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*The Duty of
not conforming to this World.*

A
SERMON
Preach'd before the
UNIVERSITY
OF
OXFORD,
At St. *MARY*'s
ON
ACT SUNDAY 1733.

By *THO. COCKMAN*, D. D. Master of
University College.

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Chancellor and Heads of Houses.

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R O M. XII. 2. Former Part.

And be not conform'd to this world.



THAT we may the better Understand the design and meaning of the Apostle in this passage, and indeed in the greatest part of this whole Epistle, 'twill be requisite to observe, that the Church of *Rome* (to the Saints of which this Epistle is directed) did at that time consist of two different Sorts of Christians, some who had been converted to the faith of *Christ Jesus* from the law of *Moses*, and others from the Gentile or heathen Religion; and these two sorts of people (as the usual way of the World is, had divided themselves into parties and factions, and had frequent quarrels and disputes with one another about their respective priviledges, while each of them affected a sort of Superiority to themselves, and endeavour'd to lessen and set at

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nought the other. 'Tis pretty plain (on the one hand) that the Converts from *Judaism* insisted very much upon the advantages which they had, in their being the children of the faithfull *Abraham*, the friend of God, to whom and to whose Seed all the promises were made; in their being actually in Covenant with God, into which they were admitted by Circumcision; and in their having had His Laws and Oracles committed to them, and the like, which the Gentiles could in no wise pretend to. Those from *Gentilism* (on the other hand) seem to have upbraided the Jews with their having always been a stubborn and stiff-necked Generation; and to have boasted against them, for that now they were deservedly turn'd off by God, and the Gentiles taken in to be His peculiar people in their stead; and to have told them, *that by how much the greater advantages they formerly had enjoy'd above other people, by so much the greater sinners they ought now to be look'd upon, for having made so bad an use of those advantages*, and the like, as may appear to any one, who shall read and consider the whole Epistle with attention. The Apostle, in order to the putting an end to these Disputes (which is evidently the main design and drift of this Epistle) in effect tells both parties, *that there was no ground or foundation for any such disputes or contentions with each other; for that they were all* (both Jews and Gentiles) *upon one and the same equal footing with respect to the favour of Almighty God. viz. all alike sinners* (and consequently alike unjustified) in virtue of these laws which
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which they had respectively liv'd under, whether the Mosaick or the natural; and all alike made righteous, and accepted by God, without any difference, in Virtue of that Redemption which our blessed Saviour had wrought for us; and justified, not by their being circumcised, or of the seed of *Abraham* according to the flesh; but by their being the Children and Heirs of that faith of *Abraham*, which was imputed to him for righteousness before he was circumcised, and which gives him the title of being the *father of all the faithfull*, of whatever Nation whether Jew or Gentile, for there is no difference, as 'tis express'd in several places: all, both Jews and Gentiles, were equally Sinners without our Saviour, and by means of Sin had falln short of that Glory, which God originally intended for them; and all as Christians are now equally justify'd freely by the Grace of God, tho' the Redemption that is in *Christ Jesus*, as he expressly tells us, Chap. III. v. 23, 24. And in the Chap. next before my text, v. 32. he again tells us, *that God had concluded* (or shut up as in a prison) *all together* (i. e. both Jews and Gentiles equally) *in a state of unbelief*, and therefore of Sin, *that he might finally have mercy upon all* (i. e. all alike and equally:) whereupon he breaks out into that noble Exclamation in the following Verse, *O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge* (or, as perhaps it might better be translated, *Goodness or Love*) of God! How unsearchable are His Judgments and His Ways past finding out &c.! And having thus establish'd His fundamental Do-

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ctrine,

doctrine, of God's being equally the God of Jews and Gentiles; of their being equally under condemnation without Jesus Christ, and now equally sav'd by Him without respect of Persons, (as 'tis elsewhere worded) the Apostle here proceeds to draw his proper Inferences from it, and beseeches all the Christians, by those mercies of God which he had just been speaking of, whereby God makes no difference between one and another, that they would make it their business, in their lives and behaviour towards one another, to comply with this wise and gracious method of God's proceeding with all alike, and would sacrifice their own inclinations and humours to that which was so evidently the Will of God, (which is what, I think, he expresses by *presenting or giving up themselves, or their bodies, as a living Sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is their reasonable service,*) and that they would not run into the common way of the World, in *quarrelling and disputing* about superiority and preeminence, in *upbraiding, lessening and setting at nought* one another; but that as Christians they would put on quite new and different minds, and *prove* (or rather, as the word frequently signifies in both the Latin and Greek Languages, *would give proof of, and shew forth,* in their conduct toward each other) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God: *viz.* that they should have no particular regard (as God plainly had not) for one before another, but should have the same equal respect for their brethren as for themselves: and then 'twill follow naturally
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(without any forc'd connexion) in the 3d. and following verses, *for as an Apostle of Christ Jesus, I declare to every man among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith: for as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

But though I take this to have been the peculiar scope and design of the Apostle in this passage; yet, since he has couch'd it under the more large expression of *not being conform'd to this world*; and since the world in other places is represented as an enemy which we are in general to strive against; and since our church teaches us to pray, *that we may be deliver'd from all its temptations* (without any restriction,) as well as from those of the flesh and the Devil: I shall take this passage of the Apostle at present in that more general sense, without restraining it to the particular subject, which he seems to have had an eye to; but as containing a precept of universal importance to all Christians, of all ages and nations, That they should make the holy will of God, and not the foolish customs and ways of the world, to be the rule and measure of their lives and actions in all cases whatsoever: *And be not conform'd* (says the Apostle) *to this world, but be ye transform'd, by the renewing of your minds, to prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

'Tis very certain, that some of the greatest follies and miscarriages of human life, and indeed some of the greatest iniquities and vices that men are guilty of, are such as they are led into by the force of custom, the prevalence of fashion, and an humour of being obsequious and complying with the world. This is what often undermines and blows up the best laid foundations of Virtue and Religion, throws down the strongest and most vigorous resolutions, and either hurries or betrays men (especially the younger sort) to do actions contrary to their Sense and Reason, their Consciences and even Inclinations, for fear least they should seem to be singular and squeamish, and not to do as others in the like circumstances do. 'Twere no hard matter to produce a great many Instances, (and every one that looks a little abroad into the world may easily supply himself with abundance of them) wherein a prevailing Custom has driven men to act in direct opposition to Laws and right Reason, to God and religion. Hence we find the world is represented to us in Holy Scripture, as one of the greatest Enemies of our eternal Happiness, whose deceits and temptations we are continually to arm and fortifie our selves against; as an Enemy to God, and irreconcilable with His laws; as a thing, the love of which is downright Enmity to Him, so that *if any man love the world, the love of the father cannot be in him*, John II. 15. And yet 'tis no less plain on the other side, both from several Examples which are left us without censure, as
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well as from some direct precepts of Holy Scripture, that we not only may in a great many Cases, but in some are oblig'd to comply with, and get the good liking of other people, and to endeavour to make our selves all things to all men, *that we may by all means*, (as the Apostle expresses it, Cor. IX. 22.) *save some*. To comply with the world in every thing, without Judgment and discrimination, is undoubtedly (on the one hand) great easiness and folly: to do it in nothing, tho' never so innocent, (on the other) is as evidently perverseness and obstinacy of spirit. The former is the Effect of a great want of Judgment, and understanding to discern what is fit and proper for us, or of courage to do it when we do discern it: and the latter usually of great pride and arrogancy, which puts a man upon following his own ways and humours, and upon letting the world see that he has no need of their Instructions; or else of Dissoluteness, and having abandon'd all shame. It may not be an unprofitable, or improper work therefore, to employ our meditations a while upon this subject, and to consider how far we may allow ourselves the liberty of conforming to this world, and how far our doing so will be sinfull and unlawfull. In discoursing upon this argument, I shall endeavour to do these three things—

I. To explain what we are to understand by *the world*, and being *conform'd to it*.

II. To shew how far our conforming with the world

world is lawful, and how far tis prohibited in this precept of the Apostle.

III. To add something very briefly by way of Inference, and so conclude.

1st. To explain, &c. — 'Tis not so easy as it may seem at first view, to frame to our selves a distinct and exact notion of what the Scripture means by the expressions of *the world*, and of *this world*, which we find so frequently dispers'd up and down in it; since they are of very general, and almost unlimited Signification. Not to give you or my self the the trouble of inquiring too nicely into this matter, I shall only observe that they are commonly taken in one of these four Senses; sometimes for this regular and beautiful frame of Beings, (consisting of heaven and earth, and all the Host of them) wherein we live and move, and whereof we are a part; as when God is said to have made *the world* and all things in it: 2^{dly}. sometimes for the State of our Existence in this Life, in opposition to that Existence which we expect hereafter, when this life shall be no more; as when our Saviour says of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, that it shall not be forgiven a man neither in *this world* nor in *the world which is to come*. Sometimes 3^{ly}. they are taken for the things which men are most apt to pursue in this present life, for the *pleasures, profits, honours*, or other advantages of it; and so they stand in opposition to God and to light, and those who are too much addicted

addicted to these things are in Scripture said to be of *the world*, and to be the *Children of this world*, in opposition to being of *God*, and being the *children of light*; and the love of *the world* (i. e. a too great affection for any of these things of it) is said to be enmity with God. 4thly. and lastly, by *the world*, and *this world*, is to be understood not the things, but the men of *this world*, and that not barely consider'd as they are men, but as they are led and influenc'd by the love of worldly things, as they are left to the corruptions of their own present nature, and not influenc'd and guided by the Grace of God's Holy Spirit; and consequently as they run into all those miscarriages, follies or vices, and all those fashions and ways of living, which a worldly and corrupt mind, in the nature of things, is apt to betray men into: and so to be of *the world* is to be a meer natural man, that's acted only by the Dictates of falsn corrupt nature, in opposition to the being of *God*, and being chosen *out of the world*, and instructed in the Doctrines of our blessed Saviour, and made partaker of the spirit of God; *if ye were of the world* (says our Saviour to his Disciples) the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. i. e. if ye were govern'd by the same principles, and follow'd the same practices and ways of living, as the men of this world do, you would then be belov'd and approv'd of by them, as being of the same *Tast* with themselves; but because ye have been

taught by me to oppose both their principles and practices, therefore it is that ye are hated by them. This latter Sense of the word seems to be chiefly that which the Apostle intended in the precept of my Text: So that by *this world*, we are here to understand the *men of this world*, so far as they are govern'd by worldly principles, influenc'd and led away by the things of this world, by the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the Eye, or the pride of life, as St. *John* distinguishes them; and consequently so far, as they run into all those practices and ways of living, which such things do naturally and of course draw men into; which practices and ways of living are, if not contrary and irreconcilable to, yet at least altogether remote and foreign from, God and Religion. Whatever therefore is not *of God*, whether practiced by the Generality, or only by some few, is *of the world*: and both the practices themselves, and the men who practice them, are (as I imagine) *the world* or *this world*, which the Apostle here requires us not to be conform'd to. And by not being *conform'd to this world* we are to understand nothing else, but the not suffering our selves to be guided by the same principles, much less to be betray'd into the same methods and practices, the same fashions, and ways of living, with the men of this world; but, on the contrary, to take care that we be subject to God's law, and make *that* the Rule and Standard of our Actions and Behaviour. And in this sense of the words we are to enquire in the second place —

2. How far &c. And here we have one universal Rule, (as was just now mention'd) which if duly attended to, and prudently apply'd to the several Cases that may happen, like an exact chart and compass, is sufficient to guide us (without being lost) through all the waves and storms of this world, and through all the Secret, and therefore more dangerous Rocks and Shallows, which we may probably meet with in our passage through it, *viz. that 'tis the will of Almighty God, whether discover'd to us by the present light of nature, or the more distinct Revelation of it in Holy Scripture, which ought to be the sole Rule and Measure of our behaviour.* So that whatever is irreconcilable with that, however it may be authoriz'd by the greatest multitudes, and those of greatest Authority, and esteem'd to have the *finest Taste*, is yet by no means to be conform'd to by us; and whatever is agreeable to, or not inconsistent with, the same, may for that Reason lawfully at least (I will not say always *discretely* and *safely*) be comply'd with: for as on the one hand 'tis very unreasonable, that the way of the world should have the preference given to it before the ways of God; so on the other 'tis somewhat selfish and ill natur'd, to set up our own ways and our own humours, in Opposition to those of the rest of the world, when they are innocent and unblameable. And this is the Rule, which the Apostle plainly intimates in the verse of my Text, where he sets *the world and our being conform'd to its fashions*, in direct opposition to the will of God, and our appro-

ving or shewing forth *that* in our behaviour; and he commands us not to do the former of these, but to do the latter: *Be not conform'd* (says he) *to this world, but &c.* as plainly intimating, that 'tis our Duty to see that we conform to the will of God, as the measure of our Conduct; and to no customs the world, which are inconsistent with it; nor to any other ways of it, in any higher Degree, or any other manner, than is justly agreeable to the same Rule and Measure. All such customs of the world therefore, (if they may be called *of this world*, as 'tis certain they cannot in the Apostles Sense, as being properly *of God*, and not *of the world*, as St. *John* distinguishes them') but all such customs as are in *general vogue and practice* among mankind, and yet are truly virtuous and religious in their nature, (as 'tis to be hoped there are many such, notwithstanding the present wickedness and corruption of the age) all these, as proceeding from a compliance with the will of God, and from a sense of that homage and obedience which we owe to Him, and of that love and kindness which we ought to shew to our Fellow-Creatures, are so far from being intended by the Apostle in this precept of the text, as things which we *ought not be conform'd to*; as that the contrary is plainly intended by him; and 'twould be an horrible abuse of the Apostles meaning, for any one to argue, that he ought not to frequent God's publick worship in His church, nor perform other duties of common *religion or humanity*, (the practice of which

which is generally kept up among us) because such things are usually done by the vulgar, and we are commanded in the Text *not to be conform'd to this world*: for these and such like things, (as was just now observ'd) though we hope generally practic'd by mankind in this life, yet are not *of this world* in the Apostle's meaning of that expression, but just the contrary: And the same reason which obliges men *not to be conform'd to this world* (viz. *that they may be conform'd to the will of God*) directly obliges 'em to all such duties, as being the greatest instances that can possibly be given of their proving (*or giving proof of*) *God's good, and acceptable and perfect will*, as the Apostle expresses himself at the latter end of the verse.

But in order to determine with any tolerable exactness (amidst the great variety of cases that must happen in human life) how far it may be lawfull and expedient for us to comply with the world, and how far not; 'twill be necessary for us to descend from this general to a more particular account, and to consider the customs or ways of the world under a three-fold light, viz. either as they are absolutely and in themselves *evil*; or as they are absolutely and entirely *indifferent*; or as, though they are of an *indifferent* nature, yet they do (as the Casuists express it) *magis vergere ad malum*, rather approach to, and have a nearer alliance with, that which is evil: such are more particularly those which are accompanied with pleasure and diversion, and especially such as strike in with any person's peculiar taste and relish;
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for such things naturally incline even those who are otherwise carefull, to be off their guard, and to forget discretion to follow appetite and inclination. As for those which are in themselves good, it has already been observ'd That they don't come under the Apostle's notion of *this world*, and therefore don't belong to our present Purpose.

I call that *absolutely and in it self evil*, which either directly or by immediate consequence, appears to be contrary to the holy will of God as made known unto us: and I call that *absolutely and in it self indifferent*, which God, by the light either of Reason or Revelation, does not appear to have intermedled with, but rather to have left to our own prudence and discretion, without interposing His divine authority. But here we must observe, that conforming to a custom may be said to be *indifferent* in two several senses, *viz.* either as having no *moral* good or evil, or as having no *temporal* convenience or inconvenience (such as trouble, pains, expence, or the like) annex'd to it. I take the word here in the former of these senses: for as to any *temporal* inconveniences or troubles, which a man may be brought under by complying with other people, religion leaves every man to his own liberty (except in some few very extraordinary cases) to bear as much, or as little of them, in conformity with any fashion or taste of the world, as he himself thinks fit. I call that (thirdly) of a middle nature, *between absolutely evil and absolutely indifferent*, which tho'
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of it self it be no where directly or indirectly prohibited, and so can't be said to be *contrary to God's will* and consequently evil; yet may probably in its circumstances, and the consequences attending it, be the occasion of something that really is so: *propter circumstantias quasdam malas* (as the School-divines express it) *quas habent plerumque adnexas*. If *Jacob's* daughter (for example) had a mind to go out and see the other daughters of the land, 'tis certain the thing was in its own nature lawfull, and what she might desire, and her father allow of, without Sin: but when by that means she was afterwards betray'd into the hands of a young *Shechem*, both the one and the other had reason to be convinced, that they had acted (not to say any thing worse) very *imprudently*. 'Twere an easy matter to produce examples in great number, of each of the sorts of customs before mention'd: but whoever has cast his eyes abroad into the world, and made the least observation upon the conduct of human life in it, must be able to supply himself with abundance of them. I shall leave that therefore to every one's own thoughts, and in order to determine how far it may be lawfull, or expedient, to conform to the world in any of them, say—

1. That whatsoever customs of the world are *absolutely and in themselves evil*, these we are to conform to upon no account: for we must not follow even the greatest multitude to do evil, it being the good, and perfect and acceptable *will of God*, and not the fancies or vain capricio's
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of either foolish or designing people, that is to be the rule and standard of our conduct in this matter. As no one would be willing to be excluded from heaven and its happiness for company, so neither should any man act directly contrary to the *laws of God* for company; and the slender pretences of *going but in the way of the world, and doing but as other people in the like circumstances do, and being no worse than the rest of one's neighbours,* however frequently they are now made use of, first as a reason for doing wicked actions, and afterward as an excuse for having done them, will finally stand a man in very little stead at that *great and terrible day of the Lord,* when the fig-leaf covering of such pitifull pretences will be taken off, and every one must appear open to an all-seeing judge, who will reward or punish men according to their respective works; and he will find but a very poor advantage to himself at the foot of the whole account, who was here applauded and embrac'd by the world, as a very good natur'd and well-bred person, for coming into the *Tast* and sinfull customs of it, and shall afterwards be rejected and condemn'd by God and our blessed Saviour; be despised by the holy Angels, and Spirits of just men made perfect; and be deliver'd over to be reproach'd and insulted by the malice of Satan and his evil Spirits; and to weep and wail with, and perhaps curse, his wicked companions for ever and ever. But secondly—

2. Those customs of the world, which are *absolutely indifferent,* may lawfully, and oftentimes

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expediently, be comply'd with in a due degree and a proper manner. For since they are such as have not any thing in them, which either in itself or by immediate consequence is any wise inconsistent with the law or will of God; there can be no sin in the bare conforming or complying with them as such: For sin is nothing else but the transgressing of some law; and the will of God, as intimated or made known to us, is the only law and rule whereunto we ought to conform our actions: Whatsoever therefore is no wise inconsistent with any known will of God, is no wise inconsistent with any law of our actions, and consequently no transgression of any law, and therefore no sin. I can't conceive therefore that we are required, by virtue of this precept of the Apostle, so far to abstain from all conformity to the world, as to turn *Cynics* and *Quakers* in down right opposition to the common ways of it. Is any one bound to appear in Mourning, when 'tis the fashion for every body else to wear colours, least otherwise he should be conformable to the customs of the world? Is a Christian oblig'd to sorrow and melancholly at a Festival, because other people are then merry and joyfull? Or must he refuse to salute any Christian brother, whom he casually meets with upon the way, because 'tis the fashion for other people to do so? certainly no; these, and many other things of the like nature, are only matters of civil and ordinary decency, and meerly discretionary, such as religion does not concern itself about, and wherein God has

no wise interpos'd His authority; which therefore *if we do, we are never the better in our religious capacity; nor if we do them not are we ever the worse.* as St. Paul speaks upon the subject of eating or not eating certain meats. 1. Cor. VIII. 8. But still this conforming even to indifferent fashions ought always to be done in a due degree, and a decent and proper manner: for that which is *absolutely and in itself indifferent*, may yet become *a fault* as to any ones particular, if not made use of in such a manner as it ought, or if lov'd and pursu'd to any excessive degree. 'Tis no harm (I grant) in the nature of the thing, for a person to conform to an innocent and not unlawfull fashion: but if any one pay too great a regard to fashion, so as to spend too much time or too many thoughts about it, and had rather break any one of God's commandments, than be guilty of doing any thing that should be a breach of modern breeding, and contrary to the Taste in fashion; to such an one it may be harm, tho' not from the thing itself, yet however from his irregular and undue use of it. For example, we are commanded in Holy Scripture, as a thing agreeable to the will of God, (and our own reason can't but tell us the same) *not to forsake the assembling of our selves together at God's religious worship*: if any man therefore be so great an admirer of the way of the world, as that he had rather forgoe his attendance upon the publick worship, than appear without a dress just according to the fashion; and would rather take a journey (as other well-bred people do) than
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worship God (as is done by the vulgar) upon the day that's peculiarly set apart for religious worship; such an one shews that he sets a greater value upon being conformable to the world, than to the will of Almighty God: and the same may be said in almost innumerable other cases. The Apostle's rule therefore, which he gives in general about the *using of this world*. 1. Cor. VII. 31. is particularly applicable to the subject now before us, we may *use* these indifferent things, but so as not to *abuse them*, or (as others rather choose to translate the place) *so as if we us'd them not*. i. e. with the greatest indifferency and unconcernedness of mind about them; without shewing any great love or desire of them; without fretting or uneasiness if we can't arrive at them; or setting too great a value upon them (or upon our selves on account of them) when we have them; and finally without giving any just ground of offence to others by our manner of enjoying them, always taking heed (according to that excellent precept of the Apostle in a like case) *least by any means* this liberty of ours should become a stumbling-block to them that are weak, and an occasion of leading them into sin. 'Tis the want of this caution, and an indiscreet abusing of things in themselves indifferent, that makes it sometimes necessary to lay such things under some restrictions: Those foolish persons, that *can't* make a right use of them for *want of understanding*; and those *vitious* ones, that *refuse* to do it through the *perverseness of their wills*, are the sole occasions of, and ought solely to be

blam'd for, all prohibitions of this nature: Whereas if such persons would have so much sense and judgment, and be so just or so kind to themselves and to one another, as not to abuse such things by their follies and indiscretions; the things themselves, as being innocent and in their nature harmless, might always be used without any restraint, and people might always enjoy their free liberty in them, if they would but take a wise care to make it an innocent liberty, and not use it (as the Apostle St. *Peter* expresses himself) *as a cloke of maliciousness, but as becomes the servants of God.* But—

3. Those customs of the world which are of a *middle* kind, *viz.* such as, though indifferent in their own nature, yet may probably be attended with some evil in the circumstances or consequences of them, as they may always *lawfully*, and perhaps sometimes *prudently* and *discretely* be conform'd to, because not sinfull; so they constantly require our utmost care and caution, because they are dangerous. All the rules therefore that were given under the former head, relating to the manner and degree of our using even the most indifferent fashions and ways of the world, are to be apply'd with greater force to our use of these: for these are always attended with at least some suspicion and appearance of evil, and therefore may more easily give offence to others; and always with some temptation to, or opportunity for sin, and therefore may be dangerous to our own selves. 'Tis much the wisest and safest way therefore (as far as is possible) altogether

ther to abstain from having any thing to do with them, and to avoid them, as we would do a pestilential air or distemper, by keeping at a distance from the infection of them. But since in the conduct of human life it must be almost impossible for us always to do this; and since in some cases it may become a man's duty to comply with other people in things of this nature, and in others he will find himself unavoidably forc'd into it; his next care should be, not to give any encouragement to, or shew any great approbation of such things, and not to suffer them by any means to become his common practice; but when he can't avoid, upon any particular emergency, to pay a compliment to the world by complying with such things, to consider before-hand the dangers that he may be under by that means, and to fore-arm him against them by purposes and resolutions of virtue and religion: and being thus fore-warn'd and fore-arm'd against the evil, which is the usual attendant or consequence of any fashion or practice of the world, he may possibly, by his own care and the blessing of God, so conform to the one, as altogether to escape the pollution of the other. But when people will, without any such thing as previous thought or consideration, run head-long into a conformity with the ways of the world, and make a practice of such things, and apparently love and are delighted with them, as the fashionable and modern Taste; though the things themselves are suppos'd not to be evil, yet such men will almost unavoidably be tainted with

with the evil which is too apt to bear them company; as he that will be playing upon the hole of the asp, or set up to be a *charmer of serpents*, (as the wise son of *Syrach* expresses it) must have more good fortune, than he has conduct and discretion, if he be not wounded and destroy'd with the poison of them. In a word and to sum up what has been said in short, 'Tis the known will of God, (which reason as well as revelation discovers to us) that we should live *piously and religiously* toward Him our God; *soberly and chastly* with respect to ourselves; and *justly and charitably* toward our brethren and neighbours, in this present life: Whatsoever ways in the world therefore are in themselves *contrary* to any of these great and substantial branches of our duty, are as such *sinfull*, and therefore not to be conform'd to: Whatsoever are *consistent* with these in their own nature, but in the degree or manner of using them any wise interfere with the same, are in such a degree, and such a manner, to be avoided by us. Whoever therefore will neglect *God's worship*, to pay a regard to any fashion or usual way of the world; whoever will be guilty of *intemperance* with regard to himself, rather than break thro' a foolish custom of drinking; and finally whoever will part with *love and charity* toward his neighbour, rather than part with a vain punctilio of honour, which the world has arbitrarily and unreasonably set up; (with examples of all which, and many other such like, the world can supply us in abundance) pays a greater

er regard to the world than to his duty, and is therefore guilty of a criminal conformity to it, and apparently transgresses the Apostles precept in the Text.

And so much may suffice for the two first things propos'd. How far what has been said may more *peculiarly concern us of this place*, and to what degree we, who by our establishment and constitution are *separated and fenc'd off* (as it were) from the *common customs* of the world, should suffer those *customs* to break in upon us, or permit our selves to go out and fetch them in, I shall not take upon me to enquire or determine, but leave it wholly to the wisdom and discretion of those who are vested with authority for that purpose: Thus much however, I believe, I may be bold to say, That if the *politer* world (as they esteem themselves) think proper to invert the rule and order of nature, and to consume in *sleep* the greatest part of the day, which was design'd for *work* or *study*; and in *gaming* or other *diversions* the greatest part of the night, which was intended for *sleep and rest*; this is no reason why the like should be introduc'd, or any wise suffer'd to be introduc'd amongst *us*, who have voluntarily submitted our selves to contrary rules and injunctions. So long as we live within the compass of those rules, we may defy the malice of men and devils to hurt us: but if we our selves, out of a foolish conformity to the modes of the world, tread down those fences which have so wisely been set up for us, or suffer other people to come in
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and tread them down; 'twill necessarily follow in the nature of things, that the *wild boars of the wood* will soon come and root up our vineyard, when 'tis thus lay'd open, and the *wild beasts of the field* (who are not few in number) will come in and devour it. And therefore I could wish (in order to cut off occasion from those who are always ready to seek occasion against us) that all those who are our own members, and live under our establishment, and have any real love for it, would adhere religiously to their old establish'd rules; which their enemies themselves can't fasten any blame upon; and that those who come from abroad (considering the place where they are) would neither too remarkably transgress those rules themselves, by introducing ways of a more Modern Taste among us; nor, however, give encouragement to our own Members (under the plausible colour of being in *their* company, and complying with *them*) to claim a liberty of transgressing them. As for those who are otherwise-minded, and endeavour to bring in the *world* upon us, I shall only say of them, as this Apostle does of some others upon a like occasion. Gal. V. v. 12. *That they are those who trouble us, and I would they were even cut off from amongst us.*

As to the 3^d. Head mention'd, all that I shall add by way of Inference at present shall be only this, That since 'tis the *good and perfect will of God*, which is the only measure to which our actions ought finally to be conform'd; and since 'twill be impossible for us to conform our actions

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to any measure whatsoever, without being well acquainted with the nature of it; therefore we should make it our earnest endeavour, by impartially consulting the dictates of our own reason, and diligently looking unto the Books of Holy Scripture, to arrive at the knowledge (as far as we are able) of that *perfect will of God* in all particulars; and when we do know it, sincerely and conscientiously to make it the rule of our behaviour, and conform our selves accordingly. And to our own endeavours we ought always to add our most earnest Prayers to Almighty God, from whom every good and perfect gift proceedeth, that he would assist us with His grace and Holy Spirit, *that we may both see and know* (as our church very well expresses it) *those things which we ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same.* Now to God the Father, &c.

F I N I S.