

**THE RULE AND  
EXERCISES OF HOLY  
DYING. [1873]**

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The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying. [1873] by Jeremy Taylor

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**JEREMY TAYLOR**

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DYING. [1873]**





TO

The Right Honourable and

NOBLEST LORD,

RICHARD, *Earl of Carbery,*

&c.

MY LORD,



AM treating your Lordship as a Roman Gentleman did Saint *Augustine* and his Mother; I shall entertain you in a Charnel-house, and carry your Meditations awhile into the chambers of Death, where you shall find the rooms dressed up with melancholic arts, and fit to converse with your most retired thoughts, which begin with a sigh, and proceed in deep consideration, and end in a holy resolution. The sight that *S. Augustine* most noted in that house of sorrow was the body of *Cæsar* clothed with all the dishonours of corruption that you can suppose in a six months' burial. But I know that, without pointing, your first thoughts will remember the change of a greater beauty, which is now dressing for the brightest immortality, and

H. D.

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from her bed of darkneſs calls to you to dreſs your Soul for that change which ſhall mingle your bones with that beloved duſt, and carry your Soul to the ſame Quire, where you may both fit and ſing for ever. My Lord, it is your dear Lady's *Anniverſary*, and ſhe deſerved the *biggeſt honour*, and the *longeſt memory*, and the *faireſt monument*, and the moſt *ſolemn mourning*: and in order to it, give me leave (My Lord) to cover her Hearſe with theſe following ſheets. This Book was intended firſt to miniſter to her Piety; and ſhe deſired all good people ſhould partake of the advantages which are here recorded: ſhe knew how to live rarely well, and ſhe deſired to know how to die; and God taught her by an experiment. But ſince her work is done, and God ſupplied her with provisions of his own, before I could miniſter to her, and perfect what ſhe deſired, it is neceſſary to preſent to your Lordſhip thoſe bundles of Cypreſs which were intended to dreſs her Cloſet, but come now to dreſs her Hearſe. My Lord, both your Lordſhip and myſelf have lately ſeen and felt ſuch ſorrows of Death, and ſuch ſad departure of deareſt friends, that it is more than high time we ſhould think ourſelves nearly concerned in the accidents. Death hath come ſo near to you as to fetch a portion from your very heart; and now you cannot chooſe but dig your own grave, and place your coffin in your eye, when the Angel hath dreſſed your ſcene

*THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.* vii

of sorrow and meditation with so particular and so near an object: and therefore, as it is my duty, I am come to minister to your pious thoughts, and to direct your sorrows, that they may turn into virtues and advantages.

And since I know your Lordship to be so constant and regular in your Devotions, and so tender in the matter of Justice, so ready in the expressions of Charity, and so apprehensive of Religion, and that you are a person whose work of Grace is apt, and must every day grow toward those degrees, where when you arrive you shall triumph over imperfection, and choose nothing but what may please God; I could not by any compendium conduct and assist your pious purposes so well, as by that which is the great argument and the great instrument of Holy Living, the Consideration and Exercises of Death.

My Lord, it is a great art to die well, and to be learnt by men in health, by them that can discourse and consider, by those whose understanding and acts of reason are not abated with fear or pains: and as the greatest part of Death is passed by the preceding years of our Life, so also in those years are the greatest preparations to it; and he that prepares not for Death before his last sickness, is like him that begins to study Philosophy when he is going to dispute publicly in the Faculty. All that a sick and dying man can do is but to exercise those virtues which he be-

fore acquired, and to perfect that repentance which was begun more early. And of this (My Lord) my Book, I think, is a good testimony; not only because it represents the vanity of a late and sick-bed repentance, but because it contains in it so many precepts and meditations, so many propositions and various duties, such forms of Exercise, and the degrees and difficulties of so many Graces which are necessary preparatives to a holy Death, that the very learning the duties requires study and skill, time and understanding in the ways of godliness: and it were very vain to say so much is necessary, and not to suppose more time to learn them, more skill to practise them, more opportunities to desire them, more abilities both of body and mind than can be supposed in a sick, amazed, timorous, and weak person; whose natural acts are disabled, whose senses are weak, whose discerning faculties are lessened, whose principles are made intricate and entangled, upon whose eye sits a cloud, and the heart is broken with sickness, and the liver pierced through with sorrows, and the strokes of Death. And therefore (My Lord) it is intended by the necessity of affairs, that the precepts of *dying well* be part of the studies of them that live in health, and the days of discourse and understanding, which in this case hath another degree of necessity superadded; because in other notices, an imperfect study may be supplied by a frequent



exercife and a renewed experience; here if we praétife imperfectly once, we fhall never recover the error: for we die but once; and therefore it will be neceffary that our fhill be more exact, fince it is not to be mended by trial, but the actions muft be for ever left imperfect, unlefs the habit be contracted with ftudy and contemplation beforehand.

And indeed I were vain, if I fhould intend this Book to be read and ftudied by Dying perfons: And they were vainer that fhould need to be instructed in thofe graces which they are then to exercife and to finifh. For a fick-bed is only a fchool of fevere exercife, in which the fpirit of a man is tried, and his graces are rehearfed: and the affiftances which I have in the following pages given to thofe virtues which are proper to the ftate of Sicknefs, are fuch as fuppofe a man in the ftate of grace; or they confirm a good man, or they fupport the weak, or add degrees, or minifter comfort, or prevent an evil, or cure the little mifchiefs which are incident to tempted perfons in their weaknefs. That is the fum of the prefent defign as it relates to Dying perfons. And therefore I have not inferted any advices proper to Old age, but fuch as are common to it and the ftate of ficknefs; for I fuppofe *very old age* to be a *longer ficknefs*; it is labour and forrow when it goes beyond the common period of nature: but if it be on this fide that period, and be healthful; in the fame de-

gree it is so, I reckon it in the accounts of life; and therefore it can have no distinct consideration. But I do not think it is a station of advantage to begin the change of an evil life in: It is a middle state between *life* and *death-bed*; and therefore although it hath more of hopes than *this*, and less than *that*; yet as it partakes of either state, so it is to be regulated by the advices of that state, and judged by its sentences.

Only this: I desire that all old persons would sadly consider that their advantages in that state are very few, but their inconveniences are not few; their bodies are without strength, their prejudices long and mighty, their vices (if they have lived wicked) are habitual, the occasions of the virtues not many, the possibilities of some (in the matter of which they stand very guilty) are past, and shall never return again, (such are, chastity, and many parts of self-denial;) that they have some temptations proper to their age, as peevishness and pride, covetousness and talking, wilfulness and unwillingness to \* learn; and they think they are protected by age from learning a new, or repenting the old; and do not † leave, but change their vices: And after all this, either the day of their repentance is past, as we see it true in

\* Vel quia nil rectum, nisi quod placuit sibi, ducunt;

Vel quia turpe putant parere minoribus, et, quæ Imberbes didicere, senes perdenda fateri.

Hor. Ep.

† Tenellis adhuc infantia suæ persuasionibus in senectute puerascunt.

Mamertus.

very many; or it is expiring and towards the Sun-set, as it is in all: and therefore although in these to recover is very possible, yet we may also remember that, in the matter of virtue and repentance *possibility* is a great way off from performance; and how few do repent, of whom it is only *possible* that they may? and that many things more are required to reduce their *possibility* to act; a great grace, an assiduous ministry, an effective calling, mighty assistances, excellent counsel, great industry, a watchful diligence, a well-disposed mind, passionate desires, deep apprehensions of danger, quick perceptions of duty, and time, and God's good blessing, and effectual impression and seconding all this, that *to will and to do* may by him be wrought to great purposes, and with great speed.

And therefore it will not be amiss, but it is hugely necessary, that these persons who have lost their time and their blessed opportunities should have the diligence of youth, and the zeal of new converts, and take account of every hour that is left them, and pray perpetually, and be advised prudently, and study the interest of their souls carefully with diligence, and with fear; and their old age, which in effect is nothing but a continual death-bed, dressed with some more order and advantages, may be a state of hope and labour, and acceptance; through the infinite mercies of God in Jesus Christ.