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C L O S E

O F T H E

DEFENSE *of the* RELIGION
of NATURE *and the* CHRIS-
TIAN REVELATION:

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A N S W E R

T O

Christianity as Old as the Creation.

I N A N

ADDRESS to Christian *Ministers* and the
Christian *People.*

By the late Reverend

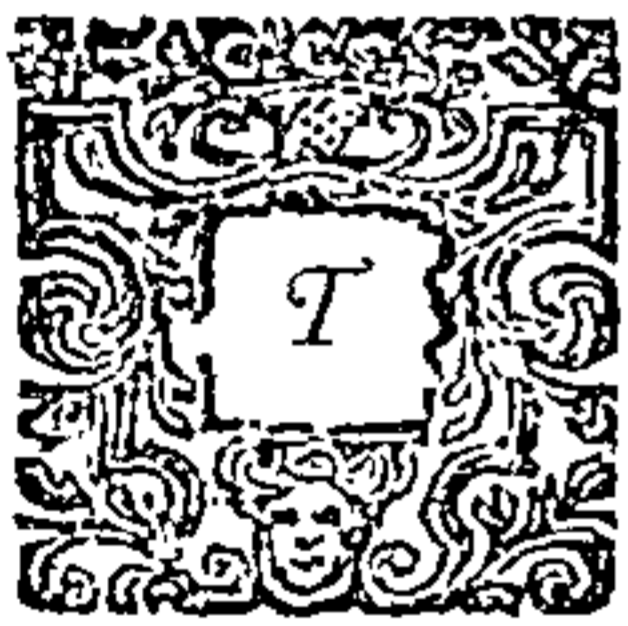
SIMON BROWNE.

L O N D O N:

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THE
PREFACE.



THE author of christianity as old as the creation, under this mock-title, has made it his real endeavour to render all revelation unnecessary and useless, to represent the christian as unworthy of God, and reduce all men to what he calls the religion of nature. The greatest part of his book by far, is, indeed, no better than impertinence, quite besides his argument. It is declamation against bigotry,

gotry, superstition, priestcraft, *the* usurpations of ecclesiasticks, *their* spiritual tyranny, *and* encroachments *under sacred and spiritual pretences,* on the liberties *and* estates of the people *with which* christianity has nothing to do, but to condemn *and* forbid *such* follies *and* faults. For *these* the guilty only are answerable ; but to charge this guilt on the religion of Jesus, is spiteful *and* barefaced calumny. It favours, it countenances, no one of all these evils. It forbids superstition, it decries bigotry, it condemns all wicked crafts, in priests *and* people, all usurpation over conscience, all dominion over the faith of mankind, all spiritual tyranny, force *and* persecution, all affectation of lordliness, in ministers, all thirst for worldly wealth *and* estates, *and* greediness of filthy lucre.

IF any, calling themselves the ministers of Christ, act in contradiction to these characters or rules of the gospel, let the reproach be flung in their own faces; but let not their unchristian and preposterous conduct be charged on their religion, which so plainly condemns and forbids it. Let the guilty be upbraided with, and, if possible, shamed for, their criminal behaviour; but let not that be objected to their religion, which so manifestly lies in its face, and is utterly irreconcilable with it. It were full as reasonable to reproach the religion of nature with all the wickedness of mankind, as to reproach christian religion with the unchristian or antichristian behaviour of ecclesiasticks, who profess it, and make this profession subserve their ungodly purposes and ends. To argue from this corruption and abuse,

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buse, in derogation to our religion, is not sober reasoning, but spiteful calumny and railing. And reason itself, so much cried up and applauded by this author, may be as righteously charged and reproached with all the evil, iniquity and mischief proceeding from its abuse.

LET this author expose these evils as heartily as he pleases, and as effectually as he can. But to argue from them against the christian religion, is not just in itself, nor wise in him. It manifests senseless spite against it; no real dislike of mens abuse of it in these practices, but rather a secret pleasure that these misdeeds of theirs, give an handle to misrepresent and calumniate the religion they profess. If men heartily hate such misbehaviour, and would indeed oppose and rectify it, the most effectual method
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of doing it, is by shewing the darknes of such deeds, in the light of that religion, that is most injuriously and infamously wrested to countenance them. Let him rout bigotry, superstition, priestcraft, tyranny over conscience, persecution, a worldly, lordly, domineering spirit out of all ecclesiasticks, if he can; or if he cannot, let him disgrace them with all christian people, he will do glorious service herein to God and mankind. But from these vices of theirs, to take occasion to revile and rail at christianity, must ruin his design. Such barefaced spite against so irreproachable, and excellent religion, will shew itself too plainly thro' the thin disguise. All the thinking world will see, that it is not hatred to these vices in christian ministers, but ill-will to christian religion itself, that is the true original

ginal of the hideous outcry. They would not have these abuses reformed, but rather continued, that by this means they may rid the world of the religion they hate, and all the teachers of it, how well soever qualified for such an office, however blameless in it, and how heartily soever they pursue the true and excellent ends of it: And, till this can be effected, may have some handle to bait them, and blaspheme their religion.

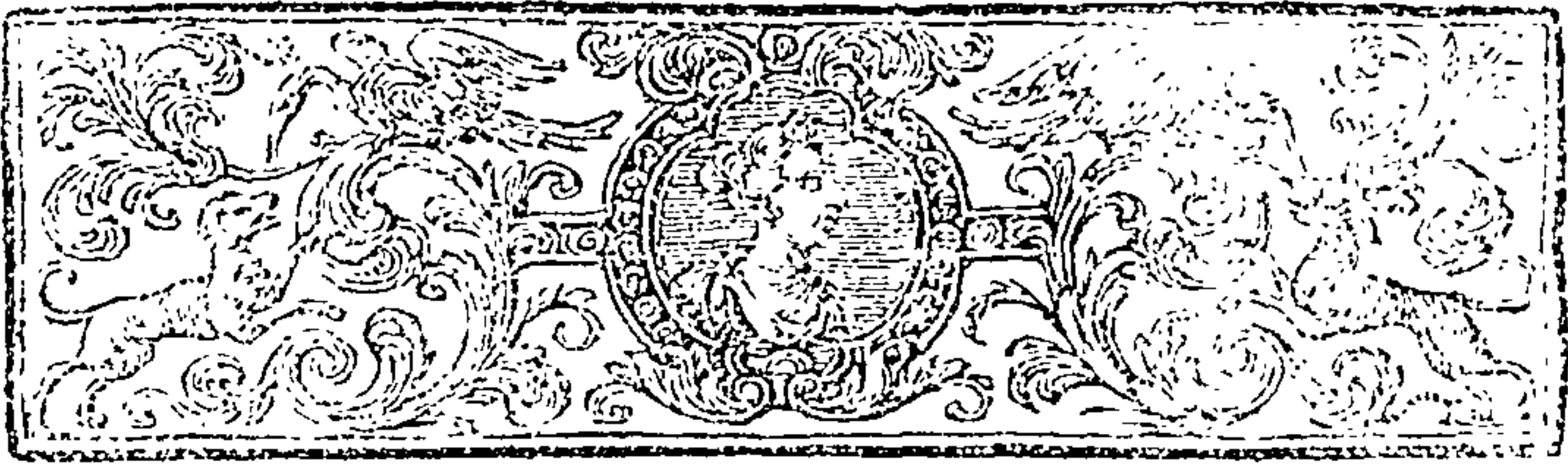
I THOUGHT it therefore proper to close the whole, with a serious address to both clergy and laity. If herein I have used a freedom, the importance of the matter, and the state of things amongst us, must be my excuse. Was there not a cause? The guilty only will be provoked, and some of them, perhaps, impress'd. Those who
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are guiltless, and thorowly believe their religion, and yield to its power and influence, and endeavour to honour it by a suitable conversation, will bear with it, if they may not throughout approve it.

S. B.

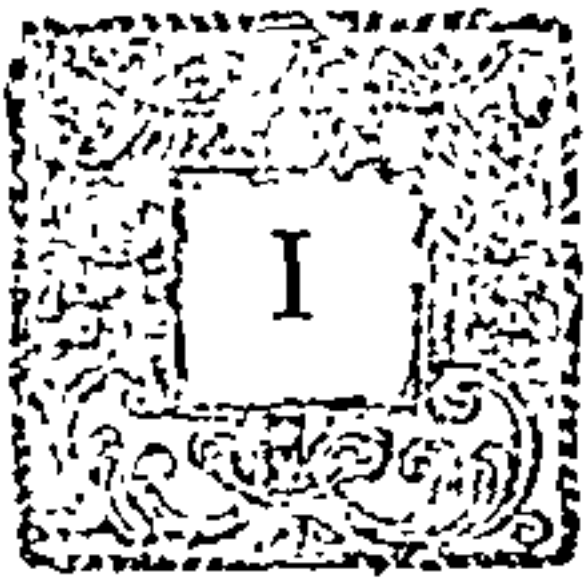


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C L O S E.



SHALL close my *Remarks* on *this Author*, with an humble and serious Address to both *Clergy* and *Laity*, *Christian Ministers* and the *Christian People*, to exert themselves, and use their most *heartly* Endeavours, that the Religion of *Jesus* may shine out with an amiable lustre in their *own* lives, that *others* seeing their good works, may glorify their father, who is in heaven; and that they would *no less* heartily endeavour, as far as their influence, in their several places, may contribute towards it, that their heavenly and excellent religion may diffuse its power amongst *others*; that there may not be so many, under the *christian name*, that live in open defiance with all religion, whether *natural* or *revealed*. The *bad lives* of those who profess their holy religion, are, to serious christians, matter of *grief*, and some *complaint*; in

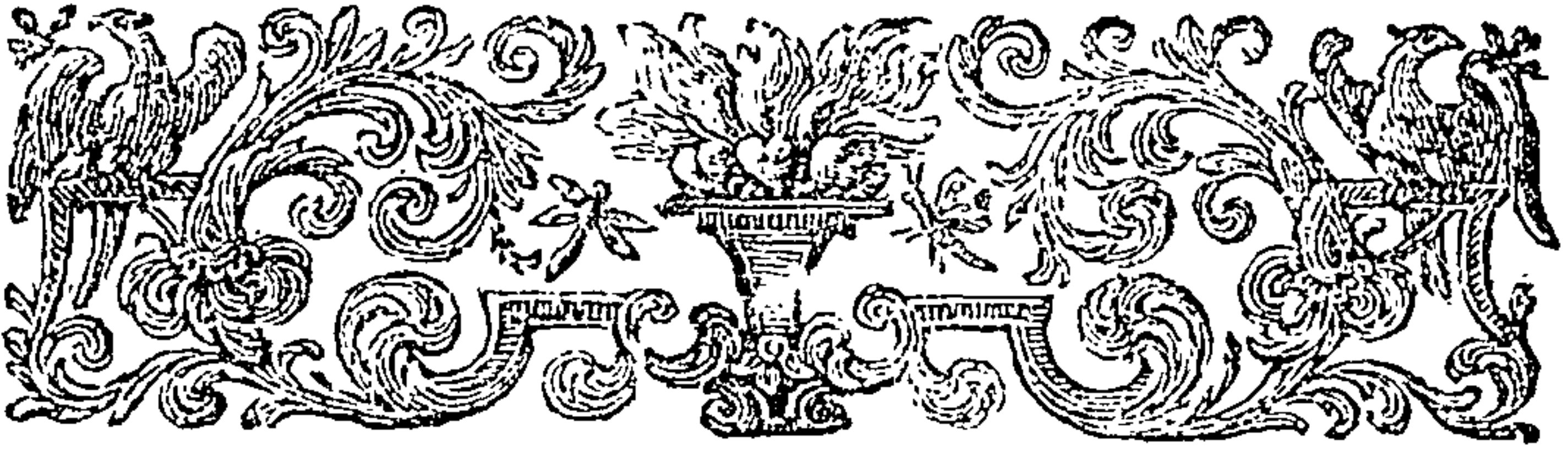
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the mouths of infidels, matter of *reproach*. This indeed is very unjust as to *our religion*: It were to be wished, one could say, it were as *utterly* unjust with regard to both *ministers*, and even many of its *bearty* friends. But, do they all do what they *can*, or what they *ought*, to remove this reproach? Do they exert themselves as they *should*, in their several stations for the reforming those practices, of which *themselves* complain, and, on account of which, *unbelievers* so loudly clamour against *christianity*? It is to be feared, *the best* herein are too defective. But I hope I may be born with in doing the best I can, on so awful an occasion.



ADDRESS



A D D R E S S
 T O T H E
 C L E R G Y.

L E T the *most reverend, right reverend and reverend* clergy, and all who call themselves *the ministers of Christ*, bear with the freedom needful on so sad an occasion. The matter will not allow of any *daubing*. The great corruption of *mens morals*, visible and general amongst us, can neither be concealed nor palliated. The *impiety and profaneness, the leudness and debauchery, the riot, luxury and intemperance, the couzenage and deceit, the falshood and perfidy, the injustice, oppression, violence and robbery, the detraction, calumny and slanders* of multitudes are notorious. These open and scandalous trespasses on the *laws of nature*, are, by *infidels*, made the reproach of *our religion*. And are not *its ministers* bound and concerned

cerned to do all they can to wipe it off? However injurious this reproach be to *their* religion, it will stick to *themselves*, if they do not exert themselves to this purpose; and that in such a manner as shall make it visible to all men, that they are indeed *the ministers* of *true religion*, and much more concerned for its honour and advancement, than any honours and emoluments of *their own*.

To what purpose is it to boast of *powers* derived from *Christ*, of a *commission divine* to minister in holy things, or a *succession in office* to *apostles*, if the *business* of this office is neglected, the *intent* of this commission disregarded, and religion lies bleeding, and wickedness spreads triumphantly; thro' the *criminal neglects*, or *bad example* of them who pretend to bear it? What is the office for? what the powers annexed to it? And what are one or the other, if *separated* from their *true ends*? Did *Christ* come down from heaven to be rich and great, and honoured among men? was this his end in teaching them a *divine religion*? or to bring men to know, and fear, and love, and serve the living God, and become like him; to teach them to be *pure in heart*, and *holy in all manner of conversation*? to be *just and honest, true and faithful*; to be *compassionate and kind, benevolent and useful*; and that, in every relation whether more extensive or confined? And did he institute a *ministry* for any other ends? And can *they* ever maintain the *honour* of their character in this office, ever *fairly* challenge, or *reasonably* expect esteem in it, who either live themselves at variance with the *laws* of *Christ*, or at least quite neglect

neglect and forget its ends, and shew *much more* concern for their own interests, honours and powers, than for the *honour* of their Master, the *salvation* of souls, or the promoting sound religion; that I mean, which will mend the *heart*, shine out in the *life*, and render men truly *good, virtuous* and *divine*?

CHRISTIAN religion has indeed *internal excellencies* to recommend it; but it must be exemplified, and set to view in the lives of them who preach it, ere it will effectually reach the hearts of the *bulk* of *mankind*. And those *ministers* and *preachers* of it, who shew no *sincere* regard to it in their own conduct, will thereby much more effectually hinder its success, than they can hope by their *finest oratory* to recommend it, if such men could ever really have this in view. They will much more *live* it *down*, than they can ever *preach* it *up*. They must shew that they themselves *indeed* believe it, and live under its influence, who would persuade *others* thus to believe and live. They whose lives stand in opposition to the *Laws* of *Christ*, will hardly persuade men that they *believe* the religion they *preach*: And what must this insinuate, but that they are prompted to preach by *other motives* than a value for it? that this is *their trade*, whilst themselves think their religion not worth their regard. And why should *others* pay an higher regard to it than they? This is not a just inference. Indeed religion should be regarded for what it is in *itself*, whether they who preach it practise it or no. But the inference is but too *common* and *natural*, and a clergyman or minister *openly* wicked

wicked and immoral, is answerable for *all the mischief* consequent upon it.

BUT where this is not the case, nor are clergymen notoriously vicious and immoral, yet if a *selfish* spirit manifestly sways them, and *reigns* in them, this will raise prejudice against themselves and their religion. If they are *worldly, ambitious, imperious, or tyrannical*. If their authority, esteem, and revenues are dearer to them than *real religion* and the *common salvation*. *Self* should be honestly disclaimed by them, in every thing they do. They are not to *preach themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and themselves the peoples servants, for Jesus sake*. Whatever their powers be, they are but those of *ministers* of Christ, and *servants* of the people for his sake. *Lordship* and *dominion* over mens consciences, bodies or estates, belong not to them; and it should be made appear, in their whole conduct, that *they* challenge nothing like it. Their master's *doctrines*, according to the best of their skill, they are to preach; but not their *own Schemes*, or the tenets of a party; nor make any thing *necessary* to be believed in order to salvation, but what is plainly *declared such*, in the *word of truth*. Nor are they to denounce *the wrath* of God against unbelievers, as if it were under their direction, and much less their *own*; or do any thing that looks like claiming *dominion over the faith* of christians. *Christ's rules* of life, with the *sanctions* by which he has enforced them, they are plainly, and fairly, and fully to explain, inculcate, and set before mankind; but are to add no *sanctions* of *their own*, to give additional weight to *his*. It is

a vain thing in itself, and an impeachment of his wisdom. His *instituted rites*, as instrumental duties of religion, they are to observe and administer; but not presume to mend or better his *religion* by *their own*; no, nor lay a *greater stress* on his, much less on the *administrator* of them, than the *nature* of the thing requires. They are of no use in religion but for the sake of *their ends*: if these are answered by them, what matters it *who* administers them. But if they are set in *the room* of their end, or made to destroy it, they are not, in such case, *christian rites*, but *corruptors* of christian religion, as all of mere *human device* have more or less been. And it should be their honest and hearty endeavour, that *all their ministrations* may spread *religion* and *virtue* among those to whom they minister; may reach their *hearts*, and regulate their *lives*. Without doing thus they *pervert* their office, make it *cross* its original purposes, at least shew no *becoming concern*, that it may reach its proper ends. They neither serve *Christ*, nor the *souls* of *men*, but themselves only; which, instead of spreading and recommending religion, is the likeliest way to bring both *it* and *themselves* into disgrace.

THE only *proper method* to procure respect in any station, is to deserve it by a *faithful discharge* of *one's trust* in it. And those who are for securing and enlarging the *temporal emoluments* of the *sacred function*, whilst they shew no becoming concern to discharge *the duties* of it, or to make it reach its end, set their religion in a very *false light*, and give a very *odd sample* of it to mankind. They shew very little
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of the *true spirit* of their master, whose kingdom was not of this world*, nor did he ever intend that the *ministers* of it should be maintained or enriched at the cost of others, without a serious concern to make them truly good. If he has ordained, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel, it is no ordinance of his, that those who do not preach it, or, if they do, preach without any serious concern to spread sound and spiritual religion, should yet, in virtue of that office, engross all the wealth they can, and live in worldly affluence and fulness, pomp and grandeur, and in sensual pleasures and delights. This had been to authorize their making merchandize of souls, the vilest traffick in the world. And it is no wonder if, when men boast an office of heavenly original, and claim powers and honours that are divine, whilst they shew little of an heavenly spirit, or a frame of mind truly divine, that they should make little impression on the consciences and hearts of men, or infuse but little of that holy and heavenly religion into them, which they pretend a commission, and oftentimes the sole commission, to teach and propagate.

Would the clergy, would all christian ministers, study to be indeed ensamples to their flocks, to make it evident that they seek not theirs but them, and are much more concerned for their salvation, than any worldly interests of their own; and therefore even travel in birth to see Jesus Christ (or the true christian spirit) formed in them †, to make them devout lovers of God, and sincere lovers

* John xviii. 30.

† 1 Cor. ix. 14.

lovers of men, and practicers of all virtue: Would they shew that their *heart* is in their work, and that what they chiefly aim at is the *true design* of their office; would they for this end not only diligently and faithfully preach *in publick*, but by *private* and *personal* instruction, even of the poorest and meanest belonging to *their charge*, endeavour to convey religion into *their hearts*, to beget in them the *true fear* of G O D, a concern for the *purity, peace* and *perfection* of their own minds, and a *generous* love and good-will extending to their whole kind, with a regard to all the *special duties* owing to more confined relations: and this without laying *greater stress* on externals in religion, the *rites, the circumstances, the skirts, the fringes* of it, or *nice, curious, cunning* and *deep speculations* in it, than is fit, or can reasonably be thought becoming a religion fitted to persons of all *ranks and conditions*; without listing them into *sects and parties*, firing zeal and destroying love, and all the good offices which as *men and christians* they owe one another: would they make them sensible, that as *in many things we do all, even the very best, offend*, so we are all liable to *mistakes*; and therefore that they should forbear one another in love: and where *true love* to G O D, and a concern to *please him*, discover themselves in *any*, and a study, as *far as they have attained, to walk by the same rule, and mind the same things*, they should be thought *disciples* of the same master, and *servants* of the same G O D, and should be owned as such, tho that in which *they are otherwise minded* be not yet *revealed to them*; according to that *maxim* of our Saviour, *they who are not against us, are for us*;

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and that *all men must know his disciples by their loving one another*, they would directly pursue *the ends* of their office, and in a great measure take away *this reproach* out of the mouth of *Infidels*.

WOULD my lords *the bishops* remember, that *those who labour in the word and doctrine*, are to be counted *worthy of double honour*, and would herein be examples to all their subject clergy; or, if they did not constantly preach, would yet inspect their *dioceses* with care; visit each parish in them, inquire into the *labours, qualifications and conversation* of the parish ministers; countenance and encourage those they find *faithful*, and sharply rebuke the *lazy, the worldly, the luxurious*, and all who by their *irregular conduct and behaviour* are a *scandal* to their function; and not let the *courtly* part of their office intrench upon the *christian*.

WOULD our *dignified clergy* live upon their *cures*, encourage piety and virtue by their *lives and labours* in their function; and not leave their *proper business* to raw and insufficient *journeymen*, and starve their *curates* into the bargain; whilst they enjoy themselves at ease on the *profits* of their livings, without any due care in return for the peoples souls; tho they can find leisure to seek for better *preferments* or *benefices*.

WOULD *all the clergy, all preachers and teachers* of all denominations, all who call themselves the *ministers of Christ*, whether in the *right line of descent* or not, with *commendable*
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emulation study to out-do each other in *holiness* of life, *regularity* of conduct, *application* to their proper work, and the most *zealous endeavours* to make all of whom they *have* or *take* the charge, not *churchmen*, not *sectaries* or *party-men*, nor *catholicks* of a *particular cut*, but *catholicks indeed*, *real christians*, *sincere penitents*, *true believers* in, and followers of *Christ*, *sincerely devoted* to God, and *heartly lovers* of men, and *studious* of *their own* purity and perfection, in a word, *truly wise* and *good*; christianity would again resume its lustre, exert its power, and appear, like *itself*, a religion *worthy of God*. Vice would then be out of countenance, irreligion and profaneness would be under disgrace, and *unbelievers* would have nothing with which to reproach either *christianity*, or *its ministers*.

BUT whilst the *ministers* of Christ, in higher or lower stations, instead of acting *this part*, shew that they are under the influence of a *worldly*, *covetous*, *ambitious*, or *lordly* spirit, and more concerned for their *own* wealth, and ease, and pomp, and power, than for the *honour* of their Redeemer, the *interest* of true, inward and sound religion, and the *souls* of the people; they will never avoid reproach and contempt; and, to their own *great guilt*, will involve *christianity* in the same reproach, and render *that* despicable, as well as *themselves*. Every thing that has a tendency to serve themselves, without any *plain* and *direct* tendency to the honour of God and the good of mens souls, will *open* the mouths of men against them, where the *dread* of punishment does not keep them shut; or else create an aversion to religion for *their sake*, who pretending to be

ministers of it, do not heartily set themselves to promote *its* interests, but manifestly make *it* subserve *their own*.

Y o u cannot be ignorant of the *outcries* made by unbelievers on this head ; how many pages of the piece I have remarked on, are filled with *these outcries* ? A plain Evidence, that this, at least, is the most *popular* argument for infidelity. How loudly are we told, that all religion, besides *that* of nature, is *priestcraft* ; the contrivance of its ministers to enrich and advance *themselves*, and enslave *mankind* ? That even *christian ministers*, so called, have corrupted religion with a multitude of *superstitions* and *rites* of *their own* devising, and dress'd it up in external gaudiness and pomp, to bewitch the *senses* and *imagination*s of men ; and this way deprave their taste, lead them off from what is *spiritual* and *real* in religion, and bring them into a *slavish dependance* on themselves ? That by a *pretence* to spiritual powers, they have enslaved mens *consciences* first, and by degrees have jostled *kings* out of their thrones, trampled on their necks, disposed of their *scepters* at pleasure, and have, by the most *bloody persecutions*, supported and established their dominion, laid waste the finest countries, and carried inhumanity and barbarity higher than ever *pagans* did.

T o o much of this is too true to be denied. The *facts* are flagrant. *Christian religion* is, in itself, a plain, simple, rational and spiritual religion. Its *necessary doctrines* are but few, and summed up in the *apostle's creed*, or
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even * one *much shorter* ; in this, as *Irenaeus*, *Tertullian*, &c. tell us, both learned and unlearned agreed. The latter owned *no less*, the former *no more*, as necessary to salvation. Its rites are only two, *baptism* and the *lord's supper*. Its precepts are all either the *plain duties of nature*, or those founded on the Redeemer's office, the *peculiar doctrine* of the Gospel. But how many *articles of faith* have from time to time been super-added, till the faith of *some churches*, even among *protestants*, amount to a *volume* ? how many *rituals* have been introduced into divine worship ? and how little have the *essential things* of religion, mean while, been regarded ? how fierce have been the *disputes* of christian leaders, for the *pure faith* of the gospel, *in pretence* ; but, *in fact*, for power and dominion ? how ready have they been to level *curSES* at each other's head, when they had no other way to avenge themselves on *dissenters*, and damn all who would contradict or oppose them ? And when the *civil power* was on their side, and the *sword* in their hands, how ready have they been to *force* compliance with their dictates, their favourite *schemes* and *terms*, and their *imaginary improvements* of their Redeemer's religion : to *imprison*, *fine*, *drive into exile* ; to *hang*, *burn*, *torture*, nay, *massacre* by thousands those who stood in their way, or they thought meet to reproach with the odious names of *hereticks* or *schismaticks* ? It is no wonder *such measures*, *such practices* should shock human nature, give men a *frightful idea* of those who used them, and pre-

* See all the ancient creeds collected in my *Lord King's Enquiry into the constitution of the primitive church. Part ii.*

prejudice them against a *religion*, from whence its preachers pretended to fetch a warrant for them. What can give a more *horrid notion* of christianity, than to imagine it *authorizes* such powers or practices : or that it was designed, by such *dishonest, cruel and destructive* methods to establish its ministers *dominion* over mankind ? This is not indeed *christianity*, but *anti-christianism*.

AGAINST *this spirit*, and every thing that borders on it, or bears resemblance to it, all who have the honour of their religion *at heart*, should guard with the utmost concern. The religion of *your master*, if you are indeed the ministers of *Jesus the prince of peace*, is founded in *love*, the most glorious and astonishing love ; it breathes *love and good-will* to men in every part of it, and diffuses *peace and calm* thro' every mind that embraces it, and were it *generally and heartily* embraced, would spread a calm over the face of the whole earth. It forbids in its *ministers* all ambition of mastership or dominion. *Humility* is their greatest grace and honour. He stands foremost in his great Lord's esteem, not who has the *largest revenues*, the most *swelling titles*, or most *numerous vassals*, not who can best *accommodate* himself to the humours of courtiers, or *recommend* himself to the great ones of the earth ; but who condescends to the *lowest offices* for the good of those to whom he ministers, and readily makes himself *the servant of all*. *Plainness and sincerity*, without any thing of tricking art, or covered selfish views, is what should distinguish every *honest man* ; and what is a *minister of Christ* without this character ? He
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himself covered no selfish designs with *sacred pretences*; but denied himself, and made *self-denial* the first lesson in his school, the first duty of his *disciples*, what was to be laid as the foundation of all the rest; and can artful, reigning selfishness *become* his ministers? No affectation of *preeminence* or dominion appeared in him, tho he was *lord of all*. Nor can such a disposition ever suit the ministers of one, *whose kingdom is not of this world*, but those only of an *earthly prince*. But to acquire such power by *art*, and support it by *force*, by *cruelty* and *persecution*; to teize and worry, to hurt and destroy those who will not submit to it, is to fly in the face of *your master* and *his religion*. He sought no *professors* of religion but *sincere believers* of it, no subjects but *volunteers*; such as on full conviction gave him at once their *names* and *hearts*. Force may make *hypocrites*, never can make *christians* and *believers*. Faith must insinuate into the *heart*, can never be *beaten* into the head.

Fides suadenda est non imperanda. Lactant.

EVERY thing then that looks like *selfish cunning*, like *affectation* of empire and dominion over consciences, bodies or estates; every thing that has the *appearance* of *forcible constraint*, and much more of *hurtful revenge* and *rage*, against modest *dissenters*, or more daring *opposers*, ministers should cautiously avoid and shun. If by proper arguments they can convince or *silence gainsayers*, if by meek instruction they can reclaim those *who oppose themselves*, if by motives and methods *evangelical*, that is, both *reasonable*, *wise* and *kind*, they can prompt and prevail with
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men to embrace the religion of *Jesus*, but especially come under *its power*, in God's name let them do it, they are but doing *their duty*. And the more industriously and heartily they labour this, the better; they'll be heard with good liking, attention and regard; they'll beget an *esteem* for their religion in the hearts of men, if they cannot persuade them to be *religious*. But if they seem to have a *design* upon mankind, to aim at blinding and enslaving them, and much more to have a *spite* against them, and make them suffer *hardships*, if they will not bend obsequiously to their will, or yield themselves to their *direction* and *guidance*; this will make *themselves* suspected and hated, if not *their religion* too, tho' nothing can be more *inconsistent* with it, than such a conduct is: nothing more *unnatural* in its ministers, than such behaviour, the ministers of the *lowly, heavenly, honest, meek, merciful* and *benevolent Redeemer*. Must not every thing *lordly, worldly, artful, impetuous, injurious* or *cruel*, look quite out of character in *his* ministers?

As *ministers* value the *honour* of their *master*, the credit of *his* religion, their *own* usefulness in their office, and their *just esteem* amongst men founded thereon, let them avoid whatever gives *ground* for suspicion here. Let the *lowly, heavenly, condescending spirit*; the plain and undisguised *conduct* of their *master*, be as conspicuous as possible in them. Let them appear to be acted by the *same principles*, and carrying on the *same benevolent* designs, in the *same kind* and *merciful methods*, without *selfish views*, without any encroachments on the *rights* and *liberties* of
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of mankind, *natural* or *civil*, if they would stop the mouths of *infidels*, and recommend the religion they preach. Nothing but this *fair, open, consistent* dealing with the world, and sincere endeavours to make their conduct *suit* with, and *serve* the true design of their office, will ever procure them the regard owing to *christian ministers*, nor keep up in men a true reverence for christianity. If this be their design indeed, it will be made appear in their *whole conduct*: If any other designs that are selfish and inconsistent with the *nature* and *true intention* of their office (tho *this* be made the *ground* of their pretensions) they must lose their esteem with the *thinking part* of mankind. They will call it, and not unjustly neither, *priestcraft*; and, if they are *enemies*, will improve it to the *disadvantage* of christianity: but if not, they can have no very *advantageous* or *honourable* ideas of such ministers.

IN short, the *ministers* of *Jesus*, are sent out to preach and propagate his religion, the *true religion* of nature, with merciful *evangelical additions* fitted to the sinful state of mankind, and to prevail on mankind to embrace it, and come under *its power*. For *this* they are put into office. For *this only* is their office honourable. He who pursues not this end, by *whatever commission* he acts, is no christian minister, nor does *deserve*, nor ever *will procure* the regard of such an one, with persons of any *sound sense*.

BUT if *other designs* inconsistent with the true nature of their office shew themselves; if instead

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of promoting real, inward spiritual religion; if instead of endeavouring to make men *wise*, and *good*, and *virtuous*, they labour to make them *credulous* and *superstitious*, fond of *pomp*, and *gaudiness* and *outward shew* in religious worship, submit to their rule, implicit receivers of their *dictates*, and blind reverers of their *authority*, and labour to awe them into this by the *powers* of the world, get *injurious*, *oppressive*, *cruel* or *sanguinary laws*, against those who dispute their claims, *dissent* from them, or *deny* them the submission they expect, stir up the *civil power* to prosecute them as offenders, that is, in other words, to *persecute them*: if they act a part so *unnatural*, *indecent* and *unsuitable* to their religion, and their *own character*, they will not appear to the thinking part of the world as the *ministers* of *Christ*, but a *sett* of men, who, in the name of *Christ*, are advancing themselves, and endeavouring to bring mankind into bondage to them, and that by no very *fair*, *human*, or *recommending* methods. And hence the inference is but too easy and natural, either their religion *countenances* them herein, or it *does not*. If *not*, what are they, who abuse and belie it with such pretensions? If *it does*, does not the whole look like the *artful contrivance* of *designing men*?

Is it likely that the *Son of God* came down from heaven, on *such* an errand, to make his ministers lords of the earth, or lords in it, and bring the rest of the world into blind vassalage to them, and dependance on them? whilst they shew but *little concern* to make men truly religious, lovers of God and of mankind? and discover

discover much more *opposition* and *enmity* to such as pay not expected reverence to them, than those who violate the *plainest laws* of nature, and make a louder *outcry* against those they stigmatize with *heresy* and *schism*, than those who are guilty of *riot*, *drunkenness*, *leudness*, *adultery*, nay, *robbery* and *murder*. Can the world believe such men are in earnest the *ministers* of *Christ*, or *true* religion? or if they do, what a *notion* must they have of true religion, when such men *seem* in earnest only to *enrich* and *aggrandize* themselves, and settle their *spiritual empire* over men?

IT is this mixture of the *spirit* of the world with religion that has been the great corrupter of it, and opened the mouths of *infidels* against it, where they have *liberty* of *speech*, and made others *secret enemies* to it, where their mouths are *padlock'd*, and *such freedom* dangerous. And *christian religion* will never diffuse itself widely among men, nor resume its *primitive lustre*, till its ministers are the same *plain*, *honest*, *artless* men as were the *apostles*; as careful to set it in the view of the world in their *own fair example*, as little concerned for revenue and power, and as much concerned that men thorowly *believe*, heartily *embrace* and faithfully *practise* the religion of their Master, as *openly* profess it. This last requires but *little pains*, and deserves *no great pay*: where such profession is the *fashion* rulers countenance it, and men of all ranks are in it. The bulk of mankind easily and naturally come into the rulers fashion: *regis ad exemplum*, &c. but it requires *skill*, and *zeal*, and *diligence*, much *humility* and *self-denial*, much *pains*

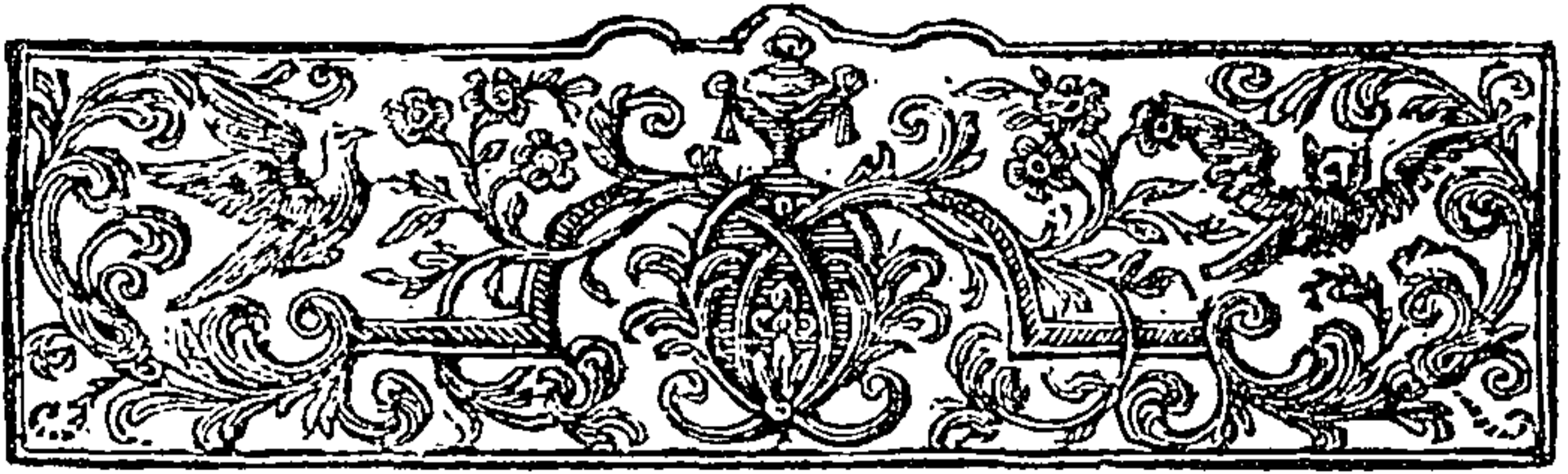
and *application*, to bring men to the hearty belief and practice of it ; and indeed that it be set before them, in a *fair attractive* example. This should be the chief concern of all who call themselves the *ministers of Christ*, and will be *so*, if they are *truly such*. This, and this only, is the likely way to stop the mouths of *infidels*, and make the religion of *Jesus* more generally shew forth its power in the lives of those who profess it, and evidence that “ Man-
 “ kind are *mended* by it, and christians are
 “ arrived at an *higher* degree of perfection, than
 “ the rest of the *degenerate world*.”

BUT how guilty must they be before God ? how criminal in the account of all considerate men, who assume this *sacred* character and office, value themselves highly *on it*, and claim *much* regard, and *ample* revenues and powers in virtue of it ; but instead of *spreading* true religion, *corrupt* it, and instead of *mending* mankind, make them *worse* ? and by their *bad example*, *negligence*, *artifice*, *ambition*, or *preposterous zeal* for the little things, the *externals* of religion, or the distinguishing *terms* or *notions* of their own sect or party, countenance or connive at *ungodliness* or any *immorality*, or encourage *spite* and *ill-will*, *rage* and *rancour* in their followers, and transform the profess'd disciples of the *meek* and *lowly Jesus*, the *lamb of God*, into *wolves* and *tygers*, and prompt them to tear and devour one another under the notion of enemies, nay, or thus to treat the *avowed enemies* of their religion, in flat contradiction to *their religion* which every where breathes and inculcates the most *fervent charity*, and most *unfeigned*

feigned and unlimited good-will, and their Master's example, who came not to hurt and destroy, but save mankind.

MAY all the ministers of christ be seriously concerned to silence *these clamours of infidels* against their religion, by a *spirit and carriage* suited to it; and shew themselves much more intent on pursuing the true interest of their office, more concerned for their *Master's interest*, and the diffusing his religion into the hearts of men, than for any interest of *their own*; enemies to *craft, ambition, tyranny* over souls or bodies, and *all kind of persecution*. *Magna est veritas, & prævalebit*; great is truth, and it will prevail: but then it must not be dishonoured, or betrayed, by those who are its votaries and ministers.





A D D R E S S
T O T H E
L A I T Y, *or* P e o p l e.

AND
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 ND now I turn myself to the
laity, as they are commonly called,
 in contradistinction to the *clergy*, the
christian people, and that of all *di-*
visions and *denominations*. I can-
 not but think there are some *chrif-*
tian people amongst them all. And sure it is *your*
concern as *well*, tho not quite *so much*, as that
 of *ministers*, to remove this reproach, and en-
 deavour that *unbelievers* have less ground to say,
 “The world has not been mended since the
 “days of the *Roman* emperor *Tiberius*, when
 “first their lord and master published his religion
 “to the world.” If *your lives* reproach religion,
 if they give *the enemies* of it *occasion* to *blaspheme*,
you cannot be guiltless. You must bear *the blame*,
 which, by this means, will undeservedly be laid

on your religion. Indeed it is *not fair*, to take an account of religion from *their* lives who profess it, but rather to judge of *them* by the religion they profess. But mankind in general, have *no biasses* in favour of true religion. They are naturally unwilling to come under *its bonds*, and are therefore glad of any occasion to *accuse* and *reproach* it, to excuse themselves. For this reason they will judge of it, not as it is in *itself*, or as described in the *sacred institutes*, but as it appears in *the lives* of christians, and that too in the *worst* part of their conduct. And the case standing thus, *all you* who call yourselves christians, should be careful, that *no part* of your conduct may give occasion to such *calumnies* and *slanders* on your holy religion, but endeavour that the *doctrine* of your God and Saviour be adorned in all things by your *conversation*. Let me on this occasion suggest some things *necessary* to this end to *you* who are christians *indeed*, and exhortate with *you* who, under the christian *name*, live at variance with the religion you profess, and lead *immoral* lives.

First, To you who appear to be christians *indeed*, true believers of the religion you profess, and in the general live according to the *rules* of your religion, *look well to yourselves*, that the *enemies* of your holy religion, take no *advantage* against it from your own *weaknesses* and *faults*; and endeavour what in you lies, to make *others*, under your *influence*, truly religious.

First, L O O K to yourselves, that no *advantage* be taken against your religion by the *enemies* of it,
thro'

thro' your own weaknesſes or faults. See that you *underſtand* your religion well, and the *evidences* which ſupport it. Take it not merely *upon truſt*, from parents, tutors, miniſters or others, *how high* a veneration ſoever you have for them, or *how deſerved* ſoever it be. When you are grown to ripeneſs of underſtanding, examine for *yourſelves*, enter into the *doctrines*, *precepts*, *motives* of your religion, into its *nature* and *deſign*, and the *moment* and *importance* of its ſeveral branches and appurtenances, that you may diſtinguiſh a-right between *things that differ*; and not be the *property*, the blind implicit followers, of any you either have or chuſe as your *teachers* and *guides*. Make nothing *eſſential* to your religion, but what *nature*, *reaſon*, and the *plain declarations* of the word of God make ſuch; leſt you depart from the *ſimplicity of the goſpel*, and condemn, diſown, hate and perſecute whom your common Lord will *accept* and *approve*, and become more zealous for a *notion*, a *ceremony*, a *ſect* or *party*, than for what is eſſential to religion. Lay not the *greateſt ſtreſs* on things of *leſs* moment. Conſider well that the *end* of chriſtianity is, to make men religious and virtuous, and let every thing be valued, as it *more* or *leſs* ſubſerves this deſign. Count nothing valuable in religion that has *no ſuch* tendency; and every thing that has a *counter tendency* eſteem miſchievous. The very *doctrines* of chriſtianity themſelves, however fitted to *honour* God, and fill the heart with veneration for him, and devotion to him, are of *little ſignificancy*, any farther than they promote religious practice, and lead to univerſal obedience. And if the *faith* or *belief* of theſe, however

however *plain* and *important*, and much more if *intricate*, *obscure* and of *less* importance, lead men off from the *study* and *practice* of the essential duties of religion, the *love* of God and their neighbour, and the *purifying* their own hearts, they are made to destroy their *own ends*.

DISTINGUISH well between the *essentials* of your religion, and the *circumstantials* and *appurtenances* of it; between the religion of the *end*, and that of the *means*, and see that they be placed in due *subserviency*, and that *the latter* be not substituted in the room of the *other*. The *doctrines* of christianity, as has been just observed, have a *subserviency* to the farther and *higher* purports of religion. But the *rituals*, the *ministers* of religion, their office, powers, ministrations, all the other *appointed means* of religion are only for their higher ends, to bring men to *repent* of sin, *believe* in Christ, *return* to God by him, and build them up in *holiness* and the practice of every *duty* and *branch* of true religion. Going to *publick prayers*, to hear *sermons*, to receive the *Lord's supper*, are appointed *means* of christianity. But if they are not pursued into their proper consequences, and made to promote their proper *designs* and *ends*, they are little better than profaned. *Prayers* are for the exercise and inflaming *devotion*, to own our *dependence* on God, and express our *hope* and *trust* in him, and heighten and increase them. *Sermons* are for *instructing us in religiousness*, explaining and applying the scripture doctrines, rules and motives, that they may affect the *heart*, and influence and regulate the *life*. The

Lord's supper is intended to commemorate and *endear* our Redeemer, and *bind* the obligations of our religion to all duties *faster* about us. If *these means* are not used to *these ends*, they are abused. If we attend on *publick prayers*, without any devotion, without exercising and increasing dependence, hope and trust in God. If we *hear sermons* only to tickle our ears, or stuff our heads, or furnish matter of talk without any, at least any *due, concern*, that our hearts be affected, and our lives regulated by the truths we hear. If we attend at the *table* of the *Lord*, without any *concern* to have our hearts enflamed with *redeeming love*, our souls moulded into an *evangelical temper*; if our repentance and faith be not there *exercised* and *heightned*, love to God and our neighbour *enflamed*, and all the bonds of duty hold us not *the faster*; but if instead hereof, we are only religious *for the time*, and our bonds of duty sit *looser* about us afterward, we do but *mock* with God, and *cheat* ourselves with those observances, how divine soever in their appointment or institution. If *rituals* are placed in the room of *morals*, especially those of mere *human device*, the *traditions* of men instead of the commands of God; if the *means* of religion are made to stand instead of the end; if going to *prayers*, to hear *sermons*, to the *sacrament*, are made the whole of religion, instead of *helps* to the being religious, the very design of them is defeated, and *christian institutions* set in opposition to *christianity*.

GUARD with utmost caution and concern against such fatal *mistake* and *abuse*. Do not place a *right belief* or a contentious zeal for it,
going

going to *church*, hearing *sermons*, attending the *sacrament*, or attachment to any ministers, whether *prelatical*, or *presbyterian* or *popular*; whether *in* the right line of succession or *out* of it; in the room of inward, real *piety*, *purity* of heart and life, or *justice*, *charity* and cordial *benevolence* towards your neighbour, towards all your kind. It is not the *christian name*, but the *divine nature* displaying itself in an holy, heavenly and useful life, in the performance of every branch of known duty to *God* and *man*, that must prove you christians *indeed*. A christian's *faith* must be *shewn by his good works* *, without those it is dead. † *He is not a christian*, any more than a *jew*, who is one *outwardly* only, in name, in shew, in form only; but he is a christian who is one *inwardly*, whose *heart* feels the impression and influence of the religion he professes, and whose *life* shews this in the faithful performance of all *known duties*, and whose *praise* is not of men but of *God*; who desires and seeks the *approbation* of God, not the *applause* or good word of men.

ADMIT nothing into your religion, that is *superstitious* and *whimsical*, *silly* or *ridiculous*. Christianity is *in itself* a plain, grave, rational and spiritual institution, and built on the most sound and solid foundations. It has nothing in it but what is *wise* and *worthy* of God. Debase it not by any *superstitious* and *silly* fancies. You see what an *handle* its enemies make of the superstitions of christians against their religion.

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* Jam. ii.

† Rom. ii. ult.

It is indeed a very *wrong charge* against christianity, but too righteous a charge against the *generality* of christians. Guard against this therefore with *peculiar concern*. Conceit no *imaginary holiness* in persons, places, times or utensils, as if, on such account, your services would be *better* accepted of God. Nothing can more *debase* the nature of christian worship, nor more directly *contradict* the express declarations of *our Saviour* himself. He has told us, that * *where-soever two or three are assembled in his name he will be in the midst of them*. And that †, *they are the true worshippers, who worship in spirit and in truth*; and that *the Father seeks such to worship him*, whether they meet in a *temple or tabernacle*, in a *barn*, or the *open air*; whether they have a publick minister amongst them in the *right line* or out of it, or none but one made *pro re nata*, the best qualified among them.

No *r*, indeed, but *order* is very requisite in publick worship, and a *publick person* to minister is requisite to the orderly administration; but to make it more than a *point of order*, and conceit that the *administrator* is necessary to the acceptance of the *worshippers*, or *their worship*, is downright superstitious. It is the *frame of spirit* in worship, that God alone regards; if this be *right*, he accepts it; if *wrong*, he rejects it: nor do the *faults* or *ill founded pretensions* of the minister, in *one case*, render the *sincere* worship or worshipper unacceptable, nor the *holy life* or *regular* call and commission of
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* Matt. xviii. 20.

† John iv. 23, 24.

the minister, in *the other*, render what is insincere acceptable. Lay no stress on persons or places, much less on the *habits* of the minister or ornaments of the place, or shew a *fondness* for finery, external gaudiness and shew in worship: they who meet to offer up their *hearts* to God, will have *little regard* to what may captivate the eyes, or strike the imagination. These gay and glittering appearances can never *help*, but naturally *hinder* devotion and spirituality in worship. *Outward pomp* may suit the taste of an earthly prince, who can see no deeper than the outside. God, who can *look into the heart*, requires an internal reverence and veneration, such as external shew cannot excite, but will naturally divert the mind from it. Make no *times* holy, but what God himself has made so, much less call *days* of idleness by sacred names. Imagine not that either *long prayers* or *short ones*, those by a *form*, or those from the *free suggestions* of a man's own mind, render acceptable to God; it is *heartly* and *cordial* devotion he alone accepts: the words without the heart reach not his ears, whether the *church's* words, or those of any *private person*.

BE as sensible of the *weakness* of human understanding, and the *failures* and *frailties* of human conduct, as the matter requires, and therefore free from *self-conceit* and *overbearing* pride, and forbearing and charitable to honest minds in differing ways of thinking. And as you pretend not to be *impeccable*, but *in many things offend*, fancy not yourselves *infallible*, but own you may *in many things mistake*, and that possibly in matters wherein you are most *confident*.
And

And as you would humbly hope for *acceptance* with God, when you have *sincerely* sought to know and do his will, tho' you may be guilty of involuntary mistakes, have the *same hopes* concerning others, tho' *they* may not think just as *you* do, or express themselves in the *same words*, when you have all good reason to believe *them* as sincere in their endeavours to please God, as *yourselves*, and love and esteem them accordingly. Draw not as *bateful inferences* as you can from other mens opinions, and charge these on them as *their sense*, and make this an occasion to *abate* your christian love (which in scripture language is to *bate* in a degree) or to feed *jealousies* and *suspicious*, and by degrees *wrath*, and *spite*, and *ill-will*, and then persecute with the *tongue*, and distress in their *circumstances*, if you cannot farther hurt or destroy. Who when his lord comes, would be found thus *beating his fellow servants*? And what is there, that gives thinking infidels a *greater prejudice* against the religion of *Jesus*, than to see his disciples treat each other in this *unnatural* manner?

NAY, as to those who *disbelieve* your holy religion throughout, and give out that it is not from God, endeavour to weaken its *evidences*, nay, possibly to render it ridiculous and hateful, pity them, pray for them; endeavour, as you are able, *in a spirit of meekness*, to shew the weakness of their reasonings, but forbear your *hands*. If you cannot silence them with *argument*, don't fall on them with opprobrious *language*, much less with more unchristian *usage*: break not in upon their *liberties* as men.

Join

Join in no *persecution*, no *prosecution* of them. What is virtuous *in them*, approve, commend. Conquer their averfions to your religion, by *kindness* and *gentleness*. Let them have *full freedom* to propofe their *doubts*, or offer their *arguments*. If they treat the fubject with *inde- cency*, this muft recoil on *themselves*, it cannot hurt the christian caufe. And if they are men of *loofe lives*, and *corrupt morals*, let not this be made *fuel* to a furious and flaming zeal, or *fanctify* violence and cruelty in you towards them. At leaft let this be check'd, till you find an *equal*, or even *greater* zeal againft thofe, who, under the christian name, are *loofe* and *immoral* in their manners, tho they may be as forward *as any* in their oppofition to unbelievers, as *fierce* and *clamorous* againft them. For thefe are the worfe enemies to christianity of *the two*. They openly caft off all reverences for it, and fhew no regard to its *laws*, whilft they profefs to believe it, and glory in the *christian name*; they are *traitors* as well as enemies, fpeak their Redeemer fair, and *call him Lord*, yet in fact renounce his authority, and declare, by their behaviour, that *they * will not have him to reign over them*. When as † *every one who names the name of Chrift, fhould depart from iniquity*, or if they do not, ‡ *as workers of iniquity be bid depart from him*. And as much as a *perfidious traitor* is worfe than an *open and avowed enemy*, fo much is a *loofe, debauched or openly immoral christian*, than even a *vicious infidel*; and by the *real christian* fhould be more dif-
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* Luke xix. 14.

† 2 Tim. ii. 19.

‡ Matt. vii. 23.

liked and shunn'd, according to apostolical advice and direction, *I wrote to you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators : yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, nor with——* But now I have written to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother (*viz.* christian) be a fornicator or idolater, or railer, or drunkard—— with such an one no not to eat, to have no friendly intercourse.

T H A T must therefore be an *unnatural* and *preposterous* zeal, that flames out against an infidel however wicked, and at the same time caresses an *immoral brother*. Whereas the *apostle* forbids all friendly intimacies with *the last*, when he allows them with *the other*. Let your displeasure better suit the apostle's direction, and rise highest against those who, in *his* account, are *most criminal*. But let not your zeal against either be *mischievous*; hate that character most which is indeed the worst, but hurt neither. A loose infidel is nothing near such a *monster* as a loose christian. *The first* acts in more consistency with himself and principles; *the last* flies directly in the face of his religion; his therefore is a character the *most deserving blame*; and every real christian should esteem it so. But to have a *fondness* for such an one, to signify *good liking* to him, or *approbation* of him, when a man's blood boils at *the other*, and he is avoided, hated and pursued with hurtful *rage* and *vengeance*, is in a true christian an unnatural and preposterous conduct; it must give *an infidel* an apprehension of his *weakness* and *inconsistency*, or give him a very *disadvantageous* notion of his religion. For he must think either he does not understand it; or
not

not *act* according to it; or he must think his religion *countenances* immorality, and that the *profession* of it, if attended with *hatred* and *opposition* to those who disbelieve it, will atone for the most flagrant violations of the *laws* of *nature*.

LET not religious services, or exercises of *devotion*, interfere with *other* duties of the family, any more than *family affairs* jostle out devotion. Afford a proper time for each. Nor let any *private duties* hinder more important ones you owe the *publick*. In your dealings be *honest*, be punctual to your *words*, and faithful to your *promises*, let nothing that has the *appearance* of deceit or tricking, be seen in any part of your conduct.

NOR think yourselves, nor give *the world* occasion to think, religion is a *sullen, sour, morose* or *melancholly* thing, or inconsistent with any *true rules* of civility, courtesy or good manners. Endeavour by *meekness* and *gentleness*, by *tenderness* and *pity*, by *courtesy* and *kindness*, by *condescension* to inferiors, by all *good offices* to those you can serve and reasonably oblige, to shew that your religion is the *best natured* in the world, and that unfeigned *good-will* to mankind runs thro' it all. It will, if duly followed, *grace* and *recommend* those in highest rank, and most politely bred. It will *reconcile* those in meanest state to their condition and circumstances, make them *grateful* to benefactors, *ob-servant* and *obliging* to superiors, and *contented* and *easy* in their stations, and thus *cement* mankind of all sorts and ranks, and tie them to-
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gether

gether by the *sweetest* and the *strongest* bands. Labour heartily, whatever your condition in the world be, *so* to live and act, that *your religion* may appear, in its *own* amiable and engaging form.

AND you, who have ability, be sure to commend your religion by *doing good* in proportion, even *all* the good you can; *to † do good and communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* Remember that those who are ** rich in this world*, are charged not to be high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; *to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, free to communicate.* Nothing is more unnatural in a christian than greedy, griping and oppressive measures in getting wealth, or a penurious, narrow soul, that seems to grudge himself, and those to whom he should impart the wealth with which the Lord of all entrusts him. It is the *blessing of God maketh rich.* And those whom he thus blesses, are but his *stewards*, and the *dispensers* of his bounty. Part indeed is their own property, and to be used for *themselves*, but part they are bound to communicate to those who *need.* If christians *keep* that wealth wholly to *themselves*, or hoard it up for their *descendants*, much more for they know not who, which God requires them to scatter, for the service of their *country*, for promoting the *good* of *mankind*, either spiritual or temporal, for the encouragement of the *industrious,*

† Heb. xiii.

* 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18i

strious, or refreshing the bowels of the *necessitous*, they wrong *him*, are unfaithful in their *trust*, injurious to their *fellow creatures*, and deprive *themselves* of the satisfaction and solace which a benevolent mind feels in *doing good* to others. They often lay up what the next taker *lavishes* away, and make provision for the *ruin* of their children, instead of *laying up* for *themselves* a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold of *eternal life*.

WHAT can be more *incongruous*, what more *reproachful* to the christian profession than such a *narrow stingy soul*, so grasping and yet so close a *fist*? An insatiate greediness for *gain*, without an heart to do *any good*, with what one has to spare? How unlike the example of the *blessed Redeemer* is this, who tho * *he had not where to lay his head*, † *went about doing good*. How unlike the blessed God, who ‖ *is good and doth good*. How little of that *love, kindness* and *good-will* does it manifest, which are so much inculcated by the *precepts*, and prompted by the *motives* of the gospel, and recommended by our Lord's example? what evidence can there be of reigning love to God or men in one ‡ *who having this world's goods sees others in want, and yet withholds his hand*? Those who are indeed touch'd with a sense of God's love, his *free* and *undeserved* love, his *rich* and *flowing* mercy, in *Christ Jesus* to sinful men, must have

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* Luke 11. 58.

† Acts 1. 38.

" Psal. cxix. 68.

‡ 1 John iii. 17.

flowing bowels, and large, free and communicative hearts and hands. The truly *christian heart* is tender, sensible how much it stands in need of God's mercy; and the feeling of its *own wants*, gives it a *fellow feeling* of the miseries and wants of *others*, and makes ready to impart for their relief *according to its power*, and oftentimes *beyond it*. But a covetous, close and niggardly spirit is a *dishonour* to the christian name. Nothing can give a more *disgraceful* representation of our holy and divine religion, nor stand in more direct opposition to it.

THOSE of you whom God blesses with abundance, and prospers in your estate and trades, take care to behave as *faithful stewards* of the most high. Consider yourselves as *trustees* for those who want what you can spare, and shew that you look upon it as a *blessing*, that you have it in your power, and find your hearts disposed to bless *others* out of your abundance. Indeed * *looking well to the state of your lands, and flocks and herds*; diligence and industry in trade and business, are your duty. An *idle, useless*, and much more a *riotous and wasteful* life, a christian should abhor, but hate a *greedy, grasping, narrow* spirit; and think it both your *duty* and your *privilege*, to lay out of your abundance for the *good of others*, for the *safety and service* of your country, the spiritual or temporal good of mankind. Let the † *blessing of them who are*
ready

* Prov. xxvii. 23.

† Job xxix. 23.

*ready to perish come upon you, and the bowels of the needy be refreshed by you. * Do good to all, as you have opportunity and ability, especially to them who are of the household of faith: not only wait till opportunities shall offer, but seek for such, to shew your hearts are set on doing good.*

INDEED between *the poor* distinction should be made; all are not to be pitied *alike*, nor with the same readiness supplied and relieved: the *lazy, idle, wasteful and luxurious* poor, deserve little compassion. The apostle gave command, † *that they who would not work, neither should they eat*; but that even those who live by their work, *should labour with their hands, not only that ‡ they may eat their own bread, but that they may have wherewith to help those in need.* Not sure the *idle*, who will not work, but *those* who either are for the present out of work or disabled. A plain evidence, *by the way*, that christian religion is no enemy to industry, nor friend to laziness or idleness. Nor the *gospel*, according to *this author's* suggestion, hurtful to a *trading nation.* But the *industrious poor*, when sickness or age prevents their labour, are proper objects of christian compassion. Such, *you* who are able, should *with pleasure* relieve and help. To such be sure to bear a *pitying* heart, and stretch out a *relieving* hand. Nor give as if
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* Gal. vi. 10.

† 2 Theff. iii. 10.

‡ Eph. iv. 28.

you *grudged* what you bestow ; but as those who *rejoice* at such an opportunity, and are much pleased that by such a service, you can testify your *gratitude* to your Lord and Saviour, and manifest your *great good will* to men. Think often of that saying of your Saviour, *what * do you more than others?* And see that in real usefulness, in true benevolence, you be out-done by none. As your religion furnishes the most powerful motives to the being and doing good, be ashamed that *any*, from the influence of *less powerful* motives, should do more good than you. But not only look to it, that your *own conduct* give no occasion to *unbelievers* to reproach your religion, but,

Secondly, ENDEAVOUR heartily that all under your care and influence be truly religious. Instil as early as you can, true *virtue* and *religion* into your children, but with a wise regard to their capacities ; not by *amusing* them with speculations *useless* and *out of* their reach ; but the plain *principles* of religion, and *rules* of duty that are level to their understanding. Teach them an awful regard to *truth*, in all they *speak*, and *honesty* in all they *do* : to govern and controul their *appetites* and *passions* ; to *love*, and do the *kindest offices* for one another. Inspire them with *tendernefs* and *compassion* for the miserable, and with sincere *good will* to all their kind, to men as men, *whatever* their sentiments may be as to religion. Possess them, as soon as possible, with a *sense* of God, a reverence and love for him, and teach them

* Matt. v. 47.

them to do all this duty out of *obedience* to him, the best foundation of religion. Make them also feel, as soon as you can, the *force* of *christian motives*, the powerful considerations of a *future state*. *Virtue* is, indeed, an amiable thing in itself, but its *native charms* will not have power to draw and keep the heart, in a thousand instances of temptation, without some *foreign advantages*. How lovely soever, few hearts will be retained in *its interests*, without a *dowry*. Make it as amiable to your children as you can, but let them know that it is likely to be crowned, with an *exceeding recompense of reward*. And let *Vice* be painted as *ugly*, and as *odious* as possible, to their minds; but let them also know how its *ways take hold of death*, and its *steps lead down to hell*. Watch over them with the tenderest care. Guard from temptations which themselves want skill to shun. Prompt not their *appetites* of any kind thro' *foolish fondness*, nor feed and encourage them by *criminal indulgence*. Yet don't, by too great *rigor*, and *severity*, alienate their hearts or from yourselves, or from their duty. Set them an *example* of every thing commendable, virtuous, useful and divine. Keep them with the utmost care from the influence of *bad company* and *bad examples*. Train them up in love to *business*, and an utter detestation of *idleness*, of all *useless* and, much more, *hurtful* exercise and employment. By serious *admonitions* and *counsels*, direct and warn them against all lust; by friendly *reproofs* and kind *corrections*, when necessary, reclaim them from it, and shew the *pitying* heart, whilst you lay on the *correcting* hand, and that *necessity is upon you*, or you would refrain,

refrain, what duty and kindness, not *passion* and *resentment*, make you act. But those who are *stubborn* in their wickedness, and utterly *incorrigible*, after all possible methods of amendment have been tried, renounce, cast off, how much soever *natural affection* relucts. And let them know, that those who renounce *God* and *virtue*, and break thro' all the strongest bonds of duty to the supreme *ruler* and *parent* of mankind, should be blotted from all *earthly parents* hearts.

NOR be concerned only that your *children* be religious, virtuous and useful in the church and world, but that *all* under *your care*, servants, apprentices, pupils, be religious too. 'Tis from *families* that religion and good order must spread themselves thro' *larger societies*. *Ministers* will labour much in vain, if family order and religion be neglected. Tho you must not make *idols* nor *oracles* of them, nor renounce *your own* understandings, to be led by *theirs*, they should be *esteemed for their word's sake*, and be helped by all good christians in it. Assist them in their work, by making *all under your care*, as religious as you can.

LET your very *friendship*, as well as your *authority*, be made serviceable to the interests of your religion, and your *love* to *friends* be shewn, by your endeavour to infuse into them the *love* of your Redeemer, of *his* religion, and *every thing* that is virtuous. Make your *conversation*, and, as much as possible your *pleasures*

pleasures and diversions subservient to this design. In a word; labour to be as *useful* as you can, and live blessings to your *families*, your *neighbourhoods*, your *acquaintance* and your *country*. Let your *interest* among all your dependants be used for this end, let your *influence* this way reach as far as it can, let your *good example* lead all that know you, to be good *christians*, good *neighbours*, good *patriots*, as endearing to their *nearest relations*, and as *benevolent* and *useful* to them, their countrymen, and all mankind, as possible: And that without any mixtures of *that wrath* or furious zeal against any *that worketh not the righteousness of God*. Yet shew, on all occasions a detestation against every sin; rouze yourselves to a *vindication* of oppress'd and injured innocence, and oppose whatever is *inconsistent* with the rights and liberties of mankind, or is *destructive* of the publick peace and weal. And now,

Secondly, I SHALL take the liberty to address *the vicious and immoral part of the christian world*, who live at open variance with the Redeemer's laws, the precepts of christianity.

You see what an handle *unbelievers* make of your conduct, to detract from the *honour* of christianity, and deny its divine original. The world, they tell us, is little *mended* by it, and multitudes under the *christian name*, are as *leud* and *debauched*, as *selfish* in their temper, as *fraudulent* in their dealings, as *injurious*

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and *oppressive*, as much *enemies* to the tranquillity and good of societies, as *hurtful*, *mischievous* and *cruel*, as those you have been taught to condemn, despise and hate, as *beastens*. The fact is but too true. The *blame*, indeed, is not to be *fairly* laid where they are fond of laying it. The religion of *Jesus* deserves no blame, on *your* account: but *you*, who give *them* this handle, cannot be *blameless*. You are indeed *exceeding criminal*, *injurious* to the religion you profess, and *answerable* for all the mischief that ensues to it, or to the souls of men, prejudiced against it, by the *false appearance* it makes in *your* wicked lives. What is religion in notion or profession only? or any farther than it reaches mens *hearts*, and influences and directs their *actions*? If *your* hearts and actions are thus under the *power* and *direction* of christianity, how bad a religion must it be? and how unworthy of God? When you are guilty of such flagrant and shameful *enormities*, as would put honest *beastens* to the blush? But if you live a *contradiction* to all the principles and rules of christianity, why do you *blaspheme* it, by assuming the christian name?

BUT monstrous 'tis indeed, for any of *you*, to shew a zeal, a fiery, destructive zeal against *infidelity*, when *sober* and *virtuous* infidels are yet *better christians* than you. For tho we have *more* in christianity than the bare *religion of nature*, yet the *whole* religion of nature is adopted into it. And he who lives at open defiance with its laws and rules, is *much less*

less a christian, than an heathen or infidel, who better observes them.

EITHER quit your *pretensions*, then, to christianity; or mend your *lives*. The true faith of a christian must be * *shewn by his works*. He whose *deeds* are at perfect disagreement with the laws and rules of christianity, is *no believer* of it. Such wicked livers have no lot nor portion in the kingdom of God. † *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, &c.* You see here, that christianity *corrects* such wicked practices, or *disclaims* such as continue in them. They shall not inherit the kingdom of God, neither that of *grace* here, nor of *glory* hereafter. So that, in truth, whilst you live in a course of *known*, and *wilful*, and much more of *gross* and *scandalous* sins, you are christians only in *name*, and to that name you are a *scandal* and *reproach*. You no more *truly* believe your religion divine, than infidels do. Cease then your displeasure against *them*, and turn it against *yourselves*, your evil deeds and inclinations. Ere you blame *them* mend *your own* hearts and

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* Jam. ii. 18.

† 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

manners. Don't *harden* them by your wicked practices in their *infidelity*, and then condemn them, quarrel with and hate them *for it*. You are of the *same party*, in the *same interests* with the very worst of them: *as much* enemies to christian religion, if not *more*: *those of them* who are sober and virtuous, are more in the interests of your Saviour than you. Tho they believe not *his* religion, they pay a regard to *some of his* laws, they *having not his law* are yet a law to themselves, and do by nature the things contained in the law. Whereas you call him *Lord*, indeed, but trample on his authority and the very dictates of nature too. Act no more in this *self-contradicting* manner, but either be what you profess, or profess to be what you are. Either live under the influence of christian *principles*, and lead christian *lives*, or honestly renounce your principles, and list yourselves among *unbelievers*, the very worst and most *vicious* of them, for those who are *virtuous* will abhor and disclaim you.

W O U L D you but attend to the *monstrous* inconsistency of your *conduct* with your *assumed character*, you would be shocked at it, and either *throw off* your character, or make your conduct better *suit it*. A christian *rake*, a christian *sot*, a christian *whoremonger* or *adulterer*, a christian *knave*, a christian *thief* or *robber*, &c. How uncouth and ill match'd an *epithet* is here? how frightful and hideous are the *jarring sounds*? Does not the contradiction stare every one in the face? and should you not dread,

dread, under the christian name, to be what is *most abhorrent* from christianity? and live in the practice of what it most expressly condemns and forbids? If you have any *value* for your religion, if you bear any *good-will* to mankind, or even to your own souls, either be *christians indeed*, or no longer pretend to the *name*, and by such groundless pretensions *profane* and *blaspheme* it.

You are called by christianity *to be saints*, and you profess esteem and veneration for *some* who have been such; but if you are *samples* of what *saints* have been, how much are names and things confounded? and what just occasion is given unbelievers, to complain of the *abuse of words*. *Sardanapalus, Nero, Caligula, Domitian, Heliogabalus*, and the most infamous names in *heathen story*, might, on as good a foot, be *sainted* too. And if from *such samples* men may make a judgment of your religion, it must be the scorn and abhorrence of mankind. For God's sake, if that awful name has any *authority* or *weight* with you, make a stand, bethink yourselves what you are doing; and have so much pity on *yourselves*, and on those *unbelievers* your ungodly and immoral practices help to harden, as to *cease to do evil, and learn to do well*; or else hasten out of *christian churches*, and herd with those of like morals with yourselves, tho' *disbelieving* the religion you profess.

IF you pretend to *principles* different from *theirs*, this is but pretence. For what are religious principles, without *proper* influences and effects? A *cypher*, a thing of nothing. Your christian principles, if you have any, have no such influence, produce no such effects. You are slaves to your *appetites* and *passions*. These pass all bounds, scorn the restraint of christian laws, and are in fact, the *only principles* by which you are influenced and acted. By herding with *loose infidels*, you only herd with such as are agreed with you in *principles*. You may have *others* in your *heads*, but the same with theirs bear sway in your *heart*. If they are not christians *in name*, you are christians in *nothing* but the name. In heart and life their religion and yours *are one*. And it is much more fit and reasonable, that your *principles* and *practices* should suit, than that your lives should *give the lye* to your profession, or *belye* and *misrepresent* your religion to the world. Or let your principles, therefore, correct your practices, and mend your lives; or, if you will go on in *your wicked ways*, let not infidels any more reproach christianity with *your* conduct, but take you into their *fraternity*, and have you fully for their own.

SUCH *wicked livers* are the reproach of any *christian church*. And did the true spirit of christianity reign in *ministers* and *people*, such *corrupt livers* would quickly be purged out of *every church*, whilst every church would be
open

open to all *good men*, of every denomination among christians. Tho, since the world got into the church, and *selfish* and *ambitious* clergymen had *ends* of their own to serve, by *soothing* princes and people in their vices, their zeal has run exceeding high against *heresy* and *schism*, whilst they have connived at *gross trespasses* on the laws of nature, in those who would serve the purposes of their ambition; and the *worst of men* have been fainted, and their raging passions let loose on *the best*, who have been exposed to publick hatred and scorn.

BUT whatever has been done of this kind, you who lead lives *openly immoral*, are never the better for the *christian name* you bear, nor *the religion* you profess: but will indeed perish with an *heavier doom* at last, for living the *disgrace* of your profession, and a lye to it by your wicked lives. And tho men assuming *sacred characters*, who have ends to serve by you, may accept, commend and applaud you *now*, yet the righteous judge of the world who * *will render to every one according to his works*, will disclaim and condemn you at last, and bid † *you depart from him as workers of iniquity*, and vile and perfidious dishonourers of that *holy name* now called on you. ‡ *Let no man deceive you. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: he that doth not righteousness is not*
of

* Rom. ii. 6.

† Matt. vii. 23.

‡ 1 John iii. 10.

of God, neither he who loveth not his brother. * Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He who soweth of the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. † And indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish will be on every soul that doth, and continueth to do evil, whether jew or gentile, christian or infidel.

* Gal. vi. 7, 8.

† Rom. ii. 8, 9.

T H E E N D.



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