

The Second

C O M M A N D M E N T.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing, which is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thy self to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me: and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me; and keep my commandments.

Idolatry is twofold; either Spiritual and Internal, residing in the Affections and Disposition of the Soul; which we are guilty of when we devote our supream Love, Fear, and Dependence unto any created Being, which are due only unto the true and only God. And this Idolatry is forbidden in the first Commandment, as we have already seen.

Or else it is more Gross and External, consisting in a visible Adoration of any thing besides God; who as he challengeth the Affections of the Soul, so requires also the

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Homage and Reverence of our Bodies, in those Services which we perform unto him. And this Idolatry is particularly forbidden in this second Commandment, which I have now read unto you.

In which we have these three Parts :

- I. *First*, The Precept itself, which runs negatively, and is branched forth into two several Prohibitions ; but both tending to the same end and effect : The one forbidding Images to be made, *Thou shalt not make to thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing* ; the other forbidding them to be worshipped, *Thou shalt not bow down thy self before them, nor serve them*.
- II. *Secondly*, Here is added a severe Comination against those that shall presume to violate this Command, *I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation*.
- III. *Thirdly*, Here is likewise for the encouragement of Obedience, the addition of a gracious Promise of, *Shewing mercy unto thousands that love God, and keep his commandments*.

- I. I shall begin with the Command, or Prohibition, which is twofold : Thou shalt not make Images ; Thou shalt not worship them. Not that the Carvers or Painters Art, but only the Peoples Idolatry ; not the Ingenuity in making, but the Stupidity in worshipping those dumb Representations, is here forbidden. The brazen Serpent in the Wilderness, the Cherubims, and other Resemblances in the Temple, are a sufficient proof and evidence of this.

This Prohibition therefore must be interpreted according to the subject matter which is here spoken of ; and that being only Divine Worship, it is plain that it is not unlawful to represent to the eye any visible thing by an artificial

facial Image of it : but only when God saith, Thou shalt not make ; and, Thou shalt not worship ; the meaning is, thou shalt not make any thing with an intention of Worship ; and thou shalt not worship any thing which thou, or others have made. But concerning the Prohibition of this Command, I shall speak more hereafter.

Now for the more full and clear understanding of this Precept, I must desire you to recal to mind one of those several general Rules which I formerly gave you, as helpful to instruct you in the due Extent and Latitude of the Commandments ; and that was, That the Negative Commands do all of them include the Injunction of the contrary positive Duties ; as when God forbids the taking of his Name in vain, by consequence he commands the hallowing and sanctifying of his Name ; where he forbids Murder, he commands all lawful care and endeavour to preserve our own, and the life of others ; where in the first Precept he forbids the owning and cleaving unto any other God besides himself, he enjoins us to acknowledge him as our God, to love, fear, and hope in him only : So here in this second Command, where he forbids the worshipping of Images, by consequence he requires to worship him according to the Rules which he hath prescribed us. And therefore as under the first Command is comprehended whatsoever appertains to the Internal Worship of God ; so under this second is comprehended whatsoever appertains to the External and Visible Worship of God.

Now here I shall first speak concerning the External Worship of God ; and then of those Sins which are contrary unto it, and condemned in this Commandment.

Concerning the Worship of God I shall lay down the following Propositions :

First, The true and spiritual Worship of God in the general, is an Action of a pious Soul, wrought and excited in us by the Holy Ghost, whereby with godly Love and

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Fear we serve God acceptably according to his Will revealed in his Word ; by Faith embracing his Promises, and in Obedience performing his Commands, to his Glory, the Edification of others, and our own eternal Salvation. This is the true spiritual Worship of the true God, who is a Spirit ; and it comprehends in it both the inward Worship of our Hearts and Souls, and likewise the outward Worship of holy and religious Performances ; of which I am now particularly to treat.

2. *Secondly*, Therefore this external Worship of God is a sacred Action of a pious Soul, wrought and excited by the Holy Ghost, whereby with all reverence we serve God both in Words and Deeds according to his revealed Will, in partaking of his Sacraments, attending on his Ordinances, and performing those holy Duties which he hath required from us, to his Glory, the Edification of others, and our own eternal Salvation. This Worship of God altho' it be external, is nevertheless spiritual ; for it proceeds from the Spirit of God exciting our Spirits to the performance of it, and is directed by a spiritual Rule, unto a spiritual End, the Glory of God, and our own Salvation.

3. *Thirdly*, The parts of this external Worship are divers and manifold ; whereof the most principal and essential are the Celibration of the Sacraments, Solemn Prayer, and Solemn Praise and Thanksgiving : But besides these, there be many other things which belong to the Service of God, yea, as many as there are Duties of Religion and Piety ; such are a free, open, and undaunted profession of the Truth, a religious Vowing unto God things that are lawful, and in our own power, an Invoking of the Testimony of God to the Truth of what we assert, or to the faithful Discharge of what we promise, when we are duly called to do it by lawful Authority ; a diligent reading of the Word of God, and a constant and reverent Attendance on it when it is read and preached ; and divers other Duties too long to be here

here particularly enumerated ; some of which belong to the proper Worship of God, immediately as parts of it, others mediately, as means and helps to it.

Fourthly, Although God doth especially delight in the acts of our internal Worship, and principally regards the esteem and veneration that we have for his great and glorious Majesty in our Hearts ; yet this alone sufficeth not, without the performance of those parts of external Worship and visible acts of Piety and Religion, which may to the Glory of God express the devout dispositions of our Souls. The inward acts of Piety are those of Faith in believing, of Hope in expecting our Reward, of Charity in loving both God and our Neighbour, of Fear in reverencing him, of Patience in a contented bearing whatsoever burdens it shall please the All-wise Providence of God to lay upon us, and of a chearful Willingness to perform all the Duties of Obedience which he enjoyns us. These belong to the internal Worship and Service of God, and are especially pleasing and acceptable unto him. And indeed without these all other acts of Worship are both dead and unfavoury : for as the Spirit of a Man is his Life, so the internal and spiritual Piety of the Heart, our Love, Fear, and Reverence of God is the Life of all our Duties, without which they are but as a dead Carcass, so far from being a sweet-smelling favour, that they are noisom and offensive to that God to whom we offer them.

But of this internal Worship I have already spoken.

That which we are now to consider, is the external Worship of God, which he hath absolutely required from us, when we have ability and opportunity to perform it.

For although there need no overt-actions to make the sincerity of our affections and intentions known unto God, yet it is necessary for his Glory, and the good Example of others, to declare that to the World by visible Signs and

Expressions, which was before known unto him in the secret Purposes and Thoughts of our Hearts.

1. For *first*, God hath no less strictly enjoined his external Worship, than he hath his internal: What can be more external than the Ceremonial part of the Evangelical Law, the Participation of Baptism and the Lord's Supper? Both of which are yet most expressly commanded, *Matth. 28.*

19. Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Acts the 2. 38. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ. And for the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, see *Luke 22. 19. Do this in remembrance of me.* Which Command they do heinously violate, and refuse to give the most evident Sign and Testimony that they are Christians, who either totally neglect, or else very seldom attend this most Holy and Spiritual Ordinance.

2. *Secondly*, We find that God doth severely both threaten and punish such as give external Worship unto any other but himself: How often are the *Israelites* reprov'd for bowing the Knee to *Baal*, for baking Cakes to the Queen of Heaven? Yea, and very usually Idolatry is set forth in Scripture by some of those visible Actions which some of these false Worshipers used to express their Devotion towards their false Deities, as bowing the Body unto them; *Jesh. 23. 16. Served other gods, and bowed your selves unto them. Judges 2. 12, 17, &c. Kissing the hand unto them in token of reverence. Job 31. 26, 27. If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly inticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge; for I should have denied the God that is above.* So likewise bowing the Knee to any Idol, and kissing it; *Hos. 13. 2. Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calves.* And so when *Elijah* complained of the total defection of the *Israelites* from.

from the Service of the true God, unto Idolatry; God to comfort and encourage him, tells him, That he alone was not singular, but that there were *seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that had not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which had not kissed him*, 1 Kings 19. 18. And therefore certainly since he makes so punctual a Computation of those who had not alienated their Bodily Worship to the Service of an Idol, he doth respect and accept those who in Faith and Sincerity tender it to himself.

Thirdly, God hath created the whole Man, both Soul and Body for himself, and he sustains both in their being; and therefore he expects Homage and Service from both: from the Soul as the chief seat of Worship, from the Body as the best Testimony of it. 3-

Fourthly, Not only our Souls, but our Bodies too are redeemed by Christ; and therefore both should be employed in his Worship and Service: The whole Man is bought with a Price, the whole is justified, the whole is sanctified; yea, our very Bodies are said to be the Temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 6. 19. And where should God be worshipped, or that Worship appear, but in his Temple? And therefore upon the account of that Purchase which Christ hath made of us to himself, the Apostle draws this Inference, in the aforementioned place, *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; wherefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits, which are God's*. 4-

Fifthly, The Body is likewise to partake of the Blessings of Obedience, and therefore it is but reasonable it should partake of the Service of Obedience: Many Blessings are promised to our outward Man here in this life, and hereafter it is to be made a glorious and incorruptible Body, like unto the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ: it is to be clothed with Light, and crown'd with Rays; never more to suffer Injuries without, or Diseases within: and therefore certainly Duty belongs to it, since so many great and unspeak- 5-

unspeakable Priviledges belong unto it.

Thus you see how reasonably God requires from us the Service not only of the inward, but of the outward Man : And therefore we are not to flight that outward Reverence which is necessary to testifie a due fence of his glorious Presence when we come before him : neither must we rob him of any part either of his Service, or of his Servant, but sacrifice ourselves intirely unto him ; our Bodies upon the Altar of our Souls, Hearts and Affections, and both Soul and Body upon that Altar which alone can make both acceptable, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a fourth Position.

5. *Fifthly*, All that outward Reverence which we shew towards God in his Worship and Service, must be measured and estimated according to the Customs and Usage of Places and Countries ; so that what they use as a sign and expression of Honour to their Superiours, they ought much more to use it in the presence of the great God, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. And therefore uncovering of the Head, bowing of the Body, an humble submit and settled composure of the whole Man, which among us are but fitting signs of Respect and Reverence, when we appear in the presence of those who are much our Superiours, ought likewise to be used by us in the presence of God, who is infinitely such, not indeed that they are essential parts of Worship, but Signs and Testimonies of it.
6. *Sixthly*, The last Position is this : We ought not to worship God with any other external Worship, than what himself hath commanded and appointed us in his holy Word. The Scripture hath set us our Bounds for Worship, to which we must not add, and from which we ought not to diminish ; for whosoever doth either the one or the other, must needs accuse the Rule either of Defect in things necessary, or of Superfluity in things unnecessary : which is an high Affront
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to the Wisdom of God, who as he is the Object, so he is the Prescriber of all that Worship which he will accept and reward.

I well know that this Rule hath given (I cannot say Cause, but) Occasion to many hot Disputes about Ecclesiastical Rites and Constitutions; some condemning whatsoever is prescribed or used in the Service of God, besides things expressly commanded in Scripture, for Incroachments upon the Authority of God, and Additions unto his Worship, which he requires to be performed according to the Pattern in the Mount, and the Model he hath delineated for it: Others again maintaining the Privilege and Authority of the Church in ordaining some things for the more decent and reverend performing of the Service of God, which are not particularly required in the holy Scriptures.

I shall not plunge myself into this angry and quarrellous Controversy: only give me leave to say, and sadly to lament, That the Seamless-Coat of Christ is rent in pieces among them, whilst some think it more decent to sew on Loops and Fringes to it, and others will have none. And truly I think our Differences are of no greater importance in themselves, though too woful in their Consequents, than this amounts unto. I shall clearly express my sence of this Matter in a few words, without any Reflection or Bitterness, and so leave it to the Judgment of every ordinary Discretion.

Things which belong to the Worship of God, may be considered either as Parts of that Worship, or only as Circumstances and Modifications of it.

First therefore, Whatsoever is imposed on us as a substantial part of the Worship of God, if it be not expressly required of us in the holy Scriptures, is to be not only refused, but abominated: For this is a plain Addition to what God hath commanded, and by it we lay an Imputation upon

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on him, as though he wanted Wisdom to ordain what is necessary for his own Service.

Then, and then only is any Constitution of Man imposed for a part of Divine Worship, when Obedience unto it is urged upon us, not only from the Authority enjoying it, but also from the Necessity of the thing considered simply and nakedly in its own Nature: For as it is with God's Laws, some things are commanded because they are good, and some things are good only because they are commanded; so is it with Laws and Impositions of Men about Matters of Religion and Worship, some things they command us to observe, because they are in themselves necessary antecedently to their Command, as enjoyed us before by God; and therefore this is no Ordinance or Doctrine of Man, but of God; unto which the Magistrate, who is the Guardian of both Tables, doth well to add the Sanction of Secular Rewards and Punishments: Other things are necessary for our Observance, only because they are commanded by their Authority, to whom we owe conscientious Obedience in things lawful and indifferent. But we utterly deny that the imposition of any such things makes them any parts of Worship, of which they are only Circumstances; or that these Observances are necessary to us, or acceptable to God antecedently to the command of Authority; or that the Worship of God were imperfect, defective, unacceptable, and invalid to the ends for which it is appointed, were not these Observances commanded, and performed: If indeed we thought otherwise, the bitterest of all their Invectives, and the loudest of all their Exclamations in calling our Worship, Superstition, Will-Worship, and Idolatry, would not shew so much Passion, as a just and rational Zeal. But God for ever forbid that any such Ordinances of Man should be introduced into our Church. We all joyn in this Vote; and do utterly renounce any such Authority, and deny any such Practice. We usurp
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not upon the Consciences of any, nor endeavour to persuade them that that is in it self necessary, which is not so by God's Commands, or the Law of Nature; or that that is unlawful which is not condemned by either. We endeavour to keep ourselves and you as much from a Positive, as a Negative Superstition: we endeavour to put due bounds between things simply necessary, either by the Command of God, or their own natural Reason and Goodness, and such as are in themselves indifferent. We say, that nothing is a part of Worship, but what belongs to the former; but some things that belong to the latter may be used in Worship as fit and decent Circumstances: And when such things are imposed, they become necessary; not indeed in themselves (for no Humane Authority can alter the nature of things) but to our Practice, and our Consciences are obliged to them: But how? not indeed simply and absolutely, so that it shall never be lawful to omit them; but only in two Cases, in case of Scandal, and Contempt. We ought not to omit them, if we judge any Offence will be taken by others at our Neglect: we ought not to omit them at any time out of a Contempt and Disrespect towards them. And thus you see we put a vast difference between that which is a part of Worship, and that which is but a Circumstance of Worship: If any thing be commanded us by Men, as a part of Worship, which is not commanded us by God, we ought not to submit unto it. But,

Secondly, If any thing be imposed on us not as a part of Worship, but as a Circumstance and Modification of Worship, we may and we ought to submit unto it.

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First, If the things so imposed be in themselves lawful and honest; which they are, if not condemned by the Scripture.

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2. *Secondly*, If they tend to Order and Decency in the Church. Of which certainly they are as fit to be Judges who have Authority both in Church and State, as every private, and perhaps less-knowing Christian.
3. *Thirdly*, If they are imposed by the Command of a lawful Power, to whom we ought to submit in all things that are lawful.
4. *Fourthly*, If they are such as neither for their levity nor number eat out or distract the Seriousness and Devotion of our Spiritual Worship: Which I think cannot justly be imputed to the Observances of our Church, being very few for Number, and very grave and modest for Use.

If such things as these be imposed upon us, the Worship of God is not thereby either changed or adulterated, neither is there any addition made unto it; but the Substance of that Worship is still in Conformity to God's Laws, when yet the outward and indifferent manner of it is in Conformity to Man's. Certainly it is no addition to Baptism, to give a Name to the Baptized, though we find no express command for it. And I much wonder among our carping Brethren, some or other had not scrupled this, as well as another Observance. It is no addition to the Ordinances of Jesus Christ, to appoint at what hour they shall be celebrated, or in what Garment, or in what decent Posture; for all these things are extrinsecal to the Worship of God, and fall under the Cognizance and Direction of our Superiours.

Certainly did we but rightly weigh what is required as a part of Worship, and what only as a Circumstance of Worship, a great deal of Heat, and Contention, and uncharitable Prejudice would be removed and prevented. It is true our Saviour, *Matth. 15. 9.* condemns the Scribes and Pharisees, that taught for Doctrines the Commandments of Men: that is, they taught those things which were but

but the Traditions and Ordinances of their Elders, to be in themselves absolutely necessary to the serving and worshipping of God. But certainly this Reproof falls not upon these, who though they do injoyne what they judge fit for Order, yet do not teach them for Doctrines; and are so far from thinking their Commandments an assential part of Worship, that they would Abhor and Anathematize all those that do so. Necessary they are to be submitted unto, and practised, because enjoined by that Authority to which God hath committed the Care of the first Table, as well as the second; but not necessary in themselves as any part of the Worship and Service of God, without which, although they were not imposed by Men, it would be unacceptable to him: And whosoever thinks so, let him be accursed.

And now that I have delivered my Judgment without Bitterness, give me leave to make some few Lamentations in the Grief and Bitterness of my Soul: Is it not to be bitterly lamented, that in a Reformed and Orthodox Church there should be such Schisms, Rents, and Divisions; Altar against Altar, Pulpit against Pulpit, and one Congregation against another? And what is all this Contention and Separation for? Oh, they will tell you, it is for the Purity of Religion, for the true and sincere Worship of God; that they may serve him purely without Humane Additions or Inventions. Thus goes the Cry; and a company of poor ignorant well-meaning Souls, because it is very demurely and gravely spoken, take it up, and joyn with it, never examining the grounds and bottom of it; but conclude, that these must needs be in the right, who complain of Corruptions; and pretend to a happy and glorious Reformation. Alas, my Brethren, was there ever any Schism in the World that did not plead the same? Did not others upon the same Pretences separate from their Communion, upon which they now separate from ours? And may not

the same Argument serve to crumble them into infinite Fractions and Sub-divisions : till at last we come to have almost as many Churches as Men, and scarce a Man constant and coherent to himself.

But what is it in our Worship which they dislike ? The Substantials of it are all the same with their own : We utterly disavow that we make that any part of Worship, which the Scripture hath not : and I think that Man very much forsaken of Reason and common Understanding, who shall endeavour to perswade us, that we intend Worship, when we ourselves most earnestly and seriously profess the contrary.

Is it then that we differ about meer Accidents and Circumstances ? I confess we do : but assert withal, that these things are not a just Cause of Separation from us. * If we look back upon the Primitive Times, we shall find that almost every Church had its different Rites and Observances ; and yet under that Diversity maintained Unity and Communion : Yea, and at this day, the reformed Churches observe different Customs one from another, and yet they inviolably

hold Communion together, and we with them. The Gallican, Belgick, Helvetian, and German Churches reject us not, nor we them, although we differ in Rites and Discipline, and those things which are left to the prudence of every Church to constitute as they shall judge most necessary for Order and Edification. Now certainly if these different Rites and Observances be no ground for one National Church to separate from the Communion of another, they can be no ground for private Persons to separate from the Communion of that Church to which they belonged. Nay, although they might with reason dislike many Usages either as trivialous or incongruous, yet it becomes.

* *Alii jejunant Sabbato ; alii verò non : alii quotidie communicant corpori & sanguini Dominico ; alii certis diebus accipiunt : alibi nullus dies intermittitur quò non offeratur ; alibi sabbato tantum & Dominico.*
Aug. Ep. ad Januarium Ep.
118.

comes the temper and modesty of a pious Christian, in things meerly circumstantial, to submit his Practice to the Judgment of that Authority under which he lives, and not to separate from the Communion of the Church, to forsake its Assemblies, to disown its Administrations, only because he thinks some things might be more conveniently ordered, according to the Model of his own, or other Mens apprehensions: Which in the Folly and sad Consequences of it, would be to act like him who took up a Beetle, and struck with all his force, to kill a Flie that he saw on his Friend's forehead. What else were this but to rend the Body of Christ by an angry contending about the Fashion of its Garments; and to tear away its Limbs by a violent striving to strip off those Cloaths which they think indecent? For my part I freely profess, That were my Lot cast among any of the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas, I would presently joyn in their Communion, and not at all scruple to conform myself to their received Customs, although perhaps in my own private Persuasion I may judge some of them to be less serious, and less reverent than those of the Church of *England*, which are now so passionately decried and condemned. * I have ever venerated that Oracular Advice of St. *Ambrose* to St. *Austin*: 'If thou wilt
' neither give Offence, nor take Offence, conform thyself
' to all the lawful Customs of the Churches where thou
' comest.

* Nec
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ulla est in
his melior
gravi pru-
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*Christiano, quam ut eo modo agas, quo agere viderit Ecclesiam adquam cunque foret deven-
neris. Quod enim neque contra fidem, neque contra bonos mores injungitur, indifferenter
est habendum, & pro eorum inter quos vivitur societate servandum est. — Mater mea
Mediolanum me consecuta, invenit Ecclesiam Sabbato non jejunantem; cepit perturbari,
& fluctuare quid ageret, cum ego talia non curabam, sed propter ipsam consului de hac
re beatissima memoria virum Ambrosium; respondit se nihil docere me posse nisi quod ipse
faceret, quia si melius nosset, id potius observaret. Cumque ego putassem, nullam reditã ra-
tione, auctoritate solã fuisse, nos voluisse admonere ne Sabbato, jejunaremus, subsecutus est &
ait mihi; Cummi Roma venis jejuno Sabbato cum hic sim non jejuna. Sic etiam tu, ad
quam forte Ecclesiam veneris, ejus morem serva, si cuiquam non vis esse scandalo, nec quen-
quam tibi. — Ego verò de hac sententiã etiam atque etiam cogitans, ita semper habui tan-
quam eam celesti oraculo suscepim. Aug. ad Jan. Ep. 118.*

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But I will not farther enlarge on this cholorick and touchy Controversy; only I pray, that our wanton Dissentions about these less important Matters, may not provoke God to deprive us of the Substance and Essentials of our Religion; and reduce us to such a condition wherein we should be heartily glad, could we enjoy the Liberty of the Gospel, and the Ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, under any of those Forms of Administration, which are now so furiously debated amongst us. It were just with God to extinguish the Light of his Gospel, when we use it not to work by, but all our study and strife is how to snuff it.

And thus much in the general, touching the External Worship of God required in this Commandment.

The Sins forbidden by it are two:

Contempt of the Worship of God; and
Superstition in performing it.

Concerning the former, I have already spoken largely, in giving you the Characters of a Prophane Person.

I shall therefore at present speak onely of Superstition.

Concerning the Etymology of the Word, both *Tully* and *Lactantius* are agreed, that it is derived from *Superstites*, *Survivers*; but about the reason of the Notion they much differ: *Tully* saith, *Qui totos dies precabantur & immolabant, ut sibi sui liberi superstites essent, superstitiosi sunt appellati: i. e.* They who immoderately prayed and sacrificed, that their Children might survive them. But *Lactantius* is not content with this reason, and therefore gives another: *Superstitiosi autem vacantur, non qui filios suos superstitites optant (omnes enim optamus, sed aut ii qui superstitem memoriam defunctorum colunt; aut qui parentibus suis superstites celebrant); imagines eorum domi, tanquam Deos*

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Penates : i. e. Men were called superstitious not from desiring that their Children might survive them, but because they celebrated the surviving memory of the Dead ; or because that surviving their Parents they worshipt their Images as their Household Gods.

But whatsoever be the Etymology of the Word, we may take this short Description of it, That it is a needless and erroneous Fear in Matters of Religion ; and this is twofold, either Negative or Positive.

Negative Superstition is, when Men do fearfully abstain from, and abhor those things as wicked and abominable, which God hath not forbidden, and therefore are in themselves lawful and harmless. And those who are biggoted with this Superstition, will be sure to cry out against all that do observe such things as they condemn, for miserably seduced and superstitious Souls. Which is the exact humour of the Men of our Days, who (as *Diogenes* is said to have trampled upon *Plato's* Pride with far greater Pride) so these exclaim against Superstition with far greater Superstition. For Superstition is not either the observing, or not observing of such things, but the doing of either with an erroneous fear lest God should be displeased and provoked if we did otherwise : He is therefore negatively Superstitious who makes the not doing of that which is lawful and harmless, a matter of Conscience, and of Religion.

Positive Superstition is, when Men do fearfully observe and perform those things which either are forbidden, or at least no where commanded by God : Or if you will, it is a restless fear of the Mind, putting Men upon Acts of Religion which are not due, or not convenient.

Now this Positive Superstition expresseth it self two ways : For sometimes it gives Divine Honours to that which is not God : And sometimes it performs needless and superfluous Services to the true God. Both these are the effects

effects of Superstition ; but are commonly known by their proper names, the one being Idolatry, and the other Will-Worship. And both these are forbidden in this Commandment :

- I. *First*, Idolatry is a part and species of Superstition ; so we find it expressly *Acts* 17. 16. compared with Verse 22. In the 16 it is said, That *Paul's spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry.* And in the 22 it is said, That *Paul* reprov'd them as being too superstitious. And therefore though all Superstition be not Idolatry, yet all Idolatry is Superstition, yea, and the blackest kind of it.

Now Idolatry is nothing else but the giving of religious Worship unto an Idol : and an Idol is not only an artificial Image or Representation of any thing, whether real or fictitious, set up to be worshipped, but any Creature of God, whether Angels or Men, Sun, or Moon, or Stars, &c. to which we give any religious Honour and Service. The worshipping of any Creature, whether in Heaven above, or in the Earth beneath, or in the Water under the Earth, is Idolatry ; which is particularly and by name forbidden in this Commandment. And indeed this is a Sin so absurd and stupid, that it is a wonder it should ever be so bewitching as to inveigle the far greater part of the World. The Prophet *Isaiah* doth very frequently deride the folly and madness of Idolaters, especially Chap. 44. 16. He burneth part of his wooden God in the fire ; he roasteth his meat with it, and is satisfied ; he warmeth himself ; and the residue thereof he maketh a God, he falleth down unto it and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my God. A most gross and bestial Stupidity ; as if there were more Divinity in one end of a Stick than the other : and yet a Sin most strangely bewitching, after which all the Heathen World ran a Whoring ; and from which all the Remonstrances and Threatnings

nings which God makes to his own People of *Israel*, could not restrain them : yea, and so strangely belotting is it, that a very great part even of those who profess the Name and Doctrine of Jesus Christ, are most foully guilty of it ; I mean the Papists ; who to hide their shame in this particular from the notice of the People, have covered it with a greater, and thought fit rather to Expunge this second Commandment, than to leave their Image-Worship to be censured and condemned by it : For in all their Catechisms and Books of Devotion, which they have published for the use of the Vulgar, they have sacrilegiously omitted this second Commandment, as fearing that the Evidence of it would convict and condemn them of Idolatry in the Consciences of the most ignorant and illiterate that should but hear it rehearsed.

Let us now proceed to consider who may justly be condemned of Idolatry, and the Violation of this Precept.

First, He is an Idolater that prays unto any Saint or Angel ; for he ascribes that unto the Creature which is an Honour due only unto God the Creator. Our Faith and our Invocation ought to be terminated in the same Object ; Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed.* And therefore if we cannot without Blasphemy say, that we believe in such a Saint, or Angel, neither can we without Idolatry pray unto that Saint or Angel.

1.

Secondly, The most execrable Idolatry that is, is that of entering into League and Correspondence with the Devil ; to consult and invoke him, and by any wicked Arts implore, or make use of his help and assistance. And of this are those guilty in the highest degree, who enter into any express Compact with the Devil, which is always ratified with some Homage of Worship given to him : And in a secondary and more low degree, those who apply them-

2.

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selves

selves to seek help from such forlorn Wretches, such as the Traditionary Charms and Incantations, or any vain Observances, to free them from Pains and Diseases, or other Troubles that molest them. For all those things which have not a natural Efficiency to produce that Effect for which they are used, may very reasonably be suspected to have been agreed on formerly between the Devil and some of his especial Servants, and that all the Vertue they retain is only from that Compact; which as it was Explicite in those that made it, so it is Implicite in those that use them; for they still act in the power of that first Stipulation and Agreement.

3. *Thirdly*, Whosoever bows down his Body in religious Adoration of any Image, or other Creature, is guilty of Idolatry; and doth most expressely transgress the very Letter of this Command, *Thou shalt not bow down before them, nor worship them*. It is but here a vain Refuge unto which the Papists betake themselves, when they excuse themselves from being guilty of Idolatry, because although they worship Images, yet they worship the True GOD by them.

1. For, *first*, they worship the Images of very many Creatures, both Men and Angels. For me now to examine their Evasion concerning *λατρεῖς, δουλῖα, and ὑπερδουλῖα*, would perhaps be as improper in this Auditory, as the Distinction itself is vain and frivolous.

2. *Secondly*, Whereas they pretend to worship the true God by an Image, we reply, That it is most impious to attempt to represent God by any visible Resemblance, and therefore much more to worship him, could he be so represented. For God who is infinite, cannot be circumscribed by Lines and Lineaments; and being invisible cannot be resembled: And therefore God doth again and again inculcate it upon the *Israelites*, that when he delivered the Law unto them, he appeared not in any shape, that they might
not

not audaciously attempt to delineate him, and so be inticed to Idolatry: Thus *Deut. 4. 12. Ye heard the voice of words, but saw no similitude. only ye heard a voice.* And Verse 15, *Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude in the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire) lest ye corrupt your selves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure.* When therefore they plead, That they worship the onely true God by Images; this is no better than to excuse one horrid Sin, by the commission of another.

Thirdly, To worship the true and onely God by an image, is gross Idolatry. This the Papists deny; and place Idolatry in worshipping of Images set up to represent false and fictitious Gods; or else in worshipping them with a belief that they themselves are Gods. But,

First, Upon the same account the *Israelites* were not Idolaters in worshipping the Golden Calf: for they were not so brutish as to believe that Calf itself to be their God. Nay, it is most evident, that they intended to worship the true God under that Representation. See *Exod. 32. 4, 5. These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.* They could not be so stupid as to think that that very Calf which they themselves had made, had delivered them from *Egypt*; but they worshipt the true God who had given them that great Deliverance, under this Hieroglyphick Sign and Resemblance; which appears Verse the 5th, *Aaron made proclamation and said, To morrow is a feast to the Lord;* in the Original it is *Jehovah*, the proper and incommunicable Name of the true God. And yet that this Worship of theirs although directed unto the true God, was horrid Idolatry the Scripture abundantly testifies, Verse 31 *Oh, this people have sinned a great sin. For to say, Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them: as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and*

rose up to play. Acts 7. 41. *They made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice to the idol.*

2. Again, *secondly*, Micah and his Mother were certainly guilty of Idolatry in making and worshipping their Images: and yet that they were made to be Symbolical Representations of the true God, and erected to this very purpose, that he might be worshipt by them, appears clearly from the History, as we have it recorded Judges the 17. 3, 4. *I had wholly dedicated (saith she) the silver unto the Lord, (Jehova hebr.) for my son to make a graven and a moulton image: Which when he had done he hired a Levite to be his priest.* And in confidence of the Reward of so much Piety, concludes, Verse 13. *That certainly now the Lord Jehova would bless him, and do him good.* Nothing can be clearer then that all this Worship was intended by him to the true and only God; yet being performed by Images, it was no better than rank Idolatry.

3. *Thirdly*, If the Papists in worshipping the true God by Images be not Idolaters, then neither was *Jeroboam* who made *Israel* to sin, an Idolater, in setting up his Calves at *Dan* and *Bethel*. For whosoever, rationally considers the occasion and Political grounds of this Innovation, must needs conclude, that *Jeroboam* intended not to introduce a new God, (which would have made the People to fall faster from him, than Tyranny and Oppression did from *Reboam*), but only to set up some visible Signs and Representations of the true God, and to persuade the People that they need not go to *Jerusalem* to seek his Presence, and to offer their Gifts and Sacrifices; for the same God was as much present with them in those Figures as he was at the Temple of *Jerusalem* between the Cherubims. And therefore we find that the Idolatry of *Jeroboam* is distinguished from the Idolatry of those who worshipped *Baal* and other false Gods: See the 1 Kings 16. 31. where God speaks concerning *Ahab*, as if it had been a light thing for him

Joseph.
Antiq.
Jud. lib.
8. c. 3.

him to walk in the sins of *Jeroboam* the Son of *Nebat*, he went and served *Baal*, and worshipped him.

Nay, *fourthly*, although some among the Heathens might be so grossly stupid as to suppose the Images themselves to be Gods, and so to worship them, yet their wise and learned Philosophers were far enough from such a senseless Error; yea, they were forced to use as many Distinctions and subtil Evasions concerning their worshipping of Images, as now the Papists do; and truly most of them are the very same, and seem but borrowed out of the Schools of the Heathens. But especially they insist on this, That they venerated not their Statues, not as they were made of

such or such Materials, but only as they were the Houses and Bodies of God, where his Presence resided, and by which his Power was manifested: That they worshipped not the visible Sign, but the invisible Deity by it. And what doth the Papist say more than this? *viz.* That they worship the Images of God, not as if they were themselves God, but only

as they are the visible Signs and Symbols of the Divine Presence; and so all their Worship is directed unto God thorough them. So that in matters of Idolatry, I profess I can find no difference at all between Heathens and Papists: for as the more learned Papists do profess that they worship the true God by the Image; so likewise did the more learned Heathens. And for the ignorant and vulgar Papists, I am very apt to suspect that they do, as the ignorant Heathen, terminate and limit their Worship in the very

Non hoc visibile colo, sed numen quod in illis invisibiliter habitat. Et qui videbantur sibi purgatiora esse religionis, dicebant; nec simulachrum, nec demonium colo, sed per effigiem corporalem, ejus rei signum inuor quam colere debeo. Arnob. lib. 6.

* *Dis
Chris-
stom. Or-
rat. 12.
de primâ
Dei no-
titiâ.*

* *Τὸ ἰδὲν εἶναι πᾶν*

ἐν τῷ πνεύματι καὶ τῷ λόγῳ, ὅτι οὗτος ὁ Θεὸς ἀλλὰ θεῶν ἀναθήματα καὶ ἀγάλματα. Celsus Orig. Cont. Cels. lib. 7. Where he likewise proves, that it is lawful to make Images of God, because according to the Doctrine of Christians themselves, God made Man according to his own Image: The very Argument urged by the Papists, and made use of by the second Council of Nice.

Images

Estienne
Apol. pour
Herodote.

Images before which they fall prostrate, esteeming them to have Divine Power and Vertue of their own. For they are most grossly blinded and infatuated in this their Image-Worship, and may as well take a Stone or a Block to be a God, as the great Dragon to be a Saint; as the poor Woman did, who offered one Candle to St. *Michael*, and another to his Dragon, that is, the Devil. And therefore certainly if the Heathen World were ever guilty of Idolatry, so is now the Popish Church, their Worship, and all the Reasons of it being so exactly parallel.

And thus much concerning the first Branch of Superstition, which is Idolatry.

2. The *second* is Will-worship: Concerning this I shall speak but very little, having already prevented myself. Now Will-worship is nothing else but the inventing and ascribing any other Worship unto God, besides what he hath been pleased to command and institute; God will not be worshipped according to our fancies, but his own appointment: For as we must have no other God besides the true, so that God must have no other Service performed unto him, besides what himself hath required and prescribed: for this were to impute folly and weakness unto him, as if indeed he would have Servants, but knew not what service to injoy them.

And thus we have finisht the Prohibition, *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c.*

Let us now consider the Sanction of this Precept; and that is twofold:

I. *First*, By denouncing a severe and fearful Threatning against all those who should presume to violate this Precept: *For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.*

Secondly,

the Second Commandment.

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Secondly, By making a gracious Promise of Mercy to the careful and conscientious Observers of this Precept : *Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

II.

In the Threatning we have these things considerable :

First, Who it is that denounceth it : *I the Lord thy God.*

I.

Secondly, What it is that he denounceth and threatens : *To visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.*

2.

Thirdly, The Persons against whom this Threatning is directed : *Those that hate him.* And by the Context they are such as contemning the only true God, prostitute themselves unto Idols.

3.

Fourthly, The Duration and Continuance of that Vengeance which he will take upon them : *It shall be to the third and fourth generation.* His wrath shall extend to their Children, and their Childrens Children.

4.

First, Let us consider who it is that denounceth this Threatning ; *I the Lord thy God am a jealous God* : So most read the words as our *Englisk* Translation renders them. But others no less rightly read them thus : *For I the Lord thy God am strong and jealous* : For the word *El*, which is here used, signifies the mighty God. And according to this Acception, the words contain in them a Description of God.

I.

First, By his relation to us, *Thy God* ; a God who hath separated thee from all People of the Earth, to be his peculiar Treasure ; who hath brought thee near unto himself, even into the Bond of the Covenant ; who hath betrothed thee in Righteousness, and is not only thy Maker, but thy Husband, as the Prophet speaks, *Isai. 54. 5.* This God

I.

God it is who commands thee faithfully to perform the Marriage-vow that is between thee and him; and not to go a Whoring after the Vanities of the *Gentiles*, nor to expose thy shame and nakedness before any False or Idol-God. For Idolatry is Spiritual Adultery, and most frequently set forth under that Name and Notion in the Holy Scriptures.

2. *Secondly*, Thy God is described by the mightiness of his Power: He is *El kana*, a strong and jealous God; able to revenge any dishonour that is done him by thy unchast lewdness.

3. *Thirdly*, He is described by that violent Passion which in Men is called Jealousy: *I the Lord thy God am strong and jealous*. Now Jealousy is an affection or passion of the Mind, by which we are stirred up and provoked against whatsoever hinders the enjoyment of that which we love and desire: The Cause and Original of it is Love; and the Effect of it is Revenge. Now God to deter the *Israelites* from Idolatry, sets forth himself as a strong and jealous God, that they might be assured not to escape Punishment; for he is strong, and therefore can inflict it, and he is jealous, and therefore will inflict it, if they shall dare to abuse and injure that love which he hath placed upon them.

Now this Jealousy is not to be ascribed unto God, as if there were properly any such weak and disturbing passion in him, but only by way of accommodation and similitude; speaking after the manner of Men: So that there is not *idem affectus*, but *idem effectus*; not the same inward affection, but the same outward effect. And so likewise is it to be understood when God is said to be angry, to be grieved, to repent, &c., that is, his actions towards us are like the actions of one that is angry, or grieved, or repents, although the infinite Serenity of the Divine Essence is not liable to be discomposed or ruffled by the tempests of any such like passions as are incident to us mutable Creatures.

Now

Now the reason why God calls himself here a jealous God, you will find in these following Particulars :

First, Jealousy is distrustful and suspicious : it dares not rely upon the truth and fidelity of the Person of whom we are jealous, but is full of misgiving doubts and fears. And so God (although in propriety of Speech he can doubt nothing, nor fear any thing, yet) is pleased to express his Jealousy by such speeches as intimate distrust and diffidence. And therefore when the *Israelites* made that solemn Promise to the Lord, *Deut. 5. 27. All that the Lord our God shall speak unto us, we will hear it and do it.* God returns answer, as one that misdoubted the real performance of so fair a Promise, Verse the 28 and 29. *I have heard the voice of the words of this people ; they have well spoken all that they have spoken : O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.* 1.

Secondly, Jealousy is searching and inquisitive : It is an hard matter to escape the discovery of a jealous Eye, which is still prying and seeking after that which it would be loth to find. So the Eye of the all-seeing and all-knowing God is continually upon us ; he critically observes every look, and every kind of glance that we cast upon ourselves ; Not the least motion of our hearts, not the least twinkling of our thoughts can escape his notice and censure. And of all sins, there is none that God doth more jealously observe than that of Idolatry ; for this is the violation of that Marriage-Faith which we have plighted to him. And therefore we find that the idolatrous *Israelites*, as though they were conscious of the great Abuse they offered to their Maker, their Husband, (as the Prophet stiles God, *Isai. 54. 5.*) sought out dark and obscure Groves to act their Wickedness in ; that although they were not chaste, yet they might seem to be cautious. But in vain is it to draw the

Curtains of a thin Shade about them; a few Leaves could not cover their Shame, nor their Nakedness from him, who is all Eye every-where, and whose Eye is every-where light to itself: *God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all*, 1 John 1. 5. It is not possible to conceal from him the prostitution of an unchast and impudent Idolatry. And therefore saith the Psalmist, *Psal. 44. 20, 21. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched forth our hands to a false God: shall not God search out this? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*

3. Thirdly, Jealousy as it is searching and inquisitive; so it is an angry and revengeful passion: And therefore Solomon
 * Prov. 6. calls it, *The rage of a man**; therefore he will not spare in
 34- the day of vengeance. And Cant. 8. 6. *Jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are as coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame.* For as Love is the most soft and tenderest affection of Humane Nature, so Jealousy, which is the sowing of Love, and turning it into Vinegar, is the most wild and furious.

Now God is pleased to stile himself a Jealous God, to express the heat of his Wrath and Indignation against Sinners. So Deut. 29. 20. *The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.* See what dreadful effects this smoking Jealousy hath, when it breaks forth into a flame: Zeph 1. 18. *Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath, but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for he shall make a speedy riddance even of all that dwell in the land.* And what signal revenge this devouring Jealousy of the Almighty God hath taken upon Sinners, the whole World is full of sad Instances: This Fire hath kindled the eternal and unquenchable Flames of Hell. When the proud and rebellious Angels aspired to be

be Gods, God turned them into Devils, and these Devils into Hell ; for his Jealousy could not indure to have Rivals in his Glory. All the Ruines and Calamities that have ever hapned to Persons or Nations, are but the effects of God's Jealousy against Sin. And of all other Sins, his Jealousy takes most remarkable Vengeance against Idolatry ; for this is spiritual Whoredom, a provocation which the jealous God can least indure, see *Deut. 32. 16, 17, 19. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods ; they sacrificed to devils, not to God ; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up : And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And Verse 21. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not god, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities : A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.* And so in the following Verses God exaggerates those sore and heavy Judgments which he would bring upon them in the fury of his Jealousie, because of this heinous Sin of Idolatry.

And thus we have seen in what respects God is said to be a Jealous God.

What remains now, but that Expostulation of the Apostle, *1 Cor. 10. 22. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy ? are we stronger than he ?* We who are but as dust before the Whirlwind, and as dry stubble before the consuming Fire, shall we dare by our sins to affront and challenge that God who hath said, *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it ?* And yet such is the madness of every desperate Sinner, that he rusheth upon God's neck, and upon the thick bosses of his Buckler, and daily provokes him who is infinitely able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell-fire : Indeed Jealousie of itself, without power to wreak Revenge, is but a weak and contemptable passion ; but when it is armed with Almighty

ty Strength, it is justly terrible: Now the Lord thy God is **אֱלֹהִים** a strong and jealous God. Every sin thou committest is an horrid wrong done unto him, and a violation of that Faith which thou owest him: He hath wooed thy affections, sought thy consent; and this thou hast vowed unto him in thy Baptism; and yet thou perfidiously followest other Lovers, and givest thy heart unto the World and the Devil, which are God's greatest Corrivals. The highest indignity that can be done against Love, is to contemn and slight it, and to imbrace those who are far more base and fordid: And how notoriously then dost thou affront God, when thou despisest his Love, and thy own Faith, to cast thyself into the imbraces of every vile Lust, which now pollutes thy Soul, and will hereafter damn it? O foolish and unkind that thou art, to neglect the love of the Great King of Heaven and Earth, and to make choice of the Devil, who is but the Slave of God, and sollicites thee only to make thee his Slave! Yet were it somewhat if thou couldest defend thyself, and maintain thy choice against the jealousy and wrath of the great God whom thou thus despisest and provokest. But assure thyself, his wrath and his jealousy will smoke against thee; yea, kindle upon thee, till it hath burnt thee down to the lowest Hell: and that day is coming wherein he will expose thy nakedness and thy shame before Men and Angels, and upbraid thee with the folly, as well as wickedness of thy Choice; and then condemn thee to be an eternal Consort with those Devils whom thou hast preferred before himself: Believe it, it is a sad and fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God, for he is a Jealous God, and a Consuming Fire, as *Moses* speaks, *Deut. 4. 24.*

And thus much for the first Observable in this Commination, *viz.* Who it is that denounceth it, *I the Lord thy God am a jealous God; or, I the Lord thy God am strong and jealous.*

Secondly,

Secondly, The next thing considerable is, what Judgment this strong and jealous God threatens to inflict; and that is, *To visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.* 2.

Now visiting is a figurative expression: And in the general God is said to visit when after a long space of time, in which he seemed to have forgotten, or taken no notice of Men, he declares by his Providence that he hath still observed their ways and doings. And this word of visiting may be taken either in a good, or in an evil part; in a good part, when God bestows great Mercies and Salvation upon his People, he is said to visit them; and thus it is frequently used in the Scripture. In an evil part, God is said to visit when he rewards those sins at which he seemed to connive, with deserved punishments; So *Psal. 89. 32. I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.* *Exod. 3. 16.* And *Jer. 5. 9. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* *Luke 1. 68. 28. Ec.* And in this sense is the word to be taken here, *Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*; that is, punishing the Fathers iniquity in their Children and Posterity: And thus we have it interpreted *Jer. 32. 18. Thou recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them.*

Now here arise two important Queries to be resolved:

First, Whether it be just with God, and consistent with the Divine Veracity to punish the sins of the Fathers upon the Children? 1.

Secondly, Whether God doth always observe this method of revenging the Fathers crimes upon their Posterity and Offspring? 2.

First, For the former Query: There seems some difficulty in reconciling Scripture to itself in this particular, and in reconciling such a proceeding to Justice and Equity; for sometimes the Scriptures do expressly mention the punishment of Parents sins to be inflicted upon their Children, *Exod.* 1.

Exod. 34. 7. Jer. 32. 18, &c. And when God commands *Paul* utterly to destroy *Amalek*, he gives this reason of his Injunction, *1 Sam. 15. 2. Remember that which Amalek did unto Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt.* And yet almost four hundred Years were past between the Journey of the *Israelites* from *Egypt*, and the issuing forth of this Command: and therefore it is not probable, that any of those *Amalekites* who opposed them in their way, were then alive to bear the punishment of that Offence. Yea, and our Saviour threatens the *Jews* of his time, *Matth. 23. 35. That upon them should come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar:* That is, the sins of their Progenitors from the beginning of the World, unto that very Age when they murdered *Zachary* the * Father of *John the Baptist*, in the Court of the Temple, shall be punished in this Generation.

* Vide
Baron.
Annal.
An. 1.
Sect. 52.
&c.

And yet again we read as expressly, *Ezek. 18. 20. The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the iniquity of the wicked shall be upon him.* And again, *Jer. 31. 29, 30. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sowre grapes, and the childrens teeth are set on edge: But every one shall die for his own iniquity.*

And indeed this seems most agreeable to the Rules of Justice, that the Innocent should not be punished for the sins of the Nocent and Guilty.

Now to solve this Difficulty, and reconcile this seeming Contradiction, I shall premise some Distinctions, and then draw from them some Conclusions satisfactory to the Question propounded.

Punish-

Punishments are either Temporal, such as befall in this present life ; or else Eternal, such as are reserved to be inflicted upon all impenitent and disobedient Sinners in the World to come.

Again, Children may be considered either as imitating the Crimes and Transgressions of their Parents, or repenting of them, and reforming from them, and to not walking in their Fathers steps, but in the ways of God's Commandments.

Now, *first*, Certain it is that God never visits the iniquity of the Fathers upon repenting and reformed Children with eternal punishments. And in this sense it is everlastingly true, That *the son shall not bear the iniquity of his father ; but the soul that sinneth, it shall die ; and every man shall bear his own burden.*

But some may say, Are we not made liable even to eternal Death, only by the sin of another ? Hath not the sin of our first Father brought condemnation upon all his Posterity ? And therefore how is it true, that the Son shall not in this respect bear the iniquity of his Father ?

To this I answer, It is not his sin considered personally as his, that hath made us obnoxious unto eternal Death ; but it was our sin as well as his : for in him we all sinned and fell. *Adam* was our federal Head and common Representative, and his Sin was legally ours, even as his Obedience would have been, had he persevered in it. But now the Case of *Adam* is singular, and much different from that of intermediate Parents ; they indeed are our natural Heads, but not our federal Heads as *Adam* was ; their actions are onely their own, and not ours, and have no influence at all upon the determining of our eternal state and condition : and therefore we shall not be accountable to God at the last Day for what they have done, but only for what we our selves have done in the Body, whether it be good or evil. Yet,

Secondly,

2. *Secondly*, If the Children imitate the wickedness and crimes of their Fathers, it is but just and righteous with God to punish them with eternal Death and Damnation for them: It is but fit that they should inherit their Fathers Damnation, who inherit their Fathers Transgressions. But in this case it must be observed, that God punisheth them not because they are their Fathers sins, but because they are their own.

3. *Thirdly*, God may, and often doth visit the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children with Temporal Punishments, whether the Children imitate the Offences of the Fathers, or else reform from them. And these Temporal Punishments are many times very sore and heavy; languishing Diseases, racking and tormenting Pains, loss of Estate, sometimes ravishd from them by violence, sometimes melting away insensibly: The Father possibly by his unjust Oppression and Extortion, intails a Curse upon his Estate, which like a Canker, eats it out and consumes it in his Son's days; so that nothing is left in his hands but Shame and Poverty, altho' perhaps he might never know the sins for which God blasts him: Yea, we find that God doth inflict Temporal Death on the Child for the Offence of the Parent; thus, 2 Sam. 12. 14. *in Nathan's Message to David, Because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee, shall surely die.*

Thus God doth very frequently inflict Temporal Punishments upon the Children for the Fathers Transgressions: Nor is it at all hard to reconcile this with the measures of Justice and Equity, because of that near relation which they bear unto their Parents; for certainly it is just with God to punish a Sinner in all that is related unto him: now Children are parts of their Parents, yea, their Parents live and survive in them; and therefore certainly God in punishing them, may justly strike what part of them he pleaseth.

pleaseth. And this even *Plutarch*, an Heathen, could observe, speaking how God did often inflict grievous Judgements on the Posterity of lewd and wicked Men, he tells us, οὐδὲν ἀτόκον ἐν ἐκείνων ὄντις ἔχων τὰ ἐκείνων, it is nothing strange and absurd for those who are theirs to suffer what belongs to them. *Plutar. de sero puni-
en.*

And thus we have briefly vindicated the Justice of God, in visiting the Iniquity of the Fathers upon their Children.

But then, *secondly*, another Question is, Whether God doth always observe this Method of revenging the Offences of Fathers upon their Children in Temporal Punishments? 2.

To which I answer, No, he doth not: neither doth this Threatning in the Commandment oblige him to do it, but only shews what their sins do deserve, and what he might justly do if he pleased to use his Power and Prerogative. And therefore we read of the Children of wicked Parents, who yet were both pious and prosperous; such were *Hezekiah*, and *Josiah*, the one the Son of *Ahaz*, the other of *Amon*. But most commonly we may observe it in the course of Divine Providence, that the Posterity of wicked Parents pay off their Fathers' score to Divine Justice, in the Temporal Evils and Calamities that are brought upon them: But yet if they themselves be pious and holy, this may be for their comfort, that whatsoever Afflictions they lie under, shall be for their benefit and advantage; and they are not Punishments to them, but onely fatherly Corrections and Chastisements: for the very things which they suffer may be intended by God as a punishment to their Ancestors, but a fatherly correction to themselves; and what to the one is threatned as a Curse, to the other may prove a Blessing and an Advantage, as it gives them occasion of exercising more Grace, and so of receiving the greater Glory.

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Suffer

Suffer me to close up this with one or two Practical Meditations.

- I. *First*, If it be the usual method of Divine Providence to visit the iniquity of the Father upon the Children, see then what great reason Parents have to beware they do not lay up a stock of Plagues and Curses for their Posterity, nor clog the Estate they leave them, with so many Debts to be paid to the Justice of God, as will certainly undo them: Thou who by Fraud and Cozenage heapest together ill gotten Wealth, thinkest perhaps of leaving so many hundreds, or thousands to thy Children, but considerest not withal, how many Curses thou puttest into the Bag, Curses that in time will rot and eat out the very bottom of it: Thou who by this, or by any other way of Wickedness, either Swearing, or Drunkenness, or Uncleaness, provokest the Holy and the Jealous God, doth it nothing grieve thee to think that thy sins shall be punished upon thy poor Childrens backs? Possibly thou art so fondly tender of them, that thou art loth to chastise them when they really deserve it for their own faults; yet art thou so cruel to them, as to abandon them over to the Justice of God, to be severely scourged for faults which are not their own, but thine. Whose heart would not yearn, and whose bowels would not be turned within him, to go into an Hospital, and there view over all those Scenes of Humane Misery and Wretchedness which are presented to us; the Blind, the Lame, the Deaf, the Dumb, the Maimed, the Distracted, the ulcerated and loathsome Leaper, and those several Maps of Man's Woes and Torments that are there exhibited? Think then with thyself, this is the Inheritance, this is the Portion bequeathed them by their accursed Parents. And as thou wouldest have thine own Children to be made the same sad Spectacles of Divine Wrath and Vengeance, so go and sin them into the same condition. Certainly Wolves and Tigers are more merciful to their Off-spring, than wretched

ed Man ! It is thou thyself, O cruel Man ! who hast crippled, and maimed, and tormented, and beggered, and undone thine own Children ; and perhaps every sin thou committest either murders, or tortures a poor helpless Infant, one whose greatest misery it is, that ever he was born of thee. I beseech you Christians think seriously of this thing ; and as ever you would wish well to those dear Pledges which are as your own bowels, so beware how ever you provoke the holy and jealous God, by any known and wilful sin, who will be sure to repay it home, either in your own Persons by his immediate Judgments upon yourselves, or that which will go as near the heart of every tender and compassionate Parent, by his sore Judgments on the poor Children and Posterity.

2.
Secondly, See here what great reason thou hast to render Thanks and Praise unto God, that thou art born of holy and pious Parents ; such as treasure not up Wrath for thee, but Prayers : Possibly they were but poor and low in the World ; but yet they have bequeathed thee a rich Patrimony, and made God Executor, who will faithfully discharge his Trust, if thou discharge thy Duty, and give thee a Blessing possible in this life, but certainly in the life to come. Let others boast their Blood, and their Parentage, and reckon up a long row of Monuments and Ancestors, if they have been wicked, lewd, and ungodly, but thine vertuous, and the sincere Servants of God, they possibly may be the last of their Family, and thou the first of thine : Howsoever, know that it is far more Noble to be born of those that have been born of God, than to be the Grand-children of the Devil : Thou hast better Blood running in thy Veins, even the Blood of them whom Christ hath judged worthy to be redeemed, and washed with his own Blood, whose Names are written in Heaven in the Lamb's Book of Life ; a greater Honour and Dignity, than if they were written in the Worm-eaten Pages of idle Heraldry : And if thou followest
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their good Examples, thy Relations, and Portion too are greater and richer, for thou hast God for thy Father, Christ for thy Brother, and the whole Heaven of Stars for thine Inheritance.

And thus much for the second General, what is here threatned in the Commandment, *viz. The visiting the of iniquity of the fathers upon the children* I shall be more brief in the two remaining. Therefore,

3. *Thirdly*, Let us consider the Persons against whom this Threatning is denounced, *Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of those that hate me*: And who those are, is explained in the Antithesis subjoyned, *Keeping mercy for thousands of those that love me, and keep my commandments*. If then those that keep God's Commandments are Lovers of God, (which our Saviour expressly affirms, *John 14. 21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*;) by direct consequence it follows, that those who transgress the Commandments of God, are Haters of God. And what worse can be said of the very Devil himself, let them pretend never so fair, and speak words full of respect and reverence, yet bring them to this Tryal, do they observe and keep the Commandments of God or no? If not, they are Haters of God and Goodness. And indeed it is impossible, that those who are disobedient and rebellious should love God; for can they love him who hath required from them what they do so extremely loath? Can they love him whom they must needs apprehend armed with wrath and vengeance to punish and torment them everlastingly for their sins? Can they love him, who if they have any consciences in them, they must needs know hates them with a perfect hatred, and will be avenged on them in their eternal ruine and destruction? Certainly if we love God, because he first loved us, these cannot but hate him, to whom their own consciences must needs attest, that God hates both them and their ways.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Consider the Duration and Continuance of that Vengeance which God will take upon those who thus hate him. On their own persons he will revenge himself eternally, and be ever satisfying his wronged Justice in their insufferable Torments: But on their Posterity he will be avenged unto the third and fourth Generation. And yet even in this very Threatning there is Mercy contained; Mercy it is that such a wicked and accursed Race, are not cut off, and cast out of his sight and grace for ever; and that where once the wrath of God hath seized on any Family, it doth not burn down and consume the whole before it: But he graciously stops its course, and gives not way to all his fury; and in this Mercy glorifies itself against Judgment, in that he sheweth Mercy unto Thousands, but visiteth Iniquity only unto the third and fourth Generation.

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