

An appendix to Solomon's prescription for the removal of the pestilence. Enforcing the same from a consideration of the late dreadful judgement by fire. Together with some perswasions to all ... to exercise and maintain faith ... in this dark ... day / By M.M. [i.e. Matthew Mead].

Contributors

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MEAD

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PESTILENCE

1867







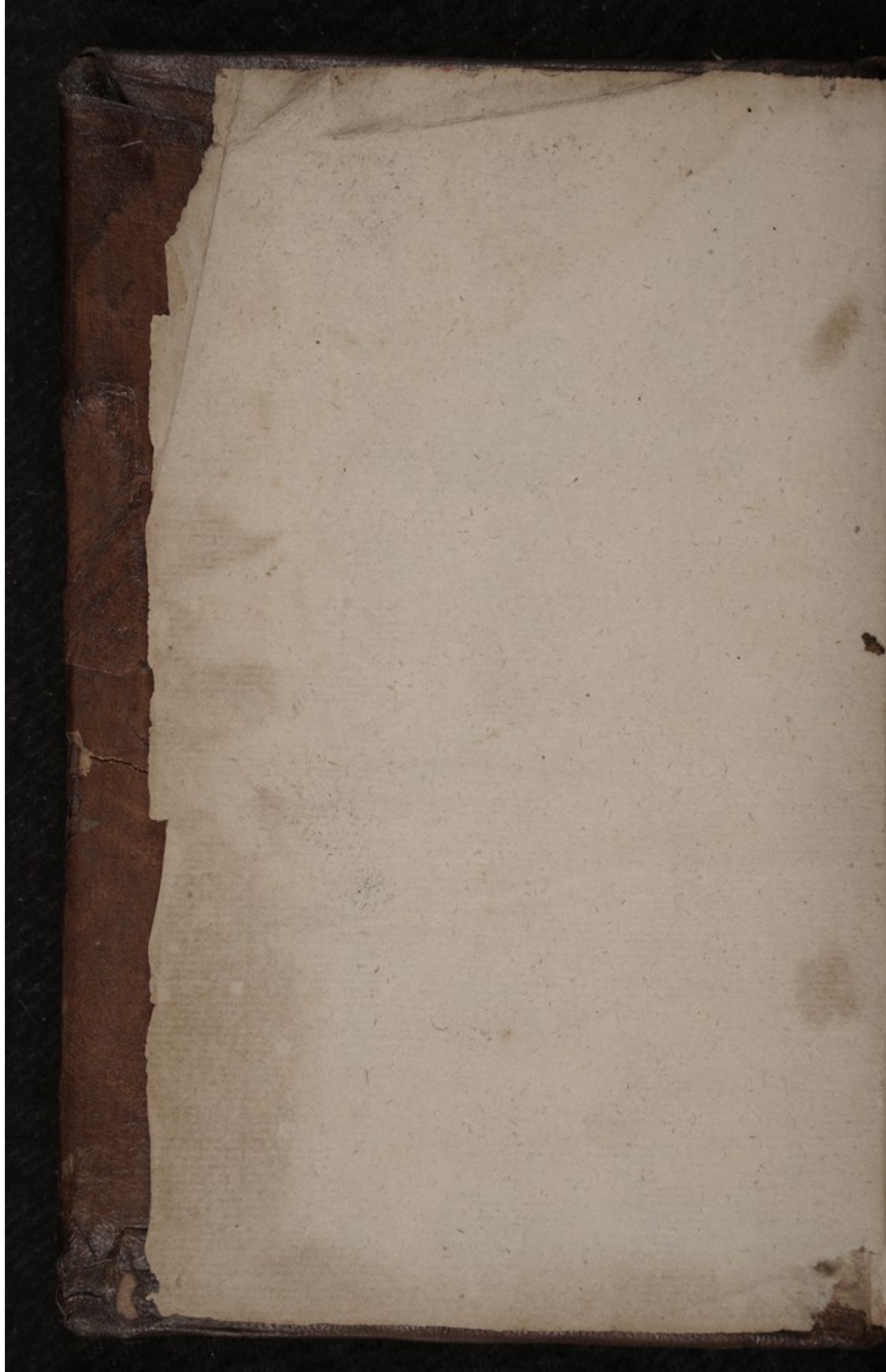
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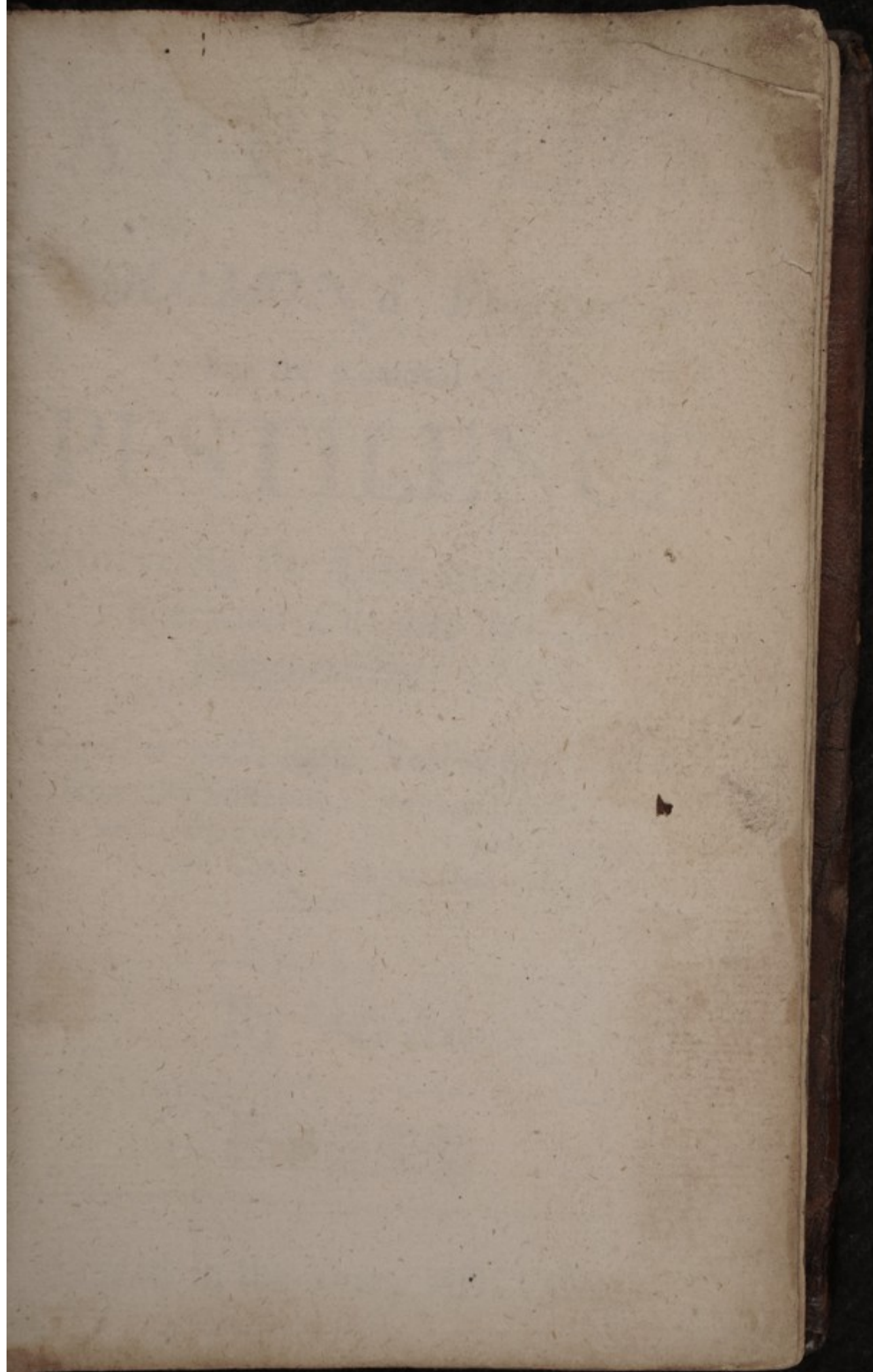
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By Matthew Mead







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APPENDIX

T O

SOLOMON'S Prescription

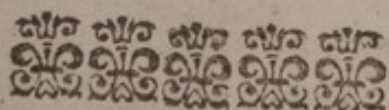
For the Removal of the

PESTILENCE.

Enforcing the same from a Con-
sideration of the late Dreadful
Judgement by FIRE.

Together with some Perswasions to all,
especially Suffering Christians, to exercise
and maintain Faith and Patience, Courage
and Comfort, in this Dark and
Cloudy Day.

By M. M.



Printed in the Year, MDCLXVII.

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JULY 1877

Courteous Reader,

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For the Removal of the

THUS indeed have the Pains and Miseries of blessed Saints that have left this life, expired together with their dying groans, whil'st we poor Sinners that are left behinde, have remained to bee the subjects of those farther Calamities, which

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which

which the Justice of God brings upon those that contemn and slight such expressions of it, as were design'd for their Instruction and Reformation: And that most signal expression of contemned and incensed Justice, which hath lately put us into an astonishment, out of which we are scarce yet recovered; doth methinks strongly invite me to attempt some kinde of improvement of it, in prosecution of the design which I aim'd at in the foregoing Discourse: The occasion whereof was the consideration of the heavy Judgement of the Plague then upon us, and an hearty desire that it might attain some good effect amongst us; and the business of it is, to represent the Sins we have been Plagu'd for, and to perswade a reformation from them, which the hand of God then stretcht out against us did so loudly call for. And since it hath pleased the Divine Majesty to follow that stroak, even whil'st it was yet upon our Loyns, with this second little less terrible, it will not I presume be impertinent, by way of Appendix to this latter Edition, at least to make so much use of this sad providence as thence farther to evidence, *That Sins, even such as I have before mentioned, are the true causes of our Miseries, and thence to enforce my Exhortation to put away from amongst us these Sins;* for the performance of which Duty, we are furnisht with another so strong but sad an Argument. And though I may be almost in despair of doing any good hereby, which shall be publick and visible, yet if I might but prevent the final ruine of any single Soul, I shall be far from reckoning my labour lost: Withall I would hope to do something towards the vindication of Divine Justice, in these seemingly severe dispensations, and to the quickning and comforting the hearts of his suffering people.

I take it for granted that the Reader is not so destitute of both Reason and Religion, as to question whether there

there be a God that rules in the World, or whether he bee Omniscient and Almighty, without whose cognizance and concurrence no Creatures can move, without whose foresight and permission no event can befall: And therefore I hope there's no need that I should concern my self with the original of these flames, and endeavour to manifest that they were kindled by no humane means, before the finger of God shall be acknowledged therein. Since wee know that God ordinarily makes use of second causes for the execution of his pleasure; which whilst they execute, there's no necessity that they should distinctly understand what they are doing, and frame designs correspondent to those, which by his over-ruling power they accomplish: Though *Jehu* was most intent upon his own advancement, to which the ruine of *Ahab's* family was subservient; yet God by him fulfill'd the threatings denounc't against that Family. Whilst the *Assyrian* King was glutting his cruelty, and enlarging his Dominions by the conquest of the *Israelites*, hee was a Sword in Gods hand to accomplish his pleasure on Mount *Zion*. And the difference of their intention from Gods, doth no more hinder their being instruments for the performance of his righteous Will, than his turning their actions to his own ends, lessens the wickedness of their intentions. Even *Judas* and the *Jews* fulfill'd the determinate counsel of God. Moreover that he who hath all Creatures at his beck, even the most brutish and inanimate, which depend upon him for their Being, Motion, and several activities, did not either prevent, or check what he saw without his interposure would produce such and such sad effects, doth plainly speak that it was his pleasure they should be produced. As the watchman wakes but in vain, except the Lord keep the City; so, if hee do keep it, all attempts made against it shall be in vain. How often

have we had experience of a watchful Providence preserving us from, or soon stopping the mischiefs of this nature, which either Treachery or Carelessness were bringing upon us. Those designs which have been contrived with as malicious a subtilty as Hell and the Conclave in conjunction were Masters of, have been discovered and frustrated; witness that our deliverance from the Popish Powder-plot, which we yearly Commemorate, and shall never surely forget whilst the Reformation keeps footing in *England*. And how often have we been Alarm'd with the cry of Fire, which hath been extinguished before we could well know where it was. But when once we have sin'd our selves out of Gods tuition, how open do wee lye to all assaults? Being expos'd to that wrath, whereof all creatures are ready to be obedient instruments, and which none may or can resist. And alas! how plainly did God appear against us in this dreadful instance of his displeasure? Though he did not indeed immediately rain Fire from Heaven upon us, yet there was such a concurrence of circumstances to make it so long unquenchable and raging, as may abundantly convince us, that it was under the command and guidance of an higher, even an uncontrollable power. May wee not bee allow'd to say, that it was blown up, and kept in vigour even by the breath of the Lord, if the winds may be so stil'd: upon the wings whereof these Flames being mounted, rode as in a Chariot, triumphing along the Streets, laughing at Engines, baffling Art and Industry, mastering and overcoming all oppositions that were made against them; in three or four daies space destroying the Works of many hundred Years, and the Wealth and Labours of many thousand Inhabitants: And yet that it should stop where and when it did is almost as much a wonder as that it should be stop't no sooner: and both are so strange, arguing a more than ordinary pro-

providence, that we may reasonably infer, that he who said to the proud flame, *You shall come no farther*, did also say to them, *Hitherto shall you come*. So that we may fitly allude to that of the Prophet, *Isa. 66. 15. The Lord is come with Fire, and with his Chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebukes with flames of Fire.*

And if be granted that it was the Lord who brought this evil upon the City, it will not then I hope be questioned but he hath justly done it; with none I am sure but with Atheists will it be questioned: For he who denies Gods Justice, doth in effect deny him to be God; that is, a Being infinitely perfect. Moreover, such is Gods gracious and merciful nature, that we may be assured he is not delighted in his Creatures sufferings, which he never inflicts but for some just and weighty cause; yea, I may say, which they scarce ever undergo, but when they foolishly and wilfully pluck them upon their own heads. Strange it is that Man, to whom Self-love is a natural and inseparable property, should contrive his own ruine: or if you say it is not ruine that he purposely contrives, yet as strange it seems, that hee who is endowed with Reason, whereby he is capable of knowing the nature, and attending to the consequences of things, should so greedily embrace the cause, and will not be driven from it, whilst he hates the effect, and would fain avoid it. But as strange as this seems, and as great a blemish as it laies upon humane nature, yet most true it is, and too strongly confirmed by daily sad experience. Fain would men separate what the unalterable Law of the Creator hath joyned together, Sin and Misery: and though they know, or may know that they cannot have one without the other, yet will they venture upon what they love, though certainly attended with that which they cannot endure; and so most justly, *They eat the fruit of their own way, and*

are fill'd with their own devices. Thus it is in the present case; with eagerness and delight have we procur'd to our selves those evils which wee bitterly lament. Wee that ran so earnestly to quench our burning houses, with our own hands set them on fire. We that are now in so perplext and destitute a condition, have even wilfully plung'd our selves into these difficulties: for in the settled course of Gods government of the world, there is as great a connexion betwixt sin unrepented of, and fore judgements, either in this life or the next, as betwixt throwing Granado's into an house, and its being thereby burn't to the ground. Yet mistake me not, as if I thought that they who suffer most are the greatest sinners, and that the City was so much more wicked than the Country, as its sufferings are greater: But only this I dare safely say, that Sin is the great Incendiary of our Land, the Traytor and Destroyer that hath done us so much mischief, even the sins of all, and therefore hath a Judgement befalln us, wherein there are few but are concern'd, either for themselves or relations, or at leastwise, as members of that Commonalty which suffers so greatly: and those particular persons upon whom it hath falln heaviest, though there may be many that have deserved as ill, who perhaps fare better than they, yet have they no reason to think that they have far'd worse than they deserv'd. God himself directs us in our enquiries after the cause of such calamities, *Dent. 29. 22, 23, 24, 25.* When any should ask why the Land was made like *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, Brimstone, Salt and Burning, the answer was to be returned, because they had forsook the Covenant of the Lord God of their Fathers. This Apostacy from God, is the usual cause of the destruction of Kingdomes. So *Isa. 42. 24.* *Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk*

walk in his waies, neither were they obedient unto his Law: wherefore we may well say, This evil is of our selves, our own doings have procured all these things to us.

If now you ask mee, What doings? what sins those are which have provokt God thus speedily to repeat his lashes? I answer, They are even such as I have before made a rehearsal of, and which I shall not now particularly enlarge upon; but especially our continuance in, and revolting to these sins, as it were in despite of those remarkable Judgements, which have been employ'd to turn us from them. The Pride and Covetousness, the Whoredomes and Drunkenness, which have abounded amongst us; our cruel Animosities and Divisions, Uncharitableness and Oppression, Contempt of God and Godliness, prophanation of Lords-daies, and neglect of his Ordinances and Worship; such as these are the doings which have brought our miseries upon us. But which is the grand aggravation of all; After we had been stricken for these sins, were we grieved and reformed? Nay, rather have we not revolted more and more? Did we in our affliction acknowledge our offence, and seek the face of God? Did we return to him that had torn, that he might heal us; to him that had smitten, that he might binde us up? Or rather, were we not like Jerusalem of whom God complains, Zeph. 3. *That being filthy, polluted, and an oppressing City, she obeyed not the voice, nor received correction; being unjust, they knew no shame; and therefore hee made their Streets waste that none past by, their Cities were destroyed there was no Inhabitant.*

Were not the fears we before mentioned of a return of all kinde of impiety, too propheticall? Where alas! could there be any thing seen amongst us, after the heavy stroak of the Plague was somewhat lightned, that deserved to be call'd a Reformation? How few were put
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to a stand thereby, and brought to consider and amend their waies? Though they saw their neighbours and friends cut off before them, yet did they not still hold on in their former careless and prophane course? What considerable notice was there taken of the hand of God? Did not the most who out-liv'd the Plague, shew that their sins out-liv'd it too? did they not fall in again with the very same violence and unconscionable eagerness they were wont, to the pursuing of their worldly designs? As if their greatest trouble was, that they had been so long interrupted in their gainful trading: and its well if the trade of sinning was even that while interrupted. Or if there were some, who by the apprehensions of approaching death, were frighted out of some grosser sins, and into good purposes; yet did they not soon return to their old bent, like streams, whose course hath been for a while damm'd up? Many, it is to be fear'd, who in their trouble sought God, presently forgate him when that was removed; and forgot the promises they made to him, of newness of life and better obedience, in case they should be recovered and preserved. But because generals affect not so much; let me put it to thy own Conscience, Reader, for thy particular, what influence the late Visitation had upon thee, for the changing and bettering thy heart and life? Did it bring thee to reflect upon thy self, and search out what was the plague of thy heart? what lust thou hadst harboured? what duty thou hadst neglected? whereby thou hadst contributed to the increasing and hastning of Gods indignation. And didst thou thereupon proceed to the humbling of thy soul before God for thy transgression, and to the reforming of thy life? If indeed thou hast done thus, and shalt hold on so doing, its happy for thee: but examine well whether thou art not still the same man that ever thou wast, as proud and worldly, as slothful and sensual as ever; and

and as much a stranger to God, and Christ, and heavenly things as ever. Whether it be thus with *thee* or not, I cannot say, I leave that to God and thy own Conscience to judge: But I think without breach of charity, I may say, 'tis thus with the most. The Rod hath left them as bad as it found them, and therefore indeed worse: Now do but consider it impartially, whether this be not matter of high provocation to the Divine Majesty, to see himself and his providences thus sleighted by heedless resolute sinners. For sure we must needs think that it is for some end, that he who is wise and good laies sufferings upon a people; and he expects they should improve them to this end; and takes exact notice whether they do so or not. No doubt therefore but he expected an improvement of our late heavy Visitation, and did observe our behaviour in and after that time. He that looks down from his heavenly Throne upon all the dwellers on earth, hath beheld our senseless and stupidity, how light wee have made of the Tokens of his displeasure; our hypocrisie and impudence, how we have kept our Fasts, and our Sins together; he hath seen how regardless we have been of the design of this Dispensation, as if it was no Call to the Inhabitants of the Land, to return to God from whom they had backslidden, but rather that it came by chance, or however, was no more considerable than other Diseases are; and accordingly we have been little more concerned, except in studying how to keep our selves out of danger; little thinking of betaking our selves to God, to get our peace made with him, nor well conceiving of any great advantage to be had thereby. Is this indeed a true Character of our demeanour, and could we think the Great God would brook such insufferable contempt? When Fathers have taken the Rod in hand, do they use to lay it down before the Childes stubbornness be conquered? Often
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may we finde in the story of Princes, that they will rather connive at some affronts from their Subjects, or Neighbours, than attempt a redress or punishment which they fear themselves unable to accomplish; but if once this attempt be made, they look upon themselves engaged in honour and policy to prosecute it, least by the falour their weakness be discovered, their authority empair'd, and the offenders more confirmed in their insolencies. How would *Pharoah* have triumphed, if after a judgement or two, *Moses* had ceast his suit, and left the *Israelites* in his hand: he would even have taken himself too hard for that God who demanded them thence. If then the Almighty hath purpost to reform this Nation or root it up, do we think he will give us off before this purpose be accomplisht? As he hath before given precept upon precept, and with great patience waited for the fruit thereof, so he may now justly send Judgement after Judgement, and if one bee slighted, follow it with another, till his ends are brought to pass. This is no more than what he hath often threatned to the Obstinate. *Leviticus 26. Jer. 30. 23, 24. Behold the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind, it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return until hee hath done it, and till hee hath performed the intents of his heart, in the latter daies ye shall consider it.*

But before I conclude the discovery of the probable causes of this our late suffering, I cannot but point at the continuance of that miscarriage which I formerly mentioned, and manifested to have so great an influence in procuring our miseries, namely, *The disabling and restraining so many faithful Ministers of Christ from doing what they might, toward the preventing and lessening of provoking Sins, and the advancement of that Godliness, which is the welfare and establisment of a Kingdome.* The ground

ground I go upon in asserting this to be a principal cause of our Calamities, are with mee unquestionable; and will be I think with any one else, who will first but grant, that the overflowing of wickedness brings ruine upon a Nation; and then will soberly consult his own reason, whether the restraint of many such who would make it their very business to oppose the growth and spreading of sin, is not the ready way to cause it overflow? and lastly will but attend to his own experience, whether this hath not been (and is therefore like to bee still) the effect of the removal of the late Ministers from their employments, and of denying admission to all other, who cannot accept of the hard conditions which are tendred them. This, as I yet conceive, I have made beyond all contradiction evident in the former discourse, *pag. 80. and forward.* Nor can I devise what can bee alledg'd to weaken that evidence. Is it not most certain that there are many such mean places in the Countries, as are altogether destitute of Preachers, which they, who with all their Souls would accept them, are absolutely forbidden to supply? And is it not almost impossible but they should be ignorant, who have no Teacher, and ungodly, who are ignorant? Again, is there any thing of a slander in what I have there said, That there are many places furnisht only with men utterly insufficient and unfit for the Ministry, being either intollerably negligent or ignorant, or of loose and vicious Lives? To hear of this may bee unpleasant to those that cause it, but if it bee true, is it not likely to bee much more displeasing to God to behold it? Have there not been multitudes restor'd to the Ministry, who were once cast forth for the notorious scandalousnesse of their Conversation? And though they pretend, it's like, that Loyalty was their onely Crime, yet doth not the continuance of their looseness

ness, as much justify their former ejection, as condemn their restitution? Amongst the many hundreds that have been excluded for Non-conformity, where are there ten, may I not say one, thus proceeded against for Prophaneness? 'Tis lawful I hope to mention these things which almost every body sees and talks of! Even those who are not at all desirous to spy blemishes in the Church of *England*, as they love to speak, nor any corruption in her Administrations; cannot but confess this to be a most grievous one, loudly calling for a Reformation. And is it a fault to speak the sense of such who are freest from partiality and prejudice? If then so many Shepherds are set over the Flocks, who are either careless of them, or are themselves dangerously sick of those Diseases they ought to cure, what's like to become of the Sheep? and what's the ground of all this mischief, but the seclusion of so many Pious and Conscientious men from the Ministry, which hath made a kinde of necessity of admitting such unfit persons thereinto to supply their rooms, or of leaving such vacancies as might too much shame the Authors. This I am confident, is the chief ground, together with that zeal in those who preside over these affairs for the strengthening of their own cause, which makes them dispense very much to such as are qualified with a full Conformity, which is seldome wanting in them who have little else to recommend them. Now what course could be taken that was like to do more to the encrease of wickedness than this, namely, to thrust into corners such who improv'd their utmost abilities to counter-work it; and instead of them, to admit such into the Pulpit, whose practises at least were Patrons and Promoters of it? Let me not be thought guilty of so much immodesty or prejudice, as to say they are all such, I have before prevented that mistake; but I think he may justly be argued of

of both, who denies that there are any such. But suppose there were not (which with all my Soul I wish was more than a supposition) yet I am still of opinion, that the silencing of so many Ministers, at least as eminent for Piety, Learning, and Diligence in their employments, as those who succeed them; and preventing so many others, hath been as great a check and hindrance to true Religion and Godliness, and of as fatal consequence to the souls of thousands, as any thing that ever befell us since the Reformation. Could there bee a readier way to expose men to death, than in time of some great Mortality, in a City where the one half of the Physicians are *Galenists*, the other *Chimists*, to issue out an Order, that none should practise except they who would approve the method of *Gallen*; or the contrary: whereby one half must needs be rendred useles, in a season where there would be work for all, though a thousand more? And was it less dangerous to the Souls of men to have so many Physicians removed, when neither the Patients nor their Diseases were few or inconsiderable? It was not then I hope either for want of consideration or charity, that I before took the boldness to suggest, that the Reformation of this disorder, was one lesson, which the Rod then laid on us, ought to teach us.

And since that time hath the case been altered, have matters been mended amongst us? Need I tell the world that they have not? Is there any man such a stranger in *England*, that he knows not what hath been done since then? How new ambiguous Oaths, as likely to be refused as the former, have been fram'd and impos'd, so that they who were before cast forth of their employments, and stript of their maintenance depending thereupon, must now be driven from Cities, Towns Corporate, and the places where they have been formerly employ'd, except they would embrace these. And yet
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what new crimes, to deserve such punishments, they were guilty of, we are yet to learn, except this was one, That, through the providence of God, and the charity of his people, they were not starv'd to death, or into a compliance something worse. I am almost afraid of being offensive, whil'st I do but nakedly relate this terrible dealing with such, for many of whom I dare confidently say, their Innocence is as great as their Sufferings; the very rehearsal thereof seems so strange, especially if we consider that doleful circumstance of time wherein it was set on foot. Whil'st we were all smarting, amongst other sins, for our unchristian divisions, even then instead of healing our Breaches, and the Land at once, were some preparing lashes for their Brethren who should survive; that if they were left on earth, they might not have a comfortable and quiet habitation in it, so far as they could hinder it. Did they, whom we may reasonably suppose the chief promoters of this design, imagine, that they had offended by too great gentleness, and therefore must expiate that fault by this severity? Alas, they need not have fear'd it! Or did they indeed take these their Brethren to be the Pests and Plague-sores of the Nation, by purging of whom from Towns and Cities, they thought to atone Heaven and purge the Land? They should not methinks be so uncharitable. But yet wee finde the best of men have been as heavily censured. The Apostles themselves were taken to be the *περιπαθήματα τῶν ὁσίων*, 1 Cor. 4. 13. such kinde of vile persons as were commonly pitcht upon for the lustration of their Cities, in times of great Calamity, And as their censure, so their condition was not much unlike; for wee finde, v. 11. *They had no certain dwelling place.*

May we not by the way, lawfully take notice of the mercifulness and wisdom of that Providence, which
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turn'd what was meant for his servants harm; into their good, even their temporal good; by something an harsh, but it seems a friendly voice, calling to them to go to *Pella* before *Jerusalem* was destroy'd. It might seem a peice of violence which the Angels offered to lingring *Lot*, when they laid hands on him to bring him away, *Gen. 19. 16.* But if he had at first thought so, it was but a very little while before he had sufficient ground to acknowledge, what we read in the same verse, *That the Lord being merciful to him, brought him forth, and set him without the City.* Who would not in such a dark and mutable world as this, give up himself without repining to the conduct of that Providence, which intends our good by those very waies which seems most to contradict it, and which will safely lead us through all the various gloomy turns of Life, and at length accomplish the just desires of all those who sincerely serve, and intirely resign up themselves to it. When as they who are engag'd in any work, which is contrary to his Will who rules the World, will finde themselves baffled and overcome even when they think they succeed and prevail. Oh how miserably do we often find the Wise men of the world infatuated in their policies, whil'st they pull down the Walls to secure the City. When the *Pharisees* conceiv'd or pretended a fear, that if Christ should bee let alone and gather so many followers after him, the *Romans* (as imagining, it's like, that they design'd a rebellion) would come upon them and take away their Nation; the course they took to prevent this danger, by conspiring against the life of our blessed Lord, prov'd a means of bringing upon them those *Romans* which they fear'd, and by them destruction to their City and Nation. The *Sodomites*, to whom the precise life and galling reproofs of *Lot* were as much a vexation, as their wickedness was to his righteous Soul, who were

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extremely impatient that an Upstart and Stranger should take so much upon him, far'd never the better for having this thorn pluckt out of their side; and had at length reason to be convinc't, that not his Neighbourhood, but their contempt of it, with their other impieties, were most prejudicial to them. *Never yet did Town or City fare worse for an holy praying people: Swearing, and Cursing, and Conventicles of Good-fellowship, and Prophaneness, are like enough to bring mischief upon the places where they are practis'd, but humble fervent prayer, be it in publick, or in private, in a Synagogue, or in an Upper Room, never did nor will do; but rather the restraining of prayer before God may probably do it. If Aaron and Hur should have laid stones upon Moses his hands, to weigh them down, instead of supporting them, no wonder if the hands of their Warriours had been weakned, and Amalek had prevailed: Or if, when he stood in the Gap to intercede for the Israelites, they should have pluckt him out of it, no wonder if wrath had soon overwhelm'd them. Had they gone about to prohibit, or any way restrain the offering up the Incense of prayer to God, it had been but just and natural that he should have made the smoke of his fury and their torments to ascend.*

Need I mention it to any knowing Englishman what a kind of Mourning Garb our Nation hath lately wore, and in what a disconsolate posture she hath sate? A Nation so gladdened by the Restauration of her Rightful Magistrate, our dread Sovereign, and equally sadned by the removal of a faithful Ministry; than which scarce any thing could have been devis'd more to the grieving and even breaking the hearts of such, to whom the interests of their souls are dearer than all worldly things. And such, though they may not be the richest nor the greatest, yet without question they are the best part of
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any Kingdome where they dwell. But yet I must confess, I have met with very few comparatively, of what spirit or inclination soever, that have seem'd pleas'd with these transactions, but acknowledge that gentleness and brotherly forbearance had been more suitable to the nature of that Christian Profession which we all own, and more advantageous to its interest, which we all pretend to design. Undoubtedly then the blessed God, who hath a quicker and more tender sense of his own glory and the concerns of his servants, than the most holy and compassionate man on earth can have, is not well pleas'd to behold the violence and harshness with which they are follow'd, though it may be under pretence of *doing him service*. Though they that hate their Brethren, and *cast them forth*, may say, *Let the Lord be glorified*, yet they shall be nevertheless ashamed of this hatred, this expression of it, and the pretences wherewith they varnish it, when the Lord himself shall appear for the vindication and joy of those who for his Names sake were contemned and abused. And although that great day of discovering truth and doing Justice be yet to come, when all Vices shall be pluckt off from persons and things, such that now render Vices Honourable, and Virtues Criminous, as the prosperous please to vote them, and when all being manifested to be what they are, shall be treated as they deserve; yet even before that day, there are now many times such strokes in that Providence which orders humane affairs, as to a careful beholder may somewhat discover what those rules are by which God is pleased ordinarily to proceed in his Administrations. And such Essays and expressions of Justice there are mingled with Mercy, as may serve to bring the ignorant and secure to consider their wayes, and to reclaim the confederate. And have not Gods Dispensations towards us been such as speak him to have a Controversie with us? Have we

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not found that it is an easier thing to silence his Ministers than his Judgements? Every mans own sense is best able to inform him what our flourishing and prosperity hath been since that time. Scarce a sensible Christian but to his grief observes how lamentably the interest of Religion hath declined, and scarce any carnal man so senseless but complains that our worldly prosperity hath done so. Certainly that all-seeing God, who is a lover of Holiness, will not be mockt with appearances and glorious pretences. 'Tis not the flourishes of Order, Decency and Uniformity, that will be accepted instead of down-right Godliness, and true Charity and Unity. To reform a Church, and raise it out of its ruines, implies something more than either to repair and beautifie stately Edifices, though Consecrated ones; or to give a little splendor to external service, and seduce some petty circumstances of worship which had been disus'd: 'Tis as much sense to say, that he recover'd a man to life, who instead of a plain Coat put him on a gaudy one, which perhaps may not be so serviceable neither. Nor is the welfare and glory of a Church to be measured by the wealth, pomp and power of its Governours (for then we know who would carry it from all Competitors) but by its attainment of those ends for which it was instituted: We use not to count that the best Flock which is diseas'd and scabbed, though the Shepherds may be rich, and at ease; nor is that Hospital in the best order, whose Governours and Physicians have the greatest Revenues and liberty to do what they list, whilst the sick and wounded are neglected, and perish, but that wherein these are most carefully lookt to, and best healed: And that's the best School where the Masters are most able and painful, and the Scholars make the best progress in learning and good manners, not that where the Masters are best paid, and do least, though such as these are the like-

likeliest to get their silly Scholars love. Plainly then, the blessed Redeemer of Mankind, the Founder and Law-giver of the Christian Church, hath appointed it to be as a School, wherein Believers by the teachings of his Spirit, Word and Ministers, are to be trained up into a fitness for the high and heavenly glory; as an Hospital wherein lapst souls are to be heal'd of the diseases contracted by the fall, that they may be made meet for the present service and future enjoyment of God: wherefore we must needs conclude, that's the happiest and most glorious Church, where these designs are most faithfully regarded and successfully carried on, even where sin and wickedness is most vigorously set against, discouraged and suppressed, and all real goodness is most promoted and farthest spread; where the several members are diligently instructed, and carefully lookt after, so that they grow in sound knowledge, faith, humility, zeal, and every other grace, and live together in mutual peace, love and righteousness, adorning the Gospel, and glorifying their heavenly Father by such fruitful, beautiful conversations. But where-ever these things are less regarded, let there be never so much empty noise of Order and Settlement upon sure and ancient foundations, of a flourishing Clergy, and excellent Constitutions, because perhaps they all read over the same prayer, or wear their Coats all of a colour; yet whilst I believe the Gospel, which tells us the nature and ends of this holy Society, I shall never believe that to be the best ordered Church which falls so vastly short thereof, even that where the Life and Power of Religion apparently decays, and ignorance, lukewarmness, and prophaneness live, thrive, and over-run the members. I think its far better to see the Physicians in times of great sickness busily running to rescue the diseased from the jaws of death, though perhaps not with so much formality and orderliness as

might at another time seem requisite, than to have them take state upon them, and busie themselves in devising and prescribing Orders about their Administrations that make more for their own interest, or at least for the humor of some of them, than for the good of their Patients; especially if they should proceed to make it a Crime for those that may be as skilful and faithful as themselves, to endeavour the saving of their Neighbors lives, except in every punctilio they comply with their humors. But to do thus in matters that concern the everlasting life and death of immortal souls, is such a piece of bold selfishness and uncharitableness, as will scarce be well taken by him who died for them. And whether there have not been such limitations and restraints laid upon many whose business and office it was to oversee souls, and thereby such injury done to their precious charge, let any unbiass'd Reader, who knows how affairs stand amongst us, determine; as also, if it be so, whether such actions must not needs tend much to the provocation and dishonor of God, being publicly owned and justified, and the whole Nation involved in the Guilt, so far as it can concur to a single action; and whether therefore the redress of this may not reasonably be thought one grand Admonition of the several calamities which have of late like waves com'n riding one upon the neck of another.

And now at length, what as to this particular shall be the fruit of these flames that have burnt up the Glory of our Land? Shall they not burn up the dishonour of it too? Shall not our animosities and contentions, our earthly carnal zeal which hath fed upon our spirits, and almost consumed our vitals, with all our passionate inflammations and heart-burnings, be thrown into this fire, never to revive and live more? Oh would to God that they might, I should not then stick to call it a Blessed
Fire

Fire, which should consume and carry away so much of a worse, even of Hell it self, from amongst us. Oh happy were we, if our Dross and Tin were but thus burnt off, that we might come out of the fire so well refin'd! That all our stubborn Spirits were but melted and softened into such mutual compliances as beseems Christian Brethren. But alas! what mortal power can produce such blessed effects? What earthly instrument can bring about such an heavenly work? No, this is left for Omnipotence to accomplish. *Good Lord, then let the power of thy Grace set in with thy Providences, and let thy Spirit do that, which neither Plague, Fire nor Sword, Mercies nor any Means by themselves can: Even to work the Spirits of all those who call themselves thy Servants and Children, into a gentle, loving temper, becoming that Profession and the nearness of their Relation; that they may with faithfulness and resolution, joyn hands in that work, to which they are all engag'd, and give each other what assistance and encouragement they are able, for the subversion of Satans Kingdome, and the carrying on those designs of mercy to Mankind, for which thou didst create, and dost uphold this world, and sent'st thy Son into it, and keep'st thy Gospel and Ministers in it.*

Is there any thing in this request, to which all true Christians may not readily give their *Amen*? Why then should not all who own that Name, contribute their endeavours to the obtaining of that, which they profess to desire? How lamentable and strange a thing is this, that when wee are all agreed, or seem to bee so, about the chief end which we ought to pursue, and the principal means conducing thereto, that yet we should stand at so hot and hurtful a difference about matters, wherein one would think it impossible for rational Men to differ. Are wee not all agreed, that the honour of God, and salvation of Souls, ought to bee the principal end of our endeavours? And that the bringing of men to

know, believe, and obey the Gospel, is the only way for the attaining of this end? And that the delivering, explaining, and inculcating upon them, the truths and duties of this Gospel, by a Ministry fitted for that work, is the ordinary means for the begetting of Faith and Obedience? And after all this, shall it bee a controversie, whether many of those who are thus fitted, and acknowledged to bee so, shall bee kept off from this, so needful, so important a work, rather than to bee dispens't with, as to some such Subscriptions and practices, which they that refuse, dare not comply with, for fear of sinning; and which they that impose, know they may lawfully dispense with, being matters of that nature, that the most zealous Assertors of them, will not affirm they are of absolute necessity, nor that they will countervail the loss of Souls, which, it's too too evident, the rigid imposition of them does and will occasion. Will nothing that hath yet befalln us, help to clear our Judgements and settle our affections, so far as to end this controversie? Are not our sufferings yet great enough to meeken and bow our spirits, and drive us together? Shall they not now at last, work the same happy effect upon us, in reference to these differences, that Persecution and Imprisonment did upon those famous Martyrs, *Ridley* and *Hooper*, in a business of the like nature. The good man, who was before so hot in pressing Conformity, soon put off his harshness, as appear'd by his loving Letter, when he saw his Brother a Prisoner for the same common truth with himself. They who may quarrel in the Palace, are made friends in a Prison, and embrace each other at a Stake. And they who cannot agree, so much as about wearing the same clothes, are soon reconcil'd when they wear the same chain. And should we be reduc't to the like case with them, I am very apt to believe we should then be
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of the same relenting temper. They who have been guilty of so much rigour, would then, I hope, be asham'd and griev'd to remember how they had formerly made those to suffer, who are now become their Brethren in suffering. May we not say, Oh wholesome Persecution, whose fetters oft prove *bonds of peace*, whose pressures alay that pride, and heal those breaches, that would nor by any other means be healed? But what shall neither Reason, Interest nor Conscience perswade that, which a more smarting Rod would whip us to? Will nothing but ravenous Wolves drive Christs Flock together? Will no other Fire but that of Martyrdome, devour our unnatural hearts? Oh why should we provoke God to use harsher means for the accomplishment of that, which hee sees his more favourable dispensations will not produce?

That it is nothing sinful or unreasonable that is requested, I appeal to the *Petition for Peace*, to which I before refer'd, as containing the sum of their desires, whose cause I plead. Will it be a sin to grant that Indulgence, which for some time his Majesty by his Declaration did; and which hee was pleased also to give assurance, hee should consent to have it by Act of Parliament confirm'd, when any Bill to that purpose should be propos'd; and which moreover, it was publickly reported, he was graciously inclin'd since to have given, had not they, whom it least beseem'd to be enemies of tenderness and charity, prevented it. In a word, can any thing bee more reasonable, than that they who profess themselves Officers in the Church of Christ, to govern it according to his Orders, and to carry on his Ends, should so far provide for his honour, and the necessities of Souls, as to give way to such to Preach his Gospel, who are competently qualified for, and earnestly desirous of that Employment; and that upon such conditions as Christ hath in his Laws appointed,

pointed, and the Apostles in their times required of those whom they admitted to this Function? Let all that are Lovers of truth and peace determine whether this be not a modest and just proposal; and whether it must not be something else than Conscience and a Zeal for Religion, that can cause any to reject it; this God will in his time determine. I mention Church-Officers, because, by their mediation, this Liberty is most likely to be obtained, as by their interposure, principally it hath been taken away and hindred: which consideration, beside the nature of their Office and Trust, methinks should engage them to do what they may towards it's recovery.

And was there now but this much granted, though I dare not say it would bring us all that outward prosperity which is desired, yet I am confident, it would very much change this sad face of things that now appears amongst us, and would revive a languishing spiritless Nation, and very much expel those ominous fears, and mis-givings of minde, wherewith we are so generally seiz'd; For I am wel assur'd it would rejoyce the hearts of thousands of his Majesties most faithful Subjects, who though they should be *fed with the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction*, yet would more chearfully bear it, were *their Teachers but remov'd out of the corners*, whereinto they have been driven, so that they might freely see and hear them. And we may reasonably suppose, that an action which tends so much to the honour and service of Religion, even to the curing of our divisions, the easing of the burdened, and not only to the pleasing of sober and good people, but to the profiting of the bad, will be very acceptable to God, and the most likely way to procure that favour, which will secure a Person or Kingdome from being miserable, whatever befall them.

And what is it, can we imagine, that should prevent
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that *Grant*, which is in self so highly reasonable, and attended with so many desirable consequences? I know not what can be objected, but that common pretence, *That this is the way to cast us all into confusions and disorders*: To which I have before sufficiently answered. Why, I beseech you, should acts of Clemency breed Confusion, where those of rigour have been receiv'd with patience? Why should they be thought so foolish and disingenuous, as to become disorderly by the favour of their superiours, who have had so much Conscience, as to be peaceable in the want of it? Especially since this favour is of that nature, that it makes them little more capable of doing mischief, if they were inclined to it, but might do much to prevent or take away such inclinations, if there was any danger. And how can that breed Confusion, which will do so much to the satisfying of mindes, the uniting of hearts, and so to the strengthening of our hands. But to secure all, what can be desired more than is before intimated? *viz.* That they who share in this Liberty, binde themselves by the most plain and sacred Oaths, not to endeavour the disturbance of either Church or State, but the peace of both. And if any bee indeed found guilty of acting to the contrary, let them bear the punishments due to Sedition and Perjury.

Fain now would I hope that there are none so fully bent on their own Wills, that they are absolutely resolv'd, no offered Reasons nor Entreaties shall prevail with them; to depart an inch from their undertaken course. Let us leave that as a property of the most singular Church, amongst the many other Prerogatives which makes her stand by her self, to justifie and maintain all her Errours, least she should be thought once to have err'd; Proclaiming her Obstinacy, instead of disproving her Fallibility. But they who make none of
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that ridiculous and proud claim, may well enough avoid those intanglements, which are the pernicious but necessary consequences thereof. As the frailty of Man exposes him to mistakes, so 'tis the honour of a Christian to acknowledge and retract them. Nor will any I hope, conceit themselves pent up in such unhappy circumstances, that they have occasion to complain, as *Adrian the sixth* did, *That being Pope, he could do little good though he really desired it, because he could attempt no considerable piece of Reformation, but he found it would either disoblige the Grandees of his own Court, impair his Revenue, or some way or other weaken the Papal interest.* All that I am pleading for, is but a Liberty for able, godly, peaceable men, to Preach the plain and pure Gospel of Christ, which it is his command should be made known to every Creature: And wherein this can prejudice any person or party, that maintain not designs contrary to, or advanc'd above this Gospel, I am utterly to seek. If there be any whose endeavours shall bee found more for the upholding and propagating of a Faction, than true Godliness; I am far from wishing them any such favour, as might capacitate them the more successfully to serve themselves. But yet since unhappily there are so many petty differences, and notes of distinction amongst us, let every man have so much Justice, as not to be presently condemn'd as Factionous, because he is angerly call'd so by another, from whom in some small things hee may dissent: For if such censures may bee on all hands admitted as current proofs, I fear wee shall finde few innocent through the whole Land. Of contrary opinions its impossible to hold both, and in matters of practice which are under debate, wee must either do them or leave them undone. And thus we cannot avoid the appearance of being on one side, which, be it what it will, the contrary part (the most rigid of them at least) will be

apt to stile it a Sect, and those Sectaries which adhere to it, because not thorowly siding with them: And how the most Catholick-spirited Christian can well please both, is not easie to conceive, displease them hee may far easier. It is not my business now to enquire into the nature of those things wherein we differ, so to attempt a dicision, who is in the right, and who is in the wrong; and thence to infer the equitableness of Liberty to any sort of men, upon supposition of their being in the right: But it is enough for my design to suppose (what methinks should not, by any that are sober and charitable, be denied me, to wit.)

(1) That at present the conditions of access to the Ministry, are of that nature, that it's possible for good Men Conscientiously to dissent from them; And

(2) That there may lawfully bee such abatements made as these Dissenters will comply with.

(3) That notwithstanding the differences that may after this remain in opinion, wee may live together in love, and joyntly promote the Great ends of the Gospel: From which premises, I presume it is a very fair, and natural inference, That such who will sincerely apply themselves to the advancing of these Ends, and will engage not to break the Peace about any inferiour points wherein they differ, ought not to bee look't upon as Factionous and Schismatical; nor as such to bee hindred from imploying themselves to the best advantage, for the honour of their Lord, and the benefit of his People. Let him then onely bee accounted Schismatically inclin'd, who, for the propagating of his own by-opinions, and the advancement of his Party, will neglect and contradict the weightier duties of Religion; not looking so much to the saving of souls, as getting himself Profelites;

undervaluing, censuring, and abusing all that are not of his own way; for such as these, be they who they will, and let them pretend what they will: I open not my mouth in their vindication, but will rather heartily joyn with our *Letany*, in praying that from all such *Schisme* in Opinion, affection or practise, the *Lord* would deliver us; and from those who are incurably tainted therewith, the *Good Lord* deliver both this and all other Churches through the Christian World.

If it should be demanded by what farther note we shall know the Factious from those that are not so, since fine words and fair pretences are a very fallible and insufficient Criterion? To such I answer, That Justice and Common Reason will tell us, that the professions, promises and oaths of men, must be taken for the surest discovery of their hearts and intentions, till they shall have utterly forfeited their credit; and when it shall be evident, not by general charges of whole parties, but by particuler proof, that any have done so, let them never more be trusted, till their Penitence and Reformation may have redeem'd that forfeiture; yet let not the Innocent suffer for their sakes, nor let them be thought to agree with them in all their miscarriages, who may agree with them in a particular Opinion, which is the most uncharitable censure that can be, except it may be prov'd that those *miscarriages* are inseparable from that Opinion. If any man should attempt to murder the Pope, upon pretence that he is not Head of the Church, the Guilt of his Fact is not chargeable upon all that are of the same Opinion, since this attempt was not the necessary consequence of that Opinion, but of the weakness of his discourse, or some carnal Motive: Why then should the peaceable bear the blame of other mens disorders, which they could not help, nor did contribute to? But if there should be any, who whilst they zealously inveigh

inveigh against all parties, shall yet be found so solicitous for their own, that they will admit of nothing as a *Test* of peaceableness and Piety, but the profession of compliance with them, even in those things which are the grounds of difference: I fear this their course will be so far from being serviceable to the recovery of the Churches Peace, that it will prove one of the greatest obstructions of it that could be thought of. And if such shall be jealous of all that refuse the conditions they offer them, as if they went about to set up for themselves, and will accept of no protestations to the contrary, but will endeavour as far as they well can, to keep them out of a capacity of doing God service, least they should undermine some interest of theirs; they do too plainly tell the world, that they have got something which they value at an higher rate than the propagating of the Gospel, and saving mens souls; since by their good will nothing shall be done in this work, but by those who will carry on those other ends of theirs. This is such a Demonstration, as meer pretences to the contrary are too weak to confute: But happy will it prove for us all, if once we become so wise as to believe, that there is no greater nor truer self-interest, than to be faithful to the Cause of our Common Lord, and diligent in his service, according to our several capacities: So that all they who own themselves in Commission under him, may desire and imploy their power to no other end than to procure obedience to his Laws, for which purpose alone his Servants are Authorized, as the King Deputes Officers to see his Laws executed. This is their Office and their Honor, to be the happy Instruments of bringing many souls to know and accept of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; as it is the business and the honor of an Embassador to accomplish those designs of his Prince for which he received his Commission and instructions, whereas

whereas to neglect these for some private ends of his own, would speak him rather a Factor for himself, than a Minister of his Prince. And when Christs Ministers do heartily believe this, they will never have a jealousy of knowledge and godliness (by whomsoever they are furthered and spread) as if they could receive prejudice thereby, since then it will be their only desire and greatest delight that these may thrive, and they who will joyn their industry with them in this blessed work, cannot but be dear to them, notwithstanding any lesser differences betwixt them. Holy *Paul* rejoyc'd in that Christ was preach'd, even when it was done by some out of no good principle; and why was this, but because all that he propos'd to himself was that Christ might be preach'd. It was not his Reputation in the World, nor any advancement that he sought for, but that the Kingdome of his Master might be enlarged, and so this went forward nothing could displease or hurt him. Oh how far then may we imagine that he was from forbidding all that nam'd themselves Followers of *Cephas* or *Apollo*, in opposition to him, to preach this Gospel. Happy then shall we be, if this true Christian spirit of meekness, self-denial, and untainted zeal for Gods honour, obtain and prevail amongst us: But if Religion be made an instrument of State, or a means for the attaining of some carnal ends, and the Church be governed by such Quirks of Policy as Statesmen use in Civil Administrations, then indeed its likely that what, according to the plain Rules of the Gospel, would be very serviceable, shall yet be rejected, because it agrees not with Politicks. And sometimes even ignorance and ungodliness shall rather be suffered to grow and encrease, than those means permitted for their extirpation which have not a tendency to such private ends, or suit not with the Methods which men too profoundly wise have propos'd to themselves.

I pray God preserve all amongst us from being guilty of so much selfishness, so little true policy. And to draw to an end, I must profess I cannot see how they can absolve themselves of this guilt, who being entrusted with the managment of Church affairs, shall not improve their power to redress this grievance whereof I have been complaining, and to obtain that just liberty for the Ministers of Christ, for which I have been petitioning; which its probable might be attain'd with ease, were they but barely willing that it should be granted.

But if they prove deaf to all the most humble and importunate entreaties, and continue the restraint of those who are conscious to themselves of no other designs (in the main) but such as Christ and his Apostles had when they were upon earth, even to instruct and convert careless sinners, and build up believers; still procuring sufferings to such, who by their good will would displease no man, if it be possible to please God and them too, (and some such there are) I shall then look upon these strange proceedings as boding yet more and greater mischief to this torn and bleeding Nation: Will God have mercy upon that people who will shew no more mercy to one another? From the day of our Peace-making and hearty Reconciliation, if ever such a desired day shall come, I shall reckon the beginning of *Englands* Restauration to her happiness and glory; but before then I shall have little hopes of either. I am not so vain as to make pretence to any Prophetick Spirit; but when I consider the reason of the thing, the Nature of God manifested in his Word, and the course of his Providence, I can hardly think that Nation will be very prosperous, which shall do so much to dis-engage themselves from his favour, by discouraging so many whom he hath fitted for, and sent out into his service; giving such a stop to the course of his Gospel, whereby

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the Inhabitants should be brought to that obedience to his Commands, which hath the blessings of this life, and that to come, entail'd upon it. Moreover, its evident to any considerative beholder, that Popery, Prophaneness, and Infidelity, are combin'd against us; mischiefs near akin, and being united under one Common Head, go about seeking whom they may devour: and if instead of joyning strength against them, we continue those divisions which weaken it, reason and experience will tell us, we shall hereby lie much more open to their fury. And to little purpose will it be for men to declaim earnestly against these growing evils, whilst they nourish the certain causes of them; and to pretend themselves desirous to have contentions cease, and wickedness reform'd from amongst us, whilst they industriously keep off the most effectual means for such a Concord and Reformation. And if they persist in these resolutions, how little reason have we to expect that our fasting and praying should prevail for mercy, except in order thereto, God shall be so far entreated by us, as to abate that obstinacy, and remove that Veil of partiality and self-love which prevent it, where-ever they are to be found upon us. He himself assures us, *Isa. 58.* that it is not the formality of Sackcloth and Ashes, and hanging down the head like a Bull-rush, that will be accepted of those who continue to find their pleasures, and exact their labours; or (as the Margent hath it) those things wherewith they grieve others. But the Fast which he hath chosen is, to loose the Bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke, *ver. 6.* To the same purpose he speaks, *Zech. 7.* when they enquired concerning their Fasts; whether they should still keep them or not; his answer was, *That they had not fasted to him that while; but rather they should have hearkned to the former Prophets, which cryed to them when*

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Jerusalem was inhabited, and in prosperity, and should have executed true Judgement, and shewn mercy and compassion every man to his Brother, and not have been guilty of oppression, nor of imagining evil in their hearts against their Brother. And when, upon *Jonah's* preaching, the *Ninevites* kept such a very strict and solemn Fast, which being joyned with Reformation, was doubtless acceptable to God; yet its observeable how he seems not to take notice of this in comparison of their turning from sin, *Jon. 3. 10.* And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.

And when at length we shall be perswaded to celebrate such a Fast as is before described, we may the better hope for those blessed fruits of the same, which are promised in the 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. verses of that 58. of *Isaiah*; the last whereof is so exceeding seasonable, both in the literal and spiritual sense, to our present sad condition; viz. That they should build the old waste places, and raise up the foundations of many generations, and should be call'd the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of paths to dwell in. And I pray God grant that the pious and successful endeavours of those who are in a capacity amongst us, may procure them these truly Honourable Titles.

After all that I have said, I know 'tis easie for those who conceive themselves accused, to wipe off all by asserting, That 'tis not any severity of theirs which gives just ground of complaint, but rather the complainers may thank their own stubbornness and self-will for whatever smart they feel; and that they themselves are guilty of whatever mischiefs have com'n by their Deprivation, who would rather forsake their employments than their humors. But to this, I conceive, I have said enough for the satisfaction of those who are willing to take any. And

if I had said no more than this (which is all I shall add) it might seem sufficient, to wit, that I have been pleading only for their liberty who are willing to take the most solemn oath, lawfully tendred them, that it is a fear of displeasing God, and damning their souls, which hinders their continuance in, or entrance upon the Ministry, on the conditions now required; and moreover will as strictly binde themselves, if more favourable terms may be allowed them, not to abuse this favour, to the fomenting either of Sedition or Schisme; but will faithfully devote themselves to that work which is on all sides acknowledged to be their duty, and will study to preserve and promote the peace and prosperity both of Church and State. I leave it then to the judgement of any charitable man, whether such as these are to be condemn'd of obstinacy; and where the guilt is like to lie, if upon this pretence, their requested freedome of serving God in his Church shall still be denied them. And moreover, I could wish (as I have said formerly) that they who oppose their Brethren in this request, would put it to their own consciences, whether they durst make the same solemn professions, that they thus deal with them for fear of displeasing God, and wounding their Consciences?

I may perhaps be thought guilty of very great sauciness and petulancy for speaking at this rate; and (would you believe it?) even of Faction and Sedition, for arguing too plainly for peace and equity: but for that I am at a pass; for be it known to thee, Reader, I consider who is present with me whilst I am writing, and before whom I must shortly give account of these and all other my words; according to which Christ tells us, we must either be justified or condemned; and even this consideration prompts me to write what I do; so that it is not the fear of displeasing men which can deter me
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from it; since also I can chearfully fore-think of that time wherein this very controversie shall be equally and finally decided, at the Bar of an Omniscient Holy God. Wherefore to this God, I absolutely refer my endeavours, and the cause on whose behalf they are, as knowing if it bee just and pious, it is his concern infinitely more than mans; and he will in his own time (which we ought quietly to wait) so far own and advance it as he sees best. Upon which supposition, I dare boldly conclude, in the name of all those worthies, who are conscienciously engag'd in it, with that of the Prophet, *The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King, he will save us.*

And now methinks, the sad countenances of impoverished Citizens, especially of sincere Christians, whom no losses can make poor, nor should make sad; call for something to be offered by way of consolation. But I am for a while interrupted in this design by a far sadder sight, even the merry looks of careless unreformed sinners, who seem so little affected with present miseries, or apprehensive of any farther danger, as if they had no Relation to God, nor the rest of the world; as if they were neither concern'd with his Providences, nor with other mens Calamities: Men so impatient of an intermission in the enjoyment, or pursuit of their brutish sensualities, that they can reckon no time seasonable for seriousness and sobriety; but absolutely conclude against them, let the premises bee what they will. If they dream of a long and prosperous life, they bid their Souls take their ease, eat, drink, and be merry, having goods laid up for many years; or if they fear their daies may be shortned, and their mirth spoil'd, yet they resolve to have it whil't they may, and cry, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall dye*: Those are such that account Solitariness and Consideration, the greatest miseries that can befall them, and whil't they are not reduc't to a

necessity of these, they escape well enough, what ever
 beides the world. There's nothing they seem to fear,
 more than being brought into their wits, and therefore
 they strive with all their might against the means of their
 recovery out of this voluntary madness. They have so
 far unmann'd themselves, that they are even asham'd
 to shew that they are owners of humane nature, by so-
 ber reflections upon their own actions and Gods dispen-
 sations: As if they were so far engag'd in their designs and
 courses, that in point of honour they could not now up-
 on any terms retreat, but must confidently proceed to
 act the Bruits on this Stage, though they turn Devils for
 it in the next. These indeed are a sort of men, rather
 fit to be Character'd to move others to compassion (so
 far as they deserve it) than to be spoke to in order to their
 Reformation. Who can cure his deafness, that stops
 his ears? Or make him hear that is so wilfully deaf?
 How can he understand, that hath made himself Drunk
 with a stupifying Potion, which hath very much depriv'd
 him of reason and foresight, and makes him go laughing
 down to destruction, in despite of the fairest warnings, and
 loudest calls to prevent it? To attempt by instructions
 to reduce such as these, seems an undertaking little
 less improbable, than by a formal discourse to perswade
 a Bedlam into his right minde. But yet some difference
 there is amongst these prophaner ones: thy are not all be-
 sorted into the same degree of stupidity, nor all equally
 resolv'd against any amendment, nor equally prejudic'd
 against the means which tend to it. Wherefore though
 I have little expectation of such kinde of Readers, and
 less of doing them good, yet if this Paper should chance
 into any of their hands, if they have the patience to
 read anything beside Drollery, let me crave the atten-
 tion of their mindes, whilst I soberly advise with them in
 a few words.

Tell me then, I beseech you, Sirs, such of you that have yet so much Reason and Conscience left you, as to acknowledge a Being above your selves, who made you and all the world, and governs all with infinite wisdom and Justice; Tell me, I say, whether these providences that have lately befallen our Nation, be not of an extraordinary nature, and therefore in all reason sent upon some great design? If one Embassadour after another be dispatcht from a Prince, to any of his Neighbours, with a more than usual solemnity, do wee not presently guess that there are some great affairs in agitation? And is it for nothing, or upon any trivial errand, that the Sovereign Majesty of the World, Commissions his most astonishing and magnificent Judgements to march one at the heels of another, to any particular people? Are not their Instructions, think we, as important as their Appearance is terrible? And if it bee so, does it not then concern the Inhabitants of the Land, to whom this Message is directed, diligently to attend to, and faithfully and speedily to obey the same? How high an affront will it be, when Embassadours are dispatcht from heaven, for us not to vouchsafe them Audience? But methinks, scarce any can be so wilfully deaf, as not to understand this much, which they utter in a voice full of power and Majesty, *That the great God is very sorely displeased with the waies of this people, being such, that hee'l no longer bear with them as formerly.* And shall not the hearing of this awaken us all, to a strict and serious enquiry into our particular waies, whether they be not such as draw out Gods displeasure against us? If we had forgot the noise of Trumpets and Drums, which a few years since read us this Lesson; or if wee are deaf to the shrill Cannon which inculcates the same; or heeded not the sweeping Plague, which did not steal more *silently* upon thousands, than it *loudly* warn'd all that surviv'd;

yet let us attend to the voice of these roaring Flames, which once more call out to us, with such a fierceness, as one would think, should neither be dis-regarded, nor in haste forgotten. Shall God speak thus once, and again, and shall not wee hearken? Doth he manifest his wrath, and shall not we be seiz'd with an Holy fear? Are our troubles so great, and shall we not diligently search who is the *Achan*, what is the *accursed thing* that occasions all? Do the storms rise, and the Seas swell, threatening us with a shipwrack, and shall wee not examine (not by casting lots, but turning our eyes inward) whether we are not the *Jonah's* that cause it? What, doth it seem a small matter whether God be pleased with us or not? Is there any in the whole World whose favour we more need, and whom we are more bound to regard? Is it not he from whom wee receiv'd our lives and all our mercies, and on whose good pleasure we depend for all? Is it not into his hands that we must shortly fall, when we leave the world, by him to bee dispos'd of to our everlasting state? Yea, even now, are not we and all our affairs absolutely in his hands, and at his ordering, to do with us as seems good in his sight? And can any bee so sottish then, as to imagine that it's not worth while to examine how matters stand betwixt God and their Souls? And whether their behaviour hath been such as is acceptable to him, that accordingly they may proceed with boldness, or retreat whil'st there is Liberty, and carefully reform themselves. This is the sum of all, that I would advise careless sinners to, even faithfully to consider their waies, every man by himself, what he hath done towards the kindling of Gods anger, and what he may do to appease it; to think what it is in him particularly God aims at, and speedily to set against it.

And besides, the wrath revealed against us in these dispensations, which may drive us to this work, doth there

there not appear so much mercy in them, as may quicken and encourage us to it? All that hath hitherto befallen us, hath but the nature of a warning to us that are left; and how great soever the terrour of these warnings hath seem'd, yet that was but necessary the deeplier to affect our rocky hearts. And it can hardly be conceived what course could be taken, more likely to reclaim a people, to whom all the alluring invitations, and severe threatenings of the Word, are grown in a manner contemptible, as I have formerly observ'd; These are like the last remedies which Physicians use to dying persons, which are wont either to preserve life, or hasten death. So that God doth not only acquaint us by these his dealings that hee is displeased with us, but in the next place, *That he is exceeding desirous to reform us, and will upon our return to him, have mercy upon us, and pardon us.* What reason else can bee assign'd why he should not immediately have destroyed us, without affording any space for Repentance or capacity of mercy? Might not God as easily, had it pleased him, have sent such flames upon us, as should not so much have tended to enlighten, as utterly to consume us? That should have devoured the Inhabitants as well as the Houses? If the Husbandman lop and prune his Tree, dig about and dung it, one year after another, waiting on, and trying it; is not this a sign that he much desires some such fruit, as may preserve it from being *cut down as a cumberer of the ground*? And what shall we go on to frustrate these merciful designs of the God of Love, who tries all waies with us to awaken and reduce us? Hath hee not as it were hedg'd in our way, and beset us round with such startling Providences, that one would thinke nothing but a wilful resolution to damn our selves, in despite of all opposition, could carry us over them to farther wickedness and destruction? Hath he not plac'd before us thousands of ear-kasses

kassies pil'd up on heaps? And set his Angels with a flaming Sword to stop us in our course? And is sin such a lovely thing in our eyes, that we will venture upon this Sword, break through these flames, trample over skulls and bones to obtain it? Yea, shall we still remain thus bewitcht by it, when God hath purposely represented it to us in such ghastly shapes, as might serve most effectually to undeceive us, and deliver us from its pernicious charms? There is nothing in the whole World indeed, either base or hurtful enough to discover all the loathsomeness and mischief of sin, yet when it hath so far abus'd and besotted the sinner, that hee can see no hurt in it notwithstanding all the bad names that are given it; the most likely way to make it truly known to him, is, to shew some such effects of it, as the faculties yet left him acknowledge most dreadful, and the cause of them, therefore by all means to bee avoided. Thus if the silly childe cannot be kept from poison, by hearing all the mischief of it, because it looks and tastes so like Sugar: Let him be soundly whipt for touching it, and this will do most to make him hate it. If he will needs bee playing with a glittering Knife, let him once feel it draw blood upon him, and that will soonest prevail with him to throw it away. And shall not wee, who have been worse than childish in our greedy pursuits of seemingly pleasing sins, shall wee not run from them as fast, when we see what we have overtaken? He that hastily takes up an hot Iron, because he saw not the redness, will soon rid his hands of it, when he feels it stick to his fingers and burn his flesh.

Though drunkenness, gluttony, whoredomes, gainful cozenage, oppression and pride, once seemed very amiable and alluring to degenerate unreasonable sinners, whilest they strongly imagined they felt the sweetness and profit of them; yet shall they seem so still, when they

they have seen what sad work they have lately made amongst us? how they have laid thousands in their graves, and made our flourishing City to fall on heaps, as if it would become a kind of common Tomb to its dead Inhabitants; to serve as a Monument to Posterity, who should find written upon it, *Here lie the fruits of sin.* Shall we dore upon a painted poysoned Harlot, and that after the Varnish is fallen off, and the poyson revealed? Shall we still stroke and play with the Serpent, after we have heard his hissings, and felt some effects of his envenomed sting? God forbid that we should be so wilful and foolish, to embrace the dart that hath murdered our friends, to court the flames that have burnt our houses, and will do worse than all this?

As then our calamities tell us to the quick, that God hath observed and altogether dislik't our wayes, so we see there is Mercy manifested in these Judgements, whilst they tend to rouse us out of our security, to convince us of the mischievous nature of sin before we feel the worst of it, and afford us ground of hope, that upon our conviction and reformation there is yet mercy to be obtained for us. If then we have any regard to our Makers pleasure, or our own interest; if we have any ingenuity or love to our selves, let us hearken to these earnest calls of a compassionate God, and speedily accept of motions for peace upon reasonable terms, least our continued stubbornness should provoke him to resolve concerning us; that since we accepted not, nor improv'd the space he allotted us to repent in, henceforward all signs and professions of Repentance shall come too late to prevent our ruine: And that seems to be another Lesson which these Judgements teach us, *That if we contemn them, and disregard God speaking to us by them, there is great hazard that this our incorrigibleness, and strange stupidity, will procure our final overthrow.* If we reject the
Scepter

Scepter of Grace which hath been held forth to us, what can we expect but that it should be withdrawn, and a frightful Sword set up in its place? If we are as resolved to hold fast our sins, as *Pharaoh* was to keep the *Israelites*, our resolutions may cost us as dear as his did him. Though our God be long-suffering, yet will he alwayes bear? Will he never do more than gently lash us, and then wait to see what good his stroaks do upon us? If we shall still make void his expectations of our amendment, will he not at length take another course with us? Hath not God been as it were laying siege to the hearts of this people, and summoned us again and again to make a surrender of our selves to him, using those several Engines that might serve to batter our hardness, and prevail with us? And if we still hold out against him, rejecting the gracious messages he sends us, slighting the Warning-pieces he hath shot off, what have we to look for next, but that his Murdering Canons should be planted against us? That as by his last act of hostility he burnt one of our chief Forts, so he should proceed to level all to the ground. If God hath smote some of us with the Sword, others with the Pestilence, and overthrown some of us as he overthrew *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, and yet we will not return to him; may we not fear that our desolation is as near as theirs was who were thus guilty, and of whom God thus complains? *Amos 4.* The continuance and growth of sin under a smarting Rod, adds an high degree of hainousness thereto, which is usually followed with a vengeance proportionably heavy. When a Nation shall solemnly bid defiance to the most High, and engage in a War with the Lord of Hosts, fighting against him by renewed Rebellions, as he against them by reinforc't Judgements, we may easily know who's like to come by the worst: He hath Arrows in his Quiver against which the rockiest stupid heart

heart is but a weak defence, which can shatter into pieces those who will not be softened: And he hath frequently exprest his unalterable will to conquer unrelenting sinners, and that he will even take pleasure in subduing such stout spirits whom nothing before would work upon, or bring to take notice of his hand stretcht out against them. Of those who profanely cried, that his word was but wind, and that they should never see evil; he threatens that this Word of his, which they scoff'd at, should be fire in the mouth of his Prophets, and the people should be wood, *Jer. 5. 13, 14.* And *Ezek. 5. 13.* Having before spoken of all the sad things he would bring upon a stubborn people, he adds; *Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and my fury rest upon them, and I will be comforted, and they shall know that I the Lord have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them.* Who can in reason expect that God should alwayes maintain his creatures in being, and continue their comforts, whilst they imploy their life and all their mercies against him who gave them both? Would not a Prince rather impoverish and destroy any part of his Dominions, than let it serve only for an harbour and supply to his mortal enemies? Oh that *England* may not hear that doleful word pronounc't concerning her, which *Israel* once did, *Ezek. 7. 6.* *An end is come, the end is come, it watcheth for thee, behold it is come.* Let us not go on to provoke the God of heaven to poure out upon us all the plagues that are threatned to those whom no former means will reclaim, to decree a Consumption by Sword or Famine, or any the like destroyers. You that have no regard to your souls, methinks should be more concerned for your temporal welfare, your lives, your friends, your estates, than daringly to hazard all for the service of some base lust, which will but repay you with damnation at last, besides all the hurt it does in the mean time to your selves, and those

those about you. Oh be perswaded at length, to take pity on the Land of your Nativity; yea, to take pity on your selves, your children, and the Wives of your bosome? How could you bear it to have these raviht from your sides, and murdered before your faces; or worse than murdered by ghastly famine? when you should see them, and feel your selves, as it were, kill'd by piece-meal; yea, when your raging hunger should make you wish for, and hasten one anothers death, and cause you to take away life from them to whom you gave it, and your bellies to become the Tombs of those who came from your loins? Ah Sirs, what reflections would you have in such a doleful day as this, on your former delicacies and riotous excesses? Would not the memory of your past fulness, and the abuse of it, help to tear your hearts, as much as present want would do your bowels? And know, that plenty of Gods creatures which we now enjoy, is not so much an argument that this evil shall never betide us, as our sinful lavishing of them in gluttony and drunkenness, is, that it may. Sin hath brought these, and worse than all these things upon divers Kingdomes: God grant it may not upon ours. And therefore do I mention them, not to encrease the unprofitable fears of any, but to stir us up all to that repentance which is most likely to prevent them, or will be sure to secure us from any considerable hurt by them. But if you cry only, God forbid that ever such things should happen, and yet take the direct way to procure them, 'tis your selves only must bear the blame, as well as feel the smart. Fair warning hath been given us by what we have already felt, and we may now conceive God saying to us, *Go your wayes, sin no more, least worse things come unto you.* And if such admonitions as these, so loudly and so smartly uttered, shall be disregarded, what greater senselesness can be imagined? Or what more presaging and deserving

ving ruine, than such a senselesness and affected stupidity?
 And let none be so weak or inconsiderate, as to imagine,
 God aims not at them, nor hath any controversie with
 them, because they have hitherto felt little or nothing
 of those Judgements that have been abroad in the Land;
 nor let any profligate Atheists add this to the rest of their
 irrational arguings against a Providence, that they them-
 selves who contemn it, live securely and at ease, whilst
 many that believed and reverenc't it, suffer under the
 severity of its Dispensations: Nor let them hence con-
 firm themselves in practises as brutish as these Opini-
 ons (which were principally minted for their sakes) out
 of a conceit, that all danger is far from them, or at least,
 that they are no more obnoxious than others. For, to take
 off these dangerous mistakes, it is to be considered, that
 the design of these sad Providences is by no means to be
 confined to those particular persons upon whom they
 have fallen heaviest; but their Errand is to warn all,
 whilst they strike some, which is no way difficult to be
 apprehended. A Warning-Piece shot off by an Enemy
 who hath besieged a Town, though it might happily hurt
 some single Townsman, is nevertheless directed to all:
 A Beacon when it is fired, gives warning as much to the
 whole Country, as to him on whose ground it stands,
 or whose wood may be employed for that fire. And may
 we not look upon our burning City, as a kind of Beacon
 kindled to give notice to the whole Island, that an E-
 nemy is coming against us? Such an Enemy as may en-
 gage us all, not to take Arms, but suddenly to lay them
 down, and meet him with such humble submissions, and
 earnest supplications, as are wont to gain the cheapest
 and most honourable Victory: That God, in his deal-
 ings with a Nation, whose wayes are generally corrupte-
 ed, layes his strokes upon some, is but Justice even to
 them; that he treats not all thus, is meer mercy; that
 he

he takes these and spares others, some better, some worse, is purely from his Sovereignty, and ought to be referr'd to his own good pleasure; and therefore, though we have no other reason for it, readily to be acquiesc'd in. Both Charity, and (frequently) great Reason, forbid us to censure their crimes the greatest, whose sufferings are so: For many times we find that God hath singled out his faithfullest servants as marks for his sharpest arrows; of which sort of Dispensations, even good men sometimes, but wicked men alwayes, are very incompetent Judges. But if any upon this account should grow more indifferent to Godliness, when he sees it will not secure its followers; nay, that an eminency of it doth oft as much expose its owners, as height doth Towers and Cedars to Storms and Lightning; if he therefore think it rather to be shunn'd than sought after, his arguing will be found as unreasonable as it is dangerous. Alas, poor blinded Sensualists! you that are strangers to the life and livelihood, and the great concerns of Immortal Souls, little know the secret, happy transactions betwixt them and their God, in that very time when you may judge them forsaken of him. Little do you know how this Godliness helps to bear up their hearts under the weightiest pressures, and like a secret Amulet, in time of Infection, secures them from the mischief of those evils with which you may apprehend them overborn: Wherefore leave them to God and his Judgement, and look you rather to your selves, what you are to learn by, and how you ought to improve such kind of dealings; even the mercy that you are spared, when so many others are visited one way or other, layes the greater engagement upon you to return to him who deals so favourably with you; and you may be suppos'd the fitter for this great and solemn work of Repentance, in that Judgements are brought so near, as may serve to quicken

quicken and affect you, but yet stand at such a distance that they may not overwhelm you.

And lastly, You may perceive, that if good Men themselves undergo so much, it's time for you to look about you. *If Judgement begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of those who obey not the Gospel?* You may hence learn, that it is not because you are better, or more in Gods favour than others who suffer, that you seem to fare better than they; and it may therefore cast you into a fear, least your punishment be reserv'd a while, because it shall bee laid on for ever, *Job 21. 30.* If the Children be now corrected, Bastards shall not alwaies go unpunisht. You cannot then conclude, that they who have drank deepest of this Cup, were sinners above all that dwelt in *England*; but this you may conclude, that *except you Repent, you shall all likewise perish.*

Even temporal destruction, as I have said, you have reason to expect; but if you take such comminations as words of course, which Preachers are still filling the ears of their people withall, no more to be regarded, than the silly Predictions of Astrologers, and do hereupon harden your selves in sin, as if no danger was near, know it for certain, that such miseries are coming upon you, as you shall neither know how to prevent, nor ever remove from off you. And that's the last thing I shall mention, which these Calamities suggest to us, *That they who are not bettered by them, nor any other means that in this life time are us'd with them, shall at length be covered with confusion, and lye down in those sorrows which will admit of no relief, and whence there shall bee no release.* I cannot certainly say, but you may stretch your selves upon your beds of ease, and continue your pleasant dreams, yet a while longer. Perhaps you may laugh and play away the remainder of your daies, as you have done all that went before; you may yet have a few more merry meetings

and pleasing entertainments; you may be loaded with riches, crowned with rose-buds, gluttred with fleshly delights, and may keep up your wonted height of pride and bravery, insomuch that in your own esteem, and in all theirs, who judge of persons and things by the same false rules, you may pass for the only happy men in the World: But yet I can and dare say, that though your Lives and your Pleasures should be thus prolonged an hundred years, you are but miserable men, whose waies are now accursed, as your end shall bee. Even all this while the vengeance of God hangs over your heads, like a Sword by a Twine-thred, and will shortly fall upon the Scalp of such as go on in their trespasses; It pursues you at the heels, and though it seem to tarry, will certainly overtake you. However you may mis-call his Patience, you shall finde that God is no more slack concerning his Threatnings, than his Promises. *In the hand of the Lord there is a Cup, and the Wine is red: it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; and though they should escape when it is poured out, Yet the Dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them, Psal. 75. 8.* These are the distinguishing judgments which shall light upon the ungodly, and none but them. Then at length shall men discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not: when that day cometh that shall burn as an Oven, and all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly shall be as stubble.

Whatever false consequences wanton Sinners draw from Gods forbearance of them in this day of his patience, or from his promiscuous dealing with good and bad in this state of tryal, they shall soon be freed from their mistakes, when they shall finde and feel, in what a different manner they are treated in the other life: This will make them acknowledge, that verily there is a
God,

God, a Righteous God, *who judgeth in the earth.* Here indeed they were Neighbours, and had bodies alike, and might therefore dye by the same Diseases: Their houses were joyned, and might therefore burn together; but their souls were not alike, nor shall they fare alike, or live together any longer, but betwixt them will bee a *great Gulf* fixed, over which there will be no passing for the persons, nor any translation of their conditions one to another. Though you might remove your dwellings and scape the Infection, or have estates of that nature that Fire did not consume them, yet all your refuges will fail, when these last woes shall bee brought upon you. Then shall the scorers who made light of threatenings, that *hid themselves under falshood, and made lies their refuge,* finde, that their *Covenant with death shall be disannulled, their agreement with hell shall not stand:* When this overflowing scourge shall pass thorow the ungodly World, they shall all be trodden down by it. Though they might escape Sword and Plague, Fire and Famine, yet Hell they shall never escape. And are there any that own the name of Men, and desire the reputation of Christians, of such a desperate insensibleness of their own concerns, that the known certainty of infinite everlasting torments, in case they hold on their present course, will give them neither check nor diversion? Such indeed who can thorowly perswade themselves to be Infidels, may possibly live in a stupid peace, till they are brought with the Devils, *to believe and tremble.* But for them who take on them to believe all that is in the Gospel, and yet walk in those very waies, to which this Gospel threatens everlasting destruction, may we not admire what strange devices they have got, to keep themselves peaceable and steady in this their furious march to Damnation? What, Sirs, have you a belief for what Scripture tells you of the weightiest and most concerning

matters in the World, and yet can you alwaies drive them out of your thoughts? Do you think it of no consequence to consider where the way will end, in which you are walking with so much confidence? Do you not know well enough, that if you never turn, you are certainly undone? And that whil'st you delay it, you run such an hazard as every man in's right wits would beware of? Every step you tread being upon such a dangerous precipice, that nothing but the mercy which you daily abuse, and which will not alwaies bear such usage, keeps you from falling headlong? And when once it's withdrawn, down you go, and are lost for ever. Is this your case, and can you not spare time to think how to get out of it? Ah Sirs, sad and serious thoughts will be good cheap in the other World: As much as you fear and shun them now, then you shall bee sufficiently haunted with them; but as serviceable as now they might be, then they shall nothing avail you. To think in time which way to avoid perdition, should not, methinks bee so tedious and unpleasant to those to whom it is so necessary, and may be as advantageous: but if this be neglected, to think what you have brought your selves to, and how strangely and wilfully you have done it, shall fill you with a sadness that will break your hearts, but nothing better your estates. What then are those dreams wherewith you delude your selves into a quiet continuance in an ungodly state, which is like to prove so bitter in the end? What do you think it's best to go on a while longer, that you have yet time enough before you? But do you well consider, how dear this *little while longer* may cost you? Have you any ground to expect to bee waited on much longer? Doth not the time of patience seem expiring? Are not the years wherein God resolv'd to try you, what fruit you would bring forth, near to an end? And is this a time to dally with the Almighty, when hee's coming forth

forth so severely to reckon with you? Is your Sun setting, and yet do you loyter? Is the Ship sinking, and are you yet unresolv'd whether you had best shift for you selves? Certainly they who take not this as a fit season for Repentance, would by their good will never Repent, and 'tis to be fear'd never will till it is too late.

But further, you are not I hope, so vain as to conceit, that there is any other way beside sound Repentance, and a thorow Conversion, to secure your selves from that wrath which is denounc't against, and will certainly come upon the *Children of Disobedience*. If you believe the Scripture, which I now suppose you do, you cannot harbour such a conceit, which is there so often and so plainly contradicted: And as far, methinks, you should be from imagining, if this wrath be not thus prevented, that ever it can with any patience be endured, or by any means remov'd. Do you indeed take hell for a tollerable evil? even more tollerable than an holy heart and life, by which it might be avoided? In how dark and blind a state are they who run from their felicity as an hurtful thing? And in how sad a case, whom nothing but woful experience will convince of this mistake? But what, do you ever hope to be able to contend with the Most High, to grapple with Omnipotence it self? Do you think you can as easily resist his Power, as you could disobey his Commands? If this should once become the only refuge that's left you, woe to you that ever you were born. Did you ever yet hear of any that entred the Lists with God and prevailed? that overcame him by strong hand? Should all the Infernal Hosts joyn forces with rebellious sinners, how utterly unable would they be for one minute to withstand the conquering Arm of the Almighty? And canst thou a single man, an impotent worm, do any thing against it? Why, dost thou not know that a frown of his countenance is enough to

dash all created courage? the breath of his mouth sufficient to destroy the world? If thou be such a courageous man as to venture upon the Divine displeasure, thou shouldst have gone and plac't thy self in the midst of one of *Londons* burning streets, and have tryed how thou couldst encounter the fury of those flames, and how much they would have valued thy opposition; and thence thou might'st learn what Man can do against his Maker, or against any of his creatures that go forth to destroy with Commission from him. Do but imagine thy self hurl'd into the midst of those burnings, and there to have been kept alive whilst they lasted, (which is no difficulty to him that made the world of nothing) how couldst thou have born such a lodging, even but for three daies space? But what if it had been for so many thousand years? Bethink thee then how thou canst dwell with *everlasting burnings*, which will be the undoubted portion of all unpardoned, unconverted ones. Do you not indeed believe, that *Christ will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that would not obey the Gospel*? And whether will you then betake your selves? or to whom will you flie? When not only a City or Kingdome, but all this lower world shall be of a flame; when the *Heavens shall pass away with a noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat*; when an unquenchable fire shall be kindled above, and below, and on every side you, where do you hope for shelter? To cry out to Rocks and Mountains to fall on and cover you, will then little avail you. *Oh who can stand before the Lord when he is angry? who knows the power of his wrath?* But shall not the demonstrations and appearances of it, which you have already beheld, prevent the farther bold exposure of your selves thereto? Have you not had a kind of glimpse of hell flashing before your faces, and will it nothing daunt you? Will you like those *Ezek. 15. 7. Go out of one fire, to be devoured*

red by another? Will you go on like an Oxe to the slaughter, when you are told whither you are going, and the instruments of death are laid before you? Will you still believe that the *stolen waters* which folly affords are sweet? That her bread eaten in secret places is pleasant? When it is revealed to you, that her provisions are baits, and their pleasure mortal; that *the dead are there, and her* (former) *guests in the depths of hell.* Will you go on to carry fuel to that pile wherein you your selves must be consumed? Will you still embrace and cherish those lusts that will, like an unnatural Monster, gnaw out the bowels of those that nourish them, and feed upon the slaughter and ruine of their dearest lovers? Will nothing allay the Adulterers hearts, till they turn to the fire that *never goes out?* Will the Drunkard swallow down his immoderate draughts, till at length he be seized with *Dives* his thirst, never to be quencht? Will the fond adorers of the riches and Gallantry of the world continue their dotage, till they see their Gold and Silver melted, and not only their stately houses, but their fruitful Lands in flames about their ears, and all that wherein they gloried vanishing into smoak and ashes; and shall find themselves inwardly tormented by their inordinate love to these Idols, more than by any fire whereinto they may be plung'd? The good Lord open the eyes and change the hearts of these secure and senseless ones, and shew them the hell that is in sin it self, that they may never feel that which it procures; that they may discern the *miserie and destruction that is in their wayes*, before their *wickedness burn as the fire, and devour them like briars and thorns, Isa. 9.18.*

But besides the loose and grossly profane, there are multitudes to be seen who seem far more serious, and better affected with Gods Judgements abroad in the Land, especially they upon whom they have fallen hea-

vily. But alas! how many of these are there more apprehensive of their outward losses, than of the sins that brought them? Such who would have thought themselves well enough had they but kept their goods, though their sins also had been kept with them? How happy would these men be, if their fitness for comfort was as great as their need of it is? But how sad a case is it to have the world frown upon us, and God frown too? to be deprived of temporal enjoyments, and destitute of spiritual blessings? to have our Idols snatcht away, and to be unacquainted with the true and living God? But that I may not seem to aggravate your grief, and bring you nothing but sad tidings, know, though I cannot speak a word of comfort to you whilst you continue in your present carnal state, yet would you but make haste out of the same, there is great Mercy before you, and a way open for your access to that Grace whence you may receive an abundant supply for all your wants, and true joy in the midst of your troubles. And methinks this should revive you, to hear that your condition is not yet miserable, past all remedy: What though you should never recover to your former height and fulness in the world, yet if your pride and covetousness be abated, and your hearts by Grace raised nearer to God, as a pledge of your being shortly raised to Glory, you will have no reason to complain of that abasement which was the beginning and occasion of this happy exaltation. Happy indeed are they that thus rise by their falls, and being thrown to the earth, thereby rebound the higher towards heaven: And this happiness, I say, you are yet in a capacity of attaining to; which priviledge, was it rightly apprehended, might well take off from the sense of any other ill circumstances you are plunged in to; and was it carefully improv'd, would make a full amends for whatever losses you have sustained. And now

to set in good earnest about this work of gaining heaven instead of earth, will be found the quickest and the surest course to make you so rich, and to set you in such a thriving way, as will not only recompence your losses, but keep you from ever being greatly impoverisht any more. This to the worldly wise, I know, will seem very strange, and far from any appearance of truth: They who knew nothing better for man than to be rich, and live high in the world, cannot imagine which way he can make advantage of being brought into a poor and low condition; and as little can they imagine, what that is in all the world which can make amends for such misfortunes, (as they call them) except they may be repaid in kind. If by losing an hundred they could gain a thousand, or missing one Trade could light upon another, with quicker and better returns, they could well enough understand this to be a gaining by their losses; and he that could teach them this notable art should be a welcome man, a Comforter indeed: But if you send them to look after great matters in another world, to repair their damages in this, and to get their souls enricht, when they feel their bodies pincht, this is but cold comfort, dry and unsavoury discourse to the poor worldling, whose feeling is all his faith, who seeming to himself a meer lump of flesh, minds and relishes only earthly things. And accordingly their behaviour too plainly discovers these their unbelieving and carnal apprehensions and affections. For since the hand of God was upon them, hath not this been in a manner all the trouble they have felt, to think what a breach is made upon their estates, and what fair hopes are blasted, many likely projects com'n to just nothing, and the fruits of their long labour and care suddenly vanish; so that they who thought their Nests well feathered (as they use to speak) and themselves warm and securely plac't therein, are now

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unrooted, and many of them put to begin the world anew? And hath not this been the very sum of all such mens contrivances and endeavours, how they might fix again to their best advantage, and soonest get up what they have lost, and most successfully pursue their former designs of growing rich? Reflect upon thy self, Reader, whether this hath not been thy very course and frame, if thou art one whom the fire hath unsettled.

If you ask me, whether then I condemn your care to make provision for your selves and families, and whether I would have you rather sit still and starve, than look out for needful and seasonable supplies? I answer, Though I am far from saying this ought not to be done, yet I must needs say, there is something which ought far less to be left undone, and both may very well stand together. For I hope your souls are of as much value as your bodies, and their happiness ought to be as diligently and speedily lookt after: Now methinks the costly experience you have had of the vanity and instability of these outward things, should give you very full conviction that your happiness is not plac'd in them, and that he is very unwise who puts confidence in such deceitful riches that *make to themselves wings, and flee away*. Shall not this then put you upon a careful search, whether there is nothing to be found out that is more solid, durable, and satisfying? And if you follow on this search as you ought, you will conclude with *Solomon*, after all his solicitous enquiries after Good, and his clear discoveries of the vanity of the creature, *That to fear God, and keep his Commandments, is the whole duty of man, Eccles. 12. 13.* And not his duty only, but his greatest interest, even in this life, but especially in that which is to come, which seems coucht in the following words of the Wise Man, ver. 14. *For God shall bring every work into Judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*
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And if he do so, we may be sure hee'll treat men accordingly, and will, as he hath promised, make those that have served him everlastingly happy, when the wicked shall be adjudged to their threatned misery. Why will you not then turn about, and change your desires and endeavours, and be as industrious for holiness and the happiness that ever attends it, as you have been for the world, wherein, through your own foolish forbidden expectations, and inordinate love, you have met with so much vexation and dissatisfaction? You see how it hath served you after you have laboured for it so long, and imbrac't it with so much affection and dearness; its fled from you in a trice, and hath left you desolate. Why therefore should you trust it any more, to expose yourselves at every turn to the ill effects of its treachery; which is indeed but Justice to those whose hearts are first treacherously departed from God? If you be false to your Maker, never expect the creature should be true to you: No, assure your selves, it will break from you when you think you have it fast, and forsake you when you need it most; and will no more hearken to you, when you call, and roar, and mourn after it, than *Baal* did to his Worshippers: Torment your selves never so much for its absence; as they, we read, flast themselves with Knives and Lancers, yet it will neither pittie nor regard you. And though it should remain with you as long as you live, yet at death it will leave you, with your heart broken at the parting, and will afford you no relief in that hour of your extremitie, much less in that state whereinto you must then depart. And what will you still labour for the wind, and set your heart upon that which is not? Surelie you have felt enough to make you more warie and wise; wherefore come rather and once make experiment, whether God will leave you as the world hath done, and is like to do; whether his promises are no truer than its flatteries; whe-

whether Grace be as frail and perishing a thing; as the goods you have lost; whether your hearts will not hold this Treasure safer, than your Chests can do any other. My advice to you is the same with that of *Pauls* to *Timothy*, 1 Ep. 6. 9, 10, 11, 12. That avoiding that resolution to be rich, which brings temptations and snares, that love of money, which is the root of all evil, you would now follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. And if you will be perswaded hereto, set about the work in good earnest, ply it hard, and never give off till you have made something of it. Remember you are labouring for an Estate that will never be lost; and rest not till you have got those affections on God, and the things above, which you were wont to lavish upon things below. And when you have done this, your work is in a manner finisht: For the way to have God and Christ, Grace and Glorie to be yours, is to desire after, and love them more than all things else. When once you have got your hearts in heaven, you have got a treasure there: Whatever other duties are required of you, will be found natural and easie, when you are but principled with a prevailing, deep-rooted love of heavenlie things. And one would think it no hard thing to attain such holie affections, if first you will but well and duly consider the worthlessness of all things else, till you are cur'd of your excessive and undeserved admiration of them; and then will be as much in meditation of the excellencie, the suitableness, the sufficiencie of those things that are invisible and eternal; and how great reason you have, and what engagements you lie under to fix and settle your hearts upon them. Consider well what you owe to the giver and preserver of your life, and all the comforts of it, and how you ought to stand affected toward him who thought not his own unvaluable Blood too good to be shed for such sinners as we. Think, if you have such

a thing within you, as an immortal Soul, whether the health, and safety, and felicity thereof, bee not of far greater moment and worth, than the prosperity of the body: and whether an unexpressible fulness of all blessedness and joy for ever, deserve not more esteem, than any of the short uncertain advantages and delights which this world affords you? Continue such kinde of considerations as these, till you feel they have an influence upon your souls, to change the bent and stream of your affections and inclinations. And be diligent in the use of all other means appointed by God, for the beginning and carrying on a work of grace in the heart of man; and above all, bee very importunate suitors at the Throne of Grace, that God would bestow upon you his holy spirit, which he hath promised to those that ask him; that by the power hereof. Your mindes may be enlightned to a right apprehension of things, and your affections strongly carried out to that which best deserves them, that you may be brought, with the Apostle, not so much to *look at*, or bee concern'd for, *those things which are seen, which are temporal, as for those which are not seen, which are eternal.* And for the future, let this bee your chiefest project, how to gain heaven, and to this refer all your labours and cares. Though it bee not the only, yet if it bee the principal trade you drive on, to thrive and grow in Grace, till at length it shall bee improv'd into such a stock of Glory, as will never be spent; to manage all your Talents to the best advantage, as may redound most to your Masters honour, and bring you in the richest increase; daily *reaching forth unto those things which are before, pressing toward the mark, for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Thus set your hearts and faces Zion-ward, looking upon your passage through this lower World, only as a journey to, and preparation for the higher. And having so rightly fixt your end and
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your work, taking your selves here but for Pilgrims and Strangers, then set about your worldly affairs, and take care for the accommodations of life, regarding and desiring them under this notion, as they are conveniencies for a Traveller. And let this true notion of them, moderate and guide all your designs and undertakings; Let the utmost of your ambition be to maintain your selves, and those that depend upon you, so as you may be fittest to do the service God hath set you, and walk on comfortably in the way he hath appointed you. Whatever you aim at more, let it be purely and sincerely for the good of others, and the honour of God. So will you fulfil the commands, *1 Tim. 5. 8. Eph. 4. 28.* and by this means you will most easily escape the temptations which ruine thousands, who wrong their Consciences to encrease their Estates; for will he sin against God to get riches, who desires them only that he may therewith serve and glorifie God. Nor can I think that hereby you will have ever the less of the World, but I am sure you will have a great deal more contentment in, and more security of what you shall have; and when at length you come to leave it, you shall neither desire or need it, but shall bee supply'd with that which is infinitely better; when as those who were bewitcht into an unreasonable fondness of their present enjoyments, shall at last irrecoverably lose both them and their souls together.

Again, Methinks, your very worldly wisdom and self-love may teach you, that if you have been, and are still like to be, so great losers by Gods displeasure, your only way is speedily to use means for the obtaining of his favour; that so you may either secure your temporal possessions, or something of more worth in their room, when ever they may bee taken from you. Believe it, Sirs, there's nothing of all that which you grasp with the
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greatest closeness, that you can keep with you, whether God will or no: If hee command it away, it will soon obey his call. You may think of reducing your estates to be of that nature, that they shall be exposed to no casualties, but all your art will fail you whilst God is your enemy. What foolish merchants then are those, who make him so by their dishonest waies of gaining? Who will be found at length to have put the most notorious cheat upon themselves, purchasing the curse of God with their unjust gains, laying themselves open to that wrath from which neither their wit nor their wealth can secure them: for where ever you are, and whatever you have, you are alwaies alike naked to his stroak. Though you should dig deep as Hell to hide your selves and your treasure, he can easily fetch you thence and pluck you asunder. If then you have been so foolish, as by any way of wickedness whatever to engage God against you, does it not now concern you to seek after and make suit of his friend-ship? Without his leave none of your designs shall take effect, without his blessing nothing can truly prosper that you take in hand. *Except the Lord build the City, they labour in vain that build it, Psal. 127.1.* What success they are like to have, whose undertakings God will not favour, the Builders of *Babel* can inform you: but how much his blessing speeds a work, you may learn from *Nehemiah* and his fellow-builders, *Neh. 6.* *To the men of Ephraim and Samaria, that said in the pride and stoutness of their heart, that the bricks were fallen down, but they would build with hewen stones, and have Cedars instead of Sycamores: God threatens to raise up adversaries that should joyn together against them, the Syrians before, and the Philistines behinde, that should devour Israel with open mouth. Isa. 9. 9, 10, &c.* As perhaps when you consider the Ruines of the City, you look no higher than second causes, so it's like you look no higher for its restauration, very little

little minding what hand God had in the one, and must have in the other, before it be accomplisht: And whilst you are thus forgetful of God, and take not his blessing along with you, let your preparations be never so great, and your hopes never so high, your attempts will either be blasted in the beginning, or curst in the end. Read your doom, *Psal. 28. 5. Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them and not build them up.* But would you give all diligence to cleanse your hands and purifie your hearts from sin, as well as to clear your streets from the rubbish, laying the foundation in true Repentance and a thorow amendment of your waies? then might you say with *Nehemiah, The God of heaven he will prosper us, therefore we his Servants will arise and build, Neh. 2. 20.* This is the way, the surest and only way to make a desolate City Phœnix-like, to rise out of it's funeral Ashes with a new life, and a Glory greater than it had before its fall. Wherefore let me use the words of *Eliphaz, Job 22. 21, 23. Acquaint now thy self with God, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up.* And when once you have well done this great work, when you have got your peace made with God, and have made sure of his especial love and all the mercies contained therein, you may chearfully go about your lawful employments, depending upon his Providence, and submitting your selves to his will, who never is unmindful of those that do so.

And now at length, to those that are in this happy case, my discourse directs it self, even to you that are the cordial Lovers and faithful Servants of the great God; such of you that have born your share in the calamities that have lately befallen us, especially that have suffered much by the fury of those flames, which, without making any difference or shewing any pity, consum'd
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all that came before them, so far as their commission went: To you, my great request is, that you would remember your selves, raise up, but yet calm your spirits, not harbouring any impatience inconsistent with the dutifulness of Gods children, nor giving way to any dejection, unbeseeming the dignity of that Relation. 'Tis a pleasant work which I would put you upon, and which he who loves your happiness hath by an express command made your duty, even to *possess your souls in patience*, and to be chearful in the midst of all your afflictions. Who then, that hath cause for it (and to such I speak) would not rather live at ease, and enjoy himself in peace and comfort, than vex and torture his own soul by fretting and grieving?

Before I prosecute this exhortation, let mee desire you not to mistake me, as if I was taking you off from all serious and sober consideration, for which Adversity is so proper a season; nor from that moderate and profitable sorrow which shall flow from this consideration. No, rather I would have you improve this time for a thorow search into your own souls, wherein it's like your Consciences will bee more than ordinarily awakened, and will deal truly and plainly with you. And whatever miscarriages these impartial reflections shall discover, which before you discern'd not, or made less matter of, represent them now as hainous and odious to your selves as you well know how, till you finde your hearts wrought to such a measure of godly sorrow, as may stir up in you an unconcileable hatred of the sin, and engage you vigorously to set against it. You may also make advantage of your sufferings to promote this Repentance, whilst they shall help you to clearer and more sensible apprehensions of the contrariety of sin to God, and of its perniciousness to man, whereby you may bee brought to a stricter enquiry into, and a greater watchfulness over your waies, as you would avoid the grieving of Gods
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Spirit, the wounding of your Consciences, and the smart of your flesh. And even now let the remembrance of any thing you have done to displease a loving Father, be matter of greater shame and grief than any affliction which you lie under: Though neither do I go about to perswade you to a Stoical Apathie, an utter insensibleness of your outward losses and troubles; whilst you have bodies, 'tis not to be expected, but you should be concerned for them, and feel some kind of resentments agreeable to what befalls them: but yet these motions and passions ought to be under the Command of an higher facultie, even sanctified Reason, whose office it is to moderate and subdue them so far as her power extends. Wherefore that which I am advising you to is this, that you would not let the sense of your pressures so overwhelm you, as to render you unfit for any dutie you owe to God, or so as may speak you forgetful of those greater grounds of contentedness and joy which Religion suggests, and all sincere Christians bears about them. And that this advice may take the better effect, I shall particularlie shew what some of those grounds are, I mean, what reason you have quietlie and comfortablie to entertain the sharpest Dispensations; and the serious consideration of these, and the like reasons, may by Gods blessing, prove an effectual means for the attaining this frame of Spirit, they being both engagements and helps thereto. It may seem perhaps a needless labour to spend words upon this Theme, which is so frequentlie and largelie handled in many excellent Treatises wrote thereupon; upon which account indeed I shall be the briefer, though having this opportunitie, something I was willing to say that might suit particularlie to the present occasion. It may also appear unseasonable and superfluous to administer comfort at this distance of time from the suffering: but yet we know the effects of it are still present, perhaps dai-
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lie encreasing; and I wish that the sorrows of those who feel them, do not answerable continue and encrease, which is that I would prevent, or however do something to confirm and fortifie their minds who are already arrived to any measure of peace and settlement; that they may see how reasonable and becoming this their carriage is, and may now retain, and on all other the like occasions, shew forth the same.

I. And to this purpose first, let me suggest what is most usuallie insisted on by all that speak of this Subject; namely, that you would consider who is *the Author* (permissively at least) of *all the troubles that have com'n upon you, even God himself.* And let not the commonness of this truth make it of ever the less esteem with you, but rather the more it is inculcated, the deeper let it be imprest upon your minds. Why should it be of less efficacie now than in *Dauids daies*, who when he was consumed by the blow of Gods hand, yet opened not his mouth because he did it? Or in *Eli's daies*, who when he heard the threatnings denounc't against his Familie, answered, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good?* Or in *Job's*, who when he had lost all, yet could calmly say, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.* How effectuallie then may this allay all the disturbances and tumults of your breast to remember, God had an hand in what hath befallen you? and dare your hearts rise against the operations of his hand? Whether you consider your selves more generallie related to God as his creatures, or more nearlie, as his people in Covenant with him through Christ, you will find your selves under strong and forcible obligations to this duty of submission upon many accounts.

Is not God your Maker, he who gave you a being, and hath preserved it hitherto? Is he not then the most proper and absolute owner both of you and all that you

have? And shall he not then do with you what he please without your murmuring or contradiction? We that are now walking upon this earth, who a few daies since were nothing; that were brought upon this Stage of life and action, by the will and power of a Being infinitelie above us, without any contrivance of our own; had we any libertie or capacitie of indenting with our Maker, that we would not come into the world except on certain terms, and on condition of such and such usage there? The pot when it is turning on the wheel, might as well compound with the Potter of what form, and for what use it should be made. Fit then it is that we should be at his finding and ordering, whose workmanship we are; that we should as entirelie render up our selves to his will, as we proceeded from it; not thinking wee are wrong'd if God dispose of us or ours without asking our consent, any more than when he made us. Can he wrong us who owes us nothing? who may without injustice turn us into the Grave, or sentence us into our Primitive nothingness? If he may thus take away life it self at his pleasure, may he not do the same by all the comforts of it? That he lent them for any time was meer bountie; and is it injustice to withdraw them, or some part of them, when he sees good? As the giving of life laies no obligation upon him to continue it, no more doth his bestowing of any outward mercies. If you had once reliev'd a man in want, that does not binde you to do so alwaies: Or if you had freelie lent your friend an hundred pound for one year, you are not thereby engag'd to let him have it for ten or twentie, or to give it him out-right. And do you think to plead prescription for any of these enjoyments which were graciouslie lent you by their owner, for so long as he should think fit. Rather, methinks, you should dismiss them with thankfulness for having had them so long, and that any thing is yet reserv'd

serv'd you. We use not to account them either honest or good-natur'd, who are as angry with their friends when they call for what was lent, as if they came to rob them. You cannot think sure, that when God put his gifts into your hands, he made them so absolutelie yours, that he past away his own right thereto, or his power to recall them. God charges it indeed upon the Jews, *Hos. 2. 8.* *That they knew not that he gave them their corn, wine and oil, and multiplied their silver and gold;* which they manifested by serving idols therewith, as they are there accus'd. And I wish this wilful ignorance was not still common in the world, and the same evidence given of it, by mens serving their pride and luxurie with those good things which were allow'd to other purposes. Such, I confess, whose dependance is very little upon God for any thing they expect or need, who are not wont to look to heaven for earthlie things, (though for fashion sake they may use to say, *Give us this day our daily bread*) but plac't their chief confidence in their own subtil projects and undertakings; such as these do little apprehend how their Estates are the Gift of God, but regard them rather as the meer fruits of their own wit or industry; and therefore think their proprietie in them so absolute, that they are readie to accuse God himself if he take them away, as if he dealt injuriouſlie with them. But you who believe that it is in vain to rise earlie and sit up late, without God give a blessing to your diligence, and have accordinglie had a chief respect to his Providence in all your waies, and received all your mercies as from his hand, will be far enough, I hope, from such gross mistakes. If you should send your Son or Servant as Factor beyond Sea, and maintain him there, and furnish him with money for Trading, you would claim a right to the encrease he should make of your Stock, and would take it for a sorrie argument, if he

should keep it back, and tell you, it had now been so long in his hands, that it was not lawful for you to take it out. By this Rule the Steward might detain his Lords money, if possession conferr'd a right. And much less reason have you to imagine, that what you may for some while possess, is thereby alienated from him whose *is the earth and the fulness thereof*. 'Twas he who made that earth, and all those creatures, by the having of which men reckon themselves rich, and whilst they pass from the hands of one to another, they are nevertheless his; and therefore are men entrusted with what measure of them, and for what time he pleaseth, that they may improve them to his glorie, and when he pleaseth he calls them in. And thus in the ninth verse of that Chapter God threatens those inconsiderate, unthankful ones, to strip them of those his mercies which they abus'd. *Therefore (saith he) will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wooll and my flax, given to cover her nakedness.* And shall not God have libertie to do what he will with his own? You that are Tenants at will, if your Landlord had warn'd you out of his house, would have prepar'd to be gone without contending? Or if for some reasons which he might not tell you of, he should have pluckt it down, you would scarce have thought yourselves concern'd to quarrel with him for so doing; since it was his own, who could hinder him? And will you not be as submissive to God whilst he executes his righteous pleasure? Your money, goods and houses, were all his, more than yours who own'd them, or rather, who had the keeping of them. Men indeed might not violate the right you had to them, but in opposition to God you had none; why then might he not burn them up, or dispose of them, as pleas'd him best? Even this earth, which for a while he hath given to the Sons of
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Men, to travel over it to Eternitie, he will ere long cast into flames, without doing any injurie, I hope, to the then Inhabitants of it: though one may perhaps cry out for his house, another for his Land, or his Plate and Jewels; which outcries, be they never so loud, are like to have no more regard than they have reason? And why may not God now deal with any part of this earth, as shortlie he will with the whole? And why may not we be as contented that he should? The same reason will also hold for our submission to Gods Providence, when he shall remove our Relations, our health, life, libertie, or any the like comfort, over all which his Dominion is absolute, and therefore his disposal ought to be acceptable. I might also farther shew how the wisdom, goodness, and other Attributes of God, engage us to the same dutie, but I am afraid of being tedious, and may have occasion to mention them hereafter.

But beside these reasons drawn from your common relation to God as your Creator and Sovereign Lord, you that are his peculiar people, to whom he is become a reconciled Father in his Son, may easilie discern many farther engagements you lie under, patientlie to bear all the allorments of his Providence; but chieflie let me bring to your remembrance the tenour of that Covenant whereinto you were entred with God, when you solemnlie gave up your selves to him, and engaged to take him for your God. Did you herein capitulate with him for your usage on earth in any absolute way, that he should maintain you in health, wealth, and worldlie prosperitie? Did you list your selves into his service onlie on condition of being paid such and such wages, and living at such an easie delicate rate? Surelie a Christian at his New-Birth durst no more do thus, than man at his Creation was able to do it. Nay, did you not engage to the quite contrarie, that you would not in any thing be

your own chusers, but leave your selves and all your concerns to Gods disposing? how else could you take him for God, and your God? which, beside other things, implies your acknowledgement of that Authoritie he hath over man in general, and your resolution for your own part to submit to it. And do you not contradict this when you would be your own Masters, and find fault with any of his proceedings? For you have not onlie bound your selves to a sincere endeavour to do what is enjoyned you, but also to be content with whatever shall be done with you. All the instances of the Divine Will, whether express in his Commands, or in his Providences, you are therefore to imbrace and acquiesce in. And when you covenanted to do thus, I question not but you were so possessed with the apprehensions of Gods Sovereignie, all sufficiency, and gracious merciful nature, that you believed you could no better way consult for your selves and the safetie of your affairs, than by putting all into his hands: And have you any reason to repent of your course, and change these apprehensions? May it not still administer full ground of securitie to consider those glorious Attributes of God, and the nearness of his Relation to you? Shall not this even endear and make welcome what in self seems rough and harsh, that it comes from the hand of a loving and good God? We find how our blessed Lord made use of this consideration, *The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* Shall Children take any thing amiss from their tender and indulgent Parents? Have they the least reason to fear that they will contrive their mischief? Earthlie Parents indeed may through their indiscretion and excessive fondness bring ruine upon their Children, whilst they are studying how to do them good, or through their weakness may not be able to keep it off them: But how vain and unreasonable are these fears in you, that have the in-

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finite wise and Almighty God for your Father? Can you imagine that ever his Providence should do you hurt? Certainlie if you harbour any such false and unworthie conceit, it proceeds from some gross mistake of your own interest, and the nature of things. And this leads me to a second consideration, which I desire you to weigh seriouſſie and impartiallie, and not let ſenſe, and carnal reaſon, and the common Opinions of an inconsiderate multitude, ſway with you againſt the greateſt and moſt apparent truth.

2. Namelie, That if we ſpeak diſtinctlie and properly, *You have received little or no hurt by all thoſe ſeemingly ſad things that have befallen you*: By your ſufferings in themſelves you are not worſted, nor are the poorer for the loſſes that you have ſuſtained. 'Tis probable, this may at the firſt ſight ſeem a very great Paradox, and a flouriſh of Rhetorick, too weak to perſwade or ſatiſfie thoſe who can fetch demonſtrations from their ſight and feeling to the contrarie: For them that a while ſince had houſes, and ſhops well furniſht, quick trading, good credit and money at command, now to have emptie purſes, little reſpect, and perhaps ſcarce a place to put their heads in: Is there no hurt in all this? This is hard to be apprehended by thoſe that have met with ſuch a change. But if, notwithſtanding the ſtrangenefs of this Aſſertion, I ſhall evince it to be undoubtedlie true, I hope you will, laying aſide all prejudice, entertain and improve it according to its uſefulneſs and importance. Why ſhould it not be as welcome tidings to you to hear, that you have received no damage (or none that's conſiderable) if it prove true, as it would be to hear how you might recover what's loſt, in a way that would ſatiſfie ſenſe it ſelf? And if you be once convinc'd that no hurt is done you by the hand of God, I hope you will eaſilie be perſwaded not to complain of it: And I muſt confeſs, except

cept you are in some measure convinc'd of this, I cannot well see what it is should keep you from complaining, or a disposition to it. All that is said of Gods Dominion over his creatures, and his right and power to do with them what he please, may make men understand that it is to no purpose to resist a will and strength so much above their own, but will not be sufficient to beget in them an hearty submission to it, nor will bring them to think well of God, and take any complacencie in him when-ever he shall make them smart, whilst they have a conceit that hereby he ruines and undoes them: Nay, perhaps it may encrease both their rage and torment, to consider how impossible it is for them to help themselves. But such, as upon right apprehensions of the true happiness of Man, see plainlie that no afflictive Dispensations do prejudice or impair it, they and they onlie will be enabled to receive them without quarrelling and repining at the Author: And that upon this account you may be possesst of so good a temper, (which is that I am now perswading you to) it will be needful to represent what those right apprehensions are which are here of so great necessitie and use. For when we call to mind what it is that is the chief and only good of man, we shall the better understand what is hurtful to him. Now in one word, mans happiness consists in his conformitie to God, or in his Communion with him; (which seems the same thing, or a necessarie consequence of it) that is to say, in his being made as like to God in all imitable perfections as his Nature is capable; in framing all his motions, and guiding his actions by those rules which God hath prescribed; and in reaching to that knowledge, love and enjoyment of God, for which his reasonable faculties were given him, and are suited. This is the proper formal happiness of Humane Nature, which is begun on earth, perfected and compleated in heaven: Here it
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in the bud, and is call'd Grace; hereafter it is in the flower and fruit, and is call'd Glory. I speak to Christians who believe they have immortal Souls, and that is true which Scripture speaks concerning them, and therefore the supposition of your Faith, may well excuse mee from any laborious proof of a Truth so fundamental to Religion, and so plainlie revealed in Gods lie Word.

If God be the most perfect Being, then to resemble him is our greatest Perfection: If his wisdom, power, and benignity be such, that he created man in an happy state, set him upon, and design'd him for a blessed employment and end; then to comply with his will, living that manner, and to that purpose for which we were created, is our greatest interest: And if God be the best Beings, then to have our souls fitted for, and rais'd the fruition of him, is our highest felicity. From this was we fell by sin, and to this it is the Office and design of Christ the Redeemer, and the work of his Spirit, to recover and restore us. The intent of his undertaking, was not to purchase for us riches, ease, or honours, nor to repair our decayed natures, and renew us after the image of God, which we had defac'd, and so to qualifie us for, and bring us into his service and favour. Only this is to be considered, that whil'st man is in this earthly state, employ'd in the service of his maker, and getting glory for the higher glory, he hath a body that stands in need of outward supports and comforts; as food and raiment, house and lodging, and such like conveniences: but yet his happiness, which is that I before mentioned, depends not upon his continuance in this body, nor upon its prosperity whil'st he is in it: Let what will befall the body, our case is good whil'st the soul prospers, and is constant and regular in those duties that are proper to the present state. Nay further, riches, health, and

and all manner of bodily accommodations, are no farther to be reckoned good for a man, than as they help on his higher spiritual good, as by them we are supported whilst wee are serving God, and as wee emploie them to his Glorie, by putting them to those several good uses which he hath appointed us. By this time, I hope, you apprehend what it is I drive at, namelie, to manifest how inconsiderable your losses are, that you may value them accordingly. You see of what nature, and in what rank those things are which you have parted with, at what a great distance they stand from your happiness, and how little reference they have thereto: And that whether you consider your happiness as now begun, or as you are in the way to it hereafter to be enjoied. If even here on earth, the good man who lives in the fear and love of his Maker, bee the only happie man, what then are you the unhappier for having lost some, yea, suppose it were all of those worldly things you possesse? And what reason have you to complain or grieve? what, I hope, you have lost nothing of God, nor the Graces of his Spirit, wherewith you were enriched; nothing of your Spiritual wisdom and affections, of your faith, and love, and zeal for his Glorie: These Goods, I hope, are unburnt. It was not sure in the power of the flames, as raging as they were, to reach to your souls, and burn up their furniture: That which was *Gods building* within you is not consum'd, nor his image upon you defac't. And if your choicest treasures, the having of which can alone enrich you, be sav'd, may you not with much ease let go your lumber, of a far less value? Are you not still as holie, humble, and heavenlie as ever you were? And if so, I dare affirm it, you are never the worse for all your losses. What a wretched creature else would you make man, if his happiness hung as loose about him, as his riches and all external things do? This would seem to blemish

blemish the Divine Providence, as if he had put the affairs of man, the noblest of all inferiour Beings, into no better a state than of a Bruit, nay, worse by far: For as his earthly enjoiments are of a much greater extent, so would he be more obnoxious to hurts and dangers. 'Tis peculiar to him to be concern'd for an estate, for reputation, for Wives and Children, &c. and if to be depriv'd of these would undo him, then the waves might swallow up his happiness, and Thieves rob him of it, fire, and many other accidents consume it. The slanderer might blast it, sickness prey upon it, and the grave burie it; and which seems worse than all the rest, our lives would be a continual torment, upon apprehension of the uncertainty of these things, and through the fore-thoughts and fears of being stript of them, when as a Bruit is free from these fears, and from most of the evils that occasion them: Moreover, men would hence bee drawn to think, that the blessed God hath dealt enviously and sparingly with his creatures, in that neither all, nor the most are capable of rising to be happy, if it consist in wealth, honors and the like: Wherefore, they to whom they were never given, or from whom they are at any time taken, will be inclin'd to hard and evil thoughts of God, whose Providence thus orders the course of things. But blessed be our heavenly Father, he hath dealt more bounteouslie with us than so, and hath not cast us into any such necessitie of being miserable, through discontentedness with our portion and reluctancie against his will; but hath made our happiness of that nature, that whoever is truly willing may reach to it, and none can be depriv'd of it against his will; which is a priviledge wherein no creature on earth, beside man, is a sharer. 'Tis nothing else but wickedness, which is alwaies a wilful thing, that can possibly hurt us. All afflictions be they never so sharp, do but raze our skin, not pierce our souls. They do but at the most

most break the Cabinet, the Jewel is safe and whole :
 When as the effects of sin are like those of lightning, secret, but most certainly pernicious, melting the Sword, whilst the Scabbard's untoucht, breaking the bone, whilst the flesh is unchang'd, thus doth it destroy the soul, whilst the body seems to remain in good plight. Every creature hath some such perfections proper to its own nature, that the having thereof causeth them to be reputed good, as being agreeable to their own kinde, and fit for that use they are design'd to. Thus the Horse that hath strength or swiftness, fitting him for the service hee is put to, is a good Horse; and though sometimes he may be set out with a fine Saddle, and gaudy Trappings, yet he's never the worse, if considered as an Horse, when these are taken off him: And no more is a man for the loss of any external things which belong to him, since it is not in these that his excellencie, as hee is a man, consists, nor was that the end of his Creation, that he might enjoy them. What, does it add any thing to his real proper worth, to be cloath'd in gorgeous and costly array, or to have store of monie lying in his chests, or to live in a brave house, with a deal of pomp and attendance, faring deliciouſlie everie day, having high titles and honours confer'd upon him? What's all this to the worth of the man? These tell what he has, not what he is. His clothes, and his house, and monie may bee good, whilst hee himself is stark naught. Such things as these, which are here to day, and gone to morrow, and are of so little reference to him whilst they stay, can they better or advance him? without question they cannot. For shall wee not finde those who abounded with them, having nothing else to commend them, term'd no better, in the language of Scripture, than Dogs and Swine, such to whom the societie and portion of Devils is threatned and allotted? When as holy men, though destitute of all these

ornaments, by the sentence of God himself, who best knows the worth of his creatures, are stiled happy, honourable, blessed, and the only excellent ones upon earth. And if Holiness be the peculiar excellency of the reasonable creature, then the loss of this only is his ruine; as your horse or any other beast, is then spoiled when he hath lost his ability for service; and as the loss of limbs or life is the destruction of the body: Even thus doth sin, where it hath its full force and operation, wound and murder the soul so far as it's capable of dying: For the death of the Soul, is its final departure from God, and it's enmity against him, which is far worse than any other death or annihilation that can befall it, as wee may understand even by the body it self, for which to draw out a life upon the wrack, or in any such like torments, is worse than to be slain out-right; and that miserable life may most properlie be call'd a lingring death, according to the saying, *vita non est vivere sed valere*. But it is no crosses nor losses, nor any thing that lights upon what is without the soul that can inflict this miserie upon it; nothing, I say, but its voluntary declining from that holy state, wherein God would have it live, to the sordid brutish waies of wickedness. May we not fitly allude to the words of Christ, concerning that which defiles the man, *Mark 7. 15. There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him, can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they which defile the man.* And most demonstrative is the reason there given, *vers. 19. Because what he receives from without, entreth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats.* So neither can affliction endamage the soul; since it enters not into it, but falls upon some external thing, and so slides away. But those evil things which come from within, such as are instanc't in *verse 21, 22. Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, cove-*
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onfness, these defile the man: And these are the things which destroy him; for the defilement of the soul is its destruction. Take it, Sirs, for a most unquestionable truth, that to have an excessive love for worldly things, is much more hurtful than not to have the things themselves; to burn in such inordinate affections to them, is worse for you by far, than to have them all burnt up: for this latter is but like the firing of some poor Cottages and out-buildings, which in time of war is oft done, on purpose for the defence and safety of the fortified City, when as the former is like a fire which the Enemy hath kindled in the very heart of the City it self.

Since then your chief happiness, as you are men and Christians, is plac'd so far out of the Sphere and hurtful influence of all external accidents, that the worst of them can do no more to lessen or interrupt it, how unreasonable is it to be much dejected for but a little grievance? Of what a sordid spirit is that man who should lament the loss of his dung, or some sorry trifle, whilst his house is well fill'd with goods, and his Coffers with money? And no more reason hath he to be cast down for having his hands emptied of all his earthlie substance, whose heart is fill'd with the more substantial heavenlie Treasure of Grace and Goodness.

Yet after all, I am afraid least most of my Readers should take what I have said for meer Notions, not fit to be framed into Principles, to guide them in their practise, and in their judgements of things. Hardlie will men be perswaded that *riches*, the *Diana* whom not any particular Country onlie, but the whole world worshippingeth, who may number more Votaries and Martyrs than the true God; that these are of so little consequence, and so little conducing to make a man happie. But yet I may well hope for better entertainment from you that have been enlightned to behold such a beautie and glorie in spiritual

spiritual things, as hath in some good measure abated your esteem of all things else. And the better yet to clear and settle your apprehensions, I would desire you but attentlie to consider your own Nature, whether you bear not something about you better than flesh and blood, and whether the gratifying and advancing of this Noblest part be not most your interest; and how far earthlie things, which are of a nature so distant from it, can be serviceable to this end? Consider moreover, what that is which you must live upon for ever, and then think whether such kind of attainments as make the nearest approach thereto, and are the very beginning of it, ought not rather to be stil'd your happiness, than such as are quite of another kind, and will then be whollie useless. Consider also what kind of men they are to whom ordinarily the largest share of these things is allotted; how Infidels, Idolaters, and the profanest wretches abound therewith; and remember how little of them Christ himself, and his most Noblest Followers enjoyed; and yet hear what *Paul* in the name of the rest tells us, That whilst they were as poor, they made many rich; whilst they seemed to have nothing, they possesst all things, 2 Cor. 6. 10. Think what were the *riches* they conferr'd, and what were the *all things* they possesst, and see whether they confirm not what I have said. Furthermore, observe what language Scripture gives to these things, as they would be any part of mans felicity, and how little regard it commands us to have for them. Call to mind also what you use to call them your selves in your prayers and serious discourse, *shadows, trash, bubbles, and vanity*; and I would hope you think of them as you speak, and will be affected towards them but as such things deserve. And lastly, take notice what their greatest lovers think and say of them, when they have had

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the best they could get, and are about to leave them. Lay but all these considerations together, which for brevity sake I only mention, and argue thence how little of true happiness consists in the having of them, and how little hurt is done, and therefore how little cause of mourning given by their removal.

And let me farther add, as very Notions as these may seem, whoever he be that is not so thorowly perswaded of their truth as to frame his apprehensions, and regulate his affections conformable thereto, is never ordinarily like to live any other than an unquiet, discontented, and therefore miserable life, be it little or much that he hath. 'Tis a most true saying of an excellent Heathen Moralist, that there are punishments, as it were, by an irreversible Law, appointed for those, who in a contradiction to the Divine Order and establishment of things, conceive too great an Opinion and love for any worldly matters, which punishments arise out of the very bowels of their vicious affections: For such (saith he) shall be envious, covetous flatterers; they shall be cast into inward disturbances, and break out into womanish lamentations. And was it needful, I might shew by many instances out of some of the most rational and sober Heathens, that they by the very light of Nature and strength of reason, discovered as much as I have asserted, that Humane Felicity depends not upon things external: Though I confess few of them (so far as I can learn) could tell much of our future perfect happiness, and therefore wanted sufficient Motives to recommend a contempt of the world, and the like difficult duties to their hearers: This they left for Christianity to do, which hath fully done it, revealing to us a state of Eternal Bliss purchast by Jesus Christ for all his faithful servants; whence I may afterward particularly fetch ground of comfort.

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But you may remember I told you, that if you considered your selves as in the way to this glory, your affairs are in never the worse posture; taking your present happiness to consist in working out your salvation, in getting meet for, and making sure of the Heavenly Inheritance (as indeed it does) it's no whit prejudiced by the troubles you have undergone. And this plainly appears from what hath been said before: If you have lost nothing of your Grace, you are never the farther from Glorie: If that be but secure, as small a stock as you have left you of other goods, you may drive on as quick a Trade for Heaven as ever. You have lost nothing of all that whereby you might purchase the favour of God, or an entrance into the *Kingdome he hath prepared*: for it was not for the rich, and honourable, and prosperous, (as such) but for those that *love him* that he hath prepared it. We read, *Psa. 147. 10. That God delights not in the strength of an horse, nor takes pleasure in the legs of a man.* No more doth he in any other external accomplishment; he regards you never the more for your wit or beauty, your wealth or dignity; but *Ver. 11. He takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.* You may still come as freely and boldly to him as ever, and may find as hearty welcome. Some that once seem'd your friends, perhaps may now grow strange, and make shie of you, for fear you should trouble them; but be of good chear, your God will not deal with you thus, *whom he loves, he loves to the end.* He that chose you, not because you were rich, will not reject you for being poor. The Lord of Glory, your dear Saviour and Husband, will not repent nor be ashamed of your Alliance, for any meanness that you may be reduc't to; he judges not as man does; nay, 'tis the mean and despised ones of the world for whom ordinarily he hath the most tender regard; *Not many Mighty, not many Noble are called; but*

he hath chose the poor of this world rich in faith, heirs of the Kingdome. Neither Grace nor Glory are set to sale for such things as the poor cannot bring as well as the rich. The Romish Usurper, with his gaping Officers, may do it, but Christ never will, nor hath he warranted them thereto, or promised to stand to their bargains: He invites all without money or price to fetch his milk and wine. You know what a terrible rebuke *Simon Magus* had for thinking the gift of God might be purchased with money: It was something more precious than silver and gold that purchast the incorruptible and never-fading inheritance; be sure then a part in it is not to be bought with any such base things. A willing, thankful acceptance of it, as the greatest blessing that can be bestow'd, is the great condition on your part required; this is your *selling all for that Pearl of Price*: And 'tis long of something worse than poverty, if any man have not this. Need I bid you remember that your money is no currant Coin in the other world, nor would bestead you any thing there. The Judicature erected in the Heavens admits neither of bribes nor fees. Get a good Cause and you are well enough, but without that all the Gold in the *Indies* can neither purchase a Pardon, nor a Reprieve; there will then be no distinction betwixt the rich and the poor, the Honourable and the mean; all the difference that is made will be betwixt the godly and the ungodly, who shall accordingly be disposed to the right hand or the left, to blessedness or woe. And if all this be so (as there is nothing more certain) how little reason have you to judge your selves in a worse state than formerly, or to grieve as if you were so? What, Sirs, is this nothing in your esteem, that you may have access to God as readily, and hear from him as frequently, and converse with him as intimately and lovingly as ever you did, and have the same liberty for transacting with him the great af-

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fairs of your Immortal Souls ? Is this nothing, did I say ; nay, is not this in a manner all ? Does not this priviledge which is yet continued, contain in it all others that are any whit considerable ? In that you may still pursue the great business of your lives as advantageously as ever, and carry on all your designs upon the Cœlestial Kingdome with as good success. If indeed you had been sent into the world to gather wealth, and leave it to your Children ; that you might raise great families which should flourish when you were dead and gone, you had now been sadly cast back, and little better than quite broke ; and 'tis no wonder if they take themselves to be so who made this their chief end. But if your business here be, to glorifie and please him that created and redeemed you, by an holy fruitful conversation, and to get your souls prepar'd for an higher bliss, (which I hope you question not but it is) then, I say, you may follow it on with as much courage, and to as good purpose, as ever formerly you did, without check or hindrance by this or any the like disaster. Now what a ridiculous thing would it be accounted, for a General to be daunted for the loss of a few stragling Souldiers, whilst the Main Body of his Army, and all things necessary to carry on the War, are still secure ? Or for a Marriner to stand weeping for having his Ship somewhat weather-beaten and defac't, as to its painting and fineness, whilst it's still as sufficient and well-fitted for his Voyage as before ? Or for a rich Merchant to lament some such trivial loss as is scarce mist out of his stock, nor is any hindrance to his great Trading ? Why then should the sincere Christian be so deeply affected with those occurrences which need be no let to him in his journey, and which leave him never the less capable of manning his chiefest Trade for invisible durable riches ? So that, I hope, I have clear'd the truth of my Position, past all denial or doubting, and

have made it to appear, that you have receiv'd no considerable disadvantage by any effects of the Fire; and therefore it is a very reasonable exhortation, that your sorrow should bear proportion to the ground of it, and not be excessive, when you have no cause, nor can shew any reason, why it should be so.

But it's probable there may arise some such Objections in your breast, as may somewhat delay your firmer assent to what is said; two or three of which I shall mention, and endeavour to take out of your way, and so hasten to the next.

Obj. 1. Some may think with themselves, *If this be indeed so, that the loss of an estate is a matter of so small importance, how comes it to pass then, that men bear it so heavily? Surely all are not Children and Fools, to mourn for the losing of Pins or Counters, wherefore, how can we but think the things they lose of more worth than so, except we will accuse the generality of men of extream Childishnesse and Folly?*

If this stick any thing with you, for your satisfaction, I would in one word advise you, soberly to consider all that hath been said, to evince how very little, or just nothing, a great estate contributes to the happiness of man; and if you can indeed make it out to your own impartial thoughts, that this assertion is false, and the arguments brought to prove it fallacious, and can manifest the contrary by stronger reasons, you shall have my free consent to reject it: But if you are not able to do thus, nor can rationally contradict the former discourse, judge yourselves, whether the example even of the most, of the greatest, or of those whom the world counts the wisest, ought to weaken your assent to a plain, undeniable truth. I affirm nothing but what the Word of God himself, the Professions of all Christians, the strictest Reason, and the Writings of wisest Heathens will ve-

ry well warrant, and the convictions of almost all, one time or other, yield a suffrage to: What then have we to do with the examples of frail men, under the power of their passions, how many soever they be? May I not with as much reason demand, If it be true what *Solomon* saies of the vanity of all the worldlings Idols; and what *David* saies, that men *disquiet themselves in vain, whilst they are heaping up riches*; and what a greater than either, even our Lord himself, tells us, *That our life consists not in the abundance of those things which we possess*; how then it comes to pass, that the most are so eager and insatiable in their desires after them, so constant and unwearied in their labours to attain them? Is this because God and good men speak worse of the world than it deserves? Or because the most are careless and inconsiderate, and think better of it than it is, pursuing the common course, without examining the reason, or foreseeing the end of it? and so in a blinde zeal, making that their Idol which they see so many adore; they follow it with the same care and love, as if it was indeed their God and happiness: which I know you'll grant to bee a very gross mistake; And yet, as bad as it is, from this very same mistake, proceeds that unseemly and excessive sorrow, which you behold in those from whom the things of the world are withdrawn. Whilst they kept them, they let out their hearts upon, and rejoyc't in them, and even blest themselves in their enjoyment of them, as if they would abide with them, and make them happy for ever: How then can it otherwise bee, but that when they are remov'd, they should wring their hands and tear their hearts with grief, as being depriv'd of that in the fruition, whereof they took all the satisfaction and joy they had, and from which they had expectations of something better than ever yet they had found? Who, that is of these carnal principles, can possibly bear up under

the interruption of this comfort, the frustration of these hopes? Yet this weak carriage of theirs, tells us not what the worth of the world was, but what kinde of false apprehensions they had of it, and how great a dependance they had upon it. Though it bee but an Idol that's carried away, yet if *Micah* have taken it for his God, what wonder if he follow after the men who spoil him of it, with a deal of lamentation and noise, from which he would never cease, but that *he perceives they are too strong for him*, *Judge 18.24, 26*. Even these are some of those sorrows with which, the Apostle tells us, *they that covet after money, do pierce themselves thorough*.

But perhaps you'll tell me, that not only the covetous who are Idolaters, but even good men themselves seem very unable to bear the losing or lessening of their estates, and are more concern'd for them, than if they were of no greater value than I speak of, and therefore hence you conclude, that it's warrantable, or however unavoidable, to have a deeper sense of their departure than I seem to allow.

To which I answer,

(1) It is not the example of men, what ever they be, but the Word of God, that must bee your direction and rule to guide you in all your apprehensions and behaviour: And you know well enough what this tells you of the World, and how you ought to stand affected to it, whether it smile or frown; that you should not, *when riches encrease, set your hearts upon them*, least when they waste, your comfort should do so too. And

(2) Since you insist on example, how many instances doth Scripture afford of good men, who arriv'd to such a constancie of minde, and indifferencie to all Worldly concerns, that no varietie of estate, no crosses therein could shake or much disturb them? *David* when in a far worse condition, in all appearance, than you
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are reduc't to, even when *Ziklag*, the City where hee dwelt, was burnt, his Goods and his Wives taken by the Enemy; and more than all this, the people spake of stoning him, yet when he was thus greatly distressed, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. So Job when he was not only depriv'd of his possessions, but his Children too; yet from a consideration, that the same God who had taken away, first gave him all, and that hee must return naked to the Grave, as he came out of the Womb, calmlie concludes with *Blessed be the name of the Lord*. And if hee afterwards discovered any touch of impatience, it was when many other afflictions besides his povertie lay hard upon him, and embittered his spirit. Does not *Paul* also tell us, that hee had learnt to want as well as to abound, and in what ever state he was, therewith to be content? And that wee might not only admire this excellent frame in him, but rise up to it our selves; he tells us how he came by it, through *Christ* strengthening him, it was, that he could do all these things. Others we read of, that took joyfully the spoiling of their Goods, counting all things but dross and dung so they might win *Christ*. And Church History makes mention of multitudes of gallant Spirits, both in the Primitive and latter times, that manifested the same low esteem of the World. And if they could take it joyfully, to have their Goods spoil'd for Gods sake, may not you take it patiently to have them spoil'd by his hand? For may not their examples, who were so famous for their holiness and wisdom, best inform you of what value the world is, and convince you, that this patience and indifferency of minde, which I am pressing upon you, is no impossible thing. Lastly, Granting that you see some, who may yet bee good men for the main, that by their carriage contradict these examples, yet may I not take liberty to say, that this is but a defect of their goodness, and therefore no way fit for

for your imitation. If *David* himself begin to have hard thoughts of God, as if he had forgotten him, he will quickly correct himself, and acknowledge, *This was his Infirmary*, *Psal.* 77. 10. The plain truth is, the best are too prone to be influenc'd upon, by the common course of the multitude about them, and being but a few, can hardly bear up against the mighty stream of popular opinions, and corrupt practices that flow from them; but are ready to be born down, as men that are overpower'd by a far greater number of contrary voices. So that partly from examples without, and partly from the strong inclinations of a carnal principle within, not wholly subdued, many even of the better sort, *walk like men*, to use the Apostles phrase, and hastily take up some of those rules whereby the common sort are guided, without that strict examination which in such matters is requisite. And therefore having too much the same conceits of riches, ease, and reputation in the world, that their carnal Neighbours have, when they meet with any cross in these things, they shew their weakness in grieving much what as others do. Though, blessed be God, these very times, as bad as they are, yeild us, I hope, many instances of such who are arriv'd to a more exalted and Christian-like Spirit. But what if there were fewer, yea, none such, what ground have you to plead against your duty? whil't you are perswaded to nothing but what is possible, what is reasonable and highly advantageous, as I may shew anon. Wherefore labour with all your might, to clear your selves of all those false opinions, which your long and daily converse with a multitude of ignorant, worldly men may have possess'd you with, and too deeply root-ed you in. Especially beware of esteeming *Good and Evil*, according to their reckoning: for mistakes here will produce a world of inconveniencies, and unavoidably cast you into great perplexities and disorders, If
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once you think every thing to be *Good* for you, which pleaseth the flesh, and that to be *Evil*, which makes it smart, or any way crosseth its interest (which is the judgement of the most) it's next to impossible that you should pass your lives with any true peace and quiet. And truly, they that will be foolish and miserable, because they see the most are so, as they are very little capable of Counsel, so they do as little deserve pitty.

Object. 2. But again some may say, *That they are now reduc'd to such straits, that of necessity they must follow their Callings more closely than they were wont, and so have not the same leisure for the Service of God, nor are so capable of doing works of charity as formerly, and therefore they cannot but think themselves in a much worse condition by this Calamity?*

To which I answer, Your greatest business and interest, is to comport with the Providence of God, in that estate and condition wherein hee sees fit to place you, and to perform the duty proper to that estate. And therefore as to your necessity of diligent labour, you need not be griev'd at it: For

(1) So far as God hath made it necessary, and so far as you are taken up therewith, to that end, and in that manner which hee hath appointed, even these your Labours shall be an acceptable Service to him. Nor

(2) Doth he require of you any such Attendance upon the duties of Religion, as is ordinarily inconsistent with your lawful and necessary callings. It is no more the duty of a poor man to spend so much time in hearing, reading, or praying, as would hinder him for providing for his Family, than it is of a sick man to be so much exercised therein, as would endanger his life.

(3) May not the diligence you are put upon in your employments, prove an advantage to you, in securing you from idleness, and the temptations and mischiefs that are begotten by it?

(4) How-

4. However you are not hereby disabled for the greatest and most substantial vital duties of Religion: Though you should not have time to hear or read so much as formerly, yet, I hope, you may love God and your Brother as much as ever; and be as much in the exercise of faith, patience, humility, and all other graces of the Spirit; and in these it is, the Life of Religion most of all lies.

And lastly, see that you do but keep up your hearts and affections for external duties, and you will find your selves not so straitned of time, be your employments what they will; but you will have leisure for the performance of them so far as God hath engaged you there-to; nor shall you find this performance any such hindrance to your business in the world, as carnal men are wont to imagine. Keep your hearts heavenly, and earthly employments will be no prejudice to you; spend none idly, and you may redeem time for Gods service, without any prejudice to your employments.

And as for your incapacity of relieving the necessitous, the same answer in a manner may shew, that neither upon this account have you much ground of trouble.

For 1. So far as God by his Providence hath disabled you for works of Charity, he requires them not at your hands, nor will blame you for not doing them, no more than a lame man shall be blamed for not walking.

2. Every condition hath its proper duty, and your contentedness in a low estate will be as acceptable to God, as your liberality when in an higher, and more plentiful.

3. You may, notwithstanding your poverty, maintain a charitable spirit: your heart may be as large, though your estate is not; and if it be so, you shall be nevertheless regarded nor rewarded by God. What we read
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in the Gospel of the Widows Mite, may inform us, that they who do what they are able, and earnestly desire to do more, shall be reckoned amongst the greatest Benefactors, and dealt with as such; otherwise it would go ill with the best of men, since a *Peter* himself may sometimes truly say, *Silver and Gold have I none.*

3. You had need to look well to your hearts that they deceive you not in this case; for so much of discontent as you find in the absence of riches, so much selfishness there is in the desire of them, since that proceeds rather from a love to the things themselves, than from any mind to glorify God with them. For if this be that you aim at, why do you not glorify him by acquiescing in his Providence that hath remov'd them? You may best discover this, by reflecting upon your carriage in the daies of your prosperity; for they who did not then improve their Estates for God, desire them back again, its to be fear'd, for their own ends rather than his glory; but if you were so wise as to *honour God with your substance* whilst you enjoyed it, this may be abundant ground of satisfaction to you in the want of it.

For 4. You are to consider that you are but Stewards of the gifts of God, whose business it is to keep a faithful account, and make a diligent improvement of whatever Talents you receive; and therefore you must wholly leave it to your Lords pleasure what you shall have, and how long it shall remain in your hands: Why should the servant be concern'd how much stock his Master allows him to Trade with? Be it little or much, what's the difference to him, so he be but careful and faithful in what he's entrusted with? Nay, lastly, if in good earnest you regard your selves but as Stewards of all you possess, that must be accountable for the same, methinks it should be but little trouble to you to have your charge and burden lessened. Certainly its easier to give an ac-

count of a small Estate than a great one, whatever men may think of the matter. And though we should refuse no pains for our Masters service, yet so far as he thinks fit to ease us, we have no reason to be displeased at it.

Object. 3. Some again may tell me (which is the last Objection I shall here take notice of) *That the afflictions they have met with, have occasioned their repining and discontent, and cast them into great despondencies and distrusts, and therefore (according to my own arguing) have been exceeding hurtful to them, and given them very great cause of sadness.*

In answer whereto: 1. I grant, that sin indeed does hurt to any soul where its entertain'd, and brings along with it just ground of sorrow: and so far as you have given way to sinful passions, you have cause for Humiliation, which you are chiefly to manifest, by endeavouring to repel and banish them from your breast, and not go on overwhelming your selves with one grief after another, upon pretence of repenting for the former.

2. But pray you see that you pass your Censure a-right, and then you'll easily find, that it is not of Gods dealings with you, but of your own unsuitable carriage under them, that you have ground to complain. Whatever distempers of mind you have been cast into, they have not so much proceeded from any outward cause, as from your own weakness and misapprehensions, otherwise the same cause would produce the same effect in all; but you know there are many instances of such who have undergone more than ever you did, without any such disturbances in their breasts, or irregularity in their behaviour.

Yea, lastly, So far have Gods Providences been from causing the distempers which may now appear, that they have rather tended to their removal, by discovering those
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which were bred before, but lay more secret and undiscerned till this occasion. You will not say, that the Touchstone makes the Gold bad, whilst it shews that is so: Nor do wars and dangers make men Cowards, but manifest some to be such. In time of prosperity the heart often secretly cleaves to the Creature, and yet is scarce suspected to do so; but when adversity comes and bereaves it of its Darlings, then doth this immoderate love break out into immoderate grief; as change of Air sometimes stirs up those humors which before lay still in the body. Whilst the world was flowing in upon you, those spiritual distempers were hatcht and nourisht, which may most of all shew themselves upon its going out. The excess of Creature-love (which possesseth us soonest when the World smiles most upon us) is that corrupt Fountain whence those many bitter streams of unruly passions flow, as love to God is the Source and Spring of all other holy affections. Fitly may it be said of you that stand mourning over the Funerals of outward comforts, what the *Jews* said of Christ when he wept over *Lazarus's* Grave, *Behold how they loved them.* And indeed the love we bear to children or friends, is eldome so much felt or exprest as at their Funerals.

The bitter and passionate lamentations which *David* makes for *Absalom*, 2 *Sam.* 18. 33. do very plainly reveal what kind of affections he had for him. But now it was not *Absaloms* death, nor *Joabs* hand that slew him, much less the Providence that permitted both, which was to be accus'd as the cause of all this sorrow, but his own fondness which he had formerly contracted for this beautiful Son; for when this was away, he could bear the death of a Childe with another kind of manliness: It was not then, *Oh my Son, my Son, would God I had died for thee, &c.* But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not re-

turn to me, 2 Sam. 13. 23. Since then this breaking forth of the corruptions you complain of, does but shew what was before in your hearts, may you not look upon it as an advantage to have such an insight into your selves (as I shall shew anon) and so entertain the Providence which hath helpt you to it, rather with thankfulness than murmuring, making so good an improvement thereof as it is fitted and designed for.

3. But this brings me to a third Consideration, which may work you to a very willing submission to what God hath laid upon you, in that, if you are not wanting to your selves, *your afflictions may be so far from doing you hurt, that they may very much conduce to your good.* And if this be so, it will be found most unreasonable for you to bear them with heaviness and discontent. What would you think of that man who should entertain courtesies with repining at his Benefactor? Now that afflictions in general are capable of being beneficial to those that are exercised with them, is most commonly inculcated and acknowledged, and may appear very plain to any that do but consider the expresse promise of God, *That all things shall work together for good to those that love him:* And the experience of Saints in former times, who have left it upon Record, that it was good for them to be afflicted. Moreover, they are pronounced blessed whom the Lord chasteneth, and teacheth out of his Law. We are told that he chastiseth every Son whom he loveth, and that for their profit, Heb. 12. 6. 10. Yea, had we nothing else to guide us, but our knowledge of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, we might hence certainly and safely conclude, that in all his dealings with his people he intends their advantage. Hath any thing happened to you but what came from his will who is goodness it self, and who is ever doing good to such as are in Covenant with him? You may be sure, he envies you not your enjoyments, nor
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took them away as being too good for you, but as having something better to bestow in their room : Wherefore, although you could not at present discern what those benefits are which God intends you by this sharp Visitation; yet you may rest satisfied in this, that there is so much reason in all his actings, and so much good designed to his people thereby, that if you were fully acquainted therewith, and had all things at your own ordering, you would dispose of them just as he hath done. Did you see and know what God does, and had the same intentions for the honour of his Name, and the good of your own and others souls, you would, had it been at your choice, have chose all that's come to pass, as terrible as it may now appear; and would freely have consented to a raging pestilence, though your friends or families might be laid hold on thereby; and to the burning of *London*, though your own dwellings were within the reach of the flames? And shall not this reconcile you to whatever God hath done amongst us? I know not what more you should require for your satisfaction, except this be a trouble to you, that you are not made acquainted with the secret and unsearchable designs of the Almighty in all his works of wonder, which are manifested in his Government of the world; that is, that you are men, and not Gods.

But yet as to your own concern, you need not go far to find out what benefit you may make of the present Providence, which I shall hint in a few particulars: only by the way, let me first desire you to call to mind what is before said of the *happiness of man*, that it consists in his being made like to God, in his loving, pleasing, and enjoying of him, partly here, perfectly and eternally hereafter: Wherefore whatever promotes this his chief good, must needs be accounted so far good for him, however it may appear in other respects, since the *means*

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must be judged of, and denominated only from their respect to the end. To lance a sore till wee smart, if it make for its healing, is good for the body. It seems harsh usage for poor creatures that are distracted, to be confin'd to dark rooms, and sometimes bound to their beds, whipt, and stript short of food, yet if all this help on their recovery, is it not to be lookt on as good for them? And as easily may you apprehend, that whatever tends to the weakning of Corruptions, and strengthening of your Graces, enables you to glorifie God, and helps you on in the way to Glory, is so much for your interest, that nothing else in the whole world could advance it, which conduceth not to make you truly, and in Gods account, *Better men*, to which end, your present sufferings may greatly conduce.

(1) As may first appear by what I formerly mentioned, of the *advantage they give you, for a thorough discovery of the frame and temper of your own Souls*. Neither Grace nor Corruption are ever so well known, as under trials. May you not now finde, that the world was got nearer to your hearts than you imagined, by the pain you feel at its departure; that you lean'd harder upon it than you thought of, by the shaking you have met with when it slipt from you? May you not perceive that too much of the comfort of your lives did depend upon uncertain, carnal things, and so was it self but vain and carnal? May you not finde more earthliness, impatience, and unbelief, than you before suspected to lodge in your breasts? Now though to have these Corruptions be matter of trouble, yet to discover them, in order to their cure, is a mercy. To have a Disease is a grief, but to know it, we say, is the first step to health. One time or other they must be known so as to be repented of and mortified, or else you were like to fare the worse for't; certainly then, the sooner the better: for the longer they

they should lie conceal'd, the greater would bee their strength and mischief, and the difficulter their conquest. For this the Psalmist praies, *Psal. 139. 23, 24.* and for this, I beleive, you have praid many a time, that God would *search and know your hearts*, that is, make them known to you, and now hee hath answered your prayer. This, *Elihu* tells us, is meet to be said unto God, by a man under chastisement, *That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Job 34. 31, 32.* and to the same purpose *Job 36. 9, 10.* But on the other hand, if these trying Providences manifest your Souls, through the Grace of God, to be in a more sound and healthful temper, so that you can chearfully let go whatever he hath cal'd for, and finde that there is nothing you so vehemently desire, as to comply with the whole will of God, and to be rendred up thereto; that none of his dealings move you to question his truth or goodness, to think hardly of himself, or meanly of his promises, but that stil your love to him is as great as ever, and in his favour alone you can rest abundantly satisfied, if it be thus with you, the very discovery of so blessed a frame, may be matter of greater satisfaction, than the loss of all things else, need be of trouble; yea, if this bee your frame, you cannot be overmuch troubled with any such losses. So that what ever your temper and behaviour is, there will be found great equity in this dispensation. If you bear it heavily and impatiently, the greater it seems was your need of it, since this proceeds from such an affection to the creature, as was the very disease of your Souls, to which this Physick is suited. But if you bear it quietly, then it appears you were fitted for it, and so I know, will bee far from an inclination to complain of him, that hath so well fitted your back for your burden, and gave you not a blow, before hee had furnished you with an Helmer. And in that these afflictions

serve not only to discover your Corruptions, but to remove them; not onely to manifest your Graces, but to exercise and promote them; upon both these accounts they will farther appear to bee for your advantage, as I shall proceed to shew.

(2) Wherefore in the next place, *Hereby you have a very great help to take a true estimate of the world, that so you may be affected towards it, according to its worth and no otherwise*: Now if ever, you may discern, how vain, how fleeting and uncertain it is. That which even now was in your houses and hands, and seem'd to make so goodly a shew there, in a few hours after, with those houses themselves, was not at all to be seen, except as expiring into smoak, or turned into ashes. And shall not this very dust and smoak, though at first it might wring water from your eyes, help so far to clear your sight, that the splendid appearances of a glittering world, may never more impose upon you? May you not now see into it, and thorow it, and behold what a very nothing it is? To your own sense, doth it not appear that the usual titles which Holy Writ bestows upon it, and all the felicity thereof, are no worse than it deserves? Calling it a *Bubble*, a *Dream*, very *Vanity*, even *that which is not*. For have you not seen stately Fabricks, with all their rich furniture, flash out and disappear as airy bubbles are wont? have you not seen fair and flourishing estates, which made the owners conceit themselves in a secure and happy condition, able to afford no more comfort than a Dream when one awaketh, being vanish'd into nothing, whilst they promised all things? Now may not such notable sights as these, do very much toward the rectifying of your judgements about all worldly things, if before they were erroneous? and toward the moderating of your affections to them, if before they were excessive? He that doted upon a beautiful outside, will soon cool his

his affections, when hee sees the object of them turned into a loathsome carcase. Where's that mans wisdom, who eagerly catches at the money, which he is certainly told, will turn to coals or dirt in his hand? And where's his understanding, I may say his senses, who hath not learnt, from what he lately saw, that all that a man hath may do so?

There are indeed (to digress a little) many such excellent lessons taught by this dispensation, that to him who soberly and attentively observes the same, it may prove a most profitable Sermon. How fully doth it inform us, what miserable kinde of people they bee, who have nothing better nor surer to trust to, than such a perishing world as this? and how foolish they are, who needlessly hurry and toil all their daies, and make it the very business of their life, to get that which can be held no faster; especially, how stark mad they are, whilst they sell away their precious souls, and an eternal kingdom that might bee made sure, for such trifles as these. It acquaints us also with the great weakness of the generality of men, who take so much upon them, and carry it so high above their neighbours, if they can but scrape together a little more wealth than they, as presently taking themselves to be much the better men for't: When alas! if this be all they build upon, they may within a few daies come to bee as bad or worse, than those they before despised; and so, they do not only discover their own emptiness of true worth, by valuing themselves by such mean and mutable things, but also stand expos'd to contempt, in their own, as well as other mens judgments: for if they account themselves wise and honourable to day, because they are rich, by the same reckoning, they must pass for worthless fools to morrow, when they shall become poor: and yet what's more common in the world, than to prize and rate men after this strange, ri-

diculous manner, so that he shall be thought ridiculous who contradicts it? Again, this sudden and unavoidable waste that was made of such riches as were in your hands may inform you, how great wisdom it is to dispose of them so as may exempt them from the power of thieves, or fire, or any such dangerous accidents. He that, according to his capacity, layes out his estate for God (or keeps it principally to trade with for him) is that wise Merchant, who puts it into such hands, where not only the principal is secur'd, but an interest of another value, than blinde earth-worms are acquainted with, is certain to be gain'd.

What one saith of *Job*, may be partly applied to your case, that he had lost all but what he had given away. That which hath fed and cloth'd the poor Members of Christ, or any other way been employ'd for his service, is still your own, and to be reckoned as good as ready money, and better too; if there be any truth in the Gospel, which, I presume, you question not. And for your own gain and comfort, I heartily wish, that your expences for Christ, amounted to a greater sum, than an Inventory of your losses by the Fire does; then, though you had nothing to shew but the very clothes upon your backs, I durst confidently affirm, you have more than you have lost. And hence, for the future, you may take direction how to improve and secure what wealth God shall entrust you with, and may be taught the discretion, still to take the first opportunity to that end. The words of our Saviour to *Judas*, which the other Apostles thought had a reference to his giving something to the poor, may very well be applied to that purpose, *That thou dost, do it quick'y.* In good works, you may without danger, *make haste to be rich.* Nay here, if in any thing, delay is dangerous. Not without reason doth the Wise man exhort us to do good, *whilst it is in the power of*

our hand, and not bid our Neighbour come again to morrow, when we have it by us. Prov. 3. 27, 28. That which is to day in your hands, and may bee profitable to your self and brother, may to morrow be snatcht out of them, and neither of you bee the better for it. Wherefore learn wisdome by what you have seen: You especially that have but seen, not at all, or but little felt the effects of this Fire, let your *lounty* to your impoverisht brethren, be your *thank-offering* to God for your preservation. And let all take notice, that if they are so backward to render God his own, in that way that it may bee most theirs, he can send for it in such waies as will bee little for their advantage. Is it not better, think you, to send up your treasures to Heaven voluntarie, where you may finde them hereafter, than to have them go up thitherwards in clouds of smoak, never more to bestead you? And it will make but little to your commendation or comfort, to have your estates fetcht away in this manner by hundreds and thousands, which before were wont to be squeez'd from you for good uses, onlie by sixpences and shillings.

But to return, the great lesson which is prest upon you hence, and which indeed is understood in all these, is what I before intimated, namelie, how very unfit any thing which the whole affords, is, to be your felicitie and portion; and how unreasonable it is that you should have the least regard to it as such. And by the palpable discovery of its vanitie, which the Providence of God hath made before your eies, you may, through his Grace working with your serious consideration, be brought off from all such inordinate regard to it, which the best are too subject to. Now without question to have this so common and dangerous a disease weakned and removed, is a far greater mercie than to have had all that is gone from you reserv'd. Nay, this might have prov'd a furtherance

therance of your misery, to have retain'd that which gave strength to your disease. For examine it well, and tell me, whether your very enjoyments have not been a clog and hindrance to you, and made you remiss and sluggish in the way to heaven, by the flatteries and diversions wherewith they were wont to entertain and amuse you?

Have they not spoil'd many a Duty, and rendred many an Ordinance useles, through their too great prepossession of your hearts? Have they not been apt to fill you with false and carnal joyes, with a vain confidence and self-conceit? Hath not the World been a bait and snare to your corrupt natures, and drawn you to unseemly compliances with the guise of this luxurious, fantastical age? in the needless cost and braverie of your attire, houses and furniture; in the excess of your feasting and entertainments, in a tenderness and delicacie that becomes not the good *Souldiers of Jesus Christ*? These are the common effects of wealth, and the temptations wherewith it is attended; and though the power of Grace might secure you from the more deadly, damning hurt of its charms, yet its too too probable some force they had upon you. What a mercie then may you well account it, if this fire have burnt up so much of your Estate as was hurtful to you, and so refin'd the rest, that it may no more hurt you. Though it will not indeed prove you humble and mortified, because you live at a meaner rate than you were wont, being necessitated thereto; yet this necessity may prove a notable means to that end, and becoming at length the matter of your choice, is capable of being improv'd into a virtue: A great deal of unnecessary expence and stir to gratifie the flesh will be say'd, when there remains no such plenty to be lavisht away; and hereby may the man in time voluntarily become much more temperate, sober, and self-denying: Poverty may prick the Bladder of Pride which
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riches were so apt to blow up; and instead thereof bring in not a forc't, but true humility; yea, the very loss of one great estate, may make the owners resolve never to cover after another, not out of despair, but prudence, as seeing what their designs are all come to, and may do again, if they should follow them as before; and so they may meet with contentedness in a low estate, who went without it in an higher, and may serve God better in want than in their former abundance.

Surelie thus to take Knives or Ratsbane out of Childrens hands is a friendlie office, and when they come to understand what was done for them, they'l so esteem it, though at first they may take on as if they were hurt. Your *friendship to the world is enmity* to your selves as well as to God; and in compassion of your case he is arisen to your assistance, against those lusts which *warr'd against your souls*: and will you not readilie accept his aid, and set in with him against them? Are you not willing to smart a little, so these may die for't? Who would be much troubled for a slight wound, if in receiving it he gave a mortal one to his deadlie Enemie? *Sampson* was willing to have the house fall upon his own head, that he might thereby revenge himself upon the *Philistine* Lords, who had put out his eyes, and were making sport with him: And why should not you as well consent to the fall of your houses and estates too, if therewith that creature-love, delight and confidence, which have done so much to befool and blind you, may be crusht to death? The Physitian is not onlie submitted to, but paid for his Physick, though his bitter Pills and Potions might make us sick before they helpt us to our health? And shall we behave our selves worse toward God, who delights not in our smart and sorrow, onlie *if need be*, will let his dearest servants meet with manifold temptations and tryals? If then the Fire which hath taken away
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much of the world from you, hath taken your worldliness too, and by the influence of the Divine Spirit (that Cœlestial Fire) hath made for the purifying of your souls, so that you come out of it, as the three Children out of the Furnace, not onlie unhurt, but unbound; having those snares and fetters of carnal affections, whereby you were straitned and enthrall'd, burnt from off you, instead of repining at this Providence, you have reason rather to indite Songs of praise to him that hath redeemed and advanc'd you into the truest Libertie, the Noblest Freedome whereof you are capable.

(3.) Another great advantage of this Dispensation is, *That now you have a most proper season for the exercise of faith, patience, and self-resignation*, with such like graces, which are especiallie requisite in, and peculiar to a suffering state. In prosperitie these are as it were obscur'd, (like Stars in the day time) and through disuse weakned, to the great disadvantage of the soul; but adversitie excites and polishes them, puts them upon action, and so displaies their use and excellencie, to the honor of the Author, and the great benefit and comfort of the owners. This we find one end of the tribulations of Christians, *That the tryal of their faith might be found unto praise, honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 1.7* And why should not all the Spiritual Powers and Faculties wherewith God hath furnisht his servants be brought into exercise? To what other purpose is Grace bestow'd? Why do Generals furnish their Souldiers with Armour and Weapons, but for the fight? And what a shame would it be for any of these to murmur because he's plac'd in the front, or set to guard any Pass which requires watchfulness and valour? How would Valour be actuated and discovered, if there were no difficulties and dangers for it to encounter? The veriest Coward that while might pass for a valiant man. To get so much

book-skill in Militarie matters, as to be able to discourse how an Army should be Govern'd and Marshall'd, how assaults and Retreats should be made, and what should be done in this case and the other, is a matter of no great difficultie; but to be able actuallie to lead an Army, and to order it aright in all the varieties of Battel, requires another kind of courage, conduct, and presence of mind; and accordingly yields another kind of glorie to him that is possesst of, and shews forth the same. Whilst you were in a full condition, and all things went according to your own desires, you might speak, and hear, and read, and live by faith, and depending upon God, and resigning our selves and all we have to his will, whilst you had little tryal for these Graces. But now, Sirs, shew what you can do, being brought upon the Stage, whether you have been so diligent in learning your part, that you can now act it readilie and becominglie. What comfort can you now take in a promise, who have little else left to trust to? Can you bear up manfullie under all your afflictions, resting singly on the truth, goodness, and all-sufficiencie of God? Can you follow him confidently, though he lead you in the dark? Can you submit to and embrace his will, when it contradicts your senses? This is a season for discovering how you have improv'd your time, and the means you have had to get well fitted for what you might afterward be call'd to; would you be content to spend your time and pains in training up a servant to his work, and after that let him lie idle, and shew no fruit of all? Or if your negligence hath been such, that so long prosperitie, and so great advantages as you therein enjoyed, have been lost upon you, it is but fit that adversitie it self should teach you, what it seems you will learn no other way. And indeed we are commonly too remiss in times of ease and peace, to make provision for the troubles that may be coming upon us; like

like foolish Travellers, that because the Sun shine when they set out, think not of preparing for a Storm for such men to be well weather-beaten, is the best way to make them more provident for the future: As in fencing, to hit a man a sound blow, will do more to make him stand upon his Guard, than a bare direction would; or, if you will, as Wars themselves do more to make men expert Souldiers, than any Fencing-School or Training exercises can. Thus the Apostle tells us, that *tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience*, Rom. 5. 3. Now a Christian comes more to see the want of his spiritual armour than before he did, and therefore labours and prays for it with greater diligence and earnestness. But if any man should ask, whether it was not better never to have need of this, by being freed from those afflictions that make it necessary? I may take leave to tell him, it savours of an impudence, unbeseeming so silly a Creature as man, to call in question the proceedings of his Maker, and demand whether he might not have ordered things better than he hath. Who should prescribe the way to heaven, but he that owns both it and us, and may bestow it upon what conditions he will? And though (if need were) it might be evident that there is great wisdom and equity in that order which God hath establisht, yet its enough for us, that we are told it is his pleasure, that *through many tribulations we must enter into his Kingdome*, and must fight before we triumph, overcome before we are crown'd. And if this be his setled will, we may easily apprehend how needful faith and patience are for this present state; and how much for our advantage that condition is, which does not only put us upon the exercise, but tends to the advancement of them.

(4.) All these your losses may prove very gainful to you, as, *hereby your hearts may be drawn nearer to God, carried*

ed out more after him, and caused to adhere to him with the greater firmness, resolution and affection; as upon several accounts may appear. This will indeed necessarily follow from what went before, what interest the world loseth in your hearts, God will gain: so much as your affections are taken off from things below, so much will they be plac't the more upon things above. Moreover, so disingenuous and inconsiderate we are, as often to be drawn away into a forgetfulness of God, by those very mercies and comforts which should have made us mindful of him, and engag'd us closer to him, and in such a case (which happens too frequently) by the removal of those we may better learn what a kind of dependance that is we have alwayes upon him, and how much we have been beholden to his bounty, when we were little affected to it. It is also very profitable for us to be sometimes cast into such a plunge, whence we plainly perceive God only can deliver us; for this will put us upon more solicitous enquiries after him, make us rely upon him, and that with all our weight and stress, and will help us to a clearer sense of his loving kindness and Almightiness, in affording us relief when all other refuges fail'd us. A friends hand put out to a drowning man is graspt with another kind of fastness, and regarded with another kind of welcome and dearness, than when they walkt together upon the Land. Furthermore, when that which was wont to stand in competition with God, and to divide our hearts betwixt it self and him, shall be taken out of the way, there's great hopes that we shall with more ease and steadiness center upon him alone. He that's at a stand which of two friends (that are of contrarie parties) he should adhere to, may quickly be resolved, when he finds one of them forsaking him, the other sticking to him at his greatest need: when we have found there was a lye in our right hand, it may drive

drive us most effectuallie to the true and everliving God. Nothing but wilful sottishness could any longer make it a question, whether God or *Baal* was to be followed, when they saw to what disgrace the Idol had expos'd his Priests, whom he could neither hear nor help, and how palpably he was witness against by fire from heaven. And if it was possible for any of you to be so weak, as in the least to *halt betwixt two Opinions*, whether God or the World was to be followed with greatest earnestness, imbrac't with most affection, I hope the controversie is now fully at an end. You see what a God the World is, that cannot defend its self, much less its followers: but the Lord *Jehovah* is still as good, and powerful, and sufficient, as ever he was, and will so remain for ever. Shall not then all the love and confidence you had scattered away and misplac't upon the Creature, be recollected thence, and fixt upon him, who (as you may now plainly see) only deserves it, and who only can requite it? How can you now chuse but say within your selves *Well, since the World hath thus taken its farewell, and fled away, why should we follow it with sighs and tears, and refuse to be comforted because it is not? Why should we mourn for that which hath profited us so little, and been no more kind nor faithful to us? No, rather let us sit down and bewail our folly in over-loving such trifles, than be guilty of worse in languishing after them, when we have found that they are such; and with these tears in our eyes let us betake our selves to our loving and good God, from whom our hearts have too much wandered, and beseech him to take them wholly to himself, and never more suffer them to dote upon so unworthy, unsuitable objects.* And indeed what way have you left, if you at all consult for your own interest, but thus to retire to God? If you should yet rather cleave to the Remnants of your Estates, or fortifie your selves with hopes of recovering them, and from these grounds fetch your chief support,

support, as carnal ones do, you do but more hazard the loss of all, and the utter blasting of these hopes.

If you indeed belong to God, hee'l throw down all your fortresses, and drive you out of all your holds, but hee'l recover you to himself. If ingenuity will not bring you, necessitie shall. And is it not Fatherly love that thus concerns it self with you, and brings you under the happy discipline of his familie, and will leave no means untryed, rather than suffer you to remain at such an hurtful distance from him. And how great is his goodness, that he will so readilie receive and welcome us, upon our return to him after all our strayings; yea, although we are thus fetcht back again by a kind of necessity? Might he not justlie upbraid us with our former unthankful and unkind behaviour? that we were so strange to him in the day of our prosperity, and liv'd as if we had no great need of him, that we came not to him till all our other lovers had forsaken us; might he not therefore bid us, now go to them in the day of our extremity, and see what they can do for us? But so gracious is his Nature, that he treats us not after this rate, as in Justice he might; but is ready to give us the same loving entertainment, that the Father in the Gospel did to his Prodigal Son.

To conclude then, Will not this prove a singular mercy, to have your Husks remov'd, that so you may be brought into your Fathers arms, and live more upon the substantial satisfying bread that is in his house? Will you not acknowledge it to proceed from love, that when you attended not as you ought to more gentle calls, God hath dealt with you much like as *Absalom* with *Joab*, who when he had twice sent for him in vain, set fire on his Field to bring him away? And be sure, God calls you not thus earnestlie to him upon any trivial business; wisdom and goodness shine forth in all his actings: And
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will you not soon own them in this, when you shall hereby be put upon making up your losses out of God himself, upon searching more diligentlie than ever you did, what there is to be found in him that will support and satisfie a man that hath nothing else to trust to? Will it, do you think, make nothing for your interest, by these searches to attain clearer apprehensions of the bottomless treasures of goodness to be had in God, and of his most perfect adequate suitableness to the humane soul? When moreover, you shall be brought to live more singly upon him, to converse more feelinglie with him, and shall better relish those surest pleasures of his presence and service, and shall be more solicitous than ever to make sure that he is yours, and to walk so, that you may keep your Evidences clear? Is he worthy the name of a Christian, that if these priviledges were to be bought, would not willinglie part with all he had to obtain them? Why then should not you as willinglie part with what God sees fit to remove, in order to his giving in the same? *Estate's sweet, but Life's sweeter*, saith the Marriner, when he throws his goods overboard to preserve his temporal life; and will not you chearfullie bear as much for the advancement of a Spiritual and Divine Life? And if these prove indeed the fruits of Gods present dealings with you, will you not be found as much beholden to this Fire he sent (excepting only a local translation) as *Elias* was to his Fiery Chariot, whilst it thus refines you from your earthliness, and carries your souls so much nearer to God?

5. But lastly, The benefit of this Providence may hereafter more fully appear, in that it may prove an happy means of preparing you for some further tryals that God shall call you to, or for death it self, whenever it shall befall you. Though you should not now so well know what God is doing with you, yet you may know hereafter: He only,
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in whose hands our times are, can tell what daies you may be reserved for, and what it may cost you faithfully to follow the Lamb in the way that he hath led and prescribed you. And perhaps he saw you more entangled in the affairs of this life, than is fit for those that have your warfare to accomplish, and more than would suffer you to please him whose Souldiers you are. The way that is yet behind for you to walk over, may be so rough and untrod, that whilst you were laden with thick clay, you could not have been able to make progress therein, and therefore may you be rendred more light and fit for travel; the weight which prest you down being taken away, even an earthlie load without you, and the greater load of carnal affections from within. In times of suffering for the truth, there's nothing ordinarily proves a more dangerous snare than a great estate. It had been happy, for ought I know, for the young man in the Gospel, if all his possessions had been burnt before he came to Christ; he had then, at least, wanted that temptation which made him go away sorrowful. And as happy had it been for many another, if their riches had been sent the same way, before they were call'd to lose them for Christ: for then we may probably suppose, they had not forsaken him for love of this present world, which none are so apt to do, as they who have most in it to cleave to. In St. *James* his time, it was the rich men that were oppressors and persecutors, whilst the poor onlie were Confessors and Martyrs, *Jam.* 2. 5, 6, 7. And so in all times it is usual. How know you then but God hath taken the world from you, least in a day of trial it should have drawn you away from him. Thus may the burning of your houses enable you the better to burn at a stake, if ever you should be call'd to't; and so one *Fiery Tryal* would fit you for another. But though you escape this, yet death you cannot escape; and to behold in this

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manner the Funeral of worldlie wealth and glorie, may very much prepare you for your own. The greater troubles you meet with in your journey, will they not make you long the more for your journeys end? When the Traveller finds his money fall short, or himself tired out with the length and badness of his way, then he falls more heartilie to wishing himself at home: Not that you ought in one of *Jonah's* Pets to take on, and desire by all means to die presentlie, because your *Gourds are withered*, your flourishing estates faded away. None ordinarilie are more unfit, and if the truth was known, more unwilling to die, than they who in a discontented mood are wishing themselves dead; for it must be love to heaven, more than weariness of the earth, that can confer this fitness, and this willingness. But yet without question, you may make this improvement of all the smart and weariness you feel, thereby to be set a longing after the promised ease and rest. Those desires after death, which proceed from a serious apprehension of the Worlds vanity, and its unfitness to be your resting place, and are bounded with a submission to Gods Will, are not onlie lawful, but commendable; and you may esteem it a mercie to have them quickned: Perhaps whilst your present state was pleasant and desirable, you found it something difficult to get heartilie willing to leave it, or to represent to your self any other condition so much better, as might make you desirous to part with this: But now, I hope, this difficultie is much abated, if not wholly removed. If you found such plentiful and pleasing entertainment in your *Inne*, that you began to think of abiding there, and to grow forgetful of your own home, will you not be of another mind when you have met with rougher usage? It is not *Lazarus* his hard fare, but *Dives* his dailie dainties, and such like Bands of love, which chain poor creatures to the World. Moreover,
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it is to be considered, that at Death you must have undergone the same, and a greater trial than now you have done, in leaving that which hath now left you; and then to have found your heart sticking to the creature, and unwilling to be torn from it, would have been much more grievous to you. Far safer it is that our Bladders slip from under us in the shallow water, where we may trie our skill with less hazard, than in the deep, where wee must either swim or drown. By this experience you have had of yourselves, how you can bear the departure of the world, if you have found out your weakness, you are yet in a capacitie of looking out for help, and getting better provided for your last great encounter; or if you have discovered strength, you may the more chearfullie expect, and boldlie address yourselves thereunto. Thus you see, this affliction, *which at present seems not joyous but grievous, may afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, to those that are exercised therewith*: And therefore it seems no way absurd to apply the exhortation to you, which we finde, *Jam. 1. 10. Let the brother of high degree (not only be content, but) rejoyce that he is (thus to his advantage) made low.*

And besides what may accrue to the sufferers themselves, I might (the more to engage their submission) mention the good that may hereby be done to others; as this signal Providence may tend to awaken our Land, and put us upon Repentance and Reformation; or at least may quicken all that are serious, to do what in them lies for the promoting of this work; and may also be a means of terrifying some careless sinners from their waies of wickedness, and of bringing them home to God. If any such work as this was to be done, or a warning given to the Nation, and God saw fit to do it by the burning of our Metropolis, why should you not freely consent that your houses should go in with others, for the

accomplishment of his Will? If their destruction may be any means of preventing the overthrow of the Kingdom; yea, or keep any poor soul out of eternal burning; You have no cause to finde fault with their being laid out so well. And if any one should think it might have conduc't more to these ends, to have singled out the dwellings of the prophaneſt ſinners, and made them warnings to the reſt, ſparing all ſuch as feared God: They may do well to remember, that it becomes not them to preſcribe to infinite wiſdome, what waies to take for the bringing about his own deſigns; which deſigns we are far from knowing perfectly, and leſs perfectly can we tell, what means are beſt ſuited for the compaſſing of them. But, I ſuppoſe, I have ſaid ſo much of the benefits, that may hereby be given in to true Chriſtians, as may ſufficiently demonſtrate, that this cloud, as dark as it is, hath a bright ſide ſhining upon Gods people, which may, in its kinde, do them as much ſervice, as the Pillar of Fire did to the *Iſraelites* in their March: Whil'ſt they, that *Aegyptian*-like, are clouded with the miſts of wickedneſs and errour, neither perceive the benefit they enjoy, nor partake of it. And though ſuch blinde Atheiſts, or inconfiderate ones, may to their own hurt, miſ-conſtrue the methods of Providence, in laſhing the good and ſparing the bad, or dealing alike with both; yea, though *upright men* themſelves may be ſomewhat *aſtonied* at this, yet *ſhall the innocent ſtir up himſelf againſt the Hypocrite; the righteous alſo ſhall hold on his waies, and he that hath clean hands ſhall be ſtronger and ſtronger, Job 17. 8, 9.* And thus, I hope, ſhould I ſay no more, I have ſhewed you abundant ground for patience and quietneſs under the hand of God. Since

(1) It is the hand of God, who cannot wrong you, and therefore gives you no cauſe to murmur.

(2) This hand of God hath not hurt you, and therefore

fore gives you no cause to complain.

(3) It may greatly profit you, and so rather gives you cause to be thankful. Two or three Considerations more I have to suggest, which I shall with more brevity dispatch, having stood so long on these.

4. Though your sufferings themselves cannot, yet *your impatience under them may very much hurt you, whilst on the other side, your patience will equally turn to your advantage.* And this may sufficiently instruct you, if you have any respect to your own interest, outward or inward, which to choose. To pursue this in a particular instance or two.

(1) By quarrelling with Gods Will in his proceedings, *you add sin to your afflictions*, and thereby put a sting into them, that may do you that mischief, which otherwise they never could. What think you is a sin, if this be not, to be discontent with any thing which God shall do with you? Do you not seem so far to accuse him of want, either of wisdom, faithfulness, or goodness, and so of want of fitness and right to be your Governour? And what's this, but to desire that your affairs were in your own hands, as if then you could order them better? And have you not reason to suppress the very first motions which have so much wickedness, rebellion, and little less than blasphemie in them? You may remember here, what I have formerly said, to demonstrate that sin is the greatest mischief that can light upon the soul of man. If to comply with the Divine Will, in all expressions of it, be his only interest, then to resist this Will, must needs be his greatest misery? Verily, there is no such a deformed monstrous sight in the whole world, as to behold a creature rising up against his Maker, and entering into a solemn war with Heaven it self; whether it be in violating his gracious precepts, or repining at his wise providences. And the very howling of Wolves, or croaking of

Toads, is a thousand times more acceptable noise, than to hear men complain and speak ill of the blessed and good God, or any of his waies: For their noise, be it never so harsh, is natural to them; but this harsher voice of murmuring, is most unnatural, and a very breaking of the *harmony* of the Creation, which consists in a sweet and chearful obedience of all creatures to him, from whom they receiv'd their beings, faculties, conditions, and employments; and in their constant celebrations of his bountie, according to their several capacities. Is not the dumb meekness of a Lamb more grateful to all men, than the roarings and strivings of a Swine? Especially when kindness, rather than violence, is offered to us, however our false opinions represent it. Want of reason may excuse the struglings of a Brute, when you go to pluck a Thorn out of his foot, or do him any the like courtesie; but such brutishness in a Reasonable Creature, is inexcusable! Believe it, Sirs, such unseemly carriage as this, is infinitely worse in the thing it self, and more disgraceful to you in the eyes of God and good men, than your losing all the monie and goods you had in the world: This meanness of spirit, is another kinde of unhappiness and dishonour, than any other povertie. But on the contrarie, to bear up under Gods hand with patience and courage, is a greater commendation and priviledge, than to abound in all riches. Whatever the world may think, it is undoubtedly true, that to *comply with the will of God under any suffering, is a greater blessing, than to have been secured from that suffering.* To bee content with sickness as it comes from God, is a greater mercie than to bee in health; and so patience under all your losses, is a greater happiness than to have lost nothing: For the worst of men may partake of these temporal favours; but good men only are enricht with so excellent a spirit. This tried and approved Faith and Pa-

tience,

cience, *are much more precious than the Gold that is tryed*
 (or than all that you have lost) *by the fire.* How worthie
 and commendable a thing is it, for a Christian in the
 lowest, poorest, and most afflicted state, still to think and
 speak as well and honourable of God, who hath brought
 him into it, as ever before he was wont? To Apologize
 for that Providence which hee smarts under, and to let
 Spectators know, that hee discerns so much equitie and
 mercie in it, that he cannot chuse but submit thereto? *Might you not hereby do more to vindicate God before*
the world, than any other, by bare discoursing can? And
by your practice might condemn and shame all those un-
manlie ones that act contrarie; and may convince
themselves and others, that it is from the weakness of
their Faith, the falseness of their opinions, and the un-
ruliness of their passions, that they keep such a complain-
ing, and not from any real cause that God hath given
them. This you may teach them more effectually than
another out of your condition can: For they are present-
ly apt to reply to such a one, If you was in my case, you
would be as bad your self; but when they see one in the
like case, whose carriage is so unlike theirs, they will the
sooner bee put to silence, and set upon imitation of it.
And would not this, do you think, very much endear you
to God, to behold in you such a love for himself, such a
liking of his actions, and such a zeal for his honour?
How dowe finde him, as it were, glorying of the perse-
verance of his Champion Job, to Satan his Accuser, in that
he held fast his integrity, although his estate was destroy-
ed, Job 2.3. And does not both God and Satan now look
upon you, to observe how you will behave your selves?
and will it not please and glorifie God, vex and confound
Satan, to behold your carriage, like that holy mans?
How acceptable, also, will it bee to the Lord Jesus, to
see you transcribe the copy he set you, to walk as he walkt,
when upon earth, and to carry your selves as hee wont,
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under all the sufferings he met with in it? And if the eye of the Prince, or General, will infuse valour into the soul of the veriest Coward, shall it not animate and raise your spirits, to remember what Spectators you have, besides the Inhabitants of this lower world? Even God himself, and Christ, and all the holy Angels. You need not sure bee told, how much you are concern'd to gain the good liking of these, and how much weight there is in their approbation; nor on the other side, how sad and shameful it would bee for you, to have all these ashamed of you, for your Cowardize and fainting.

(2) Beside the hurt that comes to your inward man, you will finde no benefit to your outward concerns, by frowardness and impatience. He that rumbles and strives, like a wilde Bull in a net, will never the sooner dis-entangle himself. There's nothing to bee gotten of God by this course. He that spar'd not his Rod, though hee knew it might displease you, will not take it off meerly because you are not pleas'd with it. Wise Parents, though never so tender, use not to have regard to all the foolish passions and desires of their Children: and as little reason is there, that God should give heed to yours: For are they any better than childish, whilest the great ground of them (to give no other proof) is, that worldly things are perishing and transitory; or, that according to their nature, they are past away from you. Now what weakness would you account it, for any man to sit weeping for a beautiful Flower, because it withers in his hand, and because the winter-cold will not permit him to have his fair Tulips and sweet Roses? Or to afflict himself, because the Moon waxes and wanes, and will not alwaies abide in the Full? What relief would you have given to this fond mourner? Should the seasons of the year, or the course of nature be alter'd to gratifie his humour? And do you not know that there are *changes* in Sublunary things, as well as in the Moon? Seasons
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and Vicissitudes in our condition, as well as in the year ? And both proceed from the same wisdom, though they appear not alike regular and constant. There is a Day and Night, a Winter and Summer, of prosperity and adversity (I speak of things without us.) And of these we may say, as the Plasmist of the other, speaking to God ; *The day is thine, the night also is thine : Thou hast made summer and winter, Psal. 74. 16, 17.* And is there any reason that he should alter the seasons, and change the nature of things, or the course of his providence, for the satisfaction of every man that is not pleased with it ? Or if this should seem too notional, you may easily apprehend, that peevishness and stubbornness, may provoke God rather to continue, than cease from lashing you. 'Tis no discretion in a Parent, to spare the Rod alwaies when the Childe cries, (the Wise man advises the contrary) much less to dismiss him whilst he is stomachful : And why should you think the *Father of Spirits* will leave you, till he hath brought you into better subjection to him ? It seems by your carriage, there is much corruption left in the Soul to be drawn out : and the same mercy that applied a Corrasive because it was needful, is like to hold it on whilst it is so. But when the cure is wrought, when patience hath had its perfect work within you, you are nearer to a freedome from that, which hath been the exercise of your patience. When the Childe is brought to kiss the Rod, the Father is wont to lay it down. When you can heartily say to God, *Thy Will bee done*, you are likeliest to hear from him, *Be it to thee as thou wilt.* For they hold creature-comforts fastest, who sit loosest from them ; they deserve them best, and are in the least danger of being hurt by them. *To humble our selves under the mighty hand of God, is a sure way, in his due time to be exalted, 1 Pet. 5. 6.* You have heard of the patience of Job, and seen the end of the Lord, that hee is very pitiful and of tender

tender mercy. James 5. 11. And none taste sooner, or more plenteously of this pity and mercy, than they who are most perfectly subdued to his pleasure.

(3) They that give way to impatience, if they will but have while to look into themselves, may easily discern what harm there is in it, if it were for nothing else, but that continual disquiet and inward torment wherewith it is attended. The passionate man, as well as the cruel, troubleth his own flesh. The most factious Souldier in an Army, or seditious Citizen in a Common-wealth, cannot raise half those stirs and tumults there, as unruly passions do in a Soul. What mire and dirt do they continually cast up? And how do they unfit us for duty to, and converse with, both God and our Brother, and embitter all the comforts we enjoy? There is no *Nero* nor *Phalaris* in the world, so ingeniously cruel, as man when he becomes his own Tormentor. He does worse by far, than the Queen we are told of, who held an Asp to her breast: for hee maintains a gnawing Worm continually within him, which is near a kin to that we read of, which *never dies*. Though affliction might make his flesh smart, yet it could not so pierce his soul, did not he himself drive it in; putting vexation into the creature, which is vanity. A Sword, which hee findes sticking in his Clothes, hee madly thrusts forward, and therewith stabs himself to the heart. A Spider, which was faine into his Cup, whence it might have been gently taken without any hurt, hee squeezes and swallows down, to poison himself, if possible, therewith. How else could it be, that mens losing of their estates, should make them lose their wits too? Sure there's no such connexion betwixt their mony and their reason, that they must stand and fall together. But the business is, they sit poring upon their troubles, and representing them to themselves so dreadfully, till their spirits are overwhelmed, and their brains weakned thereby:

by: Like a foolish man, who should get a Glass, that presents Spectators with hideous sights and shapes, of Monsters and Devils, and then stand gazing in it, till with the very horror, hee goes besides himself. Now though I hope none that fear God, are capable of such exorbitancies of passion, yet let them beware of the first risings and bubblings up thereof in the soul, least they should swell to a boisterous Sea, whose waves they will difficultly repress and calm. Thus you see the inordinate sorrow of the world, works death, whilst by *subjection* to him that corrects us, we live, *Heb. 12. 9.* And live indeed we do, at another rate than discontented, sickly mindes are wont. By *patience* wee do truly possess our souls, and enjoy our selves, and may feel little alteration within, whatever is done without us. Though I will not say it's an easier thing, to rise up to this quiet, humble frame, than to fall into the contrary, yet I may well say, it's much more for the ease of the Soul, when attain'd to; so much more as will abundantly recompence all the pains taken in the getting of it, and may well set men upon diligence to that purpose: Especially if we consider what was said before, that this is the nearest and surest way to deliverance. And if it be so, an easie way I am sure it is: What's this, but *stand still and see the salvation of the Lord*? Or as the Prophet to the Jews, *In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength. Isa. 30. 15.* Or if the outward afflictions should still remain upon you, yet there is in some sense, a way made to escape, whilst you are thus made able to bear it, *1 Cor. 10. 13.*

Lastly, Consider how by your unseemly dejection under the hand of God, you may do very much to the prejudice of the Christian Religion, which you profess heartily to believe and love. What will the Atheist, or what will the prophane scoffer say, when they shall see this? So
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sottish and malicious they are, that if they do but see you
 in affliction, they are straightway scornfully demanding,
Where is now their God? But what will they say, if they
 should hear you your selves unbelievingly cry out,
Where is our God? Will they not be ready to cry, *This is*
the Religion they make such boast of, which you see how little
it does for them in a day of extremity: They talkt of promises,
 rich and precious promises, but where are they now? Or to
 what purpose do they serve? They said they had a treasure in
 Heaven, what ails them mourn so then, if their riches bee
 there? And carnal worldlings will bee drawn to think,
 that whatever fine talk you might have about God and
 Heaven, your hearts were most upon the same things
 that theirs were, since your grief for their removal, is as
 great as theirs. They know by experience, what a stay
 it is to the heart, to have an able, faithful friend to de-
 pend upon, or to have hopes of a great estate shortly to
 fall to them; and they'l never be perswaded, you have
 any such ground of comfort, if they see you as much cast
 down, as those that pretend to no such matter. By this
 means, the precepts of Christ to constancy and content-
 ment in all estates, will come to bee lookt upon (like
 those of the *Stoicks*) only as *Magnifica verba*, Brave words,
 but such as are impossible to bee practis'd; and the whole
 of the Gospel will be taken for an airy notion, since
 they that profess greatest regard to it, are no more helpt
 thereby. Oh what a shame is it, that Religion should
 in this case make no more difference betwixt man and
 man! That it should not, do I say? Yes surely it will,
 where ever it is in truth and power. For does not the
 essence of it, lye in the souls being brought off from the
 world, and self-will, to the love of God and subjection
 unto him? Wherefore so much submission to his will, so
 much holiness and religion there is in the soul. Oh Sirs,
 these (though they make not such a noise and shew in
 the

the world) are better differences of a godly man from a wicked, than any outward profession and performances; (though these also may have their use and excellence.) Wherefore shew to the world (what ever their common censures are) that it is not so much your care to differ from them in some by-opinions and little strictnesses, as in humility, meekness, contempt of the World, and heavenly-mindedness. And now let these graces display themselves, by your chearful, patient deportment under all your grievances. And labour you to chear up your poor Neighbours, and let them know what an unfit and foolish thing it is, to be so much concerned for these things, whilst there are ten thousand times greater offered to their choice: and above all, see that your counsels are backt by your examples. This will force an admiration from beholders, and make them *take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus*. Your belief and confidence in the promises of the Gospel, being thus made manifest, will honour them and him that made them; and may put others upon enquiry, what it is in Religion that produceth such notable effects: As the brave and undaunted behaviour of Primitive Christians under all hardships and cruelties, drew many Heathens first to admire, after to search into, and embrace Christianity. If these things bee well weighed, you cannot but acknowledge, that the patience and calmness, I am perswading you to, is much more for your interest both of Soul and body, than the contrary temper: And if this be granted, need I say any more to men of common reason, to direct, or exhort them, which to pursue and embrace. And so much for the fourth particular.

5. Farther reason for, and help to this holy frame; you may finde, *If you will but take an impartial view of those many mercies, which are still vouchsafed you; the consideration whereof may instruct you, how unreasonable*
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and dis-ingenuous it is, to have your eyes so fill'd with tears for, and your mindes so possess'd with, the thoughts of what you have lost, that you should overlook and forget what you have left. Especially when the mercies yet left, are so very considerable as yours are, both Temporal and Spiritual. Is it nothing, do you think, that your lives are preserved, though your livelihood be lessened? This was promised to *Ebedmelech* as a great favour, *that his life should be given him for a prey*, *Jer. 39. 18.* And doubtless *Lot* took it for such, when the Angels rescued him from the flames that consum'd his City. When he was bid to escape for his Life, we read not of any Goods that he carried along with him. And though this preservation was more signal to him (as *Noah's* also was) in that the rest of the Inhabitants were destroy'd, yet is the mercie never the less to you, for having many more to partake thereof: but you have cause administred to bless God, not only for your selves, but also on the behalf of your neighbours, friends, and relations; whereas *Lot* himself did not altogether enjoy this priviledge, his Sons in Law perishing in the fire, and his Wife for looking back upon it: Her fault, it's probable, being that, which I am wishing you to avoid, *viz.* That she had a longing minde after her House and Goods, instead of a thankful heart for her Life, wherefore remember *Lot's Wife*. But yet you know, some there were (though, blessed be God, but a few) that lost their lives in the late Conflagration, and that neither you nor yours were of those few, you owe it to free mercie, and owe for it the heartiest thankfulness. If then it be true (what Truth himself hath told us) that *the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment*, have you any reason to repine, whilst the better is preserv'd, though the worse should not? But, farther, I suppose, there are very few, if any of you, stript so bare, as not to have food and raiment, which whilst

whilst you have, you are commanded to be content, and have reason to bee so; you may see both, 1 *Tim.* 6. 8. *Jacob's* ambition went no higher, than for Bread to eat, and Clothes to put on, *Gen.* 28. 20. and have not you these still? What though they be plain and homely, if they supply the necessities of nature, and keep you fit for the works you have to do in the world, what do you need from them more? Reason and Religion will tell you, this is enough, whatever a fleshly disposition may whine after. Moreover have you not health and strength, your reason and senses? besides all other particular mercies to your selves or yours, whereof your own thoughts may present you with a larger Catalogue than I can rehearse.

And let me put it to your Conscience, whether it is more seemly for you that are encompassed with so many mercies, to own and admire the goodness of the Donour, or sadly to lament the removing of somewhat you enjoyed, and peevishly to quarrel with him that did it. How would you cry shame upon such carriage among men? To see any one repine at his friend for calling in an hundred pound, whilst yet hee left him twice as much in his hand: Or for a Childe to murmur at his Father, from whom he hath all his maintenance, for withdrawing from him something that hee may well enough bee without. And how just your thankfulness is upon account of what you enjoy, will yet plainlier appear, if you consider, that all you have proceeds purely from the kindness of your Benefactor; and that he can as easily remove all, as any part; yea, and may justly do it, and you have rather deserved that hee should so. Look abroad also into the world, and observe what multitudes there are in a worse condition than you; and look back upon former times, and see what straits many of Gods dearest servants have been brought to. Such of whom the *World was not worthy,*

thy, found no better entertainment in it, than in *Sheepskins and Goatskins*, to wander up and down in wildernesses and mountains, dens and caves of the earth; and have not you better raiment and lodging than so? *Paul* tells us of himself, that he was in hungerings and watchings, and maintained himself by the work of his hands. Yea, the Lord *Jesus* himself, when on earth, underwent hunger and thirst, watching and weariness, and had not so much as where to lay his head. And is the Servant greater than his Master? Or shall he complain whilst he hath the same, or better usage than he? 'Tis recorded (as I remember) of *Alexander*, that when a dish of water was brought him, in a time when all his Army was sore afflicted with thirst, hee threw it away, on purpose to teach them patience by his own example. And shall not the example of *Jesus*, the Captain of our Salvation, do much more to make all his Souldiers willing to endure hardship, which hee hath born before them? and hath shewed that it is tollerable, and promised to make it so to them.

But besides the many temporal mercies that are reserv'd you, which bespeak contentment with your present estate, you have such spiritual priviledges, as may be strong engagements to this dutie. At what rate is it to bee valued, that you were born and brought up where the Gospel is purely dispens'd: not in *India*, or *Turky*, where it is not known nor embrac't; not in *Spain* or *Italy*, where it is so much lockt up from the people: but in *England*, where it hath been so industriously publish'd and inculcated. And tell me what you think, if these glad tidings of salvation were now newly come to your ears, discovering the true God, and the way to happiness, with him through the Messiah, and you were but just com'n out of Heathenish darkness to the beholding of this glorious light; would it not so swallow up and delight your souls,

souls; that you would scarce minde any thing without you, nor ever once more think of your lost estate, with any kinde of trouble? 'Tis very probable it might have such effects upon you, if receiv'd in the power of it: for we finde it had no less upon those first Christians, who so willingly sold all they had, and laid it at the Apostles feet. And why should the Gospel be the less regarded, because you have been long acquainted with it? Its own worth, and the mercie to you is never the less, and therefore ought your esteem of it, and its force upon you to be as great: Especiallie, since it hath pleased God to make it effectual to your souls; and hath thereby brought you to the knowledge and love of himself, through Jesus Christ. And is not this such a peculiar important favour, that it may make you bear any thing comfortably, which is no prejudice to it? To have God enrich and adorn you with the graces of his Spirit, to give his Son to be your Husband and Head, and himself, through him to become your loving Father and satisfying portion, what would you desire, or what can you have more than this? Or what can come amiss to you whilst you have it? There was some reason, though mixt with harshness, in *Joab's* speech to *David*, when hee took him up so roundly for his unseasonable, excessive lamentations of *Absaloms* death, after a rebellion had been suppress'd by the gaining of a victory, telling him (with many other words) that he perceiv'd if *Absalom* had liv'd, and all the peopl died, it had pleas'd him well, 2 Sam. 19. 6. And may not you, whose sorrows are excessive for worldly losses, be justly charg'd with as great fondness and folly? For does not your carriage seem to speak, that if the world had liv'd and flourish'd with you, though all your other comforts had died, it had pleas'd you well? And does not this shew (as *David* is there charg'd) that you love your enemies, and have but little regard for your friends? For tell
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me,

me, if you account the mercies that are left you of more worth than those that are fled away, why do you not rejoyce more in those which you have, than grieve for the want of these? And may not God justly say to you (to continue the allusion) *that if you will not arise and be comforted, all the kindness hee hath hitherto shewn you, shall bee withdrawn?* And that would indeed be worse for you, than any evil that hath befallen you, from your youth until now. Must it not needs be highly displeasing to God, to see his people not to be content with him alone, except they may have their part in the creature as others have? will not even carnal men in this respect condemn you? For they can make a kinde of miserable shift *without God in the world*, and cannot you finde enough in God for your satisfaction without the world? How, I beseech you, can this consist with your profession to take him for your God? By which we mean a Being in whom all perfections and excellencies, all that is needful or desirable for the soul, is to be plenteously found. And can that be really taken for your God, in the having of which, you reckon not your selves abundantly provided for in every regard? Do you think indeed, there is not enough in God to make those that love him, at all times, perfectly and completely happy, though they had no creature in the world to rest upon? May not they, to whom *the Lord is the portion of their cup and their inheritance*, well say, that their *cup runneth over*, and that they have a *goodly heritage*, though they should not have one foot of Land, nor scarce a bit of Bread to put in their mouths? Certainly God is all and more than all, and they that enjoy his favour, can want no good thing, but may alwaies glory in that sufficiency and redundancie of felicitie laid up for them in him. Even here on earth, in the absence of all other comforts, God hath waies of conveying more suitable, substantial comfort, than the whole world can afford, to believ-

believing Souls that have their whole recourse to, and affectionately hang upon him. You that have *tasted that the Lord is Gracious*, cannot but acknowledge this. Wherefore, call to minde your own experiences of his goodness, and what many of his dear servants have left upon record, that they have found from him in the day of their distress; and hereby set your souls a longing after him: Press hard after the most close and intimate communion with him, and rest not till you feel your selves reviv'd and chear'd with those communications of himself, which he is wont to bestow upon such necessitous, **hungrie** souls, as being not onlie emptied of the creature, but of love to it, breathe after nothing so much, as more of God. And when you are thus rejoicing in him, more than in all riches, what is it that can sadden you? when you are satisfied in him as with marrow and fatness, what want can you feel? But moreover, how may it yet even farther advance you above the troublesome sense of all your pressures, to remember, that your present sweetest and most delicious tastes of Divine favour, are but the overflowings of that cup, which will afford you full draughts to all eternitie; some rivulets streaming from that immense ocean of goodness and joy, which will never bee exhausted. But of this (as I promised) I now come to speak by it self, and shall mention nothing more.

6. Wherefore, Lastly, for your support and chearing under all the troubles that are com'n upon you, Remember, *There is a rest remains for all you that are the people of God*; an everlasting happiness to bee enjoied with him, when the world and all its works shall bee vanisht and gone. Do you not know there is a time coming, and apace it comes, when you shall know God (in some measure) as you are known by him, clearlie; when you shall please him, and be pleas'd in him perfectlie; when

you shall love him, and be lov'd by him feelingly; when you shall enjoy this blisful, ravishing communion with him eternally? Is there such an inexpressible glorie as this purchas't for you, and revealed to you by the Lord Jesus, and can you come into that condition wherein you may not rejoice in hope of it? Why did he tell you of this, but *that his joy might remain in you, and your joy might be full?* That your belief of this future advancement, might keep you from sinking and fainting in the lowest estate? Is it comely for a Prince, the Heir of the Crown, to lament the loss of a farthing? And are your losses any greater (though the summe of them should amount to thousands and millions) if compar'd to your inheritance, *who are heirs of God, coheirs with Christ?* What though a temporal estate be lost, since it is no less than an eternal Kingdome which you have in reversion? Imagine you heard Christ saying to you, *Though your Houses be burnt, yet let not your hearts bee troubled, in my Fathers house are many mansions; though now you are tost up and down, yet shortly I'll take you to the place I have prepar'd, whence you shall never remove more.* And does hee not speak to this purpose in his Gospel, *John 14. 1, 2, 3.* Though this you liv'd in bee no continuing City, yet there is one to come, which you are now seeking after. When you stand gazing upon the heaps that once were houses, and are ready to mingle your tears with their dust; lift up your eies and your mindes, and think of those streets of the new *Jerusalem*, which have another kinde of beautie than *London* in all its glorie, and this join'd with a stabilitie that will never suffer them to bee turned into Rubbish. What a priviledge is it now accounted, to have an estate in Land for a reserve, when that in Houses or Wares is gone? But what is it to have that better countrey, which the Patriarchs sought, even the *Cælestial Canaan*, for an heritage? which is subject to none of those

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casualties, that all kinde of earthlie possessions are? what though you have it not in hand, yet if you bee the Children of God, 'tis as sure as if you had; and when you are com'n to age, grown up into a fitness for it, you shall certainly possesse it. Though your Bills and Bonds may be burn't, yet so are not the Promises which convey this inheritance: though your Bibles themselves should be burnt, yet the Covenant of Grace remains firm; Heaven and Earth shall sooner pass away, than one rittle of Gods Word fail. And you have already the first-fruits of this your future portion, viz. the indwellings of the Holy Spirit, which may assure you the fulness of glory remains for you in the heavens. And both these it was that made the Christians, I before mentioned, *to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods; as knowing they had in themselves (for so plainly the words lie in the Original) a better substance (the Graces of the Spirit) and induring in the Heavens, (Glory itself) Heb. 10.34.* Wherefore instead of making such a matter of your pettie losses, pray for your selves, as Paul for his Ephesians. *That God would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlighined, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints, Ephes. 1. 17, 18.* For did you clearer know this, you would judge it more reasonable for the wealthiest Citizen to bee dejected for his losses than you, whose verie earnest is of more value than all his wealth. 'Tis you, Sirs, and you only, who know no end of your riches, neither as to their greatness, or duration, whereas all others may be fathom'd and exhausted: If God be infinite and everlasting, so is your portion; when you are reflecting upon your losses, consider your selves as upon the borders of the other world, and see how they dwindle into a matter of nothing: *A man that's now going to be for ever perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God, hath*

lost a little money by the way. Oh heavie chance ! If you were to die within this moneth or year, how little would this affect you ? For you know how these things are needed and valued on the other side the grave, how Angels and Saints care for heaps of gold : How short a while then would you have been better for all that's gone from you ? And can you not over-look that inch of time betwixt you and approaching death ? Forethink, moreover, how less than nothing these now so terrible things will appear, when you are got safe into heaven, what is it to *Lazarus* in *Abraham's* bosome, that once he lay at *Dives* his gate ? And will it be any thing to you what a loss you had in 1666. when you are lodg'd in Eternitie ? Why then should that be so much to you now, which will shortly be as if it had never been ? To conclude, when all you are plac'd so advantageously in that higher state, whence you may take a view of the whole Series of Providence, and the several means whereby the good of the Church and your own particular Salvation were carried on, and shall see what a tendencie those Dispensations had to this end, which here seemed most dark and amazing, how will you be rais'd to the admiration of his Wisdome and Power who sate at the Stern, and by all these strange transactions fulfilled the counsel of his own most blessed will ? And the fore-thoughts of this, should now beget in you the like frame, whilst you believe that which yet you cannot see.

From all that hath been said is farther manifest, what a vast difference there is betwixt your condition, who are Gods peculiar people, and theirs who are strangers to him, whilst to outward appearance your sufferings are the same ; and therefore how fit is it that your demeanour should be accordinglie better than theirs ? It becomes not you to think or speak at the rates they do. For a man to have his worldlie interest, and all hopes of recovering it quite broken, is with them to be utterly undone;

done; so they plainlie speak, and such are their verie thoughts: But will you judge your selves *undone*, whilst you have God dwelling within you, and an heaven where you shall ever dwell with God? Undone indeed you would be, if your God was gone as theirs is; and therefore blame not the poor men if they take on, *for what have they more?* But all you the Favourites and Heirs of Heaven, Children of the Most High, to whom you profess to have whollie given up your selves, to you I conclude my Exhortation as I began it, that you would not discover any such sorrow or impatience, under this Providence, as suits not with your Honourable Relation and Profession; or as speaks you both unmindful of the many great reasons you have for contentedness and joy, and careless of improving them when they are suggested to you.

Two more Objections which may here probably be started, I would willinglie remove.

Object. 1. *Some may say, yes indeed, if we had assurance of the love of God, that we are his children, and should for ever live with him in glory, we could comfortably bear all that he hath laid upon us, as proceeding from love: But how can we, when we have reason to fear the contrary, and to regard his judgements as tokens of his displeasure against us for our sins?* To the several things in this Objection, I shall frame an answer in two or three particulars, very brieflie.

1. If indeed you want assurance of Gods love (whereby I mean such well-grounded hopes and comfortable apprehensions thereof, as ordinarilie prevail over your doubts and fears, and enable you chearfullie to expect death and judgement.) If, I say, you have not this, is it not your wisest course diligentlie to set your selves to attain it, in the use of those means that are prescribed to that purpose, rather than to sit still and faintlie give way to your despondencies, and thereby aggra-

vate all other troubles into an intollerable weight? Would this assurance be so profitable (as you your selves acknowledge) and so fortifie your spirits against all assaults whatever, and will you not be quickned to look after it? Since, in that measure I have mention'd, it may be got and kept by diligent, humble, watchful Christians. The method you can hardlie be ignorant of, it being so plain and so frequentlie prest upon you, *viz.* That you should studie well the terms of the Covenant of Grace, and examine whether you are willing to come up to those terms; that you should search the Scripture, what manner of persons it tells you shall be saved; and then search your own hearts whether you be such, and if you are not, without any more delay, to do what in you lies to become such. And not to digress now to the laying down of marks and signs, let me onlie wish you to consider what I have before intimated, *That your patient bearing of Gods hand is a singular evidence of your sincerity:* For since the principal effect of true Religion is, to subject the soul to the Will of God, then a subjection to such instances of it as are so cross to our carnal inclinations, is a good discovery of a truly Religious man. He that keeps himself so unspotted from the world, that he is neither polluted with inordinate love to it, whilst in his hands, nor muddied with foul and turbulent passions when its taken out of them, his Religion is pure and undefiled before God. To bridle these motions of the heart, as well as of the tongue, shew our Religion not to be vain. But take heed of perverting this to your farther trouble, crying out, that you then perceive your condition worse than ever, since you are so far from this temper of mind; but rather be engag'd to greater industry with your hearts now at length to bring them thereto, since when you have done this, from this patience and meekness may flow that assurance which hitherto you have sought in vain;

vain; for by the exercise of Grace, the being and truth of it is best discovered.

2. If you judge that it is for your sins you now suffer, and Conscience tells you plainlie and truslie, what those sins are, your onlie way is humblie to acknowledge them before God, to repent of and speedilie set against them, that hereby you may get a pardon, and the sense of it, and so may attain to satisfaction and comfort.

3. And know farther, this sincere and ingenuous repentance which God requires at your hands, is no way inconsistent with that quiet frame of spirit which I advise you to: He calls for no unprofitable, perplexing grief, but for that alone which may be for your good, which may bring you more thorowlie from the love of sin, and so be a means to joy itself. And easilie may you conceive, that this godlie sorrow for sin may well consist with patience under suffering: for cannot a man, whose excess hath brought him into a Surfeit, at the same time be griev'd for that folly which procur'd his sickness, and yet content with the bitter Physick which may cure him of it?

4. Furthermore, Need I tell you what an unsound argument it is, to conclude from your afflictions, that you are not in favour with God? Do you think it reasonable or safe, to argue from our prospering in the World, that we are beloved of him, and our wayes well pleasing to him? And is there any more reason to judge the contrarie from our adversitie? Were the Apostles, when exercised, as upon a Theatre, with sufferings of all sorts, disesteemed by God? Or when he brought forth *Job*, to combat with those evils which Satan had libertie to bring against him, did he do it because he was angry with him, or did not love him? Though his friends indeed would needs have had it so, yet that good man was so just both to God and himself, that he would not believe them.

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And though you for the same reason should meet with the same charge of hypocrisie, or any other crimes, deal but faithfullie with your selves, and if your Consciences bear witness to your integritie before God, be not moved from the belief and comfort of it, either by your sufferings, or the censures that for their sakes may be fastened upon you: Both may serve as trials of your Grace, but neither are sufficient proofs of any such guilt.

Yea, lastly, Grant that for some particular sins you are afflicted, yet have I not shewn, that even this may be an evidence of Gods love, and so far a ground of comfort to you? Is it not love to reduce you to himself from those waies that might be your ruine? He that should pluck you back, when in an humor you was running to drown your self, though he might tear your cloathes in struggling, yet should have your heartie thanks, when you were com'n to a better mind. Pray tell me, cannot you hate your sin, and yet love your selves? Yea, do you not then love your selves best, when you do most against it? And may not God do so too? Your sin he hates, and wills the death of it, and sends afflictions to that end; but all this while he loves your souls, and therefore takes this course with their Enemies. What reason then have you but to acknowledge this love, and submit to all its methods for your recoverie? And by this your compliance with, and improvement of his dealings, you may best make it out that they came from love, and therefore are to be born comfortablie, according to your own confession.

Object. 2. Some again perhaps will replie, You have said much to comfort us under all our losses, and the poverty they have brought us to: But is it possible for them to take comfort, that have nothing for themselves nor families to live upon, but may, for ought we know, within a while be brought e-
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ven to starve to death : Can any man living hold up in such a condition as this ? Or can any ground of support be administered ?

Answ. Yes, blessed be God very much ; since he hath so well consulted for us, that there is no poison in nature without its attending antidote ; no trouble common to man, for which there is not suitable provision made.

1. I would have you call to mind how much is said in Scripture to secure Gods servants from these fears. You know that godliness hath the promise of this life, and that which is to come : You are bid not to perplex your selves with thoughts what you shall eat and wear, since your heavenlie Father knows what you need, and will take care for you accordingly. *When the young Lions suffer hunger, they that fear the Lord shall want no good thing : Their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure ; and their souls shall be kept alive in famine.* David in his time had not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his Seed begging bread. And though these, with a multitude the like, are not to be taken altogether absolutelie, yet I suppose its seldome known but they are in some measure made good to all the godlie. It is but a verie few in the hardest times (if we except extraordinarie famines) that perish for lack of food ; but when did you know a good man do so ? And why should you think that will happen to you which so seldome doth to any ?

2. You cannot, I believe say, that this is yet your condition, that your wants are so pinching that you have no way of relief left you any longer. Did your Children ever yet ask bread when you had it not to give them ? Have you not still one way or other found succour at your greatest need ? And yet have not your straits been as great as ever they are like to be ? And have you not the same God to depend upon ? How exceedinglie displeased was he with the unbelieving murmurings of the Israelites,

Israelites, who had oft beheld his power imployed for their seasonable relief? And why should not your experience engage you to trust in him? Especiallie since this is the best way to have his promises fulfilled to you; I mean, by your relying upon him for whatever you want, with this perswasion, that if it be good for you, it shall be given in; and that it proceeds not from lack of power, truth or mercie in God, if you go without it. Is it not against all reason, and your own ease, by unbelief and carnal fears to anticipate your troubles, and by frightful imaginations to put your selves to greater pain than ever your condition is like to do? Are we not told, that *sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*; and taught to pray for *daily bread*? Perhaps you have not another day to live, and then you are provided for; or if you have, this daies bread is a good pledge that it shall be given to morrow. And remember, there may be a greater distance betwixt you and starving than you imagine, onlie perhaps you take it for a grievous matter to live at lower rates than you were heretofore wont.

But lastlie, Suppose the thing you fear should come upon you, even that you and yours should come to die for want of bread, yet is there no such intollerable evil herein, that either the fore-thoughts, or the feeling of it, should overwhelm your spirits, and leave you destitute of all comfort. It is not this, as dreadful as it seems, that can make a good man miserable, why then should it affright you so much? Lay aside, I entreat you, all passion and prejudice, and calmlie consider the verie truth of the case: Can starving bring any thing worse than death? And may not the Command of Christ here be of force; That we should not *fear that which can kill the body only, and then hath nothing more to do*? What will it be to you, when once its over, what death you died on? Will the joyes of heaven be the less for the pains of that death
that

that brought you thither? Nay, and as to matter of pain, questionless manie a rich man, who hath long lain tortured with the Gour, or Stone, hath felt more pain than ever poor man did, though famisht to death. And as to the disgrace, (which is reckoned one of the worst miseries of povertie) it is but matter of Opinion, which a wise man ought to live above. And if it may the more convince you, hear what a verie Heathen speaks to this purpose: *Thou art afraid (saith he) least thou shouldst want necessaries; art thou so blinde that thou canst not foresee whither this want will bring thee? even thither, that a Fever or any mortal wound does, namely, to death. And hast thou not often gloried of thy willingness to die? True, but my Children will famish also; what then? Will this carry them any whither else? Is not the passage the same, and the state after death the same? Wilt thou not therefore, with a mind fortified against all fears of hunger and want, look thitherward, whether Emperours and Kings, and the richest upon earth must at length descend? Only thou perhaps mayst be kill'd with penury, they with drunkenness and gluttony. What a shame is it then for a Christian to be daunted with those things which an Heathen could perceive so harmless? Though he could tell so little of any state after death that should make amends for the troublesome passage into it. Know then for certain, that whilst God hath any work for you to do on earth, hee'l maintain you in it: Rather will he rain Manna from heaven, or turn the stones into bread, than let his servants want, whilst he sees fit to have their daies lengthened out. But when he is pleased to cut off the thread of life, you may well enough bear it, to have the staff of life withdrawn. When your journey's at an end, what need you take care for provision for the way? And needs must your provision last as long as your journey; for when it all fails, your journey's at an end. As the good woman valiantlie, when the Popish Persecutors threatned*

threatned to take away her food; Why then, saith she, *God will take away my stomach.* So when you are out of a capacitie of having maintenance, you shall soon be past needing it. And in the meantime question not, but God will bring you through whatever he brings you to: Wherefore let the confidence and resolution of *Habakkuk*, be yours also, that though there should neither be fruit in the field, nor meat in the stables, yet you will *rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of your Salvation, Hab. 3. 17, 18.* Now though the fears of this calamity are for the most part very groundless, yet I was willing to suppose a case as bad almost as is possible to fall out, that you might bee convinc'd, there is no such condition whereinto you can be brought, that doth necessitate, or will justifie your dejection and distrust.

And if indeed *the people are in so happy a case whose God is the Lord*, that no calamities need affright nor can undo them; then let me hence take rise for an exhortation (wherewith I shall conclude) to all the serious and true hearted Christians in the Land, into whose hands these lines may fall, *that in the midst of all the miseries and dangers wherewith we seem surrounded and threatned, they would be of good cheer, summon up their fainting spirits, and fortifie themselves to a resolute, undaunted expectation of the worst that may befall us.*

Let the Sinners in *England* be afraid, and let fearfulness surprize the hypocrite, but let him that walketh righteously be bold as a Lion, since his dwelling is on high, and his place of defence the munition of rocks. Fear not you their fear, neither bee afraid, but sanctifie the Lord of Hosts himself, let him bee your fear, let him be your dread: for hee is your Light, and your Salvation; whom should you fear? He is the strength of your hearts, of whom should you be afraid? Let your mindes be staid on him, who will keep them in perfect peace, even on
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the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength; and they that trust in him shall be as mount *Zion*, which cannot bee removed: for as the mountains are round about *Jerusalem*, so the Lord is round about his people, henceforth even for ever. Wherefore though you walk even through the valley of the shadow of death, yet fear none ill, since God is with you, who is a very present help in trouble, whose name is a strong tower, whereto the Righteous run and are safe. When *Saul* the Commander of an Armie, and Ruler of a Kingdome may, in the anguish of his minde, run to a witch for relief; and *Achitophel* the great Politician may have recourse to an halter, yet are they never in any case destitute of a refuge, who are acquainted with the Almighty, and dwell under the shadow of his wings. Does God, even your God, reign in the earth, and will you fear any thing that can betide you whil'st you are in it? Are you not alwaies in his hands, and where else can you be safer than there? Must you not trust your souls with him, when you go hence to that other world, to which you are yet so strange? And be whollie at his disposing, what employment, societie, and condition you shall bee in for ever. Can you then trust him for eternitie, and not for a year or two till you come thither? As confused as the affairs of this world may seem, he hath not cast them out of his hands, but governs all in perfect order, according to the nature and capacitie of the subject. When storms arise that seem to threaten the ship you are in, you may apprehend him saying to you, *Be of good chear, it is I; I that raise (or at least permit) and I who will lay their troublesome tempest.* It would not indeed (as the principal Philosopher saies) be worth while, to live in a world destitute of Providence: but this is not so. No events can befall, without the permission of that will, which you dailie pray may be done, and is in some sense done, on earth as it is in heaven; so that

that I may say, the whole world is rul'd according to your prayers. And need you fear any thing from the will of God, since it is his eternal and unchangeable decree, that nothing shall make those men miserable, who love him, and submit themselves to his righteous administrations? Whilst therefore you live under his government, as you alwaies do, and can meet with nothing but what he is pleas'd should come to pass (as you never can) how boldlie may you hold on your course, though encountred with all those terrours which dismay the faint-hearted, and cause them to run hither and thither, trembling and lamenting? Fire and Sword, Pestilence and Famine, though they may well terrifie those that converse with creatures only (having no better a portion, and no greater strength, than what they afford) yet the man that is arm'd with a self-resignation to, and confidence in God, may with an unbroken minde, march through the thickest troops of these deaths and dangers: as having God for his felicitie, from whom they cannot force him; and for his continual help, and therefore they cannot vanquish him. Yea, may I not adde, he beholds all these as fighting under the Banner of the Lord of Hosts, whose servant he is, and whose cause he hath espoused: Why then should he be more afraid to go through them, than some known friend of the Generals, is to walk through the midst of his armed men? Though he may go by the mouths of Cannons ready fixt, and the points of drawn Swords, yet he dreads them not, since these instruments of death are prepar'd for their enemies, not their friends. When any of these overflowing scourges pass over a Nation, and seem to take all before them, yet then have the Righteous the same securitie and privilege, that *Noah* and his company in the Ark had, in the time of the Deluge; what if I should say, the same that the fishes then had above all other Creatures left out?

out? For whilst they continue in compliance with that will which orders all things for them, they are never out of their proper element; whilst they follow this Providence, and keep out of the by-paths of wickedness, they are still in their way. Not but that their bodies are as weak as other mens, and their outward enjoiments subject to the same casualties: but their souls are of another temper, and their happiness of another nature, and cannot be destroyed or lost. Boldly may they defie all the Hosts of hell or earth that rise up against them, since none of these can keep them from God whilst they live, and do but translate them to him when they die. Well therefore may you, whose interests are so securely plac'd, out of the reach of all violence and malice; sing aloud with the blessed Apostle, whilst in the midst of his battles; he justly triumphs like a Conquerour; *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, persecution or famine, nakedness, peril or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerours, through him that loved us: For I am perswaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Rom. 8.35,37,38,39. And what can be more comely, than all you upright ones, to return thanks and praise to that God, who hath dealt so graciously with you? And to rejoyce in your felicity, which he hath made so secure and inviolable? Instead of continual complainings of this misery, and the other which is upon us, or fearful prophesyings of worse yet to come, wherewith many are overmuch taken up. *Let the high praises of God be in your mouths*, who hath done so much for you, to make you at all times safe, and therefore comfortable. Bless him with all your Souls, for his inestimable love to mankind, which he hath reveal-

ed by Jesus Christ, *in whom hee is reconciling the world to himself*, and hath actually done that work upon you, whereby it comes to pass, that being reconciled to the Creator, the whole Creation is so far at peace with you, that all the Creatures which stand on his side will not hurt you, and they that are his enemies cannot. Praise your Redeemer, who by his death hath slain your foes, spoil'd principallities and powers, disabled Satan, overcom'n the world, and taken the sting out of all affliction and death it self; that you might walk securely through this vale of tears, and depart out of it cheartfully. Oh praise his name, that hee hath kept you from being destroyers of your selves, and will keep all other things from destroying you. Bee thankful to him for the glorious light of his Gospel, and for enlightning your mindes therewith, whereby you are made acquainted with the true nature of all things that concerns you; that so you might neither be startled with those Bugbears, which the fears and fancies of weak and guilty men, in the dark apprehend so terrible, nor fall into those real mischiefs, which ignorant benighted sinners run upon to their own destruction. God hath already done much for you, and hath given you promises of very much more; praise him therefore for what you have, and for what you hope for: Especially for the dawnings of Heaven in your souls, and for the promises of a fuller glory hereafter, to be revealed in you. And through the hopes of this, bee you ever *filled with peace and joy in beleiving*. And with the frequent meditation of all his loving-kindness, be still *making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks alwaies for all things unto God and our Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

I have before endeavoured to take off those hindrances to this frame which might arise from worldly crosses: for if they so little deserve our sorrow, when they

they befall us (as I have fullie manifested) how much less do they deserve our sorrow and fear, least they should? And indeed it was my design, not onlie to comfort those that have met with troubles, but to prepare others for whatever they may meet with. But there is yet another Objection behind, that may appear of more weight than any of the former, which I cannot altogether pass over in silence, since fain I would do something for the removal of all shelters and pretences for carnal fears and faintings, which do so much pinch and wrong Christian souls, hinder the pleasantness and benefit of their Societie, and eclipse the glorie of their profession.

Object. Perhaps then some may tell me, *That this is an unseasonable time to call men to joy and chearfulness, when such heavy judgements lie upon us, and such a black cloud hangs over us, (and God is angry with those who takes no notice of, nor lay to heart his hand) when we consider also the low estate of Gods Church, both at home and abroad. When the Church in former times was in such a condition, we find what bitter lamentations holy men were wont to make: The loss of the Ark cost Eli's life, and Nehemiahs sorrow of heart, when Jerusalem lay waste, was so great, that the King took notice of it by the change of his countenance, Neh. 2.2. Why then should it not be so with us?*

Ans. 1. In answer whereto, First let me repeat the Caution I have before laid down, that you should not think I am perswading you to be regardless of Gods hand stretcht out against us; neither think, I beseech you, that I perswade you to any such mirth and jollitie which might manifest this regardlessness. This is indeed provoking to God, when he calls to Fasting, Humiliation, and girding with Sackcloth, to behold killing of Sheep, and slaying of Oxen, Banquets and Revellings, with all kind of excess and braverie: 'Tis to none of this that I

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call

call you, not to haunt Taverns and Playhouses, feasting and dancings, to sing and drink away your reason and fears together ; rather do you pitie their distraction who take this course , whilst they may deride your seriousness. So far am I from this, that on the other hand, I do earnestlie desire you to labour for the most awakened apprehensions of Gods dealings with us, and the design of them, that you may be suitablie affected therewith , and meet him in the way of his judgements , rightlie behaving your selves under the same : But all this may be done without slavish dejections and terrours , which onlie I plead against.

2. Yea furthermore , as to what evils may be yet hanging over us, my counsel also is, that you would so far apprehend and expect them, as may put you upon the use of those means which are likeliest to prevent them, or as may tend to prepare you for them , whilst your fears have no worse effects than to quicken you to dailie earnest strivings with God on the behalf of this poor Nation , and to a careful Reformation of your selves and families , and a serious endeavour (according to your place and capacitie) that others should do the like , in order to the removal of what judgements we feel, and the prevention of those we fear ; this while I condemn them not. Moreover, whilst you are so representing to your selves the worst that can in all likelihood happen, that you may not be surpriz'd thereby, but may get furnisht with suitable strength and comfort, you act wiselie : But this is a different thing from entertaining such misgiving, ghastlie fore-thoughts thereof, as onlie weaken and torment you. Hath not Christ bid his servants when they *hear of wars, and rumors of wars, to see they be not troubled?* And in all the calamities that came upon the Jews , God would still have the Remnant that was faithfull, spoke comfortablie to. In those great and
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astomishing changes which God makes in the world, rooting up Kingdomes for the wickedness of the Inhabitants, translating the Gospel from one Nation to another; we performing our dutie, must lay our hands on our mouths, stand on the Lords side, and acknowledge he is righteous in all his waies; as remembring, *it is not our work to govern the world, but to submit to him that does.*

3. The same again may be said as to those disorders which you complain of, at home or abroad, so far as your trouble hath a tendencie toward their removal, or any other good end, it is a dutie, but no farther. I'll joyn with you a little in complaining and acknowledge, that its sad to think how great a part of the world lies buried in Heathenish darkness, idolatrie and infidelitie, and how little is done by Christians toward their relief; especiallie that the Princes of Christendome do no more imploy their interests to that purpose, as if the pettie temporal concerns of their Crown and Kingdome were of greater moment. Sad also it is to see Christendome itself so wofullie divided and crumbled into Parties and Factions, through the carnal designs of ambitious covetous men, under the gilded pretences of Catholick peace and unitie; and how great a part of it by this means is over-spread with ignorance, impietie and idolatrie? to the disgrace of our profession, and hindrance of the Conversion of Jews and Heathens. Its sad to observe what a cruel raging thirst there is in these false Christians, after the utter ruine and destruction of all that crouch not to them, but value the Gospel above their rotten Traditions, and senseless sapless Superstitions. And sad it is, that in our own and other Reformed Churches, the divisions should be so great about matters of little moment, whilst the Common Enemy threatens to swallow them up; that the power of Godliness, and all such means as may promote it, are no more set up

and encouraged, that profaneness, lukewarmness, mutual heart-burnings and discontents, should so universal-
 lie possess us. These are all very sad considerations. But
 what then? Must we therefore sit down, over-weigh'd
 with the burdensome sense of all these evils, and spend
 our daies in weeping and wailing, because the World
 we live in is so much out of order? By this means Chri-
 stians should all turn Disciples of *Heraclitus* his School.
 But certainlie the Precepts of Jesus Christ put us upon
 no such course, who would have us live free from all
 anxious corroding cares, and the verie office of whose
 Spirit it is, to be the *Comforter* of his people. *Mourners*
in Zion we may be, but disconsolate self-tormentors we
 must not. The same *Paul* that took care of all the *Chur-*
ches, rejoyc't in hope of the glorie of God, and did alwayes
triumph in Christ. All those evils which I have menti-
 on'd may in one word be reduc't to this, that there is so
 much wickedness in the world, and so little true Religion
 and fear of God. And this I grant, must needs be matter
 of lamentation to all good men, that love their Maker
 and their Fellow-creatures, and I wish that all our
 hearts were more kindlie affected herewith. But how
 is it we should manifest our selves thus well-affected?
 Truly most of all by endeavouring all that in us lies,
 that the world may be amended; and so far as our pray-
 ers, examples, or instructions, may do any thing to that
 end, let us faithfullie apply our selves thereto. But
 such a grief as hurts our selves, and offers nothing to the
 good of others, ought to be avoided: We should not in
 such an unprofitable manner, mourn for our own sins;
 surelie then not for other mens. It would go but hard-
 ly with us, if the comfort of our lives depended upon
 such things as are no way in our power to accomplish. It
 is indeed well-beseeming a dutiful Son to be grieved for
 the disobedience of his Brethren, but yet not so far as to
 hinder

hinder the pleasure he ought to take in his Fathers love, and the performance of his own duty to him. But this pure and unfeigned sorrow for the wickedness of the world, and the dishonors done to God therein, speaks so much ingenuity of soul, and is so very rare, that I need say little to dehort you from the excess of it; rather I may exhort you to it, to be yet more possessed with a bitter hatred of sin and pity to poor sinners; but not in the least, I beseech you, with hatred or envie of the most prosperous and flourishing of them; and be very watchful over your selves, that no worldlie trouble, nor your losses, nor straits, your want of trading, nor heavy payments, lie nearer to your heart, than the Interest of Christ.

4. But if by the low estate of the Church you mean chiefly the Persecution which it is any where under; or which you feel your selves, or apprehend to be coming upon us, I may well say, there is far less cause of sadness upon this account than the former. If God see it good to have his Church purified and refined, by bringing it through the fire, who are we that we should contradict it? Need I mention to you the many benefits that are hereby wont to accrue to Christians, to whom it is appointed as their common Road to heaven? Do you not know that Christ hath bid you then especially to rejoyce and be exceeding glad, when men say and do all manner of evil against you for his sake? Doth not the Apostle reckon it as a gift and priviledge to the *Philippians*, that they did not onlie believe in, but suffer for Christ? *Phil. 1. 29.*

And to these same suffering *Philippians* it was, that he gives that earnest Exhortation, *Rejoyce in the Lord alwayes, and again I say rejoyce, Chap. 4. 4.* And how many more Texts of this sort might I mention, as those also which shew, that such was the joyfull spirit of the Apo-

stles and Primitive Christians under their persecutions
 for the truth. So far ought we to be from sorrow or shame
 for suffering as *Christians*, that we are commanded to
glorifie God on this behalf, 1 *Pet.* 4. 16. But here then let
 me desire you, as you value the true peace and comfort
 of your souls, to see that you indeed suffer as *Christians*;
 both as to what you suffer for, that it be no other than
 the Cause of Christ; and as to your design in imbracing
 it, that it be purelie for his honor, and then you are like-
 ly to suffer in that manner that becomes Christians. Be-
 ware, I beseech you, of adhering, with a carnal zeal,
 to any Sect or Party, for the advancement and flourish-
 ing whereof you are wholly concern'd, as depending
 thereupon for your estate and ease; and chiefly for your
 Reputation, by the success of your Opinion and way. If
 this selfishness possess you, it will even then when you
 seem to suffer for Conscience sake, bewray it self by
 much-what the same effects, that are to be seen in the
 men of this world, when they contend with, and oppress
 one another. It will set you a vexing and repining, and
 fill your mouths with reviling, and your minds with
 spleen against those that make you smart: And this
 while you are like to be far from the comfort of a suf-
 fering state; and no wonder, for tell me truly, Is it not
 for Self, rather than Christ that you are thus affected?
 Doth Christ, do you think, need or desire that you should
 have such boisterous passions for his sake? Doth the
 wrath of man work the righteousness of God? Where-
 fore see that you are but sincerely concern'd for Gods
 Glorie and your own Salvation, and then you'll perceive
 that in these respects men cannot hurt or overcome you;
 and so you'll see no reason to be angry with them, or hate
 them for any thing they do to you. For by doing the du-
 ties, and exercising the Graces that are call'd for, and
 may yet be done, you may glorifie God, and save your
 souls,

souls, let men and devils rage, and reign; and do their worst. Let the times be what they will, you have still liberty to serve and please God, though not alwayes in the same works, or after the same manner. Sometimes *Paul* may be glorifying God by preaching boldly in a Synagogue, or in his own hired house; sometimes by lying with his feet in the Stocks, sometimes by pleading at a Bar, and sometimes by preaching in a Prison, though but to the Jaylor and his Familie; and all this while by courage and patience, love to Christ, and zeal for the Gospel and the good of souls, which, according to the variety of occasions and circumstances, still exerted it self one way or other. Religion, as it is an inward living Principle, lies far out of the reach of all created force, and can no more be interrupted or destroyed thereby (whilst the soul is faithful to its self) than the influences of the Stars, or course of the Orbs, can be bound and stopt. It is indeed in the power of man to hinder some external duties, to discountenance and impoverish good men, but what's this to the heart and life of Religion? Though they may disturb the Communion of Christians, yet not that betwixt God and the Soul; 'tis not a stone wall can intercept that: They may put chains on the feet, but not on the affections, nor hinder their outgoings to God, any more than *Xerxes* his Chain (which in a silly rage he threw into a rough Sea) could restrain the swelling of its waves: Though some kind of outward splendour and flourishing of Religion may be eclips'd, yet the fruits of the Spirit cannot, by the nipping Frosts of Persecution, be blasted. Such as the Apostle mentions, *Gal. 5. 22, 23. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*; of these I may say as he does (though in another sense) *against such there is no Law*: Or though there should be a Law, yet there is no power against them. Though Enemies persecute
you,

you, yet you may love and pity them, whether they will or no: Though they should stop your mouths, yea, pluck out your tongues, yet you may pray for them, and forgive them; you may be humble, patient, holy, and heavenly in despite of all opposition, and were but all Professours such, Religion would flourish at another rate, than meerly by having the favour of great ones, and the riches and honours of the world entail'd upon their profession. I wonder whether Religion flourish more for the first three hundred years after Christ, or after that it became the Religion of the Empire: Whether when men lost estates by embracing it, or when they got them by professing it?

Was it Fire and Faggot, or Ease and Honours, that were the poison of the Church! And was it the blood of Martyrs, or the wealth of the Professors, that was the seed of the Church? Wherefore let us not so much complain of any thing in the Times, as of our own sloathfulness and dulness, of the earthliness and unbelief of our hearts, and the unsuitableness of our lives, for obscuring the lustre of Religion: And if Adversity may scour off all the rust and filth which ease and prosperity contracted, we shall have cause to praise him, *who saile as our refiner.*

And here by the way, let mee suggest; that there is much difference betwixt the state of the *Jewish* and the Christian Church: That was under a lower and more carnal dispensation, both as to the frame of their minde, their service and promises. They had not (generally) so great a measure of the spirit as was afterward to be poured forth, nor so clear revelations of the future glory, neither therefore was it so prest upon them, that the way thereto was, through many tribulations, which made them so extreemly scandaliz'd at that strange doctrine of Christ, that they must leave friends, lands, life,
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and all for his sake, if they would be his Disciples, and have a treasure in Heaven. But especially take notice, what a dependance their Worship had upon external things, being confin'd so much to the Temple in *Jerusalem*, and consisting in such Sacrifices and Ceremonies which could not other-where be performed; and therefore they might well be much concern'd for the continuance and restauration of that place, whereto Gods peculiar presence was limited; and upon this account they were more obnoxious to enemies, and stood greatly in need of their favour, when conquered by them. But now in all these respects the case is different. The Apostles did not stay for *Cæsars* leave, nor depend upon his aid for building the Christian Church, the new *Jerusalem*, as the *Jews* did upon *Cyrus* for the Old: (Though I grant the countenance of the Civil Magistrate, to bee a great mercy, neither ought Christians, whether Pastours or People, upon any pretence whatever, to disobey his commands, whilst they do not interfere with Christs:) Nor is it in Temples made with hands (though in such we are to worship him in publick communion) that God now dwells, but in every holy Soul, who at any time, in any place, may worship him acceptably *in spirit and in truth*; And this *Ark of his presence*, the inhabitation of his Spirit, no *Philistine* force can take out of the heart of man. Now by Jesus Christ, hath God so far sav'd us from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us, that (though we are more assaulted by them than ever, yet) we may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the daies of our life, as *Zachariah* sings. *Luke* 1. 71, 74, 75. Though Christ told his Disciples, *hee came to send a sword upon earth*, yet hee tells them also, that his peace should abide in their hearts, *Job*. 14. 27. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, give I unto you: For the world indeed gives peace, by removing*

moving outward troubles, but my peace shall possess and secure you in the midst of them (as a learned Commentator glosses upon the words) and therefore he adds that injunction, which I have been so long inculcating, *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

And to finish my answer, let mee, in the last place, wish you to remember seriously and believingly, that whatever pressures the Church of God, now militant upon the whole earth, or any part of it, may lie under; it shall, besides its present victory, at length rise up from under them into the most flourishing and triumphant state: And all those that are embark'd therein, being faithful to her cause and quarrel, and sharing in all her afflictions, shall also partake of her glory. Even now, I say, all sincere Christians by their faith overcome the world, yea, when they seem most overcome by it; like their Master, they conquer, when upon the cross: For it is not with him as with temporal Monarchs, whose interest is ruin'd, when their Subjects are destroy'd, or impoverished; But his Kingdome is oft promoted by the sufferings and slaughters of his followers. Nor therefore should we serve him with such kinde of apprehensions as common subjects are wont to have, in their quarrels for their King and Countrey, who are beforehand doubtful of the event, and being vanquish'd, bewail themselves, and pittie their Prince. But hee whose battle we fight, does not so need our lives or fortunes, that his strength should be weakned by their loss. Nor does he let his enemies so far prevail over his Church, because through their power and policy they are too hard for him: Though there was not a man upon earth that would stand on his side, he would know well enough how to deal with the greatest Potentates and Politicians of them all, as they will, ere long, know to their cost: But hee bears thus with them (beside other ends which will here-
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after be better known) that the Graces which hee hath given to his Servants may bee exercised, and that they may have opportunities of demonstrating, that they love him to the death. And this is all he cares for or requires, and whilst we do thus, whatever becomes of us, we win the field, and are sure of the crown: for our Lords Kingdome, and therefore ours, is not of this world; nor would he therefore have any upon pretence of advancing it, to disturb the world by Massacres and Powder-plots, seditions and tumults, murdering of Princes, and burning of people. These are fit means indeed to erect some *Babel* of carnal interest, but not for the building up of Christs Church: He knows how to defend and exalt it, without any such officious wickedness, as some men by all means would bring to his assistance. And as it is not for want of power or love, that Christ suffers his Spouse for a while to be trampled upon, by the feet of pride and cruelty; so hee will at length discover both, in delivering her thence, and placing her with himself in glory. He that purchast his Church with his own blood, will not be fully satisfied till she partakes of the highest benefits of his costly undertaking. As in his own person he hath combated and overcome all the Powers of Hell and Death, so he will go on conquering and to conquer, till he hath finisht the same work for, and in his body. Now hee is purifying it from all spots and wrinckles, and will hereafter present it to himself beautiful and glorious. Why then should not all the followers of this victorious Leader, march on, with courage in their hearts, serenity in their looks, and songs of praise in their mouths, as travelling to *Zion*? where *everlasting joy shall bee upon their heads*, and all remnants of sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

Wherefore stir up your selves, I beseech you Christians, sit not alwaies poring upon miseries, and overlooking
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ing mercies, making things worse than they are, and vexing your selves with needless fears. Remember still, *that a Childe of God in the way to his Fathers house, hath alwaies more cause of joy and thankfulness, than of sadness and complaining*: Let it appear that you beleive so by your deportment. And that you may rise up to this truly excellent spirit, let me beseech you, in one word, *To see that you live up to the principles of the Christian Religion*. Be affected toward the world, and all its pomps and vanities, as you are engag'd by your Baptism: Ever sit loose from it, and regard it not as any peice of your happiness. 'Tis this fills mens mindes with anguish and care, even the fears of being depriv'd of their estates and friends, their fleshly ease, their lives and liberties. But consider you, that it's impossible to have a sure hold of these things, and therefore the way never to be troubled for them, is, not to let them have hold of your hearts. You have liv'd to see in two years more men taken from their estates, and more estates taken from the owners, than in so short a time hath almost been ever known: Let both teach you what regard to have, either to life it self, or the appurtenances of it. Let your comfort in prosperity, be deriv'd from God and Christ, the first fruits and promises of heaven, then may it be constant and unchangeable, as the grounds of it are. Ever be inculcating it upon your selves, that God is your felicity, and labour to make and keep it clear, that he is your God. Therefore, as you love your lives, and the comforts of them, take heed of sin, of all sin, which will blot your Evidences, and make you of abject, cowardly spirits; so that instead of fetching comfort from approaching to God, this will fill you with horreur, and make you run from him as an enemy, and then nothing in the whole creation can releive you. But yet, believingly live upon the Mediator, by him to have all breaches heal'd betwixt God and

and your Souls, and by his Spirit to have your souls healed of all their distempers. Rest in nothing as an evidence of your interest in him, below an earnest desire, and sincere endeavour to grow up in him, to be like to him, and to fulfil all the gracious precepts of his Gospel: And having this evidence, let no temptations or doubtings rob you of the comfort it may afford. Remember, that as your happiness consists in communion with God, so this is not perfectly to be enjoy'd till after Death and Judgement. Wherefore live alwaies cheerfully, apprehensive of the certainty and nearness, of approaching death; let your great business be to get fitted for it, and let all your main designs be so laid, that they may not be blasted, but accomplish't by it. When once you have done this, you have little more to fear at one time than another, and nothing at any time: For to Death, you are in a manner alwaies alike liable, and this is the worst that any mortal power can bring upon you, onely they may make it more gainful and honourable than otherwise it would. What matter is it, whether we dye amongst our enemies, or our friends, since wee then take our leave of both? Whether upon a bed, or on the ground, since our body will so soon be in the earth? What matter is't, whether the fire of a Feaver, or of a Faggot consume us, whether our souls fly out at our mouths or our throats, since either way they will be alike soon with God.

But Scripture is most of all wont to press our looking and earnest waiting for the coming of Christ: Perhaps, as having less terrour in it to a Believer than death, and as being the time when our fullest glory shall be accomplisht, the whole Body of Christ being then brought together into the presence of their glorified Head, and to a participation of his Glory. And I'll shut up all with
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an earnest request, that you would comfort and encourage your selves with the fore-thoughts of, and ardent longings after, this day of the appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. When ever it is with you, whilst you are sailing over this Ocean, as it was with *Pauls* company, *Act. 27. 20.* that neither Sun nor Stars in many daies appear, and no small Tempest lies on you, then cast forth the Anchor of Hope, and wish for this day. And fix not your hopes with steadiness on any day short of this, or your dying day. The experience we have had of the long-talkt of, and (by some) much hop't-for 66. (beside other warnings of this kind) may tell us, that they who build their faith upon fancie, do but encrease their own troubles, provoke others laughter, and dangerously tempt themselves to Infidelitie. Expect this coming of Christ, not to the same purpose that the Jews did, and still do their Messiah; to make you rich, and high, and prosperous in the world, to throw down great men, that you may enter upon their places and estates, a poor preferment to a true Saint; but expect him to advance you above sin and Satan, the world and flesh, and to raise you to the clearest, blessed Vision, and fruition of your God. Upon this promise of his coming build all your hopes, lay all your stress, and venture all you have: If this prove false, we are all undone, but never till then, nor then neither any worse than the rest of the world that believed it not; for there's nothing else to hold by but what we are sure will fail us, and if this fail too, Mankind was made to no more purpose than Boys blow up a feather. But never fear it; though the Worldling tells you by his practise he believes its false; though the profane Swaggerer say so down-right, and prove it by a jeer, as the more sullen Atheist by his unreasonable cavils and wranglings, yet believe none
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of them till you have tryed; they neither are, nor possibly can be, sure of the contrarie, whilst they are in this life; and if there be no other life than this, they'l never be able to upbraid you with your weakness and error: But if there be (as nothing more sure) let them look to themselves: Then let it be seen whether the moneys of scraping Earth-worms, the mirth and musick, the childish sports and brutish delights of sensual Gallants, the Drollerie and Sophistrie of self-conceited Infidels, will be as good securitie to them, as your faith and holiness, even that which they were wont to deride as follie, proceeding from prejudice, melancholly, or superstition. That will be the trying time, when it shall be known who were wise men, and who were fools, when a righteous and all-knowing Judge shall justly decide the controversy. Oh Sirs, do you look for such a day as this, such an amazing confounding day, when the whole world shall be turned upside down, the earth become fuel for raging flames, and all its Inhabitants brought to account for their actions, and receive their doom to endless joy or woe? And have you any hopes of standing in such a day as this, of beholding our Lord with confidence, when he shall appear in all his Majesty, with thousands of Angels for his Honourable Attendants, when the Heavens above shall ring with the joyful acclamations of those glorious Spirits, and the Saints their Companions, and the Air below shall be fill'd with the yellings and roarings of Devils and damned Ghosts: Do you look, I say, ere long to see such sights as these, and to partake of the glory and joy of that great day? And will you now be much concern'd for the burning of an house or City, or for the busles and confusions of this dreaming world, that will not till then be awakened? Oh unreasonable! that the Saints, who shall shortly meet their Redeemer with comfort, and before all the world be acquitted and

applauded, crown'd and receiv'd into eternal joyes,
 should now pass their time in so much solitariness, and
 live no more upon the hopes of such a day. And oh mon-
 strous ! that sinners, who must shortly be judged and
 shamed before all, and sentenc'd to the sad Societie of
 Devils for ever, can yet spend their daies in ease and
 pleasure, in pampering and adorning their dirty flesh,
 overwhelm'd with gluttony and drunkenness, and the
 cares of this life, as if they were resolved never to think
 of their miserie till they feel it, and judg'd it better to
 feel it, than to think of it so as to prevent it. But let them
 take their course, and see where it will end : But all you
 the unfeigned friends and followers of the blessed Jesus,
 who shall be your Judge, let it be your work to fetch
 comfort from that which is other mens terrour. *When*
their hearts fail for fear, you must lift up your heads, as know-
ing your Redemption draws nigh. Or in S. James his words,
Be patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord
draws nigh. And nearer it is drawn by sixteen hundred
 years since these words were wrote ; How near then
 may we now think it ? Though how near we cannot say,
 yet for certain it's not far off. The eyes of them shall
 not fail that wait for him ; he will not frustrate your ex-
 pectations, as Sifera did his Mothers, you who look forth
 from the prison windows of the flesh, and with her cry
 out, *Why is his Chariot so long in coming ? Why tarry the*
wheels of his Chariot ? Confidently dare I answer you,
 yea, you may make answer to your selves, *Our Lord is*
coming to gather together and comfort all his dispersed, di-
stressed ones, from the severall corners of the world ; he is com-
ing to give them final and full release from the heavy yoke of
Turkish, Popish, and all other bondage and cruelty that re-
maines till that day ; he is coming to trample down and over-
throw all oppositions to his Government and Scepter, and ut-
terly to destroy the works of the Devil, and all his Adherents ;
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he is coming to plead the cause of his righteous servants, to vindicate them and the honour of Religion from all the disgraceful scandals, slanders, and calumnies, which the wickedness of pretended Friends, or the wilful malice of envenomed Enemies, hath cast upon them. He's coming to make all faces and actions bare, to reveal the secrets of all hearts, and discover truth from falsehood. He is coming to the confusion and sorrow of all careless and ungodly ones, rich or poor, Princes or People, that thought not on, nor prepar'd for this time; but he comes to the perfect, full, and everlasting Consolation of all believing souls, that are praying and waiting, looking and longing for this blessed day of his appearing. Even so, Come Lord Jesus, come quick'y; and let him that readeth say Amen.

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