A SERMON

Preach'd before the

UNIVERSITY of *OXFORD*,

At St. *MARY*'s,

ON

ACT SUNDAY in the FORENOON,

July 7. 1754.

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Publiſh'd at the Requeſt of the Vice-Chancellor, and Heads of Houſes.

OXFORD,

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To the Reverend

DR. *HUDDESFORD*

VICE-CHANCELLOR of the

UNIVERSITY of OXFORD,

And to the Reſt of the

HEADS of HOUSES,

The following DISCOURSE

(Preach'd and Publiſh'd with Intentions full of Regard to Themſelves and to the Univerſity)

Is

with the utmoſt Eſteem

and Affection

Inſcrib'd

By the AUTHOR.

Rom. XIV. 16.

Let not then your Good be evil ſpoken of.

THE benevolent and ſocial Spirit of Chriſtianity has been obſerv'd oftentimes to its Honour, and is, no doubt, its juſt and diſtinguiſhing Commendation. This, I think, is diſcernible in every different View of it; its Doctrines have all of them a Tendency, more or leſs immediate, to this end; the Patterns it propoſes to our Imitatation are of the ſame amiable and friendly ſort; then the Preceptive parts of our Religion abound every where with the warmeſt recommendations of Charity, and affectionate Concern for our Fellow-Creatures, in which the Perfection of Chriſtianity is frequently ſaid to conſiſt. Nor is Humanity in the higher and nobler Offices only inculcated with much earneſtneſs in holy Scripture, but regard is had to the ſlighteſt Appearance and ſmalleſt Circumſtances of our good Actions; to whatever may in the remoteſt manner ſerve to conciliate Men's Hearts, and knit them cloſe to-

gether in Charity, *the very bond of Perfectness.* In a word, what we may call the Lesser Morals make no inconsiderable part of our Religion's care; whereby *the Man of God is* not only *furnished unto all good Works,* but is taught likewise the most unexceptionable engaging Manner of performing them; is call'd upon, by every prudent method of Consideration and Caution, to recommend and grace his good Actions; to give Virtue its full Force; to procure it its proper Acceptation; and to add to what is comely *a yet more abundant Comeliness.*

The Words above-recited are one Instance among many of what I have been asserting; wherein Christians, *living in a crooked and perverse Generation,* are exhorted *to shine as Lights in the World*; to *make their Righteousness as clear as the Light*; and to free their good Actions from any such Spots or Obscurities as the watchful Eye of Envy or Obloquy may wish to spy in them: and the Intent, no doubt, is this — That Virtue may thus stand forth in its true genuine Lustre; and Men be led first to approve, and then to imitate, what they see so amiable in Another's Conduct; and that Harmony and Charity the meanwhile may unite and cement Christian Hearts.

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The Exhortation in its primary intention was ſpecial, I do ſuppoſe, and had reſpect to a State of things likely enough to ſubſiſt, and which we find actually ſubſiſting, in a Society of new Chriſtian Converts. Some of theſe, (whether of a wiſer Judgement or a warmer Confidence, the Apoſtle does not ſay which, but) Men fond of their Chriſtian Liberty ran to the utmoſt Line of it, and diſcarding all little Scrupuloſity about Meats and Drinks ate and drank indifferently of whatever was ſet before 'em; and of Days and ſuch-like Diſtinctions made no manner of Account, looking with much Unconcernedneſs on theſe leſſer Matters. Others, (weak Brethren the Apoſtle ſtiles them, and perhaps we might do ſo too, but at leaſt) Perſons of a more cautious and timid Temper, ſo far from doing ſuch things themſelves, could not endure to ſee others do them, but took grievous Offence thereat, and thought the worſe not only of the Men, but of the Religion, that could ſeem to give warrant to ſuch Licence. The Conſequence was no other than might be expected; Men's Hearts were alienated from each other; Charity waxed cold among Chriſtian Brethren; and what was worſe, Chriſtianity itſelf (as will always be the caſe) loſt Credit amidſt theſe Diſſenſions.

'Twas an Occaſion worthy the Apoſtle's Interpoſition; and therefore He, who ſo well knew how to accommodate Himſelf to every Exigence, and to be *All Things to All Men*, moſt ſuitably and ſeaſonably interpoſes this candid Remonſtrance, addreſs'd to the offending Parties— *Let not then your Good be evil ſpoken of:* Be cautious of expoſing yourſelves and your good Actions to Slanders and Suſpicions, eaſy to be avoided: Learn, for this purpoſe, to abſtain altogether from things, if not unlawful, yet in the preſent Circumſtances inexpedient; and what is too Good to be given up, be content however to guard, and explain, and vindicate from Miſconſtruction: Do this for your Own Sake, for Other's Sake, for Religion's Sake; that you may preſerve thereby the good Word and good Opinion of Mankind, which will always be worth your having; that you may remove needleſs Offences and Uneaſineſſes out of a weak Brother's way; and be no longer the Occaſion that Men *blaſpheme that worthy Name by the which you are called:* Do this, I ſay, on all theſe Accounts; and be aſſur'd, that as, *whilſt you wound theſe weak Conſciences, you ſin againſt Chriſt*, ſo by a tender Regard towards them you act conformably to His Will and His Example; and that

that ſuch Conduct, in the right Notion of it, is not Meanneſs but Magnanimity, is not Servility but Charity, and truly Chriſtian Condeſcenſion.

Such was the Apoſtle's Exhortation, and the State of Things that firſt gave occaſion to it: but 'twere Wrong done to ſo good Advice, to confine it to thoſe Caſes only where Religion happens to be concern'd, or to any particular Seaſons or Circumſtances how important ſoever. It is calculated and deſign'd, no doubt, (as moſt other His ſpecial Directions are) for general Uſe and Obſervance; and will unqueſtionably be wiſe Counſel as long as the World laſts; or whilſt there ſhall be ſuch Things as Miſapprehenſion and Miſtake, Weakneſs and Wilfulneſs, Want of Candour and Want of Caution remaining amongſt Men.

But before we proceed to ſpeak further of explaining and guarding our good Actions, agreeably to the Advice here given us, it may be proper to ſay ſomething for the better Explanation of the Advice itſelf, not otherwiſe ſecure from Miſconſtruction. For as the beſt Actions are liable to be miſreported and ſlander'd by evil Tongues, ſo are the plaineſt Words to be miſinterpreted by weak Judgements; and as

clear

clear and certain as the Precept of the Text is, there may yet be found ſome perverſe enough to object to it, as propoſing Impoſſibilities, and things plainly out of our Power: Foraſmuch as Men's Tongues, they may ſay, are their own, and as free to ſpeak evil as to ſpeak at all; and that, how exact and exemplary ſoever our Conduct be, ſmall Impreſſion is likely to be made on uncharitable and evil Hearts, *out of the Abundance of which the Mouth will ſpeak evil Things.* All this may be true, no doubt, and our Apoſtle muſt needs know it to be ſo, having Himſelf met with His Share of malicious and cruel Treatment, and maintain'd an invincible Courage and Conſtancy amidſt *evil Report and good Report.* The utmoſt He could poſſibly intend then by the Precept now under Conſideration was, to excite us to a due meaſure of Care and Circumſpection in our whole Conduct, to the uſe of all the proper Means in our power to prevent Scandal, and ſtop the mouths of Detractors: And as upon another Occaſion, where He exhorts *Timothy*, in a like form of Words, to *Let no Man deſpiſe Him*, the plain Meaning is, that He ſhould be moſt diligent to do nothing deſerving of Contempt; ſo to direct us here, *Not to let Our Good be evil ſpoken of*, is to bid us, in other Words, to do all that in us lies

to

to cut off Occaſions of Miſreport, to clear up our Conduct to Satisfaction, and to maintain, what we may term, a Right Underſtanding among Brethren; which when we have done with an honeſt and hearty Endeavour, and to the utmoſt of our Power, we have done our Part, all that Chriſtianity or Good Conſcience require of us; and from thenceforth let Calumny rail on, to its own Confuſion and to the Praiſe of Virtue; which tho' it may rob of ſome portion of its preſent Comfort, yet will it not fail in the End to enhance its Reward.

Towards fulfilling the Precept, in this View of it, with better proſpect of Succeſs, it may conduce perhaps to enquire, *Firſt*, How it comes to paſs, that *Good* of every ſort is ſo ſubject to be *evil ſpoken of*; or to what accountable Cauſes it may be owing, that, with regard to the World's good Word, Virtue is ſo often found not only in neglected Caſe, but, which is ſad to think of, in a Condition of at leaſt equal Diſadvantage with Vice itſelf. For diſcovering the Cauſes whence any Evil ſprings ſeems the ready way to prevent or put a ſtop to it; but ſhould this prove inſufficient in the preſent Caſe, we may carry on our Enquiry, and conſider, *Secondly*, What is the prudent Part, where *Good* happens

to

to be *evil ſpoken of*; or how Virtue ought to demean itſelf under the hard circumſtance of unmerited Reproach: after which ſhall follow the Application where it may be likely to have beſt Effect.

Our *Firſt* Enquiry ſhall be then, how it comes to paſs, that *Good* of every ſort is ſo ſubject to be *evil ſpoken of*. That ill Things ſhould be ill ſpoken of is an Event congruous and fitting, ſuch as may fairly be expected, and what it were abſurd and fruitleſs to ſet about to prevent. Let Vice be cenſur'd and ſham'd out of the World, as it deſerves to be; but that Virtue ſhould ſhare the ſame Fate is not ſo eaſy to endure, or to account for — Of Things rare and uncommon to be met with we are uſually diſpos'd to think favourably and to ſpeak kindly, and the bare circumſtance of Scarceneſs ſhall be ſufficient oftentimes to procure Acceptance to a Thing with not a grain of Merit or Recommendation diſcernible in it beſides. And may not Virtue, I would aſk, be reckon'd among the ſcarce Things of theſe our Times? I mean no diſparagement to the Times in reſpect of former ones, neither would I compliment them at the expence of Truth; allow them as Good as they have generally been, ſtill may Virtue, I conceive, when compar'd

compar'd with its Oppoſite more eſpecially, be deem'd a rare Thing; and, by the rule of Rarity, might therefore expect better Entertainment than is commonly given it. But what is a Circumſtance ſo advantageous to moſt Things elſe, will be found a Prejudice and ſore Hindrance unto Virtue. To ſpeak plainly and to the purpoſe at once — That which is proper to a Few will be wanting in the Many; and ſuch Deficiency being apt to be felt, where there is any Feeling, puts Men out of Humour, firſt with themſelves, and afterwards with others to whom they owe their Uneaſineſs. There is ſomewhat in Human Nature, generous enough in the Deſign but miſchievous now and then in the Application, ſomewhat impatient of ſuperiour Excellence; which, tho' intended to puſh Men on to laudable Purſuits, and to the Attainment and Imitation of what is valuable in others, takes oftentimes a different turn, and puts them upon lowering and bringing down to their own level what they want the Spirit and Reſolution to be like. To copy after good and virtuous Actions requires Pains, for the moſt part, and the uneaſy conqueſt of ſome irregular Deſire; but to defame and vilify ſuch good Actions is one of the eaſieſt things in the World, and is practis'd accordingly with a very unhappy degree of Suc-

ceſs, requiring little elſe than what baſe diſhoneſt Minds are uſually well ſupplied with, Malice in good abundance, with a moderate proportion of wicked Cunning.

Thus are the Ill-natur'd and Envious, no contemptible Number, in a ſtate of continual Enmity againſt Virtue, ready upon all occaſions, and often without occaſion, to call it ill Names, or do it unkind Turns. Nor are theſe the only Adverſaries it has to guard againſt; there are others of a yet more determin'd Virulence, and actuated by a keener ſpirit of Revenge: Thoſe, I mean, are the Immoral and Vicious, to whom an exemplary Conduct has the force of a ſtanding Accuſation or Reproach. *Maſter, ſo ſaying thou reproacheſt Us*; was the Language of One feeling the Truth of the Reflection paſt; the like Sentiment does ſilent Virtue ſuggeſt to many a wicked Heart ſuſceptible of ſuch Impreſſions; and no wonder, if thus irritated, as it were, and under the circumſtance of a ſuppos'd Provocation, Men be forward to quit Scores, and to repay Reproaches with Intereſt. The Truth is, ſo long as Virtue holds in Eſteem and Reputation, Vice muſt paſs its time but ill, and will have much ado to keep itſelf in Countenance; in which uneaſy Situation 'tis but natural,

tural, and looks like a ſort of neceſſary Self-defence, to recompence the ill Office, and endeavour to weaken the Influence and Authority which keep it under, and ſhew it in a light of ſo much Diſadvantage. Upon this Score Virtue has to encounter often with evil Tongues; and, much Wit and Wickedneſs have been employ'd to ridicule, and, which is a ſtranger Attempt ſtill, to reaſon it out of the World; wherein one ſees an Art and an Aſſiduity that are very ſurprizing in ſome Perſons.

But even in Caſes where there is no ſuch Interference, *Good* often has been, often will be *evil ſpoken of*, we muſt expect. — Some will do it in meer Ignorance, knowing little or no Difference between Good and Ill, and conſequently making none in their accounts and reports of them; Others of very Wantonneſs, with no ſet purpoſe of Miſchief, but in compliance perhaps with the Vogue, or in ſupply of vacant Converſation, or the like preſſing Occaſion.—Some, purely to gain Credit and Acceptance to their Reports, (which being of the Evil ſort are ſure almoſt to be well received) or to give an air of Importance to their Perſons, affect much to be finding Fault: For, I know not how, a grave and ſolemn Cenſure, pronounc'd with good aſſurance,

has a way of making ſome Folks look Significant, that would be otherwiſe but inconſiderable, and ſeem to themſelves and others of no indifferent Account. — Some, finding or fancying in themſelves a Talent for Ridicule, will indulge it out of meaſure, regardleſs of Diſtinctions, and caring little who's the Sufferer or what the Sacrifice, ſo long as they have but the Credit and Commendation of the Jeſt. — Some, from capricious Diſlikes of their Own, or officiouſly adopting the Diſlikes of Others, call Things by their wrong Names; looking perhaps to find their Account in Scandal, and, when ſo, being of all others the moſt immoderate in the Uſe of it: and not a Few, I'm afraid, for meer Miſchief's ſake, and from a ſtrange Pleaſure they take in ſpeaking Evil and doing Evil, propagate baſe Slanders, and *ſhoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words.* — Then little differences of Denomination, or differences of Opinion, or ſimilar Pretenſions, or eager Competitions often come in the way; all or any of which will *whet* Men's *Tongues like a Sword*, and give a notable Keenneſs and Activity to their Malice. Meanwhile good and virtuous Men, good themſelves, and no ill Wiſhers to other's Good, yet being too cautious and ſparing in their Defence of it, licence the Multitude of Detractors, and indirectly,

ly, however undeſignedly, *give Occaſion to the Enemy to blaſpheme.*

Nay and, it may be aſked, is not *Good evil ſpoken of* Itſelf frequently in fault, furniſhing handle and occaſion for Suſpicions or Reflections? I know not but it ſometimes may — As in good Senſe there is obſerv'd to be oftentimes a mixture of the Severe, ſo in Virtue, not uncommonly, we diſcern a like degree of Auſterity, a Stiffneſs and Unpliableneſs, not loving to ſtoop to bye and inferiour Regards, and manifeſting itſelf in a Neglect or even a faſtidious Contempt of Appearances and leſſer Circumſtances. Conſcious of its good Meaning, and having the teſtimony of its own honeſt Heart, it is apt to look no farther, and to ſet too light by what the World thinks or ſays, as of no manner of importance either to Virtue or to Happineſs. The World, the exceptious part of it, is as apt to reſent the Neglect, and, laying hold of ſome unguarded Circumſtance or other, to miſreport what is Good; and in this manner often ſpoils both its Credit and Effect by giving it a wrong Turn or Appellation.

Thus may *Good be evil ſpoken of* by its own Negligence or Default; by not attending to Circumſtances,

cumſtances, ſmall perhaps in themſelves, but of ſpecial uſe to conciliate Favour; which Malice will be ſure to take advantage of, and the more candid Interpreter, doubting whether or no all be right, and ſeeing the Party's own Unconcern, will therefore be the leſs forward and ſollicitous to defend. There is, in ſhort, ſo wrong a Way of doing right, ſuch an untoward and ill-contriv'd Manner of performing the beſt Actions, peculiar to ſome Perſons, that the Benefit is often loſt both to the Objects and the Authors of them; and Good-nature Itſelf has much ado on ſuch Occaſions to refrain from being ſevere.

But tho' that be not the Caſe, and our Good be moſt free from Exceptions of this Sort, yet may it be exceptionable ſtill; either as being defective, in degree ſuppoſe, and ſhort of what our Capacities and Circumſtances requir'd of us on the Occaſion; or elſe as defective in kind, and having ſomewhat of Alloy and Ill-mixture in its compoſition. For when all's done, I doubt there will be found Flaws and Imperfections belonging to our Beſt Actions; which tho' Candour might be willing to overlook, Ill-nature knows not how to ſpare, but will take ſpecial Account of theſe, and be ready to denominate the Whole Action from them. Or tho' a Particular

cular Act may be too good to be found Fault with, yet 'tis odds but there's ſomewhere a Failure in the Character, ſome Weak Side capable of being expos'd; which Malice can be moſt ſagacious in diſcovering, with much dexterity confound with what is good, and by means of *a little Leaven leaven the Whole Lump.* Or laſtly, which is a rare Caſe indeed, ſhould the Character be ſo unblameable throughout, as to be Itſelf above the reach of unrighteous Malice; even then it may be attack'd, very ſucceſsfully, in the Crowd, and compriz'd under the general Scandal, thrown often, without diſtinction, upon whole Communities of Men: for Malice is ſometimes moſt comprehenſive in its Aim, and loves dearly to ſpread the Scandal broad; inverting the rule of Divine Vengeance, and blaſting a whole City for the Few Unrighteous that may be found therein.

By all theſe, and by many more Ways, known only to the Malicious themſelves, does Good lie open to injurious Aſperſions; which to eſcape entirely may be the ſingular good Fortune of a few, but is too rare a Privilege for any one to depend upon. The more probable Iſſue we ſhould expect and provide againſt; and to this purpoſe it may be uſeful to enquire farther, what

Methods

Methods are moſt likely to prevent *Good from being evil ſpoken of*; or, in caſe of ill Accident, to put a ſtop to it; or, in failure of this Endeavour alſo, what Prudence yet directs to be done on our Part, and how Virtue ought to demean itſelf under the hard circumſtance of unmerited Reproach.

I have ſaid before and will ſuppoſe ſtill, that the World's good Opinion is at all times worth the having; at the rate of diſhoneſt or undue Compliance, I do not mean; (for if we *value the Praiſe of Men, the Praiſe of God is greater*, and will admit of no compariſon when they come into Competition) but in the way of virtuous and laudable Endeavour it is worthy to be ſought after; and to wiſh to be well ſpoken of for what we have done well is a wiſe and rational Aim, and what the ſtricteſt rules of Simplicity and Modeſty allow us to purpoſe to ourſelves. It ſerves for a comfortable Aſſurance, added to our own Conſcience, that we have done well, and is a moſt efficacious Incitement to a Continuance in well doing; it enlarges our Importance, and Ability to do Good, and to promote the Acceptance and Furtherance of whatever is good in the World: on all which accounts if Eſteem and good Name may fitly be

deſir'd,

deſir'd, for the ſame, or for ſtronger reaſons, ſhould Obloquy and odious Imputation be induſtriouſly avoided by us; as producing Effects the very reverſe of the former, in a like or even larger proportion; as obſtructing the Succeſs and Progreſs of Virtue in general, throwing Difficulties and Diſappointments in the way of particular good Actions, and damping that Satisfaction and Complacency of Mind, which are no inconſiderable part of their Reward. For however Virtue may wrap itſelf up in its Sufficiency, and expect Enjoyment compleat from abſtracted Contemplations on its own Perfections, yet without ſome ſocial Supports and Regards its Satisfactions, I fear, will be but few and ſlender; this at leaſt we may be certain of, that if Eſteem and good Name can make but ſmall Addition to our Happineſs, Reproach and Contempt, how cauſeleſs ſoever, will prove very uncomfortable Abatements of it; ſuch as we are concern'd, for our own Peace ſake, if poſſible, to prevent.

Now the beſt and only Method I know of preventing them, after taking Care that our Conduct be right, is to ſee that it be diſcreetly and inoffenſively ſo: for there is, as I ſaid before, a wrong Way of being in the right, an unacceptable Manner of performing the beſt Actions, re-

 markable

markable in ſome ill-judging Perſons, and much eaſier obſerv'd than deſcrib'd. But Good is moſt apt to offend and to incur blame by little Inattentions and Improprieties reſpecting ſome ſmaller Circumſtances. Good Men, in their overmuch Zeal to be ſo, will be unſeaſonable now and then, not enough regardful of Times and Occaſions, and ſo are cenſur'd for raſh and impertinent; or the Good they mean to do, if not out of Time, is yet out of Character, foreign to the Condition and proper Buſineſs of their Station, and ſo paſſes for no better than intereſted Deſign; or elſe it may be too publick and expos'd in the Manner of it, and ſo lie open to the Charge of Oſtentation: on which laſt Circumſtance I would obſerve, that there is a Glare oftentimes in ſome very good Actions, that offends and ſcorches; and, ſeeming to bear hard upon other's Pretenſions, ſets the Envious to work to find out, if poſſible, the Imperfections belonging to them, and to proclaim them with moſt ſpiteful Aggravation.

Of all ſuch Appearances we ſhould beware, if we are minded to ſteer clear of Cenſure; and keep a ſtrict Watch and Guard over our good Actions, thoſe of any Importance more eſpecially; yet not ſo ſtrict, as to deſtroy the Grace and Simpli-

Simplicity, which is their moſt recommending property, and defeat the very end propos'd by us. For there is a demure and guarded Manner, the proper Dreſs of Art and Deſign, that is very diſguſting, and ſeldom fails to create Suſpicion, which is near Neighbour to Reproach: as, on the other hand, there is a Way of Conduct, (known perhaps but to a few, and requiring rare Temper and Diſcretion to hit upon,) ſo artleſs and undeſigning, ſo well-ſuited to the Perſon and the Occaſion, and ſo unexceptionable in every part, that Abuſe can have no hold of it, but is overaw'd and put to the bluſh, and forc'd either to be ſilent, or to join in the general Commendation.

By conforming as near as we can to ſuch Patterns, we ſhall bid faireſt to eſcape Cenſure; whereto it will conduce likewiſe not a little, to preſerve the Whole Character uniform and of a piece, free from Inconſiſtencies, and Things even of a ſuſpicious or queſtionable Sort. For Good ſuffers often in bad Company, by being mix'd and aſſociated with what is Ill, or eſteem'd Ill, and ſo ſharing in its Diſpraiſe. It is ſcarce needful to add, that, the better to ſecure the like Treatment from others, we ſhould ourſelves be Examples of Candour and Kindneſs, very en-

gaging Qualities, and which rarely go unrequited; whereas to abuſe, and revile, and *ſpeak evil of what we know not*, is the ſure way to be recompens'd in our turn; for ſuch Debts are always paid back with Intereſt; Malice will certainly not be behind in its Returns; and even gentle and generous Diſpoſitions, ſo provok'd, will ſometimes forget their Natures, and let themſelves looſe to Reproach.

Still with all theſe Preſervatives and Cautions, I cannot certainly warrant that *Good* ſhall not ſometimes, by ſome unlucky Accident or other, *be evil ſpoken of*; in which ſituation if it chance to find itſelf, what's fitteſt to be done then? is the next moſt concerning Queſtion. Follow the Example of ſome cholerick Spirits, and you will be ready to return ſuch injurious Treatment, in the meaſure of *Zaccheus*'s Reſtitution, fourfold; and the Effect will be, that evil *Tongues* thus *ſet on fire* will wax hot apace, and what was at firſt but a haſty Spark will be ſoon blown into a Flame of malicious Contention: conſult ſome more phlegmatick Tempers, and the Advice will probably be — neglect and deſpiſe wicked Scandal, carrying its own Confutation; leave evil Tongues to tire out themſelves, till their whole ſtock of wretched and contemptible Malice

lice be quite ſpent: neither can I approve of ſuch Counſel, I muſt confeſs; eſteeming it a ſort of Inhumanity to be inſenſible to Reproach, and to ſlight that honeſt Fame, on which ſo conſiderable a part of our preſent Happineſs is made to depend. Imprudence, paſt all doubt, it is to be regardleſs of that which does Miſchief; for, alaſs, the moſt impotent Malice can do Miſchief ſtill; which, unluckily, is very eaſy to be done, and lies open to all ſort of Capacities. Regard to one's Self therefore, to one's own Comfort and Repoſe, and Regard to Reputation, that chief Inſtrument of doing Good, (ever affected by ill Reports true or falſe,) are all ſo many Calls on us to endeavour to put a ſtop to them; which, for the moſt part, is not ſo impracticable as we may imagine. A moderate Proportion of well-tim'd Prudence and Diſcretion will go far towards effecting it; farther perhaps than a more eager and more importunate Endeavour: for there is an obſequious over-acted Complaiſance, very inſincere and very nauſeous; which, in aiming to remove paſt Cenſures, is moſt apt to adminiſter freſh occaſions of Offence. A well-temper'd Humanity and Reſpect, (ſuch as we owe and muſt pay the World, if we would live upon tolerable Terms with it,) will be the likelier Method to accompliſh our purpoſe.

poſe. Perhaps what has given Offence may really be faulty, in ſome reſpect or other, and, if ſo, is much better amended or laid aſide, the exceptionable Part at leaſt, than maintain'd and perſiſted in; or, if not faulty, it may yet be inſignificant, and ſo a proper and eaſy Sacrifice to Charity; or if it chance to be important *Good* that is *evil ſpoken of*, ſuch, for the moſt part, is eaſily made appear, and its Character, when unhappily miſtaken, recogniz'd, by a patient hearing and removing of Miſtakes, by friendly Endeavours to undeceive, and, as Occaſions will admit, by good-natur'd Accommodations, and Compliances with Men's Humours: and I know no need there is to be aſham'd of ſuch Condeſcenſions, for which we have the moſt unexceptionable and honourable Precedents upon Record.

After all this Care and Endeavour to keep clear of them, if yet *Offences will come* and will continue, why ſo they muſt; but *wo to them by whom the Offence cometh.* — It muſt be own'd to be a Circumſtance ſomewhat provoking, when good Men, leaving all Rewards elſe to lower Ambitions, ſeek only the Reward of Eſteem and good Name for what they have well done, without being able to obtain it; the Effect of which

Diſappoint-

Diſappointment hath ſometimes been, that they have grown leſs careful to be good, or, in their too much Reſentment, have left off to be ſo; and at length entitled themſelves to the Reproach, heretofore ſo unjuſtly caſt on them. But this is ſad Indiſcretion ſurely; it is gratifying, and, in ſome ſort, juſtifying cruel Enemies, and being grievouſly injurious to their Ownſelves. The wiſer Part, no doubt, is Perſeverance, and patient Continuance in Well-doing, in hopes of more equitable Iſſues. Theſe will come about one time or other in their Turn. An Event ſo unnatural and prepoſterous as *Good evil ſpoken of* cannot laſt long; Malice itſelf uſually ſo contrives that it ſhall not; and, overcharging the Calumny, miſſes its Mark, or recoils back upon its own Head. Or if not ſo, yet Words and Opinions are volatile unfix'd Things, wherein there is a ſort of Vogue, and which, like moſt other Faſhions, ſhift ſoon, and are ſucceeded by ſomething the moſt oppoſite. And tho' this Rule fail us too, yet Time and a good Providence's Care uſually ſets all right; corrects Miſtakes, and confirms Judgements and Pretenſions well-founded. Good, in ſpite of unfortunate Depreſſions, will be uppermoſt at laſt, and come clearer and brighter out of the Cloud of Calumny. Or, which is a hard Caſe indeed, ſhould Virtue

tue go to the Grave in Diſgrace, yet then at laſt the Malicious themſelves are commonly diſpos'd to do it Juſtice; or, retaining their cruel Purpoſes, are unable to hurt it any longer: for Good is gone to Heaven, to aſſociate with benevolent and kind Spirits, beyond the Power and above the Apprehenſion of evil Tongues; which have their Portion likewiſe in reſerve for them, a Recompence in kind, *even mighty and ſharp Arrows with hot burning Coals.*

But 'tis Time to come now to our intended Application of the Apoſtle's Precept — *Let not then your Good be evil ſpoken of:* in the obſervance of which Rule Societies, to be ſure, are not leſs concern'd than ſingle Perſons; Societies of a higher Order in particular, whoſe Good is more open to Obſervation, more generally obſerv'd and diſcours'd of, and the Reputation of it of ſingular Importance to Themſelves and to the Publick.

In theſe *Days of Rebuke and Blaſphemy*, when the Beſt Things in the World, not excepting Religion itſelf, are become the Subjects of Reproach, who ſhall promiſe themſelves Exemption; or pretend to ſay, that ſuch Licence of Evil-ſpeaking, if it has not already, may not hereafter

hereafter be felt in Places that ſhould be moſt free from it; even in theſe illuſtrious Seats of Learning, which ought ever to be kept ſacred *from the ſtrife of Tongues.* If there be a good Work upon the face of the Earth, and one worthy of all Acceptation, it is that certainly wherein we profeſs to be employ'd, the improving ourſelves and inſtructing others in every part of a religious and learned Education. *Let it not then be evil ſpoken of:* under this Character it is impoſſible it ſhould be ſo; (No Malice was ever ſo outrageous or ridiculous;) but Miſtakes and Miſrepreſentations may be made, and then it will be poſſible. Of theſe therefore it muſt be our Wiſdom to beware, and of every Appearance that may give Occaſion to them, adopting all ſuch others as are of a contrary Tendency. I am not ſpeaking of Appearances inſtead of Realities, but in Support of them. To be good is the firſt great Point, no doubt, (and ſo far, I truſt, we are ſecure always,) the next is to appear and to be thought ſo; a Point not leſs eſſential than the former, in what relates to our Credit and our Uſefulneſs. For certain it is that Good alone will not ſerve the turn; there muſt be Eſteem and Opinion to go along with it, and give it its juſt Weight. It is Good well-approv'd and well-reported of that is neceſſary,

to our Prosperity I will not say, but to our very Preservation, as a Seat of Learning. Nor need we be under Concern on this account; for as much as *Iniquity* (of the evil speaking sort especially) abounds, *and Love waxes cold*, yet till the World grows to be much worse than it is, I trust there will always be Prepossessions, very general and very strong ones, in Favour of Learning and the Seats of Learning; which Wise Men will be studious to improve, and to preserve the Publick Approbation to what must owe its Subsistence to Publick Countenance. I speak the Sense, and the Practice too, I would hope, of all serious Persons, of all in any Degree of Station or Authority among us; whom it is neither needful nor becoming in me to commend, who have the Honour to stand in so near Relation to them: their own Hearts commend them, and the Tongues of others, whose Praises are better worth, and may redound more to their own and to the general Reputation. What I have farther to say shall be address'd to the Younger Part of my Audience, in a word or two of Admonition not unsuitable to the Occasion.

Young Persons, whether they are aware of it or no, have, and must have always, the Publick

lick Reputation a good deal in their keeping: my meaning is, what they do well or ill, but ill more eſpecially, will be likely to affect not themſelves only, but this whole Community, and to derive a laſting Credit or Infamy upon it. This ought in all reaſon to be a Check upon their Conduct, and to make them very tender of doing any thing injurious to the common Reputation; which is too precious a great deal to be made the Sacrifice of idle Frolick, or libertine Diſpoſition. I would be far from ſuggeſting that ſuch Things are frequent or prevalent among us; I hope and believe the contrary, and produce, as a Proof of it, the late peaceable and orderly Behaviour of our Younger Members, already notic'd by the Magiſtrate, and deſerving of ſecond Mention. Amidſt Scenes of Tumult and Diſorder, where Youthful Ardor ſo eaſily catches Fire, to have been Examples of Decency and Sobriety is very commendable indeed, ſhews much Concern for their own and the Place's Reputation, and does Honour to both. The like Conduct will ſecure the like good Effects for the future. Young Perſons are plac'd here in the Publick Eye, to acquire the Character and Qualifications that muſt recommend them hereafter to Publick Favour; in which Situation the World, they muſt think,

will have ſomething to ſay of them, Good or Ill, has a fair Pretence for ſaying it; and much it concerns them, for their own and the Place's ſake, the Report ſhould be in their Favour. For this purpoſe let them purſue the Good that is before them ſteadily and attentively, undiverted by Things foreign, and diſtinguiſh'd by the Simplicity, Frugality, and Modeſty ſo ſuitable to their Age and Station. Expence and Extravagance, Faults chiefly incident to Younger Perſons, are abſolutely incompatible with the good Purpoſes of the Place; the very Imputation whereof muſt lie heavy, and the Practice, if ever it ſhould become general, would be deſtructive to it. Of theſe, and the very Appearances of theſe, we ſhould therefore beware: and let Young Men, who profeſs to be Learners, not ſet up to be Judges, or not deciſive ones however, in the ſmalleſt Matters, and much leſs in queſtions of Strife and Debate. Remote from Publick Scenes, and unacquainted with the Parts acting upon Them, let them ſuſpend their Opinions, or at leaſt their Determinations about Publick Matters; and not embarraſs their future Conduct by premature Declarations, uſeleſs at beſt, but often inconvenient. Or if raſh unguarded Youth muſt needs be giving Judgements about Things which they know not, let

them

them be candid and favourable ones; and as Themſelves deſire to be well ſpoken of, let them not *ſpeak Evil* of Others, *of Dignities* eſpecially, which will draw on heavy Imputations of Ignorance or Somewhat worſe. In a word, let them enjoy the Advantage of their Situation, and be juſt to themſelves, and the Opportunities here afforded them; *whatſoever Things are honeſt, lovely, and of good Report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praiſe, thinking on theſe Things*; and confirm'd in them by the Encouragements and Examples of their Superiours.

Such Conduct will ſecure Reputation to Themſelves and to theſe Societies; (without which Solemnities and Celebrations were Idle Pomp, of no uſe but to expoſe;) it will ſecure Reputation, and every other Good in conſequence; and the Reſult will be this at laſt — that when Novelties have been tried for a time, and the World is grown ſick of fantaſtick and fugitive Schemes of Education, Good Things will come round again in their turn; and the Preference be given, where it is due, to our old and ſafe Methods of Inſtruction. Engliſh Univerſities will reſume once more their ancient Splendor, enjoying the Good Word and the Good Wiſhes of all true Judges of their Worth; and that

that calm and flowing Courſe of Proſperity, in ſo lively a Manner repreſented by the [a] Prophet, ſhall receive its Accompliſhment in Theſe Places —*Thy Children ſhall be all taught of God, and great ſhall be the Peace of Thy Children; in Righteouſneſs ſhalt Thou be eſtabliſhed; Thou ſhalt be far from Oppreſſion; no Weapon that is formed againſt Thee ſhall proſper; and every Tongue that ſhall riſe againſt Thee in Judgement Thou ſhalt condemn: This is the Heritage of the Servants of the Lord, and their Righteouſneſs is of Me, ſaith the Lord.*

a Iſai. 54. 13, &c.

The END.

Pag. 7. l. 10. read thus — which, tho' it may rob us of ſome portion of our preſent Comfort, yet will not fail in the end to enhance our Reward.