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Lately published,  
By the same AUTHOR,

I. The Nature and Reasonableness of the Inward Call and Outward Mission to the Holy Ministry considered.

II. The Natural Effect, and Religious Improvement of extraordinary Divine Judgments, and of Solemn Fasts instituted in Remembrance of them.

III. The Expediency of the Miraculous Powers of the Christian Fathers: And the Inexpediency of those that are claimed by the Church of Rome: in two Discourses.

IV. Two Discourses on the Mosaick History of the Fall.

V. The Grounds of Submission to Government, the Origin of the different Modes of Civil Polity, and the Happiness of our own Form of Legislature in particular. An Inauguration-Sermon; *June 11. 1752.*

VI. The Pleasures of Gratitude and Benevolence improved by Church-Musick. A Sermon at the Meeting of the three Choirs of *Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford. Sept. 12. 1753.*

VII. A Letter and Dialogue on the New Stile.

Printed for JAMES FLETCHER;  
And sold by R. BALDWIN, in *Pater-noster-row.*

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*The Reasons and Necessity of Publick  
Worship.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preached at

St. *Mary's* in OXFORD,

A T T H E

A S S I Z E S:

Before the HONOURABLE

Mr. JUSTICE GUNDRY,

A N D

Before the UNIVERSITY,

On *Thursday*, March 8. 1753.

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By GEORGE FOTHERGILL, D.D. Principal  
of St. *Edmund* Hall.

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Publish'd at the Request of the HIGH-SHERIFF  
and the GRAND-JURY.

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O X F O R D,

Printed at the THEATRE for RICHARD CLEMENTS:  
and Sold by J. and J. RIVINGTON in St. *Paul's*  
Church-Yard, London: W. THURLBOURNE at Cam-  
bridge, and J. LEAKE at Bath. MDCCLIII.

Imprimatur,

J. BROWNE,

Vice-Can. Oxon.

Mar. 13. 1753.



To the Worshipful  
THOMAS HORDE, Esquire, High-Sheriff,  
The Right Honourable  
THOMAS Lord Visc. PARKER, Foreman,  
And the Gentlemen of the Grand-Jury  
of the County of *Oxford*;

<i>Sr Edward Turner, Bart.</i>	<i>William Lenthal, Esq.</i>
<i>Thomas Fettiplace, Esq.</i>	<i>Thomas Horne, Gent.</i>
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<i>Thomas Blackall, Esq.</i>	<i>William Eldridge, Gent.</i>
<i>William Blackall, Esq.</i>	<i>William Astry, Gent.</i>

**T**HOUGH I little imagined at the Time of delivering this very plain Discourse, that it would be not only received with Your Approbation, but distinguished by Your unanimous Request that it should be made publick; yet I cannot now think myself at Liberty to desert the Cause therein defended, by withdrawing a Plea which You have thought in any Measure capable of becoming farther serviceable to It.

As

As Your Inducement to desire this Publication must have been Your Good-Will to the Subject itself, not any Thing new or curious in the Method of treating it; You have left me no Room to doubt but that, what You were pleased with hearing recommended (however imperfectly) from the Pulpit, and have since wished to see inculcated from the Press, You will still go on to enforce by Your own Countenance and Authority, but especially by the Influence of Your good Examples.

And, “that our united Endeavours in Recommendation of a D U T Y of so much Importance to the Glory of G O D, and to the Peace, Order, and Prosperity of our Country, may prove successful,” is the hearty Prayer of,

My Lord and Gentlemen,

Your most humble Servant,

*St. Edm. Hall Oxford,  
March 12. 1753.*

GEORGE FOTHERGILL.

## P S A L M LXXXIX. 7.

*GOD is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the Saints; and to be had in Reverence of All them that are about Him.*

**A**MIDST several humane Designs set on foot, and *worthy Deeds done*, in different Parts of *this Nation*, there is however *one* Appearance which darkens the Prospect of Good Men; I mean, that of a prevailing Indifference about the Worship of Almighty GOD: An Indifference, which hath for some Time been descending, as Fashions usually do, from Persons of Station and Fortune to the Body of the People. Hence We see even that *small Portion* of Time, which our Creator from the Beginning reserved for His own Service, so frequently prostituted to the Purposes of Worldly Business or Pleasure. Instead of devoutly approaching *the Courts of the LORD*, with their respective Families, *One goes to his Farm, Another to his Merchandise*. An unnecessary Journey or an impertinent Visit, any Thing or even Nothing, shall be sufficient to detain Men from paying their *weekly Acknowledgments* to that bountiful Hand, from which they are *every Moment* receiving *Life and Breath and all Things!*

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A discouraging Symptom this, and such as may well alarm every Lover of our Country! For certain it is, and the Experience of Ages confirms the Observation, that a General Neglect of GOD's Publick Worship is closely connected with a Decay of every Thing Great or Glorious in a Nation: And, as it is immediately *the Reproach*, so doth it, naturally as well as judicially, bring on the Ruin, *of any People*. In civilized States indeed, whilst the Remains of a liberal Education continue to operate, a certain Decency of Manners, aided by a Sense of Honour, may *for a While* preserve tolerable Order among the *upper Ranks* of Men, and even produce some beneficial Effects. But, among *less cultivated* Minds, the Degeneracy will shew itself much sooner; rendering that Strength and Activity, on the Application whereof so much must in every Community always depend, not barely useless, but mischievous to the Publick, and often fatal to the unhappy Wretches themselves. I wish we had fewer Occasions to reflect on the Condition of our own People in this respect: But we all know, how frequent it is for Those among them, who are brought by their Crimes to ignominious Ends, to date the Commencement of their Ruin from their Ceasing to *keep GOD's Sabbaths, and to reverence His Sanctuary*. And, when We trace this Neglect through its still more momentous Consequences beyond the present Life; the spreading Contagion must still more sensibly affect every Friend to Mankind, and render it still more incumbent on Us,  
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in our *publick Exhortations*, as far as We may, to stop the Progress of it.

An *Attempt* to contribute in *any* Degree towards an End so desirable, will not, I trust, be thought wholly unsuitable to the Business of our present Assembling. I shall not, for this Purpose, affect to entertain This venerable Audience with any laboured Disquisitions. Better should I hope to answer the Design of this Appointment, could I, by bringing to Your Remembrance a few *plain Truths*, effectually engage All that hear me *This Day*, to pay a like decent Attendance at *other Times* upon the Worship of That All-perfect Being; Who is *very greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the Saints; and to be had in Reverence of All them that are about Him.*

By the *Fear of GOD* is not seldom in Holy Scripture meant the *Whole* of our Duty. But we may here understand it in a *more restrain'd* and proper Sense; as denoting that *holy Awe* and profound Veneration, which GOD's adoreable Perfections demand from the whole *Rational* Creation: For it is *This* which seems to have made the most powerful Impression upon the *Psalmist's* Mind, in the Passage before Us. — *O LORD*, says he, *the very Heavens shall praise Thy wondrous Works, and Thy Truth in the Congregation of the Saints: For what is He among the Clouds that shall be compared unto the LORD? or who is he among the Gods, that shall be like unto the LORD?* — Full of the sublime Idea, he

<sup>a</sup> Psal. 89. 5, 6.

breaks forth again: <sup>a</sup> O LORD GOD of Hosts, Who is like unto Thee! Thy Truth, most mighty LORD, is on every Side. Thou rulest the Raging of the Sea; Thou stillest the Waves thereof when they arise: — The Heavens are Thine, the Earth also is Thine: Thou hast laid the Foundation of the round World, and all that therein is. — In these and the like exalted Strains doth the pious Psalmist set forth the Power and Majesty of GOD, and His absolute Sovereignty over both the Natural and Moral World.

A due Contemplation of GOD's glorious Attributes, — His *Eternity*, by which He is from *Everlasting to Everlasting* — His *Immensity*, by which He fills Heaven and Earth — His *All-powerful Arm*, with which *Nothing is impossible* — And His *All-seeing Eye*, to which *our most secret Thoughts are naked and open* — must needs fill the Mind with Wonder and Astonishment. And accordingly, we find, this *Fear of GOD*, this just Apprehension of His transcendent Perfections, hath in all Ages kept-pace with Men's other Virtues and illustrious Qualities; and hath ever exerted itself most eminently in the most eminent Personages. It was *This* made holy Job thus admonish his Friends, <sup>b</sup> *Shall not His Excellency make You afraid, and His Dread fall upon You?* And, as to himself, <sup>c</sup> *Therefore* (saith he) *am I troubled at His Presence; when I consider, I am afraid of Him.* It was *This* made Moses, in a Mixture of devout Fear and holy Transport cry out, <sup>d</sup> *Who is like unto Thee, O LORD,*

a V. 8, 9, 11. b Job 13. 11. c — 23. 15. d Exod. 15. 11.  
glorious

*glorious in Holiness, fearful in Praises, doing Wonders!* And, to multiply no more Instances, it was from a Contemplation of this Kind that the Prophet *Jeremiah* thus addressed the Almighty, *Forasmuch as there is none like unto Thee, O LORD; Thou art great, and Thy Name is great in Might; Who would not fear Thee, O King of Nations?*

And, if GOD is thus entitled to our Fear on Account of His *excellent Greatness* in Himself, He is still more so when contemplated under Those *awful Relations* He stands in to us, both as *Men* and as *Christians*: In the former View, as He is our *Creator, Preserver, Governour, and Judge*; in the latter, as He is our *Redeemer, and Sanctifier*. It were easy to enlarge upon each of these Considerations; in order to impress on all our Minds (what cannot be too strongly there impress'd) a devout Veneration for That Great and Good Being, who, on so many Accounts, *ought to be feared*.

But I must not *now* detain You with any Illustration of these Particulars. *The Fear of GOD* is indeed *the Beginning*, but, whilst confined within the Mind, is *only the Beginning of Religious Wisdom*. Our Veneration for the Deity must diffuse its Influence throughout our *whole Conduct*; and must, at proper Intervals, express itself in *Acts of Homage and Adoration*: It must accompany Us to *Places* set apart for Sacred Purposes; and, by at once regulating our Behaviour and animating our Performances there, must

<sup>a</sup> Jer. 10. 6, 7.

render Both in some Measure suited to That tremendous Presence, before which we more immediately present ourselves on such solemn Occasions. — *GOD is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of the Saints; and to be had in Reverence of All them that are about Him.*

From the Words, consider'd in *This View*, I might take Occasion not only to treat of the *General Duty*, but to recommend the *Principal Requisites*, of Publick Worship. But the Illustration of the *Duty* — *First*, By *Considerations* drawn from *Reason* and *Experience* — *Secondly*, By *Inforcements* founded on the Authority of *Revelation* — and *Lastly*, By a *Reflection* or two applicable to the *present Occasion* — will employ all the Time that I may presume to take from Your other important Engagements on *This Day*.

I. Under the *First* of These Heads, it will be neither easy nor necessary to preserve the Suggestions of *Reason* and the Authorities from *Scripture* wholly *separate* from each other. The *Former*, we have Cause to think, would, if *left to itself*, have given us but *very little* Assistance, on *This Subject* especially; Nor would I be understood to ascribe the following Considerations to its *sole* Discovery. All I here mean is, for the Sake of *Method*, to *begin* with such Arguments in Favour of Publick Worship as may seem deducible — from the *Relation* we stand in to *Almighty GOD* — from the *Circumstances* of *Mankind* about us — and from the *Consciousness* of what passeth *within ourselves*; *abstracting* for the

the present from any Divine Injunction or *Positive Law* for the same Purpose.

1. And *First*, Let us consider, how this Matter appears in the Views of *Reason* and *Experience*; more particularly in respect of our *Obligations* to *Almighty GOD*.

“That there *is* a *GOD*,” and “that He *is* to be worshipped,” are Truths, which I will presume need no Proof in this Place. Should it be said, “This Worship is a Tribute, which may be pay’d within a Man’s *own Breast*;” it will readily be granted, that the Payment of it ought always to *begin* there. But, besides those *Personal* Considerations which may offer themselves more properly hereafter; what I would *here* observe, as at least highly *consonant* to *Nature*, is, that not only *GOD*’s *Authority* must be *revered* in our *own Minds*, but our Sense of it express’d, and His *Name glorify’d before Men*. *The Glory of GOD is*, or should be, the End pursued by the Whole Creation: It is *incessantly declared* by the *Irrational*, and even the *Inanimate*, Parts of it; and ought surely to be by *Man* set forth with no less *Constancy*; because what the others perform by *necessary* Course, may be *freely* paid by him, as his *Reasonable Service*.

But now, in order to promote *GOD*’s *Glory*, we must make our *Regard* for it *visible*; we must reverence Him *publickly*, and *confess Him before Men*. If His *Name* may be *hallow’d*, and His *Perfections* recognized, in the *Worship* of the *Closet*; such *Acts*, of which *GOD* and our own *Consciences* are the only *Witnesses*, cannot  
 exert

exert any *direct* Influence on those about us. But by <sup>a</sup> *the Light* of our Devotion *shining before Men* we may engage *them also to glorify our Father who is in Heaven*. Whilst, by <sup>b</sup> *worshipping the LORD in the Beauty of Holiness*, we ourselves appear to *stand in Awe of Him*, we do, though not in so many Words, yet with greater Efficacy, *tell it out among the Heathen, that the LORD is King*.

There is not perhaps among Mankind an Appearance more declarative of GOD's Glory, than that of a numerous, yet regular, Congregation, met together in a Place decently adorned and properly set apart for sacred Purposes, uniformly breathing forth the *humble Desires* or pious Transports of their Souls, to His Name, *which is great, wonderful, and holy!* Should any Persons, out of mere Curiosity, or in Compliance with Custom, approach such holy Solemnities; they can hardly (one would think) remain wholly unaffected; but may well be, as <sup>c</sup> *Saul* himself when *among the Prophets* more than once was, caught by the almost-irresistible Impression. <sup>d</sup> *If the whole Church be come together into one Place, — and there come in, on so striking an Occasion, one that believeth not, or one Unlearned; he is convinced of All, he is judged of All: And thus are the Secrets of his Heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his Face he will worship GOD, and report that GOD is in You of a Truth.*

2. And hence, *Secondly*, As a Regard to GOD's

<sup>a</sup> Matt. 5. 16.    <sup>b</sup> Psal. 96. 9, 10.    <sup>c</sup> 1 Sam. 10. 11. and  
— 19. 24.    <sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. 14. 23, 24, 25.

*Glory* requires our Publick Acknowledgments, so doth the Principle next to it in Dignity; I mean, *Good Will towards Men*.

Indeed, so closely are the Glory of GOD and the Good of Mankind connected with each other, that whatever promotes the Former must in proportion be subservient to the Latter: And what has just been observed in the foregoing Case may by Parity of Reason be apply'd to This. We may, in our more *secret* Devotions, *pray for* the Conversion or the Improvement of other Men. But then, what Influence soever our *Intercessions* may be supposed to have towards their spiritual Advantage, our *Examples* can have none. *These*, to make them operate, must be *visible*. A Consideration, which ought surely to have some Weight with Persons of ample Fortunes and superior Rank. For, supposing at present that Men of Taste and Refinement *could* perform *their own* Duty to GOD in private only, with sufficient Regularity and Success; Such however would do well to consider, that *all Men cannot receive this Saying*: Less elevated Minds will ever be incapable of keeping alive their Devotion by such purely spiritual Addresses to the Divine Being. And yet, certainly, some Regard must be *due* to the Souls of Those Persons, by whose Industry and Fidelity *the State of the World*, and the Grandeur of their Superiors in particular, *is principally maintain'd*.

But the Truth is, Men who pay no outward Regard to the Worship of GOD will not gene-

a Ecclus. 38. 34.

rally, nor can They reasonably, be supposed to have much Concern about His Being or Providence. And, whilst the Bulk of Mankind take, as in fact They ordinarily will take, the Patterns of their Conduct, nay even their very Notions of Duty, from Men of Eminence and Authority; should *These* by a total Neglect of the Publick Offices of Religion give Occasion to suspect, that *GOD* is scarcely in all their Thoughts; what must soon become of the *Piety*, and (by easy Consequence) of the *Morals* of their Inferiors and Dependents, is not hard to say. Now, methinks, Men of Figure and Affluence should sometimes reflect, how much *their own* Ease, Safety, and Prosperity, must ever depend on the *Principles* of *them* of low Degree. And if, by the Degeneracy of these latter, the former should find <sup>a</sup> *their Houses* less safe from Fear, and their Persons more exposed to Insult and Violence; They must not be surprized at the Disorders introduced by their own Examples: Nor have they any *Right* to complain, if Those, whom their Practice is continually teaching <sup>b</sup> *not to fear GOD*, should be found of themselves to have learnt, *not to regard Man*. — But to proceed.

If we farther consider Men as united in *Societies*, Publick Worship will appear necessary to *them* in every View: Necessary as a *Preservative* of Those Religious Influences on the Minds of the several Members, without which <sup>c</sup> *the whole Body cannot be fitly joined together*; and necessary as an *Evidence* of the *effectual Working* in the

<sup>a</sup> Job 21. 9.    <sup>b</sup> Luk. 18. 1, 4.    Eph. 4. 16.



*Measure of every Part*, without which there can be no such Relyance on an equal Circulation of Good Offices, as the Health and *Increase of the Body* requires. Where the Members of a Community regularly attend upon the stated Offices of Religion, and *walk together in the House of GOD as Friends*; there a Foundation is laid for mutual Confidence; there the Affairs of the Publick, or the Intercourse between particular Persons, may be carry'd on with Chearfulness, because with a reasonable Security. Whereas, He, who never *appears* to *worship* GOD, cannot be known, cannot well be presumed, to *fear* Him; and is on that Account incapable of giving either the whole Society or any of his Fellow-Members the most proper Pledges of his Faithfulness and Integrity. And, *should* such Examples become *general*, it may be worth considering on what Footing *Social* Commerce could for *any Time* be supported; or how, in particular Those *Administrations of Justice* could be carry'd on with any Propriety, which must ever presuppose some Tye upon the *Consciences* of All who are concern'd to give Evidence or Verdict on these solemn Occasions.

Add to this, that as long as Divine Providence shall be believed to concern Itself with Human Affairs (and surely, for the Credit as well as the Comfort of Mankind, *This* will always be believed) so long Communities of Men, *as such*, will find perpetual Calls to address the Supreme Being: And these not with regard to their *Secular* Interests only, but also on Account

of many *Spiritual* Blessings; which, however They may be thought *merely personal*, are certainly of *social* and general *Concern*: Such as, the publick Means of Grace, the Light of GOD's Truth, the Defence of His Church, &c. And it must ever be highly fit and reasonable, that common Wants should be jointly made known to our common Father, that common Evils should be jointly deprecated, and common Benefits with united Gratitude acknowledged. Nay even those Good Things which are most spiritual and most strictly personal; such as, the Pardon of Sins past, the Supply of Strength against Temptations for the future; — *These* too may surely be, in *general* Terms at least, jointly implored; inasmuch as *every* Worshipper is equally concern'd to obtain them. Especially if it shall appear, that the Fervency of our Prayers for *These* and all other Blessings may be greatly assisted, and our Hopes of their Success proportionably encreased, by *joining* our Petitions with those of our Brethren. Which Consideration directly leads me to illustrate,

3. In the *Third* Place, The Reasonableness, Advantages, and Importance, of frequenting Publick Worship in regard to the *particular* *Worshippers* themselves.

And here, I am sensible, many worthy Persons may find, on certain Occasions especially, their own *Attention* more *fixed*, perhaps also their *Devotion* more *fervent*, in their *secret* Addresses to the Divine Being, than they can always perceive in more publick Places. When  
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the Objects of Sense are in great Measure shut out, contemplative Persons will, no doubt, *often feel* themselves not only less liable to Wanderings and *Dissipations* of Thought, but also more at Liberty to be *explicite* and *particular* in Confessing their Sins, laying open their Wants, and *pouring out their Hearts* before GOD, than They could otherwise be. In Truth, there is no Need to *compare* Publick and Private Worship to the *Diminution* of Either: *Each* may be allow'd to have *its respective* Advantages; Each is excellent, indeed necessary, *in its Order* and Season. Let me not, then, be understood to recommend the Worship of the Temple in *Opposition* to that of the Closet, but in *Conjunction* with it. *This latter ought* All of us to perform, but none of us to leave the other undone.

For, besides what hath already been observed of the Condition and Capacities of the *Generality* of Mankind; even the most *improved Understandings* may find Cause to beware, lest a Worship *entirely mental*, and *abstracted* from every *social* Regard, should degenerate into *Pride* and *Uncharitableness*, or *refine* itself into *Extasy* and *Enthusiasm*. The Wise Author of our Nature hath made us *sociable*, and in part *corporeal*, Beings; and our very Addresses to Himself will generally suffer by all Attempts to *divest* ourselves *wholly* of *either* of Those Characters. Nay I would farther appeal to all Persons accustomed to Religious Exercises, Whether their pious Affections have not many Times received considerable *Accessions* of Warmth, their Zeal of Vigour, and every

every spiritual Capacity of Improvement and Enlargement, from *joining* in the Devotions of a numerous yet well conducted Assembly. The Heart that can remain wholly untouch'd *here*, must not charge its Coldness to the Company It is in; and can indeed scarce be rightly *qualify'd* for the Service of Almighty God, either in Publick or in Private.

To speak freely, there is great Reason to fear, that Those Persons, who *talk mightily* of Private Devotion, at the same Time that they causelessly neglect to give their Attendance upon Publick Worship, do either *intend* to deceive Others, or will e're long very fatally *deceive their own Hearts*. Whilst we carry these Bodies about us, especially if *the Cares of this Life* have any considerable Hold upon us, it is of the highest Importance towards securing any useful *Remembrance of our Creator*, that Time and Place should be *fixed* for breaking off our Commerce with secular Concerns, and solemnly entering into His more immediate Presence. Men may set themselves Rules for this Purpose; which, when duly observed, are (no doubt) highly praise-worthy. But, I am afraid, Rules known only to God and Mens own Hearts, are apt to be too easily *dispensed with*. Seldom will be wanting Pleas of *extraordinary* Business, or otherwise commendable Application to Study and Meditation, to induce them *for once* to make free with a Rule of their own prescribing. And, whilst every such Breach makes Way for succeeding ones; from learning to neglect the usual  
Calls

Calls to *publick* Worship, Men are in great Danger of growing unconcern'd, first for whole Days, and then for Weeks together, about any Sort of Religious Intercourse with their Maker; 'till at length they are sunk into a Kind of *Heathenism*, and even become almost, as to any good Effect, *without GOD in the World!*

II. However, if after all any One should be conscious, or should flatter himself he is conscious, that *his own* Devotion doth not flag, nor are the stated Returns of it intermitted, though confined to his Closet: I must *now proceed* to add to the foregoing Considerations this farther most important one; namely, "That *Publick Worship*, in Religious Assemblies, and in Places dedicated to sacred Purposes, *is indeed the Ordinance of GOD* Himself; "that it hath the *Promise* of His more especially favourable Acceptance and Regard; and "that it cannot therefore be omitted, *wilfully* and *for any Time* omitted, without a very blameable *Neglect* of Divine Authority, and of the spiritual Interests of our own *immortal* Souls.

For the Proof of this I may refer to the whole Tenour of the inspired Writings. — Upon looking into These, one of the <sup>a</sup> first Things we meet with, after the Increase of the human Species, is the Worship of GOD by *Oblations* and *Sacrifices*. After this we find the <sup>b</sup> *Patriarchs*, on every extraordinary Occasion, *erec-*

<sup>a</sup> Gen. 4. 3, 4, 5. <sup>b</sup> See particularly Gen. 8. 20. — 12, 7, 8. — 13. 18. — 21. 33, &c.

*ing Altars or Pillars, or planting Groves; that is, setting apart Places for solemn Services, and for Calling on the Name of the LORD, the Everlasting GOD. As we go on in the sacred History, we cannot miss of observing, what particular Care was taken of every Thing related to GOD's Service among that peculiar People, which He chose out of all the Families of the Earth to place His Name there: What Variety and even Profusion of Expence and Skill was employ'd about the Ark and the Tabernacle, long before the Worshippers themselves had any settled Habitation: How carefully and minutely were the Courses of the Priests and Levites regulated: How exactly their Method and Times of Attendance prescribed: How remarkably their Observance of the Duty encouraged by that memorable Declaration of GOD Himself — <sup>a</sup> "In all Places where I record my Name I will come unto Thee, and I will bless Thee.*

Look we forward to the Settlement of the Jewish Polity under the Government of Kings? We find the Care of GOD's Publick Worship making up one of the distinguishing Ingredients in the Characters of their Good Princes; and, on the other Hand, the Neglect or Perversion of it always stigmatizing their Bad ones. The former we have remarkably exemplify'd in the Accounts of Solomon (in the prosperous Part of His Reign) of Jehoshaphat, of Hezekiah, and Josiah. But I need not enlarge upon Matters so well known. Only it may deserve a particular Observation,

<sup>a</sup> Exod. 20. 24.

that

that King *David* received a <sup>a</sup>*special Message* from GOD, expressly approving his *Intention only* of building an House, for the solemn Performance of Divine Worship: *Whereas it was in Thine Heart to build an House unto my Name, Thou didst well that it was in Thine Heart!* — How doth this excellent Prince, tenderly solicitous for the Welfare of his People, and sensible how much their Prosperity must ever depend on the regular Celebration of sacred Offices; how doth he *exult* upon discovering in *them* an Inclination so like *his own*? <sup>b</sup>*I was glad when they said unto me, "We will go into the House of the LORD.* And, as to himself, with what holy Ardor doth he express his Affection for GOD's Publick Service! <sup>c</sup>*O how amiable are Thy Dwellings, Thou LORD of Hosts! My Soul hath a Desire and Longing to enter into the Courts of the LORD: my Heart and my Flesh cry out for the Living GOD!* And again; <sup>d</sup>*My Soul is athirst for GOD, yea even for the Living GOD! When shall I come to appear before the Presence of GOD!* — Let us remember, that the Person, whose devout Breathings these were, had a <sup>e</sup>*very peculiar Testimony* in his Favour from GOD Himself: Of which doubtless he never approved himself more worthy, than when his *Heart* was thus *fixed* on joining in the sacred Services in his own Person, and on providing for the decent and beautiful Solemnization of them by others.

<sup>a</sup> Comp. 2 Sam. 7. 5 &c. with 1 Kin. 8. 18. <sup>b</sup> Psal. 122. 1. <sup>c</sup> — 84. 1, 2. <sup>d</sup> — 42. 2. <sup>e</sup> Comp. 1 Sam. 13. 14 &c. with Acts 13. 22.

Our Enquiries, if carry'd on through the *Prophetick* Ages, would discover to us the same Zeal for GOD's Publick Worship in the most eminent *Men*, which hath appear'd in the most glorious of their *Princes*. But the Time would fail me to enumerate particular Instances. Let it suffice to observe, that, throughout the *Jewish* History, we find a *Love* for GOD's *Publick Worship* flourishing, decaying, and reviving, in conjunction with *Publick Spirit* and every other great and noble *Qualification*; and *Publick Credit* and Prosperity with a very wonderful *Exactness* corresponding to *Both*.

Nor can the Introduction of *CHRIST's Religion* into the World be allow'd to have brought in with it an *entire* Change in this Matter, as some would persuade us. Our Blessed LORD, it is true, hath declared, that, as <sup>a</sup> *GOD is a Spirit, they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth*: And, that *neither at the Temple nor yet at Jerusalem should Men worship the Father*. But these Declarations, far from condemning social Worship, only explain the *unconfined Extent* of it as to Places and Countries under the Gospel-Dispensation, and shew what should in every Place and Country be accounted its *principal Requisite*, the Devotion of the *Heart*. — That our LORD was very far from intending to discourage the *joint* Addresses of His Followers, appears from His own *Promise*, that <sup>b</sup> *where Two or Three should be gather'd together to ask any Thing in His Name, there would He be in the*

<sup>a</sup> Joh. 4. 23, 24.    <sup>b</sup> Matt. 18. 19, 20.



*midst of them*; Nay from the <sup>a</sup> *Form of Prayer*, which Himself prescribed: And that He was as far from intending to discourage their Offering up these joint Addresses in *Places dedicated to Religious Purposes*, is as plain from His own <sup>b</sup> *Example* in attending the Temple-Service, and from that *Zeal* and *Indignation* with which He *chastised the Prophaners* of it. When <sup>c</sup> *certain Elders of the Jews besought Him instantly* in behalf of the *Good Centurion*, they express their Sense of his *Worthiness* of Favour in these remarkable Words, “*He loveth our Nation, and hath built us a Synagogue:*” And from the Regard our LORD pay’d to such a Recommendation, His own Approbation of *Synagogues* or Churches among *Christians*, when their Circumstances should provide them any such sacred Edifices, may be fairly infer’d. But, if *His Intention* in This respect were less clear than it is; We find His Disciples and first Followers (the best Interpreters of His Will, especially after the *Holy Spirit had led them into all Truth*) did not think themselves too spiritual, or possess’d of too high Attainments, for joining with their Converts <sup>d</sup> *in Doctrine and Fellowship, and in Breaking of Bread and in Prayers*. Accordingly (not to multiply Instances in a Case so clear) *St. Paul* in particular employs large Portions of some of His <sup>e</sup> *Epistles* in Directions for the Celebration of Religious Worship, and in Cautions against *Abuses* or *Disorders* in it. And how assiduous the *Primitive*

a Matt. 6. 9, &c. b Joh. 2. 13, 14, 15. c Luke 7. 4, 5.  
d Acts 2. 42. e 1 Cor. 11. 14 &c. and 1 Tim. 2. 12 &c.

*Christians* were in *their* Attendance on this great Duty, not only the Accounts of their Historians and Apologists, but the Reports of their Persecutors, amply testify.

To the *Reasons* before suggested for *social* Worship relating to us *as Men*, others might be added recommending it to us *as Christians*. In particular with regard to publick Blessings, *spiritual* ones especially, we may humbly hope our Addresses to our *Saviour*, or to the *Father in His Name*, will ascend with peculiar Efficacy, when they are the *united* Addresses of that <sup>a</sup> *Body*, of which He is the *Head*, — of that <sup>b</sup> *Church*, which He purchased with His own Blood. Indeed some of the most *solemn* Acts of that Worship, which our Divine *Founder* hath instituted, can only be performed *in Communion* with our Fellow-Christians. To which let me just add, that a *Relish* for such publick Acts of joint Adoration seems to be one of the most *suitable Qualifications*, one of the most *excellent Preparatives*, for bearing a Part with *the Spirits of Just Men made perfect*: Of which Society, as far as we have any Notices of its Nature or Employments, a numerous Congregation of devout Believers, lifting up their united Voices and enraptured Hearts, to the adorable *Object of Christian Worship*, presents to us one of the most lively Resemblances that this World affords.

In a Word; To *absent* ourselves causelessly from the Publick Worship of our *Creator* and *Redeemer*, is to cut ourselves off from some at

<sup>a</sup> Eph. 4. 15, 16.    <sup>b</sup> Acts 20. 28.

least of the most *comfortable Privileges* of the Gospel; and, if it do not *presuppose*, is however the most likely Way to *render*, us *Apostates* from our Holy Religion itself. *This* is strongly intimated by the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*; with whose remarkable Words I conclude this Head. \* “*Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without Wavering: — And let us consider one another, to provoke unto Love and to Good Works; Not forsaking the Assembling of ourselves together, as the Manner of some is, but exhorting one another.*

III. And now; If the Reasonableness, Advantages, and Necessity of a constant Attendance on Publick Worship be so apparent, from Considerations of *Civil Utility* as well as *Natural Obligation* and *Christian Duty*; What remains, but that All of us here present, as We would approve ourselves not only *Servants of GOD* and *Disciples of CHRIST*, but *Friends to the Community* in which we live, should earnestly endeavour, *first* by our own *Examples*, and *then* by such Influence and *Authority* as may be in our Power, to recommend and enforce the *universal Performance* of it.

The Degeneracy of the Times, and the Frequency of Villanies of the most alarming Kinds, among the lower People especially, have of late been severely felt and loudly complain'd of; and various Schemes have been proposed for the Remedy of these growing and almost insupportable

a Heb. 10. 23, 24, 25.

Evils:

Evils: Which Schemes, as far as they are honestly intended, every Friend to the Publick will *accept with Thankfulness*; and to which, as far as they are wisely calculated, every Good Man will *wish Success*: And will be encouraged to *hope* for it in *proportion* as such Schemes are *sanc-tify'd* by the *Worship of GOD*, and supported by suitable Provisions for diffusing *His Fear* throughout the various Subordinations of the Community. But, after all, You will permit me to suggest, what (I presume) Experience will too fully justify; “That vain and ineffectual will even the *best Provisions* of this Kind still be found, unless some *farther Care* be taken to secure a *general Attendance* upon them.”

I am aware, *this* is a Subject, upon which the Jealousies of Men, in an Age of Freedom and Refinement, are exceedingly apt to be alarm'd. In the Case of Religious Worship, any Thing like Inforcement or Authority will by Some be represented, as a *dangerous Infringement* of that *Liberty* to which all Men have a Right in these Matters; or however by Others, as a *fruitless Expedient* to implant in the Heart that *Principle*, which ought to proceed *wholly* from some better Cause. — Give me Leave to add a few Words, by Way of Guarding against Prejudices from *Either* of these Exceptions.

With regard to the *First*, then, it may deserve to be considered, What that *Liberty* means, for which Men are so jealous in the Case before us: Not, I hope, a *Freedom from all Obligation* to the Worship of GOD, in *any* Society, or under

der *any* visible Form whatsoever; but a *Freedom* from *Constraint* to worship Him in *such* a Society, or under *such* a Form, as a Man's own Reason and *Conscience* cannot, after due Deliberation, be brought to approve. Between *These* there evidently is, both in the Nature of the Thing and in their Influence upon Civil Society, a *wide Difference*; and between these therefore the Wisdom of our Legislature hath made a very *just Distinction*. — That *some determinate* Scheme or Mode of Worship should in every Country be *recommended* by special Privileges, and supported by suitable Endowments, hath often been proved, not only consistent with all *reasonable* Liberty, but on many Accounts highly expedient, if not absolutely necessary to preserve it. And, with regard to *that* Form of Worship, the Benefit whereof *this Nation* hath long experienced, I will take Leave to add; notwithstanding any supposed Defects, which have formerly raised the Clamour of the Enemies of our Church, and have lately been pointed out minutely enough by some who seem willing to be thought Her Friends; that it still continues to deserve, and we trust will ever continue to enjoy, all that Countenance and Support which the Laws of the Land have for many Years afforded it: At least 'till a *better* shall be offer'd, than hath *yet been* offer'd, for supplying Its Place. — However, since Objections have been started, and Scruples entertain'd, against certain Usages of our National Church; and, since Publick Wisdom hath declared itself *so far* satisfy'd with the Security  
given

given by those who worship GOD in *other* Congregations, as to exempt *them* from the Penalties that former Laws had imposed upon them; I would by no Means be understood to call for any *Infringement* of this *Indulgence*. But we may be allow'd to observe, that the Plea of a *conscientious Dissent* from our establish'd Form of Worship is not in *Reason* extended to a *wilful Absenting* from *all* Publick Worship. And, that it was never *intended* to *protect* any such Practice, appears from the *Statute itself*; \* which at the same Time that it exempts from *Legal Penalties* the Worshippers of GOD in separate Congregations, expressly leaves all others under the *Force* and *Execution* of them, *who come not to some Congregation or Assembly of Religious Worship, allow'd or permitted by the said Act*.

In short: To require Men to attend upon *some* Publick Worship, is not to break in upon any *Liberty*, which *conscientious* Men can well be supposed to *want*, or which the Laws of This Realm allow. For, unaccountably scrupulous indeed would those Consciences be, which, out of the great Variety permitted in these Kingdoms, could find *no Society* of Worshippers, no Form of Worship, pure enough for *them*. And our Laws, we see, know no Toleration for a *total Neglect* of Religious Worship. *This* the Wisdom of the Nation considers as being virtually a *Denial of the GOD that is above*; as in Consequence subversive of Order and Government; and, therefore, as *an Iniquity to be punished of the Judge*.

\* See Act of 1 *Will.* and *Mar.* Ch. 18. §. 16. a Job 31. 28.  
But

But perhaps, if *Authoritative Methods* may, in the Case supposed, appear *legally* defensible, we shall still be call'd upon to vindicate the *Propriety* or *Efficacy* of them. "Such Methods," it will be said, "can at best only affect *external Appearances*; but can never inspire Men with that *internal Devotion* which, to make it acceptable to GOD, or productive of Benefit to Society, must always be voluntary and *unconstrained*. In other Words, by the Use of such Methods, You may produce in Men *the Form*, but cannot give them *the Power, of Godliness*."

Now, it is readily acknowledged, that *some Truth* there is in this Exception. Indeed *merely Temporal* Inducements in general seem rather adapted, by any *direct* Efficiency, to the Re-forming Men's Manners, than to the *Purifying* of *their Hearts*: And undoubtedly, 'till the Heart is purify'd, whatever may be the *Behaviour*, the *Man* is not such as he ought to be. But then, because the most *salutary Discipline*, or the best calculated *Penal Sanctions*, can *immediately* reach only the outward Behaviour, and must depend even for *This* upon finding some proper *Dispositions* in those on whom they are employ'd; must *Places of Education* be wholly laid aside, and *Courts of Judicature* shut up? And must all human Provisions, unless *infallible Remedies* and able to do *every Thing*, be presently discarded as *useless* and good for *Nothing*? Men do not in other Cases use to *reason* at this Rate. Where much Evil is prevented, some Good is allow'd to be done. And why, should it not be

*some* Recommendation of Publick Institutions of Religion; if, whilst an Attendance upon them may leave a few bad Men *Hypocrites*, it will probably hinder *many more* from becoming, what they otherwise would almost unavoidably become, *abandoned Profligates*?

However, (blessed be GOD) we need not rest this Matter *here*. After all our Refinements, such is in fact the Constitution of human Nature, in the earlier Parts of Life especially, that long *repeated Acts* of outward Decency seldom fail to introduce *Habits* of *real Virtue*; and a *constant Attendance* on religious Worship, under the ordinary Influences of Divine Grace, is often finally productive of a sincere and *lasting Devotion*. With great Pleasure I appeal, for Instances of *Both*, to This ancient Seat of *Piety* as well as *Learning*: To which, I hope, it will not be any Disparagement to allow, that no inconsiderable Number of its *brightest Ornaments*, past or present, may *at first* Setting out have been chiefly determined to that exemplary Conduct in general, and even that regular Attendance upon sacred Offices in particular, which advanced them to this *Character*, by the Influence of *temporal* Motives; such as, Fear of Censure and Disgrace on one hand, and Hopes of Reputation and Encouragement on the other. And yet most certain it is (and may we All be duly sensible of it!) that whilst our Views rise no higher than *to be seen of Men*; and this in order to promote, not GOD's Glory, but our own Fame or Fortunes in the World; our *Hearts*  
are



*are not right*, and our most orderly Appearances at the Worship of our Maker want *That*, which *alone* can render them well-pleasing in His Sight. But, Are the stated Returns of our Religious Offices, and the Laws by which You enforce the Observance of them, of *no real* Service, therefore, in the Advancement of *true Piety*? Far otherwise. — *Young Minds* are by this Means *timely habituated* to an awful Deportment towards the Supreme Being; They are *train'd* up to a <sup>a</sup> *Love of the Habitation of God's House, and of the Place where His Honour dwelleth*: And (by His Blessing) many *Hearts*, which at first perhaps were touch'd only by *secular* Considerations, do in Process of Time catch the *Holy Flame*: a Flame which shall happily kindle in them a regular Warmth of Devotion, and such as shall burn and brighten all their Lives after. This, I doubt not, hath been the Case of many Thousands, who are now praising God for those happy Opportunities which they here enjoy'd; nay for those Restraints and <sup>b</sup> *Chastisings*, which for the present seem'd not joyous but grievous; which nevertheless afterwards yielded the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness unto them that were exercised thereby.

And, could the like outward Regularity of Worship be as strictly required, and as generally secured, in private *Families* daily, and *publicly* at least on *one Day in seven*, in other Parts of this Kingdom; I am perswaded, the Publick would soon perceive the agreeable Effects of it,

<sup>a</sup> Psal. 26. 8.    <sup>b</sup> Heb. 12. 11.

on the *rising Generation* especially. How far this may be wholly *practicable*, I presume not to say. But surely something more might be done, than too often is done, for so good a Purpose. And if once <sup>a</sup> *Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and Giving of Thanks*, be not only *made* publicly for all Orders and Degrees of Men, but as universally frequented by them; then, and not 'till then, may we hope to *lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty.*

I have now gone through the Particulars at first propos'd. But the Exception just consider'd suggests to us one very important, though plain, Truth, which I would willingly leave upon all our Minds in Conclusion of the present Subject; namely, "That a *Good Life*, as it is the *best Preparative* for Religious Worship, so is it a *Qualification* indispensably *necessary* to render our most punctual Performances a reasonable or an *acceptable Service.*"

<sup>b</sup> *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the LORD.* Be our Approaches to the *Temple*, and even to the *Altar*, never so constant, and our Minds work'd up to a Pitch of Devotion never so seemingly regular; yet we may assure ourselves, Nothing of this Kind will ever be admitted, either as an Equivalent for a virtuous Life, or as an Attonement for a vicious one: <sup>c</sup> *If the prevailing Inclination of our Hearts be to Wickedness, the LORD will not bear us.* <sup>d</sup> *We know* (said the Blind Man, to whom

<sup>a</sup> 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2.    <sup>b</sup> Prov. 15. 8.    <sup>c</sup> Psal. 66. 8.    <sup>d</sup> Joh. 9. 31.  
our

our Saviour gave Sight) *we know*, it is one of the clearest Notions we have concerning the Divine Proceedings, *that GOD beareth not Sinners: But, if any Man be at once a Worshipper of Him and in the general Tenor of Life doeth His Will, him He beareth.* — Let us then <sup>a</sup> *lift up holy Hands*, and <sup>b</sup> *offer unto the LORD our Offerings in Righteousness.* To the Piety of our Devotions let us add Purity of Life, and Uprightness of Conversation. — So shall our Prayers and Praises come up with Acceptance before GOD; and from thus *Fearing and Reverencing Him in the Assembly of the Saints* here on Earth, we shall, in His good Time, be translated into <sup>c</sup> *the general Assembly and Church of the First-born, that are written in Heaven:* Where, without Diffidence or Misgivings, without Wanderings or Distraction, without Weariness or Pain, we shall <sup>d</sup> *praise and adore HIM that sitteth on the Throne, and the LAMB, for Ever and Ever!*

a 1 Tim. 2. 8. b Mal. 3. 3. c Heb. 12. 23. d Rev. 5. 13.

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