God not the Origin of Evil.

Being an additional

SERMON

TO A

COLLECTION

OF

Mr. COLLIER's Discourses, &c.

LONDON:

Printed by W. BOWYER, 1726.

SERMON XII.

St. JAMES i. 13, 14.

Let no Man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man; but every Man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed.

ALL Laws, whether Humane or Divine, ſignify nothing with reſpect to Government, as long as thoſe for whom they are made, believe them impracticable: For under

this Perſuaſion they will not only be unconcern'd at the breaking them; but never uſe their Endeavours, nor try their Strength, whether they can reach up to the Command or not. Now wicked Men, who can't reconcile their Affections to the Duties of Religion, are willing to fanſy themſelves under this Incapacity; as if God did not proportion his Laws to the Faculties of his Creatures, but deſign'd them rather as an Exerciſe of Authority, than a Rule of Action. And when they have once laid the Blame of their Diſobedience on the Defect of their Nature, they think they are ſafe enough; they imagine they have no leſs than the Juſtice of God for their Security: That he will not be ſo hard a Maſter, as *to reap where he has not ſtrewed*, nor condemn for Impoſſibilities of his own making. Now that no Man might fix himſelf in a wicked Life by ſuch a fatal Miſtake, and aggravate his Crimes by accuſing God Almighty; the Apoſtle expreſſly affirms, that God is far from placing us in an unavoidable State of Sin; that giving the

leaſt Countenance to it, is utterly inconſiſtent with the Notion of ſuch a Being. And therefore *Let no Man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any Man: But every Man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own Luſt and enticed.*

But becauſe God is ſaid to *tempt Abraham*, when he commanded him *to offer up his Son* Iſaac, therefore it will not be improper to conſider the Importance of the Word. Gen. xxii.

Firſt therefore, By tempting, is meant trying the Temper and Inclinations of Men, to ſee how they ſtand affected, and which way they will turn when put to the Teſt. Thus God dealt with *Abraham* in the forementioned Place; and after the Experiment commends the Steddineſs of his Faith. *Now I know that thou feareſt God, in that thou haſt not withheld thine only Son from me.* If 'tis objected, that God is throughly acquainted with the Mind of Man, and foreſees how he will manage himſelf upon all Emergencies, and

and therefore can't be ſaid to tempt him for the Diſcovery of that which he knows already.

To this the Anſwer is plain, that God does not do this for his own Information, but to ſhew the Integrity of his Servants; which, as 'tis uſeful to others, ſo 'tis ſatisfactory to themſelves. For no Man can tell the Strength of a good Reſolution, till he is put to the Proof of it. For tho' he may be aſſur'd God will not let him miſcarry, if he does his beſt, yet the doing this, depends on his Will, which is a mutable and uncertain Principle.

A ſecond Deſign of tempting, is to improve the Virtue of the Perſon tempted. 'Tis Labour and Oppoſition, which perfects Habits, and enlarges the Faculties of Body and Mind. For this puts Nature upon its Guard, awakens all its Powers, and makes it exert, to encounter the Difficulty. And becauſe Afflictions are accounted the greateſt Temptations, both *Abraham* and *Job* may be ſaid to be tempted in this Senſe by God Almighty; that their Patience, their Reſignation, and

and Reliance, might be heighten'd, and made more illuſtrious by ſuch a Tryal.

A third End of Temptation is to make the Perſon worſe, to lay a Snare for his Innocence, and betray him into Sin; in which Senſe God never tempts any Man. For how ſhould God, to whoſe Nature all moral Impurity is the greateſt Contradiction, incline any Perſon to the doing that which he abhors? How ſhould he, who loves his Creatures, put them upon doing ſuch Actions which are diſpleaſing to him, or deſtructive to themſelves? To threaten Sin with no leſs than eternal Puniſhment, and at the ſame time encourage it under-hand, is not reconcileable with Goodneſs, or Juſtice. For to circumvent, to be inſidious, to delight in the Miſery of others, are certain Signs of a mean and depraved Diſpoſition; and conſequently the Perfection of God's Nature makes it impoſſible for him to do any of theſe Things. For being infinitely great and happy in his own Omnipotence, he needs not have Recourſe to any indirect Means, to make himſelf

himſelf conſiderable or ſecure: And farther, being infinitely juſt, 'tis impoſſible for him to have any ſuch unaccountable Deſire. But tho' 'tis never ſo plain, that Light can't be the Origin of Darkneſs, nor Iniquity be produc'd or countenanc'd by a righteous Being, yet the Perverſeneſs and Corruption of Mens Minds is ſuch, that they are not afraid to charge the Irregularity of their Actions upon God himſelf, that ſo they may ſin with the more Indiſturbance and Satisfaction. It were almoſt endleſs to reckon up all the Excuſes wicked Men make for themſelves; I ſhall only mention thoſe that are moſt remarkable, and which ſeem to carry the greateſt Weight in them.

Firſt, Some People charge their Vices upon their being united to a Body in general.

To which it may be anſwered that a Body is no more capable of ſinning than a Stock or Stone. 'Tis a ſenſeleſs inanimate Thing, without any manner of Thought or Apprehenſion; and therefore can't be under the Direction and Cenſure of a Law. But Sin is ſeated in the rational

rational Part, and ſuppoſes Judgment and Conſent: But theſe are Faculties the Body has nothing to do with; and therefore 'tis no more capable of ſinning now, than when 'tis laid in the Grave. Therefore the Apoſtle tells us, that at the laſt Day, every Man muſt *receive* not *according to what the Body has done*, but *according to what he has done in the Body.*

But it may be ſaid, that though the Body is not endowed with Senſe and Underſtanding, yet its Union with the Soul, gives it a great Aſcendant. For don't we find by Experience, that according to the Indiſpoſition or good Conſtitution of the Body, our Paſſions are diverſify'd both in Nature and Degree; and even our Reaſon is ſprightly or languiſhing; inſomuch that our Thoughts are not the ſame in a cloudy, as in a clear Day?

To which it may be anſwered, that though the Body has an Influence on the Mind; though it gives it many affecting Notices of its own State and Alterations, yet let the Ferment of the Blood, and the Motion of the Spirits be never ſo croſs

and ſurprizing, (Phrenzy and Lethargy excepted;) though the Harmony of the Humours may be very much diſturb'd; yet this does neither extinguiſh our Underſtanding, nor force the Liberty of our Will: The Mind is not ſo much overcaſt, but that it may ſee the Difference between Good and Evil; and though a Man may be ſtrongly urg'd to act one way rather than another, yet if he reflects and ſtrives, he'll find a Principle within him which can check the Motion, and deny the Importunity of his Senſes. Indeed, if God had interwoven any fatal Principle of Defection in our earthy Part; had he thrown any Infection into our Blood, and tied up the Soul to the Laws and Impreſſions of the Body, then we ſhould have ſome Reaſon to ſhift off the Faults from our ſelves, and lay them upon a higher Cauſe. But now, ſince the Soul is Maſter of its own Conſent; ſince 'tis the Companion, and not the Slave of *Matter*, we ought to lay the Blame of our Miſcarriages on our ſelves.

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2. It may be anſwered that ſome Sins have little or no Dependence on the Body; ſuch as Malice, Revenge, Envy and Pride: Theſe Vices we might be guilty of, though we were diſengaged from all bodily Commerce, and had nothing but Spirit about us. Thoſe who make this Objection ſeem to deſire an Angelical Nature; but if they had it, that would not ſecure them without Care. For God never created any Angels (that we know of) in an impeccable Condition; ſome of them we are ſure, (and thoſe none of the loweſt Order,) have *left their firſt Station, and therefore are reſerved under Chains of Darkneſs.* Jude 6.

Secondly, 'Tis uſual with Men to charge their Sins on their particular Temper. The cholerick Perſon pretends he has too much Heat and Motion put into his Conſtitution: That the Tide may as well be ſtemm'd, as the Current of his Paſſion, when it riſes on a ſudden Provocation. And to affirm, that all this Commotion lyes under the arbitrary Check of Reaſon, is, in effect, to ſay, that a Man may

lay a Tempeſt with thinking, and put out a Fire by the Strength of a Wiſh. The timorous Perſon confeſſes, that he is over-aw'd into many Things which he does not like: But the Senſe of immediate Danger hags his Imagination, and raiſes ſuch a frightful Idea, that he ſeldom has the Courage to think of Reſiſtance; and when he happens to come towards Reſolution, he finds his Spirits are not active enough to execute; but he is always deſerted by the Chilneſs and Flegm, and cold Temper of his Body.

The Licentious and Diſſolute are apt to ſay, that they are carry'd to Intemperance, by the Keenneſs and Vigour of their Senſes, by the good Nature and Compliance of their Blood: Whereas had they not this unhappy Byaſs, they would be as regular and mortify'd as the beſt. But their Temper was not of their own making; and they think it hard to be accountable for its Miſcarriages.

In anſwer to this,

1. It muſt be granted, that Temper does make Men inclinable to ſome Vices; but then

then it does not force them: Care, and the Assistance of God's Grace (which is never denied to those that beg it) are sufficient to controll these Propensities to Sin. To do this, is the principal Employment of our Reason; a Charge as well honourable as laborious; God designing this Contention of the *Flesh and Spirit*, to improve our Virtue, and make us capable of a greater Reward. And that the latter might not have too much Disadvantage, God has order'd our Frame in such a manner, that our Bodies are incapable of acting viciously in our Infancy, nor seem inclinable to it. The Disorders which they prompt us to, don't discover themselves till our Mind is able to grapple with them: For by that time our Senses begin to be troublesome, Reason is attain'd to a considerable Height; and, by the Improvement of Experience and Education, clearly understands, that, in Point of Prudence and Security, 'tis bound not to give way to every thing the Senses demand. Indeed, if the Body was grown up to its full Strength and Vigour, before

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it received its Companion: If the Soul was not infus'd till 'twas thus far behind-hand, it might be much over match'd: For if it enter'd a Blank, as 'tis most likely it does, it would want the Knowledge of Law and Duty, of which there would be immediate Use. And besides, the Impressions of the Body being so strong and impetuous, it would be difficult (though not impossible) for such a raw unexperienc'd Spirit to over-rule them. But now since the Mind enters the Lists upon equal Terms; since it has almost all along been able to observe the Motions, and check the Irregularities of the Body; since 'tis acquainted with the Measures of governing it self, the Difficulty of the Case is much lessen'd: As Things stand now, Men should be asham'd to alledge the Pretence of an unfortunate Temper: The mere Sense of Honour, one would think, was sufficient to make them lay aside so uncreditable an Excuse. For, what a scandalous Meanness is it, to let the rational and immortal Soul, which was made for Government and Empire,

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to be trampled on, and as it were led in Triumph by unconſcious and ſtupid *Matter?* How can we maintain the Dignity of our Kind, and juſtify our Claim to a rational Nature, if we ſuffer our ſelves to be moved, like Machines, with a foreign Motion; and let our Paſſions and Actions too, lie at the Mercy of every inſulting Object of Senſe? Some Creatures, we know, delight in wallowing in the Mire, and no doubt 'tis the Habit of their Body which makes them do it. Now, if this be ſuch an over-ruling Principle in Men, that there's no conteſting with it, we may put the Sceptick's Queſtion in *Eccleſiaſtes, What Pre-eminence hath a Man above a Beaſt?* To what Purpoſe ſerve Reaſon and Underſtanding, except it be a Privilege to be conſcious of its own Weakneſs and Slavery; and that without the leaſt Proſpect of Remedy?

But beſides, this Pretence arraigns all humane Laws, and taxes all Courts of Judicature with Tyranny and Injuſtice: For why may not a Man that is puniſhed

for ſtealing, alledge that the Habit of his Body is ſo unfortunately overbalanc'd, that it is not in his Power to let his Neighbour's Property alone? Why therefore ſhould ſuch a Perſon ſuffer? For if the Force of Temper be ſo unconquerable, why ſhould it not be allow'd in one Caſe, as well as in another?

2. It may be anſwered, that we often reckon that to our Tempers, which proceeds from Careleſſneſs, ill Cuſtom, or ill Principles. Thus the intemperate Perſon, when he has habituated himſelf to Exceſs, and drown'd that Conſtitution he came into the World with, complains of the Difficulties of his own making; as if the Meaſures of Sobriety were ſo ſcanty and diſproportion'd to the Neceſſities of Nature, that a Man can't be juſt to his Mind and Body at the ſame time; nor maintain the Serviceableneſs of the one, without diſordering the Reaſon of the other. The licentious Perſon ſullies his Imagination with intemperate Freedoms, paints a criminal Object with Heightnings, and frequents the moſt in-

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ſnaring Company; and inſtead of Reſerve and Diſcipline, lets looſe the Reins to Folly, *runs into exceſs of Riot, and ſtrengthens himſelf in his Wickedneſs:* And when he has laid ſo many Plots againſt his Virtue, and been at ſo much Pains to ſubdue his Reaſon, and ſilence his Conſcience, he lays the Blame upon the irreſiſtible Force of his Senſes. He grants, indeed, the ſeventh Commandment to be very reaſonable, and that Society can ſcarce ſubſiſt with a general Neglect of it: But he is thrown upon ſuch particular Diſadvantages by Nature, that 'tis impoſſible to come up to the Rigour of it. Thus when Men have betray'd their own Innocence, accuſtom'd themſelves to a vicious Courſe, and are reſolv'd to purſue it, they take Sanctuary in the unavoidable Weakneſs of Nature, and ſo leave Providence to anſwer for it: Whereas ſuch Practices and Evaſions as theſe, quite alter and unmake the original Conſtitutions of our Bodies. Such ill Conduct as this, makes us much more dependent on our Senſes than God ever

 deſign'd:

design'd: This creates new Desires, and renders those which are natural much more violent and unmanageable.

Thus likewise Men are apt to impute the History of their wicked Lives to their Temper; whatever they have done, or are inclin'd to, which their Reason tells them is unaccountable or flagitious, this they presently throw off from their Conscience upon their *Flesh* and *Blood*, because they find it lyes easiest there. One Man has engaged in a Quarrel, and been successful in it; and upon this falls in Love with this barbarous Custom, and continues in it from the Prospect of pretended Honour. And to reconcile himself to this Frenzy, fancies he is made up of different Ingredients from other flegmatick Mortals: That he has an Over-Balance of Fire in his Composition, and that some irresistible Power has made him fit for nothing but Rencounters and Bloodshed. Another has a Dispute about Property, and happens to prove victorious: Several lucky Events of this kind encourage him to be litigious upon the

leaſt Occaſion, till at laſt he grows ſo vain as to imagine, that he is fatally determined by the ſpecial Frame of his Temper, to be always moleſting and diſquieting his Neighbours: Whereas, all theſe Faults are derived from nothing, but the Pride, the Envy, or Covetouſneſs of the Man's Mind. Theſe ſcandalous and ſordid Paſſions have been uſed to govern ſo long, they have been pamper'd, and inflam'd, with ſo many unlawful Satisfactions, that they are now grown too ſtiff to be controlled. Now, he muſt comply, tho' puſh'd upon things never ſo unjuſt and inhuman: Not that 'tis impoſſible to break looſe from an ill Cuſtom; but habitually wicked Men are very hardly perſuaded to baulk a Pleaſure, and give themſelves the trouble of checking a ſtrong Deſire.

3. It may be anſwered, that ſome Perſons are guilty of almoſt all manner of Sins, which croſs their *Conſtitution* as well as their *Duty:* For Conſtitution generally lies one way, and can't preſs Men upon ſo many Vices, which diſagree in

their Nature. Thoſe who are apt to be frighted out of good Reſolutions, at the Apprehenſion of Danger, and charge their Inconſtancy upon the Timorouſneſs of their Diſpoſition; theſe Perſons, ſure, can't excuſe their cholerick Heats upon the ſame Grounds: They muſt not pretend that the Fervour and Generouſneſs of their Blood over-bears their Reaſon, and won't ſuffer them to put up a Provocation; for no Temper blows hot and cold at this rate: And yet there have been ſome ſuch Perſons in the World, both cowardly and cholerick; bold and deſperate in a bad, but very heartleſs in a good Cauſe, fight like Gladiators in a Duel, and run away in a Field, where their Prince and Country require Reſolution.

'Tis not unuſual to obſerve the Ambitious at their firſt ſetting out, to keep their Paſſions under ſtrict Diſcipline; but when once they have gain'd their Point, to diſſolve in Luxury and Pleaſure; as if Succeſs had given them a Nature perfectly different from what they had before. 'Tis no rare thing to find Perſons unreaſona-

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ble and ſcrewing in their Exactions, and yet profuſe in their Expences; covetous and prodigal at the ſame time; and yet that Conſtitution which is a Byaſs to the one, is a Bar to the other. And ſome have run through the whole Circle of Vice: But if Temper were the over-ruling Principle, ſuch univerſal Sinners would require a great many diſtinct and particularly formed Bodies, to bear up againſt Contrariety, and make room for their Impieties to range in.

4. It may be anſwer'd that thoſe Difficulties, which they pretend invincible, have been maſter'd by Perſons of the ſame Temper with themſelves: People of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions, have been virtuous, where they have had the ſtrongeſt Inclination of Temper to the contrary. God has not calculated his Laws for any particular Climate or Diſpoſition: For though ſome Virtues may be more commendable in ſome Countries or Conſtitution than in another, yet they are impoſſible in none. Religion will thrive in any Soil, if it be but cultivated with

with Care and Prudence. 'Tis true, because Temper inclines Men to ſome Sins more than others, therefore we ſhould ſtudy the Tendency of our Inclinations, and be very circumſpect in the Management of them. We ſhould implore the Aſſiſtance of Grace, and ſummon in the Aids of Reaſon to ſuppreſs them; we ſhould make uſe of the Motives of Shame and Honour, of Puniſhments and Rewards, and apply corporal Diſcipline, as the Occaſion requires; and when this is done, we need not queſtion the Succeſs, but that *the Grace of God*, according to his Promiſe, *will be ſufficient for us.*

Thirdly, Some People charge their Faults upon the ill Company they are forc'd to keep: They grant they might be able to conquer their own Inclinations, if they had none to deal with but themſelves; if they could chuſe either the Convenience of Solitude or virtuous Society, they think their Duty would be no ſuch impracticable Thing. But ſince the World is ſo vitious, and every one has not the Liberty of running away from it, 'tis as hard

hard to be innocent among ſo many Temptations and wicked Examples, as 'tis for a Man to converſe with thoſe that have the Plague, and be free from Infection. To this I anſwer,

That if God had oblig'd us to keep wicked Company, our Excuſe had ſome Pretence: But we know we are enjoyn'd the contrary, *not to walk in the Council of the Ungodly, nor ſtand in the Way of Sinners.* For though ſuch Perſons are not to be hated; though they are to be treated with common Civility upon an occaſional Meeting, yet they are not to be taken into the Intimacies of Friendſhip and Converſation: For, ſetting apart the Danger of ſuch a Familiarity, 'tis plain that thoſe who ſeek it, are depraved already. For he who has any true Veneration for God Almighty, can't take any Pleaſure in hearing him inſulted and contemn'd. No Man that knows his Friend to be a Perſon of Honour and Worth can ſee him mal-treated without Uneaſineſs and Reſentment, eſpecially when the Affront is given by

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an ungrateful inconſiderable Wretch: The Application is eaſy, and needs not be ſpoken out. But notwithſtanding the Trouble and Danger of ill Company, it may be urg'd, ſome Perſons cannot avoid it. For Inſtance, Servants are forc'd to live with vitious Maſters; ſometimes they are fixed there by the Imprudence of others, being not at their own Diſpoſal, and in this Caſe, they can't in Juſtice go off, till the Contract is ſatisfy'd; and if they could, it ſometimes happens ſo, that they can't provide for themſelves elſewhere. To which it may be returned, that thoſe who are placed in ſuch Circumſtances by the Indiſcretion of others, and have not the Liberty of a Removal; they, I ſay, need not queſtion but that Care and Religion will ſecure their Innocence. That God will not let them miſcarry in a Danger which was none of their own chuſing, nor ſuffer them to be *tempted above what they are able:* They need not doubt this, if they beg his Aſſiſtance by frequent and devout Application. But then if they are at their own Liberty,

Liberty, who that's of a virtuous Diſpoſition, would *dwell with* Meſech, *and have his Habitation among the Tents of* Kedar. For to ſay they can't be provided for elſewhere, is generally a Miſtake: For we know they ſeldom want Opportunities of planting themſelves in leſs dangerous Ground, though poſſibly with Abatement in Intereſt: But certainly he that owns the Name of a Chriſtian, will eaſily diſcern, he ought not to prefer an inconſiderable Advantage here, to the ſecuring his Virtue, and everlaſting Condition.

But it may be anſwer'd farther, that thoſe exceptionable Maſters, upon whom the Objection is chiefly founded, are unwilling their Servants ſhould imitate their Example; therefore they can't either pretend a Force, or expect any Favour by ſuch a Conformity. Such Perſons ſeem rather deſirous to engroſs their Faults to themſelves: This, they conceive is the Way to keep up the Reputation of their Wickedneſs; therefore they are by no Means pleaſed to ſee the Quality of their Vices made vulgar, and leſſen'd by the

Practice of thoſe who are ſo much their Inferiours.

If 'tis objected, that ſometimes Duty and Neceſſity forces them upon dangerous Society: This may be alledg'd in the Caſe of Children or indigent Relations: But here it may be anſwer'd, that Parents are ſeldom ſo monſtrouſly wicked, as to command Irregularity, and make Vice an Inſtance of Duty and Obſervance: This they will be apt to forbear out of mere Intereſt and Policy, for fear of diſpoſing their Children to a Revolt, and weakening their Obligation to Obedience: For this Bond to Submiſſion and Regard, they know, has its main Strength from Religion. But if they are ſo far loſt to Goodneſs and Senſe, as to command any thing unlawful, we know in ſuch Caſes, whom we are to obey, *God rather than Men.* So likewiſe, if Relations will diſcard us, unleſs we earn our Bread by Compliance, and giving in to their Vices; if we have no other Retreat, we had better caſt our ſelves upon Providence, than run upon endleſs

endleſs Ruin, by ſubſiſting upon ſo mean, and ſo criminal a ſupport.

Fourthly, Some Perſons pretend their Situation and Profeſſion obliges them to ſtrain and tranſgreſs: That they can't maintain themſelves in any creditable Circumſtances, without bending to foul Practice, and playing upon the Weakneſs of others.

Thoſe who are concern'd with Perſons of Eminence and Condition, muſt, commonly ſpeaking, commend Imperfections, magnify vulgar Qualities, and give their Superiours a falſe and flattering Idea of themſelves. For an Omiſſion in theſe Points, will be look'd on as a ruſtick and envious Neglect; and which will meet with very ſlender Returns of Favour: No; Coldneſs and Diſregard is the moſt that can be expected. But to prove this a groundleſs Excuſe, we need only remember, that St. *Paul ſalutes the Saints of Cæſar's Houſhold*, without bidding them retire from Court; tho' that Emperour was none of the beſt Heathens. 'Tis plain therefore, that Greatneſs may be attended

without ſinful Compliance, and Proſtitution of Conſcience; and when it cannot, there are otherWays for Subſiſtence and Support

Thoſe who are concern'd in Commerce may poſſibly argue, that they muſt make uſe of Artifice and Cunning, they muſt diſſemble, adulterate, and take Advantage of the Ignorance of their Neighbours, otherwiſe their Trade won't anſwer Expectation. Beſides, when Caſes are intricate and perplex'd, as they ſometimes are, the Hurry of Buſineſs won't give them Leiſure to ſcan and examine every moral Nicety; for Opportunities are preſently ſlipt, and won't admit of ſuch a ſcrupulous Deliberation. To which it may be anſwer'd, that the Underſtanding which a Man is ſuppoſed to have, in his own Employment, will tell him at firſt ſight, whether he preſſes too hard on his Neighbour or not: In moſt Caſes, there needs not much ſtudy and conſulting to know this; and where there does, the Enquiry is not ſo trivial, as ſuch buſy Men would make it: No wiſe Man, that believes his Life or Eſtate in Danger, will pretend he's too much employ'd to take care of them. Now, the Obſervance of Juſtice is an indiſpenſable Duty, and

therefore

therefore if our everlasting Condition be worth the minding, we are concern'd to examine, whether our Practice is agreeable to Equity or not. Those that pretend they can't make a creditable Provision for themselves, without Recourse to indirect Means; for that this Objection is made and allow'd, (tho' not spoken out,) is evident, because it's too often practised: Now, if Men must have their Circumstances plentiful, according to the vulgar Notion of these things, if they are resolv'd to make a Figure in the World, it must be granted, this cannot always be done, without Injustice and Circumvention: To compass this Point, they must sometimes charge through Breach of Honour, and good Faith; clear Dealing must be given up, and Integrity pay the Purchase. For, as the Apostle tells us, *That they that will be rich, fall into Temptation, and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition, for the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil.* But then, what Necessity is there for all this? Why cannot they be contented with a moderate Condition, when Justice and Providence don't allow them to rise higher? They pretend

1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

pretend they cannot be happy except they are better accommodated; but this is their own Fault, for our Saviour pronounces against them, and assures us, that *a Man's Life does not consist in the abundance of those things he possesses.* If Custom and false Reasoning did not enlarge the Necessities of Nature, they might all be brought into a small Compass, and we might learn, with St. *Paul, in whatsoever State we are to be content.* But strait Circumstances, some will say, are uncreditable; certainly not so much as Dishonesty: For, even in the general Opinion, a poor Man, that subsists fairly by his Labour, is thought a Person of more Value and Reputation, than he that lives splendidly upon his Revenues from the Highway; and if Men flourish by unjust Dealings, and fraudulent Management in their Trades and Professions, the different way of Injustice in the *Shop*, does not much mend the Matter. But, is Poverty so uncreditable a State do you say? I'm afraid those that think so, would have been asham'd of our Saviour and his Apostles, if they had convers'd with them: But if a poor Man may be just and temperate, religious and resolute in a good Cause,

Cauſe, then he needs not grow deſpicable for want of Fortune; the Practice of thoſe Vertues will gain him the Eſteem of all equal Judges, yes of God Almighty himſelf: For, if there is any real Difference in the Merit of Perſons, and any Reaſon to judge of it, they, and they only, are the great Men, who are Maſters of ſuch Qualities as theſe: In ſhort, when a more plentiful Condition is not fairly laid in our way, is it not much better to be contented with a lower Station? To enjoy the Friendſhip of Heaven, and the Pleaſures of a good Conſcience? To keep up our Reputation with our ſelves, and with all wiſe Men, and to live in Expectation of immortal Honour and Happineſs? Is it not more eligible to be in this Condition, than by unwarrantable Practices to flutter a little while in Pageantry and Tinſel? To make a Shew out of Falſehood, and ſhine like ſome Wood, becauſe 'tis rotten; and when this tranſient Scene is over, to ſink for ever into Miſery and Contempt?

To conclude, if a Man did firmly believe, that upon his yielding to a Sin, (to which he's moſt inclinable) he ſhould be immediately ſet on the Rack, or ſuffer ſome

ſome other exquiſite Torment; we need not queſtion but ſuch a terrible Expectation as this, would fright him out of all his Excuſes, and convince him that he is powerful enough to reſiſt the moſt inviting Temptation. From whence it follows, that all the Objections againſt God and his Laws are vain and pretended: 'Tis plain, therefore, that nothing but want of Chriſtian Belief, ill-manag'd Appetite, and Liberty without Reſtraint, makes Conduct miſcarry. Theſe are the fatal Tempers, the irreſiſtible Paſſions, the infectious Company, ſo much complain'd of: Thus Precaution is never call'd in, Reaſon's run away with, and Conſcience laid aſleep; and thus we are made Prize of, and maſter'd, as Temptations come up. Since, therefore, we cannot plead Incapacity, *ſeeing God's Ways are equal and ours unequal*, ſince *he is juſtified in his Sayings and clear when he is judged*; ſince we cannot excuſe our Sins, there remains nothing, but that we ſhould heartily repent of thoſe that are paſt, beg God's enabling Grace, and guard with more Vigilance for the future. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, *&c.*

FINIS.