

as I said at first; Debt has been the *Aversion* of my whole Life. And I had much rather endure a Prison than to See any Person I owe Money to, 'till I am able to pay him——

This is *The Living Elegy*; (or *Mournful State of my present Case*) but it is meet with any Ill Treatment, as I do not deserve it, so I do not value it; for (Gentlemen) I writ this *Elegy* to satisfy you, and to please my self: And I am sure I shall have my End in the Latter, whatever I have in the Former. But for all others, they are *Mock-Bourneers*, (*alias Summer-Friends*) and may go about their Business, for I neither value their Censure, nor shall court their Favour——  
FAVOUR! I might be a little Satyrical on that Word; but as M—— said (when she Look'd her Beagles to Attach my Books, being ashamed to be seen in it her self)——  
A Word to the Wife is enough—— But I shan't enlarge, for I have as little Reason to humour the Criticks as Wi—— had to be M——'s Setting Dog (I mean to offer in Person to Attach my Books)——  
However, this *Whatchers Impudence* (I call it so, as I ow'd him nothing, and scarce know him) justifies the Character I gave him in P. 47. and plainly shews Wi—— M—— H——l and M——'s Pist all in a Quill.

And here (Gentlemen) perhaps 'twill be said (for Creditors have Reason to look into the Lives and Souls of their Debtors)——  
Damon, we find you have Enemies in all Religions, [L——y is High-Church——  
The Moderator Low-Church—— The Whipster No Church—— S——ge a Tacker—— F—— a Dissenter—— M—— a Trimmer, &c.]—— Then what are you that oppose 'em all?——

To this I answer, (a) “ My Religion is [CHRISTIAN,] I mean, entirely disencumber'd of all those Names, and Sects, and Parties, that have rais'd so much Dust and Noise, and have done the greatest Prejudice to Christianity and the Reformation. The

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(a) As I formerly hinted in my *Idea of a New-Life*. P. 2.

“ World,

Dunton's *Letter to his Few Creditors.* 59

" World, 'tis true, has given me that Partial and Pre-  
 " cise Name of Presbyterian, which I renounce for  
 " ever; and take this Opportunity to tell those Strait-  
 " Laced Souls, who are for fixing Bounds and Enclo-  
 " sures in the Flock of Christ, that I am neither Church-  
 " man, Presbyterian, Independent, Anabaptist, Quaker, &c.  
 " That Title is the best, and sufficient for me, which  
 " obtain'd at Antioch under the Christian Dispensation: I  
 " desire no Character for the Future, but— CHRIST I-  
 " AN ——— A Lover of Jesus, and one that intends  
 " for Heaven and Happiness in the Life to come; and  
 " 'tis of small Moment with me, whether a Malignant  
 " World will allow me this Measure of Charity: My  
 " Right to the Covenant of Grace, and my Eternal  
 " Interest, have no Dependance upon Ill Nature and Envy.  
 " This (Gentlemen) is the Religion, (call it what you  
 " please) that I desire to live and die in; and whilst  
 " others wrangle for this or that Party, or way of Wor-  
 " ship, I desire to practice it: But tho' (as I said before)  
 " My Religion is entirely disencumber'd of all those Names  
 " and Parties which promote Divisions, and as 'twere,  
 " pine and shrivel Right Christianity into a bare  
 " Skeleton, yet I profess my self an Impartial Lover of  
 " all good Men; (by what Names soever dignify'd and di-  
 " stinguish'd) and do presume every Man to be Good, till  
 " I find him otherwise—— I have as little Zeal about  
 " Things that are manifestly Indifferent (either Pro or  
 " Con) as any Man in the World, and chuse to reserve  
 " it for those Things which are truly worthy of it.— 'Tis a  
 " great Principle with me, that the Real Differences  
 " of Good and Intelligent People are not so wide as they  
 " seem; and that thro' Prejudice and Interest, they do  
 " many times contest about Words, whilst they do Heartily  
 " think the same Thing—— And this, in Answer to  
 " the Question [*What are you?*] is Dunton's Religion,  
 " or the unobscured Principles upon which he hopes to be sav'd. (a)

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(a) By Unobscured Principles, I only mean such as are seldom believ'd, and more rarely practis'd.

This is also the Title of a *Large Essay* intended for Publick View, wherein are so many *Theses* different from what is generally believ'd and practis'd, as will make L——y (and my other Enemies) say, *Dunton had rather err by himself, than hold a Common Truth*—— However, I shall advance nothing in this *Essay* but what really are (or I take to be) *Orthodox Truths*; and such on which I intend to *venture my Soul and Eternal Happiness*—— But I won't anticipate my own Design, [*In this New Scheme of Religion*] having said enough at present to satisfy all my Friends, (and I hope my Enemies too) of what Religion I am, or shou'd be. —Gentlemen, I hope I have fairly prov'd, that as to my *Morals*, I am (or shall be) an *Honest Man* as soon as I get *Money*: And that *Dunton's Religion* is such (did he seriously practice it) as will bring me to Heaven at last—— I know a *System of Healing Principles, &c.* will be banter'd by L——y and the High-Flyers; but *Moderation* to such as *Dissent* from us, is what all Men own to be Reasonable, and wish they had practis'd on a *Death-bed*; for then Persons are *Open and Plain-Hearted*, find themselves as Fallible as other Men, and dare not Depart in Malice to the *Serious Christian* of any *Perswasion*—— This made King *WILLIAM* declare with his last Breath, “*That he dy'd a Christian of a Comprehensive Charity*——  
 “*This with every Serious Mind must surely have a much greater*  
 “*and better Sound, than to have said, I die in the Enclos'd Com-*  
 “*munion of one or other Party, or Denomination of Christians*——  
 “*Nor do I see how any one can safely leave the World, how-*  
 “*ever they make a shift to live in it, without A Charity that*  
 “*reaches to all Serious Christians under whatever Distinguishing*  
 “*Name they pass. And let others confine their Candour and*  
 “*Communion within Narrower Limits, if they dare; but I cou'd*  
 “*never hope to be joyn'd to the General Assemblie and Church*  
 “*Above, if I shou'd willingly, and out of Choice, cut off my*  
 “*self from any Part of the Body, or refuse upon truly Catholick*  
 “*Terms, to hold Communion with 'em: And upon this very Prin-*  
 “*ciple it is, that many Protestant Dissenters do, and may justify*  
 “*both their Occasional Communicating with the Church of England,*  
 “*so call'd, and their not daring to do it constantly (a) ——*

L——y and D——ke may banter this *Moderation, &c.* as much as they please, yet I don't fear (if my *Morals* are good, and my *Religion* as Sincere and Charitable as here describ'd) but I shall meet all such Persons in Heaven that practice this *Healing Doctrine*: And here all the *Debt* will be *LOVE*. For, as *Herbert* says,

*All we know of the Bless'd Above,  
 Is that they Sing, and that they Love.*

Having in this *LIVING ELEGY* briefly (and Publickly) Lamented

1. The Death of a Flourishing Trade

(a) See my *New Practice of Piety*. P. 54.

## Dunton's Letter to his Few Creditors. 61

2. The Character and Ingratitude of those *Summer-Friends* that carels'd me as long as the World finil'd.

3. The spiteful and ungrateful Treatment of M—— that wou'd have blatted my Credit with Printers and Stationers.

4. The Little or No-Religion and Honesty that has appear'd in the Lives and Writings of *The Moderator*—— *Spy*—— *Whipster*—— *Rehearsal*, &c.

And as this *Elegy* has wept over, and fairly answer'd these *Impious Wretches*, so in Answer to this Question, [*What are you?*] I have briefly shewn what *Religion and Justice* ought to be found in my Conversation: But having *Publickly* treated on these Heads, the Criticks are now desir'd to withdraw a little, whilst I have some *Private Discourse* with my *Few and Generous Creditors*——

Then (*Gentlemen*) *A Word in your Ear*, and I'll then dismiss you with this *Prayer*. “*That God would bless all your Affairs, and make up the Disappointment you have met with on my Account, (for that's all you can call it) in the Quick and Full Payments of your other Debtors*—— But to the Word in your Ear!

Perhaps you'll ask, *Who do you mean by the* 21.— B—l; S—l F— W—P—s L—y H—S—n D—y—C——r M——Wi——&c?—

I Answer—— I mean *no Body* but those that wince; and if any such *DARE* appear, I am ready and able to make *Good every Word* that is here Publish'd.

Thus (*Gentlemen*) have I finish'd my *Living Elegy*: (Or all the *Words of Comfort* your *Poor Debtor* can give at present) But seeing in all *Elegies*, *Verse* is rather expected than *Prose*; and that in a *Fit of the Stone*, &c. I scarce know whether I live or die, *A Rhiming Elegy* is the most proper Conclusion of this Letter——

My *Body* is besieg'd with *The Rheumatism, Scurvy, and Consumptive Cough*, &c. (which shews *Death* is not far off) But in a *Fit of the Stone*, I actually stand (as *Aaron* once did in the *Camp*) betwixt the *Living and the Dead*. And whilst I reflect on my self, I find I participate of both. So that if a *Rhiming Elegy* was ever proper (for a *Living Person*) 'tis so for me; not only as it justifies the Title of this Letter, and shews I have *one Foot in the Grave*, but as I was *Born seemingly Dead*: ('Twas thought I was *Lug'd* out of my *Natural-Cell* into my *Grave*.) And I cou'd have been content, had I had no more than the *Register, or Sexton*, to tell the *World* that I had ever been. However, I may venture to say, That from the *first laying of these Mud-walls in my Conception*, they have moulder'd away, and the whole *Course of Life* is but an *Active Death*: Nay, every *Meal* we eat, is as it were a *Ransom* from one *Death*, and lays up for another; and while we think a *Thought*, we die; for the *Clock* strikes, and reckons on our *Portion of Eternity*: Nay, we even form our *Words* with the *Breath* of our *Nostrils*, and we have the less *Time to live (wax't we dead already)* for every *Word* we speak.

I say it again, (wants we dead already) for I have undertook to prove (a) what we call *Life* is *Actual Death*; or at best I am but *Half alive, and half dead*; for Half my Body (by Reason of the Stone, &c.) is dead, and hath already taken Seisin of the Grave for me: And all my Friends (that Hour I grew Unfortunate) dy'd. So that if I wou'd adhere to the greater Number, (as many do in Factions) I must repair to the Dead, if I en't with em already, for my Habitation (my Body) moulders apace, and the very Top and Cover (my Thatch above) turns Colour, grows Grey, and withers —

So that you see (Gentlemen) not only my *Civil Death*, (by Reason of Debt) but my Crazy (and Dying) Body calls for a *Living Elegy*: And so that Reason, as I have written a *Living Elegy* (in Prose) on my *Civil Death*, so I'll conclude this Letter with a *POEM* on *The Arrest of Natural Death*, which *Dunton* (did my Creditors forgive all I owe them) can never escape.

[Dunton's Living Elegy in Verse.] *Death is my House, for I perceive I have  
In all my Life ne'er dwelt out of a Grave.  
The Womb was (first) my Grave, whence since I rofe,  
My Body (Grave-like) doth my Soul enclose;  
That Body (like a Corps with Sheets-spread)*  
*Dying each Night, lies bury'd in my Bed;  
O'er which my Spreading Testers, large Latent  
Born with Carv'd Antiques, makes my Monument.  
And o'er my Head (perchance) such Things may stand  
When I am quite run out in Dust and Sand.  
My close-Low-builded Chamber, to my Eye,  
Shows like a little Chappel; where I lie,  
While at my Window pretty Birds do ring  
My Knell, and with their Notes my Obits sing.  
Thus, when the Day's vain Roll my Soul has weary'd,  
I in my Body, Bed, and House lie bury'd;  
Then have I little Cause to fear my Tomb,  
When this (wherein I live) my Graves become.*

*Then Crazy Dunton, why dost take such Care  
To lengthen out thy Life's short Calendar?  
Each dropping Season, and each Flower does cry,  
John, as I fade and wither, thou must die.  
The beating of thy Pulse when thou art well,  
Is but the Tolling of thy Palling Bell.  
Night is thy Harse, whose Sable Canopy  
Covers alike Deceased Day and Thee;  
And all those weeping Dews which Nightly fall,  
Are but as Tears shed for thy Funeral.*

(a) *Dunton's Paradox Entituled The Funeral of Mankind: Or, an Essay proving we are all Dead and Buried, &c.*

## Dunton's Letter to his Few Creditors. 63

Whilst thus I musing lay, to my Bed-side  
(Attir'd in all his Mourning Pride)  
The King of Terrors came ;  
Awful his Looks, but not Deform'd and Grim,  
(He's no such Goblin as we fancy him)  
Scarcely we our selves so Civiliz'd and Tame.  
Think now the Doom assign'd me in this Change,  
That justly I might fear Heaven's worst Revenge,  
Yet with my present Griefs redrest,  
With curious Thoughts of unknown Worlds possist,  
Inflam'd with Thirst of Liberty,  
Long lov'd, but ne'er enjoy'd by me,  
I seek'd for Leave the Fatal Guilt to pass.  
My Vital Sand is almost run,  
And Death, said I, will strike anon.  
Then to dull Life I bid a long Farewel,  
And stretch'd for Flight—— But as the last Grains fell,  
Death fail'd a my Flatter'd Hopes, and turn'd the Glass.

But (Gentlemen) this is but a Living Elegy, for my Soul and Body en't yet parted ; or if they were, should you put a Bag of Guineas into my Hand, I should let it fall ; or could you give me Sampsil, (a) 'twou'd be too heavy to carry to the other World, for you'll see (when I die in Earnest) that my Eyes are closed, and I observe nothing——

Gentlemen—— I have nothing further to Add, but to tell ye again (at parting) [October the 10th, 1708.] I shall pay you every Penny I owe you ; and that I am, till then (and for ever)

From the *Athenian*  
(alias Smith's) Coffee-  
House, in Stocks-Market,  
April the 10th, 1706.

Your much Obliged,

And very Humble Servant,

JOHN DUNTON.

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(a) The Name of a Good Estate which my Honoured Mother once offer'd to secure to me, by a Writing under her Hand, which I refus'd to take, as not doubting but she'll perform her Promise of giving it to me and my Wife, after her Death.

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