

**P I E T Y**  
**T H E B E S T**  
**P O R T I O N :**  
**O R,**  
**G O L D and G R A C E**  
**WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE.**

Wherein some Directions how to proceed regularly toward the married State are proposed ; the Preferableness of Grace and Virtue to Riches and Honour are considered ; the Inexpediency, evil Consequences, and Disadvantages attending the unequal Yoking of Believers with Unbelievers are observed ; and a few Questions and Objections answered.

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**T H E T H I R D E D I T I O N .**

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**ORIGINALLY COMPOSED**

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**Now revised by JAMES UPTON.**

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## A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

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**T**HIS small Pamphlet has already gone through *two editions*, the former of which was not published, 'till after the death of the Author: who left this world, October 29, 1742. The time when the second edition was printed is not expressed in the title; but I apprehend it must be at least *thirty years* ago. However, it is now become so scarce, that though I have wished to purchase one for more than *four years*, I have not been able to do it. Being lately in the country, I had an opportunity of *borrowing* it for a few weeks. Considering *marriage* as a matter of great importance, which though truly honourable, should be engaged in with deliberation, and earnest prayer to GOD for his blessing; and being persuaded that this book contains many useful

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hints upon that subject, I determined to publish a new edition of it. Which I most sincerely and affectionately recommend to the perusal of serious young persons in general; and those in particular with whom I have the happiness to be connected.

Praying that the LORD may make it really useful, I remain, READER, your soul's well-wisher,

JAMES UPTON.

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P I E T Y

T H E

B E S T P O R T I O N.

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**T**H E R E is a natural Inclination in most young Men to seek out for an *Helpmate* in this Life: Such a Help was needful in Paradise, and much more so now. Then it is no Way strange that I found in myself the same Propensity. But I was of a wavering Disposition: One while I would covet Riches, another Time fond of Beauty; now Parentage, by and by for Parts. However, after many Journeys, and much precious Time spent to little Purpose, observing that my Labour had been in vain, and myself a Loser, I considered what might be the Reason of so many Disappointments; and having Recourse to Scripture, the Christian's infallible Touch-stone, whereby he ought to try all Things, I soon found that my former Steps were

not right: Thereupon I resolved to search the Word of GOD, and for the future to take it as my only Rule, endeavouring to follow the Example of the Children of GOD therein recorded. Moreover, I writ down the following Directions for my own Benefit, as well as for the Use of other Fellow-Christians of my Acquaintance, respecting their Conduct in this momentous Affair.

In order to proceed regularly, I humbly conceive, that a Christian ought,

1. To consider his own Circumstances; for he hath several Things to mind at Home, before he goes Abroad; to look into concerning himself, before he concerns himself with chusing another; he hath many Things to think of, with reference to his own Person and Station, before he minds the Person and Station of another. Therefore he should well consider, whether he hath a clear and manifest Call to alter his Condition in Life. He should propose to himself this Question: "Am I like to be a meet, suitable, and comfortable Help to the Person that I would chuse to be my Companion for Life?" GOD instituted Matrimony for the mutual Help and Comfort both of the Man and the Woman; and not that they might be a mutual Grief to each other. The Qualifications and Conduct of the Husband should have a Tendency

dency to attract the Desires of his Wife unto him. If he is like to be a continual Affliction and Sorrow to her, how can her Affection be towards him? He ought further to Query thus: "Am I like to be more free from Temptations, and to serve and glorify God better in a married State?"

2. He ought to eye Marriage as an Ordinance of great Weight and Importance. A Man's temporal Felicity and Comfort, with regard to Soul and Body, depend much upon it; for it tends either to the making or marring of him, while he and his Partner live together. This Ordinance was instituted by God himself, even in the innocent State, which does greatly augment its Dignity.

3. He should well weigh the End and Design of Marriage, in the various Branches thereof. Man, though originally a social Being, was alone, and his wife and benevolent Creator provided, not only a meet Help for him, but in a meet and becoming Way, which was by a Marriage Relation. This Relation seems to be the very Foundation and Bond of human Society. And as already hinted, Man and Wife are appointed and adapted to be mutual Helps, and comfortable Supports to each other: If it was so in the perfect  
and

and innocent State, then such Helps and Supports are very needful now, when the World is so full of Trouble and Sorrow. An agreeable and suitable Companion, in this near and lawful, dear and intimate Connection, will, under the divine Blessing, much ease our Yoke, and alleviate our Burden, both respecting the intricate Affairs of this Life, and the inexpressibly more weighty Concerns of Eternity. Therefore, in order to obtain this very desirable End, a Person should solemnly ponder his Steps before-hand, and endeavour to proceed in the Fear of GOD. Moreover, we may safely conclude, that Marriage is appointed to promote Chastity and Purity in Heart and Life, as well as to continue the Human Race and accomplish the glorious Designs of GOD, in an undefiled, holy, and honourable Way. Where the LORD is pleased to give Children, Father and Mother are carefully to train them up in the Way they should go. Finally, we ought by no Means to forget, that Marriage is a lively and striking Representation of that great, glorious, and mystical Union, subsisting betwixt JESUS CHRIST and his own Church or People; as the Apostle observes, with remarkable Emphasis, in *Eph. v.* from *Verse 23* to the End. Now if a Person does not eye the Glory of GOD, and his own Comfort he is like to miss the important Ends and weighty Designs of *Marriage*, which, in itself,  
ever

ever was, and always will be, *honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled.\**

4. A Man should consider whether he hath conscientiously observed and obeyed other Ordinances and Institutions of GOD, incumbent upon him, and requisite for him to observe as a Christian; before he betakes himself to the great Concern of Matrimony. A Child of GOD should proceed orderly in all his Transactions; for a good Man *will guide his Affairs with Discretion*†. Every Thing is beautiful in its Season. A Christian may create himself Abundance of Grief and Discontent by doing *unseasonably* that which otherwise may be, not only a very just and lawful Deed in itself, but his incumbent Duty at a proper Time. So it may be a Christian's Duty to marry, yet he ought to consider whether it be his present Duty, or at least the greatest at this Time; for the least should give Place to the greatest. The following Questions should be proposed, *viz.*

“ Have I given up myself wholly and unreservedly to GOD, as my Lord and Master, to obey him in all his Laws and Institutions; before I go to give up myself to a Wife, to obey the Laws of Matrimony? Have I taken upon myself the Yoke of CHRIST, before I go about to take that of Wedlock? Have I some Evidence,

“ or

\* Heb. xiii. 4.

† Psalm cxii. 5.

“ or at least a well-grounded Hope that I am mar-  
 “ ried to JESUS CHRIST, before I go to be mar-  
 “ ried to a Woman? Am I one of GOD’s Houf-  
 “ hold, in a visible, as well as invisible Manner,  
 “ before I pretend to be myself an Houholder?   
 “ Have I set myself in earnest, to build and erect  
 “ the House of GOD, and to promote the Interest  
 “ of CHRIST, before I go to build my own  
 “ House, to increase my own Family, and to pro-  
 “ mote my own private Interest? \*” What! Shall  
 a Christian set himself to build his own House,  
*whilst the Lord’s House lie waste?* † It can never  
 be said of a Follower of CHRIST, that he pro-  
 ceeds regularly to the matrimonial State, if his  
 Care be to settle himself in the World, before he  
 doth settle himself in the Church of GOD.

Another Step that a Christian should take, in  
 Order to proceed with due Precaution toward the  
 conjugal State is this; before he goes to seek a  
 Wife, he should weigh the Matter well in his  
 own Breast, praying for divine Direction, that  
 he

\* Our Author did not look upon the Marriages of the Un-  
 godly and Profane as any Way illegal: for that Relation is  
 undoubtedly honourable, even in them: But his Discourse is  
 directed more immediately to those who profess Love to JESUS  
 CHRIST, a Regard for the Glory of GOD, and a Concern for  
 their own eternal Salvation.

† Hag. i. 2, 4, 5, 9.

he may be able, in some Measure, to have his Sentiments fixed and settled concerning the Qualifications requisite in the Object of his Choice; else he is like to be blindfold, and so embrace the first that comes to Hand, or at least chuse a Person very improper for him; and thus to meet with many Disappointments in his Way. Too many Christians, as well as myself, know, by woeful Experience, the Disadvantage of not deliberating before hand about the Person to be chosen, particularly whether she ought to be a pious Woman or no; this hath been the Occasion of much Grief to many: Yea, such blind Proceedings, I think, have been the Cause of most, if not all the unequal Matches, which we see Abroad in the World, even among those who profess Religion. Is it not just with God to suffer that Man to meet with Crosses and Disappointments, who goes about so important a Business as Marriage is, without imploring his Direction by Prayer, and consulting his Word, by reading it carefully, and meditating thereon?

Marriage is, perhaps, the most momentous Affair among all our secular ones; therefore a prudent Man should act as a wise Master-Builder doth, that is, sit down and count the Cost before he ventures upon a Concern of so much Weight.

Now

Now let us consider the Qualifications requisite to be found in a Person that is like to be a proper *Helpmate*. It is vulgarly said, that an accomplished one hath the five P's, ¶ viz. *Portion, Person, Parentage, Parts, and Piety*. Though Piety is placed in the Rear, yet I think it will not be difficult to prove, that it will over-balance the other four put together; which I shall attempt in the Comparisons following.

First, *Portion, or Riches*. From Portion we may expect rich Apparel, and a splendid Table; as it appears from the Parable of the rich Man, who was *clothed in Purple and fine Linen, faring sumptuously every Day*.\* And our LORD saith, *They which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in Kings Courts*.† Now we shall consider what will answer and over-balance this in *Piety*, supposing Riches to be wanting.

The Scripture saith, Better is a Dinner of Herbs where Love is, than a stalled Ox and Hatred therewith.‡ Better is a dry Morfel, and Quietness therewith, than a House full of Sacrifices with Strife.§ A little that a righteous Man hath, is better than the Riches of many Wicked.|| Having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith  
con

¶ Note, The five following Words begin with P.

\* Luke xvi. 19. † Chap. vii. 25. ‡ Prov. xv. 17.

§ Prov. xvii. 1. || Psal. xxxviii. 16.

content.\* The Godly sought for Sufficiency, but not Superfluity. Thus did *Jacob*;† thus did *Agur*.‡

*Obj.* But Dainties and Varieties, with costly Apparel, are good in themselves, and Mercies not to be refused: What is in Grace to parallel these?

*Sol.* We shall be no further from these Things by proceeding in GOD'S Way. But if GOD should not see it meet to bestow these Enjoyments upon his People; yet they have that which will equal, yea, far exceed them; for they have Meat to eat which the World is a Stranger to; they have sweeter Dainties, and richer Varieties to feed upon, than any Prince in the Universe can have from the Riches of this World; they feed upon the Word of GOD, and therein find such a wonderful Variety of exceeding sweet and precious Promises, that they far surpass so many choice Dishes of the richest Provision here. Saith *David*, How sweet are thy Words unto my Taste! Yea, sweeter than Honey to my Mouth.§ How remarkably doth *Job* express himself upon this Head! *I have esteemed the Words of his Mouth more than my necessary Food.*|| Food is necessary,

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but

\* 1 Tim. vi. 8. † Gen. xxviii. 20. ‡ Prov. xxx. 7, 8,

§ Psal. cxix. 103. || Job xxiii. 12.

but Dainties are not; yet, we see, he esteemed the Word of GOD, even more than his *necessary Food*. Oh, then, how sweet must it needs be!

Moreover, with regard to rich Apparel and elegant Dress; no one in this World can excel the Saints. They are arrayed in fine Linen, clean and white.\* The Church, and consequently every individual Member thereof, is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought Gold.† Surely then all worldly Delicacies and Gaieties are weighed down to the Ground by those durable Riches, and that Robe of Righteousness which the Saints enjoy even here.

Again, from *Portion* or Riches, we are prone to promise ourselves much Ease and self-gratifying Pleasure. This is very plain from the rich Glutton, who said, *Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*‡ This was the Case with Sodom, Fulness of Bread, and Abundance of Idleness was in her.§ Though this be pleasant to Flesh and Blood, yet generally it is hurtful: Herein *Solomon's* Words are verified, There is a fore Evil which I have seen under the Sun; namely, Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their Hurt.¶  
We

\* Rev. xix. 8. † Psal. xlv. 13. ‡ Luke xii. 19.

§ Ezek. xvi. 49. || Eccl. v. 13.

We may flatter ourselves, that if our Riches abound, our Ease will abound in Proportion, but in Fact it is quite the reverse, for the Abundance of the Rich will not suffer him to sleep; neither shall he that loveth Silver be satisfied with Silver; nor he that loveth Abundance with Increase: When Goods increase, they are increased that eat them.\*

But to make the utmost of it, suppose the Rich should be wholly at Ease, and an entire Stranger to the common Straights of Life; hath *Piety* any Thing to answer this Conveniency? Let the Scripture speak: The Ways of Wisdom, or *Piety*, are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.† The Sleep of the labouring Man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; when it is not so with the Rich. The godly Man may say, with *David*, I will both lay me down in Peace and sleep; for thou LORD only makest me dwell in Safety.‡ The Way of *Piety* is very safe, but the Way of Riches slippery and dangerous.§ Idleness is the Saint's Burden, and not his Pleasure. He had rather be up and doing, than lie dormant. His Delight is in the Law of the LORD, and his Commandments are not grievous

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\* Eccl. v. 10, 11, 12. † Prov. iii. 17. ‡ Psal. iv. 8.

§ Psal. lxxiii, 18.

to him. Oh sweet Piety ! it hath the Preference here likewise.

Furthermore, a rich *Portion* may promote one to a high Post and Dignity. This, at first View, is very taking to Flesh and Blood; yet there is no solid and real Satisfaction to be found in the highest worldly Honour and Dignity; for we have the repeated Testimony of the wise Man, *that they are but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* But supposing high Preferments might yield some real Pleasure and Satisfaction for a Time; yet Piety hath enough and more than enough to counter-balance and out-weigh the whole. All those that are possessed of true Piety, are Fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God.\* They are made by JESUS CHRIST Kings and Priests;† yea, they are at present a *royal Priesthood*,‡ and shall hereafter be preferred to that wonderful Dignity of being Judges of Men and Angels.§ Then we see that Piety still hath the Pre-eminence.

Finally, Those whose Riches abound have generally their Pages to attend, and Servants to wait; they live in Pomp and Splendor. Yet even in this Piety is not a Whit behind-hand, but has

\* Eph. ii. 19. † Rev. i. 6. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

§ 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.

has the Preference still; for the elect Angels are the Attendants and Servants of all those who embrace and admire Piety. It is well known that one Angel was so powerful, that he flew in one Night in the Assyrian Camp, an Hundred and Four-score and Five Thousand Men; brave and powerful Attendants indeed! Such an Exploit was never performed by any of the Servants of the greatest Emperor that ever bore an earthly Sway, yet such Honour have all his Saints; for the Angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.\* Are not all the Angels ministring Spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation?† With regard to the Splendor and Equipage of the Saints, GOD himself doth bear them on Eagles Wings,‡ and doth charge his Angels to keep them in all their Ways, lest they should dash their Foot against a Stone;§ so they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.||

Secondly, the next P, is *Person*. A comely Person is desirable, and very attractive to engage the Affections. The Scripture doth often take Notice of the Patriarch's Wives, for their Beauty. *Abraham's Wife* was a *fair Woman* to look upon; yea very fair, and therefore she was commended

B 3

before

\* Psal. xxxiv. 7. † Heb. i. 14. ‡ Exod. xix. 4.

§ Psal. xci. 12, 13. || Isa. xl. 31.

before *Pharaoh* ;\* *Isaac's* Wife also was fair to look upon ;† therefore he loved her. *Rachael*, *Jacob's* Wife, was beautiful and well-favoured,‡ so he loved her better than *Leah*, who was tender-eyed. *Abigail*, whom *David* took to Wife, was of a beautiful Countenance:§ And *Ezeikel's* Wife is called the Desire of his Eyes.¶ But notwithstanding all this, the Christian should not aim chiefly at Beauty, nor any Thing in the Body ; for that is not essential to a good Wife ; because it may be soon gone, and vanish away ; therefore the good Man should aim at something more valuable and permanent. Let us hear what *Solomon* saith in this Matter. Favour is deceitful, and Beauty is vain ; but a Woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.¶ How vain and frivolous is Beauty without Virtue ! As a Jewel of Gold (saith the Holy Spirit) in a Swine's Snout, so is a fair Woman without Discretion. A Swine will be but a Swine still, though all over gilt with Gold.

Natural Beauty, as already observed, is agreeable enough ; but if a gracious Person should be deficient therein, yet she hath that which is far preferable ; for, being a vital Member of the Church of CHRIST, she is all fair, there is no Spot

\* Gen. xii. 11, 14, 15. † Chap. xxvi. 7. ‡ Chap. xxix. 17.  
§ 1 Sam. xxv. 3. ¶ Ezek. xxiv. 16. ¶ Prov. xxxi. 30.

Spot in her.\* She is renewed after the Image of CHRIST,† who is white and ruddy, the chiefest among Ten Thousand, yea, altogether lovely. Where can such excellent Beauty be found? This Beauty is perfect, not vain and deceitful like that which is natural. This will be always fresh and vigorous. As long as CHRIST hath Beauty, every Believer hath it, and that will be for ever. Oh then! let us proclaim that Piety is the most exquisite and durable Beauty.

Thirdly, *Parentage* comes next to be compared. To be of noble and honourable Birth and Descent is desirable indeed, *David* said, Who am I? and what is my Life, or my Father's Family in Israel? that I should be Son-in-law to the King. We find that it pleased *David* well to be the King's Son-in-Law.‡ Blessed art thou, O Land when thy King is the Son of Nobles. Yet real Happiness doth not consist even in this. High Birth is not so sweet a Cup as to be free from all Bitterness; nay, the Bitterness doth often exceed the Sweetness thereof. I shall have Occasion in the Sequel to exemplify this sufficiently in *David* and *Solomon*, and to observe that Piety is of the most noble Descent.

Fourthly,

\* Cant. iv. 7. † Col. iii. 10. ‡ 1 Sam. xviii. 18, 26.

Fourthly, the fourth P, is *Parts*. This is undoubtedly a very commendable Quality in a Wife. A graceful Behaviour, an elegant Deportment, and, in short, good natural Parts, polished and refined by proper Education, are exceedingly agreeable in a Partner. But a pious Woman hath these, in a very eminent Manner; though perhaps not exactly after the Mode and Fashion of the World, yet in a far preferable Way and Manner. As for the Behaviour of the Pious, it is with Simplicity, and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of GOD, they have their Conversation in the World.\* As for their Eloquence, they speak the Truth from their Heart;† and in Love‡. With regard to their Education, they are the most Learned in the World; for they have been taught by the best of Masters, even by GOD himself;§ and who teacheth like him?|| GOD, by his Spirit, doth teach them the Truth as it is in JESUS.¶ They have been taught to speak to GOD, and for him. They have been taught to pray unto GOD upon all Occasions; to give Glory to him, and set forth his Praises; yea to declare what the LORD hath done for their Souls; which is more than any unregenerate Person in the World can do. If they can address the Most High, and praise him; why may they

\* 2 Cor. i. 12. † Psal. xv. 2. ‡ Eph. iv. 15. § Isa. liv. 13.  
 John vi. 45. || Job xxxvi. 22. ¶ Eph. iv. 21.

they not, as far as it is meet, address their Fellow-Mortals? In 2 *Sam.* vi. 20. we have *Michael's* Address to King *David*; she was a King's Daughter, but no great Friend of *Piety*. Also in 1 *Sam.* xxv. 24, &c. we find an Address made by a Person of an inferior Rank in the World, even *Abigail*; but she was a prudent and pious Woman; it is easy to conclude which of the two Addressees was the most solid and agreeable. If we read the History of *Ruth*, and consider also the 31st Chapter of Proverbs with Care, we shall find that the virtuous Woman openeth her Mouth with Wisdom, and that in her Tongue is the Law of Kindness. These are excellent *Parts*; why then should we despise the pious and virtuous, because they do not know how, or perhaps do not chuse, to walk in a vain shew?\*

Having thus considered the four P's in the most advantageous Light, I think it appears very plain, that the fifth doth excel all the rest, and is the most valuable Qualification in a Wife, though the others were but scanty; for this alone hath each of those pertaining to it in a spiritual Sense, as above noted; so that it is the best Part, and the one Thing absolutely necessary. In short, though it be despicably placed in the Rear, as we are too prone to disdain spiritual Things, which are certainly

\* *Pfal.* xxxix. 6.

certainly the most valuable ; yet our blessed LORD hath commanded us to seek *first* the Kingdom of GOD, promising that all other Things should be added unto us.

Oh, how blameable most Men are in this ! They set *Piety* last, and sometimes afford it no Room at all ; when in Truth, it is the most estimable Gem under Heaven, even of more Worth than all the World, and the whole that it contains. It is true, *Piety* oftentimes hath not much in Hand. What then ? It hath rich Treasures in Store, and in very sufficient Hands, who can never be numbered among Bankrupts ; no, there is enough at command always, upon the least Notice, to supply every real Necessity wherever Grace requires it. As a Proof hereof, we may produce a few of the very numerous Securities, each of which is more sure by far than the Bank of *England*.

Our first shall be 1 *Tim.* iv. 8. *Godliness is profitable unto all Things, having promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* A large Bill indeed ! It contains more than all the Arithmeticians in the World can ever cast up. Little do we think that *Piety* is such a Fortune as indeed she is. But further, let us consider, *Psal.* xxxiv. 10. *The young Lions do lack, and suffer Hunger ;*

*Hunger; but they that seek the Lord, shall not want any good Thing! O amazing! what, not any good Thing! Need we any more? Is not here as much as Heart can wish? Is not the Security sufficient? But for further Satisfaction, this, and many more, are ratified in 2 Cor. i. 20. For all the Promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen. Here GOD doth, as it were, put a new Seal to the Bond. Wonderful Condescension indeed! This is a lasting and comprehensive Bond. What we have of this World, we may quickly lose; but this is an inexhaustible Fountain; it can never be drawn dry; nay, its Fulness can never be diminished. Oh then! let Piety for the future, be placed in the Front, by all that have any Regard for her. The Scripture is the Believer's Charter; there you find his Privileges; the Promises made to the Christian, in that Book, are very numerous; you may see a few more in the Margin.\**

To conclude this Head, the Children of GOD have the surest and most direct Title, even to the Things of Time, as they are Joint-Heirs with CHRIST who possesseth all Things. Though the Ungodly may have a legal Right to their earthly Possessions, yet even their plowing is said to be Sin.† Of the Saints it is said, that the World,  
Life,

\* Prov. iii. 13, &c. Chap. xxii. 4. Psal. xxxiii. 18, 19, and xxxvii. 19. † Prov. xxi. 4.

Life, Death, Things present, and Things to come, nay, that all is theirs.\* Then, I hope, every thoughtful Person will be ready to join me, and allow, yca, even assert Piety to be the best Portion, and the most compleat and comprehensive Qualification.

As the conjugal State is so important, and yet so seldom duly considered in Time, I will proceed a few Steps further, for my own Advantage; and if it might be of any real Service to my Friends, I should rejoice. I would observe,

First, Some Reasons why a true Christian ought not to marry an ungodly Person.

Secondly, The evil Consequences and Disadvantages thence arising.

First, the Reasons why a true Christian ought not to marry an ungodly Person, are these,

1. There is a Disagreeableness and Contrariety in their Disposition. It was the Disagreeableness in Nature, that rendered all the Creatures unmeet for *Adam*. He wanted a *Helpmate*, for it was not good for him to be alone, though by a beneficent Constitution, he was appointed GOD's Vicegerent

\* 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23.

gerent here below, and had dominion over the whole World;\* yet in all the Creation, though so extensive, there was not found one Creature that could be so nearly related, and so closely united to him, as was requisite. All the Creatures upon Earth were brought to *Adam*; he viewed them, and gave them Names; but still he was alone; for he was of a higher and nobler Rank than they all. Therefore it was necessary for him to have one of his own Species, Rank, and Disposition, to hold Communion and Fellowship with himself.†

Now with Regard to a pious Man in this World, it is not best always for him to be alone. Wo to him that is alone, saith *Solomon*; therefore he wants a Helpmate.

*Question.* Why may not a godly Man take any Woman for an Helpmate, as *Adam* did *Eve*?

*Ans.* It is by Reason of the Disagreeableness, as above observed. Some think that an ungodly Person is almost as unfit to be a Helpmate for one that is godly, as one of the irrational Creatures would have been for *Adam*. This at first may appear harsh, but when it is weighed with Coolness and Sobriety, it may not appear so uncouth;

C

for

\* Gen. i. 26. † Chap. ii. 18. to Ver. 24.

for there is an implacable Enmity between them.\* An unjust Man is an Abomination to the Just; and he that is upright in the Way, is Abomination to the Wicked.† He that is born after the Flesh, will persecute him that is born after the Spirit.‡ The Friendship of the World is Enmity with GOD; and the World hateth the People of GOD.§ Except there be an Union of Mind or Soul, there cannot be true Love. Real Affection is beautifully exemplified in *David* and *Jonathan*: The Soul of *Jonathan* was knit with the Soul of *David*, and *Jonathan* loved him as his own Soul.|| There cannot be a nearer Union here below, than that which ought to subsist between Man and Wife. As they are one Flesh, they should be one Spirit, and of one Mind; for if they love each other on the Account of Riches, Beauty, &c. these may be soon lost, and then their Love will cool. Take away the Cause, the Effect must cease. Conjugal Love should be upon a better Foundation; but it can never be right betwixt a gracious and graceless Soul; for what Fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? What Communion hath Light with Darkness? What Concord hath CHRIST with Belial? What part hath he that believeth with an Infidel.¶

## 2. GOD

\* Gen. iii. 15. † Prov. xxix. 27. ‡ Gal. iv. 29.  
 § Jam. iv. 4. John xv. 19. || 1 Sam. xviii. 1. ¶ 2 Cor. vi.  
 14, 15.

2. GOD hath separated or set apart the Godly, as a People distinct from the World \*. What GOD hath divided, let no man attempt to join. That the Church, or the Godly, and the World, or the Ungodly are separate Parties we have intimated to us as early as *Gen. vi. 2, &c.* where the Breach of GOD'S Order, relating to these distinct Bodies, is likewise mentioned. After the Flood, the Church was continued chiefly in the Posterity of *Shem*, till *Abraham's* Time; then his Seed was fix'd upon, chosen and separated from all other Nations, by GOD himself, to be his peculiar People, till the Coming of CHRIST. Ever since the Ascension of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, all those who are called by the Grace of GOD, are his Church, be they Jews or Gentiles. His Church is a Body of People, chosen and collected out of the World, of which CHRIST is the Head; of whom it is thus said, *If ye were of the World, the World would love his own; but because ye are not of the World, but I have chosen you out of the World; therefore the World hateth you †; and again, I have manifested thy Name unto the Men which thou gavest me out of the World,—the World hath hated them, because they are not of the World ‡.* And because they are not of the World, the HOLY SPIRIT commands them not

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to

\* *Psal. lvi. 3.* † *John xv. 19.* ‡ *Chap. xvii. 6, 14, 15, 16.*

to conform to this World. One grand Design, the SON of GOD had in View when he appeared in the Flesh, was to redeem, from the rest, a peculiar People to himself, distinct from the World\*. Therefore we find the Blessed Spirit, expressly and strictly, commanding the People of GOD to separate themselves from the World; wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the LORD †. Now if GOD hath chosen his People, and set them apart from the World; if CHRIST came to purchase to himself a Church to serve him in a separate State from the World; and if the HOLY GHOST bids them to come out from among the Wicked, to serve and acknowledge GOD, as a People distinct from the Ungodly; then it naturally follows, that it is very sinful in any Member of the Church, to join himself to, or intermix with the World, or any Branch thereof, in Marriage; for this is the nearest Conjunction that can be betwixt them. Oh then, that the Children of GOD would keep together, and not wilfully mix themselves with the World! In this Thing, touch not, taste not, handle not.

3. GOD hath expressly forbidden such Matches. Take heed to thyself, least thou make a Covenant  
nant

\* Tit. ii. 14. † 1 Pet. ii. 9. † 2 Cor. vi. 17.

nant with the Inhabitants of the Land whither thou goest, lest it be a Snare unto thee, when thou take of their Daughters unto thy Sons \*. Neither shalt thou make Marriages with them, thy Daughter shalt thou not give unto his Son, nor his Daughter shalt thou take unto thy Son †. In the New Testament, the HOLY GHOST, in plain Terms, prohibits his People to be unequally yoked together with Unbelievers ‡; and he limits their Marriage to be *only* in the LORD §. Then since the Lord hath so plainly forbidden his People to mingle themselves with the World by Marriage, how durst any one of them transgress the Command that is so explicit? Let not their Heart be divided between the Church and the World in this Respect, lest they be found faulty ||.

4. The People of GOD in all Ages (especially the most eminent for Piety) have taken great Care to prevent and reform such mixed Matches. With Regard to the first, we have an Instance in *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful. His Care and Concern to prevent the mismatching of his Son, was remarkable and exemplary. He took an Oath of his chief Servant, the Ruler of his House, saying, Thou shalt not take a Wife unto my Son of the Daughters of the *Canaanites*,  
 C 3 amongst

\* Exod. xxxiv. 12, 16. † Deut. vii. 3. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14.  
 § 1 Cor. vii. 39. || Hof. x. 2.

amongst whom I dwell ; but thou shalt go unto my Country, and to my Kindred, and take a Wife unto my Son *Isaac*\*. Here's a Precedent given by the *Friend of God*. Again, see what Care *Isaac* and *Rebekah* took of their Son *Jacob*. And *Rebekah* said to *Isaac*, I am weary of my Life, because of the Daughters of *Heth* ; if *Jacob* take a Wife of the Daughters of *Heth*, such as these, which are of the Daughters of the Land, what good shall my Life do me † ? Again, *Isaac* called *Jacob*, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a Wife of the Daughters of *Canaan* ‡. We find also the Care and Concern of *Manoah* and his Wife §, about their Son *Samson*.

With Regard to Reformation in this Affair, what Grief and Trouble did these unlawful and unequal Matches cause in the Time of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, those great Reformers of Religion ! as well as to those concerned therein || ! Had it not been a sin, these pious Men had not taken so much Care and Pains to reform it. The Apostle puts in a Caveat against such unequal yoking ¶. Now since the Elders who obtained a good Report by Faith, have given us such Precedents, we ought

\* Gen. xxiv. 3. † Chap. xxvii. 46. ‡ Gen. xxviii. 1, &c. § Jud. xiv. 3. || Ezra, ix. and x. Neh. xiii, throughout. ¶ 1 Cor. vii. 39. 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, &c.

ought to imitate them, for we are bid to follow the footsteps of the Flock.

5. Another Reason why a true Christian ought not to marry an ungodly Person, is,

Secondly, The evil Consequences and Disadvantages thence arising. Some of which are these following.

1. One dreadful Consequence we have pointed out to us, even before the Flood; for it is intimated to be the procuring Cause of the universal Deluge, in which all Mankind were overwhelmed, and even destroyed, *Noah* and his family only excepted. The Church, called the *Sons of God*, mixed itself with the ungodly World, stil'd the *Daughters of Men*; therefore it was just with GOD to overthrow both in the same common Calamity. As they were Partakers in sin, so they should be in the Plagues following it\*. Moreover, these Matches, produced Monsters in Body, as well as in Wickedness†, as a further Token of GOD's Displeasure; and it is remarkable, that we read of no righteous Persons in all this wicked Brood and gigantic Race.

2. It

\* Rev. xviii. 4. † Gen. vi. 2, 4.

2. It is generally a Grief and Sorrow to pious Parents. It is said of *Eſau*, that he was forty Years old, when he took to Wife *Judith* the Daughter of *Beer*, the Hittite, and *Baſhemath*, the Daughter of *Elon* the Hittite; which were a Grief of Mind unto *Iſaac*, and to *Rebekah* \*. *Rebekah* intimates her Anxiety leſt *Jacob* ſhould follow his Brother's Example, and if that ſhould be the Caſe, that her Life muſt be very burdensome indeed †. Many tender-hearted Parents have felt the ſame Anxiety, and Grief of Mind.

3. The Chriſtian will run the Hazard of many Dangers in marrying an ungodly Perſon. *Samſon* loſt his Eyes and Liberty, yea, even his Life, by the Means of his Wife, who was a Friend to the *Philiftines*, and more faithful to them than to her own Husband ‡. It ſeems to be a Judgment upon him for proceeding contrary to the Will of GOD, and the Advice of his Parents. It looks as if he had married each of his Wives, more out of Fancy, than according to ſolid Judgment. *She pleaſeth me well* §. That was his Reason why he turned aſide. *Ahab* was led on to his Idolatry, and to ſhed innocent Blood, by his cruel and impious wife, who was the Daughter of the idolatrous *Zidonian King* ||. *Solomon*,

\* Gen. xxvi. 34, 35. † Chap. xxvii. 46. ‡ Judg. xvi. 5, &c. § Judg. xiv. 3. || 1 Kings xvi. 31. Chap. xxi. 7, 25.

*Solomon*, the wisest of mere Men, was drawn from the Worship of the true GOD to Idols, though carefully educated by his pious Parents; he was his Father's Son, and only Beloved in the Sight of his Mother\*. He prayed fervently to GOD at the Dedication of the Temple. GOD appeared to him twice; and he had long and happy Experience of the gracious Dealing of the true GOD. But notwithstanding all these Advantages, it came to pass, when *Solomon* was old, that his Wives turned away his Heart after other GODS; and his Heart was not perfect with the LORD his GOD, as was the Heart of *David* his Father. For *Solomon* went after *Ashtoreth*, the Goddess of the *Zidonians*, and after *Milcom*, the Abomination of the *Ammonites* †. Did not *Solomon*, King of *Israel*, sin by these Things? Yet among many Nations was there no King like him, who was beloved of GOD, and GOD made him King over all *Israel*; nevertheless, even him, did outlandish Women cause to sin ‡.

4. The Remorse and Regret that must follow such a Contract. The good, though mistaken Man, may thus reflect upon what is past: "My Yoke-Fellow is not a Help meet for me; I did not proceed according to divine Direction, but

\* Prov. iv. 3. † 1 Kings xi. 4, 5. ‡ Neh. xiii. 26.

“ but chose for myself, and GOD left me to myself :  
 “ Therefore I cannot expect his Blessing upon my  
 “ Wedding, and I now must needs be in great  
 “ Anxiety about my Offspring. The LORD  
 “ promiseth to bless and multiply his People,  
 “ and even to bless the Fruit of the Womb ;  
 “ yet it is when they keep his Commandments,  
 “ and do them \*. I cannot bless and praise  
 “ GOD for my Wife, as she is not the Gift of  
 “ GOD, nor allowed by his Word †. As I have  
 “ not regarded divine Rules, I cannot say that I  
 “ have married in the LORD ‡ : nor that I aimed  
 “ at the Glory of GOD in it, as we ought to do  
 “ in all Things §.”

5. The numerous Disadvantages that one may expect from an ungodly Wife. These are some of them ;

1. If she is considered in the several Relations she may be supposed to stand in after Marriage, such as Wife, Mother, Mistress, Friend, and Neighbour, she will be deficient, very probably, in each of them.

As a WIFE. *Samson's* impious Wife was very treacherous, as already observed. The  
 Heart

\* Deut. vii. 9, 30, 22, 23. † Prov. xviii. 22. and xix. 14.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 39. § Chap. x. 31.

Heart of a godly Person, cannot safely trust in the Ungodly \* : No, if the good Man should want Advice in any Case, his Wife will be apt to give him evil Counsel. A corrupt Tree cannot bring forth good Fruit; and who can bring or give a clean Thing out of an unclean? not one. So that instead of such good Counsel, as prudent *Abigail* gave to *David* †, and he might have expected from a good Wife, he may fear his Wife's Counsel will not be safe, but too much resemble that of *Jezebel* to her Husband ‡, or that which *Job* had from his imprudent Counsellor §. The Evil Counsel of an impious Wife, will be more apt to corrupt a pious Husband, especially in a Time of Temptation, than his good Advice will be to convert her. In Scripture, I cannot recollect, that ever we find a Wife converted through the instrumentality of her Husband; but more than once we hear of the Husband corrupted by his unconverted Wife. Again, a gracious Man cannot expect that a graceless Woman, can love him from a right Principle; nor can her Affections be founded upon a good Bottom, as those of a gracious Woman are. A Person in a natural State, can only love from natural Motives, and often very slender indeed. *Michal* loved *David* ||; but, I dare say, it was not  
for

\* Prov. xxxi, 11. † 1 Sam. xxv. 23, &c. ‡ 1 King  
xxi. 7. § Job. ii. 9. || 1 Sam, xviii. 20

for his Grace; but either as he was a comely Person, an eloquent Man, a successful Warrior, or something of that Nature. We have no Reason to conclude, that she had an Experience of the Grace of GOD in her own Soul; and as she was ignorant of that, Nature must be the Subject and Object of her Love. Nature is mutable, and so was her Affection; for when she saw him afterward, influenced by Grace, praising and glorifying GOD with all his Might, she *despised him in her Heart* \*; she scoffed and reproached him. A godly Woman hath two Knots to fasten her Love to her Husband, more than the ungodly one hath. She hath, not only the Band of natural Affection to engage and oblige her Love to him; but she is likewise under the Constraints of the Word of GOD, and the Grace implanted in her Heart by the HOLY SPIRIT. These are three Bands for one, and a threefold Cord, is not easily broken. The pious Woman hath natural Affection as well as the other, for Grace teacheth her, not to marry any one, except she loves his Person, as well as his Principles and Practice; but she hath also supernatural or spiritual Love to her Husband; flowing from a divine Principle, and fix'd upon valuable Objects, even the Graces of the Spirit in her Husband, and the Fruit of it appearing

\* 2 Sam. vi. 14, 16, 20, 21.



**Stones:** So there must needs be a Mixture and Confusion. It is natural to suppose, that this will cause the Children, one while to imitate the Father, and at other Times the Mother; like their Brethren, who spake half in the Speech of *Ashdod*, which was their Mother's Tongue, and could not speak in the *Jews* Language, which was their Father's, but they spoke according to the Language of each People.\* Or like those who could pronounce *Sibboleth* plain enough, but not the *Shibboleth*.† The Education of Children in a proper Manner, is a very important Point, attended with many Difficulties. Happy the Parents who join heartily and prudently in that weighty Work. Oh, how unhappy it is where both Parents neglect it! and where but one is concerned in it, and the other careless, it is even then miserable with a Witness. If the People of **GOD** knew experimentally the Importance of this Work, while they are single, it is to be hoped they would be more thoughtful in chusing their Comforts, than many of them seem to be.

As a **MISTRESS**. Here again, the good Man will be at a great Loss; he shall have a Thorn in his Side, nay, to speak plain, in his Heart. Does he contrive how to set up good Order in his Family? He may promise himself no Assistance  
from

\* Nch. xiii. 23, 24. † Judg. xii. 6.

from his Wife, but Resistance; his Rules shall be despised and slighted. Is he for discouraging Vice? She will indulge it, and wink at it; nay, by her Example, she will encourage it, and probably by Words too. Is he for chusing those who walk in a perfect Way to serve him? She will be for those of another Character. Corrupt Precedents, when set up by Superiors, are soon imitated; so it is not to be wondered, if Servants will rather follow the Mistresses than the Master. How can he find in his Heart to correct Children and Servants, for following the Example of their Mother and Mistress, both in Word and Deed? Thus he is like to be opposed, and can hardly hope that his Family will be a little Church, as a religious Man's Family ought to be. But a pious Wife is a very great Assistance to manage and govern both Children and Servants. She will watch her Opportunity to promote Religion. She will do her Husband good, and not evil all the Days of her Life. She openeth her Mouth with Wisdom, and in her Tongue is the Law of Kindness. She looketh well to the Ways of her Household. Her Children (and Servants) arise up and call her blessed; her Husband also, and he praiseth her.†

As a FRIEND. Her Friendship can no longer be depended upon than while pleased; for she is

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† Psal. ci. 6.

\* Prov. xxxi. 12, 26, 27, 28.

not like one of the Inhabitants of the holy Mountain, who honour them that fear the LORD, swear to their own Hurt, and change not.\*

And as a NEIGHBOUR. Her Example in the Neighbourhood, as well as in the Family, will be hurtful. She will be familiar with those of her own Disposition, and perhaps be in Company with them too often, that she may converse in her own Dialect; for she does not love to converse with her Husband, nor understand his *religious* Language; neither can she abide his Friends, nor approve of their Conversation. She must look cold upon them, or leave the House. She cannot be discreet and keep at Home, be good, obedient to her own Husband, that the Word of GOD be not blasphemed.† A vile Person would be contemptible in the Eyes of a pious Woman, but she would be a Friend and a Neighbour to those that fear the LORD.‡

2. If we consider the several Occurrences of Life, both prosperous and adverse, temporal and spiritual; the godly Husband must sustain and endure many cutting Inconveniences, and Disadvantages. I would make a few Remarks here.

#### TEMPORAL

\* Psalm xv. 4. † Tit. ii. 5. ‡ Psal. cxix. 63.

**TEMPORAL PROSPERITY.** If Providence smile, and the Affairs and Concerns of this Life go on successfully, she will not eye the Goodness of GOD, nor consider the Operations of his bountiful and beneficent Hand; consequently she will not give him Thanks, nor endeavour to return according to Benefits received.\* She will be apt to attribute all her Wealth and Prosperity to her own Prudence and Industry; therefore will sacrifice unto her Net, and burn Incense unto her Drag, concluding, that by them her Portion is made fat, and her Meat plenteous.† Whereas one that feareth the Lord would say, It is the Lord our God that giveth us Power to get Wealth, that he may establish his Covenant.‡ It is he that blesteth our Seed sown; and it is his Blessing that maketh rich; therefore let us honour God with our Substance, and with the Fruits of all our Increase.§

**Times of SPIRITUAL JOY.** When the good Man's Soul is refreshed with divine Consolation, and Tranquility of Mind; when he is indulged with the Shinings of God's Face; when his Heart is elevated and transported with some special Tokens, Pledges, and Evidences of distinguishing Love and Favour; when he is constrained to say

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with

\* 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. † Hab. i. 16. ‡ Deut. viii. 18.

§ Prov. iii. 9.

with the Prophet, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my Soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the Garments of Salvation, he hath covered me with the Robe of Righteousness;"\* and in short, when he is most delighted with the Things of God, the Companion of his Bosom must be an Alien to the whole. She hath neither Lot nor Portion in all this; yea, though in one Sense she be Bone of his Bone, yet here she is a Stranger that intermeddleth not with his Joy. When his Heart rejoiceth, and his Tongue doth praise the Lord, her Heart is dead, and her Tongue is dumb, with Regard to any Assistance afforded him. Nay, she will resist and oppose, for she concludes that this Frame in her Husband, proceeds only from some light, vain, and airy Fit that took him; and to be either the Effect of Pride, Vain-Glory, and Self-Conceit; or of Folly, Phrenzy, and Madness. This will induce her to flight him now more than ever, her Scoffs and taunting Behaviour must now be to him a Thorn in the Flesh, the Messenger of Satan to buffet him. When *Michal* observed her Husband transported with divine Joy, leaping and dancing before the Ark of God, she despised him in her Heart; and when he came into his House to bless his Household, his Wife made him a cold Welcome. She went out to meet him, not to help

\* Isa. lxi. 10.

help on his Joy ; no, but to let him know what despicable Thoughts she entertained of him, when she looked out through the Window. She compares him to a *vain shameless Fellow*.\* Such Treatment at that Time, must no doubt damp his Spirit, and on a sudden ruffle his Temper, so that, instead of joining together to close the Solemnity of the Day, in praising and glorifying GOD for all his loving Kindness, they fall rather to Raillery and Banter.

Thus it is very disagreeable for a spiritual Person to be joined to one that is void of true Religion, even while he is in a prosperous State ; but where is the Man that hath the Candle of the ALMIGHTY always shining upon his Head ? Are not the Saints rather to expect Tribulation, Straits and Difficulties in this World ? Then two are better than one, for if they fall, the one will lift up his Fellow ; but wo to him that is alone when he falleth ; † yet, alas ! it is better to be alone in a Time of Distress, than to have one always present that will be sure to make the Burden heavier. I would add a few Observations upon adverse Circumstances.

SEASONS of common AFFLICTIONS and ADVERSITY. This must be expected, as it is the  
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\* 2 Sam. vi. 20, 21, 22. † Eccl. iv. 9, 10.

Lot of all Mankind. Many of these Seasons press heavy upon a godly Man, but if he hath an ungodly Wife, will she now assist him, and endeavour to comfort his dejected Heart, and lift up his weak Hands? Or will she not rather murmur and repine, and every now and then cast her Squibs at Religion, saying, *This is your Religion?* This will be a Sword in the Bones indeed, while she saith daily, *Where is thy God?*\* It does not appear that *Hagar* lift up her Voice to God in Prayer, but rather in a repining and distrustful Manner, bewailed her Circumstances. God heard the Voice of the Lad, it is not said, that he heard her Voice. †

**TIME OF TEMPTATION.** God will suffer his People to be tempted, though he is faithful, and will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape. § Pious *Abigail* produced her blessed Counsel, back'd with her wife and weighty Arguments, to remove *David's* Temptation, and prevented him from contracting Guilt, and much innocent Blood from being shed. || When *Manoah* looked upon himself as a dead Man, how prudent and pithy doth his Wife reason with him! ¶ But a graceless Wife will be too ready to imitate *Jezebel*, who, when her Husband coveted

\* Psa. xlii. 10. † Gen. xxi. 16, 17. § 1 Cor. x. 13.  
 || 1 Sam. xxv. 28, &c. ¶ Judg. xiii. 22, 23.

veted his Neighbour's Vineyard, advised him to take away his Life.\* *Haman's* Wife was such another.† It is not improbable that *Saphira* helped on her Husband in his Temptation, she was privy to it, and agreed with him.§ She did not act as *Abigail* did. *Job's* Wife plainly suggested that it was in vain for him to retain his Integrity, and wait GOD's Way and Time of Deliverance, in the Use of appointed Means; but she would have him take the nearest Way to get out of Trouble, right or wrong.|| Oh, what a Disadvantage is it to have an imprudent Wife when one is tempted!

TIME of SPIRITUAL DESERTION. While the Children of GOD are in the Wilderness, their FATHER doth often, for wise Ends, hide his Face from them, and then they are in Trouble.¶ When the Soul of a truly religious Man is cast down within him, so that he is overwhelmed with Sorrow, and ready to say, I am afraid GOD will be merciful no more:|||| Oh, what a miserable Comforter an irreligious Wife will be then! She will tell him, very probably, that the Whole proceeds from a melancholy Temper, too much Reading, Moping, and hearing Sermons; conversing too often with his canting Brethren, &c. If she  
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\* 1 Kings xxi. 7, 25. † Esth. v. 14. ‡ Acts v. 2, 9. || Job ii. 9. ¶ Psal. xxx. 7. Isa. viii. 17. |||| Ps. lxxvii. 2, 3, 4, 7.

is in a good Humour, she may advise him to divert and recreate himself among some merry Company, who will not mention any Thing about Religion; and perhaps she will add, that if he will not leave his religious Way, he will soon be besides himself. Alas! how cutting this must be to one that is already within a little of crying out, I am afflicted, and ready to die; while I suffer thy Terrors, I am distracted.\* But a really religious and experimental Wife, would take another Method upon such a trying Occasion. She would remind her Husband of the rich Promises, in their Freeness and Fulness; and would reason with him like *Manaoh's* Wife. Like a skilful Scribe, instructed unto the Kingdom of God, she would bring out of her Treasures, Things new and old. She would relate to him her own Experience, saying, like *Eliphaz*, I will shew thee, hear me, and that which I have seen, I will declare,† and, as *David*, declare what God had done for her Soul.‡ All her grave, serious, and seasonable Exhortations, shall be seconded and intermixed with secret and fervent Prayer, wrestling with God for her sorrowful Husband. When the HOLY SPIRIT is graciously pleased to bless her Advice, and answer her Petitions, the Soul of her lately dejected, but now refreshed Yoke-Fellow, will be drawn forth in such grateful Expressions

\* Psa. lxxxviii. 16. † Job xv. 17. ‡ Psa. lxxvi. 16.

pressions as these, “ My Dear, thou art an *Help meet* for me; many Daughters have done virtuously; but thou excellest them all.” A Woman that feareth the Lord should be praised.\* Give her the Fruit of her Hands, and let her own Works praise her in the Gates.

**TIME of open PERSECUTION.** Many of the Saints meet with the fiery Trial of Persecution, and no Man, when he doth marry, may be sure that it will not be his Lot before the conjugal Knot is dissolved. Will an unregenerate Wife at such a Time be agreeable? Will she administer Comfort, and encourage him to resign the Whole of his and her Concern unto GOD? Will she be like one of the Daughters of *Sarah*, who do well, and are not afraid with any Amazement?† Or like the religious Person, who is not afraid of evil Tidings, because his Heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD?‡ These excellent Qualifications are not to be expected in a Person, that doth not favour the Things that be of GOD, but those that be of Men; but it is rather to be supposed that she will take her Husband, and begin to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee. Her Language at such a Time may be, “ What Harm is it to bow the Knee now and then to *Baal*? To do Obedience

\* Prov. xxxi. 29, 30, 31. † 1 Pet. iii. 6. ‡ Psal. cxii. 7.

fance once to the Golden Image set up by *Nebuchadnezzar* the King; seeing all the Nobles and the Body of the People do it? Are you wiser than all the Empire? Do not the *Jews* themselves obey the King; excepting a few weak Persons, who indulge their stubborn Humour, or at least, unreasonable Scruples? If we do no greater Sin than that, I hope the LORD will pardon, and forgive our going sometimes to bow in the House of *Rimmon*; especially, when we do not reverence any Thing in our Heart with a divine Worship, but the true GOD: Therefore do not be so imprudently and foolishly scrupulous and precise." Thus she will persuade him to shun Persecution, but make very light of a good Conscience. If he still retain his Integrity, and will not observe her Advice, she may, like *Samson's* Wife, press him daily with her Words,\* and urge him to think of his Wife and Children, &c. Now if the perplexed Husband hath not quite yielded like *Samson*, what Answer can he return? If he says, Turn thou behind me *Satan*, that will exasperate her. If he say, What meanest thou, thus to reason, to weep, and to break my Heart? I am ready to suffer any Thing for the Sake of CHRIST, &c. Then she will conclude that all is gone; for she can find no Comfort in any Thing but some worldly Enjoyment,

\* Judg. xvi. 16.

ment, and therefore it will be in vain to make Use of spiritual or religious Arguments to satisfy her. Here again the good Man will be worse by far than if he had been without a Wife. Once more.

**TIME of SICKNESS and DEATH.** This a gracious Man is to look for; but will a carnal Wife be now a *Help meet*? far from it. Does he now want to converse about the other World, an Interest in CHRIST, Forgiveness of Sin, the Joys of Heaven, and such important Points? His Wife is ignorant of these Things, therefore she must be dumb, except he can talk to her about worldly Concerns, and those probably, that are quite impertinent at this Time. Would he have his Children carefully cultivated for GOD, and trained up in the Way they should go? He must not expect it from his Wife, but rather fear that Religion will die with him in his Family, and his poor Children be left to the Guidance of a blind Mother; and when the Blind leads the Blind, what must follow? Would he administer any Consolation and Cordial to his Wife, he is now like to leave behind in the World! Oh, how gladly would he do it! but what could he say? would he comfort her with the comprehensive Promises of the Covenant of Grace, that are made to all the People of GOD? Alas! how can he do that, when

he cannot, in Conscience, conclude that she is a Child of God, but rather fear, that not one of those rich promises doth belong to her? Would he exhort her not to mourn as one without Hope? This will not do, for it does not appear that ever she understood what a good Hope through Grace was. Shall he address her thus? “ My dear Wife, “ you have been the Partner of my Sorrow and “ Joy in the Wilderness; very pleasant have you “ been to me, your Love to me was wonderful, “ like *Jonathan’s Love to David*.\* You have “ been my faithful Yoke-Fellow. In every Trou- “ ble you bore your Part with me. Now do not “ be discouraged, GOD will be with you, the re- “ maining Part of your Time in the Wilderness. “ We must part, but it will be for a short Time; “ you will soon follow me to the Regions of Light, “ Glory, and Bliss, a delightful Immortality, of “ which we often conversed together with Satis- “ faction, &c.” Oh! no, no: This his Conscience will not allow him to do in the important Hour; for he can reflect with Sorrow how it has been in Time past; and for any Thing that he can see, he is now about to take his everlasting Farewel. Did she bear and nourish up Children for him? Did she eat and drink with him daily? Yea, like *Uriah’s Wife*, eat of his own Meat, and drank of his own Cup, and lay in his Bosom? What!

\* 2 Sam. i. 26.

What! and now part for ever! One to Light, and the other to Darkneſs! How pungent the Thought! Who can explore it to the Bottom?

Theſe are a few of the many evil Conſequences, and numerous Diſadvantages, which a pious Perſon, whether Man or Woman, is to expect from the unadviſed Choice of an impious Yoke-Fellow. I ſhall now conſider an Objection that may be made.

1. A godly Man may marry one whom he knew to be a ſtrict Profeſſor of Religion, and he hoped ſhe was really a gracious and virtuous Perſon; yet it is not impoſſible for him to meet with theſe Diſadvantages.

*Anſ.* Then ſhe proved to be a great Hypocrite, and conſequently worſe than the common Sort of Sinners; but notwithstanding that, if his Conſcience bears him Witneſs, that he expected the Bleſſing of GOD upon his upright and regular Proceeding at firſt, he cannot meet with ſo many of the evil Conſequences, nor the Diſadvantages; though he was diſappointed, yet he hath more Peace in his own Mind. But if his Conſcience ſuggeſted to him before hand, that ſhe was but a mere Profeſſor, and not religious indeed, then he acted very wrong. His End, Aim, and Deſign, could not be right, therefore theſe Judgments came upon him juſtly and deſervedly; for he made of her Profeſſion, but a Cloak to co-

ver some By-end and low Design. If a Christian doth marry a Person whose Grace he greatly suspects, it is but a very shallow Excuse for him to say, She professed Religion; for therein he acts different to what any wise Man would do in temporal Affairs. Who would marry a Wife for the Sake of her Fortune, and at the same Time doubt, whether she be worth a Groat in the World? the Application is easy.

*Quest.* Should a pious Man mind any Thing but Grace in the Choice of a Wife?

*Ans.* Yes; he should mind several Things besides, such as these,

1. He should, as far as he is capable, consider what might be her chief Motive and Inducement to accept of his Addresses; whether it be his Estate, Person, Parts, Eloquence, good Temper, or the like; or doth she admire his Grace chiefly. If so, her Motive is just; for in entering into the State of Wedlock, I apprehend that the Woman should weigh the Matter, as well as the Man, and follow the same Rules; she ought to be as free and as cautious in her Choice as he should be. If she does not proceed in the Fear of God, she may meet with all the evil Consequences and Disadvantages mentioned already, and many more. I only consider the Man as addressing, and the Woman as accepting or not accepting; and she should with much Concern lay the Case before  
GOD,

**GOD**, praying that she may be directed aright; whether it be her Duty to accept or reject.

2. Natural Temper should be considered. It is not enough that the Man and the Woman be truly gracious; there ought to be a Suitableness of Temper and Disposition. A Disposition and Humour may be very agreeable to one Man, but as disagreeable and unsuitable to another.

3. Some Proportion in Age, Person, Education, and Quality, ought to be minded. A great Difference in Age is not very suitable, or agreeable. If he cannot love her Person, he should not make Choice of her as a Wife. I may have a great Regard for a Person, as a valuable Christian, yet I might not love her Person as a Wife. As to Education and Quality, it is neither eligible nor convenient to have the Difference very wide either Way. If she is far superior to him, they are like to be a continual Burden to each other, for he knows not how to behave himself according to her Degree and Rank, nor she according to his. If she is far inferior to him, she is not capable of managing his Affairs in the World, and then she is like to be more a Hindrance than a Help to him. Neither can they so much as converse together, to mutual Satisfaction, when there is a great Disproportion in their Education.

4. I would not be understood as undervaluing the Things of this Life, as not at all to be minded

minded by a Christian; but my Design is, that Grace should by no Means be neglected, whatever else may be deficient. He may lawfully eye the Things of Time, either in his own Possession, or that of the Person he eyes, as the Object of his Choice, as subordinate Means of their Well-Being here. Nay, Persons ought to consider, whether they be like to live comfortably with what of the World they are like to have. They should beware of Snares.

*Quest.* What if two be married while in an unconverted State, and afterward one is called by the Grace of God, while the other continues as before; is the Marriage Band in such a Case dissolved? If not, the godly Person must labour under the fore-mentioned Disadvantages. What Course is he to take?

*Ans.* To the first, the Marriage Bond is not dissolved, they are in that Respect, as nearly related as before; for the unbelieving Husband is sanctified by, or to the Wife; and the unbelieving Wife is sanctified by, or to the Husband. *1 Cor. vii. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.* To the other Question, I shall answer, by giving the Converted Person the following Directions:

1. Let him earnestly pray for the Conversion of his Yoke-Fellow.
2. Let the converted Person convince the other by constant Practice, that Religion doth not forbid or hinder, but command  
and

and encourage the mutual Duties of Man and Wife. Religion should always make the Man a better Husband, and the Woman a better Wife.

3. Let the pious Person, whether it be the Man or the Woman, by plain Example, shew the other that Religion is not a bare Name, but that the more religious any one is, the better he is qualified to manage any temporal Affairs or Occurrences in Life. He will proceed more regular and prudent. 4. Let that Person by a favourable and prudent Conversation, and particularly at proper Seasons, well timed, endeavour to persuade the other to see the Beauty of Religion, and the Deformity of Vice, together with the miserable Consequences of this, but the glorious Conclusion of that. What knowest thou, O Wife, whether thou shalt save thy Husband? Or how knowest thou, O Man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife? *1 Cor. vii. 16.*

5. Finally, if all will be ineffectual, let the pious Person, exercise himself to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God, and toward Men, bearing the Cross with Patience, praying for much Wisdom, and in Meekness still instructing the other, if, peradventure, God will one Time or other, give Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth.

Now I shall close the Whole with a Word of Exhortation to the Husbands that have religious  
and

and agreeable Wives, and to the Wives that have pious and loving Husbands. Prize and value your Privileges. Be very thankful for them. Remember they are the Gift of God, and what a precious Gift they be. Look over their Infirmities, and cover them with Love; there is no sinless Perfection here. Think of your own Imperfection, with Care and Impartiality. Endeavour to render the Life of your pious Yoke-Fellows, as comfortable as you possibly can. Pray often for them in particular. Read carefully the Scripture, that you may know your own Duty. Beware, lest you should be too severe in observing their Duty, but forgetting your own too much. Look upon it as a very distinguishing Mercy, that you are Heirs together of the Grace of Life, and let it be your Study how to live as such. *1 Pet, iii.*

F I N I S.