

**THE NECESSITY
OF
CONVERSION.**



**BY
JOHN FLAVEL.**

The Reasonableness of Personal Reformation and the Necessity of Conversion.

The True Methods of Making All Men Happy in this World, and in the World to Come!

Seasonably discoursed, and earnestly pressed upon this licentious age.

[John Flavel](#), 1628-1691

To all such as are most immediately and particularly concerned in the following treatise, of whatever rank or quality they be.

GENTLEMEN,

TWO of the greatest, most faithful, and most intimate friends in the world, reason and conscience, command me here, in their names, courteously to salute and invite you in.

They earnestly desire three or four hours serious and private conference with you, about some very important personal concerns of yours, which cannot admit of denial, or long delay. And if you make any trifling excuses, they have commanded and instructed me, here to answer them.

In case of absolute and obstinate refusal to hear them, they order me to tell you; if you will not talk with me now, they will talk with you shortly, whether you will or no. If you say, you are not now at leisure, having other business to do; they both desire you to consider,

FIRST, You can have no business in the world of equal importance with theirs. SECONDLY, That whatever other lawful affairs you are pursuing, their business with you will no way obstruct, but greatly promote it. And, lastly, That a greater person than any of you, lost his life, by pocketing up a letter at night, saying, Tomorrow is a new day; and it proved to him indeed his last day; he losing by that neglect the only opportunity of living longer.

If you demand, how your reason came to be bound up in this little book, and say, that which is reason to this author, may be folly and nonsense to you: I am bid to tell you, you are obliged first to read and compare; else your own reason will presently call it your own folly and nonsense, so to pronounce. Sound reason is uniform, and like itself all the world over It is true, laws and dictates equally oblige one, as another, in like cases and circumstances.

If you say, there have been some jars and disgusts between you and your reasons and consciences; you and they have fallen out so oft, that you have no great fancy to come near them in private, for you expect nothing but harsh and chiding language from them; and therefore are gladly, by continual diversions, and quick successions of business, to maintain your peace, by keeping at as great a distance from them as you can.

It is their desire you should here know,

FIRST, That their debates with you will be as calm and friendly, as they are seasonable and necessary.

SECONDLY, That they profess (and you may believe them) they neither do, nor can design anything but your good.

THIRDLY, That that person is certainly in a very bad case, that cannot endure to converse with himself.

FOURTHLY, That you herein deny a civility to your own reasons and consciences, which you daily pay to strangers and inferiors. And, in a word, that they desire a

reconciliation with you upon as fair and honorable terms as can well be desired: and that this being done, they will both stick faithfully by you in all the troubles and dangers of your lives, and follow you as your inseparable friends, into anything but sin.

If you say, this is but a wheedle, to draw you into a book, that will make you melancholy, and perhaps mad.

It is their sense and judgment, that of all men living, you have least reason to pretend the one or the other, in this case: for they are very confident, you are now in the most melancholy circumstances men can ordinarily be on this side Hell. And for madness they desire to know, what you yourselves would call that man, that is running with such poste-haste to Hell, as will not admit of two or three hours stop upon the road, to prove himself to be no madman, but in his right mind and wits?

Moreover, they command me to inform you, it is their desire, that seeing their debates with you will neither be tiresome nor impertinent, you will please to hear them out what they have to say to you: and then, if you shall find cause to complain, that your pleas and excuses are not fairly drawn, or that you have new matter to furnish a better apology; they are both content you shall have your liberty to amend, or add what you please; and if they be not able to refute them, they will give you no further trouble or interruption in your course.

This, Gentlemen, is what I have in charge to say to you in the porch; and now, if you please, the door is open: you may be as private as you will. They will attend you to your bed-chamber, or closet; and I heartily wish an happy issue to this friendly debate.

JOHN FLAVEL

Chapter I

The introduction and state of the case

1. REASON exalts man above all earthly beings; it is his dignity and privilege, that God has furnished him with abilities of mind, to recollect, animadvert, compare, infer, ponder, and judge his own actions. Hereby he becomes not only capable of moral government by human laws, (which no creature beside him is) but also of spiritual government by divine laws, and the blessed fruition of God in glory, which no other species of creatures (angels only excepted) have a subjected capacity for.

Right reason, by the law of nature, (as an home-born judge) arbitrates and determines all things within its proper province; which province is extended far and wide. All actions, natural, moral, and civil, are weighed at this beam and standard; none are exempted, but matters of supernatural revelation; and yet even these are not wholly and in every respect, exempt from right reason: for though there be some mysteries in religion above the sphere and flight of reason: yet nothing can be found in religion, that is unreasonable.

And though these mysteries be not of natural investigation, but of supernatural revelation; yet reason is convinced, nothing can be more reasonable, than that it takes its place at the feet of faith; which is but to suffer itself to become pupil to an omniscient and infallible instructor. The resolution of our reason into faith, and of faith into God's veracity, are acts highly becoming reasonable beings in such cases as these.

It may not pry too nicely into unrevealed mysteries, demand the reasons, or examine the causes of them as bold and daring Socinians do; but it feels itself obliged to

receive all those things, both as possible and true, which God has revealed, counting his revelation alone to be reason sufficient. For the veracity of God takes out of reason's mouth all objections against the truth of them; and his almighty power silences all its scruples against the possibility of them.

But in all matters properly under the jurisdiction of reason, every man is obliged to account with himself, as well as others, for the reasonableness of his own actions; and that act which will not endure the test of sound reason, it judges not fit for the entertainment of man. If reason cannot justify it, it is beneath the rank and dignity of a man to do it.

2. The light of reason was at first the bright lamp or candle of the Lord, until sin, like a thief, melted it down to snuff; whereby (comparatively speaking) it becomes a poor glimmering light in the best of men, and almost quite extinguished in some men. Fallen man is become less than himself, and will never act like himself, until he be fully restored to himself.

Sanctification indeed snuffs and trims the lamp of reason; but there being few sanctified persons among men, a double misery consequently befalls a very great part of mankind; whose conversation speaks them not only destitute of religion, which bereaves them of the blessedness of the world to come; but men almost entirely despoiled of the benefits and blessings of their own reason, which makes them unhappy and miserable in this world: beasts, rather than men, as the sacred scriptures stiles them; unreasonable men; men fallen out with their own faculties; who after many a sharp battle with their reason, are now dragging it like a conquered captive, at the chariot wheels of their victorious and triumphant lusts.

3. It is scarce imaginable, that ever sin should prevail so far as it does, to the very unmaning of men, did they not first delude and bribe their own reason, by close and cunning applications to their bewitched affections; whereby, though they cannot make it a party, yet they make it stand by as a silent spectator, or neuter, while they act the beast, yes, the devil, rather than the man.

We little know how far unsanctified reason may (this way) be prevailed upon to quit his throne, and resign its scepter into the hands of lust and appetite; yes, to engage in the defense of their most absurd laws and dictates. It only serves in some men, to invent excuses, pleas, and specious pretenses, to justify or extenuate their beast-like actions; the basest servitude it can be condemned to.

If this will not do, sensual lusts have another way to obtain their satisfaction, in despite of reason and conscience; even by stopping their ears to the voices of both, and pushing on with a brutish impetus, they suffer neither to enjoy the opportunity of a calm debate of these matters with them.

4. But let men do what they will, it is next to an impossibility, they shall so far subdue and destroy those inbred principles of reason and conscience, but that they will, at one time or other, give them some check and oppositions in their profane courses; especially when they shall get the advantage of some eminent distress, or special danger, which disposes them to lend an ear to their voices. And there be few men in the world, but are sometimes providentially cast into such cases and conditions.

So that appeals to the reason of the most profligate wretches, are not altogether vain and useless: for if the case cannot be tried and decided at the bar of reason and conscience at one time, it may with more advantage at another: and haply appeals to reason may produce a reformation in some men, sooner than appeals to the scriptures, or principles of faith, especially when the world is so notoriously drenched in practical atheism, that serious religion becomes the common subject of drollery among multitudes of men.

Yet it were hard and uncharitable, to imagine any man sunk so deep into the mire of bestiality and profaneness, as not still to retain some value and veneration for his own reason, and as much as he abuses it, yet to refuse the whole world in exchange for it; and to account it a greater misery to be utterly deprived of it, than to have the hoofs of an horse given him in exchange for his hands and feet.

5. The scriptures therefore do, in many cases, appeal to the reason of sinners, and design their reformation by such appeals: for it being a most shameful thing, for a man to be convicted at the bar of his own reason, of acting like a beast rather than a man, every man is presumed to be afraid, and ashamed of such an indictment. Such miscreants are the shame and reproach of humanity itself; they are branded for brutes throughout the sober world; their company declined and shunned by all wise and good men. He who has no reason to justify his actions, may yet be supposed to be owner of some stock of natural shame; which cannot but afford a blush, upon such a plain conviction. This therefore was the course which the prophet Isaiah took, by divine direction, to reform the idolatrous Israelites; [Isaiah 46:8](#). He states the case at the bar of their own reason, and calls for a verdict upon it. The case was this: Whether idols, having not power enough to show themselves gods, those that worship them, must not want wisdom enough to show themselves men? "Remember this, and show yourselves men; and bring it again to mind, O you transgressors!" q. d. For shame, let not men act like brutes, which have no animadversion.

6. When things therefore are brought to such an exigence, that ruin or reformation is the only choice men have to make, and all religious impressions so obliterated and worn out, that men pay no reverence to them; an appeal to the reason of men, seems then to be an hopeful method of prevailing with them, to suffer a reformation rather than a ruin. Not that I imagine the topics of reason able to afford more powerful arguments, than those of religion do; but that they, who by their ignorance and strong prejudices against religion, have made themselves more incapable of conviction that way, may haply feel the force of reason prevailing so far at least, as to put their outrageous lusts under some restraints.

As for the scriptures, and serious religion begotten by them in the souls of men, they are perfect strangers to all, but the names of these things: And even their very names are grown almost ridiculous with them too. But reason may convince and shame them. What force the reason of man has, even without saving grace, to produce civility, sobriety, and other moral virtues, is abundantly evident in the very Heathens; who, by the only light of reason, discovered so much odiousness in vice and immortality, and such an amiable beauty in justice, temperance, and the other moral virtues, that their praises for them are sounded throughout the world.

Now, whatever unthinking men dream, to me it is evident, that when kingdoms and commonwealths are overflowed with unrestrained vice and immoralities; when cursing and swearing becomes the common language, drunkenness and adultery the common practice of the inhabitants; God will either sweep away the filth of those nations, by the broom of a general reformation, or he will sweep away their inhabitants out of them, with the broom of destruction. For if we have not excused the notion and belief of a God, and that he animadverts the wickedness of men, (which the very Heathens, by the light of nature, saw and acknowledged,) we may thereby easily be led to this conclusion, that such overflowings of abomination do, and must certainly presage our desolation, except speedy and general reformation do prevent it.

7. Now, the persons, whose reformation I particularly design by this method, being men that exercise more reason than religion, might (methinks) be prevailed with to take up at last, and reform their unreasonable, as well as ungodly courses, could they be once prevailed with to debate these matters with cool, considerate minds,

becoming men governed by reason, not wholly swayed like brute-beasts, by lust and appetite.

And is it not highly reasonable, that men should weigh their own actions at the same beam and standard where they weigh other men's actions; and renounce all that with shame and detestation, which they themselves must censure as utterly beneath, and unworthy of a man? Wherefore has God planted a principle of reason and conscience within us? Is it rational to think, it was planted there for no other end or use, but to scan and censure other men's words or actions by, but not our own? Or to be wholly useful to other men's interests, without any benefit to ourselves? Ask your own reason, silly man, why God placed it in your soul? and for what use it was intended? And it will tell you, it was particularly designed and appointed, to regulate and order your own life and actions; and next, for the benefit and good of the community. It will tell you, there is not a single act you do, of any weight or moment, but you ought to consult with it, and have its pass or license before you do it. But when you enter into a serious course of actions, your consultations with it ought to be very frequent and solemn, because these things are of great importance to you.

Your reason will tell you, sinner, that it is a vile affront to it, to be thrust by you from the council-table, unworthily dismissed from its office, and discharged from any further attendance upon your life, and concerns thereof, and brutish lust and appetite consulted in its room; and that it needed not at all to have been implanted in your soul, if the same principles that govern the beasts of the field must also be your governing principles. It stands ready to offer its service to you, to save you from, or to receive you out of those mischiefs you have, or may run yourself into; if you will but hear, and obey its advice, it tells you, it is your privy-counselor, by God's appointment; and if you will not find leisure among the heats and hurries of your lusts, to consult it, and hearken to its counsels now; if you will not forsake the conduct of your own reason and conscience, which have a right and authority to govern your words and actions, and follow your blind and head-strong lusts and passions, you shall hear other language from them, when your lusts have precipitated you into your own ruin and destruction; as they speedily and inevitably must, and will do, according to the course they now steer for you.

8. And there is yet more ground to hope, that reason may prevail with men living under the gospel, to return to sobriety and temperance, when we consider their reason is assisted by some illuminations from the Christian religion. They live in a land of bibles and ministers, where they cannot avoid the light; an advantage far beyond whatever the heathens enjoyed; who yet by their single unassisted reason, arrived to an eminency in moral virtues.

Our reasons and consciences do not only convince us, (as theirs also did them) that there is a God, and a future life of retribution, wherein every man shall be judged according to his works; but also, that the scriptures are the very word of God, and rule of faith and manners. And if there be any among the debauched crew, that question or deny it, we may be confident none of them are able, by plain and sound reason, to overthrow those mighty arguments pleaded for the confirmation of that truth: At least, they find in themselves a strong suspicion and fear, that they may prove to be true; which jealousy and suspicion, working together with their own reason and consciences, are no contemptible helps toward their recovery.

For if what reason, conscience, and scripture, with one mouth, pronounce, be true and certain, (as undoubtedly it will be found to be); then it must be plain and obvious to them also, that their brutish lusts have put them into the direct and ready way, both to ruin themselves, and also greatly to hazard the community to which they belong.

9. As for themselves, if they will make a judgment upon their own condition, in the light of reason, conscience, or scripture (and they very well know, they take their measures in perfect darkness, if they take them not by this direction); then, continuing the same course they now do, they are a lost generation.

All their lawful and faithful guides tell them, with one mouth, they are certainly in the broad way to damnation; and that, however irksome and terrible the thoughts and apprehensions of Hell are to them, yet thither they must certainly come, if they pursue this course. Their reason plainly tells them, he who chooses the means, and engages in the way leading to Hell, must and ought to make account, that Hell is the place he is preparing for.

Conscience is as plain and positive with them, that they must either return, or perish. The scripture confirms the testimonies of both, by telling them plainly, That the end of these things is death; [Romans 6:21](#).

It is downright folly and madness, by the vote of the whole rational and sober world, for any man to conclude, or hope he shall be happy in the world to come, whose life is drawn through, and finished in all manner of obscenity, filthiness, and profaneness in the present world.

For let the case be brought into the light of your own reason, as dim as it is, and let it freely judge, when you are belching out your black and horrid blasphemies against God, imprecating damnation from him upon your own souls, wallowing in beastly lusts, vomiting and roaring in taverns and ale-houses: ask, I say, your own reason, conscience, or the scripture, whether all, or either of them, will allow you to say or think, 'Now we are in the right way to eternal blessedness! This is the very course that will bring us to happiness in the world to come; this pleases God better, and is a surer path to glory, than repentance or faith, mortification, prayer, or reformation. No, no, as blind as your reason is, and as seared as your consciences are, you will never bring them to subscribe such absurd and horrid conclusions as these.

But, on the contrary, they will tell you, that if you will have the pleasure, you must have the pain and torment of sin. That it is madness to say, you are afraid to burn, but not afraid to sin; that you are reluctant to be damned, and yet challenge the almighty God to his face, to damn you: as much a folly, as to drink a baneful dose of known poison, and think to feel no painful gripes afterwards.

As for the scriptures, they appeal to the reason of men in this case, as a most known and allowed thing, scarce imaginable to lie hidden from any man. [1 Corinthians 6:9, 10](#). 'Know you not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind; nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.'

It would make the affections of a compassionate Christian to roll and yearn within him, to behold multitudes of souls of invaluable worth, running greedily on to their eternal ruin, willfully stopping their ears all the way, to the voices of their own reason and conscience, as well as to the voice of God in his word; not once making a pause, until they fall into that gulf of eternal and intolerable misery, into which, with great precipitation, they are casting themselves.

10. And then, for the community to which they belong; how dangerous, yes, how destructive such persons are to it, cannot possibly be hidden from any wise and serious observe. For if one sinner destroys much good; if one Achan trouble the whole camp of Israel; how much more will whole swarms and droves of drunkards, blasphemers, and adulterers, as now fill every place, pull down the judgments of God upon those states and kingdoms wherein they breathe? If our fears and dangers

were greater than they are, yet reformation might save us, [Jeremiah 5:1](#). 'Run you to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, (that is a public man, a man in authority,) if there be any that executes judgment, that seeks the truth, and I will pardon it.' And if our hopes and confidences were much higher than they are, yet unrestrained sin would undo us. Kingdoms and commonwealths are not so much endangered by the powers and policies of their enemies without them, as they are by the reformedness of profligate wretches within, and among them. Reformation quickly recovers the ancient glory of kingdoms, and makes them the terror of their enemies.

For though there will be still too much sin privately committed under the best laws, and the most vigorous and impartial execution of them; yet abundance of sin would thereby be prevented, and the sins that are committed would not become national, but personal only; and these would not so much concern and hazard the public weal and tranquility of the state.

Moreover, states and kingdoms are in no small hazard by the public debauchery, and common profaneness of their subjects; forasmuch as in this very sink and puddle of their lusts, the manly wisdom, sprightly courage, and true gallantry of their subjects, are quenched and drowned, their spirits softened and effeminated. It is hard to imagine those men will engage far in the cause of reformation, when reformation itself is the only thing they hate and fear.

Nor need we wonder to find men intimidated, and low-spirited, in times and places of imminent danger, who not only carry about them so much guilt, (which is the fountain of fear) but are wholly addicted to sensual pleasures, which they are reluctant to hazard upon public accounts and considerations, these being the only Heaven they have, or hope for: 'Whoredom, and wine, and new wine take away the heart,' [Hosea 4:11](#). It is in the very nature of these sins, to make men sottish, and in the very nature of guilt to make them pusillanimous.

Seneca observes, (and his observation is true) 'That the conscience of a wicked man is a terrible scourge and torment to him, perpetually lashing him with solicitous thoughts and fears; so that he distrusts all securities, and knows not where to be safe.' Hence it comes to pass, that many men of good extraction, liberal education, and excellent natural endowments, become so useless, yes, so pernicious as they are; who, could they be recovered but to temperance and sobriety, would become both excellently useful, and ornamental to the nation where they had their birth, and to the safety and honor whereof they owe their service.

11. The most desirable recovery and reformation of profane debauched persons, is not simply and absolutely impossible: And if magistrates and ministers were everywhere exemplary themselves for sobriety and piety, zealous and impartial in the discharge of their respective duties, a general reformation would not be difficult. But when those, whose office it is to suppress wickedness, shall associate themselves with lewd and profligate persons, and vie with them in their profane courses, or discourage more conscientious persons in the discharge of their duties; this makes reformation morally impossible.

If profaneness were once found the general odium of the people, and a bar to all preferments, it might be hoped, things would quickly alter for the better. It was an ancient custom among the heathens, (as learned and excellent Mr. Hale of Eaton, out of Chrysostom observes) That if a man offered himself to contend in the Olympic games, he was not permitted so to do, until proclamation had been first made, Whether any man knew him to be either a servant, or a man of infamous life? And if any such imputation were proved against him. it was sufficient to keep him back, let his skill be what it would.

What care was here taken, that their vanities should not be discredited? And will neither reason nor religion convince us, that not only equal, but far greater care ought to be taken, to discourage profaneness among Christians, than the blind heathens ever took, to preserve the reputation of their vain exercises? Let all subordinate ministers of state, and officers in the church, consider how great a part of this blessed reformation is demanded at their hands.

12. Were kingdoms and commonwealths once purged from that spirit of profaneness and debauchery, which thus defiles and overflows them, and the people generally reduced but to civility, sobriety, and temperance; experience would quickly show them the comfortable effects, and happy fruits thereof.

For though this be much short of what Christianity exacts from all its professors, and insufficient to obtain the happiness of the world to come: yet it is greatly conducent to the civil happiness and flourishing of the kingdoms of this world; and, therefore richly worthy the studies and endeavors of all men, to promote and obtain it.

There is no kingdom or commonwealth in the Christian world, which would not by this means breed and send forth multitudes more than they do, with excellent abilities and qualifications, fitting them to sit at the helm of government, and steer a more prosperous course than they do at present. A wise and steady direction of the arduous and important affairs of kingdoms, can only be expected from those that are able to govern themselves, and their own affairs with sobriety and discretion.

If the laws of nations take care for the preservation and growth of timber, fit for the building of houses and ships, and every one sees the usefulness and necessity of such acts; much more ought they to take care for such an education of men, as may render them serviceable members to the state, both in camp and council.

Magistrates are (in a sense) the foundation of kingdoms; the strong shoulders that bear the burden of government; And reason will tell, that so great a weight and stress, as the affairs and concerns of kingdoms, ought not to be laid on their shoulders, whose legs, through debauchery, are too weak to bear their own reeling and staggering bodies.

Seamen and soldiers are the walls of kingdoms, and (under God) their prudence and courage are the people's defense and safeguard. Plutarch tells us, there were two virtues in Hannibal, which made him prosperous and successful. He was bold in attempting, and prudent in managing the most difficult services. The former had signified little without the latter. Courage may throw men into the midst of difficulties; but counsel and wisdom helps them to emerge those difficulties; and I am sure, that cannot be rationally expected from men, that daily dethrone their own reason by debauchery.

But when men, not only sober, just, and temperate, but religiously good, are employed in public trusts and services; we cannot but think the security and prosperity of such a state are abundantly provided for. And our confidence hereof is not only founded upon the maxims of human reason, but of scripture, wisdom, and authority also.

What a renowned, prosperous, and successful captain of the armies of Israel, was good Joshua! No man was able to stand before him all the days of his life, [Joshua 1:5](#). But what bred those brave, gallant, and undaunted spirits in the breast of this hero, and crowned his noble designs with such admirable success? If we look into verse 8 we shall find it was religion, that gave both the edge and point to his natural courage; "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do all that is written

therein: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success."

Hezekiah, this way, became a standout among the kings of Judah; he "he cleaves to the Lord, and the Lord was with him; and he prospered, wherever he went forth," [2 Kings 18:5, 6, 7](#). And dying David from a whole life of experience, recommended this as the only method of prosperity, unto Solomon his son; "Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in his ways; that you may prosper in all that you do, and wherever you turn yourself," [1 Kings 2:3, 4](#).

How great a luster therefore does this truth cast about it: that the restraint and reformation of vice, and the due encouragement of virtue and piety, becomes the very civil interest of kingdoms and nations, by the joint votes and suffrages both of human and divine wisdom? Let any kingdom or state make trial of this method, and from that very time they shall date their prosperity. This will make them become the terrors of their enemies round about them: Peace and prosperity shall flourish in the midst of them; which is the true level and design of this most necessary and seasonable attempt.

Chapter II

Producing one dictate, or rule of right reason, respecting morality, allowed by mankind; and passing current through the world, without one negative voice, except only from those men, whose reasons are utterly captivated by their lusts.

1 SUCH is the degeneracy and deep corruption of some men's natures, by ill education, base company, and long custom in sin; that abandoning and casting away the bonds and restraints of right reason, as well as religion, they give the full scope and liberty to their lusts and passions, reckoning their chief happiness to consist in the gratification and satisfaction of their sensitive appetites. They affect a soft, delicate, sense-pleasing life; reckoning it the only real Heaven to be desired and sought by them; and any other Heaven beside that to be merely notional and fantastic. This is the element they desire to live and sport in, fitly described, [Titus 3:3](#) by serving divers lusts and pleasures. Hence it comes to pass, that their bodies serve only to be strainers for meats and drinks, and channels for filthy lusts to stream through. In this stream, their masculine agility melts away, and all public hopes and expectations from them, are totally defeated and disappointed. Appetite is the master, and reason the slave.

These men (if it be fit to call them men) have bid defiance to their own reason, and denounced a war against their own faculties as if reason had licensed and privileged (which it never did, nor can do) their worse than brutish lusts, to act to the uttermost of their abilities, without any matter of restraint over them.

2 But notwithstanding the present captivity of reason, under usurping and domineering lusts, so long as it has a permanent and fixed root and principle in their nature, it is possible it may recover its throne and empire over them again; as many an imprisoned king has done, and probably would do in a very short space, if those prejudices they have conceived against its government, were but once fairly confuted and removed; which certainly is not hard to do.

They are of opinion that the laws of reason are too severe, strict, and rigorous, that they too much abridge them of their pleasures and delights; and that the government of sensuality being more easy, favorable and indulgent, is for that reason, much more eligible and desirable.

Whereas right reason designs not the abandoning of all pleasures, but only the exchange of them, and that exchange every way to our great advantage. The only hurt or loss, (if this must be accounted so) any man can sustain by the exchange of pleasures made by reason and religion is this: that they design for you the rational, ordinate, and congruous delights, both of a man and of a Christian; in lieu of the lower, baser, and filthy pleasures of a beast or a devil.

They propose to you rules about pleasures, far more safe and grateful, without any culpable severity, or austerity in them. Reason would only regulate and legitimate your delights, and religion sanctify them; that you might much more purely and sweetly enjoy them, without either shame arising from their turpitude, or fear from their guilt. The rules of both are large and indulgent enough; and keeping within their lines and limits, men shall find such generous, manly, and agreeable delights, as are no where to be enjoyed without them.

3 To make this evident, I shall postulate and presume but one thing, and that a thing so immediately true and self-evident, that in the first naked proposal of it, it naturally and easily lets itself into every man's understanding, and no sooner asks, but gains the approbation of right reason. And that self-evident principle, which I take for granted, no man of sound intellectuals will quarrel or dispute, is this:

That good which comprises and involves the true honor, profit, and pleasure of the whole man, which is more congruous to human nature, and preservative of it, is to be preferred in our estimation and choice, to that which only yields a lower degree of pleasure, without profit or honor, to the basest part of man: and that low and transient pleasure it does yield, attended and followed with many present and future miseries, destructive to the whole man.

The several parts of this complex proposition, cast such a light and glory round about them, that I cannot imagine, but as soon as it shall be propounded to the judgment and censure of sound reason, it must immediately gain both its approbation and applause.

But because reason in many men is so beclouded and disturbed by lusts and passions, that it can neither receive things orderly, nor judge of them truly and impartially; I conceive it needful, to demand the censure and judgment of their reason, upon the particulars comprised in this general complex proposition; that so weighing and examining them one by one, we may try, whether sound reason has any valuable exception against any part, or member thereof.

4 And first, I take it for granted, that no man's reason will deny, or demur to this proposition; that good is to be chosen, and evil to be avoided: for the will is naturally carried to that which is good, as to its proper object, and shuns that which is evil. And that is naturally good, which is convenient and agreeable to nature; and that naturally evil, which is inconvenient and hurtful to nature. So that the choice of good rather than evil is the natural choice of the will; and this choice of the will is founded upon the law of self-preservation, without which the creation would quickly disband, and no particular being could be long preserved.

And not only the will of rational creatures chooses the good, and refuses the evil; but every sensitive creature is endowed with a natural faculty, to discern the one from the other, in order to the preservation of their beings. You find it in the smallest and most despicable animals; and therefore cannot deny it unto man, the noblest and most excellent being on earth; except only in his non-age, before he has lived to the years of discretion. Children, indeed, in their infancy, have no knowledge to discern between good and evil: [Deuteronomy 1:39](#). But men, not discerning good from evil, or choosing evil rather than good, are many degrees beneath babes.

SECONDLY, Nor will reason hesitate at all upon this particular, That there are degrees of goodness found among pleasures and delights; some are better than others. Every life is not alike pleasant and happy. To deny this, is to make the most despicable worm, or fly, equally happy with the most excellent creature upon earth. And beside, for the conviction of such debauched persons as I am here arguing with, it will follow clearly from the denial of that truth, that they really gain nothing to themselves, by all their extravagant and licentious courses; there being altogether as much pleasure and felicity, in a temperate, chaste, and sober life, as there is in that beastly life they live; and their very departure from the way of sobriety, to embrace the ways of debauchery, most clearly evinces to the world, that they do not think all pleasures equal; but that they do confidently expect to find more pleasure and satisfaction in the way that they choose, than they did in the way of sobriety, which they have left and abandoned.

THIRDLY, I cannot be so uncharitable to think, but the relicts of reason in the most profligate person, will readily admit and grant, That wherever the good of pleasure, profit, and honor, meet together, and jointly conspire to make the life of a man more comfortable, and more durable upon earth; that is much rather to be chosen, than a mere transient touch of sensitive pleasure, accompanied with present regret, and followed with the ruin of estate, name, honor, soul, and body. He who thinks otherwise, is more fit for a bedlam, than a rational and sober confutation. These things therefore I take for granted, they being innate and self-evident notions and principles in all men.

5 The wisdom and goodness of God are clearly discernible, in leaving such principles of reason, and common notices of conscience in men after the fall, as prompt them naturally unto justice, chastity, temperance, and sobriety; and do struggle within them, to restrain them from, or recover them out of their immoralities; from which many advantages do result.

For hereby God is acknowledged all the world over; men everywhere showing by these things the work of the law written in their hearts; [Romans 2:15](#).

Hereby kingdoms and commonwealth are preserved; this being the common bridle, which restrains the outrageous lusts of millions of men, which else would turn the world into confusion; though here and there some have slipped bridle and run into all excess of riot. We justly admire the providence of God, in butting, bounding, and restraining the boisterous ocean, by mountains, rocks, and sands: and as much is he to be admired, in curbing the insatiable lusts of men, by these innate principles of reason and conscience.

Hereby the way to sin is in some measure barred and shut up: and the further progress of sinners, already entered into, stopped and denied. For actions done with regret, cannot be supposed to be done so frequently and furiously, as if they were done without any regret; or that the way to sin was smoothed to them with a full consent and approbation of their whole self. For most sinners find in themselves what Medea did, 'They both see and approve that which is better, though they follow that which is worse.'

In a word, these relicts of reason and conscience in men, are fit handles to catch hold on, for the turning them about from Satan unto God. When Paul reasoned with Felix, about temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, his words laid hold upon these handles, and gave him such a shake, that the text says, Felix trembled. And, O! that this might take hold of the reason and conscience of every profane reader, and produce some more excellent and lasting effect upon his soul.

6 These notices and dictates of reason and conscience in men, being so necessary, and many ways beneficial to themselves, as well as to the whole community; it must

therefore be a horrid villainy to war against them; and, by violence, to suppress and enslave them to their own lusts.

This is, as if a company of desperate ruffians, should assault innocent and noble travelers upon the lawful road, bind and gag their guides, while they rob and prostitute them. Thus deal brutish lusts, (headed by the devil) with the affections of men, traveling along the lawful road of duty, under the conduct of reason and conscience. For this villainy it was, that the apostle tells us, "The wrath of God was revealed from Heaven against the Heathens, who held the truth in unrighteousness," [Romans 1:18](#). They had the light of natural reason and conscience in them, the inbred notions of good and evil; which raised their hopes or fears, according to the nature and quality of their actions.

But their headstrong boisterous lust, rudely and violently brake in upon reason and conscience, imprisoned and bound them; as Zedekiah did the faithful prophet Jeremiah, for the discharge of his duty to him. For this, "the wrath of God was revealed from Heaven against them." And indeed, we cannot wonder it should be incensed against them, as it will against all that act like them. For into such a sin as this, many direful aggravations fall in together, to make it a monstrous and prodigious sin. Here we find an high and causeless abuse of the noblest natural faculties and powers of a man's own soul. What harm have your reason and conscience done you by stimulating and persuading you to temperance, chastity, and sobriety: or by struggling and striving with you, to prevent both your present and future ruin? Do they lay their faithful and loving hands of restraint upon you, when they see you running headlong into destruction? And do they deserve for this, and no worse than this, to be thus trampled under foot, and abused? Ask yourself, man, Whether you think your very dog deserves to be hanged, for opening at midnight, and taking that thief by the throat, who came to cut your? And dare you use those noble powers within you, worse than you would use a dog? Humanity would blush at such an action.

These vile abuses of your reason and conscience carry also in them an horrid contempt of God; whose patent, officers, and delegates, your reason and conscience are. Those certainly sin with an high hand against the Lord, who make nothing to control, kick, and lay in irons, his commission-officers, appointed for no other end, but their present and future felicity. Nay,

Such men as these are found in a plain controversy with the devil, and that in a most unnatural and horrid plot against their own souls and bodies. Their light and their lusts are struggling together. Sin and conscience are combating one with another; the one to destroy, the other to save the man. Dare you join with your lusts against your light, and think not to be brought in as a party and confederate with the devil? The stopping of the mouth of your conscience, fully proves both your consent and concealment: and if proved consent and concealment make you not a party and accessory, it will be very strange.

Plutarch relates a story of a Persian, who scuffling in the dark with a magician, against whom he had a grudge; and not being able to conquer him himself, called upon his friend who stood by him with a naked sword ready to strike, but dared not, for fear of killing his friend: The Persian cries out, 'Strike, strike, however your stroke fall; thrust at an adventure. I care not, so you kill the magician, though you kill him through my own body.'

Much so stands the case here, with a little variation. You are furiously set upon the enjoyment of your lusts; nothing will quiet you, but their satisfaction. Your reason and conscience will oppose it and struggle hard with you, to with-hold you from them. But you care not in the rage of your insatiable appetite, though your reason

and conscience both fall in the combat, rather than your lusts should not be satisfied. Oh, what brutes! yes, what monsters, can sin turn men into!

7. If men have not quite extinguished both reason and conscience by debauchery, and divested themselves of humanity; one would think, no motion or address can possibly be made to them more fair, rational, and inoffensive, than this, that they would be pleased but to consult themselves, and hearken to the native and unconstrained voice of their own reason and conscience, before they engage themselves in matters of great concernment, upon which both their present and eternal welfare do depend; or, if they are already engaged, yet at least to lend an ear to what they have to offer for their recovery, before it be too late.

You are not here urged and pressed, to hearken to the voices of your enemies that hate you, or to the counsel and advice of mere strangers, who know not your affairs; but to hearken to yourselves, to be your own arbitrators and judges, to draw up the award with your own hand. It is a strange and an hard case indeed, and scarce to be supposed, that men should fall out with themselves at such a rate, that they had rather hear the voice of their mortal enemy the devil, and listen to his advice and counsel, than to the voice of their own reason and conscience.

We all account it madness in Balaam, to beat his innocent donkey, and threaten to kill her for shunning the sword of the angel, that opposed his passage in a sinful and dangerous expedition; but how many use both their reason and conscience worse than donkeys, because they dare not go forward, and desperately carry them into the very midst of dangers and miseries, which they plainly foresee, and warn them of?

What injuries have your reason or conscience done you, man? What affronts have they given you; that you will not allow them to speak, or offer one word, though never so pertinent, seasonable and necessary? There is a civility due from us to mere strangers; yes, to strangers of an inferior rank and quality. The least we can do, is to give them a patient hearing; and not interrupt them, while they speak nothing but what is rational, pertinent, and necessary, especially if it be to their own good and advantage. It is strange, men should not think themselves as much obliged to pay civility and respect to their own reasons and consciences, as they daily pay to mere strangers and inferiors. Give them but a patient hearing, and they will both tell you;

'We are your appointed guardians, and have our commission from God, to advise, direct, and counsel. We are your faithful and inward friends; yes, we are your own self, and the best and noblest part of yourself too. At our hands God will require your blood, should you perish by our silence or treachery. We cannot be both silent and innocent, both are in such hazard. Do not abuse us, and stop our mouths from crying out, stop, stop; when we see you departing from the paths of honesty, honor, and safety, and taking the direct road to that gulf of misery, in which few (if any) footsteps are found of such as return again, that are far engaged therein.

'Suffer us but fairly and friendly to expostulate the matter with you. What design can we have against your true interest; while your, and ours, cannot possibly be opposite, but one and the same interest?'

Well then, that which your reason and conscience offers, being so weighty, fair, and just, and what your own interest plainly lies in; I will not be so uncharitable, as to suppose you will either refuse to hear, or reject what they have to say, in the following cases and debates.

Chapter III

Wherein the true censure and judgment of right reason and conscience, are given upon profane swearing, and blaspheming the name of God: As also their replies to several pleas offered in defense or excuse thereof.

1. GOD bestowed on man the noble faculty of speech, (a peculiar favor and privilege) for two ends and uses.

(1.) That by the use of his tongue, he may glorify his Maker, and sound forth the praises of his Redeemer.

(2.) That we might thereby be able to communicate our minds one to another, in all our necessary and convenient interests and concernments, whether civil or religious. This member, (the tongue) though small in quantity, is found to be mighty in efficacy; and while it is kept under the rule and government of grace, the words that drop from it, are as apples of gold in pictures of silver Gracious words are bread to feed, and water to refresh the souls of others. A sanctified tongue is as a tree of life. Conversion, edification, and consolation, are the delicious fruits of the lips.

But the tongues of some men break loose from under all the laws and rules both of reason and religion, and serve only to vent the froth and filth, which abound in the heart, as in a fountain of pollution: For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. The tongue moves lightly, but falls heavily; it strikes soft, but wounds deep. It would not spare men of the highest rank and eminence, did not the fear of capital punishments teach them so much wit, to keep their tongues in prison, that they may keep their bodies out of prison. And though, for this reason, they are afraid of making too bold with the names of men; yet having no fear of God at all, they fall upon his great and dreadful name, tossing it to and fro, without any respect or reverence.

Augustus prohibited the common use of his name, lest it should grow too cheap and vile, by the common and needless using of it. The name of Mercurius Trismegistus was very sparingly used, because of the great reverence the people had for him. The very Heathens were afraid to pronounce the name of their great God, Demogorgon, as fearing the earth would tremble, when his name was mentioned. how does the reverence of Heathens to their false gods, expose and aggravate the impudence of professed Christians, in their vile indignities and abuses of the great and terrible name of the true God! Yes, they not only take up his name vainly and rashly into their lips, but audaciously insert it by a profane oath into their common talk, as that which gives the grace, leper, and ornament to their discourses. Some have not been ashamed to say, what pity is it, that swearing should be a sin, which gives so great a grace and ornament to language?

2. Swearing by the name of God in a righteous cause, when called thereto by due authority, is not only a lawful, but a religious act, founded upon, and directed to the honor of God's omniscience; whereunto there is a solemn appeal made, in every promissory oath, and a religious acknowledgment made him, of his infallible knowledge of the truth or falsehood of our hearts, and all the secrets of them, be they never so involved and inward things.

The lawful use and end of swearing, is to put an end to all strife, and to maintain both equity and charity among men; the two bonds and ligaments of human society. Now, it being the sovereign right and property of God alone, infallibly to search and try the hearts and reins of men, he thereby becomes the infallible witness to the truth or falsehood of what they speak; so that in every such lawful oath, there is not only a solemn appeal, and in that appeal an ascription of glory to his sovereign omniscience; but therein (implicitly at least) they put themselves under his wrath and curse, in case they swear falsely; which makes this action most sacred and solemn.

The deep corruption of human nature by the fall, makes these appeals to God under a curse necessary. For it is supposed, though men be false and deceitful, yet there is some reverence of a Deity, and fear of his wrath and curse, left unextinguished in their fallen nature. So that men will rather speak the truth (though to their own shame and loss) than by invoking so glorious a name in vain, put both soul and body under his wrath and curse. By which it appears what an awful and solemn thing an oath is; and that every good man, not only takes a lawful oath with holy fear and trembling, because of the solemnity of the action; but rather ought to chose death, than to swear profanely, because of the horrid malignity of the action.

3. The contumely and malignity found in profane oaths, appears in that terrible threatening, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain:" A threatening, altogether as just and righteous, as it is severe and terrible. This sin admits of degrees of guilt. It is highly sinful to swear by the name of God lightly and vainly in our common discourses, though the oath be clipped, and half suppressed, or disguised in the pronunciation of it; which argues remains of fear and shame in the sinner.

It is yet worse (and indeed not a jot below blasphemy) to swear by any other name, than the name of God: For in so doing, they attribute to a creature the sovereign and incommunicable property of God, set that creature in the very throne of God, and invest it with the regalities of his omniscience, to know our hearts, and almighty power, to avenge the wrong upon us, done to himself, as well as to men, by false-swearing.

But to break in rudely and blasphemously upon the sacred and tremendous name of God, with bold and full-mouthed oaths, striking through his sacred name with direct contumelious blasphemies; this argues an heart, from which all fear of God is utterly expelled and banished.

Yet some there are, grown up to that prodigious height of impiety, that they dare assault the very heavens, and discharge whole volleys of blasphemies against the glorious majesty which dwells there. They are not afraid to bid defiance to him, and challenge the God that made them, to do his worst. They deck and adorn (as they account it) their common discourse with bloody oaths, and horrid imprecations; not reckoning them genteel and modish without them. It consists not with the greatness of their spirits, to be wicked at the common rate. They are willing to let the world know, that they are none of those puny, silly fellows, that are afraid of invisible powers, or so much cowards, as to slip a full-mouthed oath, by suppressing, or whispering-the emphatical sounding syllable; but think an horrid blasphemy makes the most sweet and graceful cadency in their hellish rhetoric.

They glory, that they have fully conquered all those troublesome notions of good and evil, virtue and vice, Heaven and Hell, to that degree, that they can now affront the divine Majesty to his very face, and not fear the worst he threatens in his word against their wickedness.

If there be a God, (which they scarce believe) they are resolved, audaciously to provoke him to give them a convincing evidence of his being. And if he be (as they are told he is) rich in patience and forbearance, they are resolved to try how far his patience will extend, and what load of wickedness it is capable to bear.

If their damnation be not yet sure enough, they will do their utmost to make it sure, by breaking down the only bridge whereby they can escape damnation: I mean, by trampling under their feet the precious blood and wounds of the Son of God, and imprecating the damnation of Hell upon their own souls, as if it slumbered too long, and were too slow-paced in its motions towards them. I am of opinion, there are few Christians to be found on earth, crying so often, Lord, pardon; Lord save me; as

some wretches among us cry, (I tremble to speak it!) God damn me: the devil take me.

Herein they seem to envy the happiness of the devils, and damned wretches in Hell, and endeavor (as one speaks) to snatch damnation out of God's hand before the time; as if they could not be soon enough among their roaring and howling companions in the midst of the everlasting burnings. But, why such haste to be perfectly miserable? The very devils themselves deprecate torments before their time, though you imprecate them. Your misery makes haste enough towards you; you need not quicken it, or thus run to meet it.

I am persuaded, that if the bars of the bottomless pit were broken up, and devils should ascend in human shapes, none among them would be found hastening upon themselves the fullness and completeness of their misery, as you do. It is a truth, though a strange one, that it is much easier to find, than imagine men upon earth professing Christian religion, yet in some respect sunk below the wickedness of the diabolical nature, by making damnation both the subject of their drollery, and the object of their very wishes and desires. Some greater masters of our language, may more lively and emphatically express the horrid nature of this sin; but excuse me, reader, if I believe no words or thoughts can measure the height or depth of this monstrous abomination.

4. Such contumelious language as this (especially when grown modish, or common) cannot but be a most high and dreadful provocation of God, and such an one as will certainly bring down his desolating vengeance, not only upon the heads of blasphemers themselves, but upon the states and kingdoms that connive at, or tolerate them. We read, [Zechariah 5:2, 3, 4](#). of a flying roll full of curses, the length thereof twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits; which shall enter into the house of the swearer, remain in the midst of his house, and consume it with the timber and stones thereof. Blasphemy and profane swearing are like barrels of gunpowder laid under the foundation of many great and noble families, many of which are already-blown up, and laid in ruins by this sin, and many more are ready to follow, as soon as the justice of God shall give fire to it.

And (comparatively speaking) it were happy if the mischief ended here; but, alas! it causes God to commence a quarrel with the whole land; [Hosea 4:2, 3](#). 'And because of oaths, the land mourns.' You find in Isaiah 38 what it was that brought that unparalleled desolation upon that famous and flourishing city of Jerusalem, and the whole land of Judah; 'for Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongues and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.'

But, alas! scripture-threatenings signify scarce so much with these men, as the predictions of the weather in an almanac; and, which is strange to consider, the very execution of scripture-threatenings before their eyes, will not terrify them from this inhuman wickedness; even these also are laughed to scorn, or easily forgotten.

O! that God would set it home with power, upon the spirits of all that are in power, to take some speedy and effectual course to remove this accursed thing, this iniquity to be punished by the judge; one (and a chief one too) of those direful provocations of Heaven, to which we owe a special part of our national infelicity at this day. We all acknowledge, that all prosperity and success depends upon God; if so, reason will readily own, that it must be therefore the interest of kingdoms and commonwealths, to prevent and restrain those impieties, which so audaciously provoke and incense his wrath. As much is this their duty and interest, as it is the interest of a courtier to avoid offences of his royal master, the king, upon whose favor his honor and preferment depends: Or as it is the duty of the owner, to keep in that ox which is used to goeing, or cover that pit into which some have, and others of his family are like to fall: or carefully and speedily to remove that gunpowder,

which his enemies have placed under the foundation of his house, to blow it up. Both reason and experience will inform the rulers of this world, that professed rebels to the God of Heaven, are never like to make useful subjects in the kingdom of men.

5. Until public justice lay hold upon such offenders, let us try what close reasoning may effect, for their reformation. It is hard to imagine that men of sense should so generally, and so far engage themselves in this course of profane swearing, and have nothing at all to say for themselves.

If they have no reason at all, to offer in justification or excuse of what they do, they act the brutes, not the men, and are self-condemned already.

It is a question with me, whether the soul of man, on this side Hell, can sink so deep into the nature of a devil, as to sin because he will sin; or to engage himself in a course of sin, without any respect at all to some carnal interest, either of profit, pleasure, or honor?

The thief has a visible temptation of gain to allure him, or pinching necessity, to induce him. The liar is drawn in, to commit that second sin, to cover the shame and turpitude of a former. The adulterer promises himself pleasure in the satisfaction of his lusts. And though men generally stand amazed to think, what that temptation should be, which prevails upon the swearer; yet doubtless, something there is he has to plead in excuse and extenuation of his fault. Whatever it be, let it be produced, and weighed in the balance of right reason; *Valeat quantum valere potest*, Let it have its due value and consideration. And could I imagine anything more likely to be their inducements, than what I shall here mention, I would not conceal them. There are only four things, that can fall within the compass of my imagination, pleaded by them, when seriously charged with the evil of the fact.

1. Some of them will happily tell us, that they would not swear as they do, if they could gain credit to what they say without it; but the incredulity of others, provokes them to add so many oaths to their single affirmations.

2. Others of them will tell us, they only swear in their passion, when provoked by injuries received from others; and if men did not wrong them, they would not wrong God as they do.

3. Some will plead, that swearing is become modish, the badge and character of a gentleman; that it gives them reputation among men of their own rank and quality; and that they shall be looked upon as sneaking fools, unfit for the company of gentlemen, if they could not discourse with them in this dialect.

4. And some will confess the practice is evil; but that they have gotten such an ill habit, and the sin is become so customary with them, that many times they know not whether they swear or no.

I cannot imagine, nor (I think) they themselves, what else is pleadable in excuse, or extenuation of this horrid sin: Let these that are produced, have a fair trial at the bar of reason; and carry yourselves towards this sin forever hereafter, according to that righteous verdict yourselves shall be forced to pass upon it.

6. To begin with the first plea. You say, you would not swear as you do, could you gain credit to your words without it. Weigh this question in the upright balance of your own reason, whether any wise or sober man in the world, will find himself ever the more obliged to believe what you say, by the addition of blasphemous oaths and imprecations, to your plain and simple affirmations or negations. I cannot think, that you yourselves would give the more credit to any man, that should profess his sincerity to you, by finding him, in that his very profession, false and treacherous to

his God. Say, reason, do not you take this for a sure truth; that he who makes no conscience of being true to God, will never make much conscience of being false to men? For what is that which gives any man's words reputation among wise and sober men, but the supposition of his integrity, and conscientious fear of his deceit and deceit? Take away that, and with it you take away the credibility of all his reports and affirmations.

If I look upon the person that speaks, as a man of integrity and conscientious tenderness, I have a sufficient ordinary security of the truth of what he says. But if I look upon him as a man of a prostitute and seared conscience, that dares venture upon any sin; a man, in whom there is no awe of God, to produce veracity in his words; then my reason presently concludes, that where there is no truth, there ought to be no trust: For truth is the very ground-work and foundation of trust. Now, what truth can we suppose to be left in that man, that sticks not, upon any trivial occasion, to break asunder all the obligations of a creature to his Creator? together with all the bonds of kindness, his great and best benefactor has bound him withal; and without any the least injury he can pretend his God has done him, to fly in his very face with the most contumelious language? Can we suppose any truth to be in, or any trust to be due to such a man as this?

Good men and bad are thus contradistinguished, [Ecclesiastes 9:2](#). 'Him that swears, and he who fears an oath.' A conscientious man is so afraid of an oath, that he would rather chose to die, than swear some kind of oaths: And though he be satisfied of the lawfulness of an oath in general, and of the matter of an oath he swears in particular; yet a holy awe and fear of God fills his heart, when he swears lawfully and necessarily, lest he should fail in the manner of it, by not giving that due reverence to the name of God, which so sacred and solemn an action requires.

But from profane swearing, and blaspheming the name of God, every man's reason may justly and plainly infer this conclusion; that the fear of God, is not in that man's heart. And where there is no fear of God, what truth can be supposed in him; or what trust can be due to his words or oaths? But the more he swears, still the less reason all wise men have to believe him. And I am sure, the credulity of fools adds little reputation to him. This plea therefore, for profane swearing, is altogether shamed, baffled, and cashiered, by the common reason of mankind.

7. Call therefore to the bar of reason the second plea, or apology, for profane swearing. You say, you swear not, unless provoked by injuries men have done you.

This is so weak a plea for so great a sin, that I wonder men are not ashamed to bring it into the court of reason. This is the true sense, and strength of it: My enemy has abused me; therefore I will avenge the wrong my enemy has done me, upon my best friend and benefactor. I challenge you to give but the color, or shadow of sound reason, why, upon any abuse you have received from men, you should fall so injuriously upon the name of God, who never abused or injured you, since he gave you a being, but has always done you good. Tell me, man, (if you have the reason of a man in you) what wrong has God done you? Wherein has he injured you, that you thus wreak your revenge upon him? If an enemy have affronted you, reason would tell you, you ought not to take revenge for it, upon your friend, and best benefactor. Have you none but God to abuse, when men abuse and injure you? Can your reason comprobate and allow such an action as this? Satan instigates the corruptions of men to injure you; and you fly in the face of God for it, whose laws severely prohibit such actions, and will avenge the injuries done unto him. Speak no more therefore forever, in the way of excusing the horrid sinfulness of this fact against God, upon the account of injuries done you by your fellow creature. The case is plainly determined, and cast over the bar of reason with contempt and abhorrence.

8. Come we next to your third excuse, or plea; That swearing is become modish, and gives you a great reputation among men of your own rank and quality; and that you shall be looked upon as sneaking fellows, unfit for the society of gentlemen, if you did not discourse with them in their own dialect.

This apology for sin is of no late date: Salvian mentions it as far back as his own time: Profane persons then thus pleaded for themselves, that they were compelled to be evil, lest they should be accounted vile.

Whether there be any weight in this apology for swearing, will quickly appear, now it is to be laid in the balance of true reason.

1. And first of all, let us consider what makes a true gentleman; and whether profane swearing have any place in his true character and description. A gentleman, is one that springs from famous and renowned ancestors, and degenerates not from their virtue and honor.

This is the man, whom the Latins call a gentleman: Because we suppose a man of such an extraction and education, more gentle, affable, and condescending to inferiors, and to keep a stricter government over his tongue and passions, than the rude plebians are accustomed to do.

Men of genteel extraction and education, are persons, whose passions are supposed to move more gently than other men's: And if at any time they be moved disorderly, yet are they more placable, and sooner reduced, than those of sordid and baser spirits are.

It is virtue which raises and ennobles families at first, all human blood is derived from, and equally tainted by Adam. Nobler, and baser blood, is an after-difference, made by virtue and vice among men. And as virtue first ennobled, and raised some families above others, so it will still continue the line of honor in their posterity: And as their virtues shall increase, so will their honor proportionably do.

The case truly and plainly standing thus; it is morally impossible to make debauchery the proper badge and character of gentility. For men of eminency (above the vulgar) are more obliged than they, to shun all base and sordid actions: And as their honor increases, so do their obligations to temperance and sobriety increase, and strengthen upon them proportionably.

It was therefore a right and rational observation of Hierome; I see nothing desirable in nobility, (says he) but this; that such men are bound by a certain kind of necessity, not to degenerate from, or stain the glory and honor of their renowned ancestors. And the reason is strong and evident: For virtue being that which first differenced their blood from others, they are obliged, by all the value they have for the honor of their blood and families, to shun those vices which stain that honor and dignity. And what vice can dishonor and debase them more than profane swearing? For if the arms of many noble families have been rever.d for treason against the king; it is irrational to imagine, that treason against the King of kings, should add a new mark of honor: And what is blasphemy but treason against God? It is plain then, from the true rise and character of a gentleman, profane swearing neither first raised, nor can preserve and continue, but rather blots and exposes their reputation and honor.

2. Though I am most willing to pay a becoming deference to all persons of noble and genteel extraction, yet, in faithfulness to their true honor, I am here obliged to say, (and in saying it, I can offend no man that has a true sense of honor) that their natural descent can never give them so much honor, as the vices I am here censuring will reflect ignominy and dishonor upon him. To be a slave of Satan, and your own lusts, is such a mark of infamy, as all the honorable and illustrious titles in the world can never cover It is better to rise by virtue to honor, from contemptible parents,

than by vice and profaneness, to grow contemptible from honorable parents. It is your honor to have many servants at your command, obsequiously attending a nod of your head, or a beck of your finger: But ask your own reason, gentlemen, whether it be not a greater dishonor, for you to attend as obsequiously yourselves upon every beck and nod of Satan and your own lusts?

Were your natural birth once ennobled by the new birth, you would be more than thrice honorable, grace would make you more illustrious than your natural extraction does, or can do. Or if morality (which is far inferior to that honor, and for which Heathens themselves have been renowned in the Pagan world) did but adorn and beautify your conduct; though it cannot entitle you to Heaven, or secure to you the glory of the world to come; yet it would make you shine in the eyes of men in this world, and taking its advantage from your honorable extraction, make you differ from persons of an inferior rank, as stars of greater magnitude and luster. I hope, gentlemen valuing themselves upon their honor, will not be offended at a sharper invective than this, against those vices that darken and eclipse their honor, both in the eyes of God, as well as in the judgment of all wise and good men.

3. Suppose what you say to be true, that some profane gentlemen should scoff and deride you, for your sober carriage, and decorous language, (things which ought to be inseparable from true gentility) I would in this case appeal to your own reason, why you should not enjoy your own pleasure in as full latitude and liberty, as they do theirs? they delight in the dialect of devils; you, in pure and inoffensive language. If they will drink the puddled waters, and you refuse them for the pure crystal streams; you have, to be sure, as much reason (and a thousand times more) to assert your liberty to be virtuous, than they have (or can pretend to have) a privilege to be vicious.

And if they will be offended with you for this, their offence is groundless in themselves, and will be greatly advantageous to you. For you need not doubt but you may find better company than theirs any where on this side Hell. I remember that rational and excellent apology, which Tertullian made for the Christians in his time against the Gentiles: 'Wherein (says he) do we offend you, if we will not partake with you in your delights! If we sustain any damage by such our refusal, the injury can only be our own: We reject your pleasures, and you are not delighted with ours.'

You will show yourselves true and worthy gentlemen, in abandoning and rejecting (upon so noble an account as this) all further unnecessary society with such gentlemen; for so they deserve to be called, rather than gentlemen. They boast, indeed the honor of their blood, while they trample the precious and invaluable blood of Christ under their feet: They boast their eminency above the vulgar, while mean time they labor vilely to him that set them there.

I am sure there is not a devil in Hell, but is by nature of a more honorable and illustrious house, than the proudest blasphemers. They are angels by nature, though devils by practice. They have little reason to boast of their original excellency, which now aggravates their misery. Sin darkened their luster, degraded them from their natural dignity; and so it will do theirs also, that imitate devils in their blasphemy and malignity against God.

4. It may as easily be proved as asserted, that to make cursing, swearing, and blaspheming, the badges and characteristic marks of a true gentleman, is the foulest blot and mark of infamy, which the malice of their enemies can devise to put into their escutcheons; and such an affront, as ought to be highly resented by all true gentlemen.

Should the most malicious enemy you have in the world, sue an herald to devise a mark of infamy for your coats of arms, to make you ridiculous, and a by-word among the people; he could never dishonor you at that rate, you this way dishonor yourselves.

For if debauchery be both asserted and allowed to be the true badge of gentility, then your own reason will infer, that all the ancient epithets of gentility ought thereupon to be altered. And would those gentlemen, think you, take it well, to have the titles, and epithets of ingenious, worthy, honorable, and noble, changed into cursing, swearing, damning, blaspheming gentlemen? You cannot but see the inconsistency of both. If, therefore, you will adopt and wear the latter, you must either cashier and renounce the former, or try to make the former consistent with the latter, which I am sure the most ingenious among you will find an hard task to do.

5. I humbly beg permission to propound one plain blunt question to you, gentlemen. The matter of it is too rational to be rejected, and let that make atonement for the blunt manner of its proposal. And the question is this:

QUESTION Whether your reason and conscience be fully satisfied, that when you die (as you know you shortly must,) you shall then appear before the judgment-seat of God, in the quality and character of gentlemen? Do you truly think you shall find the more favor there, for the sake of your noble descent, and honorable extraction, or that your gentility shall make an atonement for all your impiety?

I am persuaded, gentlemen, you do not; you cannot think so. You know you must appear before that God, with whom there is no respect of persons; a God that will certainly damn the impenitent blasphemer. The man must assuredly go to Hell, [1 Corinthians 6:9, 10](#). And if the man be damned, certainly the gentleman is in a bad case.

6. In a word, I am past all doubt, and so may you too, that this genteel mode of swearing, drinking, and whoring, which has spread so far in this present infamous age, into protestant states and kingdoms, is the very spirit and strength of a Popish plot, subtly projected, and industriously managed, for their effectual reduction to Popery.

For nothing in the world can reconcile men to Popery; yes, and even endear them to it, like debauchery. Under Popery, gentlemen may come up to the rates of costly pardons and indulgences, for their greatest sins. They may give themselves liberty to wallow in profaneness all the days of their life. They may give their lusts the utmost scope and liberty, and yet have a plenary pardon when they die. So that they need not abridge themselves of any sinful liberty, or boggle at the loudest blasphemy, while they have that in their pocket to still and quiet something that grumbles in their bosom. Do you not see, gentlemen, the natural tendencies of these things? Does not debauchery look like a shoeing-horn to Popery.

Besides, gentlemen, the devil and the Pope are confederates in a farther design upon you; and if their design hit, they hope to win by power, what they may miss by policy; and that by the very same method of corrupting and debauching persons of eminent rank and quality, in Protestant kingdoms and commonwealths. For (as a learned man in queen Elizabeth's days rightly observed) these are the men especially interested in the public affairs of kingdoms. These represent the people in parliament. These make their laws, administer the government in peace and war. To their hands are committed the great concerns of nations. These are they that fill the seats of public judicature.

If gentlemen, therefore, by this means be generally corrupted and infected by debauchery, their influence and example is likely to infect the greatest part of the body politic, and either make the people easily pliable to the charms and courtships

of Popery, for the reason before-mentioned; or so besot their excellent parts, and enervate their masculine courage, that they shall fall an easy prey to their (otherwise) weak and despicable enemies.

And certainly, gentlemen, we have all cause to reckon this plot very far advanced, when we shall see debauchery everywhere made the badge of gentility; and chastity, temperance, and sobriety, become the marks and notes of infamy. When civility itself shall be hissed with derision out of some gentlemen's company; and the more temperate and sober any man is, by so much the less fit to be a gentleman's companion.

By this time I hope you are convinced, that true gentility is no enemy to sobriety, nor debauchery the character of gentility; and will at last pardon, if not thank me, for endeavoring this way to secure the true honor of some, while I rationally argue down the vices and follies of others. This plea for debauchery, you see, has the same fate the former had, and deserves never to be mentioned more.

9. There is but one plea more; and that as silly and irrational as any of the former: and that is,

The custom and habit of swearing, which you say is hard to be broken. This sin is become so customary to you, that now you scarce note or observe it in yourselves.

That there may be truth in the matter of this plea, I neither deny nor doubt; but that it is a rational and allowable plea, will never be granted by your own reason. The thing you say may be true; for we sometimes find, that when you are taxed for swearing, you will presently swear that you did not swear; and curse him to his face, that accuses you for cursing.

But pray, gentlemen, make your own reason judge, whether custom be a valid and allowed plea for profane swearing and cursing. Say, reason, will you allow that one of the highest aggravations of sin, is pleadable in your court for the excuse and extenuation of it? Will you give it under your hand, that the man is the less guilty, because the more wicked? Dare you to warrant it that God will take the less notice of the wrongs men do him, because they are used and accustomed so to wrong and abuse him every hour in the day? If your reason can allow and warrant this, I must say it is different, yes, and opposite to the common reason of mankind.

Say not, I make my own reason the rule and standard of yours, or other men's. For I argue here (as I have done all along before) upon the common topics and maxims of reason, generally allowed all the world over by mankind. If a practice be evil, the oftener it is repeated, the more still it is aggravated.

To be plain and faithful with you gentlemen, if it be your custom to blaspheme, it is God's custom to damn blasphemers. If you use to be drunken and unclean, God uses to punish drunkards and adulterers (if impenitent and unreformed) with his everlasting wrath.

And when you are cited (as shortly you must be) before the awful tribunal of the great, the just, and the terrible God, ask but yourselves, whether such a plea as this, be like to excuse in whole, or in part, and take off the heinousness of these horrid impieties? Will your profane oaths, and direful execrations and imprecations, be excused in the least degree, by telling him, Lord, I was so accustomed to blaspheme your name; cursing, swearing, and damning, were so familiar language in my lips from day to day, that I had quite lost the sense of the action, as well as of the evil thereof; and therefore, Lord, pity, spare and have mercy on me: O damn not my soul to your everlasting wrath. For though I have imprecated it upon myself, yet frequent custom at length distinguished all my sense and conscience of the evil thereof, until at length I could play with a direful imprecation as an harmless thing; nay, thought

it an ornament and grace to my speech, a gallant expression, alamode the times and places I lived in.

Is not this as good a plea, and not a jot better than that of a malefactor upon his trial for life and death, when theft or robbery have been evidently and substantially proved upon him, and the judge demand, eth, What he has to say for himself, why sentence of death should not pass upon him? Mercy, my Lord, mercy cries he! for I have been so used and accustomed to filching and thieving from my youth up, that for some years before I was apprehended, every one's goods and cattle seemed to me to look like my own; so that I scarce knew when I stole, and when I did not.

And thus, gentlemen, you have heard a fair trial of the sin of profane swearing, and imprecations of damnation; and you have heard the verdict of your own reason and conscience upon the case. The Lord help you to break off and reform that sin, for which there is not one word of apology or excuse now left in your mouths.

Let me close all I have to say upon this head, with one plain question: Do you think you must die, or live here forever, as you now do? If you are convinced (as all the living are supposed to be) that you must die, do you desire an easy and comfortable, or a painful and terrible death? I presume there is no man living, that is convinced he must die, but desires naturally and rationally as easy and comfortable a dissolution as may be. If so, I appeal to your reason, whether profane swearing and blaspheming the name of God, be a proper rational way to obtain peace and comfort at death? With what hope or encouragement can those tongues of yours cry at death, Lord, have mercy upon me, which have profaned that name, and imprecated damnation from him, until you come into your last extremities, which convinced you, you could live no longer.

It is a serious question, and well worth a cool and solemn debate in your own reasons and consciences. Some of you are more immediately exposed to the dangers of death than others, readily to be disbanded by a bullet. If you fall, you must either fall considerately, or inconsiderately. If inconsiderately, and without any sense or conscience of this horrid guilt, you die impenitently, and consequently desperately and miserably. If considerately, and with awakened consciences, I demand, whether such guilt as this will not roar louder than the peals and volleys of those great and small guns do which breathe destruction upon you, and round about you? I have done my message plainly and faithfully to the very face of your reason and conscience; and if for my faithfulness and zeal, both for God's honor and yours, I am rewarded with your curses; yet, if you would forbear to blaspheme and rend in pieces the name of God, I shall not much regard the obloquy and reproach my name shall undergo and suffer upon that account: But I expect from you better fruit than this.

Chapter IV

Wherein reason and conscience are again consulted about the practice of drunkenness; and their righteous and impartial censure given upon that case.

1. **THOUGH** our souls and bodies be of vastly different natures and originals, yet they do clasp and embrace each other with most dear and tender affection. It is marvelous to behold such a spiritual and heavenly creature as the soul in all men, fervently loving, and in most men fondly doting upon a lump of clay, a clod of earth: it sympathizeth tenderly with it. If the lowest member of the body be in pain, the soul is presently concerned for it, and evidences itself to be so, by commanding the eyes both to watch and weep, the tongue to complain and moan, the hands to bind up its wounds with all imaginable tenderness, and carefully defend it from the least injurious touch. But if the whole be in danger, how do its nobler faculties of

understanding, memory, and invention, awaken and bestir themselves to the uttermost for its deliverance and safety.

While the soul lives in union with the body, it is filled with assiduous (and too often with exorbitant and distracting) cares, for its necessary support and comfort. And when it must be separated from it by death, what strong aversions to death does it ordinarily discover? The strong ties and bonds between it and the body, cannot be loosed without much conflict and struggling, evidenced by these emphatic groans it sends forth: groans which other men understand not, nor can be supposed to understand, until they themselves come to feel the parting-pull.

The reason of all which lies in the intimate relation which is between these different natures, which God has married together in the womb, from which time they have been companions and partners in all the comforts and troubles of life. The body is the soul's house in which it dwells, and still shall dwell, until death dissolve it. It is the soul's garment that clothes and covers it. It has worn this garment of flesh from the beginning, and is to wear it still, until sickness has brought it to rags, and death stripped it from the soul.

It is the tool and instrument by which it does all its works, while it is in this state of composition; and therefore the soul cannot but love it fervently. No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it.

2. The case so standing between the soul and body, the wisdom or folly of the soul is plainly discovered in its way and manner of governing the body, as the love and prudence of an husband is in the governing of his wife, or the master in ordering the affairs of his house; or the neat breeding of a man, in the lovely wearing of his garments; or the skill and care of an artificer, in the brightness, keenness, and sharpness of his tools.

Some husbands give evidence to the world of their governing prudence and ability, in such an allowance of liberty to their wives, as the laws of conjugal love require, and their state and incomes will conveniently bear, and no more; and in restraining their extravagancies, as well as by encouraging their virtuous courses, in keeping back no due encouragement to virtue, nor giving the least encouragement unto vice.

A well-bred man, that carries with him a becoming sense of his quality, and the decorum he ought accordingly to observe, will wear his garments decently, and becoming his rank; they shall be sure to be neat and clean, and sit fit and lovely upon his body. He abhors to wear a garment tumbled in the mire, and go like a beast, without regard to his reputation.

No prudent owner and governor of an house, will let the rain drop through the roof, nor choke up the passage to his door with a nasty dunghill. His house within shall be neat, and not nasty: the rooms clean and lovely: and yet abhors to suffer superfluous ornaments, and costly vanities, to swallow up his estate that should maintain it, and bring bailiffs (more odious than a dunghill) to his very doors.

The curious artificer, neither grinds away the substance of his instruments to make them bright and glittering, and set an edge too fine to hold one minute's use; nor yet suffers them to be thrown aside in some neglected corner, where rust and flaws shall render them utterly useless, or make him blush at the botches such instruments will cause in his work.

The prudent gardener will neither break the heart of his ground for want of rest and compost, nor yet overload it with dressings which brings forth nothing but rank and useless weeds; he will in a fit season turn in a stream of water to his meadows, like a cordial-draught to fainting spirits; but will not drown it, and rot the very roots of his grass, by letting in too much, or by suffering it to lie under water too long. He

will feed his horse high enough to perform his journey, and carry him through the mire; but will not feed him to such a height, that the rider shall neither be able to sit, nor command him.

In all these cases, the common prudence of every man directs him to that just mediocrity, wherein both his honor and profit do apparently lie. And what we say in such common cases and concerns as these, is as true, and much more excellent in the soul's prudent government of its own body, unto which it was espoused in the womb, and is its dear and constant partner, both in the present and future good or evil. It is the garment it wears, the instrument it uses, and the field it cultivates. It must neither deny the body those necessary supports and comforts which God and nature allow it, nor yet surfeit and overcharge it with more than it is able to bear. In either of these extremes, the extreme folly of the soul is discovered.

3. Now the dethroning of reason, and frequent oppressions of nature, by the practice of drunkenness, is the highest exaltation of folly in the soul of man; plainly manifesting its ignorance and inability to order and govern the body, to which it is married by a vital union.

Here is a foolish soul by misgovernment, dishonoring and destroying its vigorous and lovely body, under a pretense of love and kindness to it. We account it one of the greatest outward infelicities in this world, incident to a discreet and virtuous woman, to be headed and governed by a sottish fool, neither able to govern himself, or her, nor give a reason of his own actions or commands. A man whose folly shall make her blush in all sober companies he comes into, and forces her upon such a course of life, as she perfectly abhors, and will bring speedy ruin upon her; all men pity such a case as this. And this is the very case of many a lovely, vigorous body.

Only such a woman has two reliefs under her bondage, which the body of a drunkard wants. She can sometimes withdraw and retire from his company, and enjoy the relief of her solitude, which the wretched body of a drunkard cannot do until death; but is tied day and night to the company of its foolish soul, which is frequently abusing it, and imposing upon it.

Besides, such a woman may haply outlive her vicious abusive husband, and spend many a comfortable year in the world with a more discreet, sober and religious partner of her life, whose sobriety, discretion, piety, and love, shall make full compensation for all those years of misery and slavery she endured before. But the case before us admits no such relief: for as long as ever the body lives and breathes, the soul is, and must be with it, and in it. And though death will for a time separate and divorce them, yet the body's second marriage at the resurrection, can be with no other but the same soul which oppressed and ruined it in this world. And this second marriage will be far worse than the first; for though it were the sottish soul's slave and drudge in this world, and suffered many a sickness, shame, and loss by its folly; yet in the world to come, it must be its partner and companion in hell-torments for evermore, inasmuch as it was the instrument the soul used in most of those sins committed by it in this world. And this is the case of all bodies married to, and governed by souls that have neither reason nor religion enough prudently and soberly to order and govern their own bodies.

4. Sad and doleful, therefore, are the lamentations and complaints of the bodies of drunkards, against the folly and tyranny of their souls; and as just as sad. Let me here therefore act the part of an advocate for your bodies, which is a part of yourselves, and to which, by the law of nature, you owe love, care, and honor; let me bring in the body sighing out its own complaints in the ears of its own soul, and thus bemoaning itself to it.

"Oh, my soul! I have cause to lament the day that ever I was married to such a sottish fool as you are, who are destitute both of wisdom and love to rule and govern me. I may justly resume Job's lamentation upon your account, and say with him; "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night wherein it was said, there is a man-child conceived. Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the Spirit when I came out of the belly? For now should I have lain still, and been quiet, I should have slept; then had I been at rest."

"I have been a perfect slave and drudge to your unreasonable lusts and impositions. I was once an active, vigorous, lovely body, and had you been wise and sober, I had been happy. But you have been a cruel tyrant to me, oppressing and loading me with more than I was able to stand under. You have plunged me many times into those puddles of excess, wherein you have drowned your own reason, and my health. My well-mixed beauty is now turned into the color of flaming fire; my hands and legs shake, my tongue falters, my natural temperament is destroyed. You have made me miserable in this world, and intend to make me more wretched in the world to come.

"Sober nature gave me my stint and measure. I knew when it was enough, and gave you sufficient items and intimations (amidst your foolish frolics, that I could neither with honor or safety bear one glass more. But you were deaf to all my moans, and showed more mercy to your horse than me. Sick or well, able or unable, live or die, I must take in the full number of cups and bottles you enjoined me to take. Like another Pharaoh, you have required of me the full tale, whether I had strength to perform it or no. Yes, like another devil, you have sometimes cast me into fiery fevers, and watery dropsies; and will next cast me, if you continue this course, into hell-fire itself.

"Other souls have set you a better pattern in their more sober and prudent government of their bodies. They give their bodies the true pleasure of the creature, by keeping them to that happy mediocrity in which it consists. They devote their bodies to the service of God; you have devoted me to the immediate service of the devil. A majestic beauty sits upon their faces; sottishness and folly upon mine. Their knees are daily bowed in prayer to God; mine shake and tremble in the service of the devil. They enjoy pure and sanctified pleasures every day; but I am denied the sober pleasures of a beast. Their bodies will be happy with their souls in the world to come; but I must suffer eternally with you, and for you. You have both consumed me, and your estate given to support me; and now I am like to suffer as much by want, as I have done by excess; and all this through your mis-government. These feet (if you had pleased to command them) would as readily have carried you to your closet, or the assemblies of God's people, as to an ale-house or tavern. These fingers would have served to open and turn the blessed pages, which contain the oracles of God, as to cog a dye, or have shuffled and dealt a pack of cards. This tongue might have been melodiously employed in singing the praises of God among his people, as well as in swearing, roaring, and singing among drunken sots and fools, if you had been endued with governing wisdom.

"You know I could do nothing without you. You have a despotic power over all my members. They are at your beck, and you at the devil's. Better had it been for me, had I been the body of a contemptible worm or fly, than a body animated and governed by such a sottish fool as you are.

"And now, my soul, what have you to say for yourself? What tolerable account can you give to God or me, of these your vile abuses of both?"

5. Now let us hear what the soul of the drunkard has to plead, in its own excuse and defense, for all his wrongs against God, mischief to itself, ruin to his health, name, and estate. They have various excuses, though not one sound or rational one among

them all. Such as they are, let them be tried by the rule of reason, if any reason be yet left in them, who daily dethrone it by this worse than brutish practice.

That which they say for themselves, is this:

1. That their bodies are strongly constituted, more capacious to receive, and able to bear greater quantities of wine and strong drink, than others are; and therefore, why should they not drink down, and glory over those that vie with them?
2. Others say, they would not take the course they do, but that when they are sober and solitary, they are so pressed with the thoughts of their debts and encumbrances in the world, that they are upon a perfect rack, and they find nothing like good fellowship in a tavern or ale-house, so effectually relieving against the cares and anxieties of their minds.
3. Some will tell us, they are drawn into it by the snare of pleasure; nothing being so grateful to their palate, as their full load of generous wine, or strong drink. And seeing it is so pleasant and delightful to them, why should they deny and abridge themselves of their pleasures?
4. Others will profess, they had never taken this course, which they find upon many accounts pernicious to them; but that they are not able in civility to deny their intimate friends and companions, especially such with whom they have concerns in trade and business; and they must drink as they do, or suffer loss in their trade; and beside that, be stigmatized for fanatics.
5. They will also say, they are obliged in point of loyalty, to pledge him that consecrates the first glass to the king, or persons of quality and honor.
6. And, lastly, Some will tell us, they have plentiful estates, that will bear such expenses; and since their pockets are full, why should not their heads and stomachs be so too?

Besides these six apologies for drunkenness, nothing falls into my imagination, pleadable for this sin. We will weigh these that are pleaded, in the common balance of the reason of mankind, and try the validity of them one by one. And for

Excuses

Excuse I. And, first, To what you say of the capacities of your bodies, strength and ability of your constitutions, to receive and bear greater quantities of wine and strong drink, than others can; and therefore, why should you not give proof of it, when challenged, and great reputation to yourselves, by drinking down and glorying over such as vie with you?

To this I reply three things, which must be laid in the counter-balance; and let the balance be held in the upright hand of your own reason.

1. A strong and vigorous constitution will be readily acknowledged to be so great an external blessing and mercy, that no man of sound intellects ought to do anything to destroy it; but is obliged to use all proper methods for the preservation of it. If therefore temperance shall be found to preserve it, and excess to impair and destroy it; let your own reason judge, which of these two courses you are obliged to take. Consult either the best physicians, or your own and other men's experience; and they will tell you, That Seizures, palsies, gout, and innumerable other diseases are bred by such excesses, in the soundest and strongest constitutions, and death itself hastened by such intemperate courses; whereas temperance and sobriety might have made your lives more comfortable and durable. As strong as you are, frequent

drunkenness will bring Cain's curse upon your vigorous bodies, and make you go shaking and trembling (as he did) about the world.

2. Let it be demanded of your own reason, whether it do really judge that God bestowed more strength and vigor upon your bodies, than he has upon others, to arm a stronger enemy, than others are; to fight more vigorously against him, than others do, or can do? Or, whether it were not designed by him for greater use and service to his glory in the world, than others of his people (however willing they be) can do, for want of that strength you have? I am confident, no man of sound intellects will dare to assert the former, or deny the latter.

3. And lastly, For your glorying in drinking down, and conquering others; you will certainly put your own reason to a blush, by offering such a plea as this to it. You are not yet arrived to impudence enough, to deny drunkenness to be a sin; and your reason is yet sound enough, easily and naturally to infer, that by how much the more any man exceeds and goes beyond others in sin, by so much the greater sinner that man is.

And as for the honor and glory you talk of, in exceeding others in your abilities to drink: your reason will quickly make you ashamed of that glory; and prove, as well as assert it to be a mark of basest infamy.

Do you think, that Lombard was really honored, or stigmatized, whom Tiberius Caesar dubbed a knight, for drinking off three gallons of wine at one draught, and surnamed him Trigongius, that is to say, the three-gallon knight, which story Pliny, in his Natural History, relates to the perpetual infamy of them both? Or think you, it added to the glory of Tiberius himself, who knighted this three-gallon (not thrice gallant) knight, to have his name changed among the people, from Tiberius into Biberius; as afterward they did the name of that monster Nero, into Mero?

Gentlemen, I appeal to your own reason, if the vast continent you have within you for wine and strong drink, be really your honor; whether the butt or hogshead, whence you have it, be not, for the same reason, much more honorable than you? Your reason will plainly give the conclusion.

But, oh! consider not only what reason says, but what God, the fountain of that reason, says in [Isaiah 5:22](#). "Woe to them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink." Methinks it should make you sit in as little ease upon the tavern, or ale-house bench, as that court-parasite sat at a rich banquet furnished with variety of dainties, and all sorts of generous wine; over whose head, Dionysius caused an heavy sword to be hanged, with the point downward, by a single hair every moment ready to drop perpendicularly upon it.

Excuse II. As for those that throw themselves into these excesses, on purpose to delude those anxious cares and thoughts, which oppress them, whenever they are sober and solitary: I shall only propound three plain questions to the small remainders of reason in them, which yet I presume sufficient to determine rightly upon them.

QUESTION 1. Whether they think that which greatly increases want and poverty, be a rational cure and proper remedy for it? And whether a jar of oil be not as fit to quench a flame, as tavern and ale-house scores and reckonings are to buoy up a sinking trade, and keep bailiffs from men's doors? Certainly none but a sottish fool can think it to be otherwise. Your own improvidence, or God's afflictive providence, have brought you into other men's books; and certainly you cannot think, if you be in your wits, that chamberlains bills for so many bottles of wine, and flagons of beer, will be accepted by your creditors for good bills, to quit your scores with them. Were you sober, frugal, and industrious, you would put yourselves thereby

into a better way to obtain a blessing from God, and respects and forbearance from men, than in the course you now take.

QUESTION 2. Nor can you, without manifest impudence, propound such a question as this to your own reason, whether the addition of injustice to profaneness, be a rational plea or excuse for it? And is not that the very case here? Whose money is that you so lavishly and prodigally waste out of your consuming estates? It is either your creditors, or the small remains of your own. Whether the one or the other, methinks that wine and drink should not go down very pleasantly, which must be mingled with manifest injustice, or with the tears, and (in a sense) the blood of your wives and children. If your reasons can allow these things for lawful excuses, then you are excused, else self-condemned.

QUESTION 3. I shall trouble your reason with the decision but of one question more, and it is briefly and plainly this:

Whether the addition of far greater troubles, or causes of troubles to the inner man, be a proper expedient to alleviate and ease the loads and burdens of your outward troubles already grown almost too heavy for you to bear.

I dare venture all that I am worth, upon sound reason's side, that it will never allow, or comprove such an absurdity, as the affirmative part of this question draws along with it.

Believe it, sirs, all the outward necessities, cares and fears, which now oppress you upon the score of worldly affairs, (which frame not to your minds) are much more tolerable, and comparatively light and easy, to the stings, wounds, and lashes, of a guilty conscience: But when all these inward troubles shall be superadded to your outward troubles, they will, in conjunction, make a burden too heavy for man to bear.

Whatever cares or troubles providence involves any good man in, in the honest and painful pursuit of his civil calling, he may in a great measure relieve his burdened spirit under them, by the comfortable testimony of his own conscience, and his free addresses to God in prayer. These will sweetly support him under his other entanglements and perplexities in the world. But the course you take, does not only strike away these props from under your minds; but doubles and trebles the burden upon them. Were men but once acquainted with that relief and cheerfulness of spirit, which a good conscience, and a spiritual address to God in prayer, afford in the midst of troubles, they would run to their closets, rather than to taverns and ale-houses, to divert and cure their troubles. I leave it therefore before your own reason to consider, what weight and validity there is in this second excuse for drunkenness.

Excuse III. Others plead they are drawn into this sin by pleasure and delight, whose charms are too strong for them to resist.

In this, as in all the former, I resolve to make you your own judges. Give me leave but to state the questions right, and let your own reason freely determine them. And what fairer dealing can men that exercise reason expect? And let the first question be this:

QUESTION 1. Whether the pleasures of temperance do not far excel those of intemperance? If they do, then this your plea is vain and irrational: For you foolishly choose a lesser pleasure, and refuse a greater and sweeter one. And that you do so in this case, no wise man can deny or doubt.

For temperate drinking refreshes the body, and no way burdens it, as excessive drinking does: And that which burdens nature, can never be equally pleasant with that which yields nothing but due refreshment. Temperance does not vitiate, but

raises the pure and ordinate appetite of nature to its just pitch and height; in which temper, and at which height, it is most capable of the sweetest pleasure from the creature. As the strings of a lute give us the sweetest and most delicious notes, when they are not let down too low, but are all fixed at their due height.

Temperance gives us the most pleasing enjoyment of the good things of this life, still leaving the mind free, and fit for the more spiritual and sweet enjoyments of a better and more excellent life; which excess never did or can do.

Moreover, temperance maintains the manly grace and majesty of the countenance, but excess totally disguises it. It draws the lines of drunkards faces into a form much like those ridiculous Dutch pictures, which some set upon their chimney-pieces, to move laughter in those that behold them.

Now, by the vote of universal reason, that pleasure which refreshes the body, but no way burdens it, which raises the ordinate and unvitiated appetites of nature, to its just pitch, and due height, which gives nature the sweetest refreshment, leaving it always fitter and freer for higher and better pleasures, which maintains the manly grace and majesty of the countenance, and makes not a wise man look like a fool or an antic, must needs be better than the lower and flatter pleasures of a burdened body, and vitiated palate, which draw after them so great a train of present mischiefs (which temperance avoids) besides far heavier, and more durable ones in the life to come.

QUESTION 2. But if the present pleasures of temperance were in some respect inferior to those of excess,) which I have proved they neither are, nor can be;) I demand, in the second place, whether the loss of your honor and health, your time and estate, your present peace and future hopes, do not make such sensitive pleasures base and inferior, compared with those of temperance and sobriety? Do you, in good earnest, think a glass or two above what satisfies and refreshes nature, can recompense for all that shame, sickness, poverty, and guilt that follows it! If you think so, sin has turned you into brutes, and made you utterly incapable of all arguments and manly considerations, to reduce and recover you.

Excuse IV. You say, you would not haunt taverns and ale-houses as you do, but that you are drawn in by company and business, which you cannot well resist or avoid, and should you do so, it would be to your loss; and besides that, you should be branded for fanatics.

I deny not, but there is a snare in vain company; yet give me leave to propound a few plain and easy questions to your reason.

QUESTION 1. Why must the importunity of good fellows (as you call them) be an irresistible temptation to you, and deprive you of all power to deny them, while you discern the snares and mischiefs they draw you into? This seems to be a thing unaccountable to reason. Suppose you were allowed to spend the longest summer's day in the highest gratification of all your senses together, or successively one after another, upon condition that you would endure the torments of the rack until that day twelvemonth came about again; do you think the importunity of all your intimates in the world, would prevail with you to accept the pleasures of a day under such a condition as this? And yet what are the torments of a year upon the rack, to the torments of Hell forever and ever? Or to come lower: Suppose one of those lewd companions not worth a groat, if every man had his own, should request you to lend him an hundred pound upon his own security, could you find no power (think you) to deny him, especially if the loss of that hundred pound would certainly ruin you? If you would deny him (as I doubt not but in such a case you would) tell me then, why you should not find power to deny him, when he asks a far greater matter than an hundred pound, even the peace, purity, and safety of your souls, as

well as the health of your bodies, and honor of your names? Why then should you be so easy and flexible when they ask the latter, and so stiff and unpersuadable to the former?

QUESTION 2. You say, you have business, and concerns in trade, to dispatch in such places and companies, and this draws you into the snares of excess. I will not deny but men may lawfully transact their business in such places, and there may be a convenience, and sometimes a necessity for it: But that is not the case. The question referred to the determination of your reason, is this, Why drunkenness must accompany business? And whether a man be not more fit to transact his business, and drive bargains of the greatest value, while his body and mind are cool, sober and temperate, than when his reason is beclouded and deposed by drunkenness? How many men have undone themselves, their wives and children, by drunken bargains?

Besides, I must tell you, that in all such drunken meetings, the devil comes to drive his bargain with you, as well as your other customers. He bids for your souls, and offers you such pleasures as you there find in exchange for them, and is content to make your dying day the time of your delivering them into his possession. How do you like such trading as this, gentlemen?

QUESTION 3. You say, should you refuse to accompany them, and do as they do, you should be branded for fanatics. I would gladly know, whether such a plea for drunkenness as this, does not justly cast the greatest reproach of fanaticism upon yourselves, and set a mark of true honor upon those men whom the world unjustly stigmatizes with that title? Gentlemen, I do assure you, the fanatics (as you call them) have reason to thank you for the honor and justice you have done them, in acknowledging them to be none of the members of your hellish society, but persons of a more sober and honorable character. And I appeal to your reason, whether it would not be more for your honor, to wear the unjust title of a fanatic, than the just censure of a drunken sot.

Excuse V. You say, you are obliged in point of loyalty to pledge him that consecrates the first glass to the health of the king or any person of eminency. I leave it still to your reason to be judge,

1. Whether the king have cause to account the manifest breach of the laws by which he governs, to be a signal expression of his subjects loyalty to him? Is not his royal authority, his honor and safety in his laws? And is he not finely honored, think you, by such drunken loyalty as this? Gentlemen, you have a king over you of sounder intellectuals, and more exemplary temperance and sobriety than to be thus imposed upon.

2. Can you think he reckons his health in the least degree advanced or secured by the ruin and subversion of his subjects health? No, no; did the genteelest drunkards in England inquire, they would quickly find, it would more please him if they would consult their own health better, and pray for his more sincerely and fervently than they do.

Excuse VI. Your last excuse is, that you have plentiful estates that will bear it; and since your pockets are full, why should your heads or stomachs be empty.

QUESTION The only question I would here state, and leave your own reason to determine, is this, whether you think the experience of the redundancy and over-plus of your estates in excess and drunkenness, be the very end and design God aimed at, in bestowing those things with such a bountiful hand upon you? And whether the expense of it in this way, will please him as well, as if you clothed the naked, and fed the hungry with it, and brought the blessings of them that are ready to perish, upon you and your families? Ah, gentlemen, you must come to a day of

reckoning. Your reasons and consciences can never tell you, you can make up as comfortable an account with God, by setting down so many hundred pounds in wine and strong drink, more than was necessary and beneficial: Item, So many thousand pounds lost in play: So much upon whores; as if you set down so much to feed and clothe the naked and hungry. So that all your excuses for this sin are baffled by your own reason; and it was easy to conclude, that such a traitor to reason as drunkenness is, which has so often dethroned it, could not possibly receive a more favorable judgment and sentence than this now given upon it.

Let all drunkards henceforth consider, what a voluntary madness the sin of drunkenness is, how it unmans them, and sets them below the very brutes. A grave father calls it rightly,

"A distemper of the head, a subversion of the senses, a tempest in the tongue, the storm of the body, the shipwreck of virtue, the loss of time, a willful madness, a pleasant evil, a sugared poison, a sweet sin, which he who has, has not himself; and he who commits it, does not only commit sin, but himself is altogether sin."

It is a sin at which the most sober Heathens blushed. The policy of the Spartans was more commendable than their piety in making men drunk, that their children might gaze upon them as a monster, and be scared forever from such an horrid practice. He who is mastered by drunkenness, can never be master of his own counsels. Both reason and religion condemn this course. Make a pause therefore where you are, and rather throw that wine or beer upon the ground, which else will cast your body upon the ground, and your soul and body into Hell.

Chapter V

Containing the result and issue of the third consultation with reason, upon the case of impurity; and the true report of the determination of every man's reason, with respect thereunto.

1. THE bountiful and indulgent God has made more abundant provision for the pleasure and delight of rational, than of brutal beings: And his wise and righteous laws order and limit their pleasures to their great advantage; his allowance under those restrictions being large and full enough. Both reason and experience assure us, that the truest pleasures are most freely and honorably to be enjoyed within the pale and boundary of his laws; and that there are none fit for the enjoyment of a man or Christian, to be found without, or beyond them.

That prudent owner provides best for his cattle, who puts them into inclosed fragrant fields, where they have plenty of proper and pleasant food, sweet and pure springs of water, the pleasant covert of shady trees, and all that is either necessary or convenient for them; although those fields be so enclosed within pales or walls, that they cannot stray without these boundaries, into other men's ground, to be by them impounded, and brought back lank, tired, and dirty, to their owner: or by straying into wastes and wildernesses, fall a prey (as stragglers use to do) to wolves and lions.

God envies not any true, rational, and proper pleasure to men or women; when he bounds them in by his command, within the allowance whereof, sufficient provision is made for the benefit and delight of propagation. And though it be all men's duty to tremble at the awful solemnity, yet it would be any man's sin to repine and murmur at the strictness and severity of his command, delivered with thunder and lightning from mount Sinai, You shall not commit adultery. Man's honorable liberty, and God's wise and just restraint and limitation thereof, are both set together before our eyes, in that one scripture, [Hebrews 13:4](#). "Marriage is honorable in all, and the

bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Here is a liberal allowance granted, and a severe punishment threatened for the inordinacies and exorbitancies of boundless and ungovernable lusts. God will judge with temporal judgments in this world; and upon impenitent persistents, with eternal judgments in the world to come.

2. Such is the corruption of man's nature by the fall, that it hates enclosures, restraints, and limitations. These things which were intended to regulate, serve only to sharpen and enrage their sensual appetite. No fruit so sweet to corrupt nature, as forbidden fruit. The very restraint of evil, makes it look like a pleasant and desirable good. Sons of Belial can endure no yoke of restraint. There is a great truth in that observation of the divine Herbert, That if God had laid all common, man himself would have been the encloser. For his reason and experience would have plainly informed him of the great and manifold advantages of distinction and propriety. How many quarrels and barbarous murders have been occasioned by whores! which by keeping within God's bounds and rules, had been both honestly and honorably prevented.

Were men left to that liberty brutes are, to scatter their lusts promiscuously, fathers would not know their own children, nor children their fathers; whereby both their duties and comforts would be prescinded together. Such mischiefs as these, would make men glad of that inclosure, which the laws of God have made for them. But behold with admiration the perverse wickedness of corrupt nature manifested in this, that because God has enclosed and secured their relations to them by his laws, (which enclosure is every way to their advantage;) yet this makes their lusts the more headstrong and outrageous, and they cannot take that comfort in their own, because their own, that they think to find in another's, because another's.

Remarkable to this purpose is that relation of Mr. Firmin's, which he received from his near relation, who was minister to the company of English merchants in Prussia. The consul, or governor of that company, being a married man, and that to a very proper and lovely woman, was yet enslaved to others, not to be compared with his own wife for loveliness. This minister dealt with him about it. One argument he urged was this: That of all men he had the least temptation, having a wife so lovely, that few women were like her. He answered, yes, were she not my wife, I could love her. Had she been his whore, he could have loved her; he thought none like her; but because she was his wife hedged in by God, he cared not for her. O what hearts have men, that they should ever think that to be best for them which is most cross to God? Why should stolen waters be sweeter than those of our own fountains!

3. God's choice must needs be far better for us, than our own. Ordinate and lawful pleasures and enjoyments, are far better and sweeter, than exorbitant and forbidden ones. And the reason is evident and undeniable: For among all the operations of the mind, its reflex acts are the acts that best relish pleasure. And indeed, without self-reflection, a man cannot tell whether he delights or no. All sense of pleasure implies some reflection of the mind: and those pleasures of a man must needs be the sweetest, which afford the sweetest reflections upon them afterward; and those the basest pleasures, which are accompanied and followed with present regret, or the stinging and cutting reflections of the conscience upon them afterwards.

1. Lawful and ordinate enjoyments, are as honey without the sting. Forbidden pleasures, are embittered and extinguished by these regrets and reflections of the conscience. They are like those pleasant fruits, which the Spaniards found in the Indies, which were sweet to the taste, but so environed and armed on every side with dangerous briars and thorns, that they tore not only their clothes off their backs, but the skin off their flesh, to come at them; and therefore they called them comfits in Hell. And such are all forbidden, and unlawful pleasures.

A merchant (says the fore-mentioned author) dining with the friars at Dantzick, his entertainment was very noble. After he had dined, and seen all, the merchant fell to commending their pleasant life. 'Yes, said one of the friars to him, we live gallantly indeed, if we had any body to go to Hell for us when we die.' You see what mingles with men's sensual and sinful lusts.

2. Your honor is secured, by keeping within God's bounds and limits: Marriage is honorable in all. Here guilt can neither wrong your consciences, nor infamy your reputations. Fornicators and adulterers go up and down the world, as men burnt in the hand: Their conscience lashes them within; and men point at them abroad. They are a terror to themselves, and a scorn to men.

3. The health of the body is secured by chaste and regular enjoyments, but exposed to destruction the other way. God has plagued the inordinancy of men's lust, with most strange and horrid diseases. That Morbus Gallicus, Sudor Anglicus, and Plica Polonica, were judgments sent immediately by God's own hand, as the witnesses of his high displeasure, against the bold and daring despisers of his sacred and awful command. Thus, as [Proverbs 5:11](#). "They mourn at last, when their flesh and body are consumed." Other sins are committed in the body; but this against it, as well as in it.

4. The blast and waste of our estates (which is the usual consequence of impurity) is prevented and avoided, by keeping within God's rules. The truth of what the scripture tells us, [Proverbs 10:5](#) is often exemplified before your eyes; that, "by reason of a whorish woman, a man is brought to a morsel of bread." Adultery gives a man rags for his livery; it lodges his substance in the house of strangers, and entails wants and curses on him and his.

5. In a word, continence, or lawful marriage, exposes not the soul to the eternal wrath of God, as impurity does; [1 Corinthians 6:9, 10](#). This sin does not only shut a man out of his own house, and the hearts of good men, but out of Heaven itself, without thorough repentance and reformation.

4. The case standing thus: it is matter of just admiration, how the sin of impurity should grow so epidemic and common as it does, seeing such as live in this filthy course, must needs counter-act and oppose their own reason and interest together. For they forsake God's way, which gives them as much liberty as can be reasonably desired; and cast themselves into a course of life, clogged with all manner of temporal and eternal miseries, of soul and body, honor and estate.

The plain rule and dictate of common reason, which I laid down before, being applied to this particular case, manifestly condemns it. For seeing honesty and chastity comprize the true pleasure, profit, and honor of the whole man, are more congruous to human nature, and preservative of it, it ought, therefore, to be preferred in the estimation and choice of all men, to unlawful adulterous pleasures, which (for the reasons above) are inferior in themselves to chaste, conjugal enjoyments; and besides that, are attended and followed with such a train of present and future miseries, destructive to the whole man.

And yet for all this, to the amazement of all serious observers, never was any age more infamous for this sin, than the present age is; and that under the clear shining light of the gospel.

What the special causes and inducements, to the overflowing and abounding of this sin, are in the present age, will be well worth the inquiring and sifting at this time.

5. Inducement 1

It is highly probable, the influencing examples of great men, have had no small hand in the spreading of this abominable and crying sin, among all inferior ranks and orders of men.

Great men's ill examples, like a bag of poison in the fountain, corrupt and infect multitudes. The vulgar think they are privileged, or, at the least, very much excused, when they do but follow the precedents and examples of great and eminent persons.

But this will be found a weak and foolish plea, for impurity, which will never be able to endure the test of your own reason: For the inbred notions of a God, and of a future life of retribution, being so firmly sealed and engraved upon human nature, they can never be utterly eradicated; your own reason will argue from those inbred notions in this manner, and how you will be able to repel the argument, and escape conviction and self-condemnation, quite surmounts my imagination whatever it do yours. And thus it will dispute, and dilemma you, do what you can.

That God, before whom greater and lesser, honorable and baser sinners shall appear in judgment, will be either partial or impartial, in his judgments upon them. There is, or there is not respect of persons with him. If there be, (which both his nature and word utterly deny;) then those great and honorable adulterers, or fornicators, whose examples you follow, may haply be excused for their eminency and honor's sake; but you, that have no such eminency and honor in the world, as they have, must be condemned, though you ought to escape as well as they.

But if there be no partiality, or respect of persons with God, (as most assuredly there is none,) then both greater and lesser, honorable and baser, adulterers, must be condemned together, to the same common and intolerable misery.

So that to take any (though the least) encouragement to sin, from the precedents and examples of great ones, is a most senseless and irrational thing, utterly unworthy of one who believes there is a just and impartial God; and he is worse than a devil, who believes it not: For the devils themselves believe and tremble.

6. Inducement 2

But others would persuade us, they are drawn into this sin by a kind of inevitable necessity; they being neither able to contain, nor marry.

They are not yet arrived at an estate sufficient to maintain a family with reputation: But when they have gotten enough by trade, or by the fall of their paternal estates, to live in equal reputation with their neighbors; then they design to alter their course of life, and abandon these follies.

But, reader, if this be your plea for impurity, you shall have as fair a trial, for a foul fact, as your own heart can desire: be still your own judge: and let your own reason give a fair answer to these three pertinent questions.

Questions

QUESTION 1. Whether whoredom be as likely and promising a way to engage God's blessing upon your trades and employments, as continence or conjugal chastity are? That is to say plainly, Whether obedience and disobedience to the law of God, be all one, and please him alike? You know, your success in business is not in your own hand; it is God that gives you power to get wealth: His blessing makes rich. And is sin as likely a way to engage his blessing, as duty and obedience is? I am confident your own reason will never give it.

Objection: If you say, such persons prosper in the world as well as others, for ought you see.

Solution: The contrary is evident in the common observation of mankind: By reason of whoredom, multitudes are brought to a piece of bread. And though God suffer some unclean persons to prosper in the world; yet chastity with poverty, is infinitely preferable to such accursed prosperity.

QUESTION 2. Whether the course of sin you are now driving and accustoming yourselves to, will not, in all probability, so infatuate and bewitch you, that when you come into a married estate, you shall still be under the power of this sin; and, so ruin the person you marry, as well as yourself? If the word of God signify anything with you, it signifies this; That there is a witchcraft in whoredom; and, comparatively speaking, "None that go to her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life:" [Proverbs 2:18, 19](#).

Objection: If to invalidate this testimony, you shall say that he who spoke this, did himself go after strange women.

Solution: It is true, he did so. But then withal, you must remember, that he has warned you by his own sad experience, that you never follow him, in those his footsteps: [Ecclesiastes 7:26](#). "I find (says he) more bitter than death, the woman whose hearts is snares and nets, and her hands as bands. Whoever pleases God, shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her."

QUESTION 3. And, lastly, I demand of your reason, whether it can, or will, allow any place to this plea of necessity; before you have tried and used all God's appointed remedies, which are sufficient to prevent that necessity you plead?

There are lawful remedies enough, sufficient, with God's blessing, to keep you from such a necessity to sin; such as temperance, and more abstemiousness in meats and drinks; avoiding lascivious books, play-houses, and filthy company; laborious diligence in your lawful callings, and fervent prayer, for mortifying and preventing grace: And if temptations shall stir amidst all these preventives; then casting yourselves upon the directions and supply of providence, in the honorable estate of marriage. Never plead necessity, while all these preventives might, but have not been used.

7. Inducement 3

Others plead the absence of their lawful remedies, and presence of tempting objects. This is the case of our soldiers and seamen. But though this be the most colorable pretense of all the rest, yet your own reason and conscience will, even in this case, so dilemma and nonplus you, that if you will adventure upon the sin, you shall never have their leave and consent with you: For they have a special and peculiar consideration of you, as persons more eminently and immediately exposed to the dangers of death than other men. And thus (would you but give them a fair hearing) they would expostulate and reason out the matter with you.

"Either you shall escape, or not escape, the hazard of this voyage, or battle. If you fall (as to be sure many will) will this be an honorable, safe, and comfortable close, and winding up of your life? What, from a whore to your grave! God forbid. From burning lusts, to everlasting burnings! Better you had never been born."

Or if you do escape, and return again to your family; how can you look her in the face, with whom you have so basely broken your marriage-vow and covenant? Whatever else you bring home with you, to be sure you shall bring home guilt with you, a blot never to be wiped away.

Objection: If you say, you are not such fools to publish your own shame; you will follow Caesar's advice to the young adulterer, Si non caste, tamen caute, If I act not chastely, I will act cautiously.

Solution: Your reason and conscience will both deride the weakness and folly of this pretense; For they both very well know, no man sins so secretly, but he sins before two infallible witnesses, namely, God, and his own conscience; and that the last, and least of these, is more than a thousand witnesses. That God usually detects it in this world, carry it as closely as you will; but to be sure, it shall be published as upon the house-top, before men and angels in the great day.

8. Inducement 4

Another inducement to this sin, (and the last I shall mention,) is the commonness of it, which abates the shame of it.

What need they trouble themselves so much, or be so shy of that which is practiced by thousands, which is so frequently acted in every place, and little made of it?

But if either your reason or conscience will admit this plea for good and lawful, the devil has utterly blinded or infatuated the one or other; as will evidently appear by the following reasons. For,

Reasons

Reason 1. If the thing be evil, (as you cannot deny but it is) then, by how much the commoner, by so much the worse it must needs be. Indeed, if a thing be good, by how much the commoner, so much the better: but to attribute this essential property of good unto evil, is to confound and destroy the difference between them, and make good and evil both alike.

Reason 2. If the commonness of impurity will excuse you, it will more excuse all others that shall commit this sin after you: and still by how much more the numbers of adulterers and fornicators are increased, still the less scruple men need make to commit it; and so the whole community shall in a little time be so infected and defiled, that Christian kingdoms shall quickly become like Sodom, and God provoked to deal with them, as he did by that wretched city.

Reason 3. If the commonness of the sin be an excuse and plea for it; suppose the roads should be more infested than they are with highwaymen, so that every month you should see whole cart-loads of them drawn to Tyburn; would your reason infer from thence, that because hanging is grown so common, you need not scruple so much as you were accustomed to do, to take a purse, or pistol an honest innocent traveler upon the road?

Objection: If you shall say, impurity is not so costly a sin as robbery is; there is a great deal of difference between Tyburn, and a whore-house punishment.

Solution: There is a great difference indeed, even as much as is between Tyburn and Hell, or a small mulct in the courts of men, and the eternal wrath of a sin-revenging God: so great will the difference between the punishments of all sins by God, and by men be found.

Thus you see, gentlemen, the common pleas for impurity overruled by your own reason and consciences.

We live in a plentiful land, abounding with all the comforts of this life, and with thousands of full-fed wantons: of whom the Lord complains this day, as he did of the Jews, whom that flowing land vomited out, [Jeremiah 5:6](#). "When I had fed them to the full, they committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots houses. They were as fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife." How many fat stallions are thus neighing in the fat pastures of this good land!

Nor do I wonder at all to see the growth of Atheism, in a land swarmed, and overrun with so many thousands of blasphemers, drunkards, and adulterers. It was a grave observation of that gallant moralist, Plutarch: "If Epicurus (says he) should but grant a God in his full perfections, he must change his life presently, he must be a swine no longer."

The Lord purge out this crying abomination also, with Atheism and drunkenness, the inlets of it, which darken our glory, and threaten to make us desolate.

Chapter VI

Wherein reason and conscience are once more consulted, about that bitter and implacable enmity found in thousands this day, against all serious piety, and the strict professors thereof, who differ from them in some external modes and rites of worship; and their determinations, upon that case, impartially reported.

1. MAN is naturally a sociable creature, delighting in company and converse. He who affects to live by, and to himself, must be (says the philosopher) $\zeta\ \epsilon\zeta\eta\acute{\nu}\epsilon\acute{\iota}\iota$, $\zeta\ \epsilon\acute{\alpha}\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron$; either a God that is self-sufficient, and stands in need of none; or a wild beast, so savage and fierce, that it can endure nothing but itself.

This natural quality of sociableness is diversely improved. Sometimes sinfully, in wicked combinations to do mischief; like the herding together of wolves and tygers; such was the consideration of Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity; [Genesis 49:5–6](#). Sometimes it is improved civilly, for the more orderly and prosperous management of human affairs. Thus all civilized countries have improved it, for the common security and benefit. And sometimes religiously, for the better promoting of each other's spiritual and eternal good.

Now the more firmly any civil or religious societies are knit together by love, and coalesce in unity, by so much the better they are secured against their common enemies and dangers, and become still the more prosperous and flourishing within and among themselves. For when every man finds his particular interest involved in the public safety and security, (as every private cabin and passenger is in the safety of the ship,) every particular person will then stand ready to contribute his uttermost assistance, for the public interest, both in peace and war. United force, we all know, is more than single; and, in this sense we say, *Unus homo, nullus homo*: one man, is no man, that is, considered disjunctively; and alone; when yet that single person, standing in a proper place of service in the body, may, by his prudence and courage, signify very much to the public weal of his country; as Fabius did to the Roman state, of whom the poet truly observed, That one man, by his prudent delay and conduct, has saved the whole commonwealth.

2. It is therefore the undoubted interest of Christian states and churches, to make every individual person as useful as may be to the whole, and to enjoy the services of all their subjects and members, one way or other, according to their different capacities; that it may be said of them, (as the historian speaks of the land of Canaan) that there was in it, *Nihil infructuosum, nihil sterile*; not a shrub but bare some fruit.

No prudent kingdom or church, will deprive themselves of the benefit they may enjoy by the services of any considerable number of men, (especially if they be able and good men) without a plain, inevitable necessity. No man, without such a necessity, will part with the use and service of the least finger or toe, much less with a leg or arm: but would reckon himself half undone, if a paralytic disease should strike one half of the body, and render it utterly useless to defend and support the other part in time of danger.

3. Much so stands the case with churches and kingdoms, when the causeless and cruel enmity of one part prevails so far against the other, as to deprive that state, or church, of the use and service of multitudes of good and faithful members.

It is folly, in its highest exaltation, for one part of a nation, out of bitter enmity to the other, not only to seek all ways and means to suppress and ruin it, while a common danger hangs over the whole; but to rejoice in the miseries of their brethren, as the principal thing which they fancy would contribute to the great advantage of their cause. What but a general punishment, (if that will do it) can work men's hearts into a more general compassion?

The histories of those times sufficiently inform us, that the great feuds and factions in the western church, not only immediately preceded, but opened the way to the terrible inundations of the Goths and Vandals. While the suffering part cries out, cruelty, cruelty; those that inflict it, cry as loud, justice, justice. Whatever rational apologies, or methods of peace, come from the oppressed party, are censured by the other as murmur and mutiny. All men commend unity, and assert it to be the interest of kingdoms and churches. They wish all men were of one mind; but what mind must that be? To be sure, none but their own.

The more cool, prudent, and moderate spirits of each party, may strive to the uttermost, to allay these unnatural feuds and animosities. The wisdom of the governing part, may take the instruments of cruelty out of their hand; but it is God alone that can pluck up the roots of enmity out of their hearts.

And what is the matter, when all is sifted and examined? Why the matter is this: some will be more serious, strict, and conscientious than others think fit or necessary for them to be. They dare not curse, swear, whore, and be drunk, as others do. They scruple to comply with what God has not commanded, and the very imposers confess to be indifferent, antecedently to their command. They reverently mention the name of God, without an oath, and the solemn matters of religion without a jest in their company. They will assume as much liberty to reprove sin, as others do to commit it. They take more pleasure in heavenly duties, and holy conferences, than in ranting and roaring in taverns and ale-houses. That is, in a word, they live up to the principles of religion, which all pretend to; and this is their unpardonable crime, a fault never to be expiated by any less punishment than their destruction.

And are not people (think you) come to a fine pass; when the strictest obedience to the laws of God shall be accounted more criminal than the most open and profane violation of them? Nay, though they reprove the other party's sin no other way, but by their most serious and religious lives; yet this alone shall be sufficient to make them culpable and obnoxious.

4. If the party thus generally hated and maligned, be (for the generality of them) serious and godly Christians; or if the strictness and holiness of their lives, and tenderness of their consciences, be the true ground and reason of our hatred of them; such an hatred, where it becomes general, is a direful presage of some common calamity and misery hastening upon such a people: [Hosea 9:7](#). "The days of visitation are come; the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool; the spiritual man is mad; for the multitude of your iniquity and the great hatred."

And our own reason will give us this conclusion, as well as scripture: for whatever brings sin to its full maturity, must needs hasten judgments. And what can heighten and accent the sins of a people, more than such a cruel hatred of good men, upon the score and account before given? All hatred of godliness has a tang of devilishness. It

is a desperate flying in the very face of God, whose image holiness is. Sin can scarce be graduated a peg higher.

Reason tells the gardener, it is time to mow and reap his corn, when it is full ripe. And it may convince you, that God's time of reaping down a sinful people is near, when their sins are grown to such full maturity as this: "Put you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get you down, for the press is full, the fats overflow, for their wickedness is great," [Joel 3:13](#).

5. The true cause and rise of this great and fixed hatred among professed Christians, (whatever may be pretended to salve reputation) is the contrariety and repugnancy of the natures and principles by which the godly and ungodly are governed. There is an enmity between the two seeds, [Genesis 3:24](#). And this enmity runs down in a blood, more or less, in all ages and places; [Galatians 4:29](#). "As then, he who was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now." So it was, and so it is, and so it will be, until conversion changes the heart and principle. This enmity cannot die, while Satan lives, and rules in the hearts of children of disobedience.

And the enmity is mutual: "An unjust man is an abomination to the just! and he who is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked," [Proverbs 29:27](#). Only with this difference; the good man hates, non virum, sed vitium; not the person, but his sin. The wicked man hates both the person of the godly, and his godliness too; yes, the person for his godliness sake.

This hatred of the godly, secretly and habitually lurks in the nature of a wicked man; as rapaciousness does in a young wolf, that never saw a lamb. It extends itself universally to the whole kind, and reaches those, whose lives are most obligingly sweet; yes, those that are bound to them in the strictest bonds of nature; as we may see, in that most unnatural instance of Cain's murdering his own brother Abel. It discovers itself, in seeking the destruction of them they hate upon a religious account, and rejoicing at any evil that befalls them. Nothing is more grateful to them, than any occasion to disgrace, and expose them with contempt to the world.

6. But though the strictness and holiness of good men, causing the consciences of wicked men privately to condemn, and inwardly to gaul and grate them for their looseness and profaneness, be the true and real ground and cause of the grudge and hatred; yet they think it fit, for reputation-sake, that this be wholly suppressed and silenced, and something else pretended for the cause and reason of it, else it would look too like the devil himself. And therefore, among other plausible pretensions, for their malignity to those that are better than themselves, these three are principally insisted on, and pleaded.

1. That it is not their piety, but their hypocrisy, which they hate not because they have indeed more piety than others, but because they make more vain show and ostentation of it than themselves do; who, setting aside their ridiculous grimaces, and affected fantastic words and actions, are every whit as good as themselves.

2. Because, under a pretense of greater strictness in religion, they do but hatch and carry on sedition and rebellion; and that the world will never be quiet, while such vipers are suffered in the affections of it.

3. That both the former have been made sufficiently evident and apparent, in several former and more recent instances, of the hypocrisy and seditious designs of as high pretenders to religion and reformation, as those are, whom they truly hate, and would not allow them to live, if their power were answerable to their hatred.

As to this first plea, namely, their hypocrisy; it will quickly be found to be too thin and weak to endure the text of your own reason and consciences. For how will you

answer them, when they shall thus argue and expostulate the matter with you?

'You that thus censure, and those that are censured for hypocrisy by you, do both profess one and the same religion. Your profane lives are notoriously contrary to all the principles of this religion. You swear, drink, whore, revile, and persecute the others, only because you fancy their tones, gestures, etc. to be some way or other indecent. You cannot deny, but they live soberly and godly: they attend upon all the duties of religion strictly and conscientiously. Your malice against them can find nothing to carp at, but some little trifles, with which the essence of religion is not concerned. Did they run into the same excess of riot with you, greater matters than these would be overlooked, yes, and applauded too.'

Now let reason and conscience say, Who is most likely to be the hypocrite; the man that calls himself a Christian, and under that profession wallows in all profaneness, not once censuring himself for it; or he who lives soberly and godly, against whom malice itself can produce nothing but such inconsiderable trifles as these? Is not this the very case, which Christ has determined to our hands, and made such censurers, the hypocrites? [Matthew 7:3](#). "And why behold you the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye?" It was but one blemish, and that a very small one too, but a mote; however this you can quickly spy, and as rashly censure. But mean while there is a beam, an horrid flagitious wickedness in yourselves; but it is too near your own eyes, to be discerned by you. Which of these two (think you) is the hypocrite?

2. But what if this mote that you discern, be but a fancy, a mere imagination of your own; how will that aggravate your sin, and evince both your malice and hypocrisy together? You say, their tones and gestures in religious duties, are ridiculous and dramatic. This you take up lightly against some few of them, and as unjustly apply unto the aspersing of the whole party; which your own reason must, and will immediately condemn. For there are multitudes of that party, whose countenances, tones and gestures, are as decorous, grave, and becoming the presence of that God with whom they have to do, as any men in the world.

3. And as for those few whom you thus blemish for their indecent tones and gestures; what if those tones you speak of, amount to no more but natural defects, and unavoidable infirmities, which they would, but cannot help? Do they for this, and no worse than this, deserve to be censured, and condemned for hypocrites? Or, what if they be insensible actions, occasioned by the greater intention of their spirits in the service of God? May not these very things, which you profanely flout, censure, and scoff at, either not at all be noted as blemishes to their devotion by the eye of God, or noted with approbation and delight, as the effects of spiritual fervency in his service? Certainly, gentlemen, you are no good marksmen, that neither draw the right arrow, nor level at the true mark.

4. And were not this a vain and empty pretense, to cover your own malice against godliness; how comes it to pass, that more dramatic habits, words, and gestures, should pass as ornaments in others, whom you affect? Whether this be not partiality unworthy of a man, let reason and conscience freely judge.

In a word; What commission or authority can you produce, thus to ascend the throne of God, and draw your bitterest censures through the very hearts of God's people, for such pitiful trifles as these; first condemning them as hypocrites, which is a most unwarrantable presumption; and then persecute them as far as you can, for their presumed hypocrisy? Have a care what you do; be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. This is a sin which hastens national desolation; [2 Chronicles 36:16, 17](#). "They mocked the messengers of God, and despised his word, and misused his prophets; until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, until

there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword," etc.

Plea 2. You say, It is not godliness you hate, and would persecute; but they are a sort of persons, who under a pretense of zeal for religion and reformation, design nothing else but sedition and rebellion, that the nation will never be quiet, while such vipers are suffered to live in it. And to fortify this plea, you add, that both their hypocrisy and sedition have been made sufficiently evident to the world in many instances.

Zeal for the laws, and security of the government, if rightly tempered and qualified, is highly commendable; and wherever sincerity animates, and prudence governs it, it ought by no means to be discouraged. But there are too many grounds and causes of suspicion, that both these will be found wholly wanting, or extremely defective, in many high pretenders to it, when it comes to be fitted to its bottom principles, and weighed in the just balance of sound reason.

For if you be inflamed with a pure zeal for the laws and government you live under; then you will find yourselves obliged, for your own vindication, to satisfy the just expectation of your own and other men's reasons and consciences, in the following particulars:

Expectations

Expectation 1. Reason and conscience, in yourselves and others, will expect it from you, that you, of all men living, should be most precisely and punctually obedient to all those just and good laws you live under; since your zeal burns so hot against those that comply not punctually with them. For those that make so much conscience, as you seem to do, of other men's offences against the laws must be presumed (if your profession be sincere) to make at least as much conscience of breaking any of them in your own persons; else neither reason nor conscience will ever admit this plea of yours for sound and good.

Now the laws sometimes appoint punishments for nonconformity to the rites and ceremonies, affixed to the public national worship; and so they do always for convicted swearing, drunkenness, and adultery. All these laws have the very same sanction, by the authority we live under. They forbid, and punish, the one as well as the other. And if there be any difference, it lies in this, that these latter are expressly forbidden and threatened by God, antecedently to the magistrate's prohibition of them, which has no small weight in the matter under consideration.

Now, if any man shall pretend zeal and conscience, against dissent in judgment or practice, from the church, but makes no conscience at all to curse and swear, be drunk or unclean; he will find it a difficult task to persuade his, or other men's reasons or conscience, that this his zeal for the laws and government is sincere and pure. For were it so, it could never allow him to live in the notorious violation of the laws himself, which he is so fierce and bitter against others for.

Expectation 2. If your zeal be sincere, it will contain itself within the bounds and limits of the offence, and not lay hold upon the innocent, as well as upon the guilty; and make you hate and persecute them that were never turbulent and seditious, equally with the greatest criminals. If you will hug this principle as things stand now, reason will tell you, it is as just at all other times, as it is at this.

Would you not think it an unreasonable and most injurious thing, to be plucked out of your shops, or houses, and hurried away to the jail; because two or three dissolute fellows in the city or town where you live, have been riotous or seditious, though you possibly know not the men, nor can be so much as justly suspected of any confederacy with them? True zeal for the laws and government, is content to wait,

and suspend its revenge, until a fair conviction have passed upon the guilty. And when it falls upon them, it is careful that it touch none besides them: but suffers a man to retain, in the very height of it, due love and honor for all that are innocent.

If Christians be first denominated by general titles and terms of distinction, which they cannot help, and then the crimes of any particular person, that the world pleases to denominate as one of the same party, must be charged and imputed to the whole; what must the consequence of this be, but that the whole community become obnoxious to punishment, and the very government itself thereupon be dissolved?

For I take it to be past denial or doubt, that some of each denomination have been, are, or may be guilty of seditious practices. Some hypocrites will lurk among those vast bodies of people, under the most strict and watchful government; but God forbid their guilt should affect the whole body, under whose names they shelter themselves. God, reason, and conscience, do all command the hottest zeal, to make its pause and just distinction here. Let the guilty be brought to condign punishment, upon fair trial and conviction. This discourse designs no favor for such. But let not those who abhor their wickedness, and are as pure from their crimes as yourselves, suffer with them or for them: For then your reason will tell you, yourselves are as liable to sufferings as they; and that your zeal is not kindled by love to justice, but the hatred of a party.

It is not in the body politic, as in the body natural: If the hand steal, the feet are justly laid in irons, and the neck put into an halter; because all the members of the body natural are animated, and governed but by one soul. But in the body politic, every individual has a distinct soul of his own; and therefore that member only that offends ought to be punished, and all the rest to enjoy their full liberty and honor as before. Away therefore forever with this church and state destroying synecdoche.

Expectation 3. If there be a change made upon the laws, and they shall at any time tolerate and protect that party and practice which once they made criminal; then your reason, and every man's else, will expect from you (if your zeal for the laws and government be sincere and sincere) that your countenance and carriage to that people be changed and altered, according to the different aspect of the laws and government upon them: That your envy and hatred cease with the offence; and that you be as ready to assist and encourage them, when they act according to law, as you formerly were to inflict and prosecute them, for acting contrary to law: Else, pretend what you will, it is plain enough, that it was not zeal for the laws and government, but somewhat else, (which every body may guess at) that inflamed your rage against them.

For whenever the wisdom of the government finds it necessary, by toleration, to take away the crime and offence, it must necessarily take away this very plea for hatred and persecution with it: Otherwise it would be all one, to act for law, and against law; to punish them that are offenders, and them that offend no more than yourselves; to turn the edge of your rage and fury, against those that undermine the government, and those that are as zealous as yourselves, to support and defend it, by their persons and purses.

Expectation 4. Your reason will justly expect it from you, that when, or wherever you shall see eminent piety meeting with punctual conformity in one man, that man shall be your very darling; and that both these qualifications should recommend him to your dearest affection, the more strictly godly he is, the more conformable he is to the laws of God; as well as by his punctual compliance with enjoined rules and rites of worship, to the laws of men. If he be a man of catholic charity to all of every persuasion, whom he judges to fear God, and be truly conscientious; if he boldly and impartially reprove sin, wherever he finds it, though it be in his own patron, or men of his own profession; you will still love him the more for that. For if sincerity

and conformity (as you pretend) be the very things which you make such a noise and bustle for in the world, here you have them both in conjunction. This is the man you seem to seek (by these pleas of yours) for a pattern and standard to reduce other men to.

And is it really so, gentlemen, with you? Do you heartily affect and prize a strict and serious conformist, that fears not to expose the odious shameful and wickedness of profane swearing, cursing, drunkenness, and impurity, without respect of persons, both in his pulpit and private converses? Do you love him the better, for his plain dealing with your consciences, in detecting the grand cheat of formality in religion; for his close cutting convictions of the insufficiency of mere civility to your salvation, and the indispensable necessity of regeneration? Do you heartily love and honor him, for thundering you out of ale-houses and taverns, unto your family and closet-duties? "For telling you plainly, your love must not be confined to your own party, but extended to all that fear God, however they be externally distinguished among men? Nay, for convincing you plainly, that religion lies not in external modes and rites, in standing, kneeling, or responses? That the name and cry of the church, the church, will as little avail to your salvation, as the cry of the superstitious and profane Jews, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these? That true religion is an inward, serious, spiritual thing, consisting in evidencing itself by the mortification of your sins, and real devotedness of your hearts to the Lord?"

If such a man as this will please, and delight your very hearts; then my reason is bound to conclude, there may be reality in what you pretend. But if you shall hate and loath such a man as this equally with a professed dissenter; you must excuse me, and all the rational world with me, if we shall conclude, that it is not true zeal for the laws, for the church, or for the sincerity and peaceable lives of its professors; but an inward rooted enmity at religion itself, that sets you on work, under the feigned pretense of other things.

Expectation 5. Your reason will expect, and exact it from you, that whenever you shall be convinced, that all these stirs and bustles that have been in the world, all this fining, imprisoning, and impoverishing your Protestant brethren and neighbors for their conscience sake, has done the church no good, but given a great and real advantage to our common enemy, to ruin us together; that we may distinguish ourselves how we please in our folly, but they will never distinguish us in their fury; for we are all known to them, by one common name of heretics.

In this case, your reason exacts it from you, and so does the common reason of mankind, that a sense of common interest, and common danger, now quiet those feuds, and extinguish those fires which our own lusts first kindled, and the devil and our common enemies have incensed, to the great damage and hazard of the whole Protestant cause.

Such a seasonable and becoming sense as this, were in itself sufficient to cool a wise man's heats, if penal laws were left standing in their full force and vigor: But when the wisdom and reason of the state shall plainly discern both the usefulness and necessity of liberty, and thereupon take away (as they have now most prudently and seasonably done) the further occasions of mischiefs to the whole, by relaxing the yoke that bound some (and those a very great body of truly loyal and useful subjects) leaving the rest in the quiet possession of their own liberties and properties; what shall we call that fire, which still continues burning and increasing, not only after, but by all this, but an unquenchable hell-fire.

If chimeras, and self-created jealousies, are indulged, that some carnal interests of ours are not so well secured to us under liberty, as they were under persecution and

tyranny; this will be the right way to perpetuate dissensions and persecutions to the end of the world.

And now, gentlemen, I hope I may say, without being vain or opinionative, our reason has plainly disarmed you of these pleas and excuses, by which you have hitherto defended yourselves in your most sinful practices of profane cursing and swearing, drunkenness, impurity, and bitter enmity against your Protestant brethren, for things that touch not the essence of Christianity.

And believe it, sirs, it is truly genteel and glorious, to suffer yourselves to be subdued and conquered by the plain convictions of your own reason and conscience. It is ten thousand times more honorable and glorious to lay down your arms at the feet of these, than to lay down both reason and conscience at the feet of Satan and your lusts, and continue fighting obstinately against God, your own souls, bodies, estates, reputations; yes, your very reasons and consciences, your innocent brethren, and the peace of church and state, under Satan's banner.

In all this discourse I have not designed to exasperate, but assuage and restrain your lusts and passions, by laying the loving and gentle hands of your own reasons and consciences upon them. I have not given the least injurious touch to your honor, but all along pleaded for the recovery and security of it. I have exposed no man by any particular mark, or indignation.

But now I have done with you; If your own consciences shall begin to make a rounder and more particular application of these general reasonings and arguments, and say to you, as Nathan to David, you are the man; I am not accountable to God for that. But be confident of it, you are accountable to God for all those plain convictions, and faithful endeavors used with you, and tried upon you to save you from all those miseries your head-strong lusts, with furious precipitation, are manifestly running you into.

If you can substantially and solidly repel those arguments against, and vindicate those pleas for sin, which reason and conscience have urged and censured above; and can produce stronger and clearer arguments to defend and justify the courses here censured and condemned; or if you can obtain a writ of error, to remove these causes to another lawful court of judicature, where you shall obtain a more favorable verdict, your complaint of severe dealing with you here, will not want some ground or color; but if you cannot, (as you know you cannot) then never blame your own reasons nor mine, for dealing rigorously or injuriously with you.

I am willing to hope, and persuade myself, that I shall at least obtain a reformation of life from many of you. I have strove hard for it with you here. I will strive harder with God in prayer, to obtain it for you. But yet, gentlemen, I must tell you in the close, that though an external reformation of these evil courses may make your lives more healthy, happy, and durable in this world, and will greatly conduce to the public as well as your personal and private interest; yet if you expect complete and perfect happiness in the world to come, you must advance one step further beyond reformation, unto sound conversion. The first makes you comparatively happy here; but the second will make you perfectly happy and blessed forever hereafter. The first frees you from many temporal miseries upon earth; but the second, from eternal miseries in Hell. And this brings you to the other blessed step, by conversion; which is the second part.

PART 2

EVINCING THE POSSIBILITY, NECESSITY, AND EXCELLENCY OF CONVERSION TO GOD

The only thing that makes men truly happy, and perfectly blessed, in the world to come!

I. Conviction supposed, and grace admired

REASON and conscience having been shaming men out of their profaneness, in the former part of this discourse, free grace invites them to the life of holiness, and thereby to the life of blessedness, in this second part.

There you see what it is to live like beasts; here you may see what it is to live like Christians.

My charity commands me to suppose, that some readers stand, by this time convicted in their own consciences, both of the extreme wickedness, and the immediate danger of that profane course they have hitherto pursued, and persisted in; and that by this time they begin to interrogate them in the apostle's close and cutting language, [Romans 6:21](#). "What fruit had you then in those things, whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of these things is death." It is hard to imagine, that so many close debates and reasonings, as you have heard in the former part, should not leave many of you under conviction and trouble of spirit. You see, your own reasons and consciences have condemned you; "And if our heart condemn us, (says the apostle) God is greater than our heart, and knows all things;" [1 John 3:20](#). It is folly to imagine you shall be acquitted at God's immediate bar, who are already cast and condemned at your own privy sessions.

If this be the happy effect, as I hope it is, of all the former close and solemn debates with your consciences, it will naturally and immediately cast your soul, reader, into great admiration of, and astonishment at, the patience and long-suffering of God, that has borne with you, under a life of prodigious and reiterated provocations until this day. And his goodness will be as admirable to you, as his patience; in that he has not only allowed you to live until this day, but made it the day of your conviction, the first necessary step towards your conversion; and the very first things he entertains your convinced and troubled soul with, to be the possibility and probability of your conversion to God.

The greatness of his patience shows his almighty power, [Rom 9:22](#). [Nahum 1:3](#) but his willingness to pass by all the wrongs you have done him, and to be at peace with you, discovers the immense riches of his grace, [Titus 3:3, 4](#).

That God should be so quick in the executions of his wrath upon your companions in sin, and so patient and long-suffering towards you, that have out-sinned them all; is such a comparative consideration of his bounty, as should even overwhelm the man that beholds it, [Romans 9:22](#). "Behold the goodness and severity of God! on them that fell severity; but towards you, goodness."

If you be that very man, who in the past course of your life have been a profane swearer, a beastly drunkard, a lascivious person, an hater and persecutor of good men; and after all this, the Lord has brought an offer of mercy to your soul, and shall convince you it is not come too late, but that the door of hope stands yet open to you; my advice to you is, that you cast yourself down at the feet of mercy, and after this manner pour forth your laments and desires before the Lord.

"And is there yet a possibility of mercy, O Lord God, for such a vile wretch as I have been! can the arms of free grace yet open themselves to embrace such a

monster of wickedness as I am? Who then is a God like unto you? And what patience, mercy, and goodness, is like your? I have far exceeded others in sin; I have lived the life of a beast, yes, of a devil. I have dared your dreadful, and glorious name, with thousands of horrid blasphemies; trampled all your glorious attributes under my feet, challenged you, to your very face, to do your worst, even to damn me to the pit of Hell: I have yielded up this soul, with all its noble faculties and powers, as instruments of sin unto the devil; and made this body, which should have been the hallowed temple of your Spirit, to be the noisome sink (or common sewer) for all unclean and abominable lusts to run and settle in. I have hated, reviled, and persecuted those that lived more strictly, soberly, and godly, than myself; because their convincing examples disquieted, checked, and convinced my conscience, in the eager pursuit of my lusts and pleasures.

"I have lived in the profane neglect of prayer, meditation, self-reflection, and all other spiritual Christian duties; thinking to make an atonement for all, by a few hypocritical, external formalities.

"To accommodate my carnal interest in the world, I have come reeking hot out of an ale-house, or whore-house, to the table of the Lord; where, with unhallowed hands, and a more unhallowed heart, I have crucified again the Lord of glory, and given the vilest affront and despite to that most sacred and precious blood, which now must save me, or I am lost forever. Thus have I done; and "because you keeps silent, I thought you to be altogether such an one as myself: but this day have you reprov'd me, and set mine abominations in order before me."

I have tempted and seduced many others into the same impieties with me, of whom, some are already gone down to the dead, and others so fixed, and fully engaged in the pursuit of their lusts, that there appear no signs of repentance, or recovery in them.

"Your wrath, Lord, soon brake forth against the angels that sinned in Heaven; yet hitherto have you forborne and spared me, who have been highly provoking you ever since I was born, by a life of unparalleled wickedness upon earth. Vile wretch that I am! I have despised the riches of your goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leads me to repentance. And after all, here I am told, that there is yet a possibility of pardon, mercy and salvation for me. The news is so great and so good, that I am zealously concerned to examine the grounds and evidences of it. And if it shall appear to be as true, as it is astonishingly strange, and ravishingly sweet; I hope, it shall effectually lead me to repentance, and dissolve forever the strongest ties between me and my lusts."

II. Conversion of the vilest sinner possible

THAT it is possible for the greatest and most infamous sinner to be recovered by repentance and conversion, and thereupon to find mercy and forgiveness with God; is a truth as sure and firm as it is sweet and comfortable. Three things will give full evidence of it.

1. That their sins do not exceed the power and sufficiency of the causes of remission.
2. That such sinners are within the calls and invitations of the gospel.
3. That such sinners are found among the instances and examples of pardoning mercy, recorded in the scriptures.

And if the causes of pardon be sufficient, and able to produce it; if the gospel invitations do take them in, and such sinners as these, every way as vile and wicked, have not been shut out, but received to mercy; then it is beyond all doubt that there is (at least) a possibility of mercy for such sinners as you are.

I. It is past rational doubt, that the causes of remission are every way sufficient, and able to produce the forgiveness of such sins as yours are. For consider with yourselves,

1. The impulsive cause.

2. The meritorious cause.

3. The applying cause.

1. The sufficiency and ability of the impulsive cause of pardon, which is none other but the free grace of God, the immense riches and treasures whereof, do infinitely excel the accompts and computations both of angels and men. [Exodus 34:6, 7](#). "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth: keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." [Micah 7:18, 19](#). "Who is a God like unto you, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage? He retains not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities, and you will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Once more, [Romans 5:20](#). "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." So that whatever your sins have been, they do not, they cannot exceed the ability and power of the grace of God, the all-sufficient, impulsive cause of remission. That infinite abyss, or sea of mercy, can swallow up, and cover such mountains of guilt, as your have been.

2. Nor do your sins exceed the ability and power of the meritorious cause of remission, namely, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; for that blood is the blood of God, [Acts 20:28](#). He is the Lamb of God, whose blood is sufficient to take away the sins of the world, [John 1:29](#). There is but one sin in the world exempt from remission by this blood, and if your heart be now wounded with the sense of sin, (as I here suppose it to be) that is none of your sin, however heinous your other sins be.

3. Nor do your sins exceed the ability and power of the applying cause of pardon, namely, the Spirit of God. For though I should suppose your mind to be clouded, and overshadowed with grossest ignorance, your heart to be as hard as adamant, or nether-millstone, your will stiff and obstinate, your affections enchanted and bewitched with the pleasures of sin; yet this Spirit of God, in a moment, can make a convincing beam of light to dart into your dark mind, make your hard heart relent, your stubborn will to bow, and all the affections of your soul to comply, and open obediently to Christ, [John 16:9, 10](#). "The Spirit when he comes, he shall convince the world of sin," etc.

Thus you see, whatever your guilt be, it does not exceed the abilities of the causes of remission. O what an encouragement is this?

II. And there is yet further encouragement in this, that if you will open your bibles, you may find yourselves within the calls and invitations of the gospel. And no man can say, that man is without hope, that is within a gospel-invitation. Consider [Isaiah 55:7, 8](#). "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon; for my thoughts are not your thoughts," etc. Here you

have the nature of conversion described negatively and positively, by forsaking your ways and thoughts, and turning to the Lord. The way notes the external course of the conversation; the thoughts denote the internal frame and temper of the mind; both these must be forsaken. And turning to the Lord, denotes the sincere dedicating of the whole man to God; all which is possible, and easy for the Spirit of God to do; and this being once done, abundant pardon is assured. If you say, you cannot think it; God tells you in the very next words, that his thoughts are not your thoughts; but as far above them, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Read to the same purpose, [Isaiah 1:18](#). [Revelation 3:20](#). [John 7:27](#).

III. And to make the possibility of remission yet clearer, know, for your encouragement, that as vile, infamous, and prodigious sinners as yourselves, are recorded, and found among the instances and examples of forgiven sinners in scripture. Paul was once a fierce and cruel persecutor and blasphemer, yet he obtained mercy, [1 Timothy 1:13, 14](#). That sinful woman, recorded, [Luke 7:37, 38](#) was an infamous, and a notorious sinner; yet her sins which were many, were forgiven her, verse 47. Manasseh was a monster of wickedness, as you may read, 2 Chronicles 33 yet found mercy. And if you view that catalogue of sinners, given in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10. you will seem to find among them the very forlorn hope of desperate sinners, advanced nearest to Hell of any men upon earth; yet see, verse 11 what is said of some of them: "And such were some of you; but you are washed, but you are justified."

All these things plainly show (I say not the certainty that you shall be, but) the possibility that you may be pardoned; which is a mercy and encouragement unspeakable.

III. The conversion of profane ones highly probable

AND because Satan labors to discourage them that are gone in sin so far as you are, by cutting off all hopes of mercy from them, and bringing them to this desperate conclusion; damned we know we shall, and must be; and therefore as good be damned for more, as less. If we had lived sober, and civil lives, we might have had some hope; but because we have no hope, it is as good for us to take our full swing in sin, as to think of returning by repentance and conversion, so late in the day as this is.

To obviate this deadly snare of Satan, I shall here further add, That there is not only a possibility of your recovery, but, in some respect, a strong possibility, that such as you may be converted and saved, than there is for those who have led a smoother, and more civil life in the world, and wholly trust to their own civility for their salvation, instead of the imputed righteousness of Christ.

This plainly appears, by that convictive expression of Christ to the Scribes and Pharisees, [Matthew 21:31](#). "Truly, I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of Heaven before you." Publicans, the most infamous among men; and harlots, the worst of women; yet these are sooner wrought over to Christ by faith and repentance, than the more civil, and self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees.

And indeed, it is far easier to come at the consciences of such sinners by conviction than at the others; they having nothing to ward off the stroke of conviction, it must fall directly, and immediately upon their consciences. The most smooth and civil part of the world, trust to their own righteousness; and this self-confidence, like armor of proof, resists all attempts to bring them to Christ for righteousness. Nothing fixes men in a state of evil, more than a strong conceit that their condition is good.

But such as you are, whose whole lives have been polluted with profaneness, and all impiety, your consciences will more easily receive convictions of your present danger, and of the necessity of a speedy, thorough change. You cannot think, as others do, that you need no repentance, or reformation. In this respect, therefore, you lie nearer the door of hope and mercy, than other sinners do.

If therefore it shall please the Lord, (whose grace is rich and free to the vilest of sinners) to pluck out such as you, as brands out of the burning, by thorough conversion to Christ; you will not only become real Christians, (as all true converts are) but the most excellent, useful, and zealous among all Christians. As you will be most eminent instances of his grace, so you will be the most eminent instruments for his glory. As you have gone beyond other sinners in wickedness, so you will strive to exceed them all in your love to Christ. [Luke 7:47](#). "She loved much for much was forgiven her." You will never think you can do enough for him, who has done such great things for you.

Who more fierce and vile, before conversion, than Paul, who was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious? [1 Timothy 1:13](#) and who, among all the servants of Christ, loved or labored for him more than he? How did he rather fly, than travel up and down the world, in a flame of zeal for Christ? As you have been ring-leaders in sin, so you will not endure to come behind any in zeal and love to the Lord Jesus: Yet not thinking this way to make him a requital for the injuries you have done him; (that would be the most injurious act of all the rest) but to testify this way the deep sense you have of the riches and transcendence of his goodness and mercy to you, above all others.

IV. Conversion frequently and fatally mistaken

BUT here I must warn you of some common, but most dangerous mistakes, committed in the world, with respect to conversion unto God: Except these be seasonably prevented, or removed, none of you will ever stir, or move further than you are towards Christ. Among others, beware especially of these three following fatal mistakes; that of,

1. Baptismal regeneration.
2. Common profession of Christianity.
3. Formality in religious duties.

1. There is a notion spread among men, and almost everywhere obtaining, that the scriptures mean nothing else by conversion, but to be baptized in our infancy into the visible church; and that this ordinance having passed upon them long ago, they are sufficiently converted already; and that men make but a needless stir and bustle in the world, about any other, or further conversion.

But, sirs, I beseech you, consider how dangerous a thing it is, to take your own shadow for a bridge; and venturing upon it, drown yourselves. If baptism be conversion enough, why does Christ say, [Mark 16:16](#). "He who believes, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he who believes not, shall be damned?" Baptism without faith, signifies nothing to salvation; but faith, without baptism, (where it cannot be had) secures salvation. And why does the apostle say, [Galatians 6:15](#). "Neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creature?" Or what needed Christ to have pressed and inculcated the indispensable necessity of regeneration upon Nicodemus, as he does, [John 3:3, 5, 7](#) who had been many years a circumcised Jew? This your dangerous dependence upon your baptismal regeneration, is what has given such deep offence, and prejudice to many (though

without just cause) against that ordinance. I lament it as much as they, that men should turn it into such a deadly snare to their own souls, yet will still honor Christ's abused ordinance.

2. Some think, the common profession of Christianity makes men Christians enough; they are no Heathens, Muhammadans, or idolatrous Papists; but Protestants, within the pale of the true church; that is, professed reformed Christians.

But, friends, I beg you to consider that convictive text, [1 Corinthians 4:20](#). "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Many there be, that in words confess Christ, but in works deny him. And why were the foolish virgins (that is, professed reformed Christians) shut out of the kingdom of God; if the lamp of verbal profession, without the oil of internal godliness, were enough for our salvation?

[Matthew 25:3, 12](#). Believe it, sirs, many will claim acquaintance with Christ upon this account, and expect favor from him in the great day, of whom he will profess he never knew them, [Matthew 7:22](#). Christ need not have put men upon striving, as in an agony, to enter in at the strait gate, if baptism in our infancy, or verbal profession of Christianity, were all the difficulties men had to encounter in the way to Heaven.

3. Formality in external duties of religion, is another fatal mistake of conversion. Have not these been the inward thoughts of your hearts? As bad as we are, though we take liberty to swear, be drunk, and unclean sometimes; yet we say our prayers, keep our church, and hope for Heaven and salvation, as well as those that are more precise.

But tell me, gentlemen, seriously, what do you say, or plead for yourselves more in all this, than those convicted hypocrites did, [Isaiah 58:2](#). "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my way, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God: They ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God." Or to come nearer yet to your case, and cut off, at one stroke, forever this vain plea of yours, read and ponder God's own censure of it, in [Jeremiah 7:8, 9, 10, 11, 12](#). "Behold, you trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, and swear falsely, etc. and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, says the Lord; but go you now to my place, which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel."

V. Of the nature of true conversion

YOU have heard, that conversion does not consist in these external things; at your eternal peril be it, if you trust in them: But true conversion is the turning of the whole man to God, [Acts 26:18](#) it is nothing less, than the total change of the inward temper and frame of the heart, and the external course of the life, [Isaiah 55:8](#). It is not the cool confession, but the real forsaking of sin, in which we shall find mercy, [Proverbs 28:13](#). Your heart and will, love and delight, must turn sin out, and take Christ in, or you are no gospel-convert. A true convert loathes every sin, and himself for sin, [Ezekiel 36:31](#) but general confessions of sin are consistent with the full dominion of sin. Moreover, in all true conversion there is a positive turning unto God, a whole heart-choice of him, for your supreme and ultimate happiness and portion, [Psalm 73:25](#) and of the Lord Jesus Christ, as your Prince and Savior, [Acts 5:31](#). And answerably, it will devote your whole life to his service and glory, [Philippians 1:21](#). And thus it brings forth the new man, and the whole frame of your

heart and life is marvelously changed and altered, [2 Corinthians 5:17](#). "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

It may be, you will think such a change as this impossible to be made upon you. And so it is indeed, until the day of God's power come, [Psalm 110:3](#). What! to forsake with loathing your old companions, and courses, which you have so long lived with and delighted in; and to embrace with highest pleasure, strict godliness, which you have so loathed, and ridiculed! This would be a strange alteration indeed: But as strange as it seems to be, it will be effected in a moment, when God fulfills that gracious promise (as I hope he is now doing) to you, [Ezekiel 36:26](#). "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Operations follow nature: When the heart of a beast was given to that great king Nebuchadnezzar, [Daniel 5:21](#) his dwelling was with the wild donkeys; they fed him with grass, like oxen. But let the spirit of a man return to him again, and he will blush to think of his brutish company, and way of life; and so will you of yours also. As marvelous a change as this has passed upon as eminent and notorious sinners as yourselves, [Galatians 1:22](#) the God of the spirits of all flesh can with ease and speed produce all this by that Almighty Power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

VI. Of the hazards attending conversion

IF the Lord shall, in his rich grace and mercy to your souls, stir up in them the thoughts and resolutions of a change of your course; great care ought to be taken, in the time of this change, lest they miscarry in their remove from one state to another; multitudes miscarry between a state of profaneness, and true godliness. To continue in the state of profaneness, is to be certainly lost; and so it is to take up short of Christ, in mere civility and formality in religion. This middle state takes up multitudes by the way, who do but change the open road, for a more private way to Hell.

Mere civilized nature is unregenerated nature still; "They return, but not to the most High; they are like a deceitful bow," says the prophet, [Hosea 7:16](#). They seem to aim at Christ, and salvation; but, as an arrow from a weak bow, it goes not home; or, as from a deceitful bow, it slants aside, and misses the mark. It is true, they are not openly profane, as they were before; but they take up and settle in an unregenerate state still: Their condition is the same, though their company be not.

This is excellently set forth by our Savior, [Matthew 12:43, 44, 45](#). The devil may be cast out as a profane devil, and yet keep his propriety still as a former devil. The sense of that text is well expressed by one, in this note upon it; That a restraint by formality, keeps the devil's propriety, and disposes the soul to final apostasy. You are as far from Christ and salvation, under the power of formality, as you were before. He who is cured of a fever, has no great cause to rejoice, if his fever has left him under a consumption, which will kill him as surely, though it may be less violently, or speedily.

VII. Of the absolute necessity of a thorough change

WHATEVER the difficulties and hazards are, that attend this change by conversion unto God, the change itself is absolutely and indispensably necessary to every man's salvation. The door of salvation can never be opened, without the key of regeneration. Christ assures civil and formal Nicodemus, "That except he be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," [John 3:3](#). Think not conversion to be the attainment of some singular and extraordinary Christians, for it is the very point upon which every man's eternal happiness or misery depends. There is one law for

all the world; they must be changed or damned: No restitutions or reformations, no common gifts or abilities, no religious duties or services, can save any man from Hell, without a change by thorough conversion, [Romans 8:8](#). "They that are in the flesh, cannot please God."

Satisfy and please not yourselves with this: Though we live in sin, yet God is a merciful God. We will confess our sins to him, say our prayers, keep our church; and no doubt but God will be merciful to us, as well as others. Consider it, man, that this merciful God is also a God of truth; and this God of truth has plainly assured you, that all these external things signify nothing to your salvation, unless you become a new creature, [Galatians 6:15](#) and that you must be born again, [John 3:3](#). Say not, without this you will hope in God; If you hope in God, you must hope in his word, [Psalm 119:11](#). Now where will you find that word in the bible, that warrants the hope of salvation in the unregenerate person? All scriptural hope is of a purifying nature, and evermore productive of a holy life, 1 [John 3:3](#).

If you say, Christ died for the greatest of sinners, and you trust to be saved through him; it is true, he did so, but conversion is his only method of salvation, [Titus 2:14](#) and those that are not washed by sanctification, have no part in him, or in his blood, [John 13:8](#). He came not to save men continuing in their sins, but to save his people from their sins, [Matthew 1:21](#). His way is to lead you through sanctification unto salvation, [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#). If you have a mind to see whom, and how he saves; you have it before your eyes, [Titus 1:14](#). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Those only are saved by him, that "denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, live not only soberly and righteously, but godly in this present world."

And this is the change I am here pressing you to; and until this change be made, you cannot find yourselves within the compass of any covenant-promise, [Ephesians 2:12](#) but if you will turn to [Hebrews 12:14](#). you may, the very next minute, find yourselves barred out of Heaven by a scripture threatening. Let no man, therefore, impose so great a cheat upon his own soul, as once to imagine, that anything short of sound conversion can ever put him out of the danger of damnation.

VIII. Every man might do more than he does, towards his own conversion

IT is not in any man's power to convert himself; but yet because every man might do more towards it than he does do, and does it not, he is justly chargeable with his own damnation. We are bid, and bound to strive to enter in at the strait gate, [Luke 13:24](#). It is true, a man in his natural state, can do nothing that is spiritually, or supernaturally good; yet he can do, and forbear to do many things, the doing or forbearing of which, have a true (though remoter) tendency to his conversion; and not doing, or forbearing of them, his destruction is of and from himself.

You can, if you will, forbear to swear, and blaspheme the name of God. Who can, or does compel, or force your tongues to it? The devil can tempt, but not compel them: you can, if you will, stop, when nature is duly refreshed. Your wicked companions can provoke, but not force you. You can, if you please, shun lascivious books, and company, and keep your bodies chaste, at least from the external acts of impurity.

And why cannot you (if you please) perform, as well as neglect, the external acts of religious duties? The same feet that carry you to a tavern, can carry you to your closets, if you please to have them do so. Nor do I know any reason why you cannot compose yourselves, when engaged in God's public or private worship, to a close and serious attendance to those duties. The application of the mind to what is spoken is of great concernment to you; and if an unsanctified minister can apply his thoughts to compose a sermon, and preach it: I see no reason why an unsanctified

hearer may not also compose, and apply his mind to hear it. And I am past all doubt, that something may be done beyond all this. You have some power certainly to reflect upon, and consider what concernment you have in the things you read or hear; and how they agree, or disagree with your experience.

Now, if men would but do this, (which certainly they have a power to do) though they cannot convert themselves, yet hereby they would lie in the hopeful way of converting grace; which is more than they could ever yet be persuaded to do. And though there be no positive certainty, or assurance, that conversion and salvation shall follow these acts; yet hope and probability are engagements enough. Hope sets all the world on work, without assurance. The ploughman ploughs in hope, and the merchant ventures in hope. Do but as much for your souls, as these do for their bodies.

IX. Temptation and discouragements in the way of conversion

BUT here I expect to be encountered by all the policy and power of Hell. Satan, and your own lusts, are in confederacy, to turn away your minds from such counsel and persuasions as these. They will tell you, this is no proper season to mind your conversion; it is either too soon, or too late; you have not yet had pleasure enough in sin, or so much as has put you beyond all hopes of mercy: That religion is a melancholy thing, and if once you look that way, you will never have a merry day, or hour more; with a thousand such damps and discouragements.

But pray, gentlemen, do so much, at least for your souls, before you turn away your ear from the instructions of life, as to hear these matters examined: If they are not worth that, they are worth nothing.

I will suppose you in the flower and vigor of your youth, and this dangerous season now nicked with a more dangerous temptation; that it is too soon to mind such serious matters now: You have not yet had your full pleasure out of sin.

Need I to spend a word, to refute and baffle such a temptation as this? I doubt not, but you yourselves can easily do it. Ask yourselves, Sirs, if sentence of death were passed upon you by men, (as it is by God, [John 3:18](#). "He who believes not, is condemned already,") would you think a pardon could come too soon? Be assured, every bit of bread you eat, is the bread of the condemned; you are in danger of Hell every day, and hour: There wants nothing but a sword, a bullet, a shipwreck, or disease, (of which multitudes wait on you every day) to put you beyond mercy, and all hopes of mercy. And can you get too soon (think you) out of this danger and misery? O why do you linger any longer? The danger is too great and imminent, to admit one hour's longer delay.

And it is as strange and strong a delusion on the other side, to imagine it is now too late: The vanity and groundlessness of this, has been evinced in the second section, to which I refer you for full satisfaction.

And for the loss of your pleasures, by conversion to God, that is the thinnest and silliest pretense of all the rest: That is the same thing, as to imagine it is to a thirsty man's loss, to leave the puddle waters of a broken cistern, to enjoy the crystal streams of a flowing fountain; for the pleasures of an ale-house, play-house, or whore-house, to be sweeter than the light of God's countenance, the comforts of his pardon, or the lively hopes of glory with him in Heaven; of which you read, [1 Peter 1:8](#).

Poor men! O that you did but once know what the life of holiness, and dedication to God is! what the seals, earnest, and first-fruits of his Spirit are! How willingly and

joyfully would you trample all the sordid pleasures of sin under your feet, to enjoy them!

X. Motives and considerations persuading to conversion

THIS short discourse shall wind up itself in motives and considerations, to prevail with you, not only to make the first step out of profaneness to civility; but the other necessary and happy step too, for the Lord's sake, gentlemen, that blessed step beyond mere civility, to serious godliness.

O that I knew what words to choose, and what arguments to urge, that might possibly prevail with you! My witness is in Heaven, I would do anything within my power, to procure your temporal and eternal happiness. I beg you, in the affections of Christ Jesus, as if I were upon my bended knees before your feet, turn not away your eye nor ear from these discourses: Ponder and consider, once and again, what has been rationally debated in the first part, about your reformation, and what has, and shall be offered, in this second part.

O my God! you that have counted me faithful, and put me into the ministry; you that have inclined my heart to make this attempt, and encouraged me with hope, that it shall not be in vain to all them that read it, if it must be so to some; I beseech you, lay the hand of your Spirit upon the heart and hand of your servant; strengthen and guide him in drawing the bow of the gospel, and directing the arrows, that they may strike the mark he aims at, even the conviction and conversion of lewd and dissolute sinners. Command these considerations to stay and settle in their hearts, until they bring them fully over to yourself in Christ."

Considerations

Consideration 1. And first, O that you would consider how the whole of your life past has been cast away in vain, as to the great end and business you came into the world for. You have breathed many years, but not lived one day to God. Your consciences could never yet prevail with you to get out of the noise and hurry of the world, and go along with it into some private retiring-place, to debate the state of your souls, and think close (but for one hour) on such awful subjects as God, soul, Christ, and eternity, Heaven, Hell, death, and judgment. Do you think, gentlemen, that you came into this world to do nothing else but to eat and drink, sport and play, sleep and die? Ask yourselves, I beseech you, whether the life you have hitherto lived, has looked to your own eyes like an earnest flight from Hell, and a serious pursuit of Heaven and salvation? How much nearer you are got to Christ now, than you were when in your cradles? The sweetest, and fittest part of your life, is passed away in vanity, and there is no calling one day, or hour of it, back again.

Consideration 2. Consider, gentlemen, for Christ Jesus sake, you have yet an opportunity to be eternally happy, if you will slight and neglect opportunities of salvation no longer; the door of mercy is not yet finally shut up: The Lord Jesus yet waits to be gracious to you. Such is his astonishing grace and mercy, he will pardon and pass by all that you have done against him, if now, after all, you will but come unto him that you may have life. Turn you, turn you; for why will you die? Your swearing and blaspheming, your drunkenness, impurity, and enmity of godliness, shall never be mentioned, if you will yet repent and return. [Ezekiel 18:21, 22](#). "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he has committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him."

If you say, these are hard and impossible terms to nature, it is true, they are so, and God's end in urging them here upon you, is to convince you of your natural

impotence, and drive you to Christ; that by union with him, the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in you.

Consideration 3. Let it be thoroughly considered, it is no less than salvation, and your own salvation too, which depends upon your conversion. How diligent was Christ in purchasing salvation! how negligent and remiss are we in applying it! O what compositions of sloth and stupidity are unconverted sinners! how do they sit with folded arms, as if it were easy to perish? Is this your running and striving to obtain the palms and crowns of immortal glory? Work-out (says the apostle, [Philippians 2:12, 13](#)) your own salvation with fear and trembling It is for salvation, and nothing less, you are here pressed to strive: And what care, pains, or solicitude of ours, can be equal and proportionate to so great a thing as salvation? If every thought of the heart were rescued from all other concerns, and the mind stand continually fixed with utmost intention upon this subject, surely such a subject deserves it all, and much more.

But when you consider it is not another's, but your own salvation you are striving for; how powerful should the principle of self-preservation awaken and invigorate your utmost endeavors after it! The law of charity, and affections of mercy, would compel us to do much to save the body, and much more the soul of another: And will they move us to do nothing for our salvation?

Say not, If I should be careless and neglective, yet God is good and gracious; if this season be neglected, there are more to come: Alas! that is more than you know. It is possible your eternal happiness may depend upon the improvement of this present opportunity; there is much of time in a short opportunity.

Consideration 4. Do you think your hearts would be in such a dead, careless, and unconcerned frame, about this great and awful matter of your conversion and salvation; if those things were now before your eyes, which certainly and shortly must be before them!

How rational and necessary is it, for you now to suppose those very things as present before you, which you know to be near you, and a few days or hours will make present? Here let me make a few suppositions, so rational, because certainly future and near, that no wise man will, or dare to slight them as fictions or chimeras.

Suppositions

Supposition 1. Suppose yourselves now upon your death-beds, your hearts and breaths failing, your eyes and heart-strings breaking, all earthly comforts failing, and shrinking from you; these things you know, are unavoidable, and must shortly befall you, [Ecclesiastes 8:8](#). suppose also, in these your last extremities, your consciences should awake (as probably they will, there being now no more charms of pleasure, and sinful companions, to divert or stupefy them) what a case will you find yourselves in! what a cold sweat will then lie upon your panting bosoms! what a pale horror will appear in your countenances? Will you not then wish, O that the time I have spent in vanity had been spent in the duties of serious piety! O that I had been as careful of my soul, as I was of my body! What are the pains of mortification, which I was so afraid of, to the pains of damnation, which I begin to scent, and apprehend! I thought it hard to pray, mourn, and deny myself; but I shall find it harder to grapple with the wrath of an incensed God to all eternity.

Supposition 2. Suppose yourselves now to be at the judgment seat of God, where you know you must be immediately after death; or, that you did behold the process, and awful solemnity of the general judgment of the great day! both which appearances are indisputably sure, and certain, [Hebrews 9:27](#). [2 Corinthians 5:10](#). Suppose you saw all Adam's posterity there assembled, and convened, even multitudes, multitudes which no man can number; all these separated into two grand

divisions; Christ, the supreme and final Judge, upon the judgment-seat; the Christless and unregenerate world, quivering at the bar; the last sentence pronouncing on them; the executioners standing ready to take them away: Will you not then (think you) be ready to tear yourselves with indignation, for this your supine and sottish carelessness? A voice from the throne, like the voice of a trumpet, sounds a loud alarm to all careless, negligent, and trifling sinners: And this is the voice, if you will not be in the same case with the miserable, condemned world. Put to it heartily, then, in the use of all means with God and men, for converting and regenerating grace now, which is the only thing that differences your state from those miserable wretches then.

Supposition 3. Suppose God did but give you a foresight, or foretaste in the terrors of your consciences, of that damnation you have jested at, and so often imprecated upon yourselves: Did you but lie one night in that plight poor Spira, and many others besides him have done, with the terrors of the Lord upon your spirits, under horror and remorse of conscience, which are the first nibblings and bitings of that worm which shall never die!

Paleness and horror, fear and trembling, upon the outward and inward man, while God is making the immediate impressions of his wrath upon the conscience; seeming to want someone to let out that miserable, wretched soul, that is weary to stay any longer in the body, and yet afraid to be dislodged, lest its condition be made worse by the exchange: do you think you would ever imprecate damnation any more? And yet all these terrors and horrors upon the conscience, are but as the sweating of marble-stone before the great rains fall.

But what if God should give you a vision of Hell itself, and of the inconceivable and inexpressible misery of those desperate and forlorn wretches, that lie there sweltering, and groaning under the heavy pressures of the wrath of a great and terrible God, immediately and everlastingly transacted upon their souls? Would you ever jest with damnation any more, as with an harmless thing? Nay, would you not strive to the uttermost, to flee from this wrath to come? Do you not seem to hear, in this rational and just opposition, and doleful cry coming from Hell, and the state of the damned, with this very sound and sense? 'Good souls, if ever you expect to be delivered from this state, and place of torments, strive, to the utmost, strive while you have opportunity, strive while breath and strength do last, to flee from, and escape, by a sound conversion, this doleful state of eternal damnation.'

Supposition 4. Lastly, and in a word, suppose you had a vision of Heaven, as Stephen and Paul had in the body; suppose you saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at his right hand, surrounded with the triumphant myriads of palm-bearing saints, singing Hosanna's and Hallelujahs to God, and the Lamb forever; and blessing, praising, and admiring him that gave them another spirit, vastly different from that which governs such as you: Blessing the Lord, that enabled them to be praying and praising, while others were cursing and swearing; to be sighing and groaning for sin in secret, while others were shouting and singing in taverns and ale-houses: to beat down their bodies, and keep them under, while others were pleasing and gratifying their lusts; would you still drive that course you do? Well, sirs, if ever you expect to come where these blessed ones are, you must take the course they did. Let this be your endeavor, and it shall be my fervent and hearty prayer.