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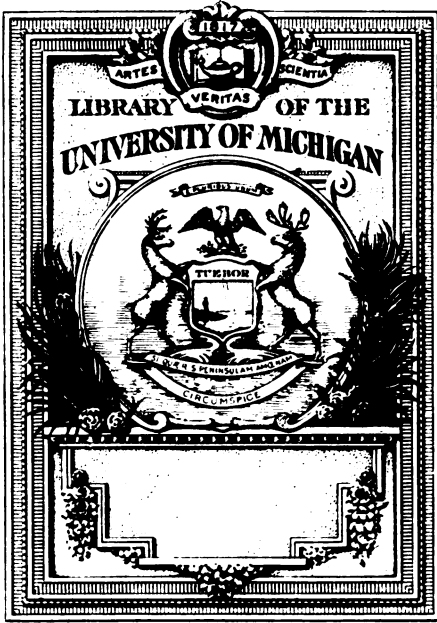
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Hill, Sir Richard, bart.

AN

ADDRESS

TO

PERSONS OF FASHION,

Containing some PARTICULARS relating to

BALLS:

And a few Occasional HINTS concerning

PLAY-HOUSES, CARD-TABLES, &c,

In which is introduced

The Character of *LUCINDA*,
A LADY of the very BEST FASHION,
and of most extraordinary PIETY.

————— *Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti: si non, bis utere mecum.*

HOR.

By a Gentleman of the University of OXFORD.

The THIRD EDITION,
Revised, Corrected, and Enlarged.

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P R E F A C E

TO THE

R E A D E R.

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WHAT gave rise to the following attempt was my bearing a young Lady affirm, that she saw no harm in going to a BALL. After I had put together the beads of it, I shewed it to a few friends, who were of opinion it might be productive of some good if I would publish it; which I the more readily consented to do, when I observed how much the custom of giving Balls at private houses has of late prevailed.

The original design of the piece being only to set the diversion of BALLS in its true light, I had no intention of saying any thing concerning Plays, Cards, &c. till I was advised to the publication of it, when I thought that some few observations on those amusements (especially on the former) might not be unnecessary; however, I chose rather to insert them by way of Notes, than to break the thread of what was already drawn up relating to BALLS; which will, I hope, be sufficient apology for the length and frequency of the Notes dispersed up and down throughout the book.

I shall not in the following treatise trouble you with any tedious account of the origin of BALLS, PLAYS, or any other of those fashionable entertainments; as well because I see no End that would thereby be answered, as because I confess myself ignorant of the exact time of their rise; however, with regard to Cards, one of our London Chronicles for the last year informs us that they were invented scarcely two centuries ago, for the recreation of a King of France, who was almost, if not altogether, an Idiot.

Neither is it my design to make any mention of religious Dances, such as was that of Miriam the Prophetess, and of the other Israelitish women, after the

overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, Exod. xv. 20. as also that of David before the Ark of the Covenant, 2 Sam. vi. 14. since it would be a most ridiculous absurdity to go about to prove that these, and other Dances recorded in Scripture, are quite of a different nature and tendency from modern BALLS and ASSEMBLIES.

My hearty wish is, that what is here offered to your perusal and serious reflection, may have the same happy effect upon many readers of it in print, as I have reason to hope it had in manuscript upon the Lady for whose benefit it was chiefly designed: upon which account, I earnestly intreat your patience to go through the whole; or at least I hope you will not toss it aside before you have well begun it, with declaring that "you never saw such horrid stuff in all your " days."

Truth is a mighty weapon, though wielded by a weak hand; wherefore since I have this on my side, I do not despair of convincing all those who will weigh what they read with a fair unbiassed judgment. As to merit, I claim none, but that of a good intention; and would not willingly give offence, where I hope to render the greatest of all services: therefore if any take exception at what they may meet with in the course of this little pamphlet, let me beg them to search into their own hearts, and examine carefully whether an unwillingness to part with those idols, the keeping of which they can no otherwise defend than by refusing to hearken to the voice of Scripture, Reason, and Conscience, may not in some measure be the cause of their being displeas'd at what they read.

And now, heartily recommending what follows to the blessing of God, and humbly submitting it to your candor, I beg leave to subscribe myself

Your most obedient,
and most humble Servant,

The AUTHOR.

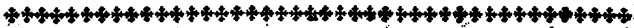


A N

A D D R E S S

T O

PERSONS OF FASHION, &c.



I N T R O D U C T I O N.

ALTHOUGH it is the undoubted duty of every *Christian* to do all in his power to promote the *Salvation* of others, yet he should be careful to *guide his words with discretion*, and not to urge any thing upon those with whom he hopes to succeed, without defending his cause with weighty and forcible arguments; lest he should make them imagine, because he advances little or nothing on his own side of the question, that consequently there is little or nothing to be said in support of it.

It is upon this plan that I purpose, with God's assistance, to pursue my design of proving the absolute *unlawfulness* of the now so fashionable diversion of **BALLS**; and tho'

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vi INTRODUCTION.

I am sensible that the mighty torrent of custom is against me, and that I may be branded with the appellation of a *precise fanatic*; yet I hope to demonstrate with the clearest evidence that BALLS are entirely inconsistent with the Spirit of *Christianity*, and that it is not possible to be present at them without incurring great guilt. All I desire of those who read the following pages is, (what I have already requested in the Preface) that they will for a little while divest themselves of all prejudice, and not blindly resolve to condemn, before they read. The arguments I shall bring, are all founded upon Scripture and plain Reason; therefore till they can be answered from Scripture and plain Reason, it is neither Laughter, Sneers, nor Ridicule, that can invalidate their force.

Observe here, that I address myself chiefly to those who have some good desires, and yet indulge themselves in the practice of going to BALLS, because they are not convinced of the great wickedness of them; for to prove their sinfulness to such as are determined to go to them at all events, would indeed be labour in vain.

SECTION



SECTION THE FIRST.

ALL the arguments I ever remember to have heard brought in vindication of BALLS, are,

First, That they are no where forbidden in Scripture, and consequently are innocent. *Secondly*, That many good Christians go to them. *Thirdly*, That provided a person does not make a constant practice of going to them, there can be no harm in them now and then by way of *relaxation*; and that by mixing ourselves sometimes with the diversions of the World, we return with greater relish to retirement and religious Duties.

Whether BALLS are particularly forbidden in any place of Scripture, I will not take upon me to determine, let it suffice for my present purpose that they are forbidden by the whole voice of *Revelation*, inasmuch as every thing is strictly forbidden that may disorder our Souls; and be destructive of that meek, humble, believing, contrite Spirit, which constitutes the real Christian; and that BALLS do tend intirely to prevent the attainment of such a temper, and cannot but be very pernicious to our souls, will be fully proved hereafter. There are many things not particularly forbidden in Scripture, which yet every one must allow to be
very

8 *An Address relating to BALLS, &c.*

very great and heinous Sins; and were we to do what we please, from the notion that what we do is no where forbidden in Scripture, how great extravagancies would such a fancy lead us into? We are no where throughout the whole Bible commanded not to set an house on fire, yet no-body can be so weak as to imagine it is no sin wilfully to commit such an action; and that because the whole tenor of Scripture forbids us to injure our neighbour. Besides, had our Saviour and his Apostles given a particular prohibition against all the fooleries that the depravity of fallen man hath invented, might we not say with Saint *John*, *that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written* (a)?

But have we any reason to think, that at the time when *Christianity* was first preached, there were any such pleasures among *Christians* as are to be met with in a modern *Ball-Room*? No, the honour of these improvements is all due to us, who have been so long blessed with the transcendent light of the Gospel; scarcely did the *Pagan world*, in the midst of their idolatrous darkness, ever arrive at that exquisite perfection in all kinds of Diversions, Luxury, and Extravagance, that is now to be met with amongst those that are reckoned *good Christians*.

But granting that, at the time of the planting of *Christianity*, there really were some such entertainments amongst Heathens as *modern BALLS*; yet we cannot suppose that *Christ* and his *Apostles* should

(a) John xxi. 25.

should think it necessary to tell their *Converts*, that they could not romp and skip about like buffoons, and merry-andrews, in all the glare of expensive dress, amongst a crowd of unconverted Heathens, either for their own diversion, or for that of the company, and at the same time *sanctify the Lord God in their Hearts* (b); preserve in them a truly Christian Spirit, and be *striving to enter in at the strait gate* (c). Can any man in his senses make such a supposition?

But here, (according to the *second* argument) it will be said, that the world (at least the part of it which we inhabit) is now become *Christian*, and that the company we meet at these *nocturnal revellings*, called BALLS, are not *Heathens*, but *Christians*.

I grant that they are so called, and that they have the outside appearance of *Christians*; but are they Disciples of that blessed *Jesus, who is meek and lowly in heart* (d)? *Are they crucified to the world, and the world to them* (e)? *Do they hunger and thirst after Righteousness*? Are they of the number of those *pure in heart*, those *poor in spirit*, or of those *meek and blessed mourners* (f), to whom our Lord has confined the kingdom of heaven? *Are they pressing forward towards the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus, that is set before them* (g)? *Are they redeeming the time, because the days are evil* (h)? Are they not often engaged in that *foolish talking and jesting*, which the Apostle tells us *are not convenient* (i)? But on the contrary, *Does the word of Christ dwell in them richly, teaching and*

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admon-

(b) 1 Pet. iii. 15.

(d) Matt. xi. 29.

(f) Matt. v. 3, 4, 5, 6.

(h) Eph. v. 15.

(c) Luke xiii. 24.

(e) Gal. vi. 14.

(g) Phil. iii. 14.

(i) Eph. v. 4.

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admonishing one another (k), warning the unruly, comforting the feeble-minded, and supporting the weak (l)? Are they giving diligence to make their calling and election sure (m); lest a promise being made them of entering into his rest, any of them should seem to come short of it (n)? Is the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the holy Ghost which is given unto them (o)? Have they received the Spirit of Adoption whereby they cry abba Father? and do they through that Spirit mortify the deeds of the body (p)? Are their affections set on things above, and not on things on the earth (q)? Are they not conformed to this present evil world (r)? and instead of taking thought wherewithal they shall be clothed, (s) are they seeking to adorn themselves in the bidden man of the heart (t)? Are they renewed in the spirit of their minds (u)? Does Christ dwell in their hearts by faith (w)? Do they take up their cross daily, and deny themselves, and follow him (x)? Are they living as strangers and pilgrims upon earth (y)? Do they continue instant in prayer (z)? Have they that meek and quiet spirit, which St Peter assures us is of such great price in the sight of God (a)? Are they blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, amidst a crooked and perverse nation, among whom they shine as lights in the world (b)? In a word, are they new creatures in Christ Jesus (c)?

These,

(k) Coloff. iii. 16.

(m) 2 Pet. i. 10.

(o) Rom. v. 5.

(p) Coloff. iii. 2.

(q) Matt. vi. 31.

(u) Eph. iv. 23.

(x) Matt. xvi. 24.

(z) Rom. xii. 12.

(b) Philip. ii. 15.

(l) 1 Theff. v. 14.

(n) Heb. iv. 1.

(p) Rom. viii. 13, 15.

(r) Rom. xii. 2.

(t) 1 Pet. iii. 4.

(w) Eph. iii. 17.

(y) Heb. xi. 13.

(a) 1 Pet. iii. 4.

(c) 2 Cor. v. 17.

These, and these only, are Scripture-marks of a Christian; and Scripture is the only touch-stone whereby we can, according to the Apostle's command, *try the Spirits whether they are of God (c)*: and though we are not to pass hasty censures upon any, yet we must not so far dishonour the Gospel of our blessed Saviour, as to admit every vain pretender to *Christianity* into the class of true believers; for as sure as GOD's word is true, any person who has not most, if not all the before-mentioned marks of a *Christian*, can lay no just claim to the name: Therefore before we waste our precious time at BALLS, PLAYS, CARD-TABLES*, &c. upon the presumption that many *good Christians* make no
B 2 scruple

(c) 1 John iv. 1.

* Permit me here just to put one question to every Lady who frequents *Card-tables*: Can any woman who spends great part of an evening in playing at Cards, and no inconsiderable part of the morning in receiving, sending, reading and writing Cards for engagements, reasonably conclude that she is *clothing herself with the whole armour of God, and working out her own salvation with fear and trembling?* Eph. vi. 13. Phil. ii. 12. But you will perhaps tell me, you are *by no means a constant player at Cards*, and when you do, *it is only for a trifle, just to kill the time, or pass away an idle hour*, and that by playing at Cards *you often avoid doing much worse!* I hope it will be sufficient answer to say, that I am sorry you think the short time allotted you in this state of probation to prepare your Soul for Eternity, to be so very cheap a drug that you will sell it for a trifle, when you are so solemnly called upon *to redeem it*; and that it will be as vain an excuse to that idle *unprofitable servant who bid his lord's talent in the earth*, Matt. xxv. 25. to say, *he might have been doing worse*; as it would be for a criminal who was accused of theft, to plead in his own behalf that he might have been committing murder.

scruple of going to them, how much does it behove us to examine whether the above Scripture-marks of a *Christian* do appear (and where they are, they must appear) in those persons by whose examples we suffer ourselves to be led? For if these be the *Bible-evidences of a Christian*, and if they are not found in those whose Religion is set up for the warrant of **BALLS**, then their presence at them cannot justify or authorize them; and we are reduced to the necessity either of disbelieving the *Bible*, or else of believing that those who have not these evidences are no *Christians*.

St Paul assures us, that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter (e): So he is certainly no Christian who is only one outwardly; and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter only.

Now, as it is impossible for any body to object against this conclusion, entertain not for the future such unworthy notions of a *real Christian*, who has in him *the mind that was in Christ* (f), as to suppose that such an one will go to **BALLS**, **PLAY-HOUSES**, or any of those *Seminaries of Vice*, which *Satan* and his instruments have established in this land; and which they would honour with the specious but false name of *innocent diversions**.

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(e) Rom. ii. 28.

(f) Philip. ii. 5.

* It is indeed astonishing, how any person, who makes the least pretensions to Christianity, can possibly be seen at a *Play-house*,

I have now, I hope, fully confuted the two first arguments in favour of BALLS, and proved beyond all

house, since our Comedies in general are not only stuffed with oaths and impieties, but with such obscenities as a modest Heathen would have blushed at; yet even *these* are perhaps not productive of such evil consequences as many of our Tragedies, to which grave matrons carry their wards with the notion of their learning instructive lessons of VIRTUE and MORALITY. Now if ranting, romantic love, pride, ambition, revenge, lust, and cruelty, (not to mention self murder) be esteemed Virtue and Morality, I must confess that most of our celebrated Tragedies abound with these; and that there is no place in the world better calculated to make young people truly virtuous and moral, than the two Theatres of *Covent-Garden* and *Drury-Lane*.

But you object, that the Design of *Plays* is not to encourage, but to lash the follies of Mankind, by giving us a proper abhorrence of those vices which are exposed upon the Stage.

What validity there is in your objection, may be discovered by desiring you to consider in what light you would look upon a Lady who being anxious to have her aversion to oaths, blasphemy, and obscenity increased, should make all her servants come into her presence, and give them a crown to curse, swear, act and talk indecently, till she found her antipathy for these crimes raised to a proper pitch: or fearing lest her son and daughter were not enough disgusted at the sins of unchastity or drunkenness, was to admonish the one to frequent houses of ill fame, and the other to spend a few hours with a company of drunkards at a tavern.

Since I have touched on this subject, I beg leave to relate the following fact, which however shocking it may appear to a Christian, I myself was eye-witness of a few years ago, when with shame and sorrow I confess I was a great frequenter of *Play-houses*. "It was at the benefit of a certain Dancing-master: The boxes were mostly filled with young children, who I suppose were the scholars of this master, and came to
" have

all dispute, that they are forbidden by the whole tenor of Scripture, and that none but those who content themselves with the shadow of Christianity instead of the substance, will ever be frequenters of them.

The third argument in favour of BALLS yet remains to be answered; namely, that provided we do not make a constant practice of going to them, there can be no harm in them now and then, by way of relaxation; and that by mixing ourselves sometimes with the diversions of the world, we return with greater relish to retirement and religious duties.

To this I readily and briefly reply, that the same reason, why we ought not *always* to be present at them, (*viz.* because they are sinful) holds good why we should never be present at them; unless you will roundly maintain that we can *serve God and Mammon* (g), and may compound with our blessed Lord and Saviour; that when we are called *to give our hearts to God* (b), a part of them is only meant, and that we may sometimes indulge a trifling worldly spirit; and sometimes be devout and

(g) Matt. vi. 24.

(b) Prov. xxiii. 26.

“ have their infant ideas formed by a lewd Comedy. Between
 “ the acts, or after the play, I forget which, one of these chil-
 “ dren, who seemed to be about seven years old, came forth,
 “ and danced two public minuets upon the stage with her
 “ master; without doubt to the no small Satisfaction of her
 “ good Mama, whose heart must needs also dance with joy, to
 “ see her dear child so much applauded by so polite an assembly;
 “ and that she had already acquired *le corps degagé*, and was
 “ totally freed from all *mauvaise honte* at so tender an age.”

communion with God, and *in singing praises to the Lamb for ever and ever*; (and that without any BALLS, CARDS, &c. to relax our minds and increase our zeal) how unfit, I say, must that soul be for such a work as this, that had rather spend five or six hours at a BALL, than in *religious Meditation, Prayer, holy Discourse, reading the Word of God, or any other good Book*? Surely the joys of heaven must be very insipid to such an one, and the employment of saints and angels nothing but mere drudgery*.

But it is not so with the *true Christian*. He looks upon his Master's yoke as *light and easy (i)*; and his commandments are *more desirable to him than fine gold; yea, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb (k)*. The heart of the true Christian is changed, and fixed upon heavenly objects; therefore he is constant and steady in his obedience. His religion does not influence him only by fits and starts; nor can he lay it aside in order to attend the pleasures of the world, and take it up again when he has no other engagements upon his hands.

If this then be the character of the *true Christian*, what shall I say to those who have scarcely the shadow of it? Can you possibly think that you have obtained *the new heart, and the new spirit (l)*, which God hath promised to his faithful people; and that *the same mind is in you that was also in Christ*

(i) Matt. xi. 30.

(k) Psal. xix. 10.

(l) Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

* Let us learn wisdom from the tender infant, how does he brook the absence of a kind Parent? Can all the tales that old wives have invented, sooth the anxiety he suffers by such a separation? How then is it possible that a dear child of God can chuse to be lulled for hours together into a total forgetfulness of the happy relation he bears to the Lord Jehovah, by such poor, low, irrational inventions, that many good old wives would have been ashamed to have been the authors of them?

Christ Jesus (m); when you are pleased with those very things, with which the most profligate part of the world is pleased? Certainly there can be no greater proof that the same dispositions and tempers are in you that are in them, and that you are of those very people whom *St Paul* stiles *lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God (n)*.

S E C T I O N T H E S E C O N D .

THUS much for my answer to the third argument in favour of BALLS. And now I cannot but think that every unprejudiced person will allow that what I have already advanced is sufficient to overthrow whatever has been, or can be said in vindication of them. However, *First*, It is not my intention to stop here, but to proceed to shew yet farther, that the custom of BALLS is totally destructive of every religious sentiment, insomuch that it strikes at the very root of *Christianity*. *Secondly*, I shall lay before you three Reasons why the evil tendency, and actual wickedness of this kind of diversion, is nevertheless so little perceived, that many souls are hurried away by it, without being sensible of their error. *Lastly*, I shall add a word of exhortation and caution, concerning the great danger of a blind conformity to custom and example.

And *First*, That the custom of BALLS is destructive of every religious sentiment, can any one

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deny

(m) Phil. ii. 5.

(n) 2 Tim. iii. 4.

deny who takes an impartial view of the frequenters of them, commonly called, *the BEST company?* By far the greater part of whom, if they live not in any outward notorious wickedness, yet seem perfectly indifferent and lukewarm in what concerns their souls: Their Religion is a thing by the by, a formal lifeless piece of ceremony, which only serves to their greater delusion.

Now if this be the case (and would to God it were not) may we not safely affirm, that there are more people kept from God by BALLS, and such like trifling amusements, than by more palpable and gross sins? For the latter are more apt to gall the sinner's conscience, and send him to Christ for ease; whereas the former, whilst they exclude the grace of God, and resist the strivings of his Spirit, rather keep conscience asleep, and by that means gnaw like a canker-worm, and as it were undermine the soul without our being sensible of receiving any injury by them.

God forbid that I should here be understood as if I thought it necessary for all persons to be guilty of notorious sins, in order to make them sensible of their want of a Saviour's merits; for this is so far from being my meaning, that I would willingly convince you of the great danger of looking upon any sin as little, and shew you how highly displeasing every thing must needs be in the sight of an all-pure God that has even the least tendency to evil.

But whether all persons choose to look upon the diversion of BALLS as wicked or not; yet we have the authority of an Apostle to say, that *she that lives*

lives in pleasure, is dead while she liveth (o). She may indeed be in perfect health and spirits; and be greatly admired for her gaiety and vivacity, whilst her poor soul is languishing and dying within her; so that whilst she is alive to the pleasures of the world, she is dead to the things of God.

Another weighty *argument* against BALLS is, that they prevent people from looking into themselves, and cherish a vain, trifling, unchristian spirit; not only for the time being, but oftentimes for whole days and weeks before and after; as any unprejudiced person must allow, that has heard what wonderful satisfaction young Ladies frequently express at the thoughts of an approaching *Assembly*, and what preparations they make for their dress upon the *Ball-night*: And when this is over, what ample fields for scandal are opened from the behaviour and particularities of the company? What edifying conversation does the fashionable or unfashionable flounce of such a lady's *negligee* afford? And how often is the rustic awkwardness or unparalleled elegance of an entertainment discussed?

Perhaps some will say, “ *It is true, these things must in general be allowed to be contrary to the Spirit of Christianity, and many may be greatly hurt by them, but I never think of a BALL before I go to it; at least when I do, it is with meer indifference; I give myself no trouble about my dress, nor do I ever make any satyrical remarks upon the company; therefore however some people may abuse these innocent amusements, I never was the worse for them in all my life.*”

To this I answer; that it is a wretched mark of an unrenewed heart, to fancy that you can go to such places without being hurt by them; as nothing can more tend to deaden Grace and to extinguish the Life of God in the Soul, than the vain conversation, and trifling behaviour of the company one generally meets with at BALLS. But if you are determined not to allow that you yourself are the worse for these things, (though you confess that many people may be greatly hurt by them;) yet, are you not aware of the harm you do by your example, and that you are, though you may not think of it, soothing others in their sins, and contributing your part to keep them in a state of impenitency? Surely this will be no inconsiderable augmentation of your own guilt. “*No, you say, because if I did not go to these places, others would. It is not in my power to put a stop to such proceedings.*” But do not you by going do all in one person’s power to countenance and encourage them? And, on the contrary, by absenting yourself, do not you do all in one person’s power to discourage and prevent them? If every body was to argue as you do, the most wicked and abominable customs would be openly supported and defended; whilst every supporter of them would be crying out, It is not I that am the cause of these doings, because they would be the same whether I contributed to them or not. Now let me ask these persons, Would you go upon the high-way, whilst you have a real desire to prevent robbing? Or would you get drunk and swear, because when you allow

allow such habits to be very wicked, you have a like desire to put a stop to them? This is just as if you were to say, "*Though I heartily wish there were no such sins as robbery, drunkenness and swearing, yet I am determined to put them into practice, although I know I am thereby doing all in my power to encourage these abominable vices.*" Examine the case, and you will find it just the same with regard to BALLS.

But you ask if I make no difference between robbery, drunkenness, swearing, and going to a BALL? I answer, certainly there is a great difference; yet still the reason is the very same why we should abstain from all; (*viz.*) because all are contrary to the spirit of christianity; and whosoever can indulge himself in any darling pleasure because it is not so great a sin as robbery, drunkenness, and swearing, is so far from evidencing a sincerity of heart, that he treats God in a manner he himself would ill resent to be used by any of his earthly friends.

Let me farther ask you, who pretend to some zeal for Religion, and yet make no scruple of going to BALLS, PLAYS, &c. whether you really look upon yourself as a steward of what you possess, who without hesitation can squander away in diversions what would contribute to the support of so many of our poor distressed fellow-creatures*?

How

* How many poor families, who through losses in trade, want of employment, long sickness, &c. are reduced to the greatest necessity, might be annually relieved with the sums that are squandered away at the Theatres for the support of a company of idle drones (or, as the Law of the land terms them, *Vagabonds*) whose whole business it is to corrupt the public?

Perhaps

How much oftener you have deprived yourselves of your natural rest to attend a BALL, than to *watch*

Perhaps some may think that because what they spend every year at *Play-houses* is very inconsiderable, therefore the guilt of withholding their alms from poor distressed housekeepers, and others that really stand in need of it, and contributing to the maintenance of such a set of infamous lazy wretches as players in general are, can by no means be chargeable to them. All I desire of such is, seriously to consider that places for the promoting of sin and wickedness are in effect as much supported by subscription as those that are dedicated to the glory of God, and intended for the relief of the sick, needy, and deserted; and as every one who, like the poor widow in the Gospel, adds his mite towards the carrying on any pious design, *shall in no wise lose his reward*, Mark ix. 41. and the prayers of those he has assisted shall be heard in his behalf; (that is, provided what he gives springs from the true principle of faith in Christ, and not from that of vain-glory, or self-justification;) so in like manner whoever contributes the least mite towards the encouragement of Vice and Idleness, shall, (unless timely repentance prevent it) in no wise go unpunished; and has great reason to fear lest he should be answerable for the sins of those poor wretches to whose support he has been accessary, without which they might have fought out an innocent and useful way of life.

But I will suppose you one of those who are not neglectful of the duty of alms-giving, and therefore (to use your own expression) you think there is no harm at all in now and then taking *the rational amusement of a good play*: so that at the year's end, between what is flung away at *Play-houses* and other diversions, and what you falsely call *Charity*, supposing you a person of an easy fortune, your accounts may nearly stand as follows.

	l.	s.	d.
For the support of <i>Ranelagh</i> and <i>Vaux-hall</i> , and the Musicians, Singers, Waiters, &c. there- unto belonging	5	5	0
One Ridotto, and two Operas	2	2	0
Lost at Cards (Card-money included)	6	6	0
Paid at ten Plays for the encouragement of Vice and Immorality, and for the maintenance of Actors, Dancers, Buffoons, Mimicks, and other Stage-gentry	2	10	0
Total year's account	16	3	0

For the relief of the Sick and Needy — 10 10 0
 I fear there are but few who frequent public places that will have any reason to complain that I have done them injustice, either by enhancing the sum they annually consume in diversions,

watch unto prayer (p)? How much more time you allot to adorn your body, when you are to shine in a stage-box, or to sparkle in a minuet amidst the circle of wondering beholders in a *Ball-room*, than you do each day to adorn your soul for *the general assembly and church of the first-born (q)?*

May I also demand in what state of mind for religious duties you return home from **BALLS**, whether or no your mind is never full of the pretty things that were whispered in your ear by your partner; whether you are never chagrined about some punctilio of precedency, or elated on account of the extraordinary notice that was taken of you? especially if it was your happy lot to open the **BALL**, or to lead up the first country-dance with the

sions, or that I have been too low in my estimate of what they employ for the benefit of the distressed: I would therefore now beg them to reflect how they would like to have the above bill produced at the great Day of Accounts, when they shall be called upon to answer for *the talent committed to their charge*; and when *every one shall be rewarded according to his works*. Matt. xvi. 27. xxv. 25. Would they not have reason to fear lest it should strike them speechless before the judge, and lest that dreadful sentence should be pronounced against them, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels?* Matt. xxv. 41. Whilst those who not daring to countenance, either by their presence or purse, whatever hath *the appearance of evil*, but from the true motive of *faith working by love*, have been *laying up to themselves treasures in heaven*, and have dedicated their abundance to *feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, and visiting the sick and imprison'd*, shall have their ears charm'd with those glorious words, "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*," Matt. xxv. 34.

(p) 1 Pet. iv. 7.

(q) Heb. xii. 23.

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the most honourable personage in the room? O what noble matter of heart-felt joy must this needs afford to a truly pious soul, who has experienced *the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost* (r)!

I would further desire to know, whether before you exclude the sun in order to go to sleep, you use your Morning or Evening Prayers? Or whether, as it is uncertain which are most proper, you esteem it most prudent to use neither?

Lastly, let me ask you, with a serious concern for your eternal welfare, what you can possibly think of the state of your souls, who, whilst so many Christians are praising the Lord for having refreshed them with seasonable rest, and for having *safely brought them to the beginning of a new day*; whilst so many Christians are thus happily employed, what can you, I say, think of the state of your souls, who, wearied with your last night's revel, are sinking into your beds with the din of the concluding country-dance in your ears, and having spent the night in the works of darkness, (in order to compleat the whole) must waste the day in sleeping?

Was I to intreat you to spend a few hours in Prayer and Meditation, you would think me *an hard task-master*, and would readily ask, *What? Are we to be always on our knees? Is there no time for relaxation?* Yet, while you are capering about like so many frantic Bedlamites, when your usual time for Evening Prayer is come, I fear you never
once

(r) Tit. iii. 5.

once say, *What? Are we to be at this work all night? Is there no time for Prayer and Meditation?*

Believe me, your case is very deplorable, and so much the more so, as you do not see your danger. O how happy is Satan when he can make people wear his chain and think themselves at liberty!

To proceed: Do you consider what heinous mockery you are guilty of before God every time you say your prayers, till you give up all thoughts of ever going to another BALL? For instance only, in the Lord's Prayer. How can you beg that the *Name of God may be hallowed*(r), when you are calmly resolved to neglect the common duty of waiting upon God in Evening-Prayer (perhaps also in Family-Prayer) in order to go to a diversion which directly tends to the dishonour of Christ, and to the subversion of every holy temper? How can you pray that *God's kingdom may come, and his will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*(s); whilst you continue to practise such things as would not only thwart his will; but have a tendency to establish the kingdom of *Lucifer*, and to overthrow the kingdom of God? Lastly, How can you, without the highest degree of hypocrisy, beseech the Almighty *not to lead you into temptation, and to deliver you from evil*(t); when you are absolutely determined to run yourself headlong into temptation? And so far to *choose the evil, and refuse the*
D good,

(r) (s) (t) Lord's Prayer.

good, as to pass over your stated times and exercises of devotion, on purpose to obtain the former and reject the latter?

Can any body say that there is the least aggravation in calling this a solemn mockery of Almighty God? May the Lord give you grace to lay these considerations seriously to heart: but if you are yet determined not to leave off going to BALLS, I dare not affirm, but that you had better leave off saying your prayers, for though you honour God with your mouth, your heart is far from him (q); and the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to (r) him.

I cannot conclude this section without earnestly desiring all MOTHERS and AUNTS well to consider these things, and instead of leading their Daughters and Neices about to BALLS, PLAYS, CARD-TABLES, &c. to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (s), and see that their relaxations are such as Christians may innocently take; but, in general, so little do they reflect on the guilt they hereby pull down on their own heads, that many dear children of God have been forcibly compelled to go to these nurseries of sin and vice by their carnal relations; I mean, not only by such as are notoriously wicked, but even by the more decent formalists, who can pity careless sinners, and rail at the degeneracy of the age, whilst their greatest uneasiness is to see the true marks of real piety in any of their family.

(q) Matt. xv. 8.

(r) Prov. xxviii. 9.

(s) Eph. vi. 4.

SECTION THE THIRD.

BESIDES all this, what can be more full and persuasive than those words of St Paul, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ (s)? And again, Those things which ye have both learned, and received and heard and seen in me, do (t). Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God (u), &c.* I know it is easy to put smooth, glossy interpretations upon these and other texts of Scripture, and so to accommodate the whole Bible to the manner in which we choose to live, instead of conforming our lives to the Bible; which many are bold enough to do, and so *wrest the Scriptures to their own (x) destruction**; but I think it would be rather

D 2

ther

(s) 1 Cor. xi. 1.

(t) Phil. iv. 9.

(u) 1 Cor. x. 35.

(x) 2 Pet. iii. 16.

* It is amazing how some people (especially such as *have a name to live and are dead*) will twist and torture the Scriptures, in order to bring the meaning of texts to the ideas already formed in their minds, and to lull themselves into a wretched security, whilst by dividing their hearts between God and the world, they are buried in lukewarmness and blinded by formality. Thus almost every expression in the whole book of God, that enjoins an holiness of life beyond what suits their taste and convenience, they either tell you is confined to *primitive times*, or is not to be taken in a *literal sense*. And when neither of these *salvo's* will serve their turn, rather than suffer their eyes to be opened to see the naked state of their souls, they will quarrel with the translation. So that setting aside what is confined to *primitive times*, what is not to be taken in a *literal sense*, and what is not translated according to the *fancy of men of corrupt minds*; Christians, now-a-days, would be deprived of no inconsiderable part of God's word.

ther more prudent, if they would first make it appear, that when the holy Ghost says one thing, he means another, otherwise, till it can be proved that this holy Apostle went to BALLS, (the very idea of which is even shocking to conceive) and that they tend to promote the glory of God; how can it possibly be thought lawful for us to go to them, who are so solemnly called upon to imitate him, and to make the glory of God the end of all our actions?

It may be objected, that you are not called upon to be an Apostle. I answer, that though you are not called to be an Apostle; yet you are as much called upon to be a servant and child of God, *to be a new creature in Christ Jesus (y), to perfect holiness in the fear of God (z), to strive to enter in at the strait gate (a), and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (b),* as any of the Apostles are; nor can you, without renouncing both Reason and Religion, indulge yourself in any practice that appears to you totally inconsistent with the piety of any other Christian whatever, and at the same time fancy that you are *abstaining from all appearance of evil,* and are of the number of those, *whose spirit and soul and body shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (c).*

But methinks you are by this time ready to say,
 “ *Why, if this be the case, we must e’en seclude our-*
 “ *selves from all society, bid farewell to cheerfulness*
 “ *and relaxations, shut ourselves up in convents,*
 “ *and*

(y) 2 Cor. v. 17.

(z) 2 Cor. vii. 1.

(a) Matt. vii. 13

(b) Tit. ii. 10.

(c) 1 Thess. v. 22, 23.

“ and so become melancholy mopes, and die of the
“ vapours.”

But no; entertain not a thought so derogatory from the honour of Christ and his gospel: for Christianity does at once tend to promote cheerfulness and to improve Society; and the blessed Author of it, so far from countenancing a monkish seclusion from our fellow-creatures, is represented as *going about doing good* (d), that we who bear his name should *so walk even as he walked* (e); and St Paul commends his beloved Timothy, for *having made a good profession before many witnesses* (f); now whether those who attend BALLS, PLAYS, &c. are thereby *going about doing good*, or *making a good profession before many witnesses*, I apprehend needs no long time to determine; but permit me to say, that those persons are utter strangers to true religion, who look upon it as a melancholy service, or destructive of any social duty whatever. Certain it is, that every real Christian must be serious and thoughtful, must often seek retirement, and be frequent in prayer, self-examination, and all the exercises of godliness: but then he will not look upon the time that is thus spent as tedious, but as by far the most happy hours of his life. And the reason why so few find any real happiness in religion is, because they have only just enough to deceive themselves, and to make it a burden to them; whereas would they cordially, and without reserve, give up their hearts to God, they would then ex-
perience

(d) Acts x. 38.

(e) 1 John ii. 6.

(f) 1 Tim. vi. 12.

perience that peace which passeth all understanding (g), and soon be convinced that the pleasures of the world are as empty and delusive, as those which we derive from God are true and substantial.

If such a thing as perfect felicity is attainable in this world, must it not consist in having all those passions and tempers allayed, which are not only hurtful to our own peace, but to the good of society? in having our natures raised to the highest degree of perfection they are capable of in our present embodied state; in the enjoyment of sweet communion with God, as our reconciled friend and father? in the sense of our adoption as *beirs with Christ* (b)? and in the anticipation of those pleasures which are at God's right-hand (i), and of which the true believer is to be made partaker through all the boundless ages of eternity? And are these things likely to promote melancholy! Is this a state so much to be dreaded!

If indeed by society be meant those companies wherein God is *forgotten*, or what is worse, wherein he is dishonoured; I readily grant that no Christian will voluntarily mix himself with such, except it be with that noblest of all views, a desire of benefiting their souls, and spreading a favour of religious knowledge amongst them. Again, if by relaxations be meant BALLS, PLAYS, and other diversions of the like nature, it is certain that with whatever eagerness these may be pursued by such as are strangers to more exalted joys, yet they are as
incapable

(g) Phil. iv. 7.

(b) Rom. viii. 17.

(i) Psal. xvi. 12.

incapable of satisfying one who has *received the grace of God in truth* (k), as a philosopher is incapable of being pleased with the toys and rattles of a baby. Nay more, so far would these things be from affording matter of amusement to an humble follower of the crucified Jesus, that it would be inflicting a severe punishment upon him, and must needs strike a damp into his affectionate heart, to oblige him to be present at them; and that with much more reason than it would affect him to see a condemned criminal, instead of bestowing a thought upon his wretched state or accepting the pardon that was freely offered him, spend the whole night in rattling his fetters for his own and the diversion of his fellow-prisoners, not knowing but the next morning he might be dragged to the place of execution.

I leave the discerning reader to make what application of this he thinks proper, and proceed to the fourth Section, concluding the present with the words of that great genius and divine poet Doctor *Young*.

“ We need not buy our ruin with our crime,
“ And give Eternity to murder Time.”

SECTION THE FOURTH.

CHristianity consists not in any form of duties, but in a temper and spirit of growing conformity to Jesus Christ. It is, as our Lord himself assures

(k) Col. i. 6.

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affures us, *the kingdom of God within us (l)*, even that Kingdom which is *righteousness, and joy, and peace in the holy Ghost (m)*. It is no external, pompous, thing. *It cometh not by observation, (μὴ ἐκ παρατηρήσεως) with outward shew*, but it is an inward change wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, a change whereby we who are *by nature children of wrath (n)*, do become *the children of grace*, and are made *partakers of the divine nature (o)*. A change whereby *we become one with Christ, and Christ with us*, whereby *Christ doth dwell in us, and we in him*, according to the prayer which he himself offered up to the Father for all that should believe in his name, with that faith which is *the gift and operation of God (p)*. It is such an Union with Christ our head, as there is between *a vine and the branches (q)*; *between the husband and wife (r)*; *between a building and every stone of that building (s)*; *between a body and every member of that body (t)*. In short, it consists in having *Christ formed in us, and living in us (u)*: or, as the same Apostle says in another place, it is *Christ in us the hope of glory (x)*.

This great change is further represented to us in Scripture under the strong images of *a new creation (y)*, of *a dead man being raised to life (z)*, of a man

(l) Luke xvii. 20, 21.

(n) Eph. ii. 3.

(p) John xvii. 21, 22, 23.

(r) Eph. v. 23, &c.

(t) Eph. iv. 16.—v. 30.

(u) Gal. iv. 19.—ii. 20.

(y) 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15.

(m) Rom. xiv. 17.

(o) 2 Pet. i. 4.

(q) John xv. 4, 5.

(s) Eph. ii. 19, 20, 21, 22.

1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

(x) Col. i. 27.

(z) Eph. ii. 1. 1 Pet. iv. 6.

man *being awakened out of a deep sleep (a)*. It is also set forth under the figure of *being brought out of darkness into a marvellous light (c)*; and being translated into that spiritual kingdom which Christ erects in the hearts of all his people, to make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (d). It is such a change, that from being *aliens and enemies*, we become real *heirs and friends (e)*. It is a *crucifixion* of that corrupt nature which we have from *Adam*, called in Scripture *the old man (f)*, and a *putting on a new nature*, which we derive from Christ *the second Adam*, called in contradistinction, *the new man (g)*, whereby those holy dispositions and tempers which we lost by the fall are in great measure restored, and the soul is *renewed after the image of him that created him (h)*. *Old things are past away, behold! all things are become new (i)*.

And now the man thus *created anew, and begotten again to a lively hope (k)*, is looked upon as dead, and risen again in another sense. As before he was alive to the world, and dead to the things of God, so now he is dead to the world, and alive to the things of God; *conformed to Christ in the likeness of his death*, by a death unto sin; and *in the likeness*

E of

(a) Eph. v. 14.

(c) 1 Pet. ii. 9.

(e) Eph. ii. 12, 13. Col. i. 21.
Rom. v. 10.—viii. 17.

(g) Eph. iv. 22, 24.

(i) 2 Cor. v. 17.

(d) Col. i. 12, 13.

(f) Rom. vi. 6. Gal. ii. 20.—v. 24.—vi. 14.

(h) Col. iii. 10.

(k) 1 Pet. i. 3.

of his resurrection, by rising again unto righteousness (l).

Although these expressions are extracted from the word of God, yet they are by some impiously treated as enthusiastical fancies and chimeras; and by others as relating only to the conversion of such as lived in pagan times; as if faith were nothing more than a speculative assent to the external evidence of the Gospel, and as if the same divine power were not necessary to open the naturally dark understanding of one as of another, whether he happen to be born in a Christian country or not: for as a truly pious author * observes, “ Outward
 “ discoveries of truth, till inwardly received, can no
 “ more profit, than the sun in the firmament can
 “ give sight to the blind; but when that same
 “ God who *commanded the natural light to shine out*
 “ *of darkness, shineth in our hearts, to give us the*
 “ *light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the*
 “ *face of Jesus Christ (m)*; then in his light we
 “ truly see light, and the two witnesses agree to-
 “ gether, as face answereth to face in a glass.”
 However, it is a melancholy truth that these things are very little understood or attended to; and hence it is that there is so terrible a decay of inward vital religion, and that piety is measured by shew and profession: hence it is that thousands run into the strangest absurdities, and by a mixture of
 holy

(l) Rom. vi. 5. Col. ii. 12.—iii. 1, 3.

* The Rev. Mr Hartley, Rector of *Winwick* in *Northamptonshire*.

(m) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

holy duties, and a round of vain amusements, compose a motley character; which, whilst by its decency it gains the esteem of the world, and supports the pride of formality, is utterly destitute of every internal principle of the divine life. A little development may perhaps place this character in a more striking light, I will suppose you, what you suppose yourself, *a very good sort of body*: As such, you make it a constant practice to go to the Sacrament, yet you continue to allow yourself in what the world calls its Diversions, BALLS, ASSEMBLIES, &c. Should I ask you how you can think these things consistent, you will tell me, that if the one is necessary, the other is innocent. But pray how comes it to pass, if you think it thus innocent, that you choose, among the other parts of the *preparation for the Sacrament*, to abstain *that week* from BALLS and places of entertainment? Is there not a consciousness in your heart, that there is a manifest inconsistency, for the same persons, within a few days distance, to lead up a Dance, and kneel at the Lord's Table; to sparkle to-night amidst the train of pleasure, and follow with the greatest delight the sound of a fiddle, and to-morrow to fall prostrate before a crucified Saviour, pouring forth tears, *whilst you look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn* (n)? Now, absurd as this is, it is the practice of many who would pass for devout. Indeed, according to the present system of lukewarmness, when to go to the Lord's Supper *three times* a year is by the *most* judged

E 2

piety

(n) Zech. xii. 10.

piety sufficient, and to attend a *monthly* Communion is godliness above the common level, this may do well enough, and the self-denial is not great. For supposing a weekly BALL, at the worst, they would only twelve times in the year be absent from it. But now suppose these absenters from BALLS the Communion-week, had lived nearer the primitive times, when they not only on the first day of the week assembled *for breaking of bread, and for prayer, but from house to house (o)*, through the week, *remembered their Lord's death, till he come*; they must either have entirely given up their BALL, or been utterly excluded from the Communion of the faithful.

To enter a *Ball-room* on the *Thursday* of the Passion-week, the day before the crucifixion of the Lord of life and glory, would certainly be reckoned profane by those who have the lowest notions of the Christian Religion. It would indicate an uncommon insensibility to that astonishing Sacrifice, and great carelessness about the effects of it. But is it not the Christian's duty to remember this *every day* of his life, and to live under the influence, and in the view of that awful transaction, as much as on the *Thursday* of the Passion-week? I believe the Scripture will not give you the least reason to suppose, that what would be profane then, would not at any other season be unbecoming the soul, who is always enjoined to *be looking for and basting unto the coming of the day of the Lord (p)*, and remembers

(o) Acts ii. 46.

(p) 2 Pet. iii. 12.

remembers him at his table for this very purpose, that he may *continually have his lains girt, and his light burning; and he himself be as one that waiteth for the bridegroom, when he will return to the marriage* (q).

Can it be doubted, whether or no, what is acknowledged to indispose our hearts for waiting upon God, and unfits us for the duties of love which we owe each other, ought to be avoided by those who are commanded to *be ready for every good word and work* (r)? I have spoken before of the indisposition for prayer which such amusements occasion; I would add a word more with regard to another social duty. Should you receive a message from any near friend or relation, whilst you were in the middle of a Dance, that he was very ill, and desired once more to receive the pledges of a Saviour's love, before he went to his bosom, no more to *drink of the fruit of the vine till he should drink it new with Christ in the kingdom of his Father* (s); that as you were near and dear to him, your company would be desirable, that he might here take as it were a solemn farewell of you, till you should meet again; I suppose you would not think yourself in a proper state to be a meet partaker of this holy Ordinance, after having been talking for hours together of nothing but vanity; as "*How prodigiously warm it is; how well or ill such a Lady looks; what a shocking figure such a one is; what a sweet silk she has on,*" and

(q) Luke xii. 35, 36.

(r) Tit. iii. 1.

(s) Matt. xxvi. 29.

“ and how genteely she is dressed; how many couples
 “ there are, how many pretty Dances have been
 “ called, how Miss such an one and her partner
 “ flirted it away together, and much more of the
 “ like conversation to the use of edifying:” Consider
 seriously whether after such a scene you would not
 have cause to fear, that were you called to receive
 the Communion of the body and blood of Christ,
 you should *eat and drink unworthily*, and conse-
 quently *damnation to yourself (t)*; and that therefore
 you must refuse the last kind office to your dying
 friend; and if so, you may easily discover, that
 whatever in your conduct occasions this, is as
 utterly inconsistent with true charity, and love
 of your brother, as it is contrary to the duty and
 love you owe to Christ and God.

You will say, perhaps, *there is a time for all
 things*; (though in the use you make of these words
 you horridly pervert their meaning. *) In answer,
 I would ask, *whether there is a time to sin*, and
 whether a Christian can ever innocently allow
 himself in any practice whereby the temper of his
 heart is so far discomposed, as to unfit him for a
 communion of Saints, and fellowship with the
 Father

(t) 1 Cor. xi. 29.

* *Solomon*, who had perhaps drank deeper draughts of worldly
 pleasure than any person either before or since his time, after
 declaring that all earthly things are empty and delusive, pro-
 ceeds to shew that notwithstanding this, the generality of people
 are wholly taken up in the pursuit of them; and yet there are
 some who would so grossly misinterpret the words of this great
 Penitent, as to make him countenance those very things which
 he affirms to be only *vanity and vexation of spirit*.

Father and the Son? And whether if death should seize him in this state, he must not necessarily be excluded from both for ever? A thought that deserves the most awakened attention!

Having shewn in how great degree the diversion of BALLS indisposes us for the duties we owe both to God and our neighbour, as well as its utter inconsistency with that humility, meekness and poverty of spirit which the Gospel indispensably requires; I shall conclude this Section with observing that many who are mighty advocates for BALLS would nevertheless loudly exclaim against those familiarities which are always practised at them, as palpable violations of the laws of modesty, were they to see them put in execution by a company of young people of different sexes where the found of a fiddle was wanting to drown reflection. Moreover I doubt not but there are many Ladies, who without hesitation suffer these liberties to be taken with them in a public assembly-room, that would highly resent them if they were not authorized under the polished name of DANCING.

S E C T I O N T H E F I F T H .

WHAT need is there of any more arguments against the unchristian diversion of BALLS? I trust that what I have said already is sufficient to convince every reasonable person that they are a scandal to a Christian country. I proceed therefore to examine how it comes to pass that the wickedness of BALLS is so little perceived, that many inconsiderate, well-meaning persons, continue to go to them without ever being sensible how great a sin they commit in so doing: I say, how great a sin they commit, because though they may not be conscious of any sin at all, yet wilful ignorance is no plea for innocence: Else the Jews had been guilty of no crime in crucifying the Lord of life, nor St Paul in persecuting Christ and his Church; who nevertheless stiles himself on that account

count *the chief of sinners* (b); alluding, as he himself assures us, to those very sins he committed ignorantly.

The principal cause why the wickedness of BALLS is so little attended to, is their having been so long established, and frequented by so many people who make an *outward shew* of Religion; which inclines persons to think that a custom set up as it were by law, in a nation professing faith in the name of Jesus, and countenanced even by such as are esteemed pious Christians, can neither be sinful in itself, nor attended with any pernicious consequences: But a little consideration will convince us of the fallacy of such reasoning; for it must be allowed, that no custom in itself sinful, (as I have fully proved that of BALLS to be) can alter its nature, either by being long established, by being set up in a Christian country, or because it is conformed to by such as are called *good Christians*; but on the contrary, the guilt of every sin whatever is aggravated in proportion to the time we have for reflection, and the light afforded us for avoiding it; and there is no reason to doubt but that the Devil takes a far greater satisfaction in seeing people fall into his snares in a land where Christianity is the established Religion, than in a nation of *Pagans* or *Mabonietans*.

Further, would we seriously consider how strangely custom metamorphoses the nature of things in the minds of weak people, and what extravagancies all its votaries must inevitably fall into; would we consider this, I am persuaded we should not suffer ourselves to be hurried away by a blind conformity to its laws, without weighing the fatal consequences; which is the case with such multitudes, who are contented to do wrong, meerly because others have done so before them; and because they never suspect that so many people
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(b) 1 Tim i. 15.

who are looked upon as *good Christians*, are all the while leading them to perdition.

For instance, *Sunday* in Popish countries is the chief day for *Horse-races, Plays, Balls, Cards, &c.*; and there are few Papists who think there is any more harm in going to these diversions on a *Sunday*, than on any other day, because custom makes no difference between them; whereas in *England* many who make no scruple of being present at these entertainments on a week-day, would yet look upon any body as monstrously wicked, that should endeavour to persuade them to go to an *Horse-race, a Play, a Ball, or a Card-table, on a Sunday.*

In like manner, some centuries ago, had one Christian proposed to another to take him to caper all night at a BALL, he would either have thought him mad, or that instead of *renouncing all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world* (*), he intended to renounce his Christianity.

Thus we see that custom is well called a second nature. Custom has the mighty power of confounding right and wrong, and in the eyes of a deluded world can turn virtues into vices, and vices into virtues. Custom has transformed that heavenly virtue of *humility*, which the Son of God was practising all the while he was on earth, into *meannefs of spirit*, and has constituted him alone a *man of honour*, who pays his gaming-debts, and scorns to forgive an injury. Custom esteems unchastity to be little or no fault in a man, yet custom

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esteems

(*) Baptifmal Vow.

esteems it so heinously criminal in a woman, that none of her own sex (though perhaps ten thousand times more wicked than herself) will ever associate with her; no, not even though she gives the most evident proofs of a sincere repentance. Whereas if she was as full of pride, envy, ill humour and censoriousness as she could hold, and had every other diabolical temper concentrated in her, yet if she was free from the sin of incontinence, custom would nevertheless suffer her to pass for a woman of *strict Virtue*.

These are a few instances of the power of custom in our Christian land. And yet how few do we find, who do not willingly bow down to this bewitching idol? Alas! few indeed. Shall we then tamely follow every *blind guide* that assumes the name of a Christian? Or shall we rather make the unerring word of God our rule of life? Surely we cannot hesitate in the choice.

Indeed I think it may with great truth be affirmed, that the *formal nominal Christian* is an adversary we have more need to guard against, than either the *professed Atheist*, or the most *abandoned Profligate*; because we suspect no harm from the former, but are ready to fly from the latter as from a toad or serpent. *It is not an open enemy*, saith the Psalmist, *that hath done me this dishonour, for then I could have born it; neither was it mine adversary, for then, peradventure, I would have bid myself from him; but it was thou, my companion, my guide, and my own familiar friend (y).* Satan is never so likely

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(y) Psal. lv. 12.

to succeed with those whom he cannot prevail upon to run into any gross sins, as when he *transforms himself into angel of light* (z); under which mask he has always many useful agents in the world, by following whose examples there is too much reason to fear, that numbers of souls have been ruined to all eternity, who never so much as suspected their danger, till it was too late to retrieve their fatal error.

But how should it be otherwise, whilst in the depraved age we live in, multitudes are looked upon as good Christians, whom our holy ancestors would not have admitted to their communion? yet these modern saints give into the follies and vanities of the world without the least hesitation; and thereby become stumbling-blocks to many inexperienced souls, who seeing such people idolized for their Religion, think they may be very safe under the sanction of such approved examples: but surely little need be said to demonstrate the absurdity of such a conclusion; since, as I observed before, there can be no other rule of practice but the infallible word of God; therefore, if we see any person chime in with such customs as are totally opposite to the Divine precepts therein contained, whatever that person may be in the opinion of the world, and of his own *deceitful heart*, he is by no means a proper model for a Christian to copy after, who is called upon by all his hopes of Heaven to walk in the paths of that Saviour, *who left us an example that we should follow his steps* (a): so

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that

(z) 2 Cor. xi. 14.

(a) 1 Pet. ii. 21.

that the great pattern proposed to our imitation, is that of Christ himself; and it is our constant and undoubted duty to imitate him to the very utmost of our abilities, and in the same degree that the primitive Christians did; for the same JESUS died for us, that died for them, and if we expect the same reward, he expects the same obedience; yet so different are the lives of the generality of Christians now, from what they were in the first ages of the Church, that the spirit of the Gospel is nearly extinct in most of its professors, who seem to look upon the imitation of Christ as a chimerical thing, and to suppose that the holiness of the first Christians is rather to be admired than attained by us.

Were St *Ignatius*, St *Polycarp*, St *Cyprian*, or any other of those pious Fathers, to rise from the dead, and take a view of our metropolis, and after having spent some time in it, to hear by chance that it was a Christian city, that the inhabitants of it were ingrafted into the Church by Baptism, and professed themselves to be disciples of the blessed JESUS; judge, if you can, how great would be the surprize of any of these holy men at such an account. I am apt to think they would with great difficulty be made to credit it; a plain proof how far the power of custom and example may be prevalent to cast a blindness over such as *profess and call themselves Christians*; a blindness ten thousand times more dreadful than *Egyptian* darkness, inasmuch as it is more deplorable to have a veil drawn over the eyes of our souls than over the eyes of our bodies.

SECTION

SECTION THE SIXTH.

HAVING shewn that the reason why many people are apt to fancy they can go to BALLS without committing any sin, is entirely owing to the force of *custom* and *example*; I would now beg leave to offer a serious *admonition* to all such as have hitherto been frequenters of them, and are any ways concerned about their everlasting welfare.

Now since the power of custom and example is so great, and so much depends upon our conforming or not conforming to it; let me intreat you, in the words of the beloved disciple, *not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God*(b), before you suffer yourself to be led by them: Remember that Christ himself hath told us, that *not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven*(c); and whatever a sleepy conscience may persuade any man to think of himself, because he sees many in his own opinion worse, yet St Paul tells us, *not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth*(d); and our Saviour says in another place, *that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God*(e).

Now the word of truth assures us, that *to be carnally minded is death*(f), that the friendship of the world

(b) 1. John iv. 1.

(d) 2 Cor. x. 18.

(f) Rom. viii. 6.

(c) Matt. vii. 21.

(e) Matt. xvi. 15.

world is enmity with God (g), that we must neither love the world, nor the things that are in the world; that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (h): that the end of those who mind earthly things is destruction (i): that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (k): that as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God (l): that the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (m): that unless Christ be in us, we are reprobates (n); that whatsoever we do in word or in deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord JESUS, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (o): that we must be holy in all manner of conversation (p); and shall be called upon to give an account of every idle word at the day of judgment (q); that we must in any wise rebuke our neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him (r); that our speech must be always with grace (s), and our communication be to the use of edifying, fit to minister grace unto the hearers (t): that our conversation must be in heaven (u), and such as becometh the Gospel of Christ (x).

As these passages are only a small specimen of the constant language of our Saviour and his Apostles, what pretensions can they have to the name

(g) James iv. 4.

(h) Philip. iii. 19.

(i) Rom. viii. 14.

(k) 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

(l) 1 Pet. i. 15.

(m) Lev. xix. 17.

(n) Ephes. iv. 29.

(o) Philip. i. 27.

(b) 1 John ii. 15.

(k) Rom. viii. 9.

(m) Gal. v. 22.

(o) Coloss. iii. 17.

(q) Matt. xii. 36.

(s) Coloss. iv. 6.

(u) Philip. iii. 20.

name of Christians, in whom scarcely any of the before-mentioned marks are to be found; inso-much that they are as totally ignorant of the life and power of Religion, as a blind man is of colours; and know no more of a change of heart, than they do of the change of earth for heaven, or of their *natural for a spiritual body?* yet some how or other these miserable self-deceivers contrive to keep conscience quiet by some formal external duties, and by flattering themselves that as they have never been guilty of any gross, enormous sins, they are as sure of heaven as if they were there already; little thinking what a sea of iniquity their hearts are full of, and that the holy law of God condemns all those who have not secured an interest in the Redeemer, for the least sinful thought or indulgence, as well as for the most notorious acts of wickedness; the word of God being, as faith St Paul, *a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (y), and requiring truth in the inward parts (z).* But though the Apostle tells them so plainly that *to be carnally-minded is death (a)*; that *the friendship of the world is enmity with God (b)*; and that *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (c)*; yet they read these alarming texts with as much unconcern as if they had nothing to do with them; whilst the same love of this world, the same attachment to its customs, follies, and vanities, influence them as much

(y) Heb. iv. 12.

(a) Rom. viii. 6.

(c) † John ii. 15.

(z) Psal. li. 6.

(b) James iv. 4.

much (if not more) than they influence a Jew or an Heathen. How wide then are these dispositions from that deadness to the world, and that humble child-like temper, without which our Lord hath declared that *we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven (d)*?

Again, when we are so positively told in Scripture, that unless *Jesus Christ be in us we are reprobates (e)*, and that *if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (f)*; yet far from having this Spirit of Christ, or desiring to have it, there are many who are quite enraged against them to whom it has pleased the Lord to give his Spirit; and fancy that *they do God service*, when they exclaim against them as enthusiasts, fools, and madmen: hereby plainly proving themselves to be *none of Christ's*, but to be of those *natural men* who, as *St Paul* declares, *cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness unto them (g)*; and therefore (as the author of the book of *Wisdom* tells us) *account the life of the truly religious man to be madness (h)*.

Moreover, when we are so strictly enjoined to *exhort one another daily (i)*; to be *holy in all manner of conversation (k)*; and to let our *communication be to the use of edifying, fit to minister grace unto the bearers (l)*; is it not amazing that multitudes of souls should be so infatuated as to fancy themselves

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(d) Matt. xviii. 3.

(f) Rom. viii. 9.

(h) Wisd. v. 4.

(l) 1 Pet. i. 15.

(e) 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

(g) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

(i) Heb. iii. 13.

(k) Eph. iv. 29.

to be in a safe state, whilst they live in a total neglect of these express commands, and can sit and rack their inventions to rake up all the nonsensical chat of the town, and had rather talk for hours together upon the most trifling subjects, than for a moment upon *the one thing needful* (m); insomuch that *religious conversation*, which is so essential a part of our duty, and the delight of every true believer, is almost the only kind of discourse that is excluded, not only in public companies, when it might not be always proper to introduce it, but even amongst intimate friends in their more retired hours.

Now can there be a more dismal sign that there is not a spark of Religion in such hearts? For *where the treasure is, there will the heart be also* (n); and *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (o). The Glutton's delight is to talk of eating; the Drunkard's of drinking; the Sportsman's of his horses and dogs. The most agreeable topic to a fine Lady is dress and diversions. And the Christian is never so happy, as when discoursing about *the things of God* and his soul. This is an infallible touch stone whereby we may try ourselves; therefore, wo unto those whose hearts condemn them in this respect.

Nevertheless, so little true Religion is there amongst many formal Church-going people, that I wish it were an exaggeration to say, that they have not only a perfect loathing to all holy dis-

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course,

(m) Luke x. 42.

(n) Matt. vi. 21.

(o) Matt. xii. 34.

course, but would even look with astonishment upon any person, and either think his head turned, or that he was guilty of a breach of polite behaviour, should he dare in their presence to mention *the exceeding great love of our Master, and only Saviour Jesus Christ in dying for our sins* *, or even to introduce his sacred Name, except in witty sayings or profane exclamations.

These are distinguishing marks whereby the *nominal* professor § may be often discerned; let us now see how these real enemies and utter strangers to true religion are described in Scripture.

Solomon calls them *a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet not cleansed from their filthiness*. (p). The prophet *Isaiab*, and after him our blessed Saviour, calls them *a people that honoureth him with their lips, but their heart is far from him* (q). Holy *David* expostulates with them in the following words; *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee* (r)? St *Paul* describes them, as *having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof* (s). It is said of them, *Rev. iii. 1. that they have a name to live, and are dead.*

And

* Communion Service.

§ *Seest thou one that is wise in his own conceit, saith Solomon? there is more hope of a fool than of him; so of all persons whatever the moral self-righteous Pharisees are the most unwilling to receive the Gospel. The foundation of our reconciliation with God must be laid in a deep heart-felt humiliation arising from a thorough sense of our original and actual guilt: till this is the case, it is impossible we can have any true longings after the blessings of Redemption, for they that are whole, that is, (those who think themselves so) need not a Physician, but those that are sick, as our Saviour himself assures us. Matt. ix. 12.*

(p) Prov xxx. 12.

(r) Psal. l. 16, 17.

(q) Isa. xxix. 13.

(s) 2 Tim. iii. 5.

And lastly, they are thus described, and the following tremendous sentence is pronounced against them by our Lord himself, from the mouth of his holy Angel, *Rev. iii. 15, 16, 17. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot; so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth, because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; therefore anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.*

When we observe the generality of people, who are called Christians, how many more do we see who answer these marks than those before given? A dismal proof that numbers are lost through a false confidence of salvation, and of the truth of our Saviour's prediction concerning these latter days; that *because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (t).*

This prophecy is indeed so exactly fulfilled at present; that instead of that Religion, whereby we dedicate *ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God (u)*, the skeleton of it scarcely remains.

I fear we shall find this assertion verified in the character of *Lucinda*.

(t) *Matt. xxiv. 12.*

(u) *Communion Service.*



SECTION THE SEVENTH.

LUCINDA is polite, affable, obliging, and universally esteemed by her acquaintance, who look upon her as a woman of extraordinary prudence and piety. She would not for the world omit her Morning and Evening Prayers; she constantly reads the Psalms and Lessons of the day; she never is absent from Church on *Sundays*, and would oftener go there on week-days, if she was not prevented by engagements to go with her friends into the city, to see what Mercer keeps the most fashionable silks; or else by business of importance at home; such as the working of a piece of cat-gut, the reception of some visitors, or necessary discourse with her Millener; or perhaps it is the Dancing-master's morning, and she knows her children will not take half the pains they ought in so material a branch of their education unless she herself is present.

Nobody can be better convinced of the necessity of visiting the sick than *Lucinda*, who not only administers medicines to the poor *gratis*, but is always ready to play a *charitable game at Cards*, or to read a Comedy to a sick friend who is in danger of being low-spirited.

Lucinda goes every month to the Sacrament, besides the three great Festivals, and hears her children say their Catechism every *Sunday* evening; she frequently gives sixpence or a shilling to the poor; and never dines till after Evening-service upon

upon *Asb-wednesday*, *Good-friday*, and *the thirtieth of January*, when she makes an hearty meal upon costly fish and rich sauce*.

Lucinda is a bitter enemy to *naughty women*, and often tells you how much she is shocked at the indecent language of the common people in the streets; yet this very same *Lucinda* as readily pays her money for a place in that choice *Synagogue of Satan*, called a *Play-house* (where she enjoys the company of many of the rakes and prostitutes of the town) and is as much delighted to hear and see God dishonoured by the immodest actions, oaths, and filthy jests of the actors, as any other person in the Theatre. The play being finished, she returns home to supper, talks till bed-time *what a charming fellow FOOTE is*, or *how gloriously GARRICK shone*; says her prayers, and goes to sleep §.

Ranelagh is also a favourite diversion with *Lucinda*, though she would like it much better, if it was possible to keep out all low company, which she

* Notwithstanding all *Lucinda's* duties, I fear it may be affirmed that she never prayed or fasted in all her life, and that she is an utter stranger to every spark of charity. Whoever will consider the difference there is between praying and saying of prayers, and look at the description given of charity by *St Paul*, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. and that of fasting, by the prophet *Isaiah*, Isai. lviii. 3, 4, &c. will probably be of the same opinion.

§ To shew *Lucinda* in what light the primitive Church regarded those who attended *the public spectacles*; that noted Father *Tertullian* gives an account of a Christian woman, who in his time returned from the Theatre possessed with a Devil; at which he expresses no manner of astonishment, *since Satan found her upon his own ground*.

she was in hopes would have been the case when the price for admission was raised to *half a crown*: But since this has not had the wished-for effect, and *Tradesmens wives will still imitate their betters, and intrude themselves amongst people of fashion*; she often comes home just ready to faint, and declares, that though the room was so crowded, she could scarcely stir, yet there was *hardly a creature there* *.

A violent Rout is *Lucinda's* aversion, yet she dearly loves a snug private party of four or five tables; but notwithstanding she is immensely fond of *Cribbage*, she never touches a Card in the *Passion-week*, nor the night before the *Communion*; and does not much chuse to play either *Wednesdays* or *Fridays* in *Lent*, when she can avoid it *consistently with good manners* §.

Lucinda

* Though I doubt not but *Lucinda* has often read *St Paul's* Epistle to *Titus*, yet I beg leave to remind her that one of the distinguishing characters there given of Christian wives is, that they are **KEEPERS AT HOME.** *Tit. ii. 5.*

§ What is *Lucinda's* reason for abstaining from Card-playing at these seasons, but because she is conscious of the strange impropriety of such an employment for those who are called upon *to redeem the time, because the days are evil?* *Eph. v. 15.* and *to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?* *2 Pet. iii. 18.* Moreover, though she is so warm an advocate for this way of consuming her leisure hours, yet she would dread the thought of being summoned before *the judgment-seat of Christ* with a pack of cards in her hands, well knowing that in such circumstances she would have little reason to hope that *the Bridegroom* had found her *watching, with her lamp trimmed, and her oil burning:* *Matt. xxv.*

Lucinda has read *Triftram Shandy*, but so far from approving of it, is greatly discomposed at the general satisfaction it gives to almost all sorts of people; and declares, that it is a sad sign of the depravity of the times, when Clergymen are preferred and patronized for writing indecent books.

But if the wickedness of the age causes *Lucinda* such deep concern, the present growth of *Entbusiasm* affords her no less matter of regret; insomuch that oftentimes when she is at Cards, she will hold forth between the Deals, upon the necessity of keeping a proper medium in Religion; but, “*forsooth, people now-a-days, must be either Saints or Devils; though for her own part she is contented to go on in the good old way, and is not so precise and strait-laced, but that she can serve God, and take her innocent amusements very well.*”

Lucinda has now and then some twinges of conscience, but these are presently silenced by reflecting how much more religious she is, than any of her acquaintance; and by calling to mind her duties; or if this will not do, another chapter in the Bible, and somewhat extraordinary to the first Beggar she meets, presently sets all to-rights again.

Such is *Lucinda*, and is she not quite a good creature? yet if her Religion is to be tried at the bar of God's word, she may with as much justice suppose that she served in quality of a foot-soldier during the last campaign in *Germany*, or that she fought in a coat of mail against the *Saracens* in the holy

holy wars, as that she is now *clothed with the whole armour of God* (x); that her life is a spiritual warfare, and she herself *a good soldier of Jesus Christ, who endureth hardness, and is not entangled with the things of this present evil world* (y).

She may as well imagine that she is taking a pilgrimage with the *Turks* to *Mahomet's* tomb at *Mecca*, or with the *Papists* to the *Virgin Mary's* house at *Loretto*, as that she is now living *like a stranger and pilgrim upon earth; looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God* (z).

She may with equal propriety believe that she has been all her life long laid in a coffin, or wrapt up in a winding-sheet; as that *she is now dead to the world, and her life hid with Christ in God* (a).

In short, she has just as much reason to fancy herself already a glorified Saint in heaven, as that there is any possibility of her arriving there as she goes on at present: Yet how many souls are building their hopes of salvation upon such a religion as *Lucinda's*? and for no other reason in the world, but because they see others, that are looked upon as excellent Christians, going on in the same way, and in the same wretched delusion with themselves: whereas if they would candidly *search the Scriptures*, I question not but they would find their state condemned in almost every page of the Gospel: *For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh at the*

(x) Eph. vi. 11, 12, &c.

(z) Heb. xi. 13, 14.

(y) 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

(a) Col. iii. 3.

the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (b).

Some people will perhaps cry out, Surely this is talking very *uncharitably*, for at this rate how few will be saved? But they cannot tell what they mean, except they would have us *make God a liar*; and in order to lull our poor fellow-creatures into the fatal dream of carnal security, assert, that he will admit them into heaven upon terms contrary to those laid down in his own Word. That sound pillar of our excellent Church, Bishop Hall, in his *Character of a real Christian*, has these words; “ I would it were uncharitable to say, there are
“ many *Professors*, few *Christians*; if words and
“ forms might carry it, Christ would have clients
“ enough.”

Our blessed Saviour assures us, that *broad is the way, and wide is the gate, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat*; and, that *narrow is the way, and strait is the gate, that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it (c)*: Yet how composedly do many persons repeat these awakening passages, who at the same time are confirming the truth of them; and though perhaps they live in no outward enormities, do nevertheless swim with the stream, till they fall into the gulph of endless misery. But if we allow our Saviour to speak truth in these places, we can have no more terrible proof of our being in *the way that leads to destruction*, than when we are doing as the gener-

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(b) 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

(c) Matt. vii, 13, 14.

rality of the world do ; nor can we have any better evidence of our being in the right way, than when we are resolved to act contrary to the torrent of custom, and are regardless of *being thought particular* ; concerning which Satan's instruments, in order to affright God's children from their obedience, talk so learnedly in their Lectures upon the necessity of a *prudent compliance with the world.*

Again, when we are told in Scripture, *that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and that the violent take it by force (d) ; that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven (e) ; that whosoever will come after Christ, must deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow him (f) ; that many are called, but few chosen (g) ; that the righteous are scarcely saved (h) ; that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven (i) ; and, that many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able (k).* I say, when we read these, and other texts of the like nature, we must needs imagine, that it is not so easy a matter to get to heaven as many people are apt to fancy, who seem to have found out quite a new road thither, very different from *that strait narrow way*, to which our Saviour has directed us, and in which whosoever now dares to walk, will be told that he is *righteous over-much,*
and

(d) Matt. xi. 12.

(f) Matt. xvi. 24.

(h) 1 Pet. iv. 18.

(k) Luke xiii. 24.

(e) Matt. xix. 24.

(g) Matt. xx. 16.

(i) Acts xiv. 22.

and solemnly cautioned against *the danger of running into extremes, and carrying matters too far*: But this is no more than must be expected in an age wherein so many do at once *glory in their shame (l)*, and are ashamed of that in which they ought to glory (*m*). An age wherein *formality* supplies the place of *vital Christianity*, and in which *spiritual Religion* and *Enthusiasm* are so far become synonymous terms, that a person is looked upon as little less than mad as soon as he comes to the right use of his understanding. An age wherein *the pure doctrines of Scripture and of the Reformation*, are set aside for *lifeless morality and dry systems of ethics*; and a steady adherence to the *truly evangelical tenets of the established Church*, is deemed the mark of a weak judgment, and is sufficient to gain a man a *nick-name*, and to make him become a *by-word among the people (n)*.

Let us therefore, as we value our immortal souls, take heed how we suffer ourselves to be led astray by any wretched pretenders to Christianity, and carefully avoid all those snares that the Devil and his adherents have established in this land, which has been so justly visited with the judgments of a righteous God, for our crying sins and horrible lukewarmness.

Let us reflect what those who have been cut off without having made their peace with God through Christ their Redeemer, and have felt the punishments of the damned; let us, I say, reflect what

H 2

they

(l) Philip. iii. 19.

(m) Gal. vi. 14.

(n) Job xvii. 6.

they would do, could they begin their lives again, or obtain one such opportunity of repentance, as God of his infinite mercy now vouchsafes to us. Would *they* waste any of their precious time in BALLS, and such like vanities, and dance for hours together upon the frightful precipice of eternity, not knowing but the next moment might hurry them again into those inexpressible torments they once experienced, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; where there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth* (o).

Judge therefore yourselves, Brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord (p), and take heed, according to the Apostle's advice, *that you refuse not him that speaketh from heaven* (q); for the God of Truth hath said, *that his Spirit shall not always strive with man* (r): *To-day* therefore, *whilst it is called to-day, barden not your hearts*; but calmly and seriously reflect what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God (s), whose word is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit (t); and who is even a consuming fire (u); and able to destroy both body and soul in hell (x).

Consider, I beseech you, consider, that these are not airy phantoms and idle tales, but they are awful and interesting truths, truths that are founded upon the word of God, and such as should
make

(o) Mark ix. 44.

(q) Heb. xii. 25.

(r) Heb. x. 31.

(u) Heb. xii. 29.

(p) Communion Service.

(r) Gen. vi. 3.

(t) Heb. iv. 12.

(x) Matt. x. 28.

make the unrenewed heart of every *self-deceiving formalist* to tremble; wherefore I pray God they may sink deep into your consciences, and excite you to fly to JESUS the Saviour of all that truly turn unto him; and if you are sensible of your need of a Redeemer, and will come as a lost, undone sinner, *not trusting in your own righteousness, but in God's manifold and great mercies (y)*, there is no doubt but he will wash you clean by his precious all-atoning blood, and clothe you with the robe of his perfect righteousness. Being thus *made free from sin, and become servants to God*, be urgent in imploring the continuance of divine grace, to enable you to *walk worthy of your vocation*, in all holiness and good works. Then shall you find, (but never by the palliating and superficial divinity of too many in our days,) that the ways of Religion *are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace (z)*.

THE CONCLUSION.

HAVING answered the arguments commonly brought in vindication of BALLS, and produced several proofs of their evil tendency and actual wickedness; having shewn the reasons why, nevertheless, these diabolical diversions have gotten such root, and the sinfulness of them is so little perceived, that many unwary souls go to them without suspecting their danger: Having ad-

(y) Communion Service.

(z) Prov. iii. 17.

admonished you to beware of a blind conformity, to custom, and of the examples of *nominal Christians*, and given some marks whereby such may generally be discerned from those who are *Christians altogether*; and lastly, having exhorted you to *flee from the wrath to come (a)*, unto Him who is able and willing to *save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him (b)*; I cannot yet conclude, without observing that it is indeed a melancholy reflection, that custom should have so far blinded the eyes of many, as to make a demonstration of this kind necessary; but since this is the case, all proper care, I hope, has been taken to set forth these enormities under their true colours, which, I trust, I have now done without the least aggravation; and if it can be proved that I have asserted any thing whatever that is not strictly agreeable to holy Scripture and plain reason, I readily give up the point*.

I

* Though, I trust, I have advanced nothing against *Balls and Plays*, but what can be warranted by the best authority; yet I may be perhaps thought rather too severe in having censured THE FLOURISHING TRADE OF CARD-PLAYING: for, since we read in history of a *Roman Emperor* who spent his time in *catching of flies*, surely we may justly claim the privilege of diverting ourselves a few hours in an evening (especially as it may be done so very consistently with the fashionable ideas of piety) in *counting black and red spots*, and asking *What's trump, who shuffled, who cut, and who dealt?* as also of *building houses with our Cards*, and *blowing them down again*, by way of changing the amusement, whenever we think proper:

(a) Matt. iii. 7.

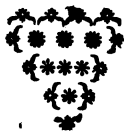
(b) Heb. vii. 25.

I am sensible, that if any body in the first ages of the Church had attempted to prove that no *Christian* could go to BALLS, PLAYS, ROUTS, REVELLINGS, and such like, without disgracing his holy profession; his arguments would have been looked upon to be as unnecessary, as those of a man who, in these days, should write a *folio* in order to prove, that the Sun shines on a bright day; and his labour as needless, as that of one who should go through all the rules of arithmetic to shew that *two and two make four*; but,

Tempora mutantur, nos & mutamur in illis!

*The Church cou'd once her Golden Ages boast;
But sad Experience proves those Ages lost!*

F I N I S.



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