, not foreign;
and if our own sad Experiences had not too
much qualified us to judge, I might appeal to
the universal vote of mankind, which of those
were the most destructive. Indeed were there
no other Act of hostility discernable, but that
which we have hitherto insisted on, the inter-
cepting
Chap. 10. from Disputes in general.

cepting her supplies, the cutting off from her that time, industry and gifts, whereby she would be nourished and supported, that were irreparably injurious to her, and consequently most grateful to that grand Enemy who as hath been shew'd, makes advantage of our Wranglings of Diffentions with one another, to reak his more inveterate Malice on us all.

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CHAP. X.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from disputes, as they supplant Charity.

But alas, the mischief of these debates, can never be describ'd by bare negatives, there are multitudes of positive ills, that inseparably adhere to them, and those of so destructive a force, that if Christianity were beleagred and famish'd by the former, she is storm'd and batter'd by these, and so is ascertain'd to sink under all the methods of ruine. In the front of these we may well rank those displacements and animosities which are the product of our speculative differences, and which do indeed so naturally result from them, that 'tis not to be hoped so long as the one continues that the other will ever cease. For though in practice we often see a bewitching Sin dethrone the Reason, and make men act as if they had no such superior principle...
principle to guide them, yet in matters of Speculation their affections are generally strongly influenc'd by their understandings. We do not only approve, but love those notions wherewith we are prepossess'd, which kindness as it propagates its self to the abettors of the same Tenets, so also it insinuates dislikes to the opposers. And as that opposition advances, so the disgust does too, till at last the Scene shifts, and the Persons are at a greater war than the Opinions. But we need not thus derive a proof from the causes, when the thing does too demonstrably attest its self by the effects; for what issues are there of the mortallest hatred, which do not plentifully flow from this fountain. Humane nature we know has but three waies of actuating its Passions; by thought, by word, and by deeds; and we may surely conclude the feud very bitter that employes all these Engins, as 'tis too visible this does; for though the former of these be in their own nature inscrutable, to all but omniscience, yet the two later are, according to Christ's own Rule of the Tree by the fruits, infallible Criterions of them; and those make such liberal discoveries, that I think I may appeal to any who have espous'd a party, whether they have not with the first discriminating rudiments of their own Sect, imbib'd a secret confus'd prejudice to all others. Nay, I fear there are but few of so mortified passions, as to have stopp'd there, and not advanc'd to a direct aversion, and alienation of mind. Indeed were it not for this, 'twere scarce possible for
for so many of the vulgar, to be such Bigots in their several factions; for alas, their Intellects are generally too gross, to have any clear apprehension of the Points they contend for; their Leaders only give them some general confus'd notions, just enough to excite their displeasure against all Dissenters, and then their anger must presently be call'd zeal, and instead of the more un easie task of suppressing their passion, this expedient serves at once to hallow and gratifie it: Nay, so ridiculous have some mens prepossession of this kind been, that they would scarce allow those to be entire men whom they thought not sound believers, but have phancied I know not what bodily as well as mental Monftrosities in those they were pleas'd to call Hereticks; a piece of childish credulity which the emissaries of some factions have not disdain'd to make their advantage of. But these inward disgusts and rancours are but the first bound of this ball of contention, when this leven is once in the heart, it will quickly diffuse its self, and both tongue and hands will be tainted with it. Hence comes it, that disputes in religion are managed with such virulence and bitterness, that one would think the Disputants had put off much of Humanity, before they come thus to treat of Divinity. The government of the Tongue is a piece of morality which sober nature dictates, which yet in this instance many even of our greatest Scholars seem totally to have unlearnt; For whether we consider the unseemly reproaches, or ri-
Mischief arising from Disputes, Chap. 10.

gid cenfures, wherewith almost all parties pursue their Antagonists, we have reason to say with S. James, *The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly Poison:* would God their guilt of this kind, did not so loudly proclaim its self, as to supersede the need of proof. 'Tis too obvious that the Satyr has usurpt the chair, and polemick Discourses are degenerated into libels and invectives, our Controversiasts fall from arguments to reproaches, as if their Zeal lay more to blast their adversaries fame, than confute his error; and were this only in personal extemporary debates, it might have the excuse of an indeliberate passion. Indeed it were to be wish'd that all words of this sort, might vanish in that breath that utters them; that as they resemble the Wind in fury and impetuouſness, so they might do also in transientness, and sudden expiration: But alas, a course is taken to immortalize them, they become records, and our most elaborate controvertial writings, like the Earth after the curse, over-run with these briers and thorns, Sarcaſsms, contumelies and invectives filling so many Pages, that were those weeded out, many volumes would be reduced to a more moderate bulk as well as temper. Nor are our cenfures any thing more modest than our reproaches, every petty difference is mutually upbraided, to each party as a defection from the faith, so that we scarce know a milder name than Heresie, nor doom than Damnation. And as if the visible obliquities of errors would not afford us inditements enough against
against one another, there is a closer inspection made, every position is ript up, and curiously dissected, to see what Embryo is in its womb, what seeds there are of monstrous productions, which though perhaps the native strength of the Principle would never have animated, yet the preternatural heat of an Antagonist can quickly hatch them (like the Chickens at grand-Cairo) into life, and vigorous being: and if by a long chain of (perhaps fallacious) Inferences, some such Imputation is fastned upon a Thesis, then all who embrace that, are charg'd also with all this furious brood, though they never so solemnly renounce and disclaim them. A practice sure very uncharitable, for suppose such consequences never so regularly deduced from my opinion, yet so long as I seriously disavow and detest them, I may indeed be thought unwise in not discerning the connexion, but sure not impious. So that unless want of Logick be a damning sin, no man can hence be authoriz'd to pronounce me reprobate: and I cannot think that God, whose rigor bends against the faults of our wills, rather than our understandings, and who at the last great assize will assume our own consciences into the judicature upon us, will ever sentence me for those deductions how horrid soever which I never made mine, or that I shall ever find my self in Hell for a misperswason which I never entertain'd. But there are some whose Censures are not so artificial, yet no less severe, who beg their Postulata, and taking it for granted that such and such
such are the only sanctified opinions, make them the Shibolet by which to discriminate not only their own Friends, but God's too, lock up heaven gates against any who bring not that Ticket for admittance; and though they make the way wide enough to receive the most overgrown Sinner of their own Opinion, yet they pronounce it impossible to the strictest piety of a Dissenter. And upon such grounds as these do we mutually doom one another to perdition, never considering that whilst we so briskly preface others Damnation, we really prepare for our own. Alas, our eagerness to heat the Furnace seven times hotter for all that bow not to our dictates, does but expose us to the fate of Nebuchadnezzars officers, Dan. 3. to be our selves consum'd in that flame, wherein we cast them. 'Tis indeed to be wish'd we would cease to invade God's peculiar, by judging those that must stand or fall to him: but if we will needs take his office, 'tis but equitable, we take his rules too; and in our Wrath remember Mercy: But God be blessed 'tis the Judgment of our upright, yet gracious Master that shall finally determine us; and not that of our passionate fellow-servants: If these were irreversible, and the Key of the bottomless pit were in our custody, we might give Satan a writ of Ease, discharge him from his perambulations, he would need no more to walk about as a Lion, but might still lie in his Den, and we should bring in prey enough to glut the Devourer: For could we execute all we condemn, we might ask the Disciples question, Mat.
Mat. 19. 25. *Who then can be saved?* But as these severe censures, are a present violation of Charity, so they tend to the perpetuating it by obstructing a return to that unity of Judgment, which might make up the very original breach: for while men reciprocally load each others opinions and persons with detestable imputations, if they really speak what they think, they do still more deeply impress upon themselves the prejudice to that which they accuse: (hatred as well as love gathering strength by being actuated): but if they do indeed not believe their own charge, yet having once made it, either upon Interest or Passion, 'tis not probable they will want pride to maintain it; and when we consider how ruling a piece of carnality that is, we can not wonder if it indispose men to retrac]tions. I wish we had not too many, and too late instances of some whose weightiest objection against a cause, has been their own former violence against it. When men have once fastned the brand of Heresie, Prophaneness or Blasphemy upon an opinion, they think they cannot afterwards become its Proselytes, without either seeming to assume those Guilts, or at least that of having falsely charg'd them upon others: and the Horns of such a Dilemma do so gore their reputation, that it often tempts to salve that with the wounding of conscience, and persuades them rather to reject their convictions, than expose their credits. And certainly were this the only ill consequent of our rigorous accusations, it would be enough to pre-
judice them as unfit Instruments in a Gospel design; but though they suit not with that work to which they solemnly pretend, they are most accommodate to that they really produce: For if we examine in the third place, what influence these our eager contests have upon our actions, we shall find them fully proportionable to our words. And first negatively, 'tis apparent in too many, that they are apt to confine even the common offices of humanity to their own Sect: and others who do not so, yet shew so great partiality in dispensing them, as discovers the Name of Christian is not half so charming, as that of their own particular Faction. Were Instances of this kind as needful as they are numerous, 'twere easie to give multitudes: but I think none that has liv'd in our late confusions can have wanted occasions of observing it in others, at least, if not in himself. But 'alas, omissions are scarce worth our notice, when there are so many positive Acts of unkindness so visible among us: They know little of ancient and less of modern Times, that are unacquainted with the mutual persecutions, which almost all parties have alternately rais'd, one against another among Christians: Confiscations and banishments, Gibbets and flames; Weapons God knows much too carnal for a spiritual warfare, yet much more in use than those S. Paul recommends to Timothy, gentleness, and meek instructing of Opposers, 2 Tim. 25, 26. And when 'tis consider'd that those Opposers too were Heathens, 'twill be more than a little strange, that Severity
Severity should be allowable to Brethren, which was interdicted against Aliens. Is it an easier crime to reject the entire body of that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints, than to differ in the explication of some one branch of it? nay, perhaps only of some corollary and deduction from it, which as far as it is humane may be fallible, and therefore can no more command my assent than it satisfies my judgment; yet this is generally the most that can be affirmed of our differences; For almost what Party is there which do not avowedly own all that Faith which constituted the first Christians; would God we did as uniformly embrace the Charity too; and then most of our disputes would be superseded, at least so calm'd, that there should be none of those destructive effects which they now produce: For alas, how many funeral piles has this preposterous zeal kindled? So that what some said of Draço's Laws may too justly be applied to our arguments, that they have been writ rather in bloud than Ink. But as Christ when he forewarn'd his disciples of the ensuing persecution, tells them not only they shall be kill'd, but they shall be put out of the Synagogue: So now as if Christians were æmulous of every branch of Jewish cruelty, we transcribe that part of the copy too, and either by causless excommunicating others, or separating our selves, we deny the benefit of publick communion to each other: And this is a greater severity than the former, by how much more implacable our hate is against what we
we count error, than what we know to be vice; and by how much the concerns of the Soul are more estimable than those of the Body. The inveterateness of those Feuds which rise from Opinion, may clearly be discovered in this instance; let a man have committed all the outrages which may render him unworthy to live, yet when we prosecute him to death, we willingly afford him all helps towards his future state, and no man is so inhumane as to refuse to pray, either for or with a Malefactor; yet some few speculative differences are such a gulph betwixt us, that we cannot meet even in that we all acknowledge our common Duty, the worship of our God. Certainly among all the accursed issues of our contention, there is none more malignant and criminal, than this of Schism and Separation, and would men judge dispassionately, more irrational neither: For doubtless were our case stated to any sober Heathen, he would never be able to guess, why they who equally acknowledge the advantage and necessity of prayer, confess the same God, have the same common wants in this world, and hopes in the next, may not ask in the same form, and in the same place. Alas, is it not enough to be at distance where we differ, but must we be so also where we agree? Is unity so dreadful to us, that we must act contradictions to escape it. Surely this is a stranger fascination of the spirit of Division, than that in the Gospel Demoniack, which enabled him to break all bonds in sunder, and like it, abhors the approaches of
a Saviour, crying out, What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus the Son of God, art thou come to torment us? Who knows what a powerful Exorcism the united intercessions of the Christian world might have been; had we joyntly deprecated our quarrels, God might have found a way to have compos'd them, though we could not; and our tears might have cemented those breaches which our dissents made, but our separation widened. I know the venerable names of the Sanctions of Holy Church, the hundred thirty seventh Canon of the Code of the universal Church, which says in express terms, Ῥητες ἀπεριτικῶς ἡ σωσυμαλίκοις ὑπ’ χέριν, that we ought not to pray with Hereticks or Schismatics, and very many warm expressions of the Fathers, are producible in this case: But till we Excommunicate with the Tears and Sorrows, and publick concernment of the Primitive Christians, who refus'd all acts of kindness only out of love, and the most ardent Charity, we may by no means lay claim to their pattern, whose estrangements only flow from malice and inveterate hate. Would we indeed comport with the Example of those happy Times, we should have fear'd the guilt of Schism in our selves so much, as not to have lightly charg'd it upon others; we should have prayed for the conversion of Dissenters, not laid Anathemas upon them, and prayed for their confusion. St. Paul we see, Heb. 10. 25. reckons the forsaking of Assemblies, as a degree, at least preparative of Apostasie; and from his time throughout all the purer ages of the Church
Church the holy Fathers have generally branded it, as the highest impiety; and no marvel, for it is one of those Gaint-like sins, which not only oppresses men, but invades even God himself. 'Tis the mangling and assasinating that body to which Christ owns an inseparable connection; the putting him to head scatter'd limbs, instead of an entire compact body, as if we meant to refute St. Paul, shew him 'tis possible that Christ may be divided. Good God, what shall we say when we see Heathen Souldiers esteem Christs coat higher than Christians do his body! they thought the one too good to be parted, but we cease not to tear and mangle the other, and which is yet more monstrous, make it a part of our Religion to do so. We name our Opinions our Faith, and when under that Title we have enshrin'd them, we make more barbarous Immolations than ever the most savage Heathens did. They sacrificed some few objects of their Love, their Children, but we sacrifice the very affection, and think our Zeal lukewarm till it have reduced our Charity to ashes. And now if we compare these our Divisions, Wrath and Bitterness, with those fundamental, Gospel precepts of Unity, Love and Meekness, we must surely say we have not there so learn'd Christ. And then how ridiculous is it, to pretend a Zeal to that Gospel, whose very foundations we undermine. Peace is at once the blessing and duty of Christians, and those heats of speculative Contests which violate it, will certainly never serve to make us either good or happy. And therefore...
till Charity cease to be an Essential part of Christianiry (which certainly we must burn our Bibles ere we can suppose) we must conclude, that our Disputes, and the ways whereby we manage them, how much soever they pretend to Preserve, do indeed evacuate and destroy true, that is, Practice Christianity.

CHAP. XI.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes, as they engage upon ill Arts and Scandalous Practises, to sustain the espoused Cause and Party.

And yet so unhappily are many men mistaken, that these irregular heats which thus waste the vital spirits of Religion, are thought the most Sovereign Cordials to support them. The highest Paroxism of this Fever are deem'd the perfectest Health. Men esteem the overflowing of their Gall, the exuberance of their Zeal, and then all the Promises to the faithful combatant in Christ's camp, they confidently appropriate to that their so eminent Grace; though indeed it can with no more propriety be call'd so, than Pharaohs lean Kine might be said to be fat, because they had devour'd those that were so. In plain terms, men lay so great weight upon their being of right opinions, and their eagerness of abetting them, that they account that the
the unum necessarium, and think the propagating of those so important a service to God, as will justify the use of the most interdicted instruments, legitimate the most enormous Commissions, that they can phancy contributive to that pious End: And moreover commute for the neglect of Practice duties in the general tract of their lives. I shall not here urge the hazard of mens erring in the choice of opinions, nay, the certainty that of many opposite, one only can be the right; and then to all such as miss, that their very groundwork fails them. I shall only confine myself to the malignant influence this Persuasion has on practice, and in that respect I cannot but affirm it a most pernicious delusion, which as it tends extremely to the enhancing the bitterness of our contests, so it may justly be reckon'd among the worst effects of them, and is a most irrefragable proof how much they obstruct the vital efficacy of Religion in our hearts. Nor is it any new thing for men thus to deceive themselves, for we find such Confidences as these frequently upbraided to the Jews, both by the Prophets and Christ himself, they thought their Zeal to the Temple and ritual observances, so invincibly meritorious, as no Crime could defeat, and that their legal purifications would render them acceptable in Gods Eyes, in spight of all their Moral pollutions: But how fallacious a hope this was, the many severe increations of God do sufficiently attest. Yet certainly their guilt was far below ours, the things they so depended on were parts, though not
not the whole of their Duty; those Ordinances, though perhaps somewhat adulterated by Rabbinical mixtures, yet for the main were instituted by God himself, and that with a design of discriminating, and separating them from the rest of the world; and such peculiarities and privileges as these, might have an aptness to excite that presumption: But alas, the case is otherwise with most of us; they are not the Revelations of God’s will, not the Testament of our dying Redeemer, but some Codicils and Annexes of our own we so earnestly abet. ’Tis not the Text (for then ’twere impossible for any that receiv’d the same Canon of Scripture to differ) but our glosses to which we pay such Reverence; and when on that account we sever our selves from those to whom the Commands of God, the Blood of our Saviour have most closely united and cemented us: We can yet make a shift to think that there is so much of Sacred in this, as shall not only render it highly rewardable, but also hallow all other profanations of our lives; and in our Jehu march upon such an expedition, can turn all regrets of conscience (like Joram’s messengers) behind us. That this is so, none can doubt who observe with what boldness men rush upon the most unchristian sins, in pursuit of what they Phancy a Christian cause. Were it not for this amulet, how were it possible for any to think they may venture upon Perjury, Sacriledge, Murder, Regicide, any thing without impeachment to their Saintship; nay, to think that the only danger lies on the other side,
in being remisly wicked, that to slack any thing of the utmost speed, is to do the work of the Lord negligently. Yet that this has been a prevailing Perswasion, we have had too many, and too sad instances; and God grant we may not find them so repeated, that our sense may supersede the use of our memories concerning them; nor has this been peculiar to one only Sect, but those who are otherwise at the widest distance unite in this Principle. They are not only Phanaticks that can say grace over the foulefi crimes, and consecrate them to the use of a good cause; if we examine the Dypticks either of Conclave or Consistory, we shall find some Saints upon that account, who could never have been so upon any other. And when we consider how often Heaven has been mortgaged to gain Auxiliaries from Hell, how men have been encouraged to the most damning sins, by promises of being certainly saved; we must either think that a Holy cause is omnipotent enough to reverse Gods decrees, to save whom he would damn, or else that this pretence is one of the most ruinous deceits, the most fatal Treachery to souls that ever Satan contriv'd, who though he do in all instances play the Mountebank, yet sure never more than when on confidence of this Antidote he perswades us thus to swallow down his deadliest Poyson.

I MUST not here attempt to enumerate all the unchristian practices, that have on this score been made, not only lawful but meritorious; yet there is one of so frequent use, that I must needs advert
advert unto it, and that is, those calumnies and falsehoods, which are now become a piece of Ecclesiastic as well as state policy, and a great part of that offensive armour wherewith our controversialists assault one another. Indeed if we consider how many forges are daily going for these Engines, we shall have reason to think, all Parties have an high esteem of their usefulness. Of these Calumnies there are too many sorts and degrees to be here particulariz'd: And indeed those, who permit themselves to use any, can be suppos'd to have no other boundaries than the advantage of their cause: And accordingly as that seems to exact, they lay their Scene; sometimes they traduce the persons of their opposers, and by raising prejudices against them, hope some of it will reflect upon their doctrine: did men generally know how to distinguish between reports and certainties, this stratagem would be as unskilful as it is uningenious: But considering the vulgar temper, its not unaptly suited to it. This it seems was anciently understood, it being the old Greek advice, ἁναροῦντας ἀντεθαλαι καὶ ἱσχυρων ταῖς διαφοραίς, οὐτε καὶ ἢμετροπαθής τὸ ἔλεος ἡ διαφορά, ἢ δυνατὸς ἡ διαφορά. To calumniate stoutly, for that how perfectly soever the wound of reproach be heal'd, there will remain a scar; and though we wipe away with never so much care the dirt thrown at us, there will be left some fulliage behind: And accordingly this was the Expedient the Pagans us'd against the Primitive Christians, to put them thus in the skins of beasts, and shapes of monsters, and then worry them to death.
death. And this is the method still, though heightned and improved, and our Religion has suffered infinitely more since we us'd it against each other, than when they manag'd it against the whole community. But besides this defamation of Persons, another branch of this black Art is the depraving of Writings, both in the sense and very letter, and direct words; for the former of these, whosoever observes the strange perversions, and affected mistakes of mens meanings visible in many of our Polemick discourses, will sure resolve that a mans intentions, as well as his words and actions may be calumniated: Nor does the letter scape better, every period which threatens danger to the cause must be mutilated and dismembred; and as Sampson was by the Philistines, lose its Hair and Eyes, and then be made sport for the whole party. And I fear there are too few, who do not in this case take the Jewish reparation, an Eye for an Eye, &c. retaliate to the adversary the foul play they receive. But some advance yet higher, and think it not enough to make an Argument or Testimony useless to the Enemy, unless they draw it over to themselves, make it betray the side it was to maintain, and as a Conqueror uses to restore Arms to such of the adverse party, as will turn to his, so after they have by satisfactions secured themselves of its aid, it shall then be made as potent as is possible, and with such kind of Renegado troops as these, some causes have been much supported. Yet were this violation offer'd only to the writings of living men, who might vindicate
cate it, 'twere not so transcendently ignoble, but it most frequently falls upon those, who have made their beds in the dust; who have chang'd their own Form, and cannot secure their Writings from the same fate: Nay, 'tis yet more frequently those, whom we have all reason to suppose, and most of us profess to believe, glorified Saints; and this superadds a daring presumption to all other circumstances of the guilt, and heightens an injustice into Sacrilege. It has always been held the most detestable sort of forgery to counterfeit Testaments; though the Testator were of never so low a quality, or his bequests of never so mean a value: And shall it now pass for a piece of commendable dexterity, an art of manage to falsifie those writings by which the Fathers of the Church design'd to entail truth and piety, not strife and faction upon her. We know Necromancy has justly been reputed one of the most horrid forms of Sorcery, because it enforced dead men to speak what the living were inquisitive to hear. I leave it to be consider'd what this wants of that, besides the dreadful ceremonies of the Incantation; certainly 'tis a guilt which nothing but our too familiar acquaintance with it could make unformidable. And indeed this whole method of serving a cause by such sinister means is so utterly repugnant to the Principles even of ingenuous nature, that we can scarce cast a greater scandal upon an Opinion, than to shew it needs such Aids. 'Tis by Historians branded as an execrable fact in him, who to secure himself from a neighbour Prince,
Prince, call’d in the Turk into Christendom: But sure those who to fortifie their side have brought in this Artifice of calumniating and falsifying, have done an Act no less impious; the constitution of Christianity agreeing full as well with the Alcoran as with these Pie fraudes; as some of them who perhaps mean the fraud more than the Piety are pleas’d to call them. Nay indeed, they accord not much better with Philosophy than Divinity, every man knows the nature of contraries is to combate and expel, not to cherish and support one another. How absurd is it then for those, who say they design to advance truth, to make falsehood their Instrument. I wish they would experiment to accommodate their secular concerns at the same rate, let them cool them in the Fire, warm them in the Frost, and feed themselves by perpetual Fasting, and when they find cause to commend the efficacy of that Method, they may with fairer pretense in this higher instance reconcile the feuds of Reason and of Nature, and make a lye the Evidence of Truth. In the interim, it may well pass for Sophistry as well as sin; and doubtless whatever advantages are hop’d for to private Sects and Parties by this art, Christian Religion in general is hugely prejudiced by it: For when men shall compare the veracity of Heathens with our falshoods; learn from Historians, that among the Persians, λιγισαντας μεθεωρητας, to lye was deem’d a fault of the greatest turpitude, and they therefore laid an ill Character upon persons in debt, ὅτι ἀνάβαται ἐρείλοντας τὸ ἀδίκος λάτρειαν, because
because he that is so must needs tell lies: And when they shall see in the Laws of Cingis a barbarous Tartar, Lying made a capital crime, and yet among Christian Casuists made a holy artifice, they will be tempted to think our end as fictitious as our way; and that our Religion has little countenance from truth, which is thus fain to make lies its Refuge. Thus unhappily do these Arrows revert, not only on those who shoot them, but in the face of Christianity its self, which is defam’d, and traduced by those flanders, we aim at our private adversaries.

BUT besides this direct, there are other more oblique Ways of making vice subservient to Religion, or to speak more properly, of making Religion subservient to vice; for some Zealots of several parties, who more regard the numerousness than purity of their Professors, discerning how much the sensual part of mankind startle at the strictness of Gospel precepts, are industrious to take off that discouragement, not by convincing them of the real divine sweetness and pleasantries of them, but by debasing and accommodating them more to the carnal appetite: Yet here men proceed not all alike, some use Christ’s yoke, as Hananiah did that of Jeremy, break it quite off; others only essay to slacken and alleviate it, that it may not pinch the lusts of libertine Proselytes: Of the first sort are such, as having made the adherence to their Party, the infallible mark of Sanctification, and that Sanctification of Election, do from thence proclaim to all who are so qualified
a general Jubilee and manumission from the bond even of Christ's as well as Moses's Law: or if some of them allow it to remain an impotent director, yet while they affirm that God sees no sin in his Elect, or if he do, beholds them as a Father does the harmless falls of his Child, rather with smiles than anger, they make the violations of it so safe, that they are too sure to be many, and between abrogating and thus enervating a law, the difference is meerly verbal.

Of the second sort are some, who by indulgent and partial glosses, seek to mollifie the severity of Christ's commands. That contrive for their Clients not the means of Obeying, but the arts of Escaping them. Like the unjust Steward teach their lords Debtors to write fifty instead of a Hundred; and decide Cases of conscience more according to the interests and passions of men, than the will of Christ. There are a generation of men of whose Dexterity in this faculty the world has taken so much notice that I need not name them, a sort of easie Casuists who seem to have erected a Court of Equity to relieve men against the rigor of divine Law; and there is little doubt but they shall find enough ready to make such appeals: Men love to be Christians as cheap as they can, and therefore will close with that party, which offers the easiest terms: And then while these spiritual Pioneers do thus enlarge the narrow way, make it a road as well for the Beast as the Man, the brutish sensual, as well as rational divine Part of us, no wonder though Shoals of Convert...
Converts throng in to them. But 'tis to be consider'd that all this while this is winning Profe-
lytes to themselves not to God: the gaining them to a Set not a religion; at least not to that pure
religion, and undefiled which the grand Author of
our Faith has both exemplified, and propos'd to
us; for how much that suffers by this way of pro-
pugning private opinions, is more than enough
apparent. Yet so ambitious are our prime lea-
ders of such Trophies that in order to them some
are said to ascend yet a step higher, and besides
this general encouragement they give to mens
lusts by taking off Restraints, do in some cases
actually promote and excite them. For when
they see a licentious person whose acquies they
judge beneficial to their cause, they have artifices
of fomenting his riots, do not only take off the
bridle, but use the spur also, hoping that at the
rebound it may conduce to their End. If any
think it impossible it should do so, let them
consider that among our various Opinions some
there are which fell heaven much cheaper than
others dare, that allow such easie attonements as
the most habituated sinner need not despair of:
and then the most infallible means to ascertain
such to that side, is to make them too bad for any
other. For when a man is resolute to keep his
sins while he lives, and yet unwilling to relin-
quish all hopes when he dies, 'tis more than pro-
bable he will embrace that profession which bids
fairest to the reconciling those so distant inte-
rests; and therefore the greater malefactor he is,
the more sure he will be to fly to the horns of this Altar; the nearer sinking, the apter to catch at these reeds; so that the Project is not impolitick, though God knows so impious that 'tis much fitter for the School of Machiavel than of Christ; and seems to verifie that imputation as to a part of Christians, which Julian once as falfly as maliciously affixt upon the whole: that their Church was an Asylum and sanctuary for the most flagitious offenders, and protected those guilts to which no other religion allowed any Expiation. 'Tis indeed so horrid that I cannot think there are many consciences so cauteriz'd by this fiery zeal as to admit it, yet that some have done it, there is too much certainty, and therefore 'tis no improper instance in our present argument, for if mens eagerness to support their several sides, can transport them to such attempts as these, 'tis abundant Evidence how much Christianity loses by these contests of under factions, which while they pretend to guard, do indeed invade her under her own Colours.

**BUT** besides the faults men commit with this immediate avowed aspect upon their religion, there are others which slily shroud themselves under the skirt of its mantle: I mean those Sins of common life, which though they pretend not to advance the cause, yet when acted by a Zealot are thought to be overwhelm'd by his heroick Piety. Indeed men who make themselves so much work about others faith, are seldom at leisure to regulate their own practice, and so have no way of
of stating their accounts with God, but by balancing the excess of the one against the defects of the other: How such reckonings will pass the grand Audit, 'tis I think not hard to divine, but in the interim, it keeps them very cheerful and secure, teaches them a Receipt to retain all their sins, and yet lose none of their confidence; so that when they have immerit themselves in all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, they can trust their zeal to refine them from all that Dross. Nor does it only thus reconcile them to their own vices, but to other mens also, whose most brutish sensuality they can look on with perfect patience, nay even Atheism its self can have fair Quarter: They are not much discomposed to see men have no religion, 'tis only the having one different from their own that awakes their indignation; then like Saul when seiz'd on by the evil spirit, they cast about their Javelins, think no rigor too great on such a provocation, yet even here they have intervals, and the very same persons who are thus at odds upon a religious, can unite upon a vicious account. Those who mutually denounce damnation to each other, can with full accord combine in those practices which will ascertain it to them both, as if they so much fear'd to have their predictions defeated, that they would be each others convoy to the land of darkness. Those that will by no means meet at the Church, know not when to part at the Tavern, and though they will not joyntly partake of the Cup of the Lord, are yet very sociable at the Cup of
of Devils; I mean those excessive debauches, which are a most acceptable drink-offering to those infernal spirits. Have we not seen many whose distant opinions have fastened upon one another the brand of Antichristianism, who have yet like Gog and Magog joyn'd against the holy city: and those who could never agree on the way of setting up Christ's Throne, have yet been very unanimous in pulling down the Kings. Thus alas do we jumble one another out of the narrow path that leads to life, but can hand in hand run our Carier in the broad way of destruction. And doubtless this great unevenness, these spiritual feuds, and carnal endearments between the same persons; this impetuous zeal, and as impetuous lusts in the same breasts could never be, did not men depend so confidently on the one, as to think it will commute, and satisfy for the other. But alas, how groundless a Presumption this is, the whole tenor of the Gospel does abundantly witness. In all that grand Charter where is there the least Clause importing such an immunity. I am sure there are multitudes that assert the contrary. Indeed the whole frame of the Evangelical covenant is totally against it: That requiring an entire uniform Sanctity, and allowing no other privilege to the sins of the most knowing Professors, but a preheminence in punishment, the being beaten with many stripes. And when 'tis consider'd that the end of all religion is but the drawing us to a conformity with God, the impressing on us some Character of his eternal goodness and holiness,
holiness, 'twill be as absurd as impious to believe that our zeal to any Religion can absolve us from that purity which is the end and design of all. And while this is the way men take to approve their piety, 'tis no marvel to find so many Christians, and so little Christianity in the world: for that is not to be estimated by the number of its professors, but by their obedience to its Rules, and he that gives up his name to it and not his heart, will receive as little advantage by it, as he brings honour to it, and how little that is in respect of its internal Efficacy, is I presume competently evidenced.

BUT that we may more thoroughly discern how universally destructive our wranglings are to it, in all its concerns, let us a little examine whether they do not endammage it even in respect of outward profession also. This may seem a strange Quære to those who think their disputes about Religion are to denominate them the great confessors of the Age: yet certainly there is but too much ground not only for the enquiry, but to resolve it in the affirmative. And if it prove so, 'twill infer but sadly to those who having laid the whole stress of their Hopes upon their zeal to advance their Faith, will be found to have pull'd down more than they have built up. Now Christianity may in respect of profession decay two waies, either in its hopes, or in its possession, the one in relation to Aliens, the other to Disciples. The first by hindring the access of new Converts, the second by staggering or alienating
tng the old, and both these wales the visibly appears to suffer by our divisions. And first if we consult but our experience, if we trust but our own observations, we cannot but confess that the Gospel has long been at a great stand. That that Sun which at its first arising was like David's, Ps. 19. surrounded the world in a vigorous efficacious motion, is since become like Joshua's, Josh. 10. 12. arrested in its course: Nay like Hezekiah's, gone backward, Is. 38. 8. Mahometism (if not Paganism) having long taken up its seat in divers of the most flourishing Apostolick plantations. A sad change, that from the daily and numerous accession of the first times, it should now become a kind of Prodigy, a piece of news, scarce heard in an Age, that one single Proselyte is gain'd to the Church, yet that thus it is, is too obvious to be denied. And truly it is not much less apparent that our dissensions have in a great degree contributed to it. For first, as to the extirpation of the Eastern Churches, he that shall examine the records of those times, will have cause to say their Janglings and Divisions were not only in a moral or divine, but even in a proper natural sense, the Instruments of it. The Turk only coming in at those breaches which themselves had made, nor had their Candlestick probably been removed, had they not first abus'd its light, to the setting themselves in Combustion. That the same cause has not yet had the same effect among us, is owing not to its unaptness to produce it, but to the admirable patience and mercy of God, who yet withholds that
that fatal Judgment, which we do our parts to pull upon our selves; our mutual violences against one another herein unhappily combining and making one united force against us all. But though the divine goodness have hitherto so counter-termined our treachery to our selves, as not to suffer us to enjoy that state of darkness we have so courted, yet certainly our contentions are extremely accessory to the continuing it upon others, our many new and wandring lights, however they fail of having that Property of the Pillar of fire, Ex. 14. of illuminating and conducting the Israelites, yet too much answer its other, in becoming cloud and darkness to the Egyptians; there being scarce any thing more apt to intercept the beams of the Sun of righteousness from the Heathen world, every of those little enclosures our Factions have made in the Church, becoming a great partition wall to keep others out of it. This may be made evident in several respects. As first, in relation to those many moral obliquities in which our eager disputes do (as hath already been shewed) betray us, which cannot but give so much scandal to any considering man, that we can scarce hope any can turn to us as to a better Religion, but will rather think it the way to relinquish all; to obliterate those native impressions of Piety and Honesty they brought with them into the world, so that if we expect any Proselytes it must be only such as would live worse than meer nature allows them.
BUT this though as important a consideration as can well be, I shall not here insist on, having in the second Section given some instances how apt our Morality is to defame our Divinity, and confirm men in Opposition to it. But though this be a great, yet 'tis not the only means by which our Dissentions hinder the progress of the Gospel, for they do not only make infidels less inclinable to receive it, but us to propagate it. Those do so busie and engross us, that there is neither leisure nor heart left for this. Our activest spirits are so engaged at home in asserting their private quarrels, that all such foreign designs are forgot. For as in Civil, so in Ecclesiastical concerns, every one is more industrious to advance his peculiar interest than that of the community, accordingly we find innumerable promulgers of every new Opinion. No Sect wants its Apostles to propagate and diffuse it; but where are there any that have the like care for the main Root of Christian Religion, which they have for these little Twigs and Offsets which they have planted in their own Gardens; how many ages must we look back to find a man that has made it his business to convert Infidels to the Faith. 'Tis true indeed there are some very magnificent relations of modern attempts this way, of great industry some have us'd to bring the most savage nations to the obedience of Christ: but if we examine 'twill be obvious, the main design was to subject them to themselves. 'Twas not so much their Heathenism as their territories they invaded,
and such Apostles as these are ill qualified to make S. Paul's profession, 2 Cor. 12. 16. *I seek not yours but you.* And the success of such Essays have been answerable to the motive; they have won riches but not Souls. The Gospel in one hand and a sword in the other has made many slaves, but I fear few Christians. Indeed, what encouragement had those poor creatures to receive a Religion from their Oppressors? why should they think that those who tortured and kill'd their bodies, were really concern'd to save their Souls? or that those who would not permit them to enjoy what was their own, meant to help them to any thing better? And while the felicities of another world were recommended to them only by such, as had deprived them of all in this, we cannot wonder at their little appetite to embrace them; or to find the opprest Indians protest against that heaven where the Spaniards are to be their cohabitants. In short, this is sure such a method of Evangelizing, as too widely differs from that which first planted the Church, to be likely to advance its growth: so that notwithstanding all pretences of this kind, we may resume our affection, and conclude that our intestine discords (perhaps not those alone) have diverted the Zeal of this more Christian undertaking, and left a great part of the world under that invincible Ignorance S. Paul mentions, Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher:*
preacher: and God knows whether we have not herein provided better for their Excuse than our own.

There is yet another way by which our divisions impede their conversion, and that is by giving them prejudice to that Doctrine about which our selves cannot agree. 'Tis an universal Maxim that truth is always consonant to its self; and therefore where they see so little unity they have too much temptation to doubt of Truth. He that wandring should meet a Company that offer to conduct him to his journeys end, might reasonably incline to deliver himself up to their guidance; but if he find them unagreed upon the way, one disputing for this, and another for that, and every one protesting against all but his own; he would sure retract his confidence, and think they offer'd him only more variety of mistakes, resolve it as safe to trust himself to his own Errors as other mens. And this alas seems to be too exact a parallel of the present case; we Christians do so mutually damn one another, that a poor Turk or Heathen will think, he rather multiplies than ends his Danger by associating himself with us; for there being so many parties, which soever he joyns himself to, there will be abundant odds against him; so that if he could be secur'd the truth were among us, yet the great difficulty of finding it out, would be a very disheartning consideration. Besides men love in transactions of great Importance to have as many, and as credible Vouchers as may be, and upon that
that score 'twill sure be but a cold inducement, to any to turn Christian to foresee, that when he has done so, he shall be disown'd by far the greater part of that number, and that at his entrance into the Church, he shall be met with almost as many Anathemas, as when he was an Infidel. Nay, I scarce know whether I may call it an entrance into the Church, or rather into a Conventicle, or particular Congregation, our Schisms and Separations having hardly left a possibility of external communion with the universal Church, since the Communicating with one part of it, does infallibly Excommunicate from another. Thus have we placed our flaming Sword (though God knows no Cherubim) at the gate of our Paradise, and when God calls all men to the waters of life, our Contentions have made them like those of Marah, so bitter and unpleasant, as deters and averts men from them: Which as it is in the highest degree injurious to them, so is it contumelious to him, whose invitations are by this means frustrated; 'tis in some degree the evacuating one of the main purposes of Christ's coming into the World, which was to call men out of darkness into his marvellous light, and as He was thus sent by his Father, so also were the Apostles solemnly commissioned by him to preach to the Gentile world, who with indefatigable industry and resolute sufferings pursued the charge; and sure this is competent evidence, that the design was of the greatest and most weighty importance, and such as can never be out-dated, till
till there cease to be objects of it, unbelievers to convert: And by that let us measure the guilt of obstructing it, which if we would impartially do, I assure my self the most passionate Bigot of any Party must confess, that it infinitely out-weighs all the Piety his doctrine can pretend to, that his peculiar Church gains not so much as the Catholick loses: And that how confidently forever he have Canoniz'd his quarrels, they are indeed but the worst sort of Heathens, and serve to keep out the better. Yet besides the mischief they do in relation to those that are without, they are extremely pernicious to those that are within, and that not only to some one Sect, but like an universal poison, that is equally deadly to the most contrary complextions, they operate on the most distant ranks of Professors, the tender and the obdurate, the scrupulous and the profane. And first for the tender tremulous Christian, 'tis easie to discern how much he must be distracted and amaz'd by them, for while he hears each Sect thunder out Damnation against each other, he cannot but be startled at the danger of adhering to the wrong, and though that may a while excite his diligence to discover the right, yet when he comes to that inquisition, he will meet with so many Polemick intricacies to entangle him, that after many turns, first to one side, and then to another, he will be apt to think the only clue to extricate him out of this labyrinth of many Religions, is to abandon all. Nor is this meer Speculation and Conjecture, God knows we have had successively through
through the whole round of Error too many practick experiments of it. Several persons there have been, whose Zeal to find out truth by an unhappy rule of False, directed them to allow of every Error: While like sick men, who desire to die good cheap, they put themselves into the hands of any Empirick; follow each bold pretender, that has the impudence to talk of Truth, till Superstition ends in Profanation, Godliness proves Atheism, and by having been of many Seats, at last have no Religion. And surely this is a most unhappy Effect of our discords, thus to be stumbling-blocks in our brothers way, and when we remember the woes pronounced against those that shall Scandalize any of the little ones, 'twill be strange how men can think to approve their Christianity, by the ruine of their Brothers, or secure themselves of Heaven by keeping Others thence: For though Christ tells his Disciples there should be some that should think it a service to God to kill their Bodies, yet to phancy the destroying of Souls so too; is a Deception of which we have neither record nor prediction in Holy Writ, and is a superfluation of the spirits of delusion, peculiar to those who have placed their own sanctity in these religious wranglings, which serve to destroy it in other men. And as they thus serve on the one side to shipwrack the faith of these weak unstable Souls; so do they on the other advance the impiety of the daring sinner; for as they are Temptation to the one, so are they Pretence and Excuse to the other to bid defiance to all Religion. He

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whose
whose dissolute affections have so long been courting his understanding to turn Atheist, will sure not lose the advantage of so plausible an Argument as our divisions afford him; and since his lusts engage him in an irreconcilable War against the practick part of Piety, he will most gladly embrace this occasion of quarrel against the Theory also: So making himself entire, and extinguishing those uneasy regrets and misgivings arising from the repugnancy of his life to his belief. It were not hard to give a compendium of these men's Logick, and draw out those Schemes of Discourse, by which from our differences in Religion they infer the discarding of all. But I fear these are already too well known, and where they are not, I should be loth to be any man's Instructor. This is I am sure too palpable, that how fallacious soever these Reasonings are, they have been very operative, as appears by the number of those avowed Atheists among us, who placing themselves in the seat of the scorbter, give themselves much pleasing Divertisement by deriding our eager scuffles about that which they think nothing. If any man thinks that the Church is no loser by the defection of such Libertines, I must be allowed to dissent from him: For first, there are examples of the most vicious Persons, that have been reduced, and while they retain their Christian belief, that lays such undeniable obligations to good life, that whenever they resume their reason, they must take up vertue also with it; so that there is an equal possibility of their being good, that there is
is of their being rational: But when all hope and fear of a future estate is disclaim'd, when those cords are broken which should pull them up from the Dungeon, then, and not before is their state visibly desperate. But besides this possibility of recovering them, the danger of losing others is to be considered. Bold Atheism is like a raging Pestilence, which taints the very Air, so that those impious discoursings which are the effects of some mens Vices, may be the cause of others; and we too often see that those who ascended themselves by degrees, do in an instant advance their Prophets to the height of Irreligion, as appears by the strange proficiency of some, whose Years allow them not to have arrived to it otherwise than per Saltum. And sure this spreading Contagion has been so destructive to the Church, that it were to be wish'd, the meer titular Christians had rather remain'd such, than thus to have averted others from being so much.

AND now if all these scandals be worth our regret, if the emboldening and exasperating the bad, the corrupting the innocent, and the decay of Christian profession consequent to both be formidable Evils, we know where to charge the guilt. Our contentions must be arraigned as accessaries, if not principals in the case: And then sure it will befit our angry Zealots to consider, whether this be the way of advancing Gods truth, or what account they will give to the Lord of the Vineyard, who while they pretend to dress and prune the branches, do thus debilitate and destroy the roots.

Nay,
Nay, indeed in this they are treacherous even to their own pretensions, for all those several Religions which they so tenderly cherish, have no proper root of their own, but like Excrescencies, spring out of the main stock of Christianity, live by its juice and moisture, and consequently, can never hope to survive it. And then certainly there can be nothing more ridiculous, than to express their kindness to the one, by ways that are so ruinous to the other. 'Tis as if a Passenger in a Ship should to fortifie his private Cabin, tear up the planks and expose the whole Vessel to sinking: Yet thus preposterously do many of our chief Pilots apply their care. In the mean time, it cannot but be a very delightful prospect to the grand Enemy of Souls, to see us thus busily promote his interest, lay snares for our selves, and by our own folly do that which all his subtilties could never compass. Nor can we think but he will be as officious to us as is possible, while we are thus employed, will help us to contrive our Turrets, whilst he sees we pluck out stones from the foundation to build them with; nor shall we ever want new models of Churches, so long as they thus help to destroy the old; and how aptly they are fitted for that Purpose, needs (I suppose) no farther Demonstration.
CHAP. XII.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes, in reference to Civil Peace.

AND now sure we cannot but conclude our Contentions highly injurious to Christianity, that thus assault it both in the Practice and Theory: And indeed how fierce soever our quarrels are with one another, the heaviest blows are sure to fall on that, which as in its constitution is of the most Pacifick temper imaginable, so it has the common fate of reconcilers to suffer from all parties. But Godliness having the promise as well of this life as of that which is to come, it often happens that there is such a consent between our spiritual and secular Concerns, that the Mischiefs that oppress the one do reflect on the other: And indeed Religion when entire and united, is one of the best bonds of Civil as well as Ecclesiastical Peace, (as even those attest, who defying all other ends of it, do yet admit it a useful State Engine;) from whence 'tis consequent, that the distractions and divisions in that must have proportionably a contrary influence, and infect communities with Discord, Tumult and Disorders. And this is an effect with which I think not unfit to bring up the rear of the foregoing Mischiefs, it being not so purely Secular as not to suit
suit our present subject; for outward order and unity can never be so innocently disturb’d, but that Christianity must be wounded in it also: And besides, it may perhaps obtain more consideration than the former, as being of a nature wherein the generality of men will think themselves the most concern’d; for though there be many that can look on the ruin both of Christian practice and profession, with Gallio’s indifference, Acts 18. 17. and care for none of those things, yet when the siege draws closer, when they find themselves begirt in their worldly interests, and that the same Deluge that overwhels Churches, may bear down Palaces also, perhaps they may think the matter not so contemptible. And first, as to the truth of the observation the World has too long groaned under the Experiment to need farther proof. That bitterness which first tainted the waters of the Sanctuary, hath from thence diffus’d its self into our common streams, and like the Egyptian Plague, left none uncorrupted: For whether we look upon Families, Neighbourhoods, Kingdoms, any the least, or any the greatest Societies, we find the miserable Trophies of our holy Wars, in Factions and Confusions; I wish I could not say Rapine and Blood also. For the first of these, the domestick Jars caus’d by different Opinions, the Instances are numerous, or rather innumerable, which our own age and nation affords us. How many Servants have on this score been at defiance with their Masters? Children with their Parents? nay, Wives with their Husbands?
Husbands? Such an unhappy force is there in mistaken Zeal, that it dissolves the closest bonds, violates all obligations natural or civil, while under pretence of service to God, like the Pharisees Corban, it evacuates all duty to man; and this has made such ruptures and divisions in Families, that that delightful prospect the Psalmist so much commends, that of Brethrens dwelling together in unity, Psal. 133, is scarce any where to be met with; but instead of that, such rancor and bitterness, treachery and malice, as if men either mistook Christ's prediction, Luke 12. 52, for a precept, or at least were willing to advance his Prophetick Office upon the ruine of his Kingly, and to verifie his prophecy by breaking his command. And as the Oeconomical order and peace is thus disturb'd, so if he that mislikes quiet at home should seek for it abroad, he will soon find himself disappointed, and discern that as the societies grow greater, so do the disorders also, and that private Strifes do as much combine to make parties and factions, as Families do to make Cities and Corporations. By this means that mutual communication by which the Members of civil bodies should not only benefit one another, but secure the whole is interrupted, and men live not as neighbours but spies, always upon designs of Entrapping and Ensnaring, for while they look on one another as enemies to God, they think that rescinds all obligations of friendship among themselves, and when Religion bears the Standard, the War will be concluded necessary and honourable.
able. But though it be so in imagination only, 'tis sure there are some, who make it really profitable; for as in most Camps, the greater Number are attracted rather by hope of booty than concern for the cause; so here, many men lift themselves under one Party, that they may have pretence to prey upon the rest. And to that End several very commodious Axioms have been taken up. As that no faith is to be kept with Hereticks; that Dominion is founded in Grace, &c. by such measures as these the goods of the Egyptians become lawful prizes to any, that please to call themselves Israelites; and indeed Jews they may be call'd in that notion we vulgarly use it of unjust and cruel extortioner: But sure not such Israelites as Christ defines Nathaniel, Jo. i. 47. without guile: For having thus consecrated their frauds, and found an expedient of serving God and Mammon together, there is no piece of deceit either too big, or too little for them; no transaction so important, which can oblige their fidelity; none so trivial as to discourage their rapine: Opportunity is the only measure and rule of their attempts, by this means no Obligation of Contract, no Laws of Commerce can escape unviolated, every thing is lawful that may weaken the wicked, and that zeal which makes men Saints in the Church or Conventicle, can make them Thieves in the Shop or Market. Thus is Piety made an Engine of rape, and by these religious riots, all boundaries wherewith Laws or Equity have fenc'd mens distinct properties, are thrown down: And sure this
this is a most carnal consequent of our spiritual debates, and bids fair towards the reducing us to that state of common Hostility, which some have phancied to be the *Original condition* of mankind: For it renders commerce so dangerous, that men may within a while think it safer to trust their own strengths, than to the shelter of those Laws and Civil compacts, which they see so avowedly evacuated. And upon this account, though the Injury be immediately done to private persons, it becomes a *publick* mischief: Yet alas, these are but the more moderate effects of our Dissentions; they afford more expedite and compendious ways of publick ruine; the defrauding or undermining of a few Neighbours, are *petty prizes* for those that think they have the sole right to the Creature, and are those Meek who are to *inherit the Earth*, and every such acquiesc only serves to flesh them for a farther chase. The spoils of a broken Kingdom will afford something worth the scrambling for: And nothing more fit to break it than a pretence of Religion, which like the stone that smote Nebuchadnezzars Image, has shivered the most goodly Monarchies. And accordingly, we see no *Engine* is more constantly us’d by men of Seditious spirits, to disturb and subvert Governments: Indeed there can be nothing so advantageously fitted for the purpose. For should such persons unmask their design, and shew it in its native ugliness, should they avow the shaking of a Kingdom meerly to establish themselves in a condition of *wealth* and *grandeur*, the new moulding...
moulding of a Government only that they might shape their own shares in it, 'twere impossible they should find any abettors; for though the multitude are always in preparation for change, yet 'tis not on Intuition of benefit to some private persons, but of somewhat wherein themselves may partake: Nor is even the madness of the people mad enough, to expose all their own interest, and most important concerns only to promote those of others. It has therefore always been both the rule and practice for such designers to suborn the publick interest to countenance and cover their private; to cry up Diana to secure their own gain, and to make the seduced Populacy like the Jackal to the Lion, hunt that prey which themselves mean to devour. And of all those artifices by which such Incendiaries have set Kingdoms in a flame, none has been more universally successful than the pretext of Religion, which is thought so creditable a cause to engage in, as can convert the infamous titles of Rebel and Traitor into those of Patriot and Saint, and consequently, take off all discouragement arising from the disreputation of such an enterprize: And no less potent is it in solving the scruples of its unlawfulness; for by a dexterous anticipation, it makes Conscience a party, that it may exclude it from being judge, and by that one fallacy of supposing Religion to be a just ground of quarrel, make way for all the wild consequences deducible from that false principle: And indeed where that is throughly fastened, the mischiefs are not only great but incurable, & yet the more
more so by how much the person is more zealous. For alas, what will it avail to tell such a man, 'tis a sin to fight against his King: when he will tell you 'tis a greater not to fight for his God: That he contracts a heinous guilt in violating the peace of the Church, that he tells you with as great confidence believes, he merits in propagating its truth. That he is accountable for the blood of his Brethren; when he thinks he has like the Levites, Ex. 32. consecrated himself in it, and offer'd it an acceptable sacrifice to God. Thus unhappily are these men fortified in their sin, by presuming it their Virtue, and while the furious zeal of such is made subservient to the wicked craft of others, 'tis a most apt instrument of publick Mischief, there being no attempt so desperate, which such may not be put upon, who are methinks us'd as HAM- bal is said to have done those Oxen, whose horns he first fired, and then sent them to disturb the Roman camp: These men as those beasts are found very useful for the molesting of others; but commonly all they acquire to themselves, is the smart of their own flames. Few of those who thus in the simplicity of their heart follow an Absolom or a Sheba, that do not either miscarry together with the design, or else live to discern how much their credulity was abused; and that both religion (however pretended) and those that fought for it, were only made properties to promote the lusts of those who despised both. But 'tis unnecessary to insist farther on the effects of such religious Fury, of which we of this Nation have
have had so many and so costly evidences, as far transcend the most tragical descriptions. God grant we may never have other than our past experiences to measure them by: But certainly there is little reason to be secure, so long as the root of them, our speculative differences daily encrease; for unless we could suppose an Age of such innocence, that there should be none who would take any undue Advantages, 'tis sure there will be enough given: And indeed when we reflect upon our past Distractions, and consider how trivial the matter of most of those Debates was, whose manner has been so cruelly solemn; how our slightest problemes have been writ in blood, that many Thousands have been made naked to keep the Surplice off a few mens backs, and we have pulled down our Churches in displeasure at the windows, when I say these and a Thousand the like are considered, we must conclude that there can never want Occasion to them that (in the Apostles Phrase) desire Occasion. The lightest distempers in the Church being contagious, and most apt (when fomented by ambitious designers) to beget an universal Plague in the Common-wealth: And now who can without horror consider these miserably perverted effects of Christian Religion, that that which was design'd the most inviolable bond of unity, should like those curles of entangled snakes with which Erinnys is said to have infuriated Athemas and Ino, become the fatal incendiary of the most almost hatred. That that Oeconomy which was meant to regulate, should be the Instrument of confounding and embroyling the World; and
a Gospel of Peace should thus be made the Incentive to war, and create fiercer quarrels than those it was to have compos’d. To turn the Grace of God into wantonness, is justly branded as a great Crime, but sure to turn it into malice is yet a greater. And though every sin offers violence to our religion, yet this is of all others the most barbarous, thus to make it Assassinate its self, become a kind of Felo de se, and contribute to its own ruine. And that this is the case, is I presume sufficiently evident in all the foregoing instances, which as they are most obviously the effect of our eager Disputes, so are they no less visibly destructive to Christianity in all its interests, leaves it neither root nor branch, neither inward Vigor, nor outward Lustre; so at once rendering it both unfertile and unamiable. 'Twas a piece of hostile Severity against Moab, to fill the land with stones, thereby to render it barren, 2 King. 3. 25. The slingers went about, and smote it: but what that suffered from profest Enemies, the Church daily sustains from those that call themselves her best friends. Our Benjaminites are so in love with their skill of slinging to a hairs breadth, their nice Criticisms, Distinctions, and Subtilties, have cast abroad so many stones of contention, that the Church is become perfect quarry, utterly sterile and unfruitful, as to all those good works for the production whereof, she was so peculiarly fenced and cultivated by God; nay, 'twere well if barrenness were the worst, and that she had not on the other side acquir’d an unhappy degenerous
Degenerous fertility: But what a numerous and accursed Issue spring from this unpeaceable temper, the foregoing considerations do too sadly demonstrate; and I doubt not every attentive Observer will be able to add more (though not truer) Instances; and besides to discern that this spurious brood like that of Hagar is grown so wantonly insolent as to despise the right heir of the Promise. The true Gospel Graces of Meekness, Peaceableness and universal Charity are accounted Earthy phlegmatick qualities, we disclaim that Holy Ghost which descends in the appearance of the Dove, nay or in fire either, unless it be like that of Elijah, to consume all that disgust us. Nor do we measure our Religion so much, by the opposition it makes to our lusts, as to those whom we first make, and then call our enemies. Thus miserably have we changed the Scene, and by calling evil good, and good evil, have accumulated injuries upon our oppressed Christianity, not only rob’d it of its rule, but of its reputation also. And do we daily thus see Ishmael mocking Isaac, and shall we not think it time to cast out the Bond-woman and her Son? shall we for ever cherish this generation of Vipers to tear out the bowels of our common Mother? I pray God the Question have not as much of preface as expostulation. For if we consider the present state of things, how our contentions plead not only right but prescription, there seems not much hope of dispossessing them, and yet less, when ’tis remembred, how they have entwisted themselves,
not only with the passions, but interests of men; two such potent Abettors as will buoy up the most forlorn cause. The truth is, there are many subterraneous springs which feed this Ocean, and though religion and piety be on all hands demurely pretended, yet as we have seen the effects of our debates very dissonant to such a Profession; so if we examine the originals and causes, we shall find them for the most part as widely distant. It may not be amiss to take a short view of some of them; for though I cannot hope the discovery of the Causes will contribute to the general cure, yet perhaps it may prove Antidote to some particular persons, who will be the less apt to admire the verdure of the leaves (the flourishing appearances of zeal and piety) when they find both fruit and root of so poisonous a quality.

CHAP. XIII.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; and first, Pride.

And in this inquest we find Pride already arraigned to our hands, by the wisest of Men, Prov. 13.10. only by pride cometh contention. It is indeed a most prolific vice, and there are few sins to which it is not either a parent or nurse: but there is scarce any which
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which does more betray its immediate descent from it than this of strife and debate, which has so many of the lineaments and features of the deform'd Mother, as sufficiently attest its extraction. And as this is true of all strifes in general, so particularly of those whereof we now treat: for Pride being its self an internal sin, it has such a neighbourhood with all the notions and speculations of the mind, that it easily makes impressions on them: Nor are we to wonder that the Sacredness of divine things is not Amulet enough against its Charms, when we remember that the first act of Pride that ever was committed, was levelled even at God himself; and as it took up its first seat in a spiritual substance, so has it ever since, never acted more naturally, and therefore more vigorously than about spiritual matters. Of this the Church in all ages has had many costly Experiments, for if we trace the Catalogues of Heresies from Simon Magus his daies down to our own, we shall find Pride a principal Actor in every Scene, though perhaps in various dresses. For though Pride be alwaies in the general an affectation of some transcendency, yet it differs as to the particular object, according to the several estimates men make of excellencies. So that the propugners of new Opinions, though they have this common aim, that they seek their own exaltation, yet do not alwaies do it in the same instances. For example, some have coveted the repute of profound inquisitors, and this Vanity has prompted them to dive so deep into the
the bowels of every the plainest doctrine, till at last they have twisted and entangled them into the most perplexing difficulties. These Navigators think they have never fail’d successfully till they have found out a Terra incognita, though God knows they bring nothing from thence for the benefit of the habitable world; nor make it their business to resolve Doubts, but start them. Another sort of men there are of so fastidious and petulant wits, that they disdain an opinion of which themselves are not the Authors; they love not to have their understandings prescrib’d to, by the preconceptions of others, how divinely foever inspir’d, and will rather have a Religion of their own making, than of his whom they pretend to worship. And this, ’tis to be doubted is the bottom of the great veneration some have paid to Reason, which they have set up in the Throne, not only in defiance of blind implicit assent, but even of divine revelation. But in the mean time ’tis to be observ’d, that ’tis not reason in general, the common excellency of our nature that is thus advanc’d, but every mans own private and individual; which upon a just scanning will often be found the most distant thing from what it is call’d: Passion and Phancy, by that omnipotent advantage of being a mans own, often passing for deep discourse and ratiocination: and what a fruitful harvest of Tares such seed is apt to produce, our reason would inform us if our experience did not. To these we may add another rank of men, who vehemently thirsting after a name in the world.
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world, hope to acquire that by being the disseminators of novel doctrines; they think while they go on in the beaten track, they shall be obscur’d in the Throng; the only way to make themselves conspicuous is to be singular: Thus fondly chusing to be eminent, though by the infamous Characters of Heretick or Schismatick, and (like him that fired Diana’s Temple to secure himself from oblivion) build themselves Monuments of the Churches ruines: and sure this Theudas his ambition of being some body, has helpt to raise more opinions than he did men. Yet commonly it answers it even in that circumstance also; for when by separating themselves from the unity of the faith, they have rendred themselves remarkable, their next aim is to have others joyn to them; and so they may have the honour of being leaders, care not though it be into the ditch. To be call’d of men Rabbi Rabbi, is enchanting Musick to any Pharisee, and serves like the Timbrels in Tophet to drown the cries not of their Children, but Mother scorching in the flames of their contention. Indeed so impetuous and uncontrorollable is this kind of vanity, that like a mighty torrent, it bears down all before it, overwhelms not only the opposite vertues, but even all vices that are not of its own confederacy. Men can in this case lay severe restraints upon their most intimate sensualities, when they suspect them treacherous to this grand Design. The Wolf shall be muzzled and made to behave himself with the meekness beseeming the Sheeps cloathing. The Swine shall.
shall be washt and by an unnatural violence withheld from the mire: All their rapacious and bestial appetites controul’d and made tame, that they worry not their reputation. And all this for a little naked popularity, for whose dear purchase, very many have thought fit to divest themselves, both of lawful and unlawful enjoyments; and have thought the tumultuous applause of a few factious spirits worth all that self-denial. But all Pride is not so perfectly Camelion as to subsist upon this meer air, there is another kind of it that proposes to its self something beyond this: such is the affectation of rule and dominion, which though in respect of any real good to the ruler, is as very a Chimera as the former; yet commonly they that are under such a Jurisdiction, find to their cost ’tis more than Imaginative. And God knows this aspiring humour, has been no less fatally active in Ecclesiastick than in Civil affairs; nor has the Church ever been in more danger of Anarchy than by those who most impatiently coveted a share in its government; for where this spirit of ambition is the Impellent, it does like the Demoniack in the Gospel, burst asunder all fetters and chains, violates the unity both of doctrine and discipline, nor is any attempt too bold for men thus animated: They who long to be in authority think the door opens not quick enough for their entry, and impatient of tedious an expectation, chuse rather to make breaches in the walls (nay sometimes to undermine the foundation) than to want an access to their
their Desires. Neither is there any thing so sacred, which upon this occasion they cannot prostitute; when Diotrephes, 3 Joh. 9. seeks preheminence, the Dictates even of an Apostle shall be rejected, and even the divinity of Christ, God blessed for ever, be trampled on, when Arius wants a footstool to climb up to his affected greatness. In a word, if we Examine the occurrences of all ages, we shall find that either the eagerness of acquiring, or the Revenge of missing dignities, have been the great instigators of Ecclesiastick Feuds; and sure our Modern stories, are not likely to fall short of the Ancient, in examples of this kind. And as Pride makes some thus passionately desirous of rule, so it makes others as impatient of being ruled, and even those who cannot hope to arrive to give Laws, will not endure to be under those already established. That this is indeed the Christian liberty for which many in our daies have so unchristianly contended, is too apparent, the fundamental quarrel has been against subjection: Yet to countenance and abett that, whole Armies of frivolous cavils have been rais’d, and the Church attacqued in every its remotest concern, and though there be nothing farther from that unity of mind, to which the simile was first affixt, yet in a perverse sense it imitates the Ointment of Aaron in descending from the head to the skirts of the cloathing: not only the supreme and more eminent parts, but the most slight extrinsick and inferior relatives to Religion being asperst and depraved; and the most innocent Cir-


cumstances of Civil or Natural actions made criminal, when applied to Divine things. A strange infective power, which these men have convey'd into Gods service, that it must thus pollute every thing that approaches it. That the place where his Honour dwells, must become a Pesthouse, and diffuse contagion to all in it. (I wish by the way their Sacrilege had not been too valiant in despising the Danger of those infected utensils, which may perhaps sadly verifie the reproach, and prove treacherous prizes) and when mens zeal operates thus unkindly, when the pretence of internal sanctity devours all outward decency, and God is to be honoured and exalted by those ways, whereby men would think themselves affronted, and vilified; we have too great reason to think such a zeal as little according to godliness as knowledge, and that it is not so much the tenderness of their Consciences, no nor generally the weakness of their Brains, but the Iron skin in their Necks, which makes them at once so scrupulous, and so clamorous; for though the former might be suppos'd owing to Error, the latter can surely proceed from nothing but Pride. Several other instances might be given to shew how that pernicious temper has contributed to the rise and first being of our divisions; and having thus given them birth, it does not like the Ostrich abandon its Brood, but has as great an influence in the cherishing and maintaining, as it had in creating them. Of this there need no other proof than the meer nature of Pride, which as it averts
averts nothing more than self-condemnation; so upon pain of that appearance, 'tis irreversibly engaged in the pursuit of its first undertakings, any desisting being interpretatively a confession either of an Error or a Defeat, both which are insupportable to an assuming temper: So that besides the original incentives forementioned, it has this of disdain superadded to actuate its motions. And accordingly we find they are at this rebound the more violent, not only the success, but the credit of the first enterprise depending upon a vigorous prosecution: So that Catilines Maxim of Villany seems to have been adopted into some mens divinity, and they think past Crimes are only to be secur'd by more and greater. Nor is it only hope to achieve their design, or hide their shame which thus animates them, despair will do it to a yet higher degree. Our Concupiscible and Irascible appetites dwell not so remote, but they are ready reserves to one another, and what was desire in the pursuit, becomes anger and revenge in the disappointment; and sure we need not be told the wild effects of those passions. How many men have in a furious despair over-acted even their own projects, and have made it a malicious consolation in their ruine, to get it attended with that of the publick? As Herod, who to secure a lamentation at his death, commanded a massacre should accompany it, or (to give a more Ecclesiastical instance) like Aerius, who fought the abolishing of that order in the Church, whereof himself could not partake. I wish no mens Conscience in our
our days were qualified to suggest a fresher example. But whilst 'tis so many ways the interest of Pride to abet our contentions, we cannot think it so sluggish or unindustrious an agent, as not to find out expedients for its purpose. I shall not attempt to give a particular of its instruments, when I have said that Schism is one of them, I need not add more, since that alone serves both to complete and perpetuate the Mischief of all our speculative dissentions. How close a Band of concord the communicating in holy duties is, we may learn by Jeroboam, who seems so well to have understood its unitive efficacy, that he durst not trust the newly divided Tribes in a joynt resort to the Temple; and therefore least the rupture he had made in the State should close again, he thinks it necessary to make another in the Church, and secure his defection from his Prince, by that from his God. But we need not borrow a testimony from that his impious Policy, we have a more Authentick attestation from the holy Psalmist, who when he would describe the greatest entireness, Exemplifies it by the walking to the house of God as friends, Psal. 55. 14. And the Apostle goes yet higher, and from our common participation of the Eucharist, infers not only our union, but our incorporation. We being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread, 1 Cor. 10. 17. And then sure me may on the contrary conclude, that our separation must have the quite distant effects; alienate our affections, and by that means still more estrange our judgements. For
For besides that 'tis natural to men to think they can never run far enough from that they begin to loath, they are in their own defence to amplify the differences, that they may acquit themselves from the scandal of a causeless separation, and this God knows is the usual Method among us, when we have broken communion, our only study is not how to repair, but justify it. The adversaries' Tenets are rigourously scanned, new Charges exhibited, and the Schism defended upon those later discoveries, which were no motives to the making it. And then sure no man can doubt but this is a proper way, both to multiply and Eternize disputes; and 'tis abundantly manifest, that vanity and elation of mind is the cause that Men thus prefer a mistaken reputation, before their own innocence or the Churches peace. Indeed if we thoroughly consider it, we shall find Pride is one of the fataleste instruments of Excision, the two-edg'd sword by which adverse parties do mutually cut themselves from one another. The very elements and constitutive parts of a Schismatick, being the Esteem of himself, and the Contempt of others. I am not as this Publican was, we know, the voice of the proud Pharisee, whose very name signifies separation, and our modern Separatists do but Echo the same note, when they pronounce all those Heretical or Carnal from whom they have withdrawn. Or perhaps they derive from a yet more ancient president, those of whom the Prophet Esay speaks, Esay 65. 5. which say, Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou;
an Insolent kind of language which the Cathari in the primitive times did not more exactly transcribe, than many Sects of differing denominations have done in ours. But 'tis to be remembered, that while the Pharisee lookt so fastidiously on the poor Publican, he renounc'd communion in prayers much more acceptable than his own; and those refined Zealots who fear'd contagion from the approach of their more innocent Brethren, could boldly venture on the pollutions of the most detestable Idolatries: And God knows the note has too ready an application in both instances. In the mean time 'tis a sad contemplation, that so much of that zeal which makes such a glittering in the World, shall when brought to the Touch, be found adulterate, that the transcendent purity men boast of, should prove but a more sublimated wickedness, and their pretense to spirituality be verified only in spiritual pride. Alas, is not the whole circuit of Secular things wide enough to contain this swelling humour? Are there not Pomp and Vanities of the world enough to entertain this one Luft, but must this Moabite be brought into the Sanctuary? Can we not be elevated enough unless we trample upon all that is holy, and make Religion Factor for our Ambition? We find some very confidently point out Antichrist upon the strength of this one predicted circumstance, that he was to fit in the Temple of God. But what need we travel beyond the Alps to find out that, which everywhere presents itself? Our Pride does too unhappily answer the description; and though
there is no instance wherein it can cease to be Antichristian, yet surely it is more eminently so, when it thus usurps God's seat, and rules in Sacred things. Would God the pains and animosity which has been spent in discovering and reviling other Antichrists, had been diverted to the pulling down of this, the labour would have been more effectual even to the immediate end of the Designers, for were this Pride Eradicated, the Foundation of all Spiritual usurpations were undermin'd. But alas, those who exclaim the most loudly against all foreign Tyranny on their Consciences, do obsequiously bow to this intestine Usurper, make an entire dediton of themselves, and submit to the severest and ignoblest vassallage. They have invested it with so absolute and sove- reign a Power, that (as Samuel warns the Israelites of their King, 1 Sam. 8.) they are not to call any thing their own when it is useful to its service: All their powers, all their interests are devoted to it, and that not only to adorn its pomp, but to fight its battels. Men quarrel and contend till not only themselves, but even Christianity itself expire in the contest. But if it be indeed certain that every War is so far unjustifiable, as are the causes of it, 'twill surely be a competent prejudice against our contentions, that our Pride is so much concern'd in them, which is so unchristian a motive, as all the holy-water where-with men have sprinkled it, can never baptize into a cleanliness; all the borrowed dresses of Zeal and Sanctity, however they may disguise, can never legitimate
legitimate it. Those Arts of concealment may indeed add a new guilt, that of Hypocrisy, but can never expiate, no nor extenuate the old: And how Saint-like a form soever our Vain-glory puts on, it does but the more own its derivation from him, who can transform himself into an Angel of light, whose aspirings have first subverted himself, and now go on to propagate both his Crime and Ruine to us; nor has he ever manag'd that design with more Art or Success, than by thus making our Pride a partition wall to divide us from one another, and consequently from God too; who being, as our Church styles him, the author of Peace and lover of Concord, can never joyn himself with the disturbers of both, but must necessarily be disoblige'd by our Dissentions and Schisms.

CHAP. XIV.

A survey of the Causes of Disputes; Secondly, Curiosity.

If now we proceed farther in our enquiry we shall find, that another grand incendiary of our Disputes is Curiosity: A vice which though in some respects it may be reckoned a species of the former, that of Pride, yet in others it admits a distinct consideration. This is that baneful weed which the Devil made a shift to steal even into Paradise, and which has ever since affec-
sowed the richest soils, the most pregnant and polite Wits; nor did it only eject man from thence, but it has improved the original curse, and multiplied those briers and thorns among which he was cast, yea, transplanted them from the Earth, where they could only raze the skin, into the Brain, where they pierce and torture the intellectual and immortal Part of Man. Nay farther, even that sweat of his brows, which was to extirpate them from the ground, serves but to water and cherish them in his mind; his very industry being in this case the extremest ill-husbandry, and the more pains he takes, the farther he removes himself from all real advantages of his toil.

There are some parts of Knowledge which God has thought fit to seclude from us, to fence them not only as he did the interdicted Tree, by Precept and Commination, but with Difficulties and Impossibilities; made it not only our sin and danger, but our Folly and madness to attempt them. Of this kind are the Mysterious parts of our Religion, which he shews us as it were a-far off to exercise our faith and reverence, but stoops them not to our sense and disquisition. These he has placed like the Sun, where they may influence, not annoy; warm, not scorch us. And would we still permit them to remain at that safe and wholesome distance, we should find none but benigne effects; but so importunate are the instigations of Curiosity, that no bounds will keep us from the Mount: We will needs break through into the thick darkness, how dreadful soever the thunders
thunders and lightnings are in the way. Like bold Phaetons we despise all benefits wherewith the Father of light and us can court us; unless we may guide his Chariot; and we moralize the Fable as well in the tragicalness of the event, as the inoffence of the undertaking; this unhappy Curiosity having not only ruin'd many of the inquisitors, but set the whole world also in a conflagration. Nor is this temerity more fatal in its Success, than impious in its Foundation: For besides that, it is a direct invasion of Gods peculiar, and violation of his Command, it does evidently imply a distrust, either of his Wisdom or his Goodness; supposes him either so ignorant of the strength of those faculties himself has made, that he has assigned them unproportionable objects, and so they must have new work cut out for them by our selves; or else presume his Eye evil towards his own Creatures; that as the Devil once suggested to our first Parents, he fears the rivalry of poor mortals, and by an envious detention of some parts of felicity, like one that had been Bountiful only upon surprize and incogitancy, illiberally retracts and contradicts his original design of making Man completely happy. Nay, indeed this represents him unkind, not only to us his created Images, but even to that Eternal and express image of his Person, the Son of his bosom, who may well be thought to have been, as despis'd in his Eyes, as he was once in ours, Essay 53. 3. if he have so cheaply expos'd him for their sakes, to whom he denies any of those intellectual advantages, which
difference them from Beasts. Thus wickedly curious are we, that rather than converse with vulgar ordinary things, we create prodigies, put new forms upon him that is unchangeable, rob divinity of its most inseperable attribute, and not only disobey God, but reproach him. And then 'tis no wonder if that which affords so little glory to God, hath no more good-will for Men, and that which thus wars with Heaven, leave little peace on Earth. Indeed if we will be building our Babels, and thus assault Omnipotence, 'tis but just we should have our language confounded, and that that knowledge for which we boldly attempt to rifle Gods cabinet, should like the Coal from the Altar, serve only to embroil and consume the sacrilegious invaders. Yet besides what is owing to divine vengeance in the case, the thing has in its self a proper, natural efficiency toward it; for when so many men are engag'd in a blind search, 'tis not imaginable they should all stumble upon the same Notions, and supposing them to fall upon variety, 'tis impossible but mens fond overweening of their own conceits and petulant disdains of others, will improve that variety into Opposition, and that opposition into set and Solemn Feuds. And God knows, the Church is too effectively acquainted with this fatal gradation, and can experimentally attest the unhappy propriety of this sort of Curiosity towards the engendering of discord and confusion.

But besides this higher rank of things which God hath set so much above us, there are others
others of an inferior sort, as much below us, which are concealed from us, not for their sublimity, but their uselessness; for as God on the one hand remembers that we are but flesh, unable to bear the nearer approaches of divinity, and so talks with us as once with Moses through a cloud: So on the other he forgets not that he breathed into us the breath of life, a vital active spirit, whose motions he expects should own the dignity of its original, and as it was its self an emanation of the Essential Goodness, should aim at only real and solid good, and not evaporate and exhaust its powers in mean and impertinent pursuits. And upon this score also, he has found it necessary to hide many things from us, not that they would dazzle, but misemploy our Eye; not swallow up our Understanding, but divert our Attention, from what is more important: Of this sort are those many thin aerial speculations, the certain knowledge whereof would bring us no real advantage, make us at all the wiser to Salvation; yet such a value does our inquisitive Nature set upon every thing for its being hid, that as if our Life were bound up with these Secrets, and all our Felicity dwelt in the Shade of these recesses, we pursue this search with indefatigable industry, ranfack all corners with as great diligence as the Woman for her lost piece of Silver, Luk. 15. 8. And as if this were indeed the treasure hid in the field, fell all that we have, lay out our whole selves upon the purchase. Indeed he that shall consider what solemn Disquisitions there
there are upon the slightest, and inconsiderablest Subjects, with what Advertence and concern Questions of this kind are bandied in the world, must wonder how men can at once be so serious and so trifling; or that those who can say so much, should not once ask themselves to what purpose they say any thing. Yet what multitudes of men are there engag'd in such chases as this? when alas, the quarry is not worth half the toil, could it be gotten: but what Solomon sayes of the sluggard, Prov. 12. 27. that he rosteth not that which he took in hunting, is true of the contrary temper, these over-busie spirits whose labour is their only reward, they hunt a shadow, and chase the wind; and when they strein to their utmost speed, there is still the wonted Distance between them and their aims; all their eager pursuits bring them no acquest; but after they have traversed so much ground, traced all the mazes that learned Curiosity could contrive to perplex men, and studied to the wearinesse of the flesh, if not to the quenching of the Spirit too, they are still in the same ignorance from whence they set out, and 'twere well if they were also in the same doubtfulness: But the unhappiness of it is, they acquire a confidence without any true ground of it; and get such a Knowledge as may puff up, but not edifie. This was eminently exemplified in the Gnosticks of old, whose vain Chimæras, and foolish questions, as the Apostle calls them, Tit. 3. 9. past with them for such a superlative wisdom, as gave them Insolence to discriminate themselves from
from others by that swelling Title, and monopolize the reputation of Science, which yet if we will believe the great Doctor of the Gentiles, and he too brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the greatest Rabbi of the Jews, was science falsely so called. And God knows, they want not successors in this as well as in other particulars, men are so possessed with their own Phancies that they take them for Oracles, and think they see visions, and are arrived to some Extraordinary revelations of Truth, when indeed they do but dream dreams, and amuse themselves with the Phantastick Ideas of a busy imagination. Yet would they only please themselves in the delusion, the Phrensie were more innocent; but like the prouder sort of Lunaticks, they will needs be Kings and Rulers, impose their wild conjectures for Laws upon others, and denounce War against all that receive them not: And this is that which makes the great combustion, and confusion among us; for while one man Opines one way, another another, and each will obtrude his opinion on every-body else; 'tis impossible but the contests should be sharp and endless; for each man labours under a double Impatience, the one of having his own notions rejected, the other of having the quite contrary impos'd on him; and though 'tis true the reciprocalness of the Injury ought to allay the displeasure at it, yet men so much more consider what they suffer than what they do, that every one cries out aloud of that hard measure, which him-
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self offers without regret. And between winds so contrary and so fierce, 'tis no wonder if storms arise; and in such Tempefts has Religion so long been tossed, that it now needs the interposition of a divine Miraculous power, to keep it from sinking; for alas, these Skirmishes expire not with the first Propugners of the Opinions; they perhaps began as single Duellers, but then they soon get their troops about them, have their partisans and abettors, who not only enhance, but entail the feud to posterity. And indeed this propagation of Strife, both in these trifling, and the former more profound speculations, is the most fatal circumstance of the whole Case: Were it not for this, though we might have many Errors, we could have no Sects. And if the Church might be sometimes wounded with the darts of single Adversaries, yet she could not be surrounded and besieged with combinations and confederacies. Some straggling Souldiers might prove renegados, but they would not revolt in troops and legions. We should not have such numerous Parties, who with the greatest violation of Christian unity, denominate themselves, not from the grand author and finisher of our Faith; but from the first brocher of their Idoliz'd opinions. In the mean time, 'tis a sad contemplation, that a little vain curiosity should weigh so much, or the Churches peace so little with us: that we should sacrifice the one, to the satisfaction shall I say, or rather to the whetting and inflaming of the other. But 'tis a yet sadder, that this should chiefly
chiefly be done by those whose \textit{learning} enables, and whose \textit{profession} should devote to the most noble and most profitable Studies; nay have the highest obligations to correct those \textit{exorbitances} in others, which with such \textit{Art} and \textit{labour} they propagate and teach. How wounding a spectacle is it to see our greatest \textit{Heroes} like \textit{Hercules} at the \textit{Distaff}, thus degenerously employed, and to find those who were by \textit{Christ} design'd for \textit{fishers of Men}, thus entertain themselves like \textit{Children}, with \textit{picking up Shells} and \textit{Pebbles} on the shore; and which is yet more unmanly \textit{wrangling} about them too. Indeed at this rate, 'tis no wonder if they make the \textit{disciples Complaint}, \textit{we have travailed all night and have taken nothing.} This sure is so little the way to win \textit{Souls}, that he whose business it is to destroy them, can very contentedly refer them to this method; can gladly leave us all our nice and subtle \textit{disquisitions}, upon the very same score that one of the \textit{Gothick Commanders}, advised the sparing of the \textit{Italian Schools} and \textit{Libraries}; \textit{Let us, sayes he, leave them their Books}, that whilst they amuse themselves with such \textit{follies}, we may subdue them at our \textit{pleasure}. It is the saying of the \textit{Wise-man, there is a wisdom that multiplieth bitterness}; and sure if there be a wisdom acquired by these curious \textit{Enquiries}, 'tis of this sort, like the \textit{Knowledge of Good} and \textit{Evil} attained by our first \textit{Parents}, which taught them to know the Good only by its \textit{loss}, and the Evil by its \textit{smart}. Indeed our too high, and transcending \textit{speculations}...
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On the one hand, and our too trivial and unprofitable on the other; are like the *torrid* and *frigid* Zone, the one consumes us with its *heat*, the other chills, and benumbs us with its *cold*; that turns us to *Cinders*, this to *Ice*. These little trifling Notions being too slight an exercise to keep *heat* in our Christianity, which not only expresses but maintains its *life* by strong and vigorous *Motions*. And therefore between these two intemperate, God has provided us an *habitable* *Clime*, I mean that middle rank of divine truths which tend to *practice*. Here he would have us dwell and converse, fix our thoughts and studies: Nor need we fear that they are too dry a subject for our contemplation. We see as deep Speculators, as any now assume to be, found it far otherwise. *David* could entertain himself with the *Meditation of God's Law* (not his hidden Decrees or counsels) *all the Day*, Psal. 119. 97. Nay it seems the Matter was *so copious* and *redundant*, that it could not be confined within that *narrow boundary* of Time, but invaded the *night* also; forced him to default from his *rest*, to bestow on his *meditations*, *I have thought of thy Name O Lord in the night season, and have kept thy Law*, Ver. 55. Neither is it a vain expence of Time, which it thus tempts to, but gives the happiest improvement; lands at that harbour to which all rational studies tend, gives understanding, Ver. 130. *makes wise the simple*, Psal. 19. 7. and this also in an eminent degree, such as set him above his teachers, and his Elders also.
also. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine Enemies. I have more understanding than my teachers, for thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep thy commandments, Psal. 119. 98, 99, 100. These are high and liberal Elogies of this divine study: and if any shall seek to divert an unwelcome inference by saying that David spoke them only in pious raptures, that they were the transport of his zeal, rather than the estimate of his judgment; we must resolve the objector far removed from such religious excesses, and under the contrary defect: yet the cause will so well bear an appeal, that he may be trusted to consult farther, let him advise with Solomon, whose large desires and possessions too of wisdom, must suppose him no stranger to its nature, and he will tell him the very same, and that not in his devout extasies, but in his most compos'd sedate temper, when he solemnly seats himself in his School, reads Ethicks to his disciples, and professes his design of giving subtility to the Simple, and to the young man knowledge and discretion, Prov. 1. 4. for if his whole book of Proverbs be scanned, the sum of it will be found to be nothing else but an exhortation to the study of this practick Wisdom. Nay when his own understanding was improved and advanced by Experience also, when he had not only beg'd, but bought wisdom, after he had given his Curiosity its full unbounded Range, compassed the whole Universe, and exa-
min'd not only in contemplation, but by sensitive experiment, whatever therein could pretend to be that good for the sons of Men, Eccl.2.3. we find after all this busy inquest, he gives up his verdict in this form, Eccles. 12.13. Let us hear the end of the whole matter, Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole Duty of Man: And now methinks so solemn a decision of the wisest of Men, and he too inspir'd by the Omniscient God, may be thought of weight enough to acquiesce in. Yet since there are some who love not to weigh in the balance of the Sanctuary, and that had rather receive Responses from Delphos than from between the Cherubims: Let such at least hear even the Heathen Oracle attesting Socrates to be the wisest man, because he directed his studies to the moral part of Learning, which he did to such a degree, as to disparage all those more airy speculations, which better'd not mens Manners, but were only λόγοι λόφος, a noise and clattering of Words. And Pythagoras his School defines Philosophy, ζωὴ ἀνθρώπινη, καὶ τελείωσιν, the cleansing and perfecting of humane life, which two things are said to be done, first by Virtue, whose business it is to remove τὸν ἁμετέλων τῶν ἀμαθῶν, the inordination of our Passions: Secondly, by Truth, which restores τὴν ἐδοξασμένην, the Image and portraiture of God. And since this is the joint suffrage both of Religion and Reason, why should those that pretend to either despise both, and vainly consume themselves in unprofitable searches? Why should men wander to seek beggary and emptines,
emptiness, who may with far less labour be rich at home? Alas, ’tis not bare knowledge, how great or universal soever, that can possess us of felicity. Were it possible for us to have a window into Heaven, to see all the Divine secrets, yet that might be but like the Rich man’s prospect into Abrahams bosom, while himself was in the bottomless pit. They are not only the gross and illiterate Souls that must feed those flames, the most Aerial and Sublimated, are rather the more proper fuel for an immaterial Fire, and the knowledge we carry thither, render us the fitter company for him, who knew every thing but how to keep himself happy. It was at once the Observation and Wonder of Plutarch, that whereas God has several incommunicable properties as Power and Immortality, &c. these all men aspir’d to, in the mean time neglected that of Goodness, wherein he was willing all men should share. And sure there is now cause of the same complaint, we would have Omniscience and all parts of Divinity besides the holiness, yet alas, those without these would prove but fatal acquisitions, and that approach towards being Gods, would only make us the more Devils. The only advantageous as well as possible way of Assimilation with God is by purity, and the means of that an Attentive consideration of those Divine revelations, which are to regulate our practice; these at once dispence light and warmth, direct and revive the Soul: And if men would not exhale vapours to cloud and darken them, Eclipse the clearest Truths
Truths by difficulties of their own creating, no man could miss his way to Heaven for want of light, and yet so vain are they as to think they oblige the world by involving it in darkness, as if their Mists should like that which Watered the new-formd Earth, Gen. 2. 6. supply the place of the dew of Heaven. But certainly to all such in their profusest liberalities, we need make no other Request than Diogenes did to Alexander, desire them only that they will not stand between us and the Sun, intercept its rays, and rob us of that which is infinitely better than any thing they can give us. Were this but obtain'd, we should soon discern the inconsiderableness of those things whose effects have been so sadly considerable to Christendom; those many Chimæras which we wrangle and fight about, would in this Sun-shine appear but Motes that dance in the Air, (though God knows as we manage them, they are the most luxurioso Revels to the Prince that rules there.) Were but a St. Pauls doctrine throughly imbib'd, our Curious Arts, εἰδώλες γεφυραίοι, superfluous unconcerning studies, would as it happened, Acts 19. be supplanted; and our devotion if sufficiently accedendo, would as theirs, burn up innumerable books of this sort. And sure as this would be the greatest, so it would be the most triumphant Bonfire Christendom ever saw, as being not only an indication, but a means of the mighty growth, and prevailing of the Word of God, which our vain Curiosities serve only to impede and obstruct, while they do as mightily advance dissentions & animosities among men.
A survey of the Causes of Diffutes; Thirdly, Interest.

But besides these two, there is a third Fomenter of divisions, which either for its activity or success must not subscribe to either of them, and that is Interest. This is the great Idol to which the world bows: To this we pay our devoutest homage, give it not only our knees, but our hearts; and as if the making us rich were a second Creation, that could cancel all the obligations of the first: We sacrilegiously entitle our profit to all the Prerogatives of a Creator, give it an absolute unlimited dominion over us, allow it to prescribe us all our measures of good and evil; to rule not only our Reason but our Passions too, (a Soveraignty alas we would never yield to our God) and as if the giving us laws were not Empire enough, we permit it to impose Religions also; for sure they that observe how great an influence it has in Church affairs, will conclude it governs more than the secular part of the world. And indeed if we look back, we shall find 'tis no novel usurpation, but though void of other Title, has the Prescription of many ages. Divinity has long since been made the handmaid of Policy, and Religions modelled by conveni-
conveniences of State. The golden Calves became venerable deities, when they were found apt to secure Jeroboams Jealousies: And Machiavils policy, that States should serve themselves of Religion, was a common practice long before 'twas his Rule. And this Example of Communities has been transcrib'd by single Persons. In the Old Testament we find frequent mention of those mercenary Prophets, that turn'd the office into a trade, divin'd for money, nay, sometimes for more contemptible hire, handfuls of Barley and pieces of Bread: And in the New we see the same motive of Secular advantage had force enough to turn an Ecclesiastic into a Laick, make Demas degrade himself, and desert his Ministry, and as it thus stopp'd his mouth from preaching the Truth, so it open'd those of Others to divulge Errors. Such were those deceivers of whom St. Paul speaks, Tit. i. ii. who spake things they ought not for filthy lucre sake. So when the same Apostle declaims the most earnestly against the love of money as the root of all evil, we find he fetches his proof of that Charge, from its having made men err from the faith, 1 Tim. 6. 10. And 'tis St. Peters prediction, that the most damnable Heresies, even the denying of the Lord that bought them, should be introduced by those, who through Covetousness should make merchandize of their Proselytes, 2 Pet. 2. 4. and sure the event attests the presage to have concern'd more than the Age immediately succeeding, there being none of the subsequent which hath not in some degree assisted its completion,
pletion, nor have we cause to wonder here-at, since 'tis obvious to discern the conjunction and dependence between Covetousness and Heresie. For the Itching ears the Apostle speaks of, being an Epidemick disease, give fair opportunity to every Mountebank to try his Experiments. When men nauseate Old truths, because they are acquainted with them, and embrace doctrines for the very same reason, they should reject them, even because they are New: When they love no Teachers, but such as thus entertain them, and are bountiful to none but such as they love; there is little doubt, but there will be Mints enough set on work, when the Coiners can thus at once stamp new opinions for their Disciples, and Money for Themselves: And God knows they are not a few of our Divisions, that have thence taken birth. It will be needless to ravel far into the Records of Elder times, every mans memory will be able to suggest to him too many, and too pertinent instances. Upon which reflection 'twill be too visible, that much of some mens late pretence to Godliness was but a real pursuit of Gain; and the new light serv'd to guide them to their neighbours Coffers: And probably many of our Disputes had been superseded, had not the Authors foreseen, that though they lost the Question, they should gain what they more sought. A few essays had discover'd how much the Populacy were pleas'd with Novelties, especially such as at once gratified their Levity and their Pride, by casting ill reflections on the things or Persons to whom they owed
owed a reverence; and the liberal contributions such Teachers met with, serv'd still to invite more labourers into that work, where without the uneasiness of a long Expectation, their very seed-time was their Harvest, and by sowing Tares, they immediately reaped Gold: And 'tis no wonder if such quick returns made them diligent at the trade, industrious to provide those wares they saw they could put off so well. And would to God we were secure, that this way of Traffick were yet at an end, for so long as these spiritual Merchants can thus impose on their credulous Chapmen, make them buy one mischief with another, and exhaust their Estates to endanger their Souls, we must not hope our dissentions will ever cease, our flames ever be extinct, that have so much matter to feed them, and such importunate blasts to blow them up.

B U T covetousness is of too unsatiable a nature to be contented with one way of supply, 'tis like the Sea, that receives the Tribute of all Rivers (though far unlike it in lending any back again) and therefore those who have resolv'd upon the thriving sort of Piety, have seldom embarkt all their hopes in one bottom, nor so depended on the bounty of their Proselytes, as to neglect other ways of preying for themselves. They wanted not providence to foresee, how uncertain a revenue popular benevolence is: That the same giddy and violent humour, which had opened their hands so wide, might by working another way close them as fast; or if their inclinations continued, their abilities
abilities might fail; (a thing very possible to those, who have such fuckers) or if both these remain’d, yet that they were unlikely to grow in proportion to their own appetites, and therefore found it necessary to have some other reserve; and besides this way of flattering, their willing benefactors out of part, contrived another of forcing their unwilling Neighbours out of all their possessions: So making the spoils of some men’s honestly a richer booty than that of others folly. Hence Shibolet’s found out of Covenants and engagements, to give opportunity of destroying a dissenting brother; by this Art a fat benefice became crime and witness too against its Incumbent, and he was sure to be unorthodox, that was worth the plundering. Thus alas has the Altar of God been attended, or rather invaded by those whose very approach was a guilt, that qualified them rather to lay hold on its horns, than pretend to its service; for sure that God, who has declar’d he hates robbery for burnt-offering, cannot much affect Robbers for Priests. But this is a Theme so unpleasant I delight not to enlarge on it, and rather wish that the memory of it were so extinct, that it might remain nowhere but in the penitential Litanies of the Offenders; my design in the present reflection is only to make it an evidence how much covetousness promotes our contentions, which sure is not more visible any where than in this instance: For where there is a design of supplanting, that necessarily requires another of accusing; (even Jezabel her self projects not to seize on Naboth’s Vineyard without
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without a precedent Charge) to comply with which necessities, not only the lives and conversations, but the doctrines and opinions of our most eminent Divines have been strangely misrepresented, and when that proved not fence enough to the reputation of their Oppressors, they have thought fit to change the Scene, and to combate those opinions in their true shape, upon which they could not so well fasten their disguise. I shall not here need to say with how much, or how little pretext of reason they managed those Disputes: 'Tis enough to my purpose that such Disputes there were, and those founded in the desire of acquiring secular advantages, which sufficiently attests Interest to be a potent Abettor of our quarrels.

BUT God knows that is a truth of which the world affords so many proofs, that we need not confine our selves to this little Angle of it, or owe our convictions only to our domestick transactions; if we look abroad we shall find it too often exemplified. The memorable disturbance given to the Church, as well as State of Germany by the Anabaptists, is a pregnant instance; whose new opinion was but an expedient of investing themselves in new possessions, and their second Baptism but the Solemnity of espousing, not only the flesh, but the world also, which they had renounced in the first.

AND would God they had been the only set of Men, whose doctrines were subservient to their interests, for such tumultuous and Plebeian projects,
jefts, though like a land-floud they make great spoil at the present, yet soon sink again. Such avowed and excessive greediness devours its self, and the instruments by which it wrought: so that the defeat of the secular Design, is commonly the routing those Opinions, which were formed for the promoting it. But when the same desire has the advantage of a sober guidance; when Avarice puts on the Canonical habit, and twists its self not only with the practice of Men, but the doctrines of the Church; when articles of Religion shall be estimated by their profitableness, and Ecclesiasticks dispute, as Lay-men fight for Money; then alas the mischief seems fatal, the disease so fixt and radicated, as at once discourages, and mocks the attempts of cure.

THAT this is the case not only in a particular and private Church, but that which assumes to be the Universal and Catholick is too apparent. The one Position of the Popes right to dispose Kingdoms, outstrips all other principles of rapine: this is to drive a whole-sale trade, when all other petty Merchants, deal but for parcels: which as it is a much bolder, so is it a more prejudicial attempt than the invading of private possessions, and this Duo gladii, the double armature of S. Peter, a more destructive Engin, than the tumultuary weapon snatcht up by a Fanatick: but sure S. Peter's sword though once rashly managed by himself, was never design'd to arm his successors to invade Kingdoms: This property of it seems rather to have been derived
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rived from the Prætorian souldiers, who insolently assumed the disposing of the Empire, wherein they at the last arrived to that impudence, that after the Death of Pertinax they made open port sale of it, ἐξερήσας καὶ ἀτύπως δοθεὶς καὶ ἱδιωτικὸς καταχθ入口, in a base and sordid manner, as if it had been of common marketable wares: I cannot say the Court of Rome transcribes that indecent owning of the traffick; but it has in other instances so well attested its good managery, that 'tis not very credible, that Crowns and Scepters are conferred gratis. And to this so advantageous a Doctrine others bear proportion: Those of Purgatory, Indulgences, and Supererogation, are ready instances, wherein the Assertors themselves seem to be unanimous in nothing but in a joynt reference to profit, for when they come to minute definitions they vary and disagree; satisfie one another, as little as their common Antagonists: and therefore in the Council of Trent they prudently chose in their decrees to propose the bare Articles backt by the Authority of the Church, and Anathemas of the Council, as having by precedent discussions of the points in their congregations discern'd the small accord that was among themselves, when they descended to particulars. And indeed the Opinions were so various as to the grounds of the Doctrines, that one would wonder how from so differing premisses, they should all infer the same conclusion; were it not that the conspiration of Interest was too potent for the diversity of Judgment. And sure 'twas a strange deference was
was given to it, when in the matter of Indulgences, there was (by the Testimony of their own Writers) four different Opinions, and yet all Catholick: which moderation towards Speculative dissenters, compar'd with the great severity against those that opposed its Practice, speaks loud enough that the Orthodoxy of the point, lay wholly in the Profitableness: and that Luther himself had been no Heretick, had he busied himself only in such disquisitions, as impeded not the gain of that Doctrine. Nor is this meerly surmise and conjecture, for if we consult the memorials of those transactions, we shall find this was the thing that most alarm'd Rome, put that Court in almost as great a commotion as the birth of Christ did Herods: and accordingly in their private consults, the closer cabals of the Colledge; the securing this part of their invaded treasure was the grand deliberation, upon which account it was, that when Adrian shewed some Inclination to the reforming abuses both in this and other instances, one of his Cardinals who better knew the intrigues of affairs, admonisht him against that unskilful piece of Ingenuity, not only from the Example of his Predecessors, who were resolute never to confess Faults by mending them, but by representing to him, "That no reformation "could be made, which would not notably di-"minish the rents of the Church, which having "four foundations, the one Temporal, the other "three Spiritual, Indulgencies, Dispensations, "and Collations of Benefices; no one of them

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"could be stopped but that one quarter of the revenues would be cut off. What a resemblance this advice carries to the oration of Demetrius to his fellow crafts-men, Act. 19. 25. I need not stand to demonstrate, but while such considerations as this, bear sway in Church matters, where Profit shall be the Touch-stone both for faith and manners, we are not to wonder if no gainful Tenet be deposited; or Peace bought with that which in most mens esteem is of far more value.

And this is it which ominates sadly as to our divisions with the Romanists, were our differences meerly the product of Heat and Passion, they would like the smaller clefts in the ground, want nothing but a cooler season to cement and close them: but when they are thus form'd into an interest, become the Design not of single persons or ages, but of corporations and successions; the Breach seems like the scissures and ruptures of an Earthquake, and threatens to swallow all that attempt to close it, and reserves its cure only for omnipotence. Indeed till spiritual and secular Concerns be reduced into their proper ranks, which are now mixt and confounded, the better to disguise the preposterous subordination of the nobler to the inferior; till we have forgotten the unhappy Chymistry of turning all even Religion its self into Gold, we must never hope to get out of the Furnace; our flames will still grow fiercer, and with this unnatural effect to consume not the Dross, but the purer Metal. In
a word, till men can sever themselves from their Avarice and mean pursuits of gain, they will never cease to separate from their brethren. For as the most sovereign Balsoms cannot cure a hurt while the arrow remains in the flesh: so neither can the most pacifick Remedies at all avail, so long as the same worldly Aims, which made the wound, still stick in it.

BUT in the mean time 'tis a Melancholick consideration that Christianity should be by its Professors thus unworthily prostituted; that the many various and opposite Religions for which we severally pretend so much zeal, should be but divers waies to the same irreligious End; wherein our Elders seem to resemble those in the Story of Susanna, who when they meant to part with each other, yet did unawares meet by the impulse of the same Lust. We find it moved the patience even of the Lamb of God, to see his Fathers house made a house of merchandize, though the Traffick was for the furnishing of Sacrifices: with what abhorrence must we think does he now behold those, who drive so much a worse trade in it: who sell not accommodations for worship, but the worship itself to accommodate their interests, and do not only make Gain in the Temple, but of it. A thing the sacrilegious Rapine of our days has made literally true, where besides the revenues, the very fabrick and materials of Churches, have been marketable ware: Judas's good husbandry has been taken up, and ad quid Perditio hæc? put as the common Motto upon
upon every thing that could be sold for more, nay sometimes for less than three hundred pence. And as Dionysius took away the golden beard from Aesclapius, to rectifie the indecency of the Sons having a beard when the Father had none: and Julian robb'd the Christian altars with this impious Sarcastn, εν τοιοι σαλβατον θυρατει, that 'twas unfit the Son of Mary should be serv'd in Plate. So do men now a-days make themselves regulators of holy things, correct the indecorums of the sanctuary, that they may rifle its treasures. Thus do we see the Apostles' affirmation sadly verified that those who will be rich fall into Temptation, and a snare, 1 Tim. 6. 9. Such is the greediness of a covetous appetite, that it swallows indiscriminately whatever looks like prize, and rather than it want its prey, God Himself shall be robb'd. Nay, 'twere to be wished in this instance, that That were all; but alas he is mockt too, used not only unjustly, but contumeliously; we thus make him a property to our fordid designs, and when he has profest that he will not be serv'd together with Mammon, we attempt that which is yet far more blasphemous, and make him pay service to him with whom he disdains to share it when paid by others.

Neither is Covetousness the only Vice that serves its interest upon Religion: but as 'tis made a factor for that, so is it a cloak and disguise for many other. Of this the Catalogues of primitive Hereticks give sufficient witness; divers whereof as the Nicolaitans, Gerinthians, Carpocra-
tians and Gnosticks seem to have constituted distinct sects in Christianity, only that they might introduce the most bestial parts of Heathenism, and pretended an association in Religion, when indeed it was in lust. How far some of our modern Sects resemble them in this Particular, I will not undertake to pronounce: though there want not those who make severe, and not improbable conjectures concerning it. But whether that be the main design or no; 'tis certain both that wickedness, and many other find great shelter among them. He that brings resolution to uphold a Faction shall not miss of Entertainment, how many or how great vices soever he brings with it; and be that is of a godly party, shall in sight of the loudest Guilts be a godly man. So meritorious a thing is it in some mens account to be factious, that it covers the multitude of sins: hence it is that Criminals so frequently fly to new Churches for Sanctuary: and 'twill still be the concern of such to have so creditable a Refuge; and therefore we are not to wonder if this Interest combine with the former in promoting our Difsentions.

BUT alas, as it advances those, so does it our guilt too, that have more than on vile End to which we accommodate our Piety: and still implies the greater affront to our God, by how many the more and baser interests we shroud under his Patronage. Alas, is it not enough as Job speaks to hide our iniquities in our own bosomes, but must we wrap them in the Veil of the Sanctuary.

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We read that Goats once lent a covering for the Tabernacle; but here by an impious Inversion, the Tabernacle must lend a covering to the Goats: The most bestial appetites be both concealed and preserv'd under the Shadow of Religion. Plutarch tells us that when Marcellus would have consecrated a Temple joyntly to Honour and Vertue, the Priests resifted it, saying, Two Gods dwell not in one Church: and if their vain deities exacted such a solemnity of Respect, and would not be Inmates to one another, can we think the true God will be content to be made so to all our vilest lusts. This is sure the highest Contumely to the divine Majesty; and never could the abomination of desolation more properly be said to stand in the holy place than in this sense: for as the natures of these Guiltys are fitly express'd by abomination, so is the effect of them by desolation; they having brought the most fatal misciefs on the Church.

AND now would God all that are concern'd in this guilt, would soberly ponder the weight of it. There are two things of which God has express'd himself peculiarly Tender, his honour and his Church; this is the invading him in both; the exposing the one to Reproach and Contempt, and the other to Ruine and Destruction; and doubtless were there nothing of the former, this later alone must be sadly accounted for. It remains yet a Character of infamy upon Achan, that he troubled Israel to enrich himself: and on Balam that he not only loved the wages of iniquity, but ensnared
ensnared the people in uncleanness: and sure the same with many aggravations belongs to those, who by the like unworthy practice, have not only rendred the Church a prey to foreigners, but made it so to its self; engag'd one part of it against another, till the whole is so wafted, that our Religion seems now neerer extinction, than our quarrels about it.

CHAP. XVI.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Fourthly, Passion.

FOURTH grand contributer to our dissentions is Passion, which being by God and nature placed in a subserviency to reason, when it quits its proper station and assumes empire, it must needs disorder and subvert not only the State of the Mind, but of Every thing upon which it has an Influence. I shall not here attempt any Philosophical discourse either of their nature or number; all that concerns the present enquiry falls under one of these two, our love, or our hate; and is either Kindness and Prepossession, or Spight and Prejudice: For the first of these 'tis a thing which common experience attests to be a most forcible corrupter of the understanding, which being by native right design'd a Judge, is by this interrupted in its office,
office, not permitted to make those impartial Enquiries, on which a right sentence should be found-
ed. But (as it fares sometimes with Magistrates in Popular insurrections) forced to give counte-
nance to its own violation, to own not its proper native dictates, but such as are presented to it, by the prejudicate Phancy. And as it thus lays restraint upon the superior part of the Mind, keeps the understanding in fetters, so (to complete the inversion) it takes off all ties from the inferior; Gives not only licence, but incitation to the other Passions to take their freelest range, to act with the utmost impetuosity. And sure there can no-
thing more be requir'd, to render it a most apt instru-
ment of Tumult and Confusion. For when every opinion that is taken up, shall instead of rea-
son and argument, arm its self with heat and vi-
olence, there can be no end of contending. And the truth of this is, God knows, too sadly discern-
able in our Church-controversies, which derive a
great deal of their warmth and bitterness from this
Fountain.

Of this prepossession there are two Sorts, the one relating to Doctrine, the other to Pers-
sons; by the first I mean not a sober constancy to those principles which being first imbied by edu-
cation, are afterwards retain'd upon Judgment, but an eager tenacity of Opinions, not so much upon Truth or Evidence, as upon a confus'd irrational kindness; a Platonick love of some Do-
ctrine meerly for themselves, and then making them the standards, by which all others are to be measured:
measured: And this kind of Prepossession is no Stranger in the world, there being multitudes of men, who assert opinions with all imaginable vehemence, who can give no better ground of it, but because they like them: And as the wiser sort choose a Tenet, because 'tis right, so these conclude 'tis right, because they have chosen it. And having thus enamour'd themselves of their Helena, they expect all should adore, nor can he scape the note of Profaneness that refuses. By this absurd partiality it is that some doctrines, which would themselves ill abide the Test, are become the Touch-stone both of Doctrines and Men, and no Opinion or Person sanctified which bears not this impress. I need not stand to give instances, either of the Doctrines or the unhappy influence this espousing of them has had on our dissentions; but indeed this kind of Prepossession is oftentimes the consequent of another; and this great veneration of some Opinions is founded in the reverence of their Authors. Men take up a confidence of the learning or sanctity of a Person, and then all his notions are received implicitly, strictly embraced, but not so much as slightly examin'd; and this admiration of mens Persons, has in all ages been of huge mischief to the Church, has nurtur'd private Phancies into solemn publick Errors, and given an unhappy perpetuity to many Heterodox opinions, which would else have expired with their first Propugners. This seems to have been foreseen by St. Paul, when he so earnestly exhorts the Corinthians against the ascri-
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...their Faith, to their several respective Teachers: But sure I am, 'twas sadly experimented by the succeeding Christians, who owed many of their divisions to it. A pregnant instance hereof was the Millennium, which in spite of its improbability prevail'd long, and almost universally against the Truth upon the strength of Authority. Papias a holy man and Scholar of St. John, having delivered it, the esteem of his Person canoniz'd his mistake, and men chose rather to admit a doctrine, whose unagreeableness to the Gospel Economy rendred it suspicious, than think an Apostolick man could seduce them. And the force of this is yet more considerable, when 'tis remembred that it found Proselytes, not only among the Vulgar, who are commonly flexible to any new Impression, but among those of a higher rank, men that were lights in their generation: Justin Martyr and Irenaeus having own'd the Opinion, and intimated it to have been received by many others no less Orthodox; and if such a seduction could prevail, so early in those purer times, before mens interests or spleen were adopted into their Religion, and begot voluntary errors, if I say the meer reputation of a Teacher, was then singly so operative; we cannot wonder at its efficacy in conjunction with those auxiliaries, which worser times have brought in. What concurrence of those there was in the several Heresies, which after infested the Church, I shall not now examine, but 'tis visible that many of them grew considerable, chiefly from the fame of their Authors, thus Tatianus up-
on the credit of being Justin Martyr's disciple, had an advantage to disseminate his errors, and not only his, but those of Origen Apollinaris and Novatus, gain'd abettors from the reputed Orthodoxy of the Persons, that propos'd them, who having asserted the Faith in some points, were qualified the more prosperously to oppose it in others.

Nor has it been only the mishap of elder times to have felt the mischiefs of such prepossession; the disease has still advanced, and every day improved in worse effect, by how much men have more degenerated from primitive integrity, so that the easy Proselyte is now in danger, not only from the blindness, but the treachery of his guide, and is often led out of the common road, as thieves draw passengers into by-ways for the better opportunity of robbing them: But 'tis not my present business to send Hue and cry after them, to examine what the intentions of those leaders are, who misguide their tractable admiring followers, 'tis enough for my purpose to observe, that those who so deliver up themselves in a blind assent to the dictates of any man, are in his power to be abused by him if he pleases: I shall leave it to others, to estimate the probability that they shall not be actually so: But certainly this may be said, that these later ages have beyond all the former given Opportunities of seducing to any that will use them. The one established Doctrine of infallibility among the Romanists is eminent for its propriety that way, while under pretence of submission to something they call Infallible, 'tis evident that the
the faith of the ignorant Vulgar resolves itself into that which they acknowledge most fallible; the Doctrine of their immediate Teachers. But indeed take it at the best, such a persuasion is not only an error in itself, and an apt foundation for innumerable others, but it necessarily renders them incorrigible; the least retraction of a mistake being so inconsistent with the claim of infallibility, that while they retain the one, they must never attempt the other, nor can they cease to Err, till they confess it possible they may do so. How much more than possible that has been, the many Innovations of that Church sufficiently witness; and consequently the danger of presuming upon the unerrableness of a guide. But would all that upbraid it there, were themselves secure from it, and that many did not in their practice transcribe that decried doctrine, and that too with the improvement of worse circumstances. I must call them worse, by how much the probabilities of Erring are greater under the extemporary conduct of a Private person, than the sixt rules of a community, and by how much again the voluntary enslaving myself is more excuselss, than that which the principles of my Profession, and consequently a seeming obligation of Conscience exposes me to. And as to the matter of Fact, I think 'tis evident enough, that the admiration of mens Persons is a spreading disease that has overrun Christendom, and though a great part of it inveigh against implicite faith, yet if it be thoroughly scanned, 'twill appear 'tis rather the object than the
the a\$t we differ about. He that vehemently opposes that homage to the Conclave, will yet tamely pay it to a Chaffis: and he that refuses it there, yields it to the Votes of a Congregational Church; or if he hold out against that too, yet chooses to himself some private Teacher on which to cast it: Like e Micah, Judg. 16. Makes him a Teraphim and a Priest too, for his private use; and then confidently consults his Oracle, and has nothing to do but believe its responses. Nay, that which makes the matter yet more sadly ridiculous, is that the very Opposition to one Usurpation makes them deliver themselves up to another. How many when they have heard a Preacher rail fiercely at the Pope, have presently made him theirs, and supposing that Zeal an indication of a safe guide, have given him as absolute a rule of their Consciences, as that he exclaim'd against (perhaps Envided) elsewhere: And the like instances might be given among our other dissenting parties. And this has taught some Seducers a lucky artifice, made them observe to what opinions their Prose-lytes had the greatest aversion, and by complying with their anger so steal away their love, that they might after lead them to what they pleas'd, yea, perhaps to that which they so much detested: For there want not examples of some, who have by back ways been brought to those Opinions, which at first they most defied. What have been the attempts or success of the Emissaries of Rome this way, I shall not pronounce, though some (not improbably) speak them great.

FROM
FROM this blind and passionate esteem of several Teachers have flowed many pernicious consequences, particularly those distinct Appellations, which form differences into Sects, many of which expressly own this original, by bearing the names of their first Authors. I might here put them in mind, that they are illegitimate persons, whom our Law directs to write with an alias, and ask them, whether the Church from their superinduced name, has not cause so to repute them. But I am sure I may with the utmost seriousness say, that this practice is to the great violation of Christian unity, and reproach of Christian profession, which seems to be abandon'd and disown'd by us, who instead of denominating our selves from the Author and finisher of our Faith, find out new Patrons, as if we were ashamed of our first Relation. Alas, how is the title of Christian, which was so glorious to the Primitive owners, that they gladly bought the occasion of boasting it with Torments and Death, become so despicable to us, that every the obscurest name is courted to supplant it. Have any of our Idolized readers bought their Interest in us so dear as Christ has done, why then are we rather ambitious to be accounted their dependants than his? 'Tis the Apostles own argument, 1 Cor. i. 13. when he refutes their factious entitling themselves to Paul and Apollo, &c. by asking them if Paul were crucified for them: And indeed he there says so much upon this point, that I need only refer the Reader thither to learn, either the unreasonableness of this Schismatical zeal for
for our several Teachers, or the inevitable contentions and animosities which spring from it; only let me observe, that every of his Arguments are more pressing upon us, than on the Corinthians; those taken from the unreasonableness sure are, by how much the names we so adore are less venerable than those of Paul and Cephas or Apollo, and those from the consequences are so also. For those Teachers were industrious to prevent, whereas ours commonly are no less busie to promote contentions on their behalf, and so we are more as certain'd never to want them.

**BUT** besides this kinder prepossession towards some mens persons, there is another of a different nature, a sinister one. I mean prejudice and disgust, and this has done no less harm in Ecclesiastical affairs than the former. Men take up piques and displeasures at others, and then every opinion of the disliked person must partake of his fate, and be engaged in the quarrel: Nor will those that are enemies ever allow one another the honour of being in the right: Nay, some have been so perversely malicious, that they have given up their understandings to their spleen, forsaken an Opinion themselves approved, only that they might find matter of contest with one they maligned. A memorable instance of this Socrates gives in his Eccl. Hist. in Theophilus Bishop of Alexandria, who having formerly attested the Orthodox belief, that God was incorporeal; yet upon a sudden indignation against Dioscorus and his brethren, who maintain'd the Tenet, he embraced the contrary
trary Heresie of the Anthropomorphites, that so under the Colour of a difference in faith, he might the more advantageously pursue his malice; & the Effects of it were very Tragical, not only to private persons in Tumult and Blood-sed, but to the Church by reviving that Error, which was before near expiring, and might as Socrates affirms, have lain in the dust, had it not been thus awa-
ken'd. And indeed in Church story scarce any thing occurs more frequently than examples of those, who upon private grudges have either begun or fomented Heresies and Schisms. Thus Marcion being denied the Communion of the Ro-
man Church, having before by a scandalous crime been cut off from his own, he reveng'd himself by publishing his detestable doctrine: In like manner Miletius upon a displeasure at Peter Bishop of Alexandria, first separated from the Church, and after took part with the Arians: So also Lucifer incensed at Eusebius for not approving of his Electing Paulus to the See of Antioch, broke Communion, and gave both rise and denomination to a new Set. The like is said of Apollinaris, that he was excited to the broaching his Heresie by his impatience of the Excommunication inf-
flicted on him and his Father, by Theodotus Bi-
shop of Laodicea; and several others might be gi-
ven to the same purpose, out of the Records of those first Ages.

And certainly the World seems not to have so much improved in meekness since, as that we should think the same principle is not still as active,
active; and if the Task were not more envious than hard, many recent instances might be given to Parallel the former, especially of such as having justly smarted under the stroke of Ecclesiastical discipline, have sought to revenge themselves both on it and the inflictors, by Factions and tumults; so making the publick at once cloak the Infamy, and bear the charge of their particular rancors. But this is a Subject neither grateful nor necessary to be more distinctly spoken to. One may however in the general say, that where these private Animosities are any thing violent, they usually beat down all Consideration of publick good. Historians observe of Themistocles, that he always thwarted the Councils of Aristides, not that he thought it the Interest of the Commonwealth, but his own, to keep down the growing reputation of his Competitor: And I fear that envious artifice has been too often transcript'd, as well in Ecclesiastick, as in Civil Transactions: No detriment is thought so formidable to a malicious mind, as the prosperity of his Adversary; and publick Ruptures shall still be allowed to widen, till they swallow up the whole, rather than he will close with his Antagonist. The History of the Scottish Church gives an apposite Example of this, in a ruling Presbyter, who being by King James advis'd with about the readmitting Marquess Huntley, and prest with the present exigencies of Church and State, which requir'd it, gave his final answer in these terms. Well Sir, I see you resolve to take Huntley in favour, if you do, I will op-
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pose it, choose whether you will lose him or me, for both you cannot have. Some may think the greatest propriety of this instance lies to shew the insolence of that Tribe towards Majesty; but however 'tis not impertinent to the matter in hand also; and shews how light the greatest publick concerns are, when malice is the counterpoize: And indeed the Naturalists experiment, that flame will not mingle with flame, never justifies its self better than when applied to minds thus accended, which however they may meet in mutual flashes, can never unite and incorporate: The sadness of it is, that they should only conspire to common vasterion, and make the Church its self a burnt-offering.

Thus fatal have our several sorts of prepossessions been to our Religion, for as if that were the common Enemy, our most distant contrary Affections, our love and our hate equally annoy it; those brutish parts of us our Passions, which like the beasts under the Law, were never to be brought into the Temple, but for sacrifice, are now found there upon a far differing account, not to be slain, but ador'd; like the Egyptian Isis and Osiris, enshrining to receive our Devotions, for that the Zeal we pretend elsewhere is really paid to them, is alas too manifest.
To these several causes of our distractions we may add another, which though in its original it may seem more innocent, yet is in its consequents no less pernicious, and that is a mistaken Zeal, which as it is fire to all about it, so is it wind to its self, fans and irritates its own flames, and by a confidence that it does well, gathers still fresh vigour to do more. How great the force of such an Erroneous perswasion is, we may collect from our Saviours premonition to his Disciples, when he tells them, that those who kill'd them should think they did God service; and if Murder, and that of Apostles too, could by the Magick of blind Zeal be so transform'd, we must not wonder to find other Crimes so too. And what Christ thus foretold was after eminently exemplified in St. Paul, whom the Holy Writ represents under all the Phrases that may denote a virulent persecutor, as breathing out threatenings and slaughter, making havoc of the Church, and in his own words, Persecuting that way unto the Death, and being exceedingly mad against them; and all this he did being Zealous towards God, and out of a perswasion that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, as we find
in his *Apology* to his country-men and King Agrippa, Act. 22. 2. & 26. 9.

And of the abettors of those novel doctrines which after times produced, we have reason to think many were of this sort, especially in those heresies which though they carried secret venom in them had yet a plausible appearance of sanctity and devotion; such was that of the Enoraticus, which seem'd to be founded in the veneration of two great virtues Continence and Temperance, though by extending them beyond the due limits, they lost that sobriety they too strictly embraced, and became inordinate in their continence, and excessive in their abstinence; such again were the Euchite or Massalians, who made the whole business not only of religion but even of life to consist in praying; and though by it they evacuated all other ends of both, yet having the letter of a precept, and the pretence of devotion on their side, 'twas a proper bait for those who had much zeal and little knowledge. In like manner the Novatians heresie had so glorious an inscription of purity as was very apt to attract well meaning souls; who seeing it bid such expressive defiance to apostacy, could not suspect that it was itself any defection from the faith; and accordingly some of that sect approved their constancy in times both of heathen and Arian persecutions. Nor must we be so uncharitable to the modern times, as not to believe many, have acted upon the like principles, and meant truth and piety, even while they actually promoted
promoted the contrary. But how sincere soever the purposes of such seduced Persons were, yet 'tis evident the Church has suffer'd no less by them, than by the more crafty designers: their misguided piety has made as great and incurable Ruptures, as the most flagitious blasphemies of others. And when a rent is once made, it matters little whether it were done by error or malice; nay perhaps as to the hopes of repairing, the former may be the more desperate: for whereas he that knowingly commits an Ill, has the Upbraidings of his own Conscience towards his reducing; these on the other side have its Cherishings and Encouragements, to confirm and animate them. And doubtless they are great advantages which Satan has in all ages made of Such Persons, whom he seems to have deluded in the same manner, that Medea is said to have done the daughters of Peleas, whom she persuaded to hack their aged Father in pieces, in hope that by her Magick, he should not only recover life but youth: so these rend and tear their Mother the Church out of a hope, no less delusive, of restoring her pristine beauty and vigor; how far the Event parallels it also, the dying state of Christianity does too sadly testify.

NOR has it only been the Heat of Erring persons that has been thus mischievous, but sometimes men of right judgments have too much contributed to the breach of Unity, and the intemperate and imprudent Zeal of these hath serv'd to exasperate the mistaken earnestness of the other:
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this happens sometimes for want of distinguishing between the Essentials and Circumstantials of Religion, and so looking upon a mistake in the later with the detestation proper only to the perverting of the former; by this means those who have entirely embraced the same faith, have yet violated charity and broken communion: such slight minute differences when managed by eager Spirits being easily blown up into solemn and lasting contentions; so that the Disputes rais'd about some pin or nail of the Temple, have sometimes shaken and endanger'd the whole Fabric, robbed the Church of that fraternal unity which was its fastest cement, and surest support. Of this we need no more apt instance from antiquity than that which has been already mentioned upon another occasion, I mean Victor's unbrother-like Heat towards the Eastern Churches in the controversy about Easter, which had fomented that Difference into a Schism, which the meeker Piety of his Predecessors thought no ground of unkindness, much less of Separation, as Irenæus more at large tells him; And probably had men in all the succeeding Ages deliberately poiz'd the Errors they oppos'd, and proportion'd their Displeasure but to the just weight of them, many of our disputes would have been so calm'd, that they should never have become quarrels. But many in this particular have only us'd the Touchstone, not the Scales: and of Opinions that are erroneous, consider not which are more or less pernicious, but with an equal violence fly at all, as
if the Stoical opinion concerning Sins had prevail'd in Errors also, and that all were resolv'd to be of the same size.

**BUT** even in those of the highest kind it may perhaps be doubted, whether too eager an opposition have not sometimes done hurt, especially in those Doctrines which relate to the mysterious parts of Religion, wherein a novelty is at first lookt upon with some horror, and many are willing rather to condemn in gross than nicely to examine: Who yet when they find this done for them by Orthodox persons, they think they may with such a guide venture to wade into the question, where many times the insinuations of Error are so subtle, that all their Antidotes secure them not from infection, but they are themselves captivated where they expected only to triumph. Neither want there those of the Vulgar that are of a more insolent temper; and out of a vanity of making themselves Umpires between learned men, greedily read the writings of both Parties, who yet are able to make no solid judgment of either; and when 'tis remembred how many popular artifices there are to byasfe such persons, we must confess that Truth hath many to one, Odds against her: Besides, publick arguing oft serves not only to exasperate the minds, but to whet the Wits of Hereticks, and by shewing them the weak parts of their Doctrines, prompts them to rally all their Sophistry to fortifie them, that what they want of truth and reason, may be supplied with fallacy and little colours; and Experience shews how fitly that
that kind of Logick is accommodated to the greatest part of the World. In short it seems not improbable, that many Heresies owe much of their growth to the improper means of eradicating them: and have acquir'd a reputation from the stir that was made about them. Thus Socrates tells us that Alexander's letters about the Arian Heresie serv'd to scatter that pestilent infection the more abroad, and combin'd men into parties, so that the whole world became the Scene of that long Tragedy, which possibly might have had a shorter and better issue, had not the notice of the Controversie been so early dispers'd.

BUT if the Attempts of the Pen have often proved so unfit, it may be consider'd whether those of the sword are not more so, and fighting be not a worse expedient than disputing: and certainly we have great reason to conclude in the affirmative, if we weigh either the Injustice, or Unreasonableness of it. I know there want not those who have thought the propagating Religion by Arms not only lawful but meritorious, and that in order to the planting it in a Nation, the soil may be mellowed with the blood of the Inhabitants; nay the old extirpated, and new Colonies planted. But we are to remember that as God is the universal Monarch of the World, so We have all the relation of fellow subjects to him, and can pretend no farther jurisdiction over each other, than what he has delegated to us: and sure 'twould be hard to produce any commission
mission from him for the invading a Nation only because 'tis not of our Faith. 'Tis sure, those to whom he first entrusted the promulgating of the Gospel had far different instructions, and 'twere fit our new Evangelists should shew their later authority for this sanguinary Method, in order to which though some have made use of the Opinion of some Schoolmen that dominion is founded in Grace, yet as that is but an Opinion, so were it admitted as the most certain Truth, it could never warrant any enterprize of this kind, for supposing that a people by wanting spiritual Blessings did lose all their right to temporal, yet that Forfeiture must devolve only to the Supreme Lord, and when as God in another case asks, where is the bill of divorce? Elsay 50. 1. so we may demand of these zealous Invaders, where is the bill of assignment, by which that right was transferr'd to them? In short, peace is the most valuable blessing of humane life, and we cannot without injustice deprive man of it, though we could as we pretend, give them truth in lieu of it; for maugre the Proverb, that Exchange will still be robbery, where the parties are compell'd to make it. But alas, 'tis a vain imagination to think that Religion can be thus impos'd: or that we can bind the understandings and wills of men, with the same fetters we do their bodies; 'tis true indeed the Apostle tells us there is a way of bringing every thought into Captivity to the obedience of Christ, but he tells us with all that the weapons, by which that Victory is atchieved, are not
not carnal, 2 Cor. 10. 4. Indeed did Religion confift only in some external conformities, external force might bear some proportion to it (which perhaps is the cause that the one is most us'd by those whose religion is most eminent for the other) but 'tis seated in those faculties to which outward violence can have no access. Alas, 'tis not whole Armies can besiege my reason, nor Canons batter my will, 'tis conviction not force, that must induce Assent; and sure the Logick of a conquering Sword has no great propriety that way; Silence indeed it may, but convince it cannot: Its efficacy rather lies on the other side, breeds aversion and abhorrence of that Religion, whose first address is in bloud and rapine: nor do such attempts gain anything to the Cause but the infamy of those rigors which are us'd to promote it. And sure since this piece of Mahumetan Zeal has been transplanted into Christendom, it has been much more mischievous than in its native soil. Christianity having been infinitely more oppressed by those that thus fought for it, than those that were in Arms against it. Whether upon this score the Pope have not done 'her more harm than the Turk, I leave to considera-

BUT what is here said of the military Sword, I intend not should be applied to the Civil; for I treat not here of those legal punishments, which Magistrates inflict upon their disobedient Subjects; who indeed may justly, nay indeed must necessarily require Conformity to Ecclesiastical laws,
as well as the Civil: the Eruptions in the one commonly overflowing the other also, and Schism usually ending in Rebellion; so that 'tis apparently their interest to guard themselves from those riotous effects of pretended zeal, nor is it less their duty, they being as the Ancients express it, Custodes utriusque tabulae in S. Paul's language, the ministers of God, Rom. 13. and in Constantines diale& ἐπισκόποις τε & τετράγωνοι, Bishops in the whole outward administration of the Church, and if Heresie or Schism be a sin, are by their places obliged to approve themselves avengers; to execute wrath no less there, than in other circumstances: And that they are sins and of no small bulk; none can doubt that observes Heresie ranked, Gal. 5. with Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, murders, and other sins of the flesh; or Schism, marked out by the Apostle to the Hebrews, as a kind of petrifying crime, which induces that induration, to which the fearful expectation of wrath is consequent, for so we find, Heb. 10. 26. that forsaking the assemblies is looked on as previous to Apostacy and final defection: And therefore sure the Magistrate can do nothing kinder even to the Offenders than by taking their sin early, prevent that fatal growth of it. But that his just power thus rescued I may assume my former assertion, and conclude, that all other Violences are so far from advancing Christianity, that they extremely weaken and disadvantage it.
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But of no sort is this more eminently true than of those popular heats, where the People undertakes to chastise error: for besides that the outrages then committed are very apt to avert men even from truths which they see so barbarously defended, it often happens that the multitude take causless alarms, and think their Faith is invaded when it is not. A memorable instance of this kind Euagrius gives in his Eccl. History, where he tells us that the Emperor Anastatius having added to the Trisagium this Clause, Who was crucified for our Salvation, the whole City of Constantinople was in an uproar, upon an ignorant jealousy that those words had some Heretical meaning; in which fury they happening to light upon a poor silly Monk, they immediately kill him as the Inventor of that clause, and a conspirer against the Trinity: So unhappily absurd are the Transports of wild zeal, which where it rules, does besides the direct mischiefs of Tumult and Sedition create others at the rebound, which are more permanent, and discompose and embitter mens spirits, and render them so ambitiously greedy of quarrels for their Religion, that they are not only prepar'd to receive but to seek Encounters: and 'tis too sure they can never be wanting to persons of such tempers, since the adversaries of Truth cannot have. more advantage or Encouragement against it, than this unpeaceful humor of those that profess it.

By these several waies has it come to pass, that even that zeal which should be the life of Christianity,
Christianny, is become its disease; and Religion like a Heætick body is consum’d by its own heats, if at least I may call those its own, which derive not from its proper and native constitution; but are the accidents of its declining state: for how confidently soever men pronounce of themselves, and believe that they are then most pious, when they are most eager and unquiet; yet ’tis sure this is far removed from the true genius and temper of religion, which like the God it worships, makes its approaches not in
winds and Earthquakes, but in the still small voice, 1 Kings 19. 12. and when ’tis consider’d, that the greatest part of the Evangelical Law is made up of precepts of Meekness, Long-suffering, and Condescension; we must conclude that zeal very preposterous, that pretends to obey by violating them; or to establish Religion by undermining the most essential parts of it: and to Persons under that mistake, we may most properly apply the reproof given by Christ to his Disciples upon the same occasion, you know not, what manner of Spirit you are of.

IT will therefore become men to look with Jealousie on themselves in this particular; not too confidently to pursue every Incitation which carries a shew of Piety; but soberly to weigh how it agrees with the Rules and Oeconomy of that Gospel for which it pretends so much concern; for though the true Christian Zeal can never be too much cherished; yet alas ’tis not every warmth we feel about Religion that can own
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own that Title; and sure we do not more often, or more fatally mistake any thing than in applying that venerable name to things of a far inferior, nay sometimes of a contrary nature. How often upon this Error, have men ascrib'd that to their piety which they owed to their complexions, and thought 'twas their religion made them Earnest, when 'twas meerly their constitution: Nay, how often has Satan taken this advantage of transforming himself into an Angel of light, and insinuating his illusions under this disguise. And truly they must still be liable to both these deceits, so long as they place the essence of Christian zeal in heat and eagerness. 'Tis true indeed it has its heats, but actuated in a far different way; it has flames of Love, not of Anger; to melt, not consume our Enemies; and makes us apter to pour out our own blood a Sacrifice to Truth than that of gain-sayers. In short, if it be a Fire, 'tis that pure Elemental which the Peripateticks talk of, which is but of a moderate heat; apt to cherish, not devour.

And would God men would so far believe this, as to think there may be moderation, without the danger of Laodicean luke-warmness, and upon that supposition suffer themselves to cool into a treatable Temper, and then I should humbly offer to them these few Considerations.

First the great and universal fallibility of humane Nature, which renders it not only possible that we may, but certain that every one of
us shall erre in something or other; and this sure is very proper to perswade lenity to those whom we find actually erring. 'Tis the Apostles argument in the case of Sin, Gal. 6. 1. Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted. Where the common Peccability of mankind is urged to induce Commiseration and Gentleness towards the Offenders; and if this be of force in sin, where the concurrence of the will renders the person more inexcusable, it will surely hold much more in bare Error, which being purely involuntary, (for nothing is properly Error farther than it is so) 'tis to be lookt on rather as the disease than crime of the Person: and since we use not to exclaim against men for being sick, but compassionately to endeavour their recovery, why should we here use so much a contrary method. 'Tis true indeed, 'tis necessary sometimes in order to the Cure, and sometimes for preventing the infection of others, to do some things uneasie to the Patient; and what tends regularly to either of these Ends, may in this case also be Charitably done, by those that have Authority: but that differs as far from our usual severities, as the lankings of a Physician do from the wounds of an Adversary; or publick Discipline from private Spleen. So that notwithstanding this, we may resume our conclusion and infer from the Errableness of our Nature, the reasonableness of compassion to the seduced. And as it thus prompts us to look gently up upon
upon others, so also to reflect impartially upon ourselves; and consider how possible it is, that even whilest we condemn others, we may indeed be in the wrong; and then all the Invevatives we make at their supposed Errors; fall back with a rebounded force upon our own real ones. If this possibility were but adverted to, it would make us less positive and Dogmatical in our opinions, and so consequently take away one main ground of contention; for though we often quarrel about matters, which are indeed but conjectural, yet not till we esteem them otherwise; and when we consider how many men have vehemently believed apparent falsehoods, it may well allay our confidences in all those cases, where we have not some mer ground than our own (or indeed any humane) judgment to build it on.

As for those who have the surest grounds of Perswasion, and by their security of being themselves in the Truth, have the more reason to be earnest in propagating it to others: let them in the second place consider how necessary 'tis to choose appropriate means to that good end, without which they do but undermine themselves, and defeat their own aims. Indeed Prudence is not only a Moral, but Christian Vertue; and such as is necessary to the constituting of all others: without it Devotion degenerates into Superstitition, Liberality into Profuseness, and this of Zeal becomes only a Pious kind of Phrensie. And of Persons so possess'd, God may say as Achish did of David, 1 Sam. 21. 15. have I need of mad men?
no sure, the defence of Truth is too noble a cause to be so managed; its Champions are not like men in a fray to make every thing a weapon that they can first snatch up, and lay on as chance or fury guides, but are deliberately to consult the properest expedients, use not only force but Stratagem against the Enemy, and yet withall to take care that while they oppose one, another gain not advantage: For alas, 'tis indifferent to our grand Adversary, by which of his temptations we fall, and if by subverting the faith of some, he shipwreck the charity of others, he has his End, and triumphs at once both over the speculative and practical part of our Religion.

AND this may induce a farther consideration, and prompt us to examine what degree of guilt lies on those who either out of a blind, or rash zeal have given him this advantage. And here though I cannot doubt, but God makes great allowances to the Miscarriages of sincere intentions, yet perhaps we have carv'd more liberally to our selves than he design'd us, and presume our Security greater than in truth it is. For how innocent soever a good purpose may make our Error, yet 'tis a priviledge beyond all possibility of grant, that our sins should be so also; therefore if our Misperfections beget wicked practice, we may be accountable for the one, though not for the other. We find indeed S. Paul allidges his ignorance, as the Cause of his finding mercy, for his persecuting the Church, but we are to remember what that mercy he there refers to is; not that of absolution, but conversion; and had
he resisted the later, though with never so full a persuasion of his doing well in it, I much doubt whether his good meaning would have secure'd him the former; so that all the Encouragement, that Example can afford it, that God may probably do more for the reducing an Erring than a malicious Persecutor: And when 'tis considered that all the odds that Christ makes between him that does ill knowingly and ignorantly, is in the number of Stripes: we must resolve our mistakes are no such Amulets as totally to secure us. And then whether our guilts shall not swell in proportion to the ills we do, is a question that sure can never be resolved in the negative: for if a good intention cannot alter the nature of Sin, sure it can as little change their degree, or make that of two Persons equally mistaken, the Murder of the one, shall not be a greater Crime than an intemperate speech of the other. And upon this measure the accounts of erring zeal are like to rise very high with many; unless we can think Rebellion and Bloodshed, Sacriledge and Schism, with all that train of zealous Enormities to be light and trivial.

NOR will it at all legitimate these, or any other, Crimes, though they should happen to be committed in the defence of Truth: Of this St. Peter is a ready instance, who when to guard Him, who was Truth its self, he had violated the Authority of the Magistrate in wounding an Officer: Christ reprehends his rashness, and instead of applauding
plauding his zeal, upbraids his absurdity, that could think his mean aids considerable to him, who could command Legions of Angels to his rescue. And sure he is not so much more impotent in his glory, than he was in his eximination, as now to need our Sins to secure any of his concerns; and if St. Peter were thus check'd for using that Sword which he was a little before warn'd to buy, it must sure set an ill Character upon those tumultuous reformation, which have so much employed the zeal of later ages, to which there can never want a concurrence of several great sins, the guilt whereof will scarce be wiped off, by their design'd subserviency to Truth; what Degree of extenuation it may afford is hard to pronounce, since we have no rule to measure it by. But whatsoever it is, we are to remember, that it can belong only to such a Zeal as is purely religious, that mixes not with our Passions or Interests; and therefore before men be too forward to appropriate any Indulgence of that kind, 'twill be necessary to Examine, whether no sinister Adherent have vitiated that integrity of their purpose to which alone it can (even by their own award and sentence) appertain.

I HAVE insisted the more on this, because many are apt to ascribe too unlImitedly to the Force of a good meaning, to think that is able to bear the stress of whatsoever Commissions they shall lay on it; and by thus presuming on their Antidote, venture boldly on the deadliest poisons. To such the foregoing considerations may be usefu
ful; and by robbing them of that imaginary Security, help them to a real one, by making their good purposes the Director of good actions, not the Apology for bad. This would make Religion look consonant to its self, which now groans under the reproach of all those Ills, that are acted under his Patronage; and sure to rescue her from such a scandal, is but a very moderate piece of compassion: Yet would God she might obtain it even from those who profess themselves her greatest Votaries: But alas, 'tis one sad circumstance of her ruine, that she owes it to such; that those Weapons which should defend her, thus recoil into her Bowels, and zeal should do her more mischief than prophaneness; for while she is but scoffed at by that, she is wounded by this: nor are those wounds ever like to close, till our Zeal grow more balsamick, partake of those healing qualities of Love and Meekness, the Want whereof has rendred it so unhappily instrumental to our Distractions.
CHAP. XVIII.

A survey of the Causes of Disputes; Sixthly, Idleness.

But as this over-active humour has done abundant mischief to the Church, so is it observable, that the direct contrary has done as much, nay, which is yet stranger, the one is frequently the product of the other, and our too busie zeal, springs from our too great Idleness. How much soever this may sound like Paradox, yet both reason and experience attest the Truth of it; for we are to consider that God has put an active principle into man, which 'tis impossible so to suppress, as that there shall be a total cessation from motion: And therefore every intermitting of sober, regular actings, makes way for wild Extravagant ones; for as nature is said so vehemently to abhor vacuity, that the very inanimate bodies would forsake their specific motions to prevent it. So when the mind is Empty, when it has no worthy and profitable speculation to Entertain it, every the most improper and preternatural Object offers its self, and importunately crowds in to fill the vacuum. This seems to have been well understood, though ill applied by Pharaoh, when he thought the Israelites proposal of Travelling into the Wilderness to their Devotions, was the Effect of their too great leisure.
Of the Causes of Disputes; Chap 18.

sure at home; and therefore encreases their tasks as the properest way of diverting their design: And in like manner we find those that treat of Politicks, insist upon the necessity of keeping the People busy, in order to which it is, that they mention the use of Mathematicks and other contemplative Sciences, to entertain the active spirits of a Nation, in demonstrating of Problemes, solving Phenomenas, and drawing Schemes and Diagrams, who else would be practising upon the Government, making new Ideas and Platforms for the Common-wealth: And doubtless there is parity of reason in the Ecclesiastick State, which would have been at more peace, had some men found themselves other diversions.

And this is confirm’d to us by experiment and observation of Event, for if we look into the Primitive times, we shall find that when there was a necessity of defending the common faith against Heathenism, when Christians were employed in writing apologies and vindications, there were much fewer of these intestine debates (at least such as were Metaphysical and purely National) they had their hands full of the foreign Enemy, and had the less temptation to jangle among themselves. So also when they were under the greatest storms of persecution, when the Church was most violently assaulted from without, it had the greatest Calm within. They were then incessantly employed, and busied their Thoughts in preparing for the fiery trial. Those cloudy days made them keep close at home waiting for the Bride-
Bridegrooms coming, and suffer’d them not to wander abroad for those unprofitable Curiosities, which though like Oil they might nourish flame, yet would never furnish their Lamps, or gain them admission to the wedding but in the intervals, and especially after the total cession of their calamity, when their Peace had taken them off their Vigilance, than while they slept, the Envious man had advantage to sow his Tares. Rest made them idle, Idleness made them curious, and Curiosity contentious; and those who under the Tyranny of a Nero or Domitian were in perfect harmony under the gentle pious regiment of a Constantine, grew to the greatest discord, and perhaps (besides the Divine and extraordinary supports the Church had in her greatest conflicts) this may be one of the best natural accounts, how she came to flourish most under her heaviest pres-
sures.

BUT our observation ends not here, for besides this extraordinary importunity of thoughts, which persecuting times occasion’d, Christianity is in its frame and constitution an active State, has its standing business, and besides all accidental, a Series of determinate, constant employments, sufficient to entertain mens minds: from which we may infer, that when this is throughly advertised to, there will be few chasms of Time to be filled with foreign impertinences. And this gives a clear account how our divisions have come to grow upon us, namely, by the Neglect of practice duties, for as every age degenerated more from
from *Primitive piety*, so they advanced farther in nice enquiries and new opinions; and as the zeal of practice grew cool, so that of dispute gathered heat and vigour. So that if we consider how far our good works fall short of the first Christians, we need not wonder to see our controversies so far exceed them; that Time which was gain'd from the one, being employed in hammering and forging the other. I do not forget that I have before ranked this diversion of Christian Practice among the effects of our Contentions, and foresee it may be thought very inartificial here, to make it the cause also: But alas, its concern in them is so extravagantly great, as to have at once the relation of Child and Parent, to be both Root and Branch, Fountain and Stream, and like a circle unites in its self Beginning and End: For as it first gave birth to our quarrels, so it finally receives increase from them. In short, our oisitant lazy piety gave vacancy for them, and they will now lend none back again, for more active duty. And as this neglect of our general calling of Christianity has been thus pernicious, so have the ill effects thereof been improved by the like ill attendance on our particular ones. We find St. Paul takes notice, that the younger widows, who deserted their own Ecclesiastical Office, grew busie-bodies in the Secular affairs of others; and sure we may with truth invert the note, and observe that those, who either desert or neglect their Secular Callings, are the most perniciously medling in Ecclesiastick matters. Did men conscientiously em-


ploy themselves in their honest occupations, their Minds would be sufficiently diverted, and it would not become the work of Artificers to make new Schemes of Doctrines or discipline; Divinity would not then pass the Yard and Loom, the Forge and Anvil, nor Preaching be taken in as an easier supplementary Trade, by those that disliked the pains of their own. But all this alas we have seen to the equal shame and detriment of Piety. Mechanicks of all sorts have presum'd to teach what themselves never learnt; and those that serv'd long Apprentiships to other Crafts, have become Divines in a moment, and with the same amulous industry wherewith they us'd to invent new fashions, have made new Religions. And as Idleness has thus made some Preachers, so it has made more hearers, those who either by the easiness of their Callings, or their flight managery of them, have had the most vacant time, have been the aptest to run after new teachers: Hence it is that Towns and Cities have been the great nurseries of faction, the leisure of Shop-men making them more inquisitive after, and receptive of Novelties. And were that over-grown zeal of Sermons, which has now devour'd all other parts of Religion, among that sort of men throughly scanned, we should find Idleness goes very far in its composition, for besides that Hearing is the most lazy of all religious Offices, as appears by the undisturb'd sleeps men can take at Sermons; it is manifest this infatiate appetite of it, is originally founded either in the not having business, or
or not attending to it. For should I ask such men, whether if necessity had enforce'd St. Paul's rule upon them, that without their labour they should not eat, they would have spent their whole week at Lectures, and trusted to be fed by the Ear. I believe few could pretend to have begun with so exorbitant a zeal, though the truth is in the issue it sometimes arrives to it; and men that have itching Ears forget the rest of the body, whilest to gratifie them, they totally neglect all care of their Secular concerns, and bring Themselves and Families to want and beggary.

Nor is it only this one rank of Persons whom Idleness has betrayed to faction, Servants we have frequently seen under the same Seduction, while either having but little work, or but little diligence in it, they have found time to listen after novel doctrines, with which being once tainted, they impatiently thirst after more, and neglecting the duties of their place, spend their time, which by compact is their Masters (and can with no more justice be purloin'd from him than his goods) in following factionous Teachers, who instruct them so in their Christian liberty, that they bring them to defie all subjection: And by telling them they are to call no man Master upon Earth, that they are to own no King nor Priest but Christ; teach them to contemn all Authority, Domestick, Civil or Ecclesiastic.

If we look farther into families, we shall find also that many of our She-zealots become so upon the very same ground, when Women neglect that
that which St. Paul assigns them as their proper Business, the guiding of the house, their Zeal is at once the product and excuse of their Idleness; and in spite of the ill Character the Wise-man has set on her, whose feet abide not in her house, Prov. 7. xi. it becomes the mark of a Saint, when a Lecture or Conventicle is taken in the way: And though these feminine Irregularities may seem to be of no great concern to the publick, yet experience convinces the contrary; it having been the unhappy priviledge of that Sex (as ancient as their Mother Eve) to be able to do great and important mischiefs; and doubtless many men may give the same account of their Schism and Sedition, that Adam did of his first sin, The woman that thou gavest me, &c. This has always been well understood by Seducers, who have found it the most compendious way to their designs, to lead captive silly women, and make them the Duck-coys to their whole Family: But even those who have mist of this influence over the minds of their Husbands, have yet had it over their Purses, and out of them supported the Rabbies of the Faction; who in gratitude to those wise Abigails give their Husbands the title, and perhaps wish them the fate of Nabal. And God knows, how many men have thus been made contributers to the cause they have most detested, maintain'd that fire which those incendiaries have kindled in the Holy place; Money being no less the sinews of Ecclesiastical than Secular War.

THUS we see how the Idleness even of the most
most inconsiderable persons has at the rebound been extremely pernicious to the Church, which like a Clock or Watch may be disorder’d by the rust of the least Pin; how much more then, by that of the main wheels and springs; if Negligence in lay-callings have though but an oblique, yet so inauspicious an Influence, the like Neglect in Ecclesiastic must needs have a worse, because more immediate and direct. And would to God we could say this had been wanting to the compleating the mischief: But alas, many of those who are called to labour in the Lords Vineyard, seem to have forgot their Errand, and stand there all the day Idle (a much worse fight than to have seen them so only in the Market-place;) so that I fear there is too evident ground of saying, that the slight execution of the Pastoral Office, has been one of the most eminent Contributors to our distractions. And among all the parts of that Charge, none has been more generally, or more perniciously neglected than that of Catechizing: the want whereof has left People so unbottom’d, that like a house built on the sand, every Wind of Doctrine blows down that Faith which they only profess, but understood not. This is that which has made so many unstable Souls, as St. Peter observes, 2 Pet. 2. 14. to be the proper prey of Deceivers. And God knows, we may from sad experiment confirm the note. I wish the same negligence do not again evidence itself by the same effects: But besides this, which is part of the Publick Ministry, (and deservedly is so, being useful
useful to the whole Church, the aged as well as children) there are private Intercourses between Pastor and People which are of great use, would God they were of equal practice: We know a careful Shepherd does not only turn his flock into a common Pasture, and then think he has done his work, but does with a particular advertent observe the thriving of every one of them, takes notice of their single strayings and diseases, and accordingly applies himself to reduce or cure them, and surely the like care is full as necessary in the spiritual Shepherd, 'tis not the counsel which is promiscuously dispenced in a Sermon (and whereof 'tis odds every man takes that which is least proper for him) that will do the business: Converts come not in now as in St. Peter's days, in throngs and shoals, a more distinct and particular application is now necessary; men must be treated with apart, their particular wants discern'd, and applications accordingly made of instructions, reproof or comfort, and 'tis these appropriate Medicines, that are like to make sound flocks. Had Ministers generally bestowed more pains this way, they might probably have frustrated the attempts of Seducers, who could not so easily have insinuated themselves into the people, had they found them thus prepossessed: but while these with all the arts of a subtile industry infuse their poisons into every one they meet, nothing but the like diligence in administering Antidotes, is like to countermine them. How much of that has been us'd I shall leave to the Consciences of concern'd
Of the Causes of Disputes; Chap. 18.

cornard'd persons to determine. But besides the ill influence the Pastors negligence has on the People, it has in respect of themselves an immediate propriety to the advancing our debates, the leisure which is thus acquir'd, being apt to betray speculative persons, to the study of those curious questions, which are the great disturbers of our Peace; and of those that study them so few keep themselves in neutrality, that parties are still fo mented by it: whereas were the practical business of their Charge thoroughly attended, the remainder of time would not be more than the study of the more solid, useful parts of Divinity would exact, and consequently there would no surplus be left for those dangerous impertinencies, which as the Apostle says, serve to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers, 2 Tim. 2. 14. But when our Watchmen sleep, 'tis no marvail if they dream too, and entertain themselves and others with those Phantastic notions, which the great day will manifest to have had nothing of weight and reality, besides the Mischiefs they wrought.

And indeed if we scan the volumes of those vain Speculations, we shall have cause to conclude that Idleness has created as well as fomented them; and they had as well wanted Authors as abettors, had men found themselves more useful business: and that not only the extemporary Chimæra's of Phanaticks, but the more elaborate niceties of the Schools, have been thus derived: we know Air possesss no place, where it first finds not a vacuity, nor could those lighter notions,
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sure at home; and therefore encreases their tasks as the propereft way of diverting their design: And in like manner we find those that treat of Politicks, insist upon the necessity of keeping the People busie, in order to which it is, that they mention the use of Mathematicks and other contemplative Sciences, to entertain the active spirits of a Nation, in demonstrating of Problemes, solving Phanomenas, and drawing Schemes and Diagrams, who else would be practising upon the Government, making new Ideas and Platforms for the Common-wealth: And doubtles there is parity of reason in the Ecclesiastick State, which would have been at more peace, had some men found themselves other diversions.

AND this is confirm'd to us by experiment and observation of Event, for if we look into the Primitive times, we shall find that when there was a necessity of defending the common faith against Heathenism, when Christians were employed in writing apologies and vindications, there were much fewer of these intestine debates (at least such as were Metaphysical and purely National) they had their hands full of the foreign Enemy, and had the less temptation to jangle among themselves. So also when they were under the greatest storms of persecution, when the Church was most violently assaulted from without, it had the greatest Calm within. They were then incessantly employed, and busied their Thoughts in preparing for the fiery trial. Those cloudy days made them keep close at home waiting for the Bride-
Bridegrooms coming, and suffer'd them not to wander abroad for those unprofitable Curiosities, which though like Oil they might nourish flame, yet would never furnish their Lamps, or gain them admission to the wedding but in the intervals, and especially after the total cessation of their calamity, when their Peace had taken them off their Vigilance, than while they slept, the Envious man had advantage to sow his Tares. Rest made them idle, Idleness made them curious, and Curiosity contentious; and those who under the Tyranny of a Nero or Domitian were in perfect harmony under the gentle pious regiment of a Constantine, grew to the greatest discord, and perhaps (besides the Divine and extraordinary supports the Church had in her greatest conflicts) this may be one of the best natural accounts, how she came to flourish most under her heaviest pressures.

But our observation ends not here, for besides this extraordinary importunity of thoughts, which persecuting times occasion'd, Christianity is in its frame and constitution an active State, has its standing business, and besides all accidental, a Series of determinate, constant employments, sufficient to entertain mens minds: from which we may infer, that when this is thoroughly adverted to, there will be few chasms of Time to be filled with foreign impertinences. And this gives a clear account how our divisions have come to grow upon us, namely, by the Neglect of practical duties, for as every age degenerated more from
Of the Causes of Disputes; Chap. 18.

from primitive piety, so they advanced farther in
true enquiries and new opinions; and as the zeal of
practice grew cool, so that of dispute gathered
heat and vigour. So that if we consider how far
our good works fall short of the first Christians,
we need not wonder to see our controversies so far
exceed them; that Time which was gain'd from
the one, being employed in hammering and forg-
ing the other. I do not forget that I have before
ranked this diversion of Christian Practice among
the effects of our Contentions, and foresee it may
be thought very inartificial here, to make it the
cause also: But alas, its concern in them is so ex-
travagantly great, as to have at once the relation
of Child and Parent, to be both Root and Branch,
Fountain and Stream, and like a circle unites in
its self Beginning and End: For as it first gave
birth to our quarrels, so it finally receives en-
crease from them. In short, our oscilant lazy
piety gave vacancy for them, and they will now
lend none back again, for more active duty. And
as this neglect of our general calling of Christia-
ty has been thus pernicious, so have the ill effects
thereof been improved by the like ill attendance
on our particular ones. We find St. Paul takes
notice, that the younger widows, who deserted
their own Ecclesiastical Office, grew busy-bodies
in the Secular affairs of others; and sure we may
with truth invert the note, and observe that those,
who either desert or neglect their Secular Cal-
lings, are the most perniciously medling in Eccle-
siastick matters. Did men conscientiously em-
ploy
ploys themselves in their honest occupations, their Minds would be sufficiently diverted, and it would not become the work of Artificers to make new Schemes of Doctrines or discipline; Divinity would not then pass the Yard and Loom, the Forge and Anvil, nor Preaching be taken in as an easier supplementary Trade, by those that disliked the pains of their own. But all this alas we have seen to the equal shame and detriment of Piety. Mechanicks of all sorts have presum'd to teach what themselves never learnt; and those that serv'd long Apprenticeships to other Crafts, have become Divines in a moment, and with the same amulous industry wherewith they us'd to invent new fashions, have made new Religions. And as Idleness has thus made some Preachers, so it has made more hearers, those who either by the easiness of their Callings, or their flight managery of them, have had the most vacant time, have been the aptest to run after new teachers: Hence it is that Towns and Cities have been the great nurseries of faction, the leisure of Shop-men making them more inquisitve after, and receptive of Novelties. And were that over-grown zeal of Sermons, which has now devour'd all other parts of Religion, among that sort of men throughly scanned, we should find Idleness goes very far in its composition, for besides that Hearing is the most lazy of all religious Offices, as appears by the undisturb'd sleeps men can take at Sermons; it is manifest this infatiate appetite of it, is originally founded either in the not having business,
or not attending to it. For should I ask such men, whether if necessity had enforc'd St. Paul's rule upon them, that without their labour they should not eat, they would have spent their whole week at Lectures, and trusted to be fed by the Ear. I believe few could pretend to have begun with so exorbitant a zeal, though the truth is in the issue it sometimes arrives to it; and men that have itching Ears forget the rest of the body, whilest to gratifie them, they totally neglect all care of their Secular concerns, and bring Themselves and Families to want and beggary.

Nor is it only this one rank of Persons whom Idleness has betrayed to faction, Servants we have frequently seen under the same Seduction, while either having but little work, or but little diligence in it, they have found time to listen after novel doctrines, with which being once tainted, they impatiently thirst after more, and neglecting the duties of their place, spend their time, which by compact is their Masters (and can with no more justice be purloin'd from him than his goods) in following factious Teachers, who instruct them so in their Christian liberty, that they bring them to defie all subjection: And by telling them they are to call no man Master upon Earth, that they are to own no King nor Priest but Christ; teach them to contemn all Authority, Domestick, Civil or Ecclesiastic.

If we look farther into families, we shall find also that many of our She-zealots become so upon the very same ground, when Women neglect that
that which St. Paul assigns them as their proper Business, the guiding of the house, their Zeal is at once the product and excuse of their Idleness; and in spight of the ill Character the Wise-man has set on her, whose feet abide not in her house, Prov. 7. 11. it becomes the mark of a Saint, when a Lecture or Conventicle is taken in the way: And though these feminine Irregularities may seem to be of no great concern to the publick, yet experience convinces the contrary; it having been the unhappy privilege of that Sex (as ancient as their Mother Eve) to be able to do great and important mischiefs; and doubtless many men may give the same account of their Schism and Sedition, that Adam did of his first sin, The woman that thou gavest me, &c. This has always been well understood by Seducers, who have found it the most compendious way to their designs, to lead captive silly women, and make them the Duck-coys to their whole Family: But even those who have miss’d of this influence over the minds of their Husbands, have yet had it over their Purses, and out of them supported the Rabbies of the Faction; who in gratitude to those wise Abigails give their Husbands the title, and perhaps wish them the fate of Nabal. And God knows, how many men have thus been made contributers to the cause they have most detested, maintain’d that fire which those incendiaries have kindled in the Holy place; Money being no less the sinews of Ecclesiastical than Secular War.

Thus we see how the Idleness even of the most
most inconsiderable persons has at the rebound been extremely pernicious to the Church, which like a Clock or Watch may be disorder'd by the rust of the least Pin; how much more then, by that of the main wheels and springs; if Negligence in lay-callings have though but an oblique, yet so inauspicious an Influence, the like Neglect in Ecclesiastick must needs have a worse, because more immediate and direct. And would to God we could say this had been wanting to the compleating the mischief: But alas, many of those who are called to labour in the Lords Vineyard, seem to have forgot their Errand, and stand there all the day Idle (a much worse sight than to have seen them so only in the Market-place;) so that I fear there is too evident ground of saying, that the slight execution of the Pastoral Office, has been one of the most eminent Contributors to our distractions. And among all the parts of that Charge, none has been more generally, or more perniciously neglected than that of Catechizing; the want whereof has left People so unbottom'd, that like a house built on the sand, every Wind of Doctrine blows down that Faith which they only profess, but understood not. This is that which has made so many unstable Souls, as St. Peter observes, 2 Pet. 2. 14. to be the proper prey of Deceivers. And God knows, we may from sad experiment confirm the note. I wish the same negligence do not again evidence its self by the same effects: But besides this, which is part of the Publick Ministry, (and deservedly is so, being useful
useful to the whole Church, the aged as well as children) there are private Intercourses between Pastor and People which are of great use, would God they were of equal practice: We know a careful Shepherd does not only turn his flock into a common Pasture, and then think he has done his work, but does with a particular advertence observe the thriving of every one of them, takes notice of their single strayings and diseases, and accordingly applies himself to reduce or cure them, and surely the like care is full as necessary in the spiritual Shepherd, 'tis not the counsel which is promiscuously dispenced in a Sermon (and where of 'tis odds every man takes that which is least proper for him) that will do the business: Converts come not in now as in St. Peters days, in throngs and shoals, a more distinct and particular application is now necessary; men must be treated with apart, their particular wants discern'd, and applications accordingly made of instructions, reproof or comfort, and 'tis these appropriate Medicines, that are like to make found flocks. Had Ministers generally bestowed more pains this way, they might probably have frustrated the attempts of Seducers, who could not so easily have insinuated themselves into the people, had they found them thus prepossess'd: but while these with all the arts of a subtile industry infuse their poisons into every one they meet, nothing but the like diligence in administering Antidotes, is like to countermine them. How much of that has been us'd I shall leave to the Consciences of concern'd
concern'd persons to determine. But besides the ill influence the Pastors negligence has on the People, it has in respect of themselves an immediate propriety to the advancing our debates, the leisure which is thus acquir'd, being apt to betray speculative persons, to the study of those curious questions, which are the great disturbers of our Peace; and of those that study them so few keep themselves in neutrality, that parties are still fomented by it: whereas were the practical business of their Charge thoroughly attended, the remainder of time would not be more than the study of the more solid, useful parts of Divinity would exact, and consequently there would no surplus be left for those dangerous impertinencies, which as the Apostle says, serve to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers, 2 Tim. 2. 14. But when our Watchmen sleep, 'tis no marvail if they dream too, and entertain themselves and others with those Phantastick notions, which the great day will manifest to have had nothing of weight and reality, besides the Mischiefs they wrought.

And indeed if we scan the volumes of those vain Speculations, we shall have cause to conclude that Idleness has created as well as fomented them; and they had, as well wanted Authors as abettors, had men found themselves more useful business: and that not only the extemporaneous of the Schools, but the more elaborate niceties of the Schools, have been thus derived: we know Air possess'd no place, where it first finds not a vacuity, nor could those lighter notions,
tions, have filled men's brains, had they found them prepossessed with what was more solid: but when men wanted more substantial work for their Understandings, they were fain to employ them thus in making Cob-webs, of which they have made a worse sort of Jewish veil in the Sanctuary, and have now involved the Gospel in greater Obscurities, than the Law, was before: whence our Bezaleels and Aboliabs have been inspir'd for this work I shall not determine; but sure not from him whose Character S. John gives us (in peculiar reference to gospel revelation) that he is light, and in him is no darkness at all, 1 Jo. 1.5.

THUS we see even Idleness wants not its operation; but is productive of great and mischievous effects; it being the unhappy property of that Vice, that it supplants its Self, and by a fatal Antiperistasis makes men perniciously active: so that we may truly say sloth has made more Business than industry. I am sure in this instance it has cut out work for many ages, though of such a kind, that we have little reason to wish that our Lord at his coming should find us so doing: yet for ought now appears, our activity is so wholly bent that way, that 'tis like to be the only, at least the most intense business we shall be found at.

I MIGHT here take a very apt occasion to declame against Idleness, as the unhappy fountain of so great mischiefs, but that is a vice that has been so often arraign'd, that I need not repeat
peat those charges which all Authors, Natural, Moral and Divine have laid against it. Let but this of its being the Original of faction be added, and there can be nothing wanting to render it a most dangerous crime: yea, and a most monstrous one too, that operates thus preternaturally, that freezes and yet inflames men at once, stupifies and enrages: And yet alas, there is as much riddle in its fate as its nature; 'tis hated, and yet embraced; generally decried, and yet as generally cherished: and though it have no advocates, has many friends. Would God men would at last be ashamed to be what they are ashamed to own, and by a diligent attendance on their proper business, secure themselves first from doing nothing, and then from doing ill; the one being so close an Attendant on the other, that 'tis scarce possible to sever them. And God knows the Church finds too sad proof of their connection. Idleness having serv'd as Athes to keep alive that fire which has set her in combustion. Thus unhappily passive is she in our disorders, and accessory to all our Guilt and Punishments: All our peccant humors concur to her disease, and like a common mark she receives arrows from all Quarters, we have seen how many Contributors there are to her ruine, every one whereof with a wanton cruelty (like Caesar's murderers) are ambitious to inflict new wounds, and to give her Supernumerary deaths; and whilst she is thus surrounded with Assassines, what can we expect but that her present languishings
Sixthly, Idleness.

guishings should End in death. That Christian Religion now crumbled into so many minute fractions, should like dust be scatter’d, and irrecoverably dissipate’d, and thus infallibly it must be, if either God do not miraculously countermine us, and do more for us than we can do against our selves, or we recover so much sobriety, as to forbear to Massacre what we pretend to Love, and endeavour to bind up those wounds at which our own Souls are like to Expire.

CHAP. XIX.

The Conclusion drawn from all the Premises.

We have hitherto examin’d the effects and originals of our contentions, and now the only remaining Enquiry is concerning the ways of redress. And that will exact no long disquisition: for as in diseases ’tis said, the knowing the cause is one half of the cure; so more especially is it here, where the remedies are meerly privative, and we are not to be healed by external applications, but only by substracting those Humors which feed the Malady: There will therefore need no other prescription than to advise...
the exterminating of all those Passions and Interests which have appear'd accessory to our quarrels, which though they are become the publick Epidemick disease, yet as the infection did, so must the cure arise from single persons: for as we look not a common Pestilence should cease without due care and manage both of the sick and sound: so neither can this Church plague ever abate, but by the cure, or fortifying its individual members.

Let every man therefore who has any way made himself a Party to these contests, seriously interrogate his own heart; what it is that has engag'd Him in them: if any of the sinister motives before rehearst, let him for a while shift the Scene, and instead of accusing others as Opposites to Truth, condemn himself as Enemy to Peace: remembering that how just or important soever the cause be, it is no so to him; whilst he serves his humors and designs under its covert. The Philosophers in their darker notions of Truth could yet discern, that she was not accessible to any who sought her not purely for her self, with sincere and single Intentions, and if she entertain no Pupils that are not so qualified, is it fit she should have Guardians and Champions of a quite distant Temper? No, he that undertakes the defence of Speculative Verity, must first possess himself of that practick Truth the Psalmist speaks of, Ps. 51. That in the inward parts, such a simplicity and integrity of Purpose, as may supplant all those indirect Aims, purge out every prejudice and passion,
tion, which may byass, and pervert him; and by that time he has done this, 'tis odds but he will find a new face of affairs, and discern that many of those things he so fiercely contended about, were either false or trivial; acquir'd their considerable-ness only from those magnifying perspectives of his own lusts, through which he viewed them. However till he have thus denudated himself of all these encumbrances, he is utterly unqualified for these agonies; and how lawfully soever others may strive, 'tis sure he cannot, that does it upon so unlawful grounds, and therefore upon pain of losing much more than a corruptible crown must withdraw himself. As for those who can yet acquit themselves from having fomented our distractions, I shall not forbid them to look with great complacency upon it, but rather by considering how valuable a piece of Innocency it is, engage and encourage themselves to preserve it; and to that purpose, jealously to examine the first overtures of a Temptation. When they find any proneness to immerce in faction, any unwonted heat towards a Dissenter, to trace it to its fountain and original; nicely to observe whether it issue not from some of those envenom'd springs forementioned, and make as much haste to stop its current, as they would to impede the most overwhelming inundation; for such 'twill infallibly prove to those who indulge to its course. But as a Turf will at first close the breach, which neglected becomes the inlet of a mighty Torrent: so had this early vigilance been us'd, it might
with ease have prevented those Distempers, in private Beasts, from whence the general Confusion has sprung. As it is, might but these two things be obtain’d, would but the Guilty purge, and the Innocent guard themselves, we might yet hope to see an end of our Discords: not that I suppose it possible to extinguish all diversity of Opinions among men, who from their differing faculties, and other guiltless occurrences, may and will have their judgments severally dispos’d. But first, were all, who have upon the former culpable motives enter’d the lists, excluded, we should find They would amount to such a Number, that there would be few left to maintain the Combat. Nay, secondly, were it not for those conceal’d inducements, there would scarce be any Combat to maintain, those are the things that convey the sting and malignity into our Differences, without those we might dissent, but not fall out; and should no more be angry to see another opinie contrary to us, than we are to see him of a differing feature, or complexion. In fine, let us pretend what we will, ’tis the Carnality within, that raises all the Combustions without: This is the great wheel to which the Clock owes its motion, while the pretext of Truth and Piety is but like the hand, set indeed more conspicuously, but directed wholly by the secret movings of the other. This, this alone is it which creates and continues our broils, and by a monstrous conjunction of Properties, is its self both flame and fuel: Nor can we doubt that from hence spring those railing accusations,
we bring one against another, if we remember what St. Jude tells us that the Angel brought them not even against the Devil himself, he could calmly manage a dispute with the most execrable and provoking adversary, because his Angelick nature had none of that carnal leaven which ferments to the souring of ours, an evident Indication what it is that has rendred our arguings so invective, that divinity seems now an Artifice to elude law by daily patronizing those Libels, which would else be Obnoxious to civil Justice.

But I presume there need no more be said to evince this, which has, I fear, the attestation of too many consciences, to be generally doubted; the greater difficulty will be, to perswade the depositing of those lusts, which though they are confessly the Bouteffieus among us, have yet by I know not what Fascination so endear'd Themselves, that we tenaciously retain them in spight of all their appendent Mischiefs; nay, we cherish and foster them, and for that very purpose bring them under the covert of Religion. He that has but a puny vice, if he get it like Joash conceal'd and shelter'd in the Sanctuary, 'twill not only live, but reign too. Put on a Port and Majesty, and appear venerable upon the pretence of that Piety, whose Essence and Being it evacuates and undermines.

Indeed sin never arrives at so luxuriant a growth, as when it roots in hallowed ground, which Satan so well knows, that he has ever been industrious to plant it in that soil. Thus we find he
had introduced the most brutish crimes into the religion of the Gentiles, interwoven them into their Sacred Rites and Mysteries, till vertue and vice had changed names, and it became piety to be Wicked, and profaneness to be Innocent. And when that gross deceit became detected by Gospel light, when he could not in the same manner obtude upon Christians, he yet found the way to do it more obliquely, and by starting these religious quarrels, gave at once employment and reputation to the most irreligious vices. For alas, what part of wild fury was there in the Heathen Bacchanals, which we have not seen Equall'd if not Exceeded by some intoxicated zealots? Or what cruelty in their most barbarous rites, which has not been matcht by the inhumanity of dissenting Christians? So that upon a just scanning, all our splendid pretence of Sanctity is but an emulation of Gentile Impurity under a better name; and while we damn Heathens for their Moral vertues, We are yet so stupid as to hope our selves to be saved by their worst vices.

AND now who that does enough consider can think he can enough bewail this sad state of affairs: That Christianity should thus out-run its self, and bring us round to Gentilism again, whilst her Professors ridiculously contend for the title of the best Christians, by such acts as denominate them none at all. Thus have we inverted the significance of that Sacred Name, and made it serve only to upbraid the contrariety of our practice; so that that which was once the Index to
point out all Moral and Divine virtues, does now on the contrary mark out that part of the World, where least of them reside. This, this alone is the prize we have acquir'd with so much sweat and blood, this the Triumph we have brought to our Religion, which indeed could never have sunk to such a despicableness by any Endeavours but our own; for so long as Christianity waged war only with foreign enemies she never must to be victorious, but since that these intestine discordst have turn'd her force against her self; Bella geri placuit mullos habitura triumphos, there is no possibility of success, the meer fight implies a defeat, and the swords of all Parties meet in her bowels. 'Twas a passionate expostulation that Julia is said to have us'd with her two sons Antonine and Geta, whose animosities having prompted them to divide the Empire, which they were joyntly to have enjoyed, she askt them whether they would divide their Mother also; implying how much their discordst had rackt and torn her. And sure our common Mother may make a yet fadder complaint of her Sons, by whose unkind dissentions she is so miserably mangled, that she may cry out with the Psalmist, My soul is among Lions, and I lye among the Children of men that are set on fire.

AND now if amidst all our importunate pretences to Piety, there be indeed any such thing among us, methinks it should give us some relentings, make us sadly consider to what a deplorable condition we have brought that very religion on which we profess to hang all our hopes; and would
would God those who are the most nearly concerned in this Contemplation would pursue it to the utmost; let them on the one hand set the most glittering temptations to Discord, and on the other let them view the dismal effects of it, and then consider at how dear a rate they gratifie a few impotent Passions. Can any man without Horror think that his thirst of Glory has brought dishonour to his Religion, and consequently to his God; that his curious enquiries into things secret, has help't to Evacuate the more useful things Revealed; or in short, that his pursuit of his various interests and appetites has destroyed what was so incomparably more valuable, the honour of the Gospel, the unity of the Church, and as many souls as have perisht by that scandal. 'Twas as infamous a Character of inhumanity as the very Poets could feign of Diomedes, that he fed his horses with mans flesh; but alas, that barbarity is here infinitely out-done, when Men nourish far worse bruits, their own unreasonable lusts, with those things that are most sacred. Certainly were the vastness of this guilt thoroughly weighed, 'twould make men sick of those petty wretched acquests they have thus purchased, make them fling back this price of blood, I say not with the same despair, but with as great remorse and detestation as Judas did the silver pieces for which he sold his Master. 'Tis sure the crimes have too great an affinity, as in all other circumstances, so especially in this, that as the one was, so the other is most frequently the Guilt of an Apostle, I mean of those to whom
whom Christ has committed the dispensing of that Gospel which they thus evacuate, and doubtless this is a consideration of great enhancement, as that which superadds treachery to all the other pestilent ingredients of the Crime; 'tis the falsifying the most important trust, for under words of that signification we find the office of the Ministry every where represented in Scripture, as Stewards, Ambassadors, Shepherds, and consequently the accounts of the sin must swell so much the higher. For a Steward to embezzle those Goods he undertakes to manage; an Ambassador to betray his Prince for whom he should negotiate; a Shepherd to worry that Flock which he is set to guard, these are crimes that double their malignity from the quality of the Actors; and yet this is undeniably the Guilt of all those whose profession having devoted them to the Church, have impiously chang'd the Scene, and devoted the Church to them, serv'd all their mean degenerous ends upon her; and as Chyrurgeons are said sometimes to deal with profitable Patients, kept open, nay, widened her wounds for their own advantages.

IT has been the Priests Litany as ancient as Joels time, Spare thy people O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach; but now alas, who shall prevail with them to do that themselves which they beg of God, to spare his people and his heritage; to prostitute them no more to their own sinister designs, nor by their vain and endless contentions, expose them as well to ruine as contempt. He were indeed a happy Orator that could in this effectu-
effectually intercede with them, though One would think the wonder should lye on the other side, and the only strange thing be, that they should either need or resist such a solicitation, it being so much the concern of all that ought, as well upon the score of advantage as duty, to be dear to them; so that the Church may most aptly address to these her Sons in the same form St. Paul does to the Philippians when he conjures them to unity, Phil. 2. 1. If therefore there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil you my joy that you be like minded. And can it be possible for any who have tasted all or any of these, to think fit to wrangle them away; to exchange these divine irradiations, the Antepast and Emblem of Heaven, for those bitter dissentions, whose Alpha and Omega, their original and end are Hell, and do as lively represent as they certainly lead to the horror and confusion of that land of Darkness.

BUT if some mens appetites be so depraved, that they find more Melody in discord, than in the harmony of the Angelick Quires, yet even these can discern Musick in a consort of Pau-dites, and seldom miss to be affected with those Eulogies which are given themselves; and therefore though they disjoyn the Apostles motives, Phil. 4. 8. and will do nothing for vertue, yet they may be presum’d more considerate of Praise: And God knows, in a wrong sense they are too much so; and sure, as we have already observed by
by it, have made no small contributions to our discords: yet did they measure Glory by its right and proper standard, they would find they have all this while courted a shadow, and that the substance will never be acquir’d by being fomenters of publick Mischief; but the unhappiness of it is, that our Ecclesiastic as our Secular Duellists abuse themselves with false notions of Honor, novel Opinions and subtile Questions they think attest the pregnancy and acuteness of their Understandings, and give them reputation; but alas, how vain an imagination is this? Who admires the Sagacity of the Viper, that Eats her way through her mothers bowels? Or who reverences a man for the sharpness of that Sword wherewith he commits his Paricide? Nay, what more infamous brands have Records of all ages stuck upon any, than those who were Ingeniosissime nequam, & facundi malo publico, who us’d the best Parts to the worst Ends, and with the greatest cunning and artifice have contrived their mischiefs?

BUT could we abstract from these pernicious effects, and suppose that this exercise of their Faculties were innocent, yet sure it would be too light and impertinent to become matter of praise. He that should spend all his Time in tying inextricable Knots, only to baffle the Industry of those that should attempt to unloose them, would sure be thought not much to have serv’d his generation. 'Tis one of the certainest Estimates we can make of a man, to measure him by the employments he chuses, if those be slight and trisling, they suggest
suggest the Person to have low thoughts; what an abasement of Majesty was it thought in Nero to become a Fidler and Stage-player; and Herodian tells us, that men hoped no longer for any thing princely from Commodus the Emperor, when he had once lifted himself among the Fencers, and instead of the magnificent styles of his Predecessors, derived from the conquests of great and populous Nations, assumed This, The vanquisher of a Thousand Gladiators: And certainly 'tis no less a descent and diminution for those who were design'd by God for the highest achievements, the subduing the Kingdom of Satan, and pulling down his strong holds, to devote themselves to these so much ignobler contests, and account their conquests, not from the number of Souls won to God, but of Opposers worsted in Argument. Indeed, as we before observ'd, they have now rendred the Church a kind of Theatre, Disputes are managed with such Sleight and Sophistry, that at the best, the litigants do but set forth a shew of Fencers: 'Twere well if they did not sometimes play the Gladiators, by that wounding deadly sharpness they use, and 'twould be consider'd what a change is now made: In the Primitive times, none that own'd any relation to the Church were allowed to be spectators of those Games, now That is made the Stage, and her ablest Persons the Actors. But certainly 'tis very little to the reputation of those who have so unworthily debaucht both it and themselves; and therefore to all other dissuaders we may add this of
of the Uncreditableness: For let men phancy what they please of the Glory acquir’d in these opportunities of shewing their parts, the best that can be said of them is, that they use Wit foolishly; A character whereof the one part devours the other, and leaves not so much as a mouthful of that popular air which these Camelions gasp after. In a word, though vain-glory be a principle I shall commend to no man, yet in this case ’twere more tolerable if it would work the right way, put them upon what were really praise-worthy, and then sure ’twould encline them rather to close than widen the breaches of Sion. To inflict wounds on an unresisting Patient, is a thing that requires neither courage nor skill: Every man can do that who has but ill nature enough, but to cure them is an act at once of Art and Mercy, and entitles to the Praise of both; and therefore if any man’s eagerness of Glory, have made him over-see the way to it, let him now at last recover his wandering, and seek it in this one only proper Method.

But this is, I confess, a Topick of Perswasion fitter for Philosophers than Divines, and I wish I may have urg’d it impertinently; it being much less shame for me to have done so, than for them to need such an Argument. There is another more genuine and proper, derived from the nature of distributive Justice, which requires a man to do his Utmost to repair the injuries he has done to any, this is so stated a rule, that all our Casuists justly press it in all cases of damage: But are
there not many of them, who while they so eagerly assert that obligation in other mens cases, do as David did in the matter of the poor mans Lamb, severely sentence that injustice; whereof themselves are more highly Guilty. To every such I would speak in the words of Nathan, and say thou art the Man. Alas, shall every little trifle I purloin from my Neighbour have weight enough to sink me to the abyss, and shall these of the greatest magnitude, the robbing God of his honour, the Church not only of her Patrimony, but her Peace, and the World of those inestimable benefits, which from a uniform consonant Christianity were to have been transmitted to it? Shall these I say be so slight and inconsiderable; as not to hinder his ascent to the hill of the Lord? Shall the least violence I offer to the person of an Enemy oblige me to satisfaction, and shall he rend and tear the body of his Saviour (who willingly expos'd his natural body only in tenderness to that mystical one, which is thus violated) and shall this criminous barbarity exact no offers towards amends? Certainly no man can have partiality enough to think it, and if he do not, he is to remember himself indispensably engag'd to take the same course he prescribes to others, and with his utmost industry endeavour to repair the injury he has done.

AND O that we might see this so essential a piece of justice assum'd among us, that our impertinent strifes might be superseded, and all moulded into the one noble Emulation, who shall fastest
faileft unravel his own mischiefs, and promote that peace he has hitherto disturb'd. This indeed were worthy to be the united design of all learned men; and were it once so, who knows how prosperous it might be: For though some single attempts have miscarried, yet probably one great cause why they do so, was because they were single. When one Person comes with pacisick arguments to part an enraged multitude, let his Reasons be never so convincing, they are not like to be much adverted to; the only effect is, that he who design'd himself the common Friend, is taken as the common Enemy; but where many associate in such a design, and make a party for peace, their numbers give a considerableness to their proposal, and prepare for their success. And were there such a combination in order to the Churches Quiet, it were more than possible they might undermine the contrary attempts of Faction and Discord.

And why should not every man be ambitious to make one in this sopsious a confederacy, and resolve most studiously to endeavour the composing the Distractions of the Church, in which they may borrow something of instruction even from their past guilts, and copy out their own industry to this better purpose. This is sure; our disputes had never so multiplied, had there not been a great deal of unhappy diligence in nourishing the seeds of them: Every controverted Tenet has been heightned and improved, till it have spawn'd a numerous brood, so that those who at first differ'd, perhaps
perhaps but in some few things, wrangle on, till at last they agree in fewer: Now were the like Industry applied the other way, it might sure do much to the changing the whole Scene. If men would as nicely observe the Principles of agreement between dissenting parties, and with as much Art and Care seek to dilate and spread them; why might not they as much overwhelm our Differences, as they have been overwhelmed by them? 'Tis sure that those Universal truths, to which all Parties assent, are, as the clearest for their Evidence, so the most important for their Consequence: And why should not these, if rightly managed, be a more enforcing motive to Unity, than the more singular opinions (perhaps phancies) of some men, can be to Discord? Certainly would but our Moses's try what this rod of God in their hand could do, they would find it able to devour all those of the Magicians. Would they like Benhadabs Ambassadors, catch hold of every amicable expression, any thing that looks towards Peace, and close in with it, they might probably see Effects, beyond what can at distance be expected. For sure Peace is not such a dry Tree, such a Sapless unfertile thing, but that it might fruitifie and encrease as well as Discord, were there a just care taken to Cherish and nourish it.

INDEED this Design is the only Amulet which can render it safe to look into controversies, which are else apt to infuse a kind of acrimony, and venom into mens spirits; For we see many,
many, whose curiosity at first brought them as unconcern'd spectators, do within a while engage with all earnestness in the contest: but those who study differences only with an aim of composing them, these have their thoughts determin'd and fixed, and so not left loose to the enticements of any Party. Aristotle says that on the Hill Olympus the Air is so subtil and piercing, that those who ascend thither, are forced to carry with them wet sponges, by that moisture somewhat to allay that extreme tenuity which otherwise would be deadly; and sure they that deal in controversies, live in no less corrosive an Air, and therefore had need make the like provision, and carry with them this pacific purpose, as a lenitive and emollient against the infectious sharpness they will there meet with.

AND now how blessed a thing were it, if we could once thus follow the things that make for Peace, that the numberless mutual enmities which are now among us, may all be reduced into one, that we may fight not against single adversaries, but against War itself, and contend against nothing but contention. And sure our victory here were worth millions of those petty conquests wherewith men please themselves, and which acquire them so little of real advantage, that the same account which was given of Otho and Vitellius, that the war would swallow up the one, and the victory the other, is too applicable to our combatants, who are like to be equally unhappy in defeat or success. The Spartans had an E e 2 Order
Order that when any of their Generals had compassed his Design by policy or treaty, he should sacrifice an Oxen, but when by force and bloodshed, a Cock only; from the distant values of which oblations, Plutarch observes how much they preferr'd the Achievements of calm and sober counsels, before those of strength and power: but sure the disparity is more eminent in the present instance, where if we fight we wound our Brethren, but if we unite we destroy our Enemy: baffle and circumvent Satans Master-stratagem, and not only worst but outwit him. Indeed this and this only is worth our Industry, whereas those little defeats we give Each other, are like those in a civil War, wherein the publick is still sure to be a Loaper; upon which consideration the Romans allowed not their Captains to triumph for such Victories; and sure our Christianity is very ill bestowed on us, if it have made us so much worse natur'd, as to choose those ruinous Conquests at home, before the most glorious and profitable ones abroad.

'TWAS Abner's admonition to Joab, when he was in a hot pursuit of the Israelites, 2 Sam. 2. 26. Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the later end? and sure 'tis more than time for our Leaders to make the same reflection, and as Joab did there, call back the People from following their Brethren: Nay indeed, would they but attend, they might hear themselves called back; the great Captain of their Salvation sounding a retreat from these
these fatal skirmishes. Xenophon in the institution of Cyrus tells us of one Chrysanthus, who in the heat of battle had his hand lift up to strike an Enemy, but hearing in the very instant the Trumpet found a retreat, stopp'd his blow. A great sobriety of courage so to shew more Zeal to the obeying his General, than the annoying his Enemy; and an Instance of much reproach to our Spiritual Combatants, who have shewed themselves so much worse disciplin'd, as in spight of daily repeated calls to Peace, still to pursue their Hostility: But sure such an insolence is so inconsistent with the pretence they make of fighting Gods Battails, that they must either reform the one, or disclaim the other.

AND now if after all that hath or can be said of the obligation, necessity, or advantages of Peace, we are put to the Psalmists Complaint, that there are still those that will make them ready to battle: if men are of so untreatable a Temper, that nothing can be obtain'd of them: what remains for those that are Peaceable and Faithful in Israel, but to bewail those Mischiefs they cannot redress? If the Church must perish, at least to give her Funerall rites, and if they cannot quench her flames, yet to bedew her ashes with their tears. 'Tis true, we cannot yet say she is quite dead; but though she breathes yet in a few pious peaceful Souls, yet like a Palsied person, she scarce moves a Limb, she wants vigor to actuate the generality of her professors, and remains rather a trunk than a body: and sure if there be truth in that
Physick Aphorism, which says that diseases which cross the temper and constitution of the Patient are most dangerous; we may well conclude her desperate, there being nothing more repugning to the very Elements and Principles of her Being, than those contentions under which she now groans.

Yet there is an omnipotent Power to whom no Difficulties are insuperable, an unerring Physician who makes the most hopeless Diseases, but the Triumph of his Art. O let us resort to him, and invite his Aids in the same pathetick form, wherewith he was solicited for Lazarus, Jo.11.3. Lord behold she whom thou lovest is sick: She for whose sake thou endurdest such contradiction of sinners against thy self, is now by the contradiction of her own Children, languishing and expiring: she for whom thou pourest out thy blood, lies weltring in her own, Lord save or she perisheth: Were such Petitions enforced and ingeminated by the daily breathing of humble devout hearts, who knows how prevalent they might be. In this sense also Heaven might suffer violence; nor is there any better countermine to all the outrages acted upon Earth than by making them thus reverberate in our cries and prayers.

And perhaps this Consideration will draw us all, even the most peaceful of us into the guilt of a negative Accessuariness to the present Mischiefs. There are divers that dislike our contentions, and blame the abettors; but yet with such
Unconcern'dness and Indifference, as that where-with we commonly talk of the combustions of foreign States, wherein we rather express our Judgment than our resentments, and do make it more our discourse than our concern. And even of those who have in some degree laid it to heart, who is there that has not been some way wanting in the ardency, or frequency of his intercessions? let every one seriously interrogate his own Heart, and I fear 'twill witness to him, that his own private concerns are much apter to excite his devotions. Let us remember with what passion and importunity we invoke God in our particular Exigents, and consider whether we are equally affected with those of the Church: Hast thou been like Hezekiah, sick unto death? and hast thou with him wept sore, and vehemently solicited a recovery? has thy estate been invaded by Oppression, thy fame by Slander and Detraction? and hast thou with loud and earnest cries, appealed to that God to whom vengeance belongs? or hast thou been in that condition which is proverbial for setting men to their prayers? hast thou like Jonas been in a storm, in minutely expectation of being swallowed up by the waves, if not the Whale; and in this Extasie of fear, when as thy soul was as the Psalmist speaks, even melted away because of the Trouble, hast cried unto the Lord, and even out-noys'd the billows in thy clamorous importunities for aid? Hast thou in all, or any of these estates been thus affected for thy self? then remember whether thy resentments have
have been proportionable for that which is much better than thy self: If the no less imminent and pressing dangers of the Church, have not as much awakened thy fervor, given as sharp and piercing an accent to thy Prayers, thou must needs confess, thou hast fallen short, of what thou shouldst and mightest have done towards her rescue.

And if this Inquisition be impartially made, who among us can plead not guilty? and therefore in reflections upon our past omissions, we are in justice oblig'd to redouble our Zeal, to say over again our Tepid heartless prayers, and inflame them with a Cole from the Altar; an earnest affectionate Concern for all that is holy, such as may prompt us to cry, and that mightily to God: We see the Ninevites could do it when there was no visible approach of danger, but meerly upon the presage of a stranger Prophet, backt with the consciousness of their own Guilt: I fear we more than equal them in the later Motive, I am sure we far exceed them as to the former. The miseries we are to deprecate being not only under denunciation and threat, but actually upon us, though withall so improvable, that after all the black Catalogue our Experience brings in; our Fears meet us with the bottomless Prophetick menace, Esay 5.25. for all this his Anger is not turn'd away, but his hand is stretched out still. 'Tis the usual Oeconomy of divine Justice to make our Crimes our Punishment, and to give us up to those ills, which were at first, our own depraved choice: and God knows we have too much reason
reason to fear this may be our case: That we who have so perversely violated all the bands of Unity, wantonly wrangled ourselves out of all inclinations to Peace, should never be able to resume them; that all those gentle breathings of Grace, by which exasperated Passions are to be cool’d and tempered, should be withdrawn, and we finally be given up to be dissipated by those Whirl-winds ourselves have rais’d: That Christianity which we have made the stale and Property to our irregular appetites, us’d only as fig-leaves to hide our shame, should wither and shrink into nothing; and that we who could not agree in what manner to retain it, should at last too well agree to renounce it.

THIS alas, as it is the fearfuller, so is it the probablest Issue of our wild Contentions, such as nothing but the miraculous Effluxes of divine Clemency can avert. O let us with all the groans and tears, so deplor’d a Condition exacts, address thither, importune the father of Mercies. to pity us, who know not how to pity our selves, and that though we have cast off all bowels, yet that we may find them all center’d in him: that he will heal our wounds; and which of all others is the most desperate, our unwillingness to be healed: that the Spirit of Peace may overshadow us, and impress on us the dove-like qualities of Meekness and Gentleness: that he would rescue our Religion from our Profanation not by taking it from Us, but by conforming us to It: Finally that he would do for us, not only above what we can
can ask or think, but beyond what we would wish or chuse, and not suffer us to acquire the Miseries we so eagerly pursue.

This divine interposition alone is it that can possibly secure us, and indeed the suit amounts to no less, than that he will force upon us the Blessing we resist, and do us good against our wills, which is so bold a request, that they had need be more than ordinary Favourites that shall prefer it. Those hands must be very pure, that are lift up in such an intercession: and therefore all that undertake it are obliged to qualify themselves for it, by purging out not only the levain of Malice and Strife, but all other filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit: without This, we can never approve our selves to intercede in earnest; for what can be more ridiculous than to deprecate the ruine of Christianity by the contentions of other men; when our selves contrive it by some other vice of our own? This is not to desire it should live, but that none but we should kill it. 'Twill therefore concern those who wish the Peace of the Church; to examine whether they do as much project for her Purity; otherwise 'tis a mockery to pretend such a jealous tenderness for her. We have seen there are more waies than one, by which Christian practice may be evacuated, and it matters little from whence that Wind blows that ship-wracks our Piety. Yet 'tis not to be denied that of all those tempestuous blasts, this of our contentions is the roughest and most fatal. 'Tis indeed not a single gust, but an encounter and struggling
gling of several contrary winds; and God knows no poetical description can out-doe the horror of the storms they have rais'd; yet for ought I discern, there is nothing that is less vulgarly accused, which I must account to the Reader, as the cause why I have detain'd him so long upon this Head; and given it a length so unproportionable to the preceding parts of this Discourse.
CHAP. XX.

The Close.

We have now seen the unhappy riddle of the Unchristianness of Christians unfolded, have observ'd the Originals and Causes of That which is too notorious to all the world in its Effects. And though in this cursory view the Reader is not to think he has any such compleat discovery, as should supersede his own farther inquisition, yet as it may serve to awaken, so somewhat to assist his Industry, give him some light and insight into the wiles of Satan: and by branding some of the chief of those cheats which have robb'd us of our Piety, prepare for the detection of the whole Confederacy: in the interim this Specimen may serve to stop his wonder at the ruinous estate of Christianity, for though 'tis true that it was compacted of all the most incorruptible materials, had all the harmony of parts which the most exact Frame and Composure could give it, and so was qualified both for strength and beauty, to have defied all the injuries of Time; yet while she has so many Underminers, 'tis not strange to see her in the dust, there being no one of these, especially that I last insisted on, which has not destructive efficacy enough; first to deface, and then to ruine her.

BUT
**B U T** it is but an unprofitable acquest to know the Authors of our mischiefs if we stop there; this enquiry being matter not of mere Curiosity, but of the nearest and most pressing Interest: we search not after Malefactors for their acquaintance, but for their punishment, and our own security; and all our discoveries of this kind are vain, if we apply them not to that purpose. Let me therefore conclude with this earnest Petition to the Reader, That he will not to all the native Defects of this discourse, add this accidental one that it shall be perfectly impertinent; a mere waste of his Time and my own; which it will inevitably prove, if it engage him not in an earnest prosecution of those Delinquents it hath appeacht; and in as earnest an endeavour to repair the Mischiefs they have wrought.

IN short, let every man deposit what he has here read, not with his memory only but his conscience, let him there seriously ponder the Excellency of that holy vocation, as S. Paul terms it, Eph. 4. 1. to which he is call'd: and then as seriously consider, whether he have as the Apostle there exhorts, walked worthy of it; if he find he have not (as alas who is there that has?) let him search out as the particulars, so the causes of his Miscarriages: diligently sift out those Fallacies of Satan, or his own heart; those fly Delusions which have made him act thus preposterously against all the Convictions of common reason, natural conscience, or Christian experience; and when he has discovered, let him make no delay to rescue himself from their Treacheries, but manfully break
break those withs and cords (which are too weak to hold any that will but in earnest remember, he is a Nazarite, a Person consecrate to God) resolutely resist the insidious carelesse of those Dalilah's, which will deliver not Himself only, but the Ark to the Philistines. Nor is he to content himself with his own single escape, but to propagate the deliverance, to as many as he can; let him blazon and stigmatize those Imposters (for 'tis a combining with them to conceal them) warn and caution others against those jugling Artifices, by which himself was entrapped, and make his own ship-wracks a Sea-mark for the securing the course of other Passengers. This is the Effect of Christ's admonition to S. Peter, when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren; and a piece of that Fraternal charity we all owe to every particular Soul, to whom we have opportunity to dispence it.

But besides that private Obligation, it becomes a duty upon a higher, and more publick Account, it being the only way to take off that Scandal we have brought upon our Religion; which as it was not contracted by the irregularities of one or two persons, but by associated and common crimes; so neither will it be removed by a few single, and private Reformations; there must be combinations, and publick Confederacies in Vertue, to ballance and counterpoise those of Vice, or she will never recover that pristine honour which she acquired by the general Piety of her Professors. In those primitive days there was such an abhorrence of all that was Ill, that a vicious person was lookt on as a kind of Monster
Monster or Prodigie, and like a putrified Member cut off, as being not only dangerous, but noisome to the Body: but alas, the Scene is so chang'd, that the Church is now made up of such as she would then have cast out; and 'tis now as remarkable an Occurrence to find a good Christian, as it was there to see a bad: and since everything is estimated not according to its rare and casual, but frequent usual Operations, 'tis easy to conclude, that Christianity has lost as much in its Repute, as it appears to have done in its Efficacy: nor will there be any way of repairing it, till We be generally rendered so malleable to its impressions, that our Lives may attest its Force and Energy.

NAT indeed 'tis not only its honour, but its being is concern'd in it, active Principles cease to be when they cease to act. You cannot hinder the fire to burn but by putting it out: and to suppress the Operation of our Religion is indeed to extinguish it; at least to deprive it of its proper and specific act: so that if it can be said to be; 'tis only by that abuse of speech which calls a dead or painted man, a Man: It may perhaps be a vizor for the Hypocrite, a Stale for the Ambitious, a wash or tincture for the Covetous; but where it is these, it ceases to be its self. The essence and being of Christianity is practice; and according to that Test and proof thereof, where almost can it be said to Exist in the world? we have indeed some images and shadows of it: Some have taken its picture, but the substance and solid body is vanished, resolv'd into Air, and seems sadly to have moraliz'd the poetick Fable of Sybills
Sybills being worn into a voice, we have turn'd it into a meer noise and found; nay, which is worse, into an Eccho, that flattering complying voice, which reverberates every man's own language to him: Men dictate to their Religion, and then will needs perswade themselves and others, that their Religion dictates to them, will have the rebounds of their own Fancy or Lust pass for Divine Oracles; so suborning this Aiery fantastick Christianity to legitimate those practices, which the real solid one forbids and Execrates.

To this dismal forlorn estate have we brought that which was designed to bring us to bliss, herein far exceeding the barbarity of the brutish Sodomites, they would have violated the Messengers of their ruine, but we those of our safety: We having not only neglected, but vilified and reproacht the Embassy sent us from Heaven, and instead of embracing that purity and peace it recommended to us, have done our Parts to make it forgotten that ever it was sent upon any such Errand; and indeed so it is like to be, if some Heroick piety do not revive its Memory, and teach us to record it not so much in our books as lives: There, and there only it will be universally legible, there it would indeed appear, what it is in its own nature, the power of God unto Salvation.

And now why should we not all Emulously contend, who shall first put off that ugly vizor we have put upon our Religion, and restore it to its native form; especially considering that with its Beauty we lose its Dowry too; forfeit all those glorious Rewards
wards which it promises to them that preserve it immaculate. 'Tis only a pure and undefiled Religion that will invest us in those white robes, wherein we are to follow the Lamb. And sure those who have here endeavoured to darken and extinguish all the rays of Spiritual Light, that have lived as if they profest Christianity meerly in spite to defame it, must never hope it shall bring them to shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, or procure them the reward of blameless Souls. No, it promises no other Crown than that of Righteousness, and therefore they that want the Righteousness must want the Crown also: Nay, besides that so inestimable a Reversion, they lose all those present Joys and satisfactions which true Christian practice would afford them, and which both in respect of the intenseness and duration, infinitely exceed the most profuse sensualities the World ever tasted.

These are interests that are sure. Important enough, and yet we must be woed to consider them, nay, that does not prevail neither, but with a perverse Coyness we hold off; all the solicitations and importunate Calls of God are lookt upon as Artifices and Designs, as if he had some Ends of his own to serve upon us, and (as the Corinthians suspected St. Paul) meant to make a gain of us; we treat with him as if he were the Person to be advantaged, and barter for Heaven with such an Indifference, as if It would want Us more than We It; never considering that 'tis impossible for him to have any other Concern, than that which his Compassion to us creates,
and the more earnest and passionate. That is, the more it should excite our own care, it being the extremest degree of perverse Folly, to abandon and despise our own Interest meerly because a Friend or Patron considers and prizes it. And this brand must ly on every one of us, who still refuse to discern the things that belong to our Peace, after God has done so much to render them not only visible but attainable.

**WHAT shall I say more, but conclude with Christ's passionate wish, that we might in this our day, understand the things that belong to our Peace, and that the Spirit of Peace and Light would descend among us, illuminate us with that true practical Wisdom, which may convince us, that our Duty and Interest are the same thing under several forms, and that while we impiously cast off the one, we do as foolishly betray the other. That so those inestimable advantages our Christianity gives towards both, may not be thus madly lost, serve only as a price in the hand of a Fool, who hath no heart to it, Prov. 17.** And to this end let us humbly and earnestly invoke the Father of lights, to illuminate all those whom the God of this world hath blinded, that after he hath sent into the world the Image of his own eternal brightness; caused the Sun of Righteousness so long to shine upon us, it may not serve only to involve us in that most dreadful condemnation, which awaits those who love darkness more than light; but that answering the purpose of our holy calling, walking as Children of light,
light, we may vindicate that Christian profession
which we have so defamed, secure to our selves the
light of Gods countenance here, and that of his
glory hereafter.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 12. Line 19. for taught Read sought, p. 97. l. 9. for di-
verts r. divests, p. 99. l. 7. for insidious r. insidious, p. 105.
l. 27. for them r. him, p. 114. l. 14. for one r. own, p. 118. l. 6. for
owes r. owns, p. 164. l. 27. for assimilation r. assimilation, p. 165.
l. 17. for should r. shoals, p. 171. l. 16. for avow r. disavow.