

*The word of God the
young man's best directory*

by

Edmund Calamy



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*The word of GOD the Young Man's best
Directory.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd to a
SOCIETY of Young-Men

IN
Silver-Street:

On *May* 28. 1725. the Birth-Day of His
Majesty King GEORGE.

*And now publish'd at their Common
Request.*

By EDMUND CALAMY, D.D.

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PSALM CXIX. 9.

*Wherewithal shall a young
Man cleanse his Way?
by taking heed thereto, ac-
cording to thy Word.*



THE serious Instructions and Admonitions that are contained in this Glorious *Psalm*, were design'd to be of Use, to every Age of Life without Exception. We have here a Sort of Directory, to guide in the sure Way to Heaven and Happiness, from the Cradle to the Grave: A Directory concise enough, for those whose Lives are cut the shortest; and at the same time comprehensive enough, for those whose Lives reach to the utmost Date. The Thing that is admirably here illustrated is this; that in every Period of humane Life from first to last, in Youth or Age, in Health or Sicknes, in Prosperity or Adversity, the Word of God is the surest Preservative and the safest Guide; yields the greatest Comfort, and the most solid Satisfaction. And a feeling Conviction of this, could not but be of general and. lasting Use to us all.

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BUT there is no Part of Humane Life, wherein such a Directory as this is more needful, or more useful, it be but duly *heeded*, than in the Morning of it,; whilst Persons are yet *young* and tender, and tho' destitute of Experience, yet comparatively free from the defiling, hurrying and Mattering Impressions of vain and busy World. This is the Season, in which a subtle Devil with great Eagerness puts in for the Ascendant: And if he carries his Point, a Recovery is afterwards very difficult, and Misery and Ruin is the common Consequence. The Blessed GOD also at the same Time puts in his Claim; and if He so far prevails as that He is listen'd to, if his *Word* be but chosen as the Compass to Steer by, and follow'd accordingly, the greatest Dangers of Life are avoided, and be that longer or shorter as to its Continuance, the End of it is full of Peace and Comfort.

YOUTH is an Age that is apt to be unstable, and is liable to more Temptations than can easily be reckon'd up; and they are of such a Nature, that to many they seem insuperable: And yet a serious *heeding the Word of GOD*, will even then be a Preservative. *Young* People are commonly vain and freakish; and this would be a Bridle to keep them in. *Young* ones are impure, but this, would cleanse them. There is no one Thing in which *Youth* are more concern'd than the fixing upon a proper Course of Life, which they may spend their Days in pursuing; and there is no Method they can take in which they can reasonably expect to prosper, if the *Word* and Law of GOD be not fix'd on as the Guide and Counsellor: But if that be adher'd to and follow'd, Happiness may be depend on as the certain Consequence.

HOLY *David* in all his Writings appears clear in these Things, but is no where more so, than in this *Psalm*, of which my Text is a Part. In the Verses that go before the Words I, have pitch'd on for your present Entertainment, he gives us to understand, That whosoever were undetermin'd, or howsoever others might differ from him, he was come to a full and final Resolution as to himself. Having declar'd, that walking in the Law of the Lord,
and

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and keeping his Testimonies, and seeking him with the whole Heart; and walking in his Ways, and keeping his Precepts diligently, was the only true Method of reaching consummate Blessedness, he sends a serious Aspiration upwards for divine Assistance, saying, *O that my Ways were directed to keep thy Statutes!* And then he presently signifies how he was dispos'd, and what a Pass he was come to: Let others, says he, take what Course they please, *I will keep thy Statutes*, divine Grace enabling me: And such sort of Declarations he oft repeats throughout the whole *Psalm*.

Ver. 2.

Ver. 3.

4.

Ver. 5.

Ver. 8.

HAVING thus proclaim'd his fix'd Purpose and Resolution, he in my Text starts this material Question; *Wherewithal shall a young Man cleanse his Way?* q. d. How shall a young Man, such as I am, in an Age that is very prone to Evil, be able to keep such a Resolution as this? I have indeed fixedly determin'd that I will be careful and faithful in my Duty, and watchful against Sin: But how can that find my vicious Inclinations so strong and impetuous; that am so weak and without Strength; so raw and unfurnish'd for the Resistance of such an Enemy as I have to do with how shall I that have so many bad Examples before me, and so many insnaring Temptations surrounding me, ever be able to reach my End? How can I hope to succeed? How shall I ever be able to escape so many Dangers as threaten me? It cannot be any other-wise than under the Direction of the *Word of GOD*. *According to that* therefore will I take heed to my *Way*; that will I continually observe: By the Help of the Grace of *GOD*, I'll make it the Business of my Life, to follow its Rules and Directions, and order my Steps according to it. And happy, thrice happy they, who in their early Days thus resolve, and act agreeably.

So that we may observe in my Text, a short Question, and as short and plain an Answer. The Question is close; and the Answer full. The *Psalmist* enquires after the best Way of regulating the Conduct of *Youth*; and with the same Breath he declares he had found it out. The Question he puts, is in reality very weighty and serious, and yet

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yet to many it appears ridiculous. To talk of regulating *Youth*, (say they) is idle and foolish. 'Tis like backing Colts too soon, which is the ready way to spoil them. With such People as these, 'tis but Labour in vain to attempt it. For Youth is the time for the Reins to be let loose, and the Desires to be gratify'd. If you go to check Persons in that Age, you sour their Tempers: But give 'em their Liberty, and you'll keep 'em in heart, and may hope that by Degrees they'll get Experience, and that Wisdom will come, as their Years advance. But this is a sort of Reasoning that is very unaccountable; since Life itself may be so easily gone, before that Age arrives, which it might be thought should bring Wisdom along with it. I will refer you to one with whom I should think they that talk and argue at such a rate as this should not have the Face to compare themselves for Wisdom, and that is *Solomon*; who gives you that are young, fair Scope to gratify your Inclinations to the full, and then comes in the close of his License with a severe Check, which being well consider'd, might give you a clear View of the Folly of irregular Courses. *Rejoyce*, says he, *O young Man in thy Youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the Days of thy Youth, and walk, in the Ways of thy Heart, and in the Sight of thine Eyes: But, then says he at length, know thou that for all these Things GOD will bring thee into Judgment.* When therefore the vain World whispers this in your Ears, These and these are but the Tricks of Youth, for which Allowance must be made; stop your Ears, and don't regard such Insinuations, if you value your Souls. Remember that unless you repent of the Sins of your Youth, and review them with great Bitterness and Sorrow of Heart, and break off from them by an holy Life, GOD won't fail of bringing you into Judgment. He will severely punish you for all your Criminal Vagaries, with Torments infinitely greater than any of the Delights could be that your youthful Sallies could be attended with. We have not therefore the least Occasion to wonder that the setting Youth right, and the *giving to the young Man Knowledge and Discretion*, should have been the

Care

Eccles.
xi. 9.

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Care and Concern of Wise and Good Men in all Ages of the World. This is a Thing that is not to be neglected; for it admits of no Delay: And if it be then deferr'd, so happy an Opportunity of bringing them to themselves, is not afterwards to be retriev'd, nor can the Loss of it be compensated.

THE Question then here started by the *Psalmist* is most important. It implies Necessity, but such as has great Difficulty attending it. Were it not highly necessary to have Youth set right, and yet at the same time very difficult to effect it, the Question would not have been put so warmly and closely, and with such an Appearance of hearty Concern.

AND as to the Answer or Resolution given, that is compriz'd in a very few Words. If young Ones would *cleanse their Way*, 'tis declar'd it must be, *by taking heed thereto according to the Word*, There are other Means that in their Place, may be of some Use, to preserve such as are young from several particular Sins and Follies, or to cleanse them when they are polluted: And no Means that are safe and warrantable, that have any aptness or tendency to serve so good an End, as the *cleansing the Ways of Youth*, should be neglected: But when all is said that the Case will admit of, no such Expedient can be proposed, as that of following the Directions of the *Word of GOD*. This is a Method of reaching the End mentioned that is safe and sure; a Method that is so plain that it is easy to be understood, and at the same time so effectual, that it need not be fear'd it should fail of Success.

THIS then is the *Doctrinal Conclusion* on which our Thoughts may fasten, That *the following the Word of GOD, is the best Way to keep even a Young Man clean, and bring him safe to true Blessedness.*

IT will here be my Endeavour, distinctly to shew,

I. THAT even a young Man needs to have his *Way cleansed.*

II. THAT

II. THAT the following *the Word of GOD*, is the most effectual Means to reach this end.

III. THAT the youngest, that have reach'd the the Use of Reason, may by this Course be brought safe to true Blessedness. And then,

IV. I'll set before you the Improvableness of this Thought, with respect both to Younger and Elder Persons: Which being clear'd, it will be natural enough to subjoyn in the Close of my Discourse, somewhat that may not be unsuitable to the present Day of Rejoycing and Festivity.

I. THEN, let us observe, That even a *young Man* needs to have his *Way cleansed*. The *Psalmist's* Question in the Text plainly supposes it, and, does not carry in it any thing of Dubiousness, or Uncertainty. Safely may we lay it down with ourselves for a certain Truth, That such as are *young* as truly need to have their *Way cleansed*, as those that are advanc'd in Years, in whom Sin is rivetred by Custom, and who are harden'd in their evil Ways. There is it must be own'd, a great Difference between the one and the other, as to the Circumstances and Degrees of Impurity: And yet it is as true that a Youth of Sixteen or Eighteen stands in need of having his *Way cleansed*, as a Man of Sixty. I shall briefly set the Evidence of this before you under Six several Heads, and draw Arguments in order to your Conviction, from the naturalness of inherent Corruption, from the earliness of visible Irregularities, from the common Impetuoussness of Lust in the Morning of Life, from the Nature of those Follies to which Youth is peculiarly addicted, from the Strength of the Temptations which then encompass them, and from the bitter Complaints and Moans of pious Persons on the account of youthful Sallies.

I. NATURAL Corruption makes it evident, that young Ones need to have their *Ways cleansed*. And this Corruption is not peculiar to some, but
common

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common to all. Tho' Man was pure and innocent at his first Formation, yet since the Fall of our first Parents, an hereditary Contagion is propagated from Age to Age, together with the Human Nature. Tho' the Natural Image of GOD still remains, yet his Moral Image is lost; and in the stead of it, an Alienation from the Divine Life is now become natural. The several Powers of the Soul are depraved; and the sensual Inclination which when predominant is so brutish, and makes us so like the Beasts that perish, has got the Mastery. Reason is enslav'd, fetter'd and pinion'd, and we are apt to act as if we were all Body, notwithstanding that according to our Original Make and Frame, we were but little lower than the Angels. Nor can it be otherwise with us, as Things now stand. For that which is *horn of the Flesh is Flesh*. And *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.* Joh. iii. 6. Job

SINCE then there is a moral Uncleaness in the Sight of GOD attending all, as they are born into this World, they that are young need to be purify'd as well as taught. There must be a *Cleansing* as well as a *Guiding*. The Fountain must be made pure, that the Streams may be so too. And the Necessity of this, is what is pointed at by that *Baptismal Washing*, which our Lord JESUS has obliged his Followers to submit to, as is plain from his telling them, *That except a Man be born of Water and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD*. And the Sense of the great Needfulness of this *Cleansing* is generally deepest, where there is most Experience of the Grace of GOD.

2. THE visible Irregularity of most young Ones from their very Infancy, may farther contribute to our Conviction in this Case. And of these early Enormities we may discourse with Freedom, notwithstanding that as to the general Corruption [[?????]] the Human Nature, we are much in the dark [[?????]] cause of the Difficulty of accounting for th[[?????]] and manner of its Conveyance. It is very [[?????]] meet with any, in whom we may not ea[[?????]] ver fomething of a stubborn Heading[?????]

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Ps. lviii.
3.

certain vicious Propension, even from their Cradles. We plainly see Children, *enranged from the Womb, and going astray as soon as they be born, speaking Lies*. Easily may we observe them ready to clip the Truth, even when they can but stammer, and have scarce Sense enough to be capable of understanding it to be a Fault. How soon may we discern in them the workings of Pride and Self-will, Envy and Malignity! We may speak diminutively of such Things as these, because of the Weakness of the but budding Capacities of the little Creatures, and make them the Matter of our Diversion, (in which I doubt some run too far) and yet strictly speaking, they are plain Irregularities, and but too evidently appear such, when they come to ripen, and produce their natural Fruits. How much more impressive do we find young Ones commonly by Vanity and Folly, than by what tends to serious Piety and Religion! And how fast will the former Impressions stick, while the latter soon wear off, and are easily lost?

'Tis true, there is a certain sort of *Ευφύια*, as the Philosophers commonly used to call it, a certain Goodness of natural Temper, that some are born with, that is a great Advantage. It must not be deny'd, but that here and there some Few are to be met with, who give early Discoveries, of such a sweetness and pliability of Temper, and such a Disposition to Acts of Benignity, as is truly amiable, and tends to render 'em Common Blessings. As the Want of this in others is much to be lamented, so wherever any thing of this Nature is experienced by any, there ought to be a peculiar Thankfulness to God for his Goodness, for to Him it is wholly to be ascrib'd. But whatever good Inclinations are now born with any, or appear in 'em as they grow up, they are but comparatively Good, and the Irregularities which they run into from the first, are still many. If we take those [?????] best natural Disposition that are to be met [?????]y where, and search and canvass them [?????]and endeavour to trace them in their [?????]their first Spring and Fountain-head, [?????]such an Impurity as makes *Cleansing* absolutely

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absolutely necessary. And should any even of those who as to their natural Endowments or Dispositions are the most distinguish'd, pretend to swell in their own Conceits, and offer to say *they had no Sin*, they needed no *Cleansing*, they would but *deceive themselves, and the Truth would not be in them.*

1 Joh. i. 8.

3. A young Man's needing to have *his Way cleansed*, farther appears from the impetuosity of Lust, in that early Age of Life. It's true the Stream is not alike strong in every Current: But if we take it, as running in that Channel that is made for it by the Constitution and Temperament of the Body, we shall find it has a mighty Force. It often swells at such a Rate, that it is the hardest thing in the World to keep it down. It carries all before it through the Violence of the Tide. Let a Youth for Instance be naturally of a jovial Make, and inclin'd to Pastime and sensual Mirth, and you'll find he'll be apt to act, as if he were purely made for the Gratification of that Inclination, and had nothing else to mind; and run on with an Eagerness and Vehemence, that hardly any Considerations that can be offer'd shall be able to abate. That's an Age in which the Blood is warm, and the Spirits are brisk and nimble, and nothing is then ingag'd in but what is pursu'd with Eagerness. And the Eagerness with which that Corruption which has the Ascendant is usually then gratify'd, has such Consequences attending it, as makes a *Cleansing* highly needful.

4. THE Nature of those Follies to which Youth is peculiarly addicted, makes their being cleansed necessary. 'Tis indeed a very affecting Thing to observe many make so light of these as they do: 'Tis a Sign they never weigh'd them in the Balance of the Sanctuary. For we find *youthful Lusts*, in Holy Writ reckon'd very considerable. We may gather it, from St. Paul's not counting it improper to warn such an one as *Timothy* against them. When he was writing even to a Person of his Eminence, and that with all possible Seriousness, about his Conduct, he gives him this Charge among others, *flee also youthful Lusts*. Thereby plainly intimating, that his Care in other Respects

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ii. .

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would not do, if youthful Lusts were not carefully avoided. Every Age has its peculiar Lusts; and it is so with Youth as well as any other Age: And youthful Lusts do as truly defile, as those that are incident to more advanced Years; and therefore they make *Cleansing* needful.

WILFULNESS, Giddiness, Impatience of Restraint, addictedness to Pleasure. Ambition, and Vain-glory, Curiosity and Envy, Drunkenness and Uncleaness, which too often rage and discover themselves even in the Morning of Life, as far as Opportunities for the gratifying such vicious Inclinations offer, (and 'tis very evident that the Inclination may boil within, tho' Opportunities for a Gratification do not offer) are all very defiling Things. And if these are *youthful Lusts*, and there be not a *Cleansing*, I may leave it to any of you to judge what Possibility there can be, of any Communion with GOD now, or any Enjoyment of Him hereafter.

5. I argue also in this Case from the Strength of the Temptations with which Youth are encompass'd. They that are young are commonly both ignorant and unexperienc'd, and apt to be rash and precipitant. They are often discourag'd from Seriousness thro' Fear of Melancholy. They have a Prospect of a good deal of Time before them, and it seems hard to let the Season of Liberty and Pleasure pass over them, and they all the while keep in the Exercise of a strict Self-Denial. They are apt to be prejudic'd against the Advices and Remonstrances of Elder Persons, whom they reckon too nice and squeemish, and too much addicted to the Methods of former Times; whereas the Age is now refin'd. Nor is there any Thing wherewith their Companions in Gaiety more commonly entertain them, than with representing that as Dulness in those of more advanc'd Years, which is really the Fruit of Experience. Their Superiors seem past the Relish, of the Things of which their Equals have the full Gust, and therefore they are the more inclinable to prefer the Report of the latter. They for their Part are but ascending the Hill, and are often told 'twill do well enough to think

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think of growing grave and demure, when they come to the Descent on the other Side. These and a hundred more, that might be mention'd, are their Temptations; and they are all heighten'd by Strength of Fancy. The Devil, their Flesh, the World, and their Companions, all press them hard, to make Trial at least, of such Things as are offer'd, that so they may be able to judge for themselves. And how know they, but they may find a Way to join Sin and Happiness together, tho' none could ever do it before them. And when once they are engag'd, they are lur'd on from one Step to another, till a Retreat becomes the most difficult Thing in the World.

WHILE Persons are young, let them look which way they will, they find something that is tempting, to be remiss in their Duty, and give Scope to their vagrant Inclinations, without fearing the Consequences. If they regard the Vigour of their Youth, or the Time they have before them, or the Novelty of the Things they are tempted to, or the Easiness of a Retreat, if upon Trial, they should not find their Expectations answer'd they are apt to think that those overdo, that are the most free in their Invectives against Sin and Vice. And when they consider the Number and Pleasantness of their Companions, and how many Dangers they have been threaten'd with, which they have fairly escap'd, and how many and common have been the youthful Slips and Failures of such as have afterwards prov'd valuable and useful Men; they perswade themselves, that they may come off much better, than the Grave Remonstrances of their Instructors and Reprovers, would lead 'em to apprehend. Let them look which way they will, they meet with that which makes Irregularities and Follies appear as tolerable in them, as in any Persons whatsoever. And tho' this is but a poor Excuse, yet it is what the Generality of 'em at last take up with. And when the Mounds and Fences are thus broken through, and Sin is made light of, and sported with, and roll'd as a sweet Morsel under the Tongue, without dread of the Consequence, notwithstanding all the Warnings that can be given,
how

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how can we wonder that there should be great need of *cleansing*?

Ps. xxxv.
7.

Job xiii.
26.

6. AND lastly, the same Thing also appears, from the bitter Complaints and Moans of many pious Persons, upon the account of youthful Irregularities. *David* was under no small Concern upon this account; and hence was that Affectionate Prayer of his; *Remember not the Sins of my Youth, nor my Transgressions: According to thy Mercy remember thou me, for thy Goodness Sake, O Lord.* Pious *Job* also looking up to God, cries out in the Agony of his Spirit, *thou writest bitter Things against me, and makest me to possess the Iniquities of my Youth.* And there have been several that have concurred with him in the same Cry, even tho' they have been kept from gross and scandalous Enormities in their early Days. For tho' they have not run into the same Excess of Riot with some others, yet when they have found the Hand of God heavy upon 'em in then advanced Years, and they have look a back carefully, and considered their Ways, they have been very sensible, that should their early Faults be visited upon 'em with Severity, their Case would lie most deplorable. They have found great need of *cleansing*, as well as of a Pardon, and cry'd out for it, as Persons sensible that they were utterly undone without it. And indeed these are two Things that go together, and tho' they are different in their Nature, yet they cannot be separated. Whosoever need a Pardon, must also be *cleansed*; and they that cannot do without the one, must have the other too. And therefore if such as are young need to have Sin pardon'd, (and who can doubt of that!) they need also to have their *Way cleansed*.

PERHAPS some may be for running back to their Baptism, and argue from thence against the Need of being *cleansed*. They may say, we were wash'd from our Sins at the Font, when Water was pour'd on us, in the Name of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, at which Time all Sin was done away: And what need then of any farther *cleansing*? But they are miserable Instructors, that

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that teach this for found Christian Doctrine. Let these People fancy what they will, under the Pretence of heightening the Value of Divine Institutions, they hazard the Ruin of Thousands of Souls. But I pray Sirs consider, is there no Difference between washing with Water, which naturally cleanses from bodily Defilement, but goes no farther; and the experiencing the renewing influence of the SPIRIT of GOD to *cleanse* the Soul? Is there no Difference between using the outward Sign which our Blessed SAVIOUR has appointed, and the experiencing the Thing that was intended to be thereby signify'd? Is there any necessary Connexion, between bodily washing, and spiritual *cleansing*? Nay is it not evident that they often are actually separated, and that the one goes without the other? Was not *Simon* the Sorcerer baptiz'd, and that by one of our Lord's Apostles too? But did not the very same Apostle as baptiz'd him, tell him afterwards, that *his Heart was not right in the Sight of God*; and that *he perceivd, he was still in the Gall of Bitterness, and the Bond of Iniquity*? And did he not then need farther *cleansing*? Acts viii.
21, 23.

THOU Friend wer'r cleansed in thy Baptism: But whence I pray came the after Impurities that have appear'd in thy Temper and Life? Whence came that Aversion to what is good, (and especially what is spiritually so) and that Proneness to Evil, that is so visible in thee? Does not this make it evident, that a farther *Cleansing* is necessary? Or suppose we that the Sign and the Thing signify'd, did through a special Divine Blessing go together in thy Case: Or that the latter follow'd the former, and thou art inwardly renew'd, as well as outwardly wash'd: Yet have not many Spots appear'd upon thee since? And must there not be a suitable *Cleansing*? The Thing so plainly speaks for itself, that I can't see 'twill bear an Argument. And therefore passing it by, I proceed to the

II. SECOND Head propos'd, *viz.* To shew that the following the Word of GOD, is the best Way, and most effectual Means, by which
a young

a *young Man's Way* can be *cleansed*. We are here pointed to the *Word*. That must we study and converse with, and from that we must take our Measures. We must follow it as a Rule; and there it is the Stress is to be laid. For there may be an Acquaintance with the *Word*, as to the Matter and Substance of it: The History, the Doctrines, the Notions, the Precepts, the Promises and the Patterns of it may be very distinctly known to us, and yet the Heart and the Life may remain as impure as ever. It is the *taking heed to the Ways according to the Word*, that alone will *cleanse*. And here I move we should consider,

1. THAT all other Things, even those that seem to bid the fairest, do in this Case prove ineffectual. And

2. THAT this Method of *taking heed to the Ways according to the Word*, may be depended on as to its Efficacy and Success. This will certainly *cleanse*.

1. THEN, let us observe, that all other Things, even they that seem to bid the fairest, do in this Case prove ineffectual. Many are the Experiments that have been try'd to keep Youth right, and either to preserve from running into Sin and Folly, or to recover from Extravagance, and bring to Regularity afterwards; but they have not had the desir'd Success. None of them all, without taking the Method which the Text directs to, would or could help a *young Man thoroughly to cleanse his Way*: They would not do without the *Word*. I'll here give you some Instances in a narrow Compass.

PHILOSOPHY won't do in this Case. That is a Thing of which I must freely own I am willing to entertain as good an Opinion, as any Man can prove it deserves. I am entirely of Solomon's Mind, that *Wisdom excelleth Folly, as far as Light excelleth Darkness*. I am satisfy'd none despise *Philosophy*, but such as are ignorant, and therefore no competent Judges of its Worth. It is a Thing which without all question, may much enoble and improve the Minds of Men. It may excite such as are seriously dispos'd, the more carefully to glorify GOD. It may furnish with some good Rules of Practise

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Practise, and good Examples too, in some Particulars that are remarkable: And a great many other Things may be said in its Commendation. But make the most of it, it won't help *a young Man thoroughly to cleanse his Way*. It may help to recover from grosser Immoralities which are against natural Conscience, and are disgraceful, and would therefore lessen the Capacity of publick Service; but it won't go to the Root of the Malady that has seiz'd us, cure that natural Corruption which is the Spring of our actual Disorders, or produce an habitual Conformity to GOD in the Room of it. The most celebrated among our ancient Philosophers seem to have been sensible themselves of the Insufficiency of their Morality for a Cure in the Case of Youth, in that they refus'd to admit young People to those Lectures in which the several Virtues and Vices were laid open, and the Moral Principles that obtain'd among them were distinctly explain'd. They thought 'em to be too much under the Government of Passion, for it to be hoped that any great Impression should be this way made upon them. They rather apprehended that good Counsel and Advice would be lost and thrown away upon them. And when some of the most celebrated Masters of this Sort, have in this Case been more modest, than to pretend to be able to work a Cure, I think we should but expose our Weakness, and betray our Folly, should we expect one, from their Dictates and Admonitions.

AGAIN; neither can Parents or Masters, tho' ever so tender, ever so concern'd, ever so well-qualify'd to act their Part in the Conduct of young People, be able to help them thoroughly to *cleanse their Ways*. They may instruct and admonish, persuade and warn; and by a variety of Considerations propos'd, encourage to what is Good, and deter from what is amiss: They may correct for Faults, and endeavour to govern by suitable Hopes and Fears: And yet when all is done, that is within their Reach, we often find, they may sooner break the Hearts of the young People they are dealing with, aye, and their own Hearts too, than, they shall be able to bring them off from their ill Customs and Practises, or prevail with them to fall

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fall in with what most evidently for their Interest both here and hereafter. How often do we hear tender Parents complaining in the Bitterness of their Spirits, that they have taken all possible Care of the Fruit of their own Bowels, no Pains have been wanting, they have used all the most likely Means they could think of with them, and yet they will obstinately tend to their Ruin, both as to Soul and Body, in his World and another too. In reality, the utmost Care of Parents, Schoolmasters, Ministers or Magistrates, won't be sufficient to keep Youth from Vice, if the Word of God be disregarded.

AGAIN: neither will good examples do in this Case. They are it must be own'd a very great Advantage; and if they are but carefully minded, they may very helpful; and it is the unquestionable Duty of such as have a Concern in the Education of those that are young, to furnish 'em with such Examples, as far as it is their Power, that by covering freely with them, they may grow like them: And yet it cannot, it must not be pretended, that their Influence will be sufficient for a Cure. For, besides that bad Examples are so commonly mix'd with good, and do so much out-number them, that 'tis one of the difficultest Things in the World, in making a Choice to keep to the good ones only, and to keep free from such as are bad; besides this, I say, the very Best have their Faults, and they are sooner singled out for Imitation, than their Vertues. Nay, and many times, what is discerned that is ill and amiss in those that are recommended to young ones as good Examples for them to imitate, shall be made use of to prejudice them against any Thing that is truly laudable in such Persons, and keep them from imitating 'em in any Thing that is good. And after all, the best Company that is, may be freely converted with for many Years, and yet there may be neither Agreeableness nor Like through a rivetted Malignity.

AND finally, neither the Ordinaces nor the Providences of GOD, tho' they are ever so instructive or affecting, will of themselves be sufficient

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Helene in this Case. They may startle the young Sinner, but cannot of themselves recover him. They may give him a Jogg, and set, his Conscience a little to work; but if Corruption be freely indulg'd to it, will soon lay him as fast asleep as ever. They may hinder him in several Respects from being so bad as he otherwise would be: But they cannot *cleanse* and cure him. However,

2. THO' these and other Things besides that might be mention'd, may fail, yet the Method which my *Text* mentions may be depended on, as to its Efficacy and Success. Let but a *young Man take heed to his Way, according to the Word*, and it shall sufficiently *cleanse* it. This Method will succeed. For,

1. THE *Word* of GOD sufficiently instructs in all the Instances of Purity, and warns against all Sorts of Defilement. It goes to the Bottom of the Sore, and shews the true Deformity of Sin. And when once it is throughly set home upon the Conscience. It discovers that Malignity in the Heart against GOD and true Goodness, as was never taken notice of before. It shews gross Defects attending the most specious Performances, in the Service of God, and considerable Spots and Blurs in those Things which were before commonly made use of as Fuel for Pride, and Props of Self confidence, It displays the provoking Aggravations attending some particular Faults, that were but little heeded before; and at the same time, shews the true Beauty of Holiness, so as to enamour with it, and make every Part and Branch of it appear superlatively excellent. It *converts the Soul*, and *makes wise the Simple*, and *enlightens the Eyes*. It compleatly discovers what we are to do, and what to avoid, and upon what Grounds and Reasons; Reasons that are cogent and unanswerable. And therefore it appears most plainly, that while and as long as a Man *takes heed* to it and closely follows it, no Impurity can prevail in him.

Psal. xix.
7, 8.

2. THE *Word* furnishes with powerful Arguments against the most dangerous Temptations that offer. Let the Devil come with his crafty Insinuations, persuading to do as others, in Hope

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Ps. xvii.
4.

of coming off as well as they at the last, the *Word* warns of the Displeasure of the ALMIGHTY, which no Companions in Sin can help their Partners, either to bear or to escape. And this *David* had in his Eye, when he cries out, *By the Word of thy Lips I have kept myself from the Path of the Destroyer.* When the World presents itself to the unwary young Man's Embraces, endeavouring to charm him by its flattering Sweetness, and persuade him that no such Entertainment is any where to be met with, as may be hoped for in its Pursuit and Enjoyment, the *Word* presents him with GOD's strict and positive Demand, *My Son, give me thy Heart, and let thine Eyes observe my Ways:* A Demand so reasonable, that there is none that seriously considers it, but what must be ready to comply with it; and none that complies with it can be any other than safe. When the Flesh would turn him aside from GOD, withdraw him from his Duty, and defile him, by ingaging him in the Pursuit of its ainfeful Motions; the *Word* gives a Check, by prerenting him with that awful Commination, *If ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die.* And so in the Case of any other Temptations that offer, let 'em be ever so dangerous or ensnaring, if a young Man does but take heed to his Way, according to the *Word*, he is furnish'd with a Variety of strong Arguments, drawn from the the Nature, the Will, the Purity, the Goodness, the Justice, the Authority of GOD, wherewith to make Resistance.

Prov.
xxiii. 26.Rom. viii.
13.2 Cor. vi.
18.
Zech.
xiii. 1.Joh. xvii.
17.

3. The *Word* also presents a variety of great and rich and precious Promises, which are the chief Means of real *Cleansing*. It presents with a Covenant, the Promises whereof are large and very extensive. It gives Assurance that GOD bears us the Affection of a *Father*, and is ready to treat us suitably. It tells us of a *Fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleanness*, and points us to it for our Purification. It minds us of that Petition of our SAVIOUR for his Followers, which if we are but faithful to our own Duty and Interest may raise our Expectations, *sanctify them through thy Truth, thy Word is Truth.* It shews us how ready GOD

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is, as well as able, to *cleans*e us from all our Iniquity. And such as these are the Motives and Means of our being *cleans*ed from all Filthiness both of *Flesh* and *Spirit*; and by these do we become *Partakers* of the *divine Nature*, having escaped the *corruption* that is in the *World* through *Lust*. And it is thus with young Men as well as others. When the *Love* of *GOD* as it is display'd in the *Word*, and branches itself forth in a variety of *Promises*, once comes to constrain and melt; and when such *divine Impressions* are this *Way* made on the *Souls* of *Sinners*, as transform them into the *Image* of *GOD*, then is there an effectual *Cleansing*, and not before.

4. THE *Word* puts into the true and only *Way* of deriving suitable *Strength* against *Sin*, and for *Duty*. Of any that could be mention'd, a *young Man* is the least likely to be able to *cleans*e his *Way*. That *Age* of *Life* is commonly remarkable, for a *Fickleness* and *Inconstancy*, that does not well consist with that *Resolution*, and *vigorous Application*, that is necessary in order to it. This at least is the case, when there are not great *superiour Aids* afforded. Now by the *Word* is *Direction* given, how that *Strength* may be obtained, whereby *Resolution* may be *invigorated*, *Duty* discharg'd, *Temptations* resisted, and the *Way* and all that belongs to it thoroughly *cleans*ed. The *Word* shews us the absolute *Necessity* of an inward real *Sanctification*, and minds us, that the *Ground* of it was laid in the *Satisfaction* of *CHRIST*. In *Consequence* of which, we are inform'd, that the *HOLY SPIRIT* is given forth, to assist all those who need *Help*, as all those most certainly do that need *Cleansing*. When then, a *young man* tho' ready enough of himself to cry out with him whom the *Gospel* speaks of, *All this have I done, what lack I yet?* comes to view himself in the *Glass* of the *Word*, and sees his own inward *Depravity*, and loathsome *Deformity*, he cannot but be under a deep *Concern*. But looking yet farther, he finds suitable *Help* provided for him. He is directed to look for *Strength* unto the *Lord JESUS CHRIST* who is the only effectual *Cleanser*,

Jeremiah
xxxiii. 8.
2 Cor.
vii. 1,
2 Pet. i. 4.

er,

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or; the only One that can make, and keep us *clean*. Since therefore the *Word* leads a *young Man* directly to him for Help. It must needs effectually secure his being *cleansed*, But without Intercourse with, and Assistance from Him, we may be assur'd, that the best form'd Resolutions and they that appear the strongest, will soon vanish away and come to nothing. I am now in Course,

III. To shew you, that the very youngest that have reached the use of reason, may by this course be brought safe to Happiness. As prone to Vice as Youth is, yet thus *taking heed to their Way according to the Word*, they shall be firmly intitled to that Blessedness that is spoken of in the beginning of this Psalm. And this I shall briefly state to you in four Particulars, in order to the preventing such mistakes, as we might be apt to run into.

I. LET a *young Man* take heed to his *Way*, according to the *Word*, and tho' it cannot be said he will be wholly free from Impurity, yet it will be kept from prevailing and reigning in him. Tho' he won't be so *clean* as to have no Spots remaining. yet he'll never wallow in Filth, Tho' Sin will still keep Footing, yet it won't have Dominion. He that orders his *Way* as the *Word* of GOD directs, *walketh not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit*, and therefore *there is no Condemnation to him*.

Rom.
viii. 1.

2. HE shall resist many Temptations that may appear Insuperable. Let him even in the Heat of his Blood, be presented with as moving a Temptation as can be suppos'd to come in his *Way*, and let him have a Prospect of Privacy and Concealment too, without any apparent danger of a Discovery: Nay, let there be a concurrence of the most inviting Circumstances that can be imagined; yet still a regard to the *Word* of GOD shall preserve him. We have this most admirably illustrated to us, in young *Joseph's* Case. He was violently assaulted; but his Thought darting into his mind preserv'd him, *how can I do this great Wickedness, and Sin against GOD?*

Genesis
xxxix. 9.

And

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And it has been the like in the Case of others also. David was this way preserved. He a very little after he had uttered, the Words of my Text, cries out to God, *thy Word have I hid in my Heart, that I might not. Sin against thee.* Let but the Word be hid in the Heart, and it will fortify. We find our blessed Saviour strengthened himself with this, under all the Assaults of Satan. He was various ways attack'd by that foul Fiend: But he still oppos'd him, with *it is written* so and so. And it deserves a remark that when St. John the beloved Disciple wrote, his first Epistle, he gave this reason for his directing it to *young Men, because, says he ye have overcome the wicked one.* And if you ask in what way it was that they became so *strong* as to *overcome the wicked one?* the Apostle himself has laid in an answer; *because ye are strong, and the Word of GOD abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one:* Thereby plainly intimating, that it was by *the Word of GOD abiding in them,* that these young Men, to whom he wrote, did *overcome the wicked one.* And by the same *Word abiding in them,* may other young Men also hope for a like Victory. And most certainly, he that overcomes the Wicked one, that is the grand Enemy of his Happiness, may upon good Grounds be encouraged to hope that he shall reach true Blessedness.

3. A young Man taking heed to his Way according to the Word, may hope to improve considerably, both by the Ordinances and Providences of God. Both of them shall be found effectual, for his Instruction and Excitation, Confirmation, and advancement in the Ways of GOD. He shall improve in Divine Knowledge, by waiting seriously and diligently at wisdoms Gates: and Divine Knowledge when it is Practical is always purifying. And therefore the Apostle speaking to Believers, says, *ye have purify'd your Souls, in obeying the Truth through the Spirit.* Such an one, shall moreover be gaining Experience by his Remarks upon, all Divine Providences, either towards himself or others; and a growing Conformity to the blessed GOD shall be the effect of all. And where the Ordinances

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Ordinances and the Providences of GOD are both of them duly improved, 'tis impossible but there should be a great Advance towards true Blessedness.

Ps. xxxv.
14.

4. A young Man that takes heed to his Way according to the Word, and follows that as his Rule, shall have a secur'd Entail of all the Blessings of the Covenant. For *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.* He will so shew it them, as to make them to know it: so shew it them as to make it good to 'em. If then an Interest in GOD's Covenant can convey a sure Title to Blessedness, (and what can do it, if that cannot?) those young Ones cannot miss of it, that *take heed to their Way, according to the Word.* And therefore without seeking for any farther Evidences, I will now proceed as I promis'd,

IV. To set before you the Improvableness of this Thought, that *the following the Word of GOD, is the best way to keep even a young Man clean, and bring him safe to true Blessedness,* with respect both to younger and elder Persons. And,

Ps. lvi. 10.

Acts xx.
32.

Ps. xix. 10.

Ps. cxix.
111

I. WE may from hence see, what reason we all have to be thankful for the Word of GOD. Blessing GOD for his Word, is our common Duty. With *David* should each one of us cry out, *in GOD will I praise his Word: In the Lord will I praise his Word.* The Usefulness of the Word to purify and cleanse, ought to recommend it to our highest Esteem: Since the Word can purify us, and is afterwards *able to build us up, and to give us an Inheritance among all them which are sanctify'd,* it becomes us most heartily to bless GOD for it. We should with *David* look upon it as *more to be desired than Gold, yea than much fine Gold: sweeter also than Honey, and the Honey Comb.* With him also, should we count it our chief Treasure, and each one of us should joyn in with him in saying, *thy Testimonies have I taken as an Heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my Heart.*

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2. THE Oldest among us may from hence receive Instruction. For if the word is effectual to preserve and cleanse such as are young, we may conclude it is capable of doing the like to those that are now grown old in whom the Appetite is less raging, and the Affections cooler. Tis true their Corruptions are riveted: But if the Word be but allow'd to search, 'twill cleanse: if it be but yeilded to, 'twill heal and cure. Have any of you then gon on in Sin many Years, yet don't I beseech you despair of Relief. It's not indeed at all to be wonder'd at, if your Recovery should be found to have great Difficulty attending it, considering how long you have *rejected the Counsel of GOD against yourselves*, and what a Strength your vicious Habits have acquir'd by continu'd Custom: And yet you may depend upon it, that the Word of GOD has sufficient Vertue, if you will but follow Its Directions.

Luke vii.
30.

3. WHAT we have heard on this Subject should stir us up, if we did not *cleanse our Way* when we were young, heartily to lament it, and if we did, readily to bless GOD for it. If we did not, it should be the Matter of our hearty Lamentation. And what indeed can be so, if this be not, to despise GOD's saving Counsels, set at nought his Reproofs, spend the Morning of Life in the Service of our great Enemy, and in sowing to the Dishonour of GOD and our own Confusion, and laying Bars to ourselves in our Way to Happiness! This is very doleful, and should deeply concern us, But on the ether hand, If we were possess'd with a great Regard to the Word of GOD betimes, had our *Way cleansed* by it, and were not only kept from grosser Enormities, but had our Hearts thereby pointed towards GOD, and set against Sin: If we were thereby kept from youthful Lusts, whereby so many are ruin'd, and brought to the faithful And consientious Practise of our Duty, not only out of Fear but out of Love. O what Thankfulness do we then owe to GOD! and how concern'd should we be to express it in all proper and fitting Ways!

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4. WE may observe from hence the true Reason of the great Degeneracy and Impurity of the Age we live in. It is this in reality, that the Word of GOD is disregarded. Therefore is it that our young ones generally speaking are so loose, because they converse but little with their BIBLES; and if they give 'em the Reading, they mind them but little, and discover no inward Veneration and Regard for the Contents of that Sacred Book. Many take more Delight in entertaining themselves with Plays and Romances: And they with whom 'tis otherwise, give the Things whtoh they there meet with a bare Speculative Entertainment, and can't be prevail'd with to take due heed to them or make the Word, of GOD their Rule. 'Till things are otherwise with us in this respect, instead of Amendment as far as I can perceive, we can reasonably look for no other, than that we should grow worse and worse.

5. WE may from hence also plainly see, that a pious Education is a very great Blessing. 'Tis no small Mercy, from the very first to be made acquainted with those things that concern us most. 'Tis represented as the Happiness of *Timothy*, that *from a Child he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto Salvation.* This has been the Happiness of many, nay, of most of us. Let us heartily bless the LORD on this account. By Means of a pious Education, it pleases GOD to make such early good Impressions on the Hearts of some, and so soon to cleanse them, that they can hardly tell when it was that he first began with them. And indeed, the prudent Instructions, seasonable Cautions, useful Examples, and serious Prayers, of pious Parents, and other religious Relatives, conformable to Holy Writ, during the whole Course of the Education of young ones, have help'd many such to Heaven. And where they have not had any present influence for Good, they have sometimes revived as to the sense of them many Years after. In short, if we consider this matter well, we shall easily conclude,
that

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that to be train'd up in the Nurture and Admonition of the LORD, and according to his Word, is one of the greatest Blessings in the World: A Blessing for which as God is to be magnify'd, so our Parents that gave it us are to be honour'd by us, either in their Persons if they are yet living, or in their Memories if they are dead, to the very last day we have to live.

THIS may also teach Parents how to manage their Children to the best Advantage, and what to beg of GOD on their behalf: and it may also instruct Masters as to the management of their Servants, whom GOD has committed to their care. Both the one and the other, most certainly ought to do what in them lies, to bring the young ones they are charg'd with to an Acquaintance with the Word of GOD, and to a great value for itj stately to regard it, and to take their measures from it. Without this, there's no reason to expect that their Way should be cleansed. But if this be duly minded, their cafe will be hopeful.

AND let me admonish all young ones this day, to *take heed to their Ways, according to the Word of GOD*, and to do it without delay, if they desire to be *cleansed*. Without this, you have reason enough to fear that Impurity will over-run you e'er you are aware, and so follow you and increase upon you, from one Age of Life unto another, that there will be no small danger of its adhering to you even till you die, without ever being purg'd away. But if Conformity to the Word of GOD in your Hated course be but your main Desire, and Aim, and Study, the chief danger will then be over.

THE Word of GOD gives a great many very suitable Directions to all both Young and Old, for their Conduct, and we are to *take heed to our Ways* as to all of them, and following them we may hope to be *cleansed*. 'Tis our great work and business who are Gospel Ministers to explain and inforce such Directions on all that we have to do with whether Young or Old. And

1 Pet. ii.
17.

Thanks be to GOD, you may all of you have considerable help in that respect from Sermons and good Books, if you are but dispos'd to value and improve them. I shall just mention and lightly touch upon one Rule or Direction which the Word gives, which it highly concerns you all to mind and follow, and the Words of it are these: *Honour all Men, Love the Brotherhood, Fear GOD, Honour the King.* And I dare venture to say, that this one Direction duly heeded, and that from the first, would save you that are young from much Impurity, and help to render your lives both clean and comfortable.

1. HONOUR *all Men*. Give unto all with whom you are any way concern'd the Respect that is due to them. Be not only careful to reverence your selves, which will be a check to Corruption when you are alone, but see to it that you give none occasion to think you slight 'em; and manage your general Conversation to as to shew you have a regard to the dignity of humane Nature. Despise not even such as are poor and in mean Circumstances; Let not even Inch as are vicious and dissolute, as far as you are concern'd, want any respect that is proper for them, on the Account of any Qualities belonging to them that are truly commendable: And shew a Regard to all Mankind, in the several ways that are within your reach.

2. LOVE *the Brotherhood*. Affect Christian Societies that are calculated for promoting serious Piety, and yet let not your Regard be wholly confined to them. Love all that bear the Christian Name, especially if they don't dishonour it, but carry it agreeably to their Profession and Character. Look upon all true Christians as a Fraternity, that are united to CHRIST their Head, and have Communion one with another. Be of a Catholick Spirit; and limit not your Love to a Party only. And yet where you are under special Tyes and Bonds, take care to answer them by a suitable Affection.

3. FEAR GOD; and yield him a reverend Obedience. Pay him all the Duty and Submission.

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sion, which his Essential Perfections, your entire Dependence on him, and the Relations which you stand in to him, call for: And be assured that no other. Duties can be perform'd as they ought, if this is wanting.

4. HONOUR *the King*, whom GOD has let over you, out of great Mercy to you. Respect him inwardly; and endeavour in all becoming Ways outwardly to express an hearty Loyalty to him. This is a Thing that will recommend Religion: whereas the contrary would very much discredit it. A Religion without Loyalty, is an unscriptural Religion: And young ones should be minded of this as well as Elder Persons.

THANKS be to GOD, my Friends, we have now upon the Throne, a PRINCE that is so intent upon promoting the Welfare of all his Subjects, that we must be perfect Monsters of Ingratitude, if we do not all in our several Stations, endeavour to make his Crown fit easy upon his Head, and render, his Reign comfortable to him. And we may easily see by what happen'd a few Years ago in the case of that unhappy Youth *Sheppard*, how sad a Thing it is, for young Persons to have ill Principles with respect to Government, instill'd into them with Earnestness and Application. God be praised, there are no such ill Principles or Practices among us Protestant Dissenters, as that poor Youth, (who had been bred up among those of another Clan,) was charg'd with, and suffer'd for: And I hope there never will.

INSTEAD therefore of imitating an Ungrateful Set of People that we have among us, in murmuring or clamouring, traducing his Majesty or his Prudent and Faithful Ministers, or spreading about Rumours of any Sort, to the Discredit or Disadvantage of the Government, let me recommend it to you as your Duty, heartily to bless Almighty God, who brought our SOVEREIGN that now reigns over us as on this Day into the World, to be so great a Blessing to these *British Isles*, such a Patron of Liberty, and so firm a Support to the whole *Protestant* Interest.

AND

AND pray we heartily to the Supreme and Universal RULER, That He would be pleased graciously to multiply the Years of his Reign, and fill each Year of it with a Variety of Blessings, as He has done histerto: And that under Him, and his Royal House, we and those who come after us, may lead peacable and quiet Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty: And let all the People say Amen.

FINIS.