



QUESTION LIII.

WHICH is the Third Commandment ?

A N S W E R.

THE Third Commandment is, *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain.*

IN the two former Commands, Precept is given us about the kinds of Worship, which we observed were, Natural, directed in the First ; and Instituted, about which Precept is given us in the Second. The two following Precepts do also refer to Worship, belonging to the first Table ; and they serve to regulate us in the right performance of the Worship required in both the former. And this comes under a double Consideration, First, With respect to our due behaviour in our Carriage towards God, which is required in the Third. Secondly, With respect to the Time of Solemn Worship, which is laid down in the Fourth Command.

OUR due behaviour in our Carriage towards God, is required in the Third Command. And that we may take a distinct Account of it, it may be considered in the Positive and Negative part of it ; for, tho' the Precept is laid down Negatively, yet there are Affirmative Duties that belong to it. Here then,

QUESTION LIV.

WHAT is required in the Third Commandment ?

A N S W E R.

THE Third Commandment requires,

the Holy and Reverend Use of God's Names, Titles, Attributes, Ordinances, Word and Works.

THAT we may take a particular Account of what is contained in this Answer, we may consider, 1. The Object of this Duty, viz. the *Name of God.* 2. The matter about which this Duty is to be pursued, i. e. the *taking of it up.* 3. The Duty it self, viz. *Holy Reverence.*

I. TOUCHING the Object of this Duty, it is said to be the *Name of God.* Now by the *Name of God* we are to understand all those Manifestations of himself, which he hath made in and to the Creation: It is one way by which Men distinguish things, one from another, by giving Names to them ; which is the first reason of the imposing of them. This therefore when ascribed to God, comprehends in it his declarative Glory ; or his back Parts in opposition to his Face : As appears, if we consider, Exod. 33. 20, 23. *And he said, Thou canst not see my face : for there shall no man see my face, and live. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back-parts ; but my face shall not be seen.* With Chap. 34. 5, 6. *And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.* By God's Face is intended his Essential Glory, and hath no Name. Hence that, 1 Tim. 6. 16. *Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.* His back Parts therefore are his manifestative Glory, or that of himself which he hath seen meet to reveal, by which we may have such a knowledge of him, as is suited to our created Capacities, and sufficient

for our blessedness. Whatsoever therefore either bears on it the impression of any of his Perfections, which are to be read in it, or whatsoever notice is given to him, whereby he is differenced from all other Beings, belongs to his Name. These are in our Catechism reduced to several comprehensive Heads; and this is to be understood *metonymically*: Not that the things themselves are God's Name, but that his Name is engraven on them, and the Letters of it are to be understood by them: And for that reason not the things themselves, but God appearing in them, is to be acknowledged by us, and a suitable respect is to be paid to him upon the discovery. These are,

1. *HIS Name.* By which we are to understand, those Names which he hath assumed to himself in his Word; either Incommunicably, and cannot be put upon any other Being without Blasphemy: Such as *El, Schaddai*, Gen. 17. 1. *I am*, Exod. 3. 14. *Jehovah*, Exod. 6. 3. Every whereof discover him to be an incomparable Being. Or such, as tho' they may be given in low and diminutive respect to some second Beings, yet are by way of Eminency ascribed unto him, and there is but an obscure shadow of them in the Creature; as *Elohim*, translated Gods; and other things, which will more properly be considered under his Attributes.

2. *HIS Titles.* By which we are to understand those Prerogatives which he assumes to himself, with relation to his Creatures, which properly belong to him, and may not be ascribed to any other Being whatsoever; many whereof the Scriptures do furnish us withal: Such as, *the Lord of Hosts, the Holy one of Israel, the King of Saints, the God of Salvation*, and many more. Which Titles may not be inserted into the title of the greatest Monarch in the World, but carry in them the signification of a Being super-transcendent.

3. *HIS Attributes.* Which tho' in a large and comprehensive sense, they comprize both the former, yet more restrainedly, they intend those Perfections of his Nature, which are Essential to him, and are usually called the Divine Properties; Such as his *Eternity, Omnipotency, Omnipresence, Immortality, Immutability*, &c. For by our apprehending of a Being, to whom these do appertain, and acknowledging of them to him, we ascribe the Divine Glory to him, which is his due; and they are so many Letters, by which we spell a God. Thus, 1 Tim. 1. 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever & ever, Amen.*

4. *HIS Ordinances.* By which we are to understand, those holy Appointments of Instituted Worship, which he hath commanded his People to serve him in: Of which we considered under the former Precept. These do all bear his Name on them, in that they come forth by his Supreme Authority, and have his Name underwritten, *I am the Lord*. Nor can any other Name in Heaven or Earth,

warrant any such Institution: and in them we are to read God's *Sovereignty*, his *Wisdom*, and his *Power*, in making them serviceable to his own Glory, and our Salvation.

5. *HIS Word.* By which we are to conceive his written Word, or the Holy Scriptures: Tho' it also comprehends all those Revelations of his Will, which he hath at any time made extraordinarily to his People, or to Men inspired. For we are told, Heb. 1. 1. *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets.* Yet these are now collected together, and commended to us, in our Bible: Of which we read, Psal. 138. 2. *Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.* And indeed, the great design of giving to us these Writings, was to help us to acquaintance with God, and bring us to the enjoyment of Him.

6. *HIS Works.* Under which is comprehended his whole Efficiency in Creation and Providence. Which are for that reason ascribed to his Name, because in them, there are the convincing Discoveries made of his Being, and glorious Perfections; and tho' they come incomparably short of so making him known, as is done by the Gospel, yet they have such stamps of his Glory upon them, as bear witness to his Being, and Divinity, and testify in the Natural Conscience that there is none like him. Of the Works of Creation, see, Psal. 19. 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handy work.* Rom. 1. 20. *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.* Of his Works of Providence, Psal. 9. 16. *The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.* Psal. 86. 8. *Among the gods there is none like unto thee (O Lord) neither are any works like unto thy works.* Act. 14. 17. Now in every one of these, the Duty required in this Command is concerned, as will be discovered in the Sequel.

II. TOUCHING the Matter about which this Duty is to be exercised or pursued, viz. the taking up of this Name; We may observe, that the word translated *take*, signifieth to take a thing up, to bear it, and to elevate or lift it up on high: and is in the Word of God, applied to many purposes: And in this Precept it comprehends any manner of use that we make of the Name of God. And it intends two Things,

1. *THAT there is an use to be made of the Name of God.* God hath therefore revealed his Name to us, that we should improve these Discoveries for his Glory, and our own good. There is therefore a glory owing to it from us, which we ought to pay unto it. Hence that, Psal. 29. 2. *Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.*

2. *THAT we be very cautious, what use we do make of it.* That we take heed to our selves, that in all respects we carry it worthily towards this Name of his. Which
what

what it is, will be afterwards considered. Here only observe, that this Command, being of the first Table, properly refers to the Worship of God. The Name of God, is the Object of our Worship, for we are to Worship him according to what he hath revealed of himself to us, and therefore we are never to use this Name of his, but with a frame suitable to Worship. And we may further observe, that this taking up of his Name, comprizeth both our Thoughts, Words and Actions, in all whereof this Caution is to be used. For there is an Internal and an External Worship due to him from us, about which we must here take our Direction. And finally, we may take notice, that this Duty is to be practised, not only in the Observances of instituted Worship, but also in all the parts of natural Worship, which we are to pay to him at all times: For this third Command hath respect to our due Carriage to God, in the manner of our performing Obedience, to both the former.

III. *THE Duty itself which is here required, is holy Reverence*, or a religious Veneration of this glorious Name of his. The Duty proper to this Command, is that which is opposite to the Vanity forbidden, for in negative Precepts we are to judge of the Nature of the affirmative Duties, by the negative; they being the contrary to that which is forbidden. Now the Word, *in Vain*, is used both *nominally* and *adverbially*; and it signifies falsehood, rashness, levity, and unprofitableness; the contrary to all which is summarily included in that comprehensive Duty of Reverence: which is usually in Scripture Language called Fear. Hence that is asserted concerning his Name, Psal. 111. 9. *Holy and reverend is his name*. Now this religious Reverence of God's Name, is an awful Respect which we have engraven upon our Hearts, and which we maintain the Exercise of, in our Thoughts, Words and Actions: Of which, Jer. 10. 7. *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain*. Now there is a civil Reverence which we owe to Men who are our Superiours, and a religious one, which is due from us to God, and these two are vastly different one from another; and it is this latter, which is the Subject of our present Speculation.

NOW the Expression of this Reverence, may be considered either *generally*, or *particularly*, with respect to the several things, in which the Name of God is made known to us.

First, *IN general*, I shall only observe these two things.

I. *THAT* whenever we any way make use of the Name of God, we ought to observe our due Distance. We should always have in Mind, what an infinitely glorious Being he is, exalted above all Glory and Praise, and what low and little things we are; and except we ever carry the Impression of this upon our Hearts, we shall not pay him the Re-

verence that we owe to him. We have this exemplified in *Abraham*, Gen. 18. 27. *And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes*. And are directed about it, Eccl. 5. 2. *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few*. Our Carriages therefore must be measured according to this.

2. *THAT* we do always exalt God's Name, when we make use of it. We observed, that the Word *take*, signifies to lift a thing up on high. And *metaphorically* it is used for the giving it superlative Commendation; and this is a very proper Expression of our keeping our distance. This Word is therefore used, for extolling of God, Psal. 68. 4. *Sing unto God, sing praises to his Name; extol him that ruleth upon the heavens by his name Jah, and rejoyce before him*. We must in all respects give him the Acknowledgement of being infinitely greater and more glorious than all Beings whatsoever, and on all Occasions make it to appear, that we do really entertain such Thoughts concerning him. So he resolved, Psal. 145. 1, 3. *I will extol thee, my God, O King, and I will bless thy name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable*.

Secondly, *IN particular*, We may consider the several Duties respecting the diverse ways, in which God communicates his Name to us. For though we are ever to maintain a Reverence toward God, yet there are diverse ways in which we are to express it, suitable to the several things in which he hath manifested himself unto us. And these may be considered,

I. *IN respect of his Names, Titles, and Attributes*. I put these three together, because they are very nearly related, and the difference between them is not great. For his Names and Titles may in a sound sense be referred to his Attributes; and hence the Duties here, are common to them all. And these are,

First, *THE Thoughts of these should raise suitable Dispositions in our Souls, towards God*. When we meditate of these glorious Perfections of his, we should entertain them with Affections becoming. Hence,

1. *THEY* should raise in us a loving Thoughts of God. They all of them commend him to us, as a most worthy Being. And we should upon them acknowledge, that he doth transcend all the Praises of Angels or Men: As he, Neh. 9. 5. *Bless the Lord your God forever and ever, and blessed be thy glorious Name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise*. We ought on this account, to gaze upon these Perfections of his, with the most surprizing Admiration, confessing the Infiniteness, and Inscrutableness of his Glory, and accordingly to acknowledge our Ignorance of him; yet that no Creature can come at the Comple-

hension of them, so great, and so wonderful is he. And accordingly make his demand, Job. 11. 7, 8, 9. *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*

2. *THEY should maintain in us, an holy Fear of offending Him.* And accordingly raise in us a Caution to ourselves in all we think, speak, or do, that we avoid every thing which may expose us to his righteous Displeasure. When we consider who, or what manner of God he is, it should make us to draw that Conclusion, Heb. 10. 31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* And thereupon render us exceeding Circumspect in our whole Walk. Doubtless the Psalmist had been in this Speculation, when he drew up that Resolve, Psal. 76. 7. *Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?*

3. *THEY should kindle in us, an insatiable Desire after an Interest in his Favour.* And this should stir up in us, restless endeavours to secure a Title to him as our God. Think what inconceivable Happiness it must be, to view his glorious Perfections, and be able to underwrite in the foot of the Accompt, *This God is our God forever.* Hence we should make our humble suit to him for his Grace, and earnestly implore him, that he would accept us into his Favour. David could say, Psal. 63. 3. *Because thy lovingkindness is better than life; my lips shall praise thee.* And it was the Contemplation of his Infinite Excellencies, that drew this Profession from him.

Secondly, *WE should be very careful about our Words, or taking of his Name into our Mouths.* It is a Duty incumbent on all the People of God, to be often speaking of him. It is said in, Psal. 29. 9. *In his temple doth every one speak of his glory.* And David tells us what he and others would do, Psal. 145. 4, &c. But we ought to maintain an holy Reverence of him in our Hearts, and make it appear in the manner of our speaking.

1. Here, *IN our ordinary Discourse, we should mention God's Name with great Seriousness.* If we speak of him at all, it must be with a Discovery, that his very Name, bears an Awe upon our Hearts. We should put the highest Honour upon him, in every mention that we make of him. The Name of God is said to be great and fearful, Deut. 28. 58. If then we speak of it, we should ascribe Greatness to it, and testify our Fear of it. We should not use any of the Names, Titles, or Attributes of God, as Words of Course, in common and light Talk, but with Solemnity, and to put the greatest Honour on Him.

2. *IN Swearing.* We ought in this to use utmost Care, to pay a reverend Respect to the Name of God. Swearing is used as a Confirmation of a Testimony, and it is done

by calling upon the Name of God, in which we appeal to him, to be a Witness to the Truth, of what we testify unto. There is a vast difference between a Testimony and an Oath, the former belongs to the ninth Commandment, and so refers to the second Table, which hath Man for the Object *immediate*, whereas an Oath is a part of religious Worship; and is usually referred to the third Commandment, in that in it we pretend to a Veneration of God's great Name. That an Oath belongs to Worship, and must therefore be reduced to the first Table is evident, because it hath God for its *immediate Object*. And for that reason, Swearing by the Name of God, is often *synecdochically* put for all religious Worship, as, Psal. 63. 11. and elsewhere. And that the right and reverend Use of it belongs to this third Commandment, is evident, because all Reverence of God in Worship is pointed to by it; or all profitable using of God's Name; though the Duty itself may belong to the first. That it is lawful & warrantable for Christians, in the Days of the Gospel to swear, and sometimes a Duty so to do, is a Truth which he that denies, renders himself Guilty of a superstitious breach of the second Commandment. Nor doth that of Christ, Mat. 5. 34. *But I say unto you, Swear not at all.* Or that of the Apostle, Jam. 5. 12. *But above all things, my brethren, swear not.* Disprove it, since it is manifest, that in both of these Texts, Swearing in common Talk is only forbidden, which is indeed great Sin & Profaneness. Whether in Supposition, that Man had continued in his State of Integrity, he would have had any Occasion for Swearing, may admit of a Debate, but the Necessity of it since the Fall is very great. Man's Sin hath filled him with Falseness and Incredulity. Every Man is a Liar, and Men's Suspicion one of another, is such, that except they give the greatest Confirmation of what they say, they are not believed, and scarcely then. Yea, God himself is sometimes put upon it, to swear to his People, that he may be believed. Now there is nothing more accommodable, according to the light of Nature, to oblige any to speak the Truth, without Dissimulation, than the Solemnity of an Oath, and many, who make but little Conscience of lying, are startled at an Oath, and good reason, for as we in it call God to witness to the Truth of what we say, so we do, implicitly at least, imprecate his Wrath upon our Heads, in Case of Falsehood; in which we do necessarily acknowledge him to be an all-knowing, and righteous Judge, who taketh Vengeance. Hence the usual Form of an Oath among the Ancients, began with such Words, *God do so to me, and more also.* Hence also that of Paul, 2 Cor. 1. 23. *I call God for a record upon my soul.* And this is enough to convince us, with what holy Reverence, we ought to address ourselves, to so solemn and awful an act of Worship as this is, as knowing, that we can neither *impose* upon God's Knowledge, nor *bribe* his Justice.

Justice Now the Reverence towards God, which is here required, may be considered either in general, in respect of Swearing it self, or in particular, with regard to the several kinds of Oaths.

I. *IN general*, in respect of Swearing it self. And the Duties here follow, from the Nature of an Oath, viz. That it is a solemn Appeal to God, and Invocation of him, as an Omniscient and Holy Judge. And here,

1. *WE ought always when we go about to swear, to call to our Minds, who that God is, whom we are now about to invoke.* We should affect our Hearts with his Majesty, and Glory. We should consider, that we are not now applying ourselves to an Idol, that can neither see nor hear, neither do good nor evil, neither reward nor punish us; but that God who searcheth Hearts, who is also jealous for his great Name, and will not forego his own Glory; that God who is holy in all his Ways, and just in all his Doings, who is not mocked, and to whom we must give an Account of this very Act; and this thought will put us upon doing it with fear and trembling; if we believe him to be such a God, as he hath told us that he is, we cannot but be very serious in what we do.

2. *WE must well ponder what we do, when we swear.* Possibly the express Terms used, are no more, but that we swear by the living and true God, but we ought distinctly to revolve in our Minds, what is included in this. We should make a Commentary on it, in our Thoughts, and consider, that we do now directly put ourselves into the Hands of the great Judge; we do now invoke the great God, and adjure him, to pour out his Vengeance upon us, and make us the Instances of his Wrath and Curse, if we be not sincere and upright, and true, in what we say; so that we lay ourselves open to all his Judgments in case we dissemble or lie. And now remember, that this God will certainly do so, as we imprecate upon ourselves, either in this Life or in another, in case we have wickedly exposed ourselves to this Judgment of his. We should at such a time reflect upon that flying roll, *Zech. 5. begin.*

3. *WE should hereupon cautiously satisfy our own Consciences about our Call now to swear.* And there is enough in the former to enforce this. Where the hazards are great, every Man will enquire, what Obligation is on him to engage. That a Christian is sometimes called, is beyond question, and to refuse or decline it, would be his Sin. God's Glory, and our Neighbours Welfare may suffer by the neglect of it. That he is not always called to it of God, when others may solicit him, or his sinful Heart may prompt him, is equally certain; and he who truly reverenceth God, will never swear but when it is his Duty, and will for that reason first deliberate and enquire. And there are these three Rules, will be helpful in this Deliberation.

1. *THAT the Thing itself be a Matter of*

Weight or Moment. God's Name should not be invoked, nor God called upon about Trifles: We must be sure that it be a Matter worthy of his sitting a Judge upon. And always this must be judged of, by the Concernedness of God's Honour, and our own, or our Neighbours good in the thing. Hence a Matter that is in itself of no Concern, or about which, neither will God be dishonoured, nor Man suffer, either in Life, Chastity, Estate, or Reputation, is beneath the great Weight of an Oath; and thus to espouse God's Name in such things, would be greatly derogatory to it.

2. *THAT the Thing itself, is not otherwise to be determined, but by an Oath.* We are always to remember, that an Oath is the highest Appeal, we now remove the Case in question, to the Supreme Judge. So that if the Matter be of Weight, yet if it may be cleared and confirmed sufficiently, and to answer the end of an humane Faith, without it, this is not necessary, and to add it is superfluous, which our Reverence to the Name of God, requires us to avoid. Sometimes, our bare Assertion will give Credit to us, sometimes the Confession of the Party concerned will put the thing beyond question, & that which can be done as well without it, cannot require it of us.

3. *THAT it requires our particular and personal Oath, for the Confirmation of it.* A thing may be of Weight, and it may require the Establishment of it by Swearing. But there is a further Inquiry, viz. Whether ours be necessary thereunto; and that is when the matter will not be sufficiently confirmed without our Oath be given about it: So that if two or three be already offered, in the same Case and Circumstances, Reverence of God will make us afraid of multiplying Oaths, unnecessarily. And all these three are included in that Precept, which requires us to swear in Judgment, *Jer. 4. 2.*

4. *WE should be exceeding wary, what and how we swear.* This Reverence ought to influence both the Matter and the Manner of it. For in both of these the Name of God is concerned not a little.

1. *WE should be wary what we swear.* We should be exceeding curious and critical, about the Matter of it. And this belongs to the Truth required of us in Swearing, *Jer. 4. 2.* And here we are to weigh and revolve every Article, Word, Circumstance, that there be no mistake. For though Truth & Falsehood, belong to a Testimony as such, and so are not the matter of this Precept, but the Ninth, yet the Care about them, in order to our Swearing to the Thing, belongs to this, and is a part of that Reverence which we owe to God in it; considered, as he is a God of Truth. And though a meer moral Certainty of a thing, may command our humane Credit unto it, yet it is not enough to allow us to attest to it with an Oath; because in it, we lay ourselves open to the Judgment of God, if

the thing be not so, which no serious one dares to do, but upon his own personal Knowledge of it. And if we Swear to any one Clause, of which we have not such an Assurance, we therein express a Levity of Spirit, unbecoming the Gravity of an Oath.

2. *We should be equally wary to our selves, how we Swear.* For this Reverence is also concerned in the Manner of our so doing; and this also belongs to the Truth before mentioned. For this Truth not only refers to the Matter of the thing to which we offer our Testimony, but also to the frame of Heart which we do it withal. There is *the Truth of the Thing sworn*, and *the Truth of him that swears*, both whereof are here to be regarded; and this Latter, is of as great Weight as the Former. That therefore is one part of the Character of a pious man, Psal. 24. 4. *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.* A Man may Swear nothing but Truth in Words, and yet reserve a Meaning to himself, which makes his Testimony fallacious, and Men are imposed on by it, which is one sort of Equivocation. A Man may Swear that which is false alone, and reserve in his Mind a Clause which would make it true, and this is perfectly Jesuitical. Or, he may Swear in a sense, which he knows Men will not understand, but put another Interpretation upon. Or he may Swear only to a part of the Truth, which will altogether alter the Case, and pervert it. And this belongs to the Righteousness required, (*Jer. 4. 2.*) that he avoid this. The Reverend respect which is due to God, who is not to be mocked, will command the Man to avoid all these, and to practice Heart-Sincerity in what he doth. And let us be wary in all these things, knowing that we have to do with a jealous God.

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SERMON CLXIV.