

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

Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's House; Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's Wife; nor his Man-Servant, nor his Maid-Servant, nor his Ox, nor his Ass, nor any thing that is thy Neighbour's.

THus are we at last (through the Divine Assistance,) arrived to the Tenth and last Precept of the Moral Law. Indeed the *Papists* and the *Lutherans* divide it into Two; making these Words, *Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's Wife*, to be one entire Command; and then putting together the other Branches of it, *Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's House; nor his Servant, &c.* to piece up the last. But then withal, to keep the Number of them from swelling beyond a *Decalogue*, or *Ten Words*, the *Lutherans* joyn the First and Second together into one; and the *Papists*, in propounding the Commandments to the People, wholly leave it out; fearing they may be corrupted by hearing it, because it speaks too boldly against their Idolatry and Image-Worship. But how infinitely temerarious is it for vile Wretches either to invert, or defalcate, and as it were, to decimate the Laws of the great God, by the which, they, and all their

ACTIONS

Actions must be judged at the last Day? And certainly, were it not that they might the better conceal from the ignorant common People, the Dangerous and Heretical Words of the Second Commandment, they could have lain under no Temptation at all, to do a thing altogether so unreasonale, as the dividing of this Tenth Commandment into Two: For upon the same ground might they as well have divided it into seven, since there are many more Concupiscences mentioned in it, than that of our *Neighbour's Wife*, and of *his House*. And if each of these must constitute a distinct Precept, why not also, *Thou shalt not covet his Man-Servant: Thou shalt not covet his Ox, &c*? Besides, the Order of the Words makes clearly against them: For, whereas they make, *Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's Wife*, to be the Ninth; in the Text, those Words, *Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's House*, go before them: So that either they must needs confess it to belong to the Tenth, or else must grant a most unintelligible *Hyperbation* both of Sense and Words; such as would bring in utter Confusion and Disorder amongst those Laws which God certainly prescribed us in a most admirable Method and Disposition.

But to speak no more of this: The Sin here prohibited, is Concupiscence, or an unlawful lusting after what is another Man's. For since God had in the other Commandment forbidden the Acts of Sin against our Neighbour, He well knew that the best Means to keep them from committing Sin in Act, would be to keep them from desiring it in Heart; and therefore he, who is a Spirit imposeth a Law upon our Spirits, and forbids us to covet what before he had forbidden us to perpetrate. It is true that other Precepts are spiritual likewise, and their Authority reacheth to the Mind, and the most secret Thoughts and Imaginations of the Heart. For our Saviour, *Matth. 5*, accuseth him of Adultery, that doth but lust after a Woman; and him of Murder, that is but

but angry with his Brother without a Cause. And it is a most certain Rule, That whatsoever Precept prohibits the outward Act of any Sin, prohibits likewise the inward Propension and Desires of the Soul towards it. But because these are not plainly, and literally express'd in the former Commands, therefore the infinite Wisdom of God thought it fit to add this last Command, wherein he doth expressly arraign, and condemn the very first Motions of our Hearts towards any sinful Object. And whereas before he had commanded us, not to Kill, not to Steal, not to Commit Adultery, not to Slander, and bear False Witness; now, in the last Place, for the greater Security that these his Laws should not be violated, he commands us, not so much as to harbour in our Hearts any Desire towards these. So that this Tenth Commandment may well be called *Vinculum Legis*; and it is especially the Bond that strengthens and confirms the Second Table. For because all our outward Actions take their first Rise from our inward Motions and Concupiscence, there is no such Way to provide for our Innocency, as to lay a check and restraint upon these.

Now Concupiscence is sometimes taken in Scripture in a good Sense; but more often in an Evil. There is an honest and lawful Concupiscence, when we desire those things which are lawful, to which we have Right, and of which we have need: There is likewise an holy, and pious, and a wicked, and sinful Concupiscence. We have both together, *Gal. 5. 17. The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh*: It is only concerning this sinful Concupiscence, that we are at present to speak.

Now this evil Concupiscence is the First-born of Original Sin, the first Effay, and Expression of that Corruption which hath seized on us, and on all the wretched Posterity of *Adam*: For in Original Sin, (besides the Guilt which results from the Imputation of the primitive Transgression to us, and makes us liable to eternal Death,) there is like-
wise

wise an universal Depravation of our Natures, consisting in Two Things.

First, In a loss of those spiritual Perfections, wherewith Man was endowed in his Creation. And this is the defacing of the Image of God, which was stamp'd upon our Nature in Knowledge, Righteousness, and true Holiness: And as a Consequent upon this,

Secondly, In a violent Propension and Inclination to whatsoever is really evil, and contrary to the holy Will and Commands of God. And this is the Image of the Devil, into which Man by his voluntary Apostasie, and Defection, hath transformed himself. Now this inordinate Inclination of the Soul to what is evil and sinful, is properly this Concupiscence forbidden in this Commandment. For the Soul of Man being an active and busie Creature, must still be putting forth it self in Actions suitable to its Nature. But before the Fall, Man enjoyed supernatural Grace, though in a natural Way, which enabled him to point every the least Motion of his Soul towards God, and to fix him as the Object, and End of all his Actions: But forsaking this Grace by the Fall, and being left in the Hands of meer Nature, all his Actions now, instead of aspiring unto God, pitch only upon the Creature. And this becomes Sin unto us, not merely because we affect, and desire created Good, (for that is lawful,) but because we affect, and desire it in an inordinate manner; that is, without affecting, and desiring God. And thus, the Soul not being able, without Grace and the Image of God, to raise its Operations unto God, pitcheth upon what it can, *viz.* low, sinful Objects, to the neglect and slighting of God, and the great Concernments of Heaven: And this is in the general that inordinate Disposition of the Soul, which is here called Coveting, or Concupiscence.

Next

Now there are four Degrees of this sinful Concupiscence.

First, There is the *Motus primò primi*, the first Film and Shadow of an evil Thought, the Imperfect *Embryo* of a Sin before it is well shap'd in us, or hath received any Lineaments and Features. And these the Scripture calls the Imaginations of the Thoughts of Men's Hearts, *Gen. 6. 5. God saw that every Imagination of the Thoughts of Man's Heart was only evil continually*: That is, the very first figment and flushing of our Thoughts, is evil and corrupt: Indeed some of these are injected by the Devil. Many times he assaults the dearest of God's Children with horrid and black Temptations, and importunately casts into their Minds strange Thoughts of questioning the very Being of God, the Truth of the Scriptures, the Immortality of the Soul, Future Reward and Punishments, and such other blasphemous, hideous, and unshapen Monsters, against the very Fundamentals of Religion, for the Truth of which they would willingly sacrifice their very Lives, as a Testimony to them. These indeed are not their Sins, although they are their great Troubles and Afflictions; for they come only from a Principle without them, and they are meerly Passive and Sufferers by them, so long as they are watchful to abhor and resist them, and to cast these fiery Darts of the Devil back again into his Face. But then there are other first Motions arising up in our Hearts towards those Sins, which are more delightful and pleasant to our sensual Inclinations: These, (whatsoever the Papists say to the contrary,) as soon as ever they do but begin to heave and stir in our Breasts, are truly Sins, and do, in their measure, pollute and defile the Soul. For the Soul of Man is like a clear Mirrour, upon which if you only breath, you sully it, and leave a Dimness upon it; so truly the very first breathings of an evil Thought and Desire up in our souls, do sully their Beauty, and dim their Lustre.

The Tenth Commandment.

97

lustre, and render the Image of God less conspicuous in them, than it was before.

Secondly, A farther Degree of this Concupiscence is, when these evil Motions are entertained in the sensual Mind with some measure of Complacency and Delight: When a single Object offers it self to a carnal Heart, there is a kind of inward pleasing Titillation, that affects it with Delight, and begets a kind of Sympathy between them; that look as in natural Sympathies, a Man is taken and delighted with an Object before he knows the Reason why he is so; so likewise in this sinful Sympathy that is between a carnal Heart and a sensual Object, the Heart is taken and delighted with it, before it hath had time to consider what there is in it that should so move and affect it. At the very first sight and glimpse of a Person, we many times find that we conceive some more particular respect for him, than possibly for a whole Croud of others, though all may be equally unknown unto us: So upon the very first glimpse and apparition of a sinful Thought in our Minds, we find that there is something in it that commands a particular regard from us, that unbosomes and unlocks our very Souls unto it, even before we have the Leisure to examine why.

Thirdly, Hereupon follows Assent and Approbation of the Sin in the practical Judgment; which being blinded, and forcibly carried away by the violence of corrupt and carnal Affections, commends the Sin to the executive Faculties. The Understanding is the great Trier of every deliberate Action, so that nothing passeth into Act, which hath not first pass'd Examination and Censure there. Whether this, or that Action is to be done, is the great Question canvassed in this Court; and all the Powers and Faculties of the Soul wait what Definitive Sentence will be here pronounced, and so accordingly proceed.

N n n

usually

An Exposition upon

usually appear, and put in their Plea to the Judgment against Sin; God's Law, and God's Advocate, Conscience: The Law condemns, and Conscience cites that Law: But then the Affections step in, and bribe the Judge with Profit, or Pleasure, or Honour, and thereby corrupt the Judgment to give its Vote and Assent unto Sin.

Fourthly, When any sinful Motion hath thus gotten an Allowance, and pass from the Judgment; then it betakes it self to the Will for a Decree. The Judgment approves it, and therefore the Will must now resolve to commit it: And then the Sin is fully perfected and formed within; and there wants nothing but Opportunity to bring it forth into Act.

And thus you see what this Concupiscence is, and the Degrees of it; *viz.* The first Bubblings up of evil Thoughts in our Hearts; our Complacency and Delight in them, (as indeed it is very hard, and much against corrupt Nature, not to love these first born of our Souls,) the Assent and Allowance of our Judgment, and the Decree and Resolution of our Wills; each of these are forbidden in this Commandment: But if the Sin proceeds any further, it then exceeds the Bounds and Limits of this Commandment, and falls under the Prohibition of some of the former, which forbid the outward Acts of Sin.

Thus much concerning *Evil Concupiscence* in the general: But here is mention likewise made of several particular Objects of it: *Thy Neighbour's House, his Wife, his Servants, his Cattle;* (under which are comprehended all sorts of his Possessions;) and all is included under the last Clause, *Nor any Thing that is thy Neighbour's:* So that to desire to take from him either his Life, or his good Name, or his Vertue, is this condemned Covetousness, as well as a Desire to take from him his Temporal Possessions and Enjoyments.

I shall

I shall close up all with some Practical Use and Improvement.

First, Learn here to adore the unlimited and boundless Sovereignty of the great God. His Authority immediately reacheth to the very Soul and Conscience, and lays an Obligation upon our very Thoughts and Desires; which no humane Laws can do. It is but a Folly for Men to intermeddle with, or impose Laws upon that of which they can take no cognizance: And therefore our Thoughts and Desires are free from their Censure any farther than they discover themselves by overt Acts. But though they scape the Commands and Notice of Men, yet they cannot escape God. *He seeth not as Men see, neither judgeth he as Men judge; the Secrets of all Hearts are open and bare before his Eyes.* He looks through our very Souls, and there is not the least hint of a Thought, nor the least Breath of a Desire stirring in us, but it is more distinctly visible unto him, than the most opacous Bodies are unto us. *The Lord knoweth the Thoughts of Men that they are vanity,* Psal. 94, 11. And therefore his Law, like his Knowledge, reacheth unto the most secret Recesses of the Soul, searcheth every Corner of the Heart, judgeth and condemns those callow Lusts which Men never espie; and if these find harbour and shelter there, condemns thee as a Transgressor, and guilty of Eternal Death, how plausible soever thy external Demeanour may be. And therefore,

Secondly, Content not thy self with an outward conformity to the Law; but labour to approve thine Heart in Sincerity and Purity unto God; otherwise thou art but a Pharisical Hypocrite, and waldest only the outside of the Cup, when within thou art still full of unclean Lusts. This was the corrupt Doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees. That the

Law reached only to the outward Man, and although we entertain'd and cherish'd wicked Desires, and evil Purposes in our Hearts; yet as long as they did not break forth into outward Crimes, they were not to be imputed unto us; nor did God account them as Sins. And this *St. Paul* confesseth of himself, That whilst he was trained up in Pharisaical Principles, he did not understand the inward motions of Lusts to be Sins. But alas! this is but gilding over a dry and rotten Post; which, though it may look beautiful, to Men; yet when God comes to examine it, will not abide the fiery Trial*. Thou art as truly a Murderer, a Thief, an Adulterer in God's sight, if thou dost but harbour bloody, unclean, unjust Thoughts in thine Heart, as thou wouldst be in Men's, if thou shouldst actually kill, or steal, or wallow in the open and professed Acts of Uncleanness. Indeed most Men do herein grossly delude themselves; and if they can but refrain from the outward commission of gross and scandalous Sins, they very seldom reflect upon their Heart-Lusts, which, like deep Ulcers rancle inwardly, and perhaps grow incurable, when all the while they may be skinn'd over with a fair and inoffensive Life. Although the Heart estuate and boil over with malicious, revengeful, lascivious Thoughts, yet they usually dispence with these, and their natural Conscience indulgeth them without disturbance. But *deceive not your selves, God is not mocked*, nor can he be imposed upon by external Shews; neither will he judge of thee as others do, or as thou thy self dost: I know it is a very difficult thing to convince Men of the great Evil that there is in sinful Thoughts and Desires; and therefore very difficult to persuade them to labour against them; for because they are of a small and minute being, therefore Men think they carry in them but small Guilt; and little Danger. Every Man that hath but a remnant of Conscience left him, will beware of gross and notorious Crimes, that carry the Mark of Hell and Damnation visibly stamp'd upon their

Foreheads,

* Scelus
 intra se
 que cogi-
 sat illum
 f. n. i. cri-
 men habet
 Iuv. Sat. 13.
 Ev. 7n
 exponitur,
 isiv n. non
 Smeia x. 7d
 adixev.
 Anst. Rhe.
 o. 14.

Fore-heads: Such as he, that can without Reluctance commit them, must needs own himself for the apparent Offspring of the Devil. But for an invisible Thought, a Notion, a Desire, a Thing next nothing; this certainly I may please my self withal; for this can hurt no one. By a malicious Purpose, I wrong no Man; by a covetous Desire, I extort from no Man; and what so great Evil then can there be in this? It is true indeed, wert thou only to deal with Men, whom immaterial Things touch not, there were no such great Evil in them. But when thou hast likewise to do with an, immaterial and spiritual God, before whom thy very Thoughts and Desires appear, as substantial and considerable as thy outward Actions, then know that these, as slight and thin Beings as they are, fall under his Censure here, and will fall under his Revenge hereafter:

Now were this Persuasion effectually wrought into the Minds of Men; were it possible they should indulge themselves as they do, in vain, frothy, unclean, malicious Thoughts and Desires: Were it possible they should so closely brood on these Cockatrice Eggs, which will bring forth nothing but Serpents to sting them to Eternal Death: Were it possible they should delight in rolling, and tossing a Sin to and fro in their Fancy; and by imagining it, make the Devil some Recompence for not daring to commit it. Certainly such Men are altogether unacquainted with the Life and Power of true Grace, when, as those Sins which they dare not act, yet they dare with Pleasure contemplate, and dally with in their Fancies, and Imaginations.

Turn therefore your Eyes inwards; bewail, and strive against that natural Concupiscence which lodgeth there: And never content thy self, that thou hast dammed up the Streams of thy Corruptions from overflowing thy Life and Actions, till thou hast in some good measure dried up the Fountain of it.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, See here the best, and the surest Methods to keep us from the outward Violation of God's Laws; which is to mortifie our corrupt Concupiscence, and Desires. And therefore (as I told you) the Wisdom of God hath set this Commandment in the last Place, as a Fence and Guard to all the rest; Thou shalt not Covet; and then certainly, thou shalt not Kill; nor Seal; nor commit Adultery, nor bear False Witness; but be kept pure from all outward Defilements of the Flesh; when thou art thus cleansed from the inward Defilements of the Spirit: For from these it is, that all the more visible Sins of our Lives and Actions have their supply. And therefore, saith our Saviour, *Matth. 15. 19. Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Thefts, false Witness, Blasphemy.* Observe that he puts evil Thoughts in the Front, as the Leader of all this Black Regiment. For out of this evil Treasure of the Heart, Men bring forth Evil Things; and all the Fruits of the Flesh, the Grapes of Sodom, and the Clusters of Gomorrah; receive their Sap and Nourishment from this Root of Bitterness. It ought therefore most deservedly to be the great and chief Care of every Christian to lay the Axe to this Root, to purge and heal this Fountain, that sends forth such corrupt, and poisonous Streams, to keep his Heart clean from sinful Thoughts and Affections; and then this Life will be clean by Consequence. And therefore God very pressingly requires this; *Jer. 4. 14. O Jerusalem, wash thy Heart from Wickedness; How long shall vain Thoughts lodge within thee? And let me add, that unless we make this our chief Care; unless we do most solicitously observe this last Commandment, all our Care in observing the former, will be utterly in vain; not only in respect of our Acceptance, and Reward with God, but as to any good Issue and Effect. All other Endeavours will be as successless, as to attempt the Cure of an Ulcerous*

the Tenth Commandment.

103

Ulcerous Body, without purging it, where the Corruption will quickly break forth again ; or to attempt the emptying of a Pond , that hath many Springs still rising up in the Bottom of it, which will soon grow as full as ever it was.

A
