
O F

WITHDRAWING

From such as

Walk Disorderly.

2 THESSAL. III. 6.

Now we command you, Brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw your selves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he received of us.

THESE Words are as authoritative and pressing a Command, as any we meet with in the whole Book of God. In them we may observe both the Matter, and the Form, of this Injunction: The Matter is, Separation from the Converse of wicked and profane Christians, who

who are here described to be *such as walk disorderly*: Ἀτάκτως, that walk out of Line, and keep not their Ranks. A Word borrowed from Military Discipline, which requires every Soldier to march in his File, and to keep that Order in which he was placed by his Leader.

But because there can be no Irregularity, but a Rule must first be presupposed; and no Disorder, where no Orders have been given: Therefore the Apostle farther explains whom he means, and whom he would characterize by this Note, of *walking disorderly*: And those he tells us, are they who *walk not after the Tradition which they had received*; i. e. according to that Doctrine which was taught and delivered to them by the Apostles and Ministers of Christ. And therefore,

First, All that commit gross and flagitious Wickedness, and that live in a Course of foul and notorious Impieties, are justly branded as those who *walk disorderly*. Tho' they make Profession of an Holy Faith, yet they contradict, and enervate it by an unholy Life: They take upon them the Name of Christians, but yet live as without God, and without Christ in the World. The Doctrine of the Gospel teacheth nothing but Holiness and Purity;

It is a Doctrine according to Godliness, as the Apostle expresseth it, 1 *Tim.* 3. 6. All its Precepts, Exhortations, Promises and Threatnings, the whole Drift and Design of it tends only to make us more holy, and to impress upon us some Strictures of the Purity of God our heavenly Father. And therefore, certainly, they who live in the Commission of any scandalous Crimes, must needs be guilty of most wretched Disorder; they break their Ranks, fly out into open Rebellion; yea, while they march under the Banner of Christ, fight against their own Captain, and are to be reputed not his Soldiers, but his Enemies. And not only these, but,

Secondly, All that are erroneous and heretical, are disorderly Persons. Others transgress the Rule, but these destroy it: They pluck up the very Boundaries of the Faith, and deny not only their Obedience to the Truth, but the Truth it self. And though they may varnish over their damnable Doctrines with fair Shews, and good Speeches; and seem to be very mortified, spiritual, and heavenly Persons, that thereby they may gain Proselytes, and a Veneration among them; yet are they far more pernicious and baneful to the Church of Christ, than those that
are

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are openly profane and scandalous : For since the Mind and Understanding is the leading Principle of Man, if that be perverted, it must needs have a malignant Influence upon all the inferiour Faculties. Our Notions are the Guide of our Actions; and consequently, an Error in Judgment stops not there, nor rests only swimming and floating in the Brain ; but challengeth the same Privilege the divinest Truth hath, to direct and govern our Lives ; and so by a wretched Improvement, becomes a Transgression in Practice too. He that hath denied the Faith, must, if he will, be coherent to his own Principles, refuse that Obedience which is consequent upon it. As a *Vertigo*, and Dizziness in the Head, causeth a reeling and staggering Motion in the Feet ; so those who are vertiginous and giddy in their Opinions, must of Necessity be disorderly in their Conversations. They can never walk steadily by a Rule, which they deny to be so. And thus Error is not only Error, but an accumulative Mischief ; it is Error, and Vickedness too.

Thirdly, And not only these, but all turbulent and factious Persons are disorderly Walkers: Such who rend the Church with Schisms and Divisions ; and despise Government

vernment and Order, only because it is not of their own devising ; and are so full of new Models, and new Platforms of Discipline in their Fancies, that in the mean while they have made such wide Breaches in the Peace and Unity of the Church, that I doubt it would much puzzle not only their overweening Wifdoms, but the Wisdom of an Angel himself, to compose and make them up again. And,

Fourthly, Not only these, but also all idle and impertinent Tatlers, all slothful Tale-bearers, who are very busily idle in gadding from House to House, like a Company of giddy Flies buzzing up and down, and who have no other Employment but very solemnly to whisper Nothing in every Man's Ear they meet ; these also are branded by the Apostle as disorderly Persons. Indeed, a great Part of this Chapter is spent about these : Especially *Ver. 11. We hear that there are some among you which walk disorderly, working not at all, but are Busy-bodies ;* very busy they are, but yet do no Work. Unprofitable Burdens to the Earth, and good for nothing in the World, but only to keep the Air in motion. Now from all these Sorts of

of disorderly Persons, we ought to withdraw our selves, to have no Conversation nor Society with them.

And to this we are bound by a Command, as express and urgent, as any contained in the Scriptures. The Form of it runs imperatively, *We command you, Brethren*: And the Authority of this Command is most absolute and sovereign, *In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ*; *i. e.* We command you by the Authority of Christ, or Christ commands you by us, that you *withdraw your selves from every Brother that walketh disorderly.*

And here we may observe Two Things:

First, That a mere external Profession of Christianity, though it be overborn and contradicted by a disorderly and sinful Life, is here made by the Apostle, a sufficient Title to a Fraternity with true Christians: Though they *walk disorderly*, and are dissolute in their Lives, and erroneous in their Tenets; yet while they own the Head, Christ Jesus, and make Profession of his Name, they are you *acknowledged and called Brethren*: They all belong to the same Family the Church, till they are solemnly cast out from thence;

thence; and that not only the Dutiful and Obedient, but the Untractable and Rebellious, *withdraw from every Brother that walketh disorderly.*

Secondly, The Apostle commands them to be more cautious in abstaining from Converse with a disorderly, lewd, or erroneous Christian, because he is a Brother, than if he were an utter Stranger to the Commonwealth of Israel, and a sworn Enemy as well to the Profession, as to the Practice of Christianity; *Withdraw from every Brother,* rather than from every other Person, *that walks disorderly.*

To this Purpose it is a most remarkable Place, and well worthy our most serious Consideration, 1 Cor. 5. from the 9th to the 12th Verse, *I wrote unto you in an Epistle, not to company with Fornicators: Yet not altogether with the Fornicators of this World, or with the Covetous, or Extortioners, or with Idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the World. But now I have written unto you, not to keek Company, if any Man that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat.* It seems that in a former Epistle (which perhaps is not now extant) the Apostle had forbidden the believing Corinthians

all Converse with wicked Men ; which possibly might occasion some Trouble and Perplexity in them, because in those Beginning Days of the Church, the number of Christians was so small, that the very Necessities of Life required their Converse with their Heathen Neighbours, who were Idolaters, Fornicators, Drunkards, and generally as wicked as Wickedness it self could make them : And therefore to relieve their Minds of this Scruple, the Apostle writes to them again, and distinguisheth wicked Persons into two Sorts : Such as visibly belonged to the World, and were professed Heathens, whom he calls the Fornicators and Idolaters of this World ; and such who belonged to the visible Church, and were Christians by an external Profession, but yet continued in their old Sins, though not in their old Gentilism. Now (saith the Apostle) I meant not that you should wholly abstain from having any Converse with wicked Heathens, though their Crimes be very vile and flagitious : For since the greatest Part of the World, and of those among whom you live, are Heathens, the Necessities of humane Life require that you should have Commerce and Dealing with them. You must go out of the World, *i. e.* You cannot possibly live, if you be wholly

wholly interdicted their Society, and debarr'd from those, with whom your natural Relations, and secular Affairs, Interests and Dependencies, are so closely interwoven. But there are another Sort of wicked Persons, those who are impious and scandalous Christians, those that are called *Brethren*, that make Profession of the same common Faith, and own the same Lord and Saviour; and yet their Lives are as profane, as their Profession is holy. From these they ought to withdraw themselves: *If any Man that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or an Idolater, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat.* You see then that the Command is most express, and that which the Apostle urgeth with a great deal of Vehemence and Earnestness.

And in prosecuting of it, I shall endeavour,

First, To state the Duty, and to shew you how far we ought to *withdraw from those that walk disorderly.* And,

Secondly, Give you some Reasons, why we ought to do it: And make Application of all.

First, In stating the Duty, I must premise, that our Condition is much different from those Primitive Churches to whom the Apostle then wrote : They lived mingled among Heathens and Infidels, who made up far the more populous Part of all their Cities. Then the Church was in the World, as a little Leaven in a great Quantity of Meal, as our Saviour compares it, *Math.* 13. 33. But now, since the Progress and Spreading of the Gospel, the World (at least this Part of it) is come into the Church. We live, we converse with few or none but those who are called *Brethren*, and are all Christians, and the People of God, at least by eternal Profession and Vocation. And therefore,

In the *First* Place, As the Primitive Christians might lawfully converse with Heathens in managing their Civil Affairs in Traffick and Commerce, and whatsoever else was for the Necessity or Convenience of their Subsistence; the like Converse may we lawfully maintain with ungodly and dissolute Christians : For the Reason in this Case is the very same. The Apostle allowed them to ~~commune~~ with Heathens, though they were ~~unbelievers~~ and wicked, because most of those among whom

whom they lived were Heathens ; and if this were not granted, there were no living in the World : And therefore, now that we live among none but those that are Christians, though the greatest Part of them should be supposed to be overgrown with Vice, and notoriously wicked and profane ; Swearers, Drunkards, unclean and covetous Persons ; yet we may lawfully converse with them about the necessary Concerns of Life : Otherwise, still the same Inconveniencies would press us, that we must go out of the World. We may trade and traffick with them, and perform all Offices of Civility and Courtesy, that do not either engage us unto, or demonstrate too great a Familiarity and Inwardness with them. Yea, the very same Converse which was allowed the Primitive Christians with their Heathen Neighbours, may, by the Parity of Reason, in all Circumstances be allowed us with dissolute and disorderly Christians.

Secondly, We are not so far to withdraw our selves from them as to violate the Bonds of Nature, or those Respects we owe, according to the Relations in which we stand towards them. A *godly Son* must not withdraw himself from un-

der the Government and Authority of a *wicked Father*. And those who are unequally yoked to wicked and dissolute Persons, must not therefore assume a Liberty either of relinquishing that Relation, or neglecting the Duties of it, because the other is lewd and licentious. Servants must not therefore reject the Commands of their Masters, and refuse Obedience to them because they are wicked: For this would put all the World into Confusion, and rude Disorder. Dominion is not founded in Grace. And it would be a wild World if Inferiours should acknowledge no Superiour, but those who are truly and cordially subject unto God: If Servants should obey no Master, but such as obey their Master Jesus Christ: If Yoak-Fellows should not acknowledge one another, unless they were mystically and spiritually married unto Christ: If Children should not be subject to their Parents, unless their Parents themselves were the Children of God: No; we ought to converse with all Persons, be they never so loose and dissolute, according to the Relations in which we stand unto them: And that also with the greatest Intimacy and Familiarity, and most endeared Friendship that such Relations do challenge from us. For the

same Authority that hath commanded us to withdraw from every Brother that walketh disorderly, hath commanded us likewise to love our Relations. And therefore, though they should remain obstinately wicked after all our Endeavours and Perswasions to reclaim them, we ought not to withdraw either our Persons or our Affections from them.

Thirdly, We are not to withdraw from any wicked Person, if we have great Hopes and strong Probabilities of reforming and reducing him by our converse. For this is to act the Physician; and with whom should such an one be most frequent, but with the Diseased? And therefore we find that our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who by the Apostle is said to be *separate from Sinners*, Hebr. 7. 26. was calumniated and traduced upon this very Account, because he kept so much Company and Society with them; and accused by the supercilious and blind *Pharisees* (who could not distinguish between the Leprous and the Physician) as a Sinner himself, because so familiar with Sinners! *Matth. 11. 19. The Son of Man came eating and drinking*, i. e. he demeaned himself affably and courteously to all, accommodating himself to all their

lawful Actions; and they say, behold a Man gluttonous, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans, and Sinners. And so again, when they were captiously censuring him for eating with Publicans, and Sinners, *Matth. 9. 12.* he justifies this Action which seemed so obnoxious to them by the Charity of his Intention; *They that be whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick.* He was conversant among diseased Persons, with a Design of healing them, and among wicked Persons with a Design of converting and reforming them. And certainly the same Charity may justify our conversing with such: For should all serious and pious Persons withdraw from them, it would only leave those Diseases, which are in themselves dangerous, altogether desperate and incurable. And it would fare with them, as too often with many poor Wretches in the Plague, who perish miserably, not so much from the Malignity of their Disease, as only for Want of Help and Assistance.

But yet two Cautions are here necessarily to be observed:

1st. That thou thy self be very watchful over thine own Heart, and over thine own Actions, when thou art in wicked Company even with a Design of doing them

them good : Else, perhaps, thou mayst thy self get Infection, while thou intendest to cure it. For the soundest Christian hath corrupt Humours in him, which are very apt to take the Contagion. The best Preservative you have is your utmost Care and Caution, which if you do in the least slacken, it is great Odds but you will be involved in their Guilt and Sin, either by being drawn by their Examples into the same Acts, or by conniving at them, when it may be fit and necessary to reprove them.

And, 2^{dly}. That you venture not into wicked Company, if you have not very probable Grounds to hope that your Presence among them will be an Occasion to hinder their Sins. Which ordinarily you may with Reason expect, if either,

You have *Prudence* enough to divert them.

Or *Authority* enough to affright them.

Or, *Thirdly*, *Reverence* enough to overawe and shame them.

One of these three Qualifications is absolutely necessary for every one that would converse with wicked Men to their Benefit and Advantage ; either Prudence, or Authority, or Reverence and Respect. But for any other Christian (though he be never so zealous, and come fortified

with never so good Intentions and Purposes) he is no fit Man for such Society.

For, *First*, It is hazardous whether he shall be able to preserve his Conscience safe, where he shall be born down and outbraved by boisterous Sinners, who will scorn to be controul'd by a Person in whom there is nothing venerable but that Holiness and Piety which they despise and contemn. And so he will lie under a Temptation to do many undecent, if not sinful Actions, only that he may not be exposed to their Scoffs and Injuries. Or,

Secondly, If he preserve his Conscience safe, yet his very Zeal and Godliness will be made a Prey to their Taunts, and the weak inefficacious Attempts he makes to check their Sins, will but the more enrage and embolden them. They will but sin the more, to beat him quite out of Countenance; and that out of mere Despight that a Person, whom they so much contemn, should take upon him to prescribe Laws and Orders to them: And so instead of Physicians, they will, out of a mistaken Charity, prove only Murderers to their Brother. And this I have frequently observed in the World to be the sad and woful Issue of it. And therefore

fore you, who have Reason to suspect either the Frailty of your Nature, or the Weakness of your Parts and Authority, beware that you venture not into such Company. The best Security thou canst have, is to withdraw thy Foot far from them; and to disengage thy self as soon as possible, if at any Time thou art accidentally cast upon them. For either they will wound thy Conscience; or thou wilt but occasion them to wound their own the deeper. But if God hath endowed thee with such Courage, Prudence and Authority, that thou canst baffle and shame the Impudence of wicked Men, know that it is thy Duty, and a Work of Charity, at fit Times and Seasons, when God's Providence shall cast thee upon it, to converse with evil Men. Thou goest among them but to part a Fray, wherein though they all seem merry, and very good Friends, yet they are desperately stabbing, and wounding, and murdering one another by their Sins. And if thou canst either hinder any one of those Blows, or cure any of those Wounds, thou hast done a kind Office to their Souls, and an acceptable Service unto God. That's the third Particular.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, We are not to withdraw and separate from wicked Men in the Service of God. We may join with them in Prayer, in hearing the Word, yea, and in all the Ordinances of Jesus Christ; and be glad they will so far own Religion, as to give it any, though but an outward and complemental Reverence and Respect. The great Scruple, I know, is concerning that most sacred Ordinance of the *Lord's Supper*; and that Place before-mentioned, 1 Cor. 5. 11. is here much insisted on, *with such an one, no not to eat*. From whence they infer, that if they may not eat *common Bread* with such who are Drunkards, Railers, Extortioners, or Unclean, &c. at their own Tables, then much less may they eat *sacred Bread* with them at the Lord's Table. And this passeth as an unanswerable Argument to justify Separation from them in this Institution.

But to this I answer,

1st. Jesus Christ himself eat his Supper in Communion with one whom he knew to be a wicked Person; yea, and whom he had branded with the Black Name of Devil: Which, were it needful, could be demonstrated as plain as Evidence it self can make any Thing. But,

See Luke
22. 20, 21.
Mark 14.
23.

Secondly,

Secondly, Let it be supposed that such have no Right to partake of that holy Ordinance, yet you ought not to withdraw your selves because of their Admission, but endeavour rather to remove them. If you do not know them to be guilty, you are most uncharitable both in suspecting them, and in separating only upon a suspicion. If you certainly know their Guilt, have you admonish'd them? If you have admonish'd them both secretly and before Witnesses, and yet they still persevere in their Sins; have you accused them, and before the Church brought convictive Proofs of the Scandal they have given? If thou hast used this plain Course, which our Lord Christ himself hath commanded towards an offending Brother, *Matth. 18. 15, 16, 17.* there will be no need of separating, but by this Means thou shalt either remove and eject him that hath given the Offence, or clear thine own Soul, and not partake of his Sin, in partaking of the same holy Ordinance. If otherwise, if thou hast neither reprov'd the Offender in private, nor accused him in publick, how darest thou separate from the Communion of the Church of Christ? How darest thou contradict his express Order and Command; yea, and think thy self the

the more holy and pure for doing so? Is this Conscience? Is this Religion? Is this strict Piety and Godliness? Nay, rather let me tell thee, it is a Piece of *Pharisaical* Pride to separate because of their Sins, and yet never reprove, never accuse them for their Sins!

Thirdly, Suppose we may not eat familiarly with such at their own Tables; yet it is no Consequence to argue hence, that therefore we may not eat with them at the Table of the Lord. And the Reason is, because the one is of Choice, the other is of Necessity, till they be cut off from the Church. I may chuse my Acquaintance and familiar Friends with whom to converse at Pleasure; and if I chuse those that are wicked and ungodly, without any charitable Design upon them, I then sin; and shew my self to be such an one as delights in vain and wicked Persons. But I cannot chuse Church-Members, nor say I will communicate with this Man, but not with this, till they are cut off from the Body of Christ, unless I design to make a Rent and Schism in the Unity of it.

Fourthly, To cut the Sinews of this Objection: I answer, That upon the Grounds already premised, it is as lawful for us to eat with wicked and disorderly

derly Christians, as it was for the Primitive Christians to eat with lewd and wicked Heathens. For the State and Circumstances of the Church are altogether chang'd; and we have now none to converse with, but those who are by Name and Profession Christians. And therefore though they should be guilty of the same Sins as the old Heathens were, yet upon the very same Account that the Apostle allowed his Converts to eat with Heathens, upon the very same may we be allowed to eat with loose Christians, when decent Circumstances seem to require it from us. So that if we take this Prohibition of the Apostle literally, we may safely affirm that it was but Temporary: Or if we take it Analogically, and by Rules of Proportion, so it forbids us nothing but an unfit and unnecessary Familiarity with wicked Persons; and so indeed we hold its Obligation to be perpetual.

Thus then I have shewed you the Cases wherein we are not bound to withdraw from those who walk disorderly. Not in managing our civil Affairs, and necessary Concerns of this Life. Not if we are bound to them in near and mutual Relations. Not if our Converse may
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be profitable and beneficial to them. Nor, *Lastly*, in the Worship and Service of God.

Let us now consider the positive Part of this Duty; and shew you in what Cases, and how far we are bound to withdraw from them.

First, We are bound to withdraw our selves from all unnecessary Converse and Correspondence with wicked and ungodly Men. We are not to make them our Bosome Friends, nor our chosen Intimates, nor to have Society with them, more than either the Necessity of our Affairs, or a charitable Design of doing them good exacts from us. And this I take to be the genuine and true Import of the Text, *Company not with any Brother that is vicious and debauch'd*, i. e. be not his Intimate and Familiar, give him no Countenance by seeking or imbracing his Acquaintance. We ought not to chuse nor select such to make them our Friends, our Confidants, or Privado's. But if upon other Accounts we are obliged to converse with them, then although the latter of this Command reacheth no farther than this, yet by the same Reason we are obliged in the

Second Place, To withdraw from them our inward Respect and Esteem, setting them low in our Affections, and accounting but meanly and slightly of them. This the Psalmist gives as a Character of those who shall dwell in God's *holy Hill*, Psal. 15. 4. *In whose Eyes a vile Person is contemned.* They have learnt to judge of Things and Persons as they are: And though they may have many great Advantages of Wit and Parts to adorn them, yet these Things dazzle not their Eyes; but they know it is but an *Ignis Fatuus* which makes all this Blaze, a Thing made up of earthy and sordid Vapours, whose Extraction is base, whose Employment pernicious, and their End deplorable. Alas! how can he highly value a Company of Slaves, whom he sees busily turmoiling in the Devil's Drudgery! How can he but nauseate those Swine that wallow in their Mire; and those Dogs, when he sees them licking up their Vomit! He knows, that such as these are vile in the Sight of God; and it would be a strange Dissonance if they should be dear to him, whose Affections ought to be conformed to his heavenly Father's.

Thirdly, We ought to manifest this inward Dislike, by our outward Demeanour,

nour, and to let them know by some overt Acts, that they are a Company of Persons we have no great Esteem nor Value for. We ought to put a vast Difference between our Converse with those who are sober and serious Christians, and those who are lewd and profane. Indeed, if we have no great Love nor Esteem for them, this Difference will soon appear of it self. For let two pious Christians converse together, how presently are their Souls touched with a mutual Sympathy; and that Holiness which knits them both unto Jesus Christ, knits them likewise one to another. Their Communion is sweet and free; no Reservedness, no Disgusts, but as full of Joy, as it is of Innocence; and their Souls seem to be as much one anothers as their own. But let a Person, whose Vices have made him odious, intervene, and his Presence (like that, as they say, of evil Spirits) brings a Damp and Suffocation with it. Presently their Joy is stifled, their Freedom restrain'd, they shrink and retire within themselves; and treat him with a visible Coldness, and an inward Constraint and Reluctancy. And indeed, we ought to shew a kind of Aver-sation towards wicked Men when we are in their Company, that it may appear
that

that neither they, nor their Converse, are acceptable to us ; and that we are, as it were, out of our proper Element, whilst we are engaged in their Society. So we find that holy *David* resolves to witness his Dislike whenever he should chance to be with evil Men, *Psal. 39. 1. I will keep my Mouth with a Bridle, while the Wicked is before me*, i. e. I will lay a Restraint upon my self ; my Words shall be but few and sparing, that it may appeare such Company is not at all grateful to me.

But here let us beware of running into Extremes. For many Men may be apt to take that for the Zeal of their Spirits, which indeed is only the Frowardness of their Temper ; and so instead of an holy Dislike, may expresse only a proud Disdain of wicked Men : And by the Sourness of their Humour fright them not only from their Converse, but from their Religion too, which they are ready to censure as the only Thing that makes them thus crabbed and ill-natured. And therefore to both these Particulars of lessening our Love and Esteem, and the Signs and Testimonies of it towards wicked Men, we must add these following Cautions.

First, Thou oughtest heedfully to distinguish between thy Brothers Person,
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and his Vices ; and neither love, nor hate the one for the other : For he that loves his Person for his Vices, is a Devil ; he that loves his Vices for his Person, is a Flatterer ; he that hates his Vices for his Person, is a Murderer ; and he that hates his Person for his Vices, is unchristian and uncharitable. And therefore, *Levit. 19. 17.* God forbids us to *hate our Brother in our Heart*, although he be such an one, whose frequent Sins may give us frequent Cause sharply to rebuke him. And therefore St. *Austin* gives us a good Rule ; *De Civit. Dei, lib. 14. cap. 6. Nec propter vitium oderit hominem, nec amet vitium propter hominem ; sed oderit vitium, amet hominem :* “ Neither let any hate the “ Man for his Vice sake ; nor love his Vice “ for the Man’s sake ; but hate the Vice, and “ love the Man.” For indeed, couldst thou but cure his Vice, there is nothing in thy Brother but what is lovely and amiable. It is, I confess, a very difficult Matter to carry our Love and our Hatred with so even an Hand, that they shall not one intrench upon the others Object. And truly I know but one only Method how it may be done ; and that is, by using our utmost Endeavours to reclaim and reform our Brother : For thereby we do at once both express our Hatred against his Sins,

by seeking to root them out and destroy them; and our dearest Love to his Person, by seeking his eternal Welfare and Salvation. But, believe it, if we take any other Course of expressing our Dislike, than what in Probability may be beneficial to our Brother, and tend to reduce him, we do not only declare our Hatred to his Vice, but to his Person, from which we ought never to withdraw our tenderest Affection. And therefore to rejoice at his Miscarriages; to report them needlessly to his Disparagement; to upbraid him spitefully with them, not seeking his Amendment, but his Shame and our Revenge; is too true a Sign, that be our Hatred never so great against his Vices, yet it is not little also against his very Person. That's the First Caution.

Secondly, Another Caution is this: We must not so far withdraw the Testimonies of our Respect and Esteem from the most wicked Person on Earth, as to deny him that Civility and Respect which is due unto his Place; nor to refuse him the Offices of Humanity, which that common Nature we are all Partakers of, doth challenge from us. The one is not Religion, but Rudeness, and shews not so much Zeal, as want of Breeding: The other is barbarous and unnatural; with

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which the Satyrift justly taketh the stubborn Jews, *Non monstrare vias, quæstum ostendere fontem*, Juven. Satyr. That they would not shew the Way, nor direct a thirsty Traveller to a Fountain, if he were not of their Religion. But certainly, Religion doth not teach Men to be surly and churlish; but it is the most gentle, the most obliging and affable Thing in the World. It is beautiful to see Christians kind and respectful to all, in their Deportment; taking all Opportunities to be helpful and beneficial even towards those with whom they refuse Familiarity. This their ready Willingness to do good to the worst of Men, will be a most effectual Means to bring up a good Report upon their Profession, when it shall appear that nothing but their Conscience and their Religion prompts them to it. Our outward Deportment towards others, is to be regulated by outward Respects, as well as our inward Veneration by inward Excellencies. I owe not so much Ceremony to a mean Man, although truly gracious, as I do to a great Man, though impious and profane: The one shall have my Hat, the other shall have my Heart. Certainly, it is but a sullen Humour, and not Religion, that teacheth any to deny accustomed and due Respects. *Festus*, tho'

an Unbeliever, shall be most Noble, as well as *Joseph of Arimathea* an honourable Counsellor, though it be added in his Stile, that *he waited for the Kingdom of God*. Though some wicked Men should be equally great in Crimes, as in Power; yet I ought to pay their Place and their Quality my Reverence, whilst I reserve my Veneration and Esteem for the poorest Saint. That's a Second Caution.

Thirdly, When, I say, that we ought to withdraw our Love and Affections from wicked and ungodly Persons, we must observe that there is a twofold Love: A Love of Benevolence, whereby we wish well to the Party beloved, and endeavour to promote his Good; and a Love of Complacence and Friendship, whereby we take Delight in him. We ought to love all wicked Men, whosoever they are, with a Love of Benevolence, cordially desiring their Good and Welfare, labouring what in us lies to forward it. But generally we ought not to love them with a Love of Complacency, Delight, and Friendship.

Fourthly, We are to withdraw from wicked Men, our Love and the Expressions of it; not absolutely, so as not to love nor esteem them at all; but only comparatively, so as to love and esteem

them less : And that in a twofold Comparison.

First, If we are not related to them, to esteem them far less than we do others that are truly sober and serious Christians. Our Delights should be in such, as are the Excellent Ones upon Earth ; and we should in all our Demeanour put a visible Difference between our Deportment towards the one, and the other, that it might be seen, that my Converse with the one is only out of Charity or Necessity ; but with the other it is out of Delight, and a free unconstrained Choice. And,

Secondly, If we are nearly related to them, and by that Bond are perhaps obliged to love them more than any other Persons in the World, yet also we must love them less in comparison, if not to others, yet to themselves. There are some natural and some civil Relations in which we stand, that challenge from us a Love and Esteem of the highest Nature, though the Persons be never so wicked and impious. And if we do not love and honour them above all other Persons in the World, we sin. And yet we must love them Comparatively less, because of their Vices ; not indeed less than other Persons, but

less than we should else love, and honour, and esteem themselves, were they truly virtuous and holy. Natural and Civil Relations are a strong and inviolable Bond of Love and Respect. But yet where true Grace and real Godliness is to be found, there the Union of our Souls should be closest and most endearing : And this double Cord, both of Grace and Nature, should knit us straighter to them, than where only one of these doth tie the Knot. And we should in a wise and obliging Manner let them know, that though we respect and value them as they are, above all earthly Enjoyments, yet our Respect, Love and Valuation of them would be far greater than it is, could we but prevail upon them to be other than they are. These are the Cautions I thought fit to give you. And thus I have done with the first General, the Stating of the Duty, how far, and in what Cases we ought to withdraw from the Company and Converse of wicked and ungodly Men that walk disorderly.

The *Second* is, To give you some Reasons that may enforce this Duty to you. And indeed, it being a Duty that seems so rough and morose to the too sociable and compliant Humours of most Men,

it had need be back'd with very cogent Motives and Reasons. And such I doubt not but to produce.

First, It is an Act of the greatest Love, and Mercy, that we can shew to their Persons. We are not to separate from them out of Spight or Peevishness, but out of Good-will and Charity; it being the last, and probably the most effectual Means to reclaim them: And therefore, as the Church is impower'd by Christ to draw forth its last Weapon against obstinate and contumacious Sinners, and to cut them off from its Fellowship by the dreadful Sentence of Excommunication (which Power is given her, not for the Destruction of any, but for their Edification; that they may thereby be brought to a Sight of their Sins, and repent for them); so also that personal Power which every private Christian hath over his own Converse, to refrain from the Society of such as *walk disorderly*, should be used by him (with the Rules and Cautions before prescribed) towards those who are otherwise incorrigible, as a charitable Means to reduce them from their sinful Ways; that when they see themselves thus banish'd, and, as it were, excommunicate from the Company of all those that are sober and serious,

serious, they may be moved to reflect upon their Actions, and to return both to themselves, and to God: And therefore the Apostle gives us this Command, *2 Thess. 3. 14. Note that Man, and have no Company with him, that he may be ashamed.* And indeed, if a Man be not altogether profligate in Wickedness, if he be not wholly lost to Bashfulness, it must needs make him blush to think, that he should be grown such a vile Wretch, that all good Men should carefully shun the very Air he breathes in, and the Places he haunts as contagious and infectious. The Truth is, whatsoever Company a wicked Man keeps, it proves a Snare to him: For by his Familiarity with evil Men, he is but tempted to more and greater Sins, And by good Mens Familiarity with him, he will be shrewdly tempted to Security, and Self-confidence, under his Sin and Guilt. He will argue with himself, that certainly such Men who are reputed holy and pious, would not converse with me as they do, did they not think well, and entertain a good Opinion of me. Were such and such Sins so black and horrid, as some few sower People would fain persuade me, these godly People would shun my Company as unworthy of them, and avoid me as a Person both noisome and dangerous.

dangerous. And therefore, doubtless, I may keep my Sins, and yet go Hand in Hand with them to Heaven ; for if we part not by the Way, I hope we shall not part at the Journey's End. And so they are harden'd in their Sins ; and you by keeping Company with them, and not reproving them, prove the Ruine and Destruction of their Souls. Whereas did you but withdraw your selves from their Society, it is probable the very Shame of seeing themselves forsaken, and left as it were lonely and desolate in the World, would at length work in them an Hatred of those Crimes which they see so detested by others. And thus we should only leave them for a Season, that we might afterwards enjoy them for ever. That's the first Reason.

Secondly, Consider the great Danger you are in, of being your selves defiled with the Converse of wicked and ungodly Men. There is no Plague, no Leprosy in the World so catching, as that of Sin : For,

1st. Our Hearts themselves are naturally corrupt : There are in us the latent and lurking Seeds of all manner of Wickedness. We should therefore beware, how we venture an evil Heart amongst evil Examples. The Devil hath a strong
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Party within us, that watch all Advantages to betray us. And if thou wilt needs be gadding Abroad, to observe the Manners and Fashions of the World, beware thou beest not caught and ravish'd, and sent Home with a Wound and Dishonour. And;

2dly. It is the Glory and impious Pride of wicked Men, to rub their Vices upon as many as they can: They would fain make all like themselves: And it is much to be doubted if thou venturest among them, that as thou art more prone to be infected, than they are to be cured (for Sin is natural both to them and us, but so is not Grace); so also they will shew more Zeal and Forwardness to debauch and corrupt thee, than thou wilt to reform and reclaim them. Nay, indeed it cannot otherwise be: For they will look upon thy Sobriety and Seriousness, as a severe Upbraiding them for their Dissoluteness and Profaneness; and so to ease themselves of such a troublesome Reflection, would fain banish that Virtue which reproacheth them: And therefore will be earnestly perswading thee to do as they do, and be as they are. And, I believe, the very best Christians will find it a very hard Task when they are engaged in such Company, to keep themselves pure and unspotted,

unspotted, when they have so many Disadvantages against them, as an evil Nature within to prompt them, and evil Examples and Inticements without, to allure them. In this Respect certainly, there is not so much Danger in conversing with wicked Heathens and Infidels, as there is with wicked Christians : For as Physicians observe, that Diseases sooner infect those that are of a Blood, than those that are Strangers one to another : So is it likewise in the moral Diseases of the Soul. The Vices of a Brother, of one that is called a Christian; are more dangerous and contagious, than of a Stranger and Alien ; inasmuch as the Sameness of Profession is apt to make us less suspicious, and wary of his Actions. And when we both own and embrace the same Religion, we are apt, first to favour, and then to imitate his Deeds : And therefore the Apostle commands us, especially *to withdraw from every Brother that walketh disorderly*. And that, if not out of Charity to him, yet at least we should do it out of Care to our own Souls; for we are in Danger to be led aside by their evil Examples. And how many have returned from such Converse with bloodied Consciences ! Their poor Souls have long lain languishing under those Wounds which they have received in the House of

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of their Friends, as the Prophet speaks, *Zech. 13. 3.* That's the Second Reason.

3dly. Consider, our Society with lewd and wicked Persons, may not only involve us in their Guilt, but also in their Punishment. And indeed, it is but Reason and Equity that we should be Partners with them in the One, as well as in the Other. And therefore we have that Threatning, *Prov. 13. 20. A Companion of Fools shall be destroyed.* Nay, though we could keep our selves from their Crimes, yet our Society with them may justly expose us to their Plagues; and that, because our very Converse with them is Sin enough to provoke Divine Justice against us; which finding us in the same Herd, may well drive us to the same Slaughter. And therefore we see how earnestly *Moses* cautions the *Israelites*, to separate from the rebellious Company of *Corah*, and his Associates, *Numb. 16. 26. Depart, I pray you, from the Tents of these wicked Men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their Sins.* And so again, *Revel. 18. 4.* where the Destruction of the mystical *Babylon* is foretold, God warns his People to come out of her; *Come out of her, my People, that ye be not Partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her Plagues.* And therefore you ought, for your own Interest

rest and Security's sake, to abandon the Company of wicked Men, unless perhaps you intend to perish with them for Company.

4thly. Consider, that if no other Punishment overtake you, yet the very Society of such must needs be a continual Burden and Vexation to all those who are truly conscientious, and tender-hearted Christians: So that, if not for your Security, yet at least for your own Content and Satisfaction, you should think yourself obliged to desert the Company of such who must needs be a perpetual Grief and Torment to you. Thou who hast any Reverence for the holy Name of God; any Veneration for the Mysteries of the Gospel; and the Truths which thou professest; any Love and Esteem for Piety and Godliness; any Respect for Temperance and Sobriety; with what Pleasure canst thou converse with those who impiously tear and rend the holy Name of the great God with their hellish Oaths and Curses? Who deride Piety, and all that profess, or practise it: Who make it their Business to overthrow the Faith, and expose the sacred Oracles of God, and Mysteries of Religion; upon which all thy Hopes for the future are built, to publick Scorn and Contempt; who are
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only witty when they are profane, and learned when they are atheistical; whose Mouths are froth'd with Lasciviousness, and whose most familiar Dialect is Ribaldry; who are continually abusing themselves, and God's better Creatures, by their Excess and Intemperance; and boast of it as an heroick Atchievement, how many they have fell'd by the downright Valour of their Riots! Are these Companions fit for thee who callest thy self a Christian, and makest Profession of that Religion which requires Purity and exact Holiness from all its Votaries? Canst thou find any Pleasure in such Society? If thou canst, thou thy self art not only one of them, but worse; for so the Apostle accounts those who have Pleasure in such wicked Persons, *Rom. 1. 32.* But if thou hast but one Spark of Grace under all that Flame of Devotion thou makest shew of, thou wilt be so far from taking Delight in such Company, that it will be the greatest Burden and Vexation of thy Life: And when thou hast heard thy God dishonoured, thy Religion abused, thy holy Gospel denied or derided; and seen all the Abominations that Wrath, Lust, and Luxury prompts those to, who are Slaves to these filthy Passions, wilt return Home with a sad and heavy Heart, and find abundant Cause

Cause to weep over their Sins, tho' thou hast reprov'd them; or thine own, if thou hast not? And what a Folly then is it, voluntary to make thine own Life uncomfortable; and by Seeing and Hearing, vex thy righteous Soul from Day to Day with their unlawful Deeds? Indeed, if thou art constrained to dwell amongst such, it is thy Affliction; but it is thy Sin, if it be thine own Choice. It were altogether as pleasant an Abode, to dwell among Lions, and Bears, and Tygers, and all the ravenous Beasts of the Forrest. See how David complains of it, *Psal. 57. 4. My Soul is among Lions, and I lie even among them that are set on Fire; even the Sons of Men, whose Teeth are Spears and Arrows, and their Tongue a sharp Sword.* And see how passionately he bemoans himself, that he was under the sad Necessity of conversing with such Persons, *Psal. 120. 5. Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesecti, that I dwell in the Tents of Kedar.* If thou art constrain'd to this unequal Converse, either through God's Providence casting thee among such, or through the Necessity of thine Affairs or Relations, thou oughtest to look upon it as a sore and heavy Affliction; and wilt find frequent Occasion in the Anguish of thy troubled Spirit to cry out, *Wo is me, that my Soul dwells among Lions, that I sojourn*

in the Tents of wicked and ungodly Men :
That ever I should reside in those Places,
and among those People, where the Name
of God is daringly blasphemed, the Ways
and Worship of God impudently derided ;
where I hear nothing but Oaths and Cur-
ses, and see nothing but wicked Examples.
Certainly, if thy Heart be true and up-
right before God, this will be thy perpe-
tual Torment : But if thou needlessly ma-
kest such Converse thy Choice, it is not
only thy Suffering, but thy Sin too.

5thly. Consider, thy Converse with lewd
and ungodly Men, will be a very great
Hindrance to thee from doing of thy
Duty. Art thou to perform any Duty of
Religion in the Worship and Service of
God ? Thou wilt find there is no such
Check to the Freedom of thy Spirit, as the
Presence of wicked Persons ; who watch
all we do, and with a malignant Eye,
wait for some Advantage to scoff and
taunt us for it. So that our holy Zeal
and Ardour will be very much damp'd
through the sinful Awe that is upon us,
of offending them. Is it any common
Affair of thy Life, that thou art to trans-
act ? If thy Interests be much interwoven
with theirs, it is hard if they do not im-
portune and prevail with thee, to put in
some of their Byas's ; and perswade thee

to do somewhat, that either is dishonest or indecent. Art thou invested with Power and Authority, as a Magistrate? How hard will it be for thee, to punish the Crimes of those whom thou hast made thy Companions and Associates! How hard to administer Justice impartially against all the Solicitations of thy wicked Acquaintance, who will be ready to plead on the Behalf of the Guilty, only because they are so! Art thou an Inferiour? How hard will it be to preserve thy self free and untainted, from the Vices of those upon whom thou livest and dependest! And so in every State and Condition of Life, we shall find that Converse with wicked and ungodly Men, will prove to us either a mighty Temptation wholly to neglect our Duty, or a great Impediment to a conscientious and right Performance of it.

6thly, Consider, that thou hast other Company to keep, and needest not to be beholden to wicked Men for their Converse.

First, There are good Men, whose Company and Acquaintance we should covet and desire: And, Thanks be to God, that though these are but thinly sown in the World, yet there are but few Places where

where our Lot may be cast, but some one or other may be found, whom we may make our Guide and our Companion to Heaven. And though they should be but one or two, yet these are enough to take sweet Counsel together ; these are enough to make thy Bosom Intimates, and Familiar Friends. The rest thou may'st lawfully converse with for thy Necessities ; those thou should'st select for thy Choice and Delight. Or,

Secondly, If all others should be wicked and profane, and thou should'st live like *Lot in Sodom*, no righteous Person in the Place but thy self ; yet art thou not left desolate and solitary. Hast thou not a good Companion in a good Conscience ? A Companion which thou always carriest about with thee. This is such Company as a wicked Man dare not keep. Alas ! there is nothing but chiding and brawling sessions : A quarrellsome Conscience, corroding Guilt, ghastly Reflections, pale Fears, Terrors, Despair, Self-accusing, and Self-condemning Thoughts, that Hell would be almost as quiet an Abode for him, as his own Conscience. And therefore he keeps most Abroad, and converseth with any Thing, rather than his own Heart ; and complains of being forsaken and solitary, if he hath not some to divert him

from minding the troublesome Discourses of his own Conscience. Whereas with a godly Man, all is quiet and calm at Home ; he can take his Heart aside, and commune with it, and entertain himself with a silent Joy. And certainly, he that hath such a serene, pure, and pacified Conscience, can never complain for Want of good Company. Nay,

Thirdly, Thou may'st every where, and at all Times, keep Company with the great God of Heaven and Earth : And he will make one with thee : And then thou may'st say, as our Saviour did, *I am not alone, but I and my Father*. Certainly, that Soul hath a strange gadding Humour, and is not sociable but wanton, whom the Company and Communion of God himself cannot satisfy. Such as these would certainly have repined to have been the first in Heaven ; and would have thought *Abel* himself not compleatly happy, who had there none of his own Rank to converse with. And thus much for the Reasons or Motives to this Duty ; for in a practical Subject, Reasons and Motives are the very same.

Suffer me to close up all, with a brief Word of Application : I shall but mention what might be more largely insisted on.

First,

First, Ought we thus to withdraw from those *that walk disorderly*? Then let not wicked Men condemn conscientious Christians, as if they were proud, or scornful, or unsociable. Know that it is not out of Pride, or Humour; but only out of Charity to thee, and Care of themselves, that they dare not keep thee Company. They are far better Friends to thee, than those who help thee to consume away thy precious Time, and damn thy precious Soul. They pity thee, they pray for thee, and will be ready to contribute their utmost Assistance to thy Advantage. Change thou but the Lewdness and Dissoluteness of thy Life, and thou wilt quickly find them to be the most affable, courteous, and complaisant Companions in the whole World.

Secondly, Must we withdraw from every one *that walketh disorderly*? Let this then serve to break all Knots and Combinations of wicked Men. God, the great Master and President of all Societies, hath prescribed us the Rules of our Converse; which if it be not regulated according to the Measures he hath given us, is no longer to be called a Society, but a Confederacy, and Conspiracy against Heaven. The first and chiefest Thing to be regarded in all Company, is the Company it self; which if it be

impious and debauch'd, we ought as carefully to avoid, as we would a common Pest. For the Devil hath no such artificial Method, of insinuating Vice into the Minds of those who are of ingenuous and facile Natures, than first to toll them into the Haunt of wicked and lewd Persons : For Custom usually begets Liking, and that Imitation. Know therefore, that it is thy indispensable Duty to separate from all thy loose and ungodly Companions, unless thou intendest to keep them Company to Hell, and there burn together in unquenchable Flames. Think how these Wretches, that now hug and embrace one another, will then fly in one another's Faces ; and with fearful Outcries, charge their Damnation one upon another : One for enticing, the other for consenting ; one for plotting, the other for executing, and there hurl Firebrands at one another for ever.

Thirdly, Here see the Misery of those that are wicked : God hath so low and vile Esteem for them, that he not only thinks them unworthy of his Presence in Heaven, but of the Converse and Society of Saints here on Earth.

Fourthly, Let it be for Exhortation, to those who are true Christians, that they would withdraw themselves from all ~~that~~ *walk*

walk disorderly. The Motives and Arguments that might perswade you to this, you have heard already: I shall therefore only give you a few Helps and Directions.

1st. Get your Hearts much off from those Things, that wicked and carnal Men are permitted to abound in: For these are the Baits that draw and allure you to their Company. There is scarce any Person that loves another only because he is wicked, but because of some Advantage, and secular Commodity, that he hopes and expects from him. Now when we can overlook all their temporal Pre-eminences, their Wealth, their Honour and Interest, and the like, from which we might expect any Profit to our selves, we shall not be in much Danger of being inveigled by a Person who hath nothing to recommend him but his Vices; nor by those Vices which have nothing to recommend them, besides their own Deformity and Ugliness.

2^{dly}. Be as little beholden and engaged to wicked Persons, as possibly you can: For receiving of Courtesies from them, will seem to oblige you in Gratitude to converse with, yea and sinfully to honour them.

3dly. Let them see that you are Persons of most undaunted Courage and Resolution, that will not be afraid of the Face of any Man alive ; but will boldly reprove them as often as they dare to sin in your Presence : For this will be the Means either effectually to reform them, or at least to make thy Company the less acceptable to them, and so to deliver thee from the Danger of theirs.

Fifthly, Let me add one Exhortation more ; and that is, that those who are truly pious Christians, would so demean themselves, that all who have any Ingenuity in them, may acknowledge that their Company is far more desirable, than the Company and Converse of lewd and profligate Persons.

1st. Walk so that Men may see there is a Reality in your Principles, and that your Practice is agreeable to your Profession ; For this brings a great Credit to Religion, and is a beautiful and charming Thing in the Eyes of all. That Man must needs render himself grave and considerable, who professeth what is true, and practiseth his Profession.

2dly. Let

2^{dly}. Let them find an Evenness, and constant Tenor in your Life and Conversation: Be the same in your Houses, as in the Church; in Private, as in Publick: For nothing doth so much ingratiate a Man in the Reverence and Esteem of others, as to be constant and suitable to himself in all Occurrences.

3^{dly}. Especially labour to outstrip wicked Men, in those commendable Things wherein they seem most to excel, and by which they gain upon the Affections of others to their Ruine. As,

First, Some wicked Persons pretend to be very exact in doing the Works of Justice, in giving every one their Due: And it is sad to consider, how they trample upon, and triumph over the Profession of Religion upon this very Account, that many who have pretended highly to it, have been found notoriously guilty of Rapine, Extortion and Deceit. Now, O Christians! gain this Ground of them, and make it appear that you are as just towards Men, as religious towards God, that neither you, nor your Gospel, may be evil spoken of.

Secondly, They brag much of their Courtesy and Affability, towards all: And indeed, by this very Act, they draw many
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into their Society, and the Snare of the Devil. Be you therefore kind and obliging, and use all the honest Insinuations you may to win others first to a Love of your Persons, and then of Virtue.

Thirdly, They boast much of Love and Agreement among themselves ; which, though it be very false, yea, and impossible, that those who do not agree in God, who is Love, should ever cordially agree in loving each other : Yet because they maintain a kind of League and Confederacy among themselves, whereby they draw others to join with them ; therefore let true Christians, who are all united to Christ Jesus by Faith, be likewise united one to another by Love. Shall the Members of Satan agree, and not much more the Members of Christ ? Never cast that Shame either upon your Lord and Master, who is the Prince of Peace, or upon his Holy Gospel, which is the Gospel of Peace. But by the Indear'dness of your mutual Affection one to another, win over others to the Obedience of the Truth, who will be much the sooner perswaded to it, when they are once convinced that only in the Society of true Christians, they shall find true Friends, and such
who

who will most sincerely and cordially love them.

Fourthly, They boast much of their Charity and good Works; how liberal they are in relieving the Wants and Necessities of the Poor. Let them not carry away this Glory from you. But as we have Opportunity, let us do good unto all, and thereby lay up for our selves *Treasures in Heaven*, 'till we come to our own, that is, our Heavenly Country, where we shall be repaid with abundant Interest and Advantage. *Where we shall converse with God and with Christ, with Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect.* Where we shall for ever be freed both from the Contagion and Trouble of wicked Company. Where we shall with infinite Joy and Satisfaction embrace the Society of those good Men with whom we have here taken *sweet Counsel together*, without Fear of Disunion or Separation, when both they and our selves shall be made infinitely better.

AGAINST