

*John Willard*  
THE  
*4 MS*  
GREAT AUDIT, *1810*

OR  
GOOD STEWARD.

EXTRACTED FROM

THE WRITINGS OF THE LATE WORTHY AND RENOWNED

SIR MATTHEW HALE.



PHILADELPHIA:

TO BE HAD OF BENJAMIN & THOMAS KITE, No. 20, NORTH THIRD  
STREET: AND FOR SALE BY SOLOMON W. CONRAD, No. 87,  
KIMBER & SHARPLESS, No. 93, JOHN RICHARDSON, No. 237,  
AND ISAAC PEIRCE, No. 316, MARKET STREET.

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1816.

No. 4.

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## GREAT AUDIT,

OR

## GOOD STEWARD.

*Concerning my Conscience.*

I HAVE been very diligent to keep my conscience clean, to encourage it in the vicegerency that thou, the great Lord of the world, hast given it over my soul and actions; I have kept it in the throne, and greatest reverence and authority in my heart.

In actions to be done or omitted, I have always advised with it, and taken its advice. I have neither stifled, nor forced, nor bribed it; but gave it a free liberty to advise and to speak out, and a free subjection of my will, purposes, and actions to it.

If, through importunity of temptations, &c. I have at any time done amiss, I have not taken her up short, or stopped her mouth, or my own attention to her chiding and reproof; but I have, with much submission of mind, borne her chastisement, and improved it to an humbling of myself before thee for my failings. For I looked upon her as acting by thy authority, for thy service, and to thy glory; and I durst not discourage, discountenance, or disobey her.

When she was pleased, and gave me good words, I was glad; for I esteemed her as a glass, that represented to my soul the favour or displeasure of God himself, and how he stood affected towards me.

I have trembled more under the fear of a seared or discouraged conscience, than under the fear of a sharp or scrupulous conscience, because I always accounted the latter, though more troublesome, yet more safe.

I have been very jealous either of wounding, or grieving, or discouraging, or deadening my conscience. I have therefore chosen rather to forbear that which seemed but indifferent, lest there should be somewhat in it that might be unlawful; and would rather gratify my conscience with being too scrupulous, than displease, disquiet, or flat it, by being too venturous. I have still chosen rather to forbear what might be probably lawful, than to do that which might be possibly unlawful; because I could not err in the former, though I might in the latter.

I have been careful to advise impartially with my conscience before my actions. But lest I had committed any thing amiss, either in the nature or manner of the action, I commonly, every night, brought my actions of the day past before the judicatory of my conscience, and left her to a free and impartial censure of them; and what she sentenced *well done*, I with humility returned the praise thereof to thy name; what she sentenced *done amiss*, I did humbly sue to thee for pardon, and for grace to prevent me from the like miscarriages. By this means I kept my conscience active, renewed, and preserved my peace with thee, and learned vigilance and caution for the time to come.

*Touching thy Creatures.*

I have not only looked upon thy blessings and bounty, in lending me thy own creatures for my use, but I have sought unto thee for a blessing upon them, in my use of them. I did very well observe, that there is by my sin a curse in the very creatures that I receive, unless thy blessing fetch it out; and emptiness in them, unless thy goodness fill them. Though thou shouldst give me quails and manna from heaven, yet without thy blessing on them they would become rottenness and putrefaction to me; and therefore I ever begged thy blessing upon thy blessings, as well as the blessings themselves; and attributed the good I found, or was to expect in them, to the same hand that gave them.

I received and used thy creatures as committed to me under a trust and as a steward and accountant for them; and therefore I was always careful to use them according to those limits, and in order to those ends, for which thou didst commit them to me.

*First,* With temperance and moderation; I did not use thy creatures to luxury and excess, to make provision for my lusts, with vain-glory or ostentation, but for the convenient support of the exigencies of my nature and condition. And if at any time thy goodness did indulge me in an use of them for delight, as well as necessity, I did it but rarely and watchful. I looked not upon the wine, when it gave its colour in the cup, nor gave myself over either to excess or curiosity in meats or drinks. I checked myself therein, as being in thy presence, and still remembered I had thy creatures under an accompt; and was ever careful to avoid excess or intemperance, because every excessive cup and meal was in danger to leave me somewhat insuper and arrear to my Lord.

*Secondly*, With mercy and compassion to the creatures themselves, which thou hast put under my power and disposal. When I considered the admirable powers of life and sense which I saw in the birds and beasts, and that all the men in the world could not give the like being to any thing nor restore that life and sense which is once taken from them; when I considered how innocently and harmlessly the fowls, and fish, and sheep, and oxen, take their food, that thou, the Lord of all, hast given them; I have been apt to think, that surely thou didst intend a more innocent kind of food to man, than such as must be taken with such detriment to those living parts of thy creation. And although thy wonderful goodness hath so much indulged mankind, as to give up the lives of these creatures for the food of man by thy express commission; yet I ever did think, and still do, that there was a *justice due* from man, even to *these sensible creatures*; that he should take them sparingly; for necessity, and not for delight; or, if for delight, yet not for luxury. I have been apt to think, that if there were any more liberal use of creatures, for delight or variety, it should be of fruits, or such other delicacies as might be had without the loss of life. But however it be, this very consideration hath made me very sparing and careful; not vainly, or superfluously, or unnecessarily, or prodigally, to take away the life of thy creatures for feasting and excess. And the very same consideration hath always gone along with me, *in reference to the labour of thy creatures*. I have ever thought that there was a certain degree of justice due from man to the creatures, as from man to man; and that an excessive, immoderate, unreasonable use of the creatures' labour is an injustice for which he must account.

To deny domestical creatures their convenient food; to exact that labour from them that they are

not able to perform; to use extremity or cruelty towards them; is a breach of that trust under which the dominion of the creatures was committed to us, and a breach of that justice that is due from men to them; and therefore I have always esteemed it as part of my duty, and it hath been always my practice, to be merciful to my beasts.

And upon the same account I have ever esteemed it a breach of trust, and have accordingly declined any cruelty to any of thy creatures, and as much as I might, prevented it in others, as a tyranny inconsistent with the trust and stewardship that thou hast committed to me. I have abhorred those sports that consist in the torturing of the creatures: And if either noxious creatures must be destroyed, or creatures for food must be taken, it hath been my practice to do it in that manner that may be with the least torture or cruelty to the creature. And I have still thought it an unlawful thing to destroy those creatures for recreation sake, that either were not hurtful when they lived, or are not profitable when they are killed: Ever remembering, that though thou hast given us a dominion over thy creatures, yet it is under a law of justice, prudence, and moderation; otherwise we should become tyrants, not lords, over thy creatures. And therefore those things of this nature, that others have practised as recreations, I have avoided as sins.

### *Touching my Body.*

My body, which was given to serve and obey, became the empress, and commanded and corrupted my soul, debased and enslaved it to lust and disorder; and my soul, which was given to rule, became but a slave of my body. I considered, that if the business was thus carried on, my happiness must be only in this life; and that when death seized upon

me, I had an immortal soul, that had lost her time wholly in this world, and therefore could expect nothing but vexation and everlasting confusion to all eternity, &c. Upon these, and the like considerations, I resolved and practised severity over my body, and refused to gratify her intemperate desires; denied them, kept them in awe, and under discipline. And because I found that my lusts grew unruly by variety and curiosity of meats and drinks, I subdued them by moderate diet and temperance. My table was sparing to myself, my clothes plain, my retinue and attendance but necessary. I chased away my lusts with the contemplations of the presence of God; the end of Christ's sufferings: the certainty, yet uncertainty of death; the state after death; and mingled all my enjoyments and desires with these serious and cleansing considerations. And I peremptorily refused to gratify the cravings of an inordinate sensual appetite, and did resolutely let them know, they should not, might not, expect any better dealings from me; and my practice was accordingly.

### *Concerning my Wealth.*

The more I had, the more was my care, and the greater the charge that I had under my hands; and the more was my solicitude to be a faithful steward of it, to the honour and use of my Master; but my part was the least that was in it. Indeed I rejoiced in this, that my Master esteemed me faithful, committing the dispensation thereof to my trust; but I thought it no more mine, than the lord's bailiff, or the merchant's cash-keeper, thinks his master's rents or money his: And therefore thought it would be a breach of my trust to consume or embezzle that wealth in excessive superfluities of meat, drink, or apparel, or in advancing myself or my posterity to a massy or huge acquest.



*Touching my Reputation.*

Though I have loved my reputation, and have been vigilant not to lose or impair it by my own default or neglect; yet I have looked upon it as a brittle thing, a thing that the devil aims to hit in a special manner; a thing that is much in the power of a false report, a mistake, a misapprehension, to wound and hurt. Notwithstanding all my care, I am at the mercy of others, without God's wonderful, over-ruling Providence. And as my reputation is the esteem that others have of me, so that esteem may be blemished without by default. I have therefore always taken this care, not to set my heart upon my reputation. I will use all fidelity and honesty, and take care it shall not be lost by any default of mine; and if, notwithstanding all this, my reputation be soiled by evil or envious men, or angels, I will patiently bear it, and content myself with the serenity of my own conscience. *Hic murus aeneus esto.*

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The aforesaid author, in his book "*Of the Nature of True Religion,*" &c. page 17, says thus:

True religion teaches and tutors the soul to a high reverence and veneration of Almighty God; a sincere and upright walking as in the presence of the invisible, all-seeing God. It makes a man truly to love, to honour, to obey him, and therefore careful to know what his will is. It renders the heart highly thankful to him, both as his creator, redeemer, and benefactor. It makes a man entirely to depend upon him, to seek to him for guidance, and direction, and protection; to submit to his will with all patience and resignation of soul. It gives

the law not only to his words and actions, but to his very thoughts and purposes, that he dares not entertain thoughts unbecoming the sight and presence of that God to whom all our thoughts are legible. It teacheth and bringeth a man to such a deportment, both of external and internal sobriety, as may be decent in the presence of God and all his holy angels. It crusheth and casts down all pride and haughtiness, both in man's heart and carriage; and gives him an humble frame of soul and life, both in the sight of God and men. It regulates and governs the passions of the mind, and brings them into due moderation and frame. It gives a man a right estimate of this present world, and sets the heart and hopes above it, so that he never loves it more than it deserves. It makes the wealth and the glory of this world, high places, and great preferments, but of a low and little value to him; so that he is neither covetous, nor ambitious, nor over solicitous concerning the advantages of it. It brings a man to that frame, that righteousness, justice, honesty and fidelity, are, as it were, part of his nature. He can sooner die than commit or purpose that which is unjust, dishonest, or unworthy a good man. It makes him value the love of God, and peace of conscience, above all the wealth and honour in the world; and to be very vigilant to keep it inviolably. He performs all his duties to God in sincerity and integrity; and whilst he lives on earth, his conversation, his hopes, his treasure is in heaven; and he entirely endeavours to walk suitably to such a hope. This man hath the life of religion in him; and that life acts in him, and will conform his soul to the image of his Saviour, to walk along with him to all eternity.

*The Consequence of Intemperance.*

God hath given to the sons of men, in respect of sensual things, objects not only for necessity but delight. But here is their misery, as well as their sin, that they rest not in what God lawfully allows. And hence it is that the God of mercy curses (and that most justly) his own blessings unto that man that thus perverts the use of them. Wine rejoiceth the heart of man, as it was given for that end: but when a man in the use of it looks no higher but to satiate himself, there is a sting put into it, and it proves a serpent.\* *Knowledge of God*, page 286, 287.

*Touching the Conscience.*

Conscience is God's vicegerent in man; and when her Lord is angry, conscience will chide. It is a glass wherein a man may, by reflection, see the face of heaven, and of his own soul. *Knowledge of God*, page 269.

If thy conscience blame thee, though ever so little, despise it not, nor neglect this secret check. It is a messenger from heaven that summons thee to thy duty, page 372.

Certainly the sense of the love of God is either not at all, or not awake, when any man considerately commits the least sin against his conscience, page 297.

The direction of conscience, when it is well used, is seldom without the immediate direction of the very spirit of God. But if the guidance of that spirit be neglected, it will not return to thy assistance when thou pleasest, page 369.

There is nothing in the world conduceth more to the composure and tranquillity of the mind, than the

\* Proverbs xxiii. 52.

serenity and clearness of the conscience. Keep but that safe and untainted, the mind will enjoy a calm and tranquillity in the midst of all the storms of the world. And although the waves beat, and sea works, and the winds blow, the mind that hath a quiet and clear conscience within, will be as stable and as safe from perturbation, as a rock in the midst of a tempestuous sea: and will be a Goshen, to and within itself, when the rest of the world without is like an Egypt, for plagues and darkness. *Contempt.* page 373.

Whatever thou dost hazard or lose, keep the integrity of thy conscience, both before troubles come, and under them. It is a jewel that will make thee rich in the midst of poverty; a sun that will give thee light in the midst of darkness; a fortress that will keep thee safe in the greatest danger; and that is never to be taken from thee, unless thou thyself betray it, and deliver it up.