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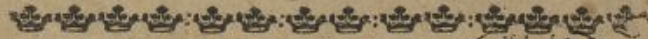
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Massey, Edmund. A sermon against the dangerous and sinful practice of inoculation preach'd at St Andrew's Holborn, on Sunday, July the 8th, 1722

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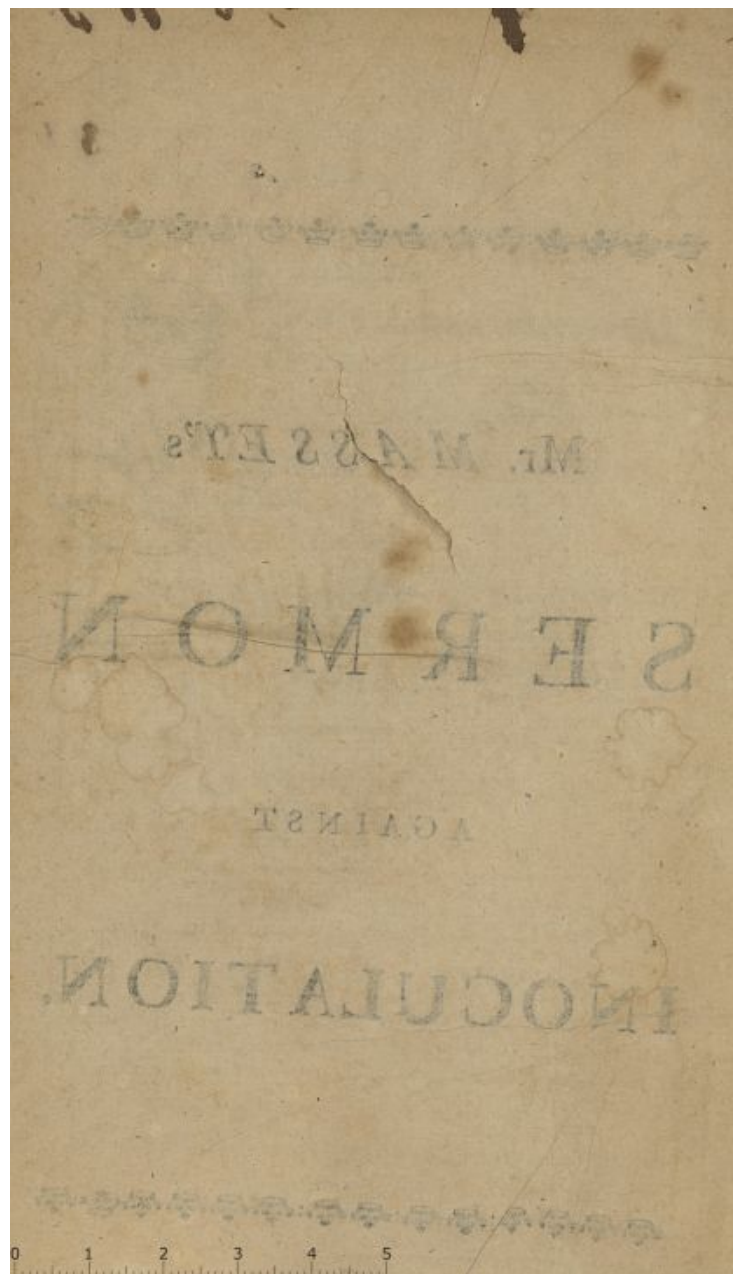


SERMON

AGAINST

INOCULATION.



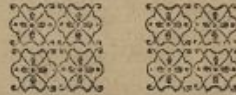


A
SERMON
AGAINST THE
Dangerous and Sinful Practice
OF
INOCULATION.

PREACH'D AT
St. Andrew's Holborn,
On Sunday, July the 8th, 1722.

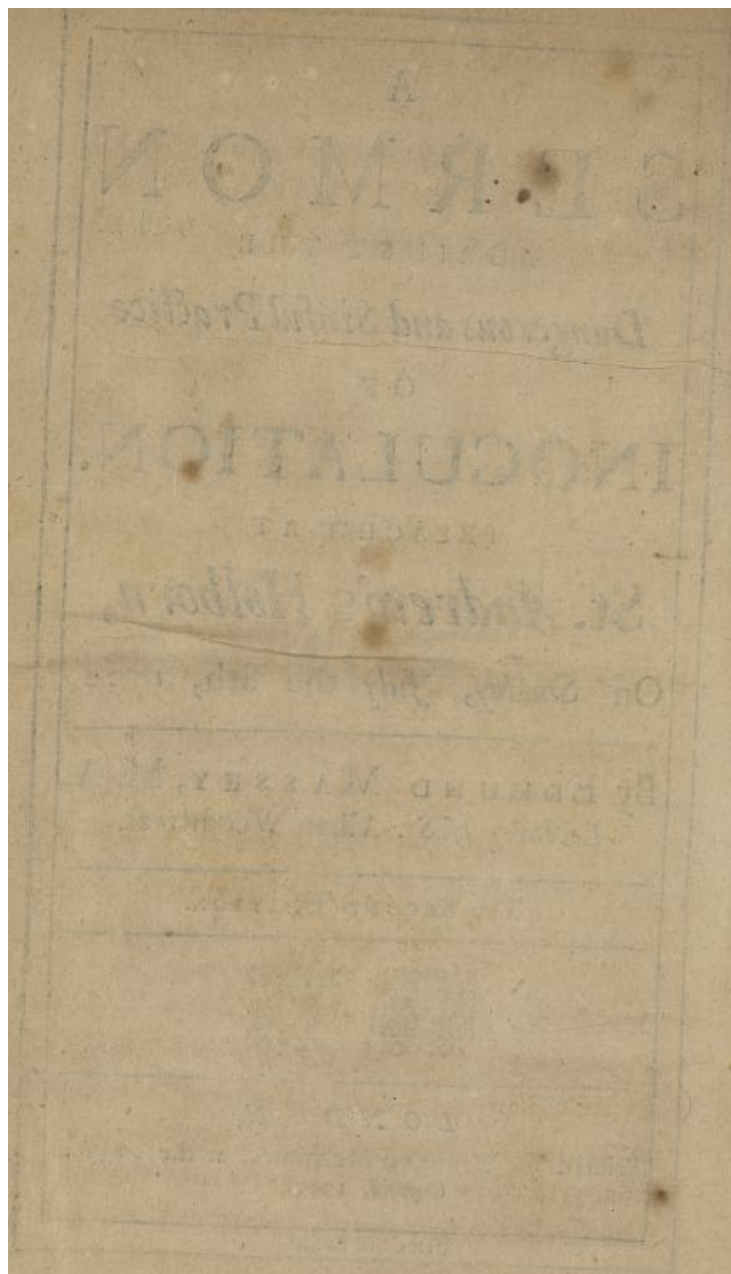
By EDMUND MASSEY, M. A.
Lecturer of St. Alban Woodstreet.

THE SECOND EDITION.



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A
S E R M O N
AGAINST THE
Dangerous and sinful Practice
OF
INOCULATION, &c.

JOB II. vii.

*So went Satan forth from the Presence of
the Lord, and smote Job with sore
Boils, from the sole of his Foot unto his
Crown.*



WHEN the Enemy of Mankind
was first permitted to tempt
the Faith and Patience of Ho-
ly Job, his Estate and Family
only were made liable to his ^{Chap. 1}
Power, with an exprefs Command not to ^{12.}
touch his Person. B This

This I look upon to have been almost as great a Temptation as the spoiling of his Substance, or the slaughter of his Children, forasmuch as the common Opinion of Mankind hath usually esteemed the survival of any great Misfortune, to be the greater Unhappiness of the two.

Under such Afflictions 'tis very hard for a Man to moderate his Passion; for Grief is natural, and the Excess of it easily run into: But to restrain and curb it, and not suffer it to exceed its just Limits, to feel Sorrow as a Man, and to assuage it from proper Considerations as a wise Man, is a strain above Nature, and properly constitutes that passive Vertue, which we call *Patience*.

Thus our Hero, being plundered of his Estate, and bereaved of his Children, reduced from Affluence to Beggary, and in danger that his Name, in the present *Generation famous*, should in the next be *clean put out*, after shewing a just Resentment of these severe Dispensations, by rending his Clothes, and other his Country Tokens of Distress; looking up to the Hand that smote him, resolves
all

Pfal. 109.
12.

all into the good Pleasure of that Providence, which was about to resume what it had hitherto lent; and dutifully resigns what he had thankfully received, and wisely used as a Steward only, without arrogating to himself the Right of a Proprietor. *Naked, says he, Job 1. 21. came I out of my Mother's Womb, and naked shall I return thither: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the Name of the Lord!*

The suddain Fall of this great Man may serve to shew us, how unable all human Means are of themselves to support us, when it shall please God to withdraw the Blessing of his Protection: That we cannot be secure against the *Changes and Chances of this mortal Life*, in any Acquisition of Power, or Riches, or Reputation, no not in *keeping Innocency*, and *taking heed to the Thing that is right*, without the Concurrence of Divine Providence: That God many times may afflict without forsaking his Servants. And when it shall seem good to him to call us forth, into the rough Paths of Suffering; if He shall please to *minish and bring us low*; the Example of psal. 107. our Text will teach us, not to behave un-³⁹ seemly, or *charge God foolishly*, but with Pa-^{Job 2. 22,}

tience and Meekness, and Resignation, and Contentedness, take what *He* lays upon us, whose is *the Kingdom and the Power*, and to whom for that very Reason we should give, even in such Circumstances, *Glory*.

The first Attempt of the Devil being thus baffled, and the Sincerity of the Holy Man found to be established upon more solid Foundations, than what the Accuser had urged to his own, as well as *Job* his Disadvantage; he next insinuates that *Job* was a Man of so mean a Spirit, as to be glad of Life upon any Terms; and so prevailing was this Passion in him above all other, that it was the only Consideration that kept him in his Duty to God; for fear of being *cut off from the Land of the Living*: Put forth now, says he, *Job 2. 5. thine Hand, and touch his Bone, and his Flesh, and he will curse thee to thy Face.* That is, afflict him in his Body, let some painful, some acute Distemper make his Life burdensome, without any hope of Recovery, and his Hypocrisy will display it self, and you will find he will throw off all the Regard he pretends to have for God, and will openly arraign and blaspheme his Providence.

Upon this Insinuation, the Devil obtains Permission a second Time to try our Man of Fortitude, what Impression bodily Pain, and loss of Health would make upon him, whose Vertue under the Losses he had lately sustained, stood still fix'd and impregnable.

Indeed his Malice was limited, and the good Man's Life was to be secured, but that was more than *Job* knew: So that the *Adversary* had all the real Advantages against him, that he could possibly desire.

According to his usual Way, after being once defeated, he returns to the Assault, with fresh Vigour and additional Strength. Temptations like Waves break in upon us, one upon the Neck of another, and commonly the last is the biggest, and goes the farthest. 'Twas hard upon *Job* to be deprived of his worldly Goods, harder to be bereaved of his Children, hardest of all when these were gone, to be yet worse handled, buried as it were alive, turned into *Corruption* before his Time, by the Infliction of a sore noisome Distemper, which excluded him the Society of Mankind, and even then his Reputation, the only *uninfected* thing

A Sermon against the dangerous and thing left, as inhumanly treated as his Body. And so we are come to the Words of our Text, So went Satan forth from the Presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore Boils, from the sole of his Foot unto his Crown.

The Silence of Scripture hath given Interpreters occasion of gueffing at the Distemper, which the Devil here inflicted upon Job: But among them all, it appears not certainly what it was. I will therefore desire to give an Opinion, equally I think true, with any that hath yet been taken notice of: It is this, That the Devil by some *venomous Infusion* into the Body of Job, might raise his Blood to such a Ferment, as threw out a *Confluence of inflammatory Pustules* all over him, from Head to Foot: That is, his Distemper might be what is now incident to most Men, and perhaps conveyed to him by some such way as that of *Inoculation*.

I do not at present see what can be advanced to invalidate this Supposition, which I look upon to be as tenable as any that is extant about this Matter; having this additional Advantage, that the Scene of Action
lies

lies in those parts of the World, whence this Practice is *confessedly* derived.

The Tempter's Aim was still the same as before ; to make his *Patient* let go his Integrity, throw off his Dependance upon Almighty God, and renounce that Allegiance which is justly due to him, as Creator and Governor of the World: To persuade him, that if any Thing, he was the worse for his constant Obedience to God, who made him so severe Returns for his faithful Services; and so by Consequence comparing his past Deserts and present Treatment together, to infer, that God was a *hard Master*, or that he neglected to superintend human Affairs; or rather to ask *Pharaoh's* Question, *Who is the Lord?* Exod. 5. 2. and so, lay in his Misfortune a Foundation for Infidelity.

How in all these Designs the Devil was disappointed, it may be well worth our Pains to enquire: In order to do this, it is not at all improbable to suppose that the Holy Man might duly consider these two Points.

First, For what Causes Diseases are sent amongst Mankind.

Secondly,

Secondly, Who it is that has the Power of inflicting them.

Let us then accompany him in the first Place, in finding out the Causes why Diseases are sent amongst Mankind.

I take them to be principally two: Either for the Trial of our Faith, or for the Punishment of our Sins.

There is nothing, generally speaking, that a Man is so ignorant of as himself, nor so apt to be deceived in: His Love and Aversion are chiefly complexional, and not so often as they shou'd be grounded upon rational Motives. I believe I may venture to affirm, that the Religion of the greatest part of Mankind is perfectly accidental, according to the Country they happen to be born in: Men carry their religious Profession, *as the Children of Ephraim did Bows and Arrows*, which they knew not how to use *in the Day of Battle*. The Day of Battle, in a religious Sense, is, when any Afflictions overtake us, which in the most ordinary way come upon us in *diverse Diseases and sundry*

kinds of Death. When God thus pleases to visit a sincere Professor, he marks him out for an Example for the rest of Mankind to imitate ; He sets him like a lighted Beacon on a Hill, to alarm, to *let his Light so shine before Men*, Mat. 5. 91. *that they may see his good Works, and glorify their Father which is in Heaven* for him. Besides, since the Heart, as the Scripture says, *is deceitful above all Things* ; it follows, that Jer. 17. 9. the best Men cannot be sure of themselves until they have been proved ; many Corruptions may remain unpurged, many Vices may lie concealed in them, as well as many rewardable Vertues unpractised : For these and the like Reasons, the Apostle bids us *count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temp-* James 1. *tations, as having so many Opportunities put* ^{2.} *into our Hands of mortifying all our evil and corrupt Affections, and daily proceeding in all* Office for Baptism. *Vertue and Godliness of living.* To see a good Man acting upon Principle under all Disadvantages, to see him with *Joseph* esteem a Jail no Evil, in comparison of committing a Gen. 39. 20. Sin against God ; or with *Daniel*, account being devoured alive no Evil in comparison Dan. 6. 16. of living without God in the World for thirty Days ; or with *Job*, holding a dreadful Disease no Evil in comparison of *letting go his Integrity,*

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regrity, are noble Trials and Instances of that *saving*, that *justifying* Faith, which *worketh by Love*, and are recorded to shew how greatly our Nature is capable of being exalted in this Life, although *common Humanity* reaches not so high.

Secondly, Diseases are sent, if not for the Trial of our Faith, for the Punishment of our Sins.

Bad as the World is, it would still be worse if the Wickedness of Mankind should be so successful as to meet with no more rebuke than it would willingly suffer. But Sin, as it is always the deserving, so it is often the

procuring Cause of Afflictions in this Life, as appears from our Saviour's Admonition

to the Man in St. *John*, whom he had lately healed; *Sin no more* (says he) *lest a worse Thing come unto thee*: And he had already been punished with a bodily Infirmary thirty eight Years together. St. *Paul* also gives

the profane Behaviour of his *Corinthians* as a Reason why many of them were weak and sickly. After these Patterns our Church ad-

vises those who languish upon the Bed of Sick-

Office for
visiting
the Sick.

ness, to *examine themselves for what Cause this Evil is come upon them*; whether (as before has been

been

been urged) *it be to try their Patience, and that their Faith may be found in the Day of the Lord, laudable, glorious and honourable, to the increase of Glory and endless Felicity: Or whether it be sent to them to correct and amend whatsoever doth offend the Eyes of their Heavenly Father.* For if, as the Scripture asserts, God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children ^{Lam. 3.} of Men; that is, afflict Men merely for the ^{33.} sake of correcting them, nor take Pleasure in their Sufferings as such; it will follow, that to one of our aforementioned Reasons, *viz.* either the Trial of our Faith, or Punishment of our Sins, all his Visitations are to be attributed.

Some Sins it pleases God to strike immediately in a more remarkable Manner, as he did *Herod*; while others do naturally, and by ^{Acts 12.} degrees, advance to the Punishment they deserve: ^{23.} Thus habitual Drunkenness and Adultery, will ruin Health, and impair Estates, and induce a distempered old Age as the natural Consequence of a riotous youthful one. This also gives us to consider, that Diseases are not only *judicially* inflicted for past Offences, but graciously also design'd to *prevent* future: And a little Recollection will

tell a Man, whether he has not often been kept Virtuous through fear of the Consequence, even when Inclination has gotten the better of his Duty. Hence some are made Honest for fear of a *Prison*; others continue Chaste for fear of *Infection*; a great many are Just for fear of *losing their Character*; and no doubt several are Religious, more out of fear of *going to Hell* than any thing else. So that we see the worst of Evils have their Use, and in this Sense, and by proper Reflection, we may make a Moral of the *Devil* himself.

Should all Restraints of this Sort be taken away, were there no fear of Punishment in this Life, nor belief of any in the next; should Iniquity and Reputation be join'd together, and Health be Handmaid to Uncleanneſs; we may conjecture from present Disorders, how mightily they would encrease, and irremoveably be established; so that we have good Reason to bless and praise Almighty God for the wholesome Severities ordained for Offenders, without which, the World would be a much more uncomfortable Place to live in, than it is at present. And this brings me to the second Consideration, which is,

Secondly

Secondly, Who it is that hath the Power of inflicting Diseases upon us.

Our Text indeed ascribes *Job's* Distemper to the Power of the Devil ; but the foregoing Verse shews *that Power* to have been delegated to him, and limited by Almighty God, who alone being Omnipotent, the Powers that be, whether *Natural* or *Political*, must all be derived from him. 'Tis true, he has communicated several Parts of his Sovereignty to the Sons of Men, but still the Exercise of it will ultimately be resolved into his Permission. And it is as true, that there are several Branches of Authority, which he has reserved to himself, in displaying of which, he acts upon Prerogative, and without human Intervention. I chuse to instance in the Infliction of Diseases, which I will attempt to prove are utterly unlawful to be inflicted, by any who profess themselves Christians. Indeed where the Doctrines of Salvation are not known, and a regular Dependance upon Providence is postponed to the absurd belief of a *Fatality* ; there it is no wonder to see Men give into impious or unreasonable Practices : But in a Country
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where better Principles are *established*, where God's Government of the World is for the most Part undisputed, and slavish implicit Belief happily superseded by rational Enquiries; in such a place, methinks, Men cannot easily be reconciled to a *Practice*, which abuses their *Understanding*, as well as insults their *Religion*; and if the received Notions of God's Providence be just, has its Foundation in *Ignorance*, and must be maintained (if at all) by *Presumption*.

The Holy Scriptures give us frequent Instances of God's giving Power unto Men to *heal Diseases*; and by his Blessing a Power is still continued: But that one was ever granted to *inflict Diseases*, will I think hardly appear; unless in the Case of *Moses* with the *Egyptians*, and *Elisba* with his Servant *Gebazi*:
 Exod. 9.
 10.
 2 King. 5.
 27.
 But both these Cases were miraculous, and of God's own immediate Appointment, to vindicate the Honour of his Servants the Prophets, and for the Punishment of *Sacrilege* and *Idolatry*, and cannot be drawn into Precedent by any not invested with the same Character and Authority. Men may, and have invented Wracks and Tortures for each other, but no Man, let his Crimes be what they

they will, was ever yet condemned to an immediate Sickness, or sentenced to lie languishing in a Fever, for want of a sufficient Authority, which no Body but a present Set of *adventurous Practitioners* have of late pretended to assume.

It will easily be granted, therefore, that such a Procedure, for want of a *competent Authority*, is unlawful: That if Diseases, as beforementioned, are sent unto us for the *Trial of our Faith*, or the *Punishment of our Sins*; He alone to whom our Faith must approve it self, and our *Sins are manifest*, has properly the Power of inflicting them.

Remembring then our Text, I shall not scruple to call that a *Diabolical Operation*, which usurps an Authority founded neither in the Laws of *Nature* or *Religion*, which tends in this Case to anticipate and banish *Providence* out of the World, and promotes the encrease of *Vice* and *Immorality*.

That a modern Practice has a direct tendency to all this, I offer the following Considerations to evince.

1. A

1. A *Natural* or *Physical* Power does not always infer a *Moral* one: That is to say, a Man cannot *lawfully* do every Thing that is in his *Power* to do. Thus we abstain from Acts of Injustice and Oppression, although they may be gainful to our selves, out of regard to *Morals*, notwithstanding they lie within the *Compass* of our Abilities. Thus the

Rom. 14. 16. Apostle adviseth us, *Not to let our Good be evil spoken of*; that is, not to do any unwarrantable Action, for the sake of any subsequent Benefit: Because the end, however good *intentionally*, can never *justify* in Law, nor *sanctify* in Religion, the use of Means that are bad, to come at it: But on the contrary, the use of bad Means designedly, corrupts the Morality of the intended Good: For to make an Action good, 'tis necessary that *all its Parts*, be lawful, innocent, and good also; whereas the Depravity of *any One*, is sufficient to denominate that *whole Action*, Evil: Now the Apostle forbids us to do *Evil*, tho'

Rom. 3. 8. *Good should come of it*, upon Pain of Damnation, which absolutely prohibits all unjustifiable Arts and Practices, be the Event never so beneficial and desirable; so that although we have a Power to give a Man a Disease, that
is.

is, tho' we know the Way how it may be done; since a bare *Power* or *Knowledge*, does not infer the *Morality* of so doing; till that is ascertained, we ought to forbear all Experiments of that sort: For even *Uncertainty* and doubting in moral or religious Cases, lays a positive, or at least a prudent *Restraint* upon Practice, because, as the Apostle says, *Whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin.* ^{Rom. 14. ult.} The Patient of our Text, at the Verse but one following, refuses to procure a Good to himself at the Price of a Sin. Had he followed the Advice there given him, it might perhaps have eased him of his present Pain, and freed him from future Apprehensions, but still the *Remedy* would have been worse than the *Disease*, and what the foolish *Prescriber* would have given for good *Physick*, the unhappy *Patient* would have found *miserable Divinity*.

2. The Good of Mankind, the seeking whereof is one of the Fundamental Laws of Nature, is, I know, pleaded in Defence of the *Practice* I contend against: But I must profess my self at a Loss, to find or understand, how *that* has been, or can be promoted hereby: For if by *Good*, he meant the *Preservation of Life*, it is in the first Place a

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Question, Whether *Life* be a *Good*, or not? But if it be, the Preservation of it will be found as little beholden to *this Practice*, as any other Invention whatsoever. The confessed Miscarriages in this new Method, are more than have happened in the ordinary Way: And if this be our Case now, how much worse must it needs prove, if God for our *Presumption*, and contemptuous *Distrust* of his good Providence, should suffer this *Delusion* to gain Ground, and these *Physicians of no Value*, these *Forgers of Lies* (as *Job* expresses it) to obtain and grow into Credit among us: Such I fear they may be accounted, who so confidently tell us what is impossible for them to know; namely, that *they who undergo their Experiment are for ever thereby secured from any future Danger and Infection*: This is a bold Assertion indeed, and if such Experiment were *lawful* and consistent with the Rules of *Christian Practice*, I could wish to God it were true also: But if neither of these be the Case, if the two Requisites, *Prevention*, and *Lawfulness* be wanting; I believe I may venture to affirm, that the most learned and judicious among the *Professors* of Physick, will never give into so destructive a Scheme. And I hope the Time is coming, that these

Vene-

Venefici, these *Spreaders of Infection*, will be distinguished from those of the *Faculty*, who *deserve Honour*, and not permitted to mingle with them, as the Devil among the Sons of Job 2. 1. God, lest like the *Disease-giving Practitioner*, the Harlot whom Solomon describes, they *entice us, till a Dart strike through our Liver*, Prov. 7. 23. *and we haste to their Snare, not knowing that it is for our Life*. Besides, I cannot apprehend how it conduces to the *Preservation* of Mankind, to force a dangerous Distemper upon them, which possibly may *never* happen unto them, and if it should, may *probably* be attended with very *little*, if any Inconvenience; and as before has been hinted, is no Security against *future* Contagion. This is unequally to stake a Substance against a Shadow, to make Men run into a real Danger, lest they shou'd happen to fall into an accidental One, and contributes no more to the *Preservation* of Mankind, than it would rebound to the *Honour* of a well provided City, to invite the Enemy and surrender *now*, for fear lest *sometime hence*, they should possibly be surpris'd and taken. If we now

Thirdly, D 2 3. Will

3. Will weigh this Matter in a religious Ballance, it will certainly be found *wanting*, and *deceitful upon the Weights*. I look upon this Matter to be forbidden by the *sixth Commandment*, as lascivious Thoughts are by the *Seventh*. For it is always to be supposed, that a Law which forbids a great Evil, forbids also every Thing that has a Tendency thereto. For which Reason, the very next

Exod. 21. Chapter forbids all *voluntary and causeless Wounding, Mutilation, &c.* Because these Things go often farther than they are designed, even to the taking away of Life: When this happens, they are to be considered, as no other than a Breach of the Commandment: And it is but reasonable to imagine, that when God forbid to take away Life, He forbid also the Commission of any Violence, whereby Loss of Life might *probably* ensue. Tho' the Homicide be casual, yet if the Cause of it be criminal, surely it will be no Excuse for it, for it is observed, That although the Effect which follows (if mortal) is beside the *Intention*, yet the Cause of it being not so, is sufficient to make a Man guilty before God: Men being justly chargeable with those *Effects*, which are the *natural* Results

of

of those *inordinate* Actions, from whence they proceed.

It is written, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord* ^{Deut. 6.}
thy God: This was our Saviour's Answer to ^{16.}
the Devil, when he would have persuaded him to the Commission of a *presumptuous* Action. There are Angels, says the Tempter, to take Care of you, so that you cannot possibly come to any Harm, then make the Experiment, and *cast thy self down*. Now there is no great Difference between *this* of the Devil and the *Temptation* which lies before us; *both* intimate the *Safety* of the *Practice*, and *both* pretend the *Blessing of God*: Our Lord's Reproof then will serve them *both*: No, says he, we must not presume upon God's Protection, to expose our selves to any *unnecessary* Danger or Difficulty. If Trials overtake *us*, he to whom we pray *not to lead us into Temptation*, will make a *Way for us* ^{1 Cor. 10.}
to escape, that we may be able to bear them: But ^{13.}
if we overtake them, if we seek for a *Disease*, and so lead *our selves* into Temptation, we can have no rational Dependance upon God's Blessing: It is with Difficulty we can sanctify our Afflictions in the Course of Providence, in the way of our Duty, and 'tis odds but we miscarry
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under them, when we bring them upon our selves : If God's Blessing be withdrawn, it must unavoidably be so; and such Circumstances wherein we have no Reason to expect his Blessing, are, I think, by no means to be run into.

There is also a *tempting of the Lord our God*, when Men rely too much upon themselves, and put their Trust in one another, without calling upon God for his Assistance, or praying to him to guide and direct them : Under these two Temptations the *Practice* I condemn, is fairly to be ranked. In the former we *throw our selves off the Pinnacle* ; in the latter,

Isa. 36. 6. *we lean upon a broken Reed, which will go into our Hand and pierce it* : And it is but just in Almighty God, when we presume too far, to *punish* our Rashness, when we misplace our Confidence to *visit* for our Idolatry.

Eccles. 38. 1. The Honour due to a Physician, which the Son of *Sirach* advises us to pay him, arises from his being an Instrument in the Hand of Providence, to *restore Health*, and to *prolong Life* : This he does by Virtue of a wonderful Insight into the nature of the Mineral and Vegetable World, by which, 'tis probable, the
Life

Life of Man was spun out to so great a Length before the Flood : It may be this was that *Tree of Life* which *Adam*, our *first Physician*, as well as *first Parent*, was dispossessed of for his Sin ; the Want of which, together with the Destruction of the Virtues of Plants wrought by the Deluge, may also be a Reason why Life is now so short and precarious. But we are still to remember, that how great or extensive soever his Knowledge be, 'tis all the Gift of God, and like all good Gifts *cometh* ^{James 1: 17.} from above ; and under this Reflection, he himself ought always to make Use of, and apply it. *There is a time*, says the same wise ^{Ecclus. 38.} Man, *when in his Hands there is good Success* : ^{v. 13, 14.} For, continues he, *he shall pray unto the Lord that he would prosper that which he gives for Ease, and to prolong Life*. The Time of Success was thought to be when the *Physician* should pray for a Blessing upon his Prescription. So that formerly, we find that the *Patient* was *prayed for*, before his Case was thought to be desperate. Now *praying* for a Blessing upon our Undertaking, must suppose the Use of *lawful Means*, otherwise it is better to let it alone. And although we live in an Age, wherein Forms of Grace are for the most part set aside, and Usages of Piety run out of Countenance,

tenance, yet I will venture to recommend this old Practice, and affirm that the Lives of Mankind would be no less secure, if all the *Guardians* of Health should speak *Peace* to our Houses when they enter them, and *pray* for (I don't say with) all those committed to their Charge ; and to this Course of *private* Devotion add a little more Attendance on the Publick. But this by the Way.

It remains now in the last Place, to speak of this modern *Practice*, as it tends to promote *Vice* and Immorality ; I believe it will be readily granted me, that there is no one Thing so universally dreaded, as the Disease, which this *strange Method* of *Practice* pretends to elude. But there is this of Good attending, that the Fear of it is an *happy Restraint* upon many People, who seem not so sensible of superior Obligations, to keep themselves in Temperance and Sobriety, and want no other Encouragement to give a Loose to their Inclinations, than to be free from Apprehensions of this *uncertain Visitor*. Most Mens Acquaintance, I am apt to think, will furnish them with Instances of Persons who would gladly give into the Extravagance of these *licentious Cities*, to the apparent

parent hazard of Reputation and Fortune ; did not this providential Obstruction, like the Angel of the Lord to *Balaam*, stop them ^{Nom. 22.} *in the Way*, or keep them at a safe Distance, ^{31.} in Health, Wealth, and Innocence. However ugly Sin may be in it self, rightly considered, 'tis the fear of some such Consequence *as this*, that frequently hinders the Commission of it, in spite of all the prevailing Invitations of *Fashion*, Place and Opportunity. We ought then to look upon this, and all other Discouragements to Sin, with a thankful Eye, and bless that wise Providence which has mercifully set such checks upon Iniquity, that we may not run smoothly on unadmonished to our Ruin. Could then these *bold Practitioners* lessen the Severity of this Disease ; could they entirely secure Men from Danger under it, could they say to the Distemper, as Almighty God does to the proud Waves of the Sea, *Hitherto shalt thou* ^{JOB 38.} *come, but no farther* ; could they, I say, do all ^{11.} this, I do not see what Good Mankind would get in the main ; they would, 'tis true, have one Danger less to fear, but that would be no real Kindness ; forasmuch as it would be the Occasion of their running into a great many more, and if they should happen

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*A Sermon against the dangerous and
to be more healthy, 'tis a great Chance but
they would be less Righteous.*

If Security wou'd make Men more diligent in their Callings, more just and honest in their Dealings ; or if they would look upon it as a Mercy, and be thankful to God for the Enjoyment of it ; I could wish the Generations of the World were more healthy and strong : But the Negligence of Men in these Particulars, even with all their Infirmities about them, makes it evident to Demonstration, that these good Effects would not follow : If Danger should be removed, we shou'd be the less upon our Guard, and lie more open to other Assaults of the Tempter, and give more easily into the Commission of many Sins, which then would also more easily beset us. In a confirmed State of Health we are not so apt to consider our latter End : Or if we do, the Consideration does not so much affect, because of its supposed Distance : But when we find it by any Indisposition, or the fear of any, making nearer Approaches, when the Pleasures of Health are abated, and human Enjoyments have lost their Relish, when a Man's Spirits begin to sink, and his Body decay ; this awakening Call, is much more persuasive

five

five than the Voice of Eloquence, or Force of Reason, to make a Man improve the Thoughts of his Diffolution to the best Advantage. I have before observed, that Life it self may not always be a Blessing: For that depends entirely on the good Use that is made of it: It had been better for them, if some Men had never been born; if others had died in their Infancy. No doubt but Providence has a good and beneficial Design in all those Deaths, which we improperly call untimely; either the Good is taken to his Reward, or the Wicked hindred from encreasing his Punishment. What Reason then for this saving, this anti-providential Project, this pretended Art of Preserving, which thus tends in a great Measure to prevent that religious Watchfulness, which Christianity, as a Warfare, requires? Should we not rather, with the same Mind, endure our present Estate, whatsoever it be; as we pass through a hard Winter, or a Time of foul Weather, taking it for seasonable and fit, because the wise Author of Nature has so ordered and appointed it?

And now upon the whole, what is all this Discourse, but a Persuasive to depend upon

the good Pleasure of an all-wise God, rather than throw our selves into the presumptuous Hands of foolish and unskilful Men; and with

2 Sam. 24. 14. David to say, *Let us now fall into the Hand of the Lord, for his Mercies are great, and let us not fall into the Hand of Man.* If we believe

that he who made the World does still guide and govern it, and sees and knows every Action of our Lives; if we believe the Apostle,

1 Pet. 5. 7. who says, *God careth for us;* or our blessed

Mat. 10. 30. Saviour, who assures us, that *the very Hairs of our Head are all number'd;* that is, the most

minute Circumstances of Life happen not unto us, without God's Permission or Appointment: If we believe this, the Sense of living under such a kind and watchful Government, should give us a suitable Awe of it, a reverential Regard for it, and a firm and steady Dependence upon it. Let me ask the Apostle's

1 Cor. 10. 22. Question: *Do we provoke the Lord to Jealousy? or are we stronger than he?* Shall we presume

to rival him in any Instance of Providence, find fault with his Administration, take the Work out of his Hands, and manage for our selves? A dangerous Experiment this! and not to be made with impunity, unless as we thus pretend to be wiser, we prove our selves mightier than he. But let us not be deceived

with

with vain Expectations; he who perfectly knows our Frame, knows what is fittest for us to *endure*: He who knows our *Vertues*, knows the properest time to *try* them; and he who knows our Sin, knows also the best manner how to punish us for it. Nothing becomes us like Submission, which if it be voluntary will be graciously accepted and rewarded as a Virtue; if involuntary, it will become our Sin, and even at last we *must submit*.

Let the *Atheist* then, and the *Scoffer*, the *Heathen* and *Unbeliever*, disclaim a dependance upon Providence, dispute the Wisdom of God's Government, and deny Obedience to his Laws: Let them *Inoculate*, and be *Inoculated*, whose Hope is only in, and for *this Life*! But let us, who are better instructed, look higher for Security, and seek principally *there* for Succour, where we acknowledge Omnipotence: Let us not sinfully endeavour to alter the Course of Nature by any presumptuous Interposition: Let us bless God for the Afflictions which He sends upon us, and the Chastisements wherewith He intends to try or amend us; beseeching him to grant us *Patience under them*, and in his good Time a
happy

happy Deliverance from them. Let us remember, that with him alone are the Issues of Life and Death, Health and Sicknes: Let the Ignorant and the Transgressor place their Confidence elsewhere, but let us evermore believe, and practise as if we believed, That the Salvation of the Righteous cometh of the Lord, who is also their Strength in the time of Trouble: That the Lord shall stand by them and save them, that He shall deliver them out of the Hand of the Ungodly (and Unskillful) and shall save them, because they put their Trust in him.

Psal. 37.
40, 41.

Now to God the Father, &c

F I N I S,

THE Reader will observe, that I meddle not in this Matter otherwise than as it seems to me to be Irreligious. If he would be satisfied of the Danger and Uncertainty of it in a Physical way, let him consult Dr. Wagstaffe's admirable Letter to Dr. Friend, and I dare promise him ample Satisfaction.

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