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SIXTEEN
SERMONS,

All (except One) Preach'd before the

Univerfity of *Oxford*,

At St. *MARY*'s,

U P O N

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

By *WILLIAM TILLY*, D.D.
Fellow of C.C.C. *Oxon*, and Rector
of *Albury* near *Rycot* in *Oxford-*
shire.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Bernard Lintott* Bookseller, at the
Sign of the *Cross-Keys*, between the Two
Temple Gates in *Fleetstreet*. 1712.

To The RIGHT HONOURABLE

MONTAGUE,

Earl of *Abingdon,*

Baron NORREYS of Rycot,
Lord Chief Justice, *and* Justice
in Eyre of all Her MAJESTY'S
Forests, on the South-Side of
Trent, *and One of the Lords of*
Her MAJESTY'S *most* Honourable
Privy-Council.

MY LORD,

I Hope You will be pleas'd to receive these Papers, as an Instance of my Duty, and grateful Acknowledgments to Your LORDSHIP; though I could not have presum'd to have offer'd them to Your Acceptance on any other Reason.

The Dedication.

Not, but that Your LORDSHIP did me the Honour to entitle Your Self, in a great measure, to the former part of these Discourses; when, besides all the other Instances of the greatest Favours shewn to their Author, You condescended, some Years since, to undertake the Publick Defence of their Innocence and Integrity, in the Presence of some Men, from whom, My LORD, an *Honest Man*, and *Good Principles* must expect no Favour: These Things are so little like what these Men are, or have themselves: Yet Your LORDSHIP ventur'd, even then, in the most Evil and Dangerous Times, whilst *these Men* were *Flourishing*, and the *Nation Sinking*, to stand up in Vindication of *Honest Principles*, even under the Weakness, with which they are *here* deliver'd; and not only so, but to take a Person that Preach'd them into Your more immediate *Patronage*, and not long after to Prefer him,

The Dedication.

him, when many of his own Friends were ready to look upon his *Interest* as Desperate as his Enemies could Wish, his *Person* most Imprudent, and his *Zeal* Unseasonable.

I know, My LORD, Your Honour towards Almighty God and Religion to be Truly Great; and that, when ever there is occasion for it, You will not fail to express Your Favour, and contribute Your Assistance to the meanest of his Servants, that, under the Sacred Badge of his *Profession*, and in pursuance of his Holy *Office*, comes to suffer from the Malice and Slanders of a *Persecuting Interest*. Yet none of these Favours must I have expected from Your LORDSHIP, if I had been the Person these ill Men had endeavoured to represent me. But Your LORDSHIP was pleas'd to think *otherwise* of me, that I had no ill Designs, nor bad Principles, at the Bottom: Nothing but a

a 3

Heart

The Dedication.

Heart full of Duty to my *Gracious Sovereign the QUEEN*, of Love to our Excellent *Church and Constitution*, and of a *just Sorrow and Indignation* at the Flourishing and Success of ill Men, and worse Designs.

These, My LORD, are such Favours, that I dare appeal to all the World, whether they are not sufficient to engage not only the utmost Duty, but even the Love and Affection (pardon me, my LORD, that I use such *Levelling Expressions*) of any *Chaplain* towards so Excellent a LORD and PATRON. And may all the World be Witnesses against me, and rise to Condemn me, if ever I fail in any Instance of Dutiful Respect to Your LORDSHIP, or My *most Honoured LADY*; From whom I have receiv'd, so frequently, such Condescensions of Her Goodness towards me, that if I should endeavour to express my Sense of, and Acknowledgments for them, I must
fall

The Dedication.

fall so far below what ought to be said, below my own Obligations and Desires, as to run the Venture of being thought a Man without Apprehension, or without Gratitude. How much farther still must the Just Character of Her LADYSHIP'S Personal Excellencies rise above any Thing 'tis possible for me to represent!

I will only presume to say One Thing, My LORD, in General, that I am sure 'tis impossible any Person of *Quality in England*, though even of Your LORDSHIP'S Admirable Goodness and Sweetness of Nature, should ever treat his *Lady* so well, with that Great Tendernefs, Regard, and Honour, which Your LORDSHIP never fails to Express towards the *Countess of Abingdon*, if She had not those Truly Amiable Graces and Accomplishments in Her Person and Temper, which might deservedly engage, and for ever retain the Affections of One

The Dedication.

of the *Wiseſt*, as well as *Beſt* of *Noblemen*.

I hope, My LORD, by the advantage of ſuch an Example, in time, the ſtrict Obligations of the *Married State* may come to have ſome Reputation amongſt more Perſons of *Honour*, than they ſeem to have at preſent. I am ſure they are ſtrictly bound upon all degrees of Men, in that Condition of Life, how Great ſoever, if the Authority of *God* and *Chriſt* can prevail any thing: And one would think they ſhould be *Honourable* too, if the *Great Fountain* of *Civil Honour* could make them ſo, as recommended by the *unparallel'd* Example of the *Beſt* of *QUEENS*: As long as it pleas'd the Good Providence of Heaven, there ſhould be room for Her *Sacred Majeſty* to expreſs Her moſt eminent Vertue and Piety in that Instance of Religion, as She has ever done in all the reſt, ſo much to the Honour of *Almighty God*,

The Dedication.

God, and the true Spiritual Advantage of all Her Subjects.

And whilst Your LORDSHIP follows so bright a Precedent in Your Practice of this Great Duty, other Men's Vices and Failures herein serve the more to recommend Your Vertue, since one would almost think himself bound in Charity to believe, that, surely, the Observance of this great Instance of our *Religion* is attended with more Difficulty in Persons of High *Quality*, than in other Men: And, consequently, 'tis the more highly Excellent and Valuable, when 'tis found there. In *this*, My LORD, though Your Example be of a very large and extensive Influence, yet the more immediate advantage of it is confin'd at Home, and renders indeed Your LADY particularly Happy.

But when, in conjunction with this, we survey so many other Perfections of Grace and Nature united

The Dedication.

in one Person: When we consider, an *Earl of England*, as answering all His relations to His God, His QUEEN, and Country, His Neighbour and Himself: When we observe His unfeign'd Faith and Piety towards *Almighty God*, His unblemish'd *Loyalty* to His *Sovereign*, His resolv'd uniform steady Love to His Church and Country's Establishment, without any design of Self-interest, or upon His own least Advancement, tho' His noble Endowments, Accomplishments and Capacity render Him, in the Eye of all the World, most truly Deserving of the *Greatest*: When we know Him to be most seriously and constantly Devout, both in publick and private, without Affectation, Just beyond Example, Kind and Generous, and Charitable further than the Needs and Desires of those that apply to His Power and Goodness do require: When we find Him truly Sociable and Compliant with-

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The Dedication.

out breaking in upon the Bounds of Temperance and Sobriety; Cheerful without Trifling, without ever violating the *Guards* of Religion or Modesty; full of Submission, Courtesy and Condescension, yet never *descending* from His *Honour*: When we see Him *Wise* without *Craft*, *Strict* and Severe in His own Life and Practice without *Censuring*, *Prudent* to Observe; Careful to Avoid, and Powerful to Reprove, by His own Example, yet, in His great Candour, not willing to upbraid the Faults and Infirmities of other Men: In one Word, When we contemplate Him as perfectly Regular, most truly Delightful and Profitable in all His Conversation: These, My LORD, are Qualities and Vertues so truly Great and Worthy, that when plac'd in so Great an *Eminence*, in a Person of *Your High Character*, they descend full of Blessings upon the World, and have the most prevailing

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The Dedication.

ing Efficacy towards the Reformation of the Age.

Such I know them to be in Your *Lordship*, that almost any Man, even a *Worthy Clergy-man*, much more Your own *Chaplain*, may learn to correct and amend the Defects and Errors, and improve the Vertues of his own Life and Practice by the more perfect Pattern of Your *Lordship's*.

How much therefore *I my self* have to answer for in *particular*, if I am not made the *better Man*, and the *better Christian* by my attendance on Your *Lordship*, I am very sensible: As I am likewise of my exceeding great Happiness, in having been Plac'd by Your *Lordship's* Favour and Bounty, and in consistence with my *University Interests*, once before, and now again, within the reach of so *advantageous* an Influence.

My LORD, That I take the Boldness to inscribe these *unworthy*
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The Dedication.

Papers to Your *Great Name*, without Your Leave or Consent, while I am not sure I act against it, I would desire the affectionate Forwardness of my Duty towards Your *Lordship* may be my Excuse. But, I am very far, *My Lord*, from designing, by this means, to Engage Your HONOUR in any of my Controversies, or to Answer for any Exceptions that can be justly taken against me, for any Passage to be found within this Book. I was only desirous, for the Ease and Satisfaction of my own Mind, to take the First Opportunity (though others, perhaps, will think not the most Prudent or Respectful one) of rendring those my dutiful *Thanks* to Your *Lordship*, from which I can never be excused; And for paying which, when I am permitted to do so, I must think my self still the further indebted to Your Goodness: And *That* I have always found so very Great, that I could almost take

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The Dedication.

Encouragement from *thence* to hope for Your Pardon to my present Presumption. I am sure, I must ever look upon my self as the more highly oblig'd to Your *Lordship's* Kindness, for all those numerous *Favours*, upon all occasions, with so much Readiness conferr'd upon me; the more frequent Opportunities You shall be pleas'd to allow me of expressing my self, either in this way, or any other Instance within my Power,

My Gracious LORD,

Your most Oblig'd,

Humble, and Dutiful

Servant, and Chaplain,

WILLIAM TILLY.

THE
PREFACE.

THE former Part of these Sermons, if I may guess by the general Acceptation they met with, at their first coming out, may have done some little good. And because I was not willing they should be quite lost in loose and scatter'd Papers, I have taken care to have them Reprinted with the rest of this Book: That, if they should happen to continue hereafter, they may stand as a Testimony of my Zeal and Integrity, at least, in Protest-
ing against the ill Principles and Practices of the Times in which they were written; As I am very sensible, they have been already an Argument, in the Opinions of some Men, both against my Person and my Interest.

I am

The Preface.

I am very far, however, from repenting, or being ashamed of any thing I have there deliver'd; And though I had much rather, at any time, be engag'd on Points, that more immediately refer to the Doctrine and Practice of Christianity; yet, I should not be Discourag'd, by any thing I have met with hitherto, from Preaching and Proceeding in the very same Style and Manner I have already done, if there should ever be Occasion for it again, from the Degeneracy and Corruption of the Age, which I hope there never will be.

The rest of this Collection being written in a less Popular way, because more immediately design'd for a Learned Audience, I had little, or no farther Use of them. To those, for whom they were intended, I am sure nothing can be difficult; from whom if any thing receive an Approbation, there needs nothing else to Recommend it.

THE CONTENTS.

SERMON I. Page 1.

On *Monday January XXXI.* the Fast-Day for the execrable Murder of King *Charles* the Martyr.

JOHN XVI. 2.

—*Yea, the Time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God Service.*

Preach'd before the University, *January XXXI.*

170 $\frac{3}{4}$. The Third Edition.

SERMON II. Page 41.

The Nature and Necessity of *Religious Resolution,* in the Defence and Support of a *Good Cause,* in Times of Danger and Tryal.

PROVERBS XXIV. 10, 11, 12.

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain:

If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not: doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every Man according to his works?

Preach'd at the *Affizes,* and before the University, *July XIX.* 1705. The Fourth Edition.

The CONTENTS.

SERMON III. Page 91.

The *Church's* Security, from the Providence of God defending *Her*, and the Goodness of Her own Cause and Constitution.

ISAIAH LIV. 17.

No weapon that is form'd against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall arise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.

Preach'd before the *Mayor* and Corporation of *Oxford*, at *St. Martin's Church*, on *Monday, November V. 1705.* The Third Edition.

SERMON IV. Page 118.

The Sins and Vices of Men's Lives, the chief Cause of their *Ignorance*, and *Corrupt Opinions* in *Religion*.

JOHN III. 19.

Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Preach'd before the University *December XI. 1709.* The Second Edition.

SERMON V. Page 142.

A return to our former *Good Old Principles* and *Practice*, the only way to restore and preserve our *Peace*.

JEREMIAH VI. 16.

Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

Preach'd before the University, *May XIV. 1710.* The Fifth Edition.

SER.

The CONTENTS.

SERMON VI. Page 167.

The Law of *Moses* not of Eternal Obligation, and the Reasons of our *Saviour's* Conformity to it, when he came to remove it.

HEBREWS VIII. 8.

For finding fault with them he saith, Behold the days come (saith the Lord) when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah.

Preach'd before the University on *Circumcision-Day*, January I. 179⁸/₉.

SERMON VII. Page 196.

The utter Inconsistence, and no Necessity of Observing the Law of *Moses*, together with the Profession of *Christianity*.

PHILIP. III. 2, 3.

Beware of the Concision; for we are of the Circumcision.

Preach'd before the University on *Circumcision-Day*, January I. 17¹⁰/₁₁.

SERMON VIII. Page 226.

The Grace of God shewn to be not only Consistent with the Liberty of Man's Will, but the strongest Obligation to our own Endeavours.

PHILIP. II. 12, 13.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; For it is God which worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Preach'd before the University on *Sunday*, September VI. 1702.

The CONTENTS.

SERMON IX. Page 255.

A Second Part on the same Text and Subject.
Preach'd before the University on *Sunday*, April
XI. 1703.

SERMON X. Page 283.

The Coming of the *Holy Ghost* consider'd, as depending on our *Blessed Saviour's* Intercession, together with his Office, as our *Comforter*, and his perpetual *Residence* in the *Church of Christ*.

JOHN XIV. 16.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

Preach'd before the University on *Whit-Sunday*,
May XXIV. 1702.

SERMON XI. Page 312.

Of Grieving the *Holy Spirit*.

EPHES. IV. 30.

And Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are seal'd to the day of redemption.

Preach'd before the University on *Whitsun-Tuesday*,
May XXV. 1708.

SER.

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XII. Page 345.

The Nature and Instances of Spiritual Pride Explain'd from our Saviour's Parable of the Pharisee and Publican.

LUKE XVII. 9, 10, 11, 12.

And he spake this Parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

Two Men went up to the Temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican.

I fast twice in the Week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

Preach'd First before the University of Oxford, 1708. And Afterwards before the Right Honourable the Lord-Mayor, and the Aldermen of London, at St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday, November XI. 1711. The Second Edition.

SERMON XIII. Page 370.

The Folly and Danger of being conceited of our Spiritual Knowledge.

1 CORINTH. VIII. 2.

And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Preach'd before the University, in January 1711.

SER.

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XIV. Page 396.

The Nature, Advantages, Object and Evidence of our Christian Hope.

HEBREWS VI. 19.

Which hope we have, as an anchor of the Soul, both sure and stedfast. and which entreth into that within the veil.

Preach'd before the University on Sunday, December XV. 1700.

SERMON XV. Page 425.

The Nature of Christian Forgiveness of Injuries, and by what Rules we may try our Practice of it.

LUKE VI. 37.

Forgive——.

Preach'd before the University on St. Andrew's Day, Thursday, Novemb. XXX. 1704.

SERMON XVI. Page 453.

Plain-dealing, Zeal and Integrity the indispensable Duty of the Christian Ministry, in times of Danger and Corruption; and the best means to secure the Honour and Reputation of their Sacred Order.

2 CORINTH. IV. 1, 2.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have receiv'd mercy we faint not.

But

The CONTENTS.

But have renounc'd the bidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the Truth, commending our selves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Preach'd before the Univerfity on *Act-Sunday*,
July VIII. 1711.

E R R A T A.

PAGE 43. Line 17. *read* forbear. P. 63. l. 23, *r.* perfection.
 P. 90. l. 11. *r.* God of his infinite Mercy. P. 108. l. 13.
r. their own way. P. 171. l. 21. *r.* of the Jewish, P. 180.
 l. 32, *r.* perverse. P. 199. l. 24. *dele* that. P. 215. l. 15. *r.*
 dependence, *r.* so as often as that Word is wrong Printed.
 P. 219. l. 16. *r.* mere. P. 253. l. 14. *r.* Summit. P. 256.
 l. 28. *r.* vacate. P. 263. l. 33. *r.* Obedience. P. 266. l. 27.
for deadless, *r.* dead. P. 272. l. 15. *r.* Endeavours, *for*. P.
 277. l. 34. *r.* a light, a roving. P. 284. l. 27. *r.* made. P.
 287. l. 25. *r.* supersede. L. 28. *r.* say this, P. 292. l. 33. *r.*
 there by. P. 297. l. 32. *r.* signature. P. 299. l. 18. *r.* con-
 trolling. P. 301. l. 33. *r.* Counsel. P. 313. l. 22. *r.* effectively
 Holy. P. 321. l. 22. *r.* after all, P. 326. l. 6. *r.* afterwards to
 be Acted. L. 24. *r.* inconsideration, L. 25. *r.* inadvertence
 to. P. 330. l. 9. *post* this *dele* comma. P. 347. l. 5. bore a
 most. P. 368. l. 26. *r.* purpose. P. 376. l. 21. *r.* where then
 is Wisdom to be found! P. 378. l. 9. *r.* Pregnancy. P. 385.
 l. 29. *r.* the Nature of true Knowledge. P. 387. l. 18. *r.*
 Spiritual. P. 388. l. 6. *r.* fallen into. P. 390. in the Note
r. Book 5. Paragr. 3. 403. l. 22. *r.* glimmering. L. 23. *r.*
 desperation. P. 410. l. 3. *r.* a misguided. L. 23. *dele* they.
 P. 422. l. 30. *r.* resolute. P. 423. l. 8. *r.* indispensable. P.
 427. l. 17. *r.* to strain. P. 431. l. 28. original. P. 456. l. 14. *dele*
 comma *post* need. P. 457. l. 15. *r.* account of the Nature, .
 P. 458. l. 4. *r.* Ministers. P. 459. l. 35. *r.* enrage. P. 463.
 l. 26. *r.* destitution. P. 465. l. 28. *dele* than. P. 475. l. 5. *r.*
 the just Reproach. P. 476. l. 16. *r.* himself at last, . P. 477.
 l. 2. *r.* a violent wrest, and. L. 11. *r.* Stream.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd Before the
University of OXFORD

O N

Monday, *January XXXI.* 170³₄.

The Third Edition.

J O H N XVI. 2.

—Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service.

WHEN the *Light* of our Conscience, which God originally set up within our Souls, and next under his own Holy Word, intended to be the Rule and *immediate* Guide of our Lives, shall it self once become *Erroneous* and *Corrupt*, 'tis beyond Conception, into what fatal Consequences this must lead Men, and what Blindness and Confusion must of Necessity follow from thence, upon our whole Conduct and Course of Action; and that, howsoever we consider Men in a

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SERM. I. manner as single, and independent upon Society, without any great Relation to, or Combination with each other. But when publick Bodies, and Communities of Men, shall once come to unite in a Common Error, to promote an ill Cause; this is so Unnatural a Thing, and must breed such Convulsions, both in Church and State, as must sorely *Threaten*, if not determine in the Ruine and Dissolution of Both. When Men shall Combine together, for Reasons of their own vicious Interest, in a Distemper'd and Seditious State, to set up the common Cry of Religion and Conscience, and shall run a Cause up or down upon it, as it either happens to be for, or against their Designs: This is an Artifice that seldom fails to take; it does indeed so quickly kindle, and usually so fire the Spirits of Men, that nothing less can quench it than the Blood of those that set themselves to oppose its Progress: The Generality of the giddy Multitude, upon whom yet the main Issues of Government depend, running away with the first Hint; and never so much as doubting but that the Name of Conscience alone, will bear them out in all the Outrages they commit, as they imagine, in Obedience to it: As if the bare Inscription of God and Religion upon the Banner, were sufficient to justify the Cause, or Men could never do amiss, when under a blind and ignorant Zeal they intended well. 'Tis certain, that wheresoever in any State or Government, these Sacred Names have been pretended to a bad Cause, the Wounds they have given, have there gone deeper; and the Scars left behind, have been more wide and visible, than from
any

any other Reason of Dissention whatsoever; and no Wars in the World have prov'd more Cruel and Severe than Religious Ones; there being no Principle in Human Nature, on which Men act so violently, when they are once set upon it, as on that of Conscience: And consequently, there can be none, in which it concerns Men more not to be Mistaken. SERM. I.

In this Chapter our Saviour addressses himself to prepare and confirm the Minds of his Disciples against those many, and violent Persecutions, he foresaw would fall upon them for the Sake of Himself, and his Religion. He tells them, that in Proposing his *Gospel* to the World, they should be encounter'd with all the Strength and Power of it, and beliable to the utmost Severities from it, which the *Pride, Interest, and Ill-Nature* of Men could raise against them: Nay, and that in thus dealing with them, Men should alledge Conscience for it; and so, out of a pretended Principle of Religion it self, Oppose and Persecute the best Religion in the World: *The time cometh, says he, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service.*

In treating on these Words,
I shall, *First*, Enquire from whence it is, and from what Principles, Men are drawn to commit things in themselves utterly Unlawful, even the Greatest Villanies in the World, under a Pretence of Religion and Conscience.



Secondly, I will, in some measure, examine the *Proceedings*, and the *Pretences*, of those Ill Men who brought the 'Guilt of the Royal Martyr's Blood upon our Kingdom, as upon this Day; and shall endeavour to shew how utterly Insufficient the Latter were to justify the Former.

And when we have seen, under the Two former Heads, the evil Rise, Tendency, and Unhappy Consequence of Ill Principles, and a Misguided Conscience, and that, both in General and Particular; I shall endeavour, in the

Third and last Place, to lay down some Directions for our Conduct, in regard both to our own Principles, and our Behaviour in relation to the bad Principles of other Men.

And, *First*, I am to enquire from whence it is, and from what Principles, Men are drawn to commit the greatest Villanies in the World, under a Pretence of Religion and Conscience. 'Tis certain there are no Two Things in the Universe so widely distant from each other in their own Natures, as *Vertue* and *Vice*, and so impossible to be ever reconcil'd. So that it would really be a Matter of our greatest Wonder, if it did not almost continually fall under our Notice, that Men should ever come to be so Fatally and Grossly Mistaken about these Things: Especially when God Almighty has taken all the Care to prevent it, that could possibly have been expected from the Best and Wisest Father, and Governour of Mankind.

For

On Monday January XXXI.

5

For what is the great End of that noble Principle of Reason, which he has put within our Breasts; but to Discern and Determine the difference between Good and Evil? And has not God taken care to place such Characters of Distinction upon both, that even by the Light of Nature, if a Man attends with any Care, he cannot be Missed as to the main Points of his Duty. But then, besides all this, where, in any Instance, our Natural Light might Fail, or prove Obscure, there we have the clear and open Revelation of his Word and Will for our Direction. And though 'tis possible indeed, after all, there may remain some particular Instances of our Duty a little more perplex'd, and not so very Plain and Easy to the Apprehensions of Men, without a more diligent Heed and Attention to them: Yet these are not the Points about which the foulest and most pernicious Errors are committed; the good Providence of God ordinarily preventing those Evils, and leading us with greater Security through those Paths which we are less able to Discern our selves. But they are the great Strokes of Duty, the most Fundamental Laws of our Nature, of the greatest Importance, and most common Use, about which our Mistakes are most frequently made, with the greatest Reproach to our Reason, and Danger to our Souls: Those, in whose Faces are so clearly and plainly discernable such Lines of Beauty and Deformity, that one would think it were Impossible to make a wrong Election. A Man, in order to be informed about these Things, need only open his Eyes, and they lie before him; the Vertues being of so ap-

SERM. I. prov'd and highly Excellent a Nature, and so level to the Apprehension and Capacity of every Man, that we cannot but close in with them upon the first Proposal, and confess their Excellence: The Vices, of so Black and Heinous a Complexion, that a Man that runs may Read the Mark upon them, as clearly as that of old, upon the *Forehead of Cain*. And yet after all that God and Nature have done to prevent it, How mischievously and fatally have we known Men Blunder, and Stumble, and Fall, even in these very Things themselves? 'Tis yet within the Memory of the present Age, when one of the most complicated pieces of Villany that was ever yet heard of in any Nation under Heaven, almost as bad as Hell could Suggest, or Men Conceive, was first with all Solemnity of Deliberation and Counsel Approv'd, and then Consecrated under a colourable Title, and then Acted with Applause: When the very Flames of Hell within the Hearts of Men, were mistaken for the genuine Fire of Devotion, and the Devilish Spirit of Faction and Sedition, Sainted under the specious Names of a Just Defence of Liberty, and Religion. 'Tis so easy, we find, for Men of some Tempers, and some Interests, to make any thing Vice and Vertue as they please; to interpret Sedition, and the Subversion of Church and State, but as a due Concern for a *Good Old Cause*; and the Murder of God's Supreme and most Sacred Minister, as a Lawful Zeal to himself.

Now since we find the Effects of a misguided Zeal so very fatally *Mischievous*, it cannot be thought an useleſs Deſign, to enquire more
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particularly, whence these Errors flow, and what Principles those are, that are apt so far to Mislead, and Abuse the Consciences of Men, about Good and Evil, as to engage them in the Blackest Designs and Practices, under a colour, in the mean-time, of Obedience and Duty to God himself. SERM. I.

The Mistakes of Men's Minds in this Case, arise chiefly from a twofold Original :

First, From an extreme Ignorance of the true Nature of Religion.

Secondly, From the fond Prejudices of Men, and their blind Zeal to a Religious Party. I could here mention many others; as a fix'd and absolutely resolv'd Pursuit of a Man's own Interest; a proud Stubbornness of Will, refusing to submit to the Divine Authority, and bent upon its own sinful Inclinations; the Power of Evil Habits, whereby a Man becomes unwilling to undergo the Trouble, and the Convictions of a clearer Information; and many other Reasons of Errors, which might be produc'd, almost as infinite as Error it self. But I shall confine my self to the two former, as being most pertinent to the Occasion, and comporting best with my Design in this Discourse, and the compass of Time allotted me for it.

And *First*, Men come to be so desperately Mistaken about Good and Evil, from an extreme Ignorance of the true Nature of Religion. This was the Ground and Bottom upon which proceeded all that Opposition the *Jewish* and *Heathen* World made against our Blessed Saviour, and His Religion, at the first Publication of it; in which notwithstanding

SERM. I. they were highly Criminal, and upon no account whatever to be excused. For they ought certainly to have considered his Doctrine better, when it came recommended with such fair Pretences, and so much Authority from the God of Nature to confirm it; to have look'd into its Nature and Design; to have Scann'd and Examin'd the Laws and Rules of Life it brought with it, and the Weight of those Encouragements it gave to the observance of them: And then 'tis impossible they should ever have thought it their Interest to have resisted it. And therefore, that they would apply themselves to such Unjust, and Cruel Methods, to stifle the Christian Faith, and to hinder its Propagation in the World, our Saviour ascribes it wholly to their Ignorance of the Nature and Will of God his Father, and of Himself his only Son: *These things will they do unto you, says he to his Disciples, because they have not known the Father nor Me.* What greater Evidence can there be indeed, that Men know nothing of the Nature of God, or of the Gospel of his Son, than when they shall venture to do such things (as they pretend) for his Sake, which are not so much as Reconcilable with the common Dictates of Nature and Humanity? For is not God himself of a Pure and Holy, a Mild and Merciful Nature? And must not that Religion which He can approve of, be such, as in it self is most suited to produce and promote the like Temper in the Souls of Men? Such as will render Men Pure and Peaceable, Tender and Compassionate, Kind and Exorable; that so they may approve themselves the *Children of their Father which is in Heaven,*

whilst

John 16. 3.

On Monday January XXXI.

9

whilst they resemble him in the most lovely **SERM. I.**
Features of his Nature, his Goodness and his Mercy. We are told by the Apostle, that *the Wisdom which cometh from above*, that is, the *James 3. 17.*
True Religion, which God will own himself the Author of, is both *Pure and Peaceable, Gentle, and Easy to be entreated.* And therefore, With what Face can Men of *Seditious and Turbulent* Spirits, that are Restless and Uneasy under Government, fomenting Strife and Faction in the *State*, and Schism and Division in the *Church*, pretend themselves Votaries of an Humble, Submissive and Obedient Saviour, or to have any Interest in that Religion, whose End and Design they so much Contradict in their Lives and Behaviour? For whatsoever Shews and Pretences of Conscience these Men may carry before them, or however by an awkward and demure Saintliness, and a precise Hypocrisy, they may insinuate themselves into the fond Opinions of easy Souls, it is not more certain that the *Christian* Religion is True, than that these Men do not live in Conformity to it.

It was the old Error of the *Heathen* World, that they Entertained wrong Opinions about the Nature of God, imagining him Wanton, Fierce and Cruel, Bloody and Revengeful; and therefore to appease him, they thought themselves oblig'd to Worship and Honour him, in a way which they conceiv'd most suitable to their own Notions of him. And from thence we find in the Laws and Services of their Religion, such a mixture of Impurity, such Barbarous and Bloody Rites, as could not but in themselves, be infinitely Offensive

SERM. I. to the Pure and Perfect Deity, whom they pretended to Adore. Yet these *Gentiles* certainly thought with themselves, that in all these unnatural Mysteries of their Worship; they did things highly Grateful to Heaven; and would have very much resented it, if any one should have pretended to have question'd their Title to the Divine Favour and Protection upon that Account. So far is it possible for Human Nature to be depriv'd!

And how far Misapprehensions concerning God, and the True Spirit and Temper of Religion, may carry even Christians themselves to act, upon the same pretence, those things that are yet in their own Nature most contrary to the Nature of God, and His Laws, we have a very Melancholy Evidence in that Great and Signal Revolt from the Purity and Simplicity of Christ, that of the *Romish* Church; of whose *Faith* and *Doctrine*, if we may guess by those Lewd Practices, and that Persecuting Spirit, that Reign throughout that Church, we may, without a Breach of Charity, affirm of them, that they are wholly mistaken in the Design and Nature of the Gospel they Profess.

And our Dissenting Brethren at Home (however they may think themselves injured by the Comparison) little imagine, how nearly they acted, in their late Behaviour, to the Principles and Practice of the Church of *Rome*. For is not the Doctrine of Deposing and Killing of Kings, That, upon which the Power of *Rome* does stand, and by which it keeps up its Awe and Authority upon the Kingdoms of the Earth? Is it not the Darling Principle of that Church, and the Choicest Jewel the *Pope* has

has in his Cabinet? So that our Rebels could not SE: R. M. I. have taken a more ready way to Gratify the E-
 nemies of God and His Church, than by doing as they did. And if they had purposely contrived to get into Favour with his *Holiness*, the most likely Method that could be thought of, was to remove that Blessed Prince out of the way, that always stood the Fence and Bulwark to our Religion and Laws, against the bold Invasions of Error and Superstition. So that, no doubt, the Papal Consistory owes the Covenanting-Brethren a great many Thanks for the Signal Service they have done them. Since these Good Men have answered any Design the *Pope* could have had upon the *Royal Martyr* as effectually, as if the Holy Father had dispatch'd a Commission of *Jesuits* on purpose upon that Errand.

But whence can we imagine Men should ever become Guilty of such Horrid Practices as these? But from the grossest Ignorance, or Forgetfulness, both of God and their own Duty. Had these Men but so much as look'd into the Great Law of their Lives, the *Holy Scriptures*, they might there have found how very Tender God Himself is of the Lives and Interests of Kings, of Good Ones more especially: How jealous for their Honour; His own Authority, indeed, being so nearly concern'd in them; and all Affronts, that are offer'd to the Sovereign Power, striking yet higher, and rebounding upon God Himself. But thus it is, when Men forget to try the Lawfulness of their Proceedings by the Rule of God's Word: When Men leave the Law and the Testimony, those Eternal Measures of Good and Evil, and
 fancy

SERM. I. fancy a Law within themselves: When Men will be the Framers of their own Religion, and attribute all the Blind and Enthusiastick Heats they feel within themselves, to the Operations of the Holy Spirit: Though, we know, they were kindled from another Principle, even Hell it self; and are likely to have their Reward and Portion there.

A Second Account that may be given of these Errors of Conscience, whereby Men come to run themselves upon the Grosslest Crimes, under a Pretence of Sanctity, is from a Fond Prejudice, and Blind Zeal to a Religious Party. Let us closely Examine the Religion of these Men that cry out so loud for Reformation; and we shall find it nothing but some Childish Principles, and Prejudices, they have suck'd in, before they understood any Thing; and afterwards, what there wants of Reason and Evidence in those Opinions, they take care to make up, and supply, by a Stubborn and Perverse Adherence to them; and therein think to justify themselves, by Quarrelling with all the World, that is not of the same Perswasion with themselves. There are some Men, for Instance, whose whole Religion, it may be suspected, terminates in a Complaint and Quarrel at some particular Way or Manner of Religion; possibly against the *Rites* and *Ceremonies* of our own Church: Things in their own Nature Indifferent, which we don't pretend to be Absolutely Necessary; but they would have us reject them as utterly Unlawful. Now when Men have once embrac'd such Principles as these, and so list'd themselves under a Party, they are apt to conclude themselves immediately

ately bound to vouch all the Opinions of it to their utmost, because they falsely imagine the Cause of God, and his Truth, stands or falls with that particular Model of Religion they themselves have consented to, and are very positive is the only right one. And from hence it proceeds, that whilst such Men are busy about Strifes, perhaps of no great Concernment in themselves, and their Heads and Hands employed in the Defence of a Party in Religion against what they think, and call another, they in the mean time forget what true Religion it self is; which indeed is of no Party, nor to be confin'd to any: But we are sure one main Branch of it consists in a kind and charitable Disposition towards all Men, even not excepting those that differ from us in Opinion. But when Men shall conceive ill Surmises of their Fellow-Christians, by reason of Difference in Judgments; and so let their Hearts boyl up to an unnatural Ferment of Rancour and Malice, it is no Wonder this should break out, and discover it self in the outward Actions, and thence, in a furious and turbulent Zeal, carry Men on to the utter Destruction of all those that oppose them. *For if ye bite and devour one another, says the Apottle, take heed ye be not consumed one of another.* In general we may depend on this at all times, that whenever Men oppose an Establish'd and True Religion, they must do it by ill Means; and yet 'tis not so very strange some Men should think any Means and Methods to this purpose honest and upright, when they look upon nothing to be so, but what makes for their own Interest and Party.

Gal. 5. 15.

SERM. I.

So that we see it is not so very difficult to give an Account, whence Persecutions should arise from a Party of Christians against the true Worshipers of God, though each Side seems to agree in the Profession of the same common Faith; because there may be such a Fondness in some Men for the distinguishing Opinions of their own Sect, and so very bitter and malicious a Spirit towards all that contradict them, that while they are intent only upon the Defence and Advancement of their own private Faction, without a due Regard to the Great and Fundamental Principles of Christianity, they mistake their Duty, and do some things in the pretended Favour of Religion, which yet are most contrary to it in its true Design and Interest. But these Men

James 1. 20. would do well to consider, *That the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God:* The furious and passionate Tempers of Men, are not the best Instruments to be employ'd in the Cause of God's Truth and Honour. And therefore when Men feel such Unchristian Risings in their Breasts as these, they may justly suspect there is some other Fountain from whence they come, and that they proceed not from the calm and gentle Spirit of God, who breaths nothing but Love and Peace upon the Minds of Men.

I come now to the *second* thing propos'd, namely to examine in some measure the *Proceedings*, and *Pretences*, of Conscience, on which the late Murtherers acted, in bringing the Guilt of *Royal* Blood upon this Nation, and to shew how utterly insufficient these *Pretences* were to justify them in it. And here,
I pre-

I presume, no Body will deny, that what these *good and holy* Men did, was by them given out to be upon a Religious Account, and *For the Lord's Sake, and in his Cause*; as those impious Hypocrites abus'd the Great and Blessed Name to their own base and wicked Designs. And surely not many of their Posterity to this Day will dare to question this, when they so far justify their Forefathers in the Fact, as to refuse joyning with us in this Day's Solemnity, or most unnaturally to pervert it into a matter of Contempt and Scorn; thereby intimating, as plainly as they dare, that they see no reason the Nation has to make this Day's Action a matter of publick Repentance; it being, as they take it, happily begun, carried on, and finish'd for so glorious a Cause, and upon such conscientious Accounts. These Men very well understand, that nothing less than the highest Pretences of Conscience can colour over so foul and detestable an Act, committed against the clearest Reasons to the contrary, against plain Testimonies of the Word of God, and the most sacred Bands of Allegiance to the best of Kings. Which Action of theirs, had it wanted such a Disguise as this, they too well knew would have made their Names stink (as it did indeed notwithstanding) among all the Nations about them, and the *Ears of every one that should hear it tingle*. And indeed it would have been a much too impudent, and barefac'd Impiety, to commit a thing so directly and plainly against Religion and Reason both, and not to seek some Excuse, from one of them at least, to palliate it.

Now

SERM. I.

Now the Pretences upon which these Men proceeded, we may discover more fully and particularly, by considering what the Propositions were, which, as the only Terms of Reconcilement with the King, were by their Commissioners offer'd to him at the Treaty of *Uxbridge*; to which if he would not Consent, as in Reason and Conscience he could not, they gave him to understand, they should take their own Measures, and proceed against him as they should think fit; that is, as their own deep Malice and Faction should incline them.

And to omit matters of less Consequence, I shall only mention the two former Articles insisted on by them in that Treaty, (the third not having so immediate a Relation to my Design) which were these that follow:

* *First*, That the King would give his Consent for the Abolishing *Episcopacy*; and this under a Pretence of *Prelatical Corruptions*, and of the Necessity of *purser Ordinances*.

† *Secondly*, That all the *Military Power* of the Nation, should be put into the Hands of those Men whom They should think fit to Choose for that purpose, and in whom (as the Cant then ran) they might *Confide*; and that the King himself should not have the Liberty to except against any One they should pitch upon for this Design; and this, under a pretence of securing the Religion and Liberties of the Nation: These things indeed they had often intimated, and plainly drove at before; but now they came to press them peremptorily, and were resolv'd to take no Denial.

* *Ld. Clarendon, l. 7. P. 288. Item B. 8. Page 446, 450.*

† *Ld. Clarendon, B. 8. P. 453.*

Now I shall endeavour to shew how unreasonable these insolent Demands of these Men were; and, consequently, how utterly Inexcusable their Proceedings against the King, because he neither would, nor could, in regard to the Welfare of Himself, the Church, and Nation, give his Consent to these Things.

And *First*, As for the Abolishment of *Episcopal* Government; They could not indeed have touch'd the King in a more tender Point than this: and **That* they themselves very well knew. For out of his hearty Zeal to God's Honour, and an inquisitive Spirit into the Affairs of Religion, and the several Constitutions of Churches, he had made a careful Observation, what Form of Church-Government in the World had both the fairest Pretences to, and the most real Effects of, a pure and Apostolical Piety. And then by his great Learning and Skill in the Histories of the primitive Church, he could not but discern the most perfect agreement and Conformity, almost in every thing, between those first Ages and the *Church of England*. And therefore as he was the Patron of one of the Best Churches in the World and in a very peculiar manner the *Defender of the Faith*, by being himself one of the greatest Instances of the Power of it: how could he in point of Honour, and Conscience, admit of any such Proposal, that should offend against the best Sense and Judgment of his own Mind; and by a base Compliance betray the Interest of a Church, so pure and primitive, so well founded,

* *Ld. Clarendon, B. 6. P. 90.*

SERM. I. and so long continued, into the Hands of
 ~~~~~ Licentious and Unreasonable Men; who, for  
 their own parts, neither understood, nor de-  
 sired the Advancement of God's Glory, nor  
 the Honour of Religion. Was not the King  
 oblig'd in answer to his great Character, to  
 consult and provide what was Best for his  
 Church and Nation? And could he be per-  
 swaded there was any thing better for them,  
 than the present Constitution under which  
 they were Establish'd? Must the purest Disci-  
 pline in the World yield it self up to be  
 Trampled on by the Insults of a Contemptuous  
 Enemy, and the Best and Happiest Laws of  
 Government bend to the Humours of a wan-  
 ton People.

Besides, was not the King oblig'd, in pur-  
 suance of his Coronation-Oath, to Maintain  
 the *Church of England* as by Law Establish'd?  
 And would they have Him Perjure Himself to  
 gratify their Ambition? But they'l say, the  
 King was no longer held by that Oath, when  
 the Legislative Power of the Nation should  
 think fit to remit the Obligation of it: And  
 this they pretend both Houses of Parliament  
 did, in requiring of Him a Change of Govern-  
 ment in the Church.

I shall not here urge, that those Men who  
 requir'd this, could not be the total Legislative  
 Power of the Nation: By the Constitution of  
*England*, the Legislature being lodg'd in Prince  
 and People jointly, the Royal Consent being  
 Necessary to stamp an Authority on a Law, or  
 to repeal it. But to pass this by, How can it  
 be prov'd, that those Men that thus Sate and  
 Acted both against the King and Law, did so  
 much

much as make up but one the least part of the **SERM. I.**  
 Legislature? 'Tis plain the King Himself ex-  
 cepted against them as a Parliament, in their  
 Proceedings of this Nature, and in those  
 strange Propositions and Ordinances made by  
 them upon other Occasions; which yet were  
 not more Illegal than the present. I shall pro-  
 duce His own Declaration to this Purpose; as  
 'tis to be found in the Great and Excellent  
 \* Historian of the late Times.


“ Our good Subjects, says the King, will no  
 “ longer look upon these and the like Results,  
 “ as upon the Counsels and Conclusions of  
 “ both our Houses of Parliament (though all  
 “ the World knows, even that Authority can  
 “ never justify things Unwarrantable by the  
 “ Law) they well know how few of the Per-  
 “ sons trusted by them, are trusted at *their*  
 “ Consultations, of above Five Hundred of  
 “ the Commons, not Fourscore: and of the  
 “ House of Peers, not a Fifth part: That they  
 “ who are present, enjoy not the Priviledge  
 “ and Freedom of Parliament, but are Besieg'd  
 “ by an Army, and Aw'd by the same Tumults  
 “ which drove us, and their Fellow-Members  
 “ from thence, to Consent to what some few  
 “ Seditious Schismatical Persons among them  
 “ do propose.

Thus far the King's own Words, as they  
 are recited by that Noble Author. From  
 whence it plainly appears, His Majesty did  
 not look upon this Proposition about the Dissol-  
 ution of the Episcopal Government of this  
 Church, as an Act of any part of the Le-

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\* Lord Clarendon, 2d Part, 6:13 Book, Page 81.



SERM. I.  gislature; but as an insolent Demand, made by a thin Assembly of Treacherous and Violent Men; so that, in as much as the King was oblig'd to the far best, and greatest part of His People, and their Representatives in Parliament, to Preserve the *Church of England* as by Law Establish'd, it is certain, these few Seditious Persons could not Absolve Him from His Oath; and he was, consequently, bound by That, and by the Law, to withhold His Consent to this Proposal: Since otherwise, He must have falsified his Oath, in not doing his utmost to preserve the Church, by hindring a Subversion of its Government, which these Men drove at.

Another very considerable Objection against the Kings complying to Abolish Episcopacy was this, that it would be no less than Sacrilege to take the Bishop's Lands away, and to alienate them to other Designs than to which they were at first devoted. So that His Majesty could by no means assent to the Request of these Men, without breaking through the most sacred Ties of Conscience, and running Himself upon Two of the blackest Crimes in the World, *Perjury* and *Sacrilege*, at once.

But here, though upon this account of Sacrilege, we see the highest Reason in the World the King had to deny this Proposal, and no Reason upon any other Account to grant it; yet when we mention Bishop's Lands, we may possibly discover some Reason why these Men should make it: For no great wonder if the plentiful Endowments of the Church, be a sweet Bait to draw and allure the Covetousness and Ambition of those Men,  
that

that care not what becomes of Religion. **SERM. I.**  
 They had, without doubt, long before pleas'd themselves, with a Fancy what a delicious Morfel the Lands of the Church would be, especially in the Mouths of *Saints*; and therefore, they might be apt to think with themselves, why should they not have some Right to Possess, what they imagined they could Relish so well. So that they were their own base Ends and Designs, that were to be served by the Ruine of the Church; and not any Principles of Conscience for Reforming it, that put them upon such Projects as these. And if this be not sufficient to Discover the Unreasonableness, and Unlawfulness of this first Demand of these Men, and to leave them inexcusable for what they did upon the Refusal of it, 'tis only amongst those, who too much favour their Interest and Party, and therefore are unwilling to acknowledge their Guilt.

The *Second* Demand of these Men, at the same time offer'd to the King by them, was in no wise more reasonable, or more modest than the former, and intrench'd upon the Honour and Prerogative of the King himself, no less than the other did upon the Rights and Priviledges of the Church. It was this, That all the Military Power of the Nation should be put into the Hands of those Men whom they should think fit to entrust with it, and in whom they might *confide*; and that it should not be left in the King's Power to except against any one they should pitch upon for this Design: And this under pretence of securing the Religion and Liberties of the Nation.

But,

**SERM. I.** But, Who is there that does not see at the first Glance, that in granting this, the King must have divested himself of all his Honour and Authority? For, when his Power should have been once gone, his bare Title would have prov'd very insignificant, and he must have even stood to the Courtesy of those Men, whether he should any longer wear his Crown or no; from whom he had no more reason to expect any Kindness, upon any account of their Principles, or good Nature, than he had to trust them upon his Experience of their Loyalty. They pretended indeed they would have been very willing to have allow'd him still the Name of their Lord and Sovereign; but to what purpose was this, when their open Design was to rob Him of all the Majesty that High Name imports? For when once he should have given up his Sword, his Sceptre could not have long defended him: And therefore it was high time for him to think of securing both, when Men were once grown to such a Pitch of Insolence, as to Contend with Him for either.

And all this these worthy Patriots did upon a presumption that they were a Free People, and out of a generous Design, as they pretended, of maintaining the Rights and Liberties of the Subject. It is true, the Rights and Liberties of a Kingdom are of very high Concernment, and Men should be allow'd, in all lawful ways, to proceed with a just Zeal in their Defence: But then how does it appear, that the Rights and Liberties of *England* were ever likely to be more secure in the Hands of a seditious and tumultuous Band of Villains, than



than under the peaceable Government of a just and pious King? And therefore, if it had been only to prevent the Abuses so much Power had been liable to, when violent Men should have had it within the Reach of their Arm to do Mischief, that alone had been a very sufficient, and a most justifiable Ground for the King's refusing to give way to their Desires in this Instance.

And what Use of so much Power they then intended to have made, we now very well know, from what they did with it afterwards, when they had broke through all the Bounds of Just and Right, of Loyalty and Conscience, to come at it. For were not the very Foundations of Government in these Kingdoms raz'd, and such a Scheme of Principles introduc'd amongst us as had perverted the Course and Order of Judgment and Justice! Were not Religion and Honour both laid in the Dust, and the *Church of ENGLAND*, the Glory of the Reformation, made to groan under the Tyranny of the Oppressor! *On Their side indeed was Power, but we had no Comforter!* Ecc!s. 4. 1.

And now let any Man judge whether these things I have mention'd were Matters, either fit for a King to grant, or for a People to require! Indeed by making these their Conditions of Reconciliation with the King so very absurd and intolerable, they did as good as speak out, that they did not expect He should agree to them; and that therein they sought only a plausible Pretence and Opportunity to betray him, upon a Supposition he should refuse to consent to that, with which

**SERM. I.** if he had complied, he could neither have answered it to God or his own Conscience.

And thus fell that Great and Excellent King, by the Hands of violent and bloody Men, in the Defence of a most just and righteous Cause!

We are told by an \* Historian of those Times, that about Two Days before his Death, some of the Leading Men of that Party came to Him with a Paper of Proposals; which if he would have subscrib'd, they thought they could yet prevail to reverse the Sentence of his Death. But, with the Spirit of a King and of a Christian, he rejected them; declaring his resolute Intention never to betray the Welfare and Honour of his Church and People upon any Terms, by any base Compliance whatsoever. † And, when he came upon the Scaffold, He witnessed the same good Profession before all Men, that it was for God and his People that He came there to Suffer; and that He needed not to have come there, if he would have taken the Advice and Methods of ill Men to have declin'd it.

He was a Prince whose Life was full of Trouble and Disquiet occasion'd to him by the malicious Practices of His Enemies; but He had this to comfort Him, that they were Enemies at the same time to the *Truth* it self, and upon the same Ground that they were so to Him. Though he desired nothing more than to be the Father of his People, and, next to the Honour of God, (the Supreme and Ruling Principle of his Life,) aim'd at nothing so

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\* Dugdale's *Short View of the Troubles of England*, Chap. 30. p. 372.


† Dugdale, *Chap. 30. p. 373.*

much,



On Monday January XXXI.

25

much, as to promote the Glory and Interest **SERM. I.**  
of his Kingdom; yet he had this Unhappiness,   
common to him with the Best and Greatest  
Men that ever liv'd, that his most sincere and  
honourable Counsels and Designs were both  
mis-understood, and mis-construed by Evil  
Men. As for his Religion, He was as Exem-  
plary for the Piety and Innocence of a Chri-  
stian, as He was Admirable for the Vertues of a  
King; and his Devotion was so far rais'd above  
that of ordinary Souls, as himself was above  
them in his Condition. In his Life he learn'd  
Humility, Meekness, and Dependence upon  
God, by the difficulties and afflictions He  
underwent; and at his Death he practic'd  
the deepest Resignation, and gave the highest  
Instance of Obedience. He Died the Desire  
and Lamentation of every good Man, and to  
the everlasting Shame and Conviction of all  
those that had their Hands in his Blood, that  
had been the Contrivers, or the Abettors of  
his Death.

*We have seen now* the malignant Rise, the  
dangerous Tendency, and the dreadful Issues  
of ill Principles and a misguided Conscience;  
and that both in the general and particular,  
under the Two former Parts of this Discourse.  
I shall now, by way of a just Inference from  
what has been already spoken, go on to the  
*last* Part of my Design.

To propose, *Thirdly*, some Directions for  
our Conduct and Behaviour in regard both to  
our own Principles, and in relation to the  
bad Principles of other Men.

And surely a Discourse of this Nature, if  
ever, is become necessary in an Age that seems  
to

SERM. I. to have run off into so general a Looseness in point of Judgment, as well as Practice; Where so wide and deep a Corruption, or a no less fatal Indifference has so long prevail'd upon Men of all Orders amongst us, in Principles, both of Church and State.

In the Church (which is the best and truest Support of the Civil Government) we have, not so long since, felt the almost fatal Shake, in the sly Designs of her Enemies to undermine Her, and the Treacheries of her own false Friends and Patrons in their Defence of Her. We have liv'd in these Days to see Men, who, one would think, are nearly concern'd in, and live upon the Interests of our Church, and derive their own Honour and Advantages from Her, even these very Men themselves, when Occasion requir'd it, recoiling back from Her Assistance, in the time of Her Necessity, leaving Her unguarded and open, without those natural Supports and Fences, which are necessary, not only for Her prosperous Continuance, but, almost, Her very Being: Nay, we have seen Men that profess themselves Friends to our *Sion*, and to have their Names written in her, with their own Hands breaking away the Hedges set for the Defence of the *Holy Mountain*; beating down the Barriers and removing the *Ancient Landmarks* of our Constitution; and cancelling all the Characters of Distinction between our own and other Churches; thus letting in the *Boar out of the wood, and the wild beast of the field* upon Her; the Wildness and Fury of Fanaticism and Superstition to over-run and devour Her. How many Designs on foot, to take off our, Rigour!

*Psal. 80. 12.*

*Exod. 19. 12.*

*Psal. 80. 13.*

Rigour! to smooth and qualify the Strictness **S E R M. I.**  
 and Severity of our Church's Discipline; and  
 and to soften her Doctrine upon Principles of  
 Compliance and *Moderation*! So, by Degrees,  
 to melt down the Strength of her Constitution,  
 and to bring her to the Ground, even to the  
 Dust; to a flat level with the groveling Religion  
 of the *Low Countries*, and the Platform of  
*Geneva*: As if our Church could not prove  
 her Charity, and good Nature, without turn-  
 ing a Prostitute; nor her Humility, without  
 bowing down her Neck that her Enemies may  
 go over and trample upon her.

In pursuance of these noble Purposes, these  
 great and generous Designs in hand, for the  
 good of our Church, we have known the  
 Doctrines of it drawn away and sunk from  
 their just and native Sense; our Articles ex-  
 pounded with so very Catholick a Spirit, with  
 so much Vertue of Moderation, and so Com-  
 prehensive a Reach of Charity; as, if once  
 admitted, would effectually compass the Pro-  
 ject; and it would really raise our Wonder  
 and Concern, were we not well assur'd that  
 the Reach of some Men's Knowledge and Judg-  
 ment in these Doctrines, is equally *Compre-  
 hensive* with their Charity; and that their  
 constant Endeavours to support the *Church of  
 ENGLAND*, are answerable to their  
 known, and usual Zeal, and Affection for Her.

But, indeed, we are beholden to Men, if  
 they will please to do us less Mischief, as they  
 think, than they are able; if they will only  
 endeavour at a *Comprehension* in the Articles  
 of our Church, as not impossible, when some  
 of them can tell us, at another time, that a  
*Separ-*



SERM. I. Separation from Her is not only *Justifiable*, but *Commendable*!

How? *Justifiable* and *Commendable*? What When the Terms of our Communion are not only Lawful, but Holy, and Just, and Good? Bound upon us by the Authority of the Sacred and Civil Power; excellently well fitted for the Uses of Piety; and, most of them, the pure and primitive Results of the Wisdom of Christianity, in the most early Ages of it? Is Separation from such a Church as this (not to insist upon *Commendable*, so hot a Word, but is it) upon any Reason, in any Case, by any Means whatsoever to be Justified? If it be, 'tis only in the Sense that Word bears in \* *Scotland*, where to be *Justified* is to be Condemned and Punish'd by the Law: And so far, indeed, we are ready to allow, that a Separation from our Church very well *may* and *ought* to be *Justified*: And we could wish that those ill Men too, that speak such despightful Things of an excellent Constitution, of which they are not worthy, were in due Measure *Justified* likewise.

But is this then the Sense and Language of Church-Men, those that pretend to live under, and should Protect our Discipline? Is a Separation from the *Church of ENGLAND*, Justifiable in their Opinion? How then are we sunk and declin'd from the Primitive Sense, and Excellent Spirit of our Fore-fathers! How gone off and fallen from our Noble Cause, and from our own Honour with it! Where is that Brave, Generous, Cordial Zeal for the

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\* Dr. Hammond's *Annotat. on Matth. XI. 19.* Mr. Hotchkis's *Disc. of the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness*, Chap. 12. Part 1st.



Church our Mother, which once burn'd in **SERM. I.**  
 the Hearts and Affections of Her Professors to-  
 wards Her, and sparkled at their Lips in their  
 Defence and Maintenance of Her! *How are*  
*the Mighty fallen, and the Weapons of War, of*  
 our Defence perished! 2 Sam. 1. 27.

The Truth is, we have drawn so deep a Tincture from the bad Influence of the Late Times, that we are not ashamed to appear with it about us in the Present. And we have the Courage to vouch those Ill Principles under the Best of Governments, which we took up and espous'd under the Worst. We had so long liv'd under, and complied with the Measures and Inclinations of the Late Extraordinary Government, that we are touch'd with the Spirit of it ever since. And God only knows when we shall again return to our Selves; To that Spirit, and those Principles, by which our Church, and our Religion were at first Founded, have been since Supported, and to which we must again go back, if ever we desire they should be long Establish'd. But how far are we distant from these things at present! Whilst many amongst us, even of our own Communion, are become altogether Indifferent what Principles they entertain, or whether they have any: Others of us seem to acknowledge the Necessity of some, only by retaining ill ones.

I shall therefore speak something in the first place with regard to our own Principles, and then to those of other Men.

First then, Let us make it our strict Care to preserve our own Principles Sincere and Uncorrupt; not to suffer any Consideration of  
 In-

SERM. I. Interest or Disadvantage to sway us from our own best Sense and Conscience, to bend or to pervert us. 'Tis certain the Goodness of our Cause will justify the highest Zeal and Resolution with which we can proceed in its Defence: And we cannot desert, or entertain a slight and cold Opinion of our own Excellent Church and Constitution, without being Injurious to the Interests of Religion and Government in general.

It may be indeed, that a firm Profession of the Truth is not always attended with the outward Advantages of Reputation or Preferment in the Friends and Patrons of it: In these Days however, we have no Reason to think ourselves forsaken even of these; Honesty and Good Principles having the *Promises* also of the present Time, the Favour and Countenance of Government to Promote and Encourage them *without*, as well as the silent Approbations of Conscience to Reward and Crown them *within*. But setting aside these, and all other Temporal Respects (upon which if our Resolution at any time be Founded, it must prove Unsteady) at whatsoever time hereafter it may be the Lot of our Church, our Holy and Suffering Church, to fall under the Frowns of Power, under a Disrepute from the Interests or Numbers of Men above Her, Let us have the Courage and the Conscience to appear Bravely for Her; to stand with Her Establishment, and to fall with Her Dissolution. So shall we have the Pure and Uncorrupted Pleasure of Rejoicing in the Days of Her Prosperity, and be secure from the Smitings of our own Consciences, from the Reproaches of Batenets and Apollacy at her Fall. Let

## On Monday January XXXI.

31


SERM. I.

Eph. 6. 14.

Let us therefore *Stand* having our *loyns girt about*; and prepar'd for any Event; our Resolutions Firm and Steady; not to be shaken at any time with any present Gust of Fortune, nor to be mov'd upon any disadvantageous Prospects of the future; which ever way the Stream of Temporal Affairs runs, which ever way Preferments draw. For we may enjoy a True Cause, and a Good Conscience, well enough without Preferments: These, we are satisfied, do not always suppose, nor make Men Honest; they sometimes become the Rewards of former Baseness, and Opportunities of Discovering more.

Shall we *Trim*, and *Turn*, and *Truckle* to every Wind of Advantage that comes over us? Shall we bend, and sneak, and give up our Integrity to a Great Man, a Powerful Hypocrite, an Atheist in a High Place? Shall we prove False to our God, to our Conscience, to our Church, to our Oaths, to our past Professions, and our present Pretences; and all this, to wind our selves out of our Reason and Honesty, into the Favour and Interest of One who is Ten Times worse than we can make our selves? And then shall we go and stand in the House of God, take in our Hands his Holy Ordinances, after we have thus stain'd and polluted the Glory of them; have render'd *them* and *our selves* contemptible, by our sly Connivances, and our base Compliances, and all this to gratify a Lust, a vain Ambition? How can we expect our Church should long stand, when 'tis supported upon so much Rottenness, and contains such Principles of Corruption within it self; so many *Vipers* that gnaw through the  
very



**SERM. I.**  very Bowels of their Mother! This we may be sure of, the same Principles that have once ruin'd our Church and Government before, (which we this Day lament) have the same Tendency in all Ages, and will, if not amended, have the same Effect again. Every Step we take from the good old Paths, in which our Ancestors trod to the Glory of God, and our Religion, and so much to their own Honour and Happiness, is an Approach towards our Ruine. Our *New ways not cast up before*; Our distinguishing away our Conscience to comply with extraordinary Measures; Our bearing down the strong Suspicions of our own Minds about the Lawfulness of our Proceedings by the importunate Clamours of a present Interest; Our changing from the acknowledged and establish'd Sense and Doctrines of our Church and Government, and screwing about every way, to find an Evasion for our Selves, with a security to our temporal Advantages, though with a Dishonour to our Faith and Reason; these things declare plainly what we must expect, as well as what we are; and pronounce our Judgment as loudly as they proclaim our Sin.

Jer. 18. 15.

If ever then we would again be innocent; if we would be secure; if we would avert the natural and judicial Consequences of our own Treacheries that threaten us; if we desire the Blessing of God should establish us, and preserve to us the long Enjoyment of our *Church*, of our *Queen*, and of our *Government*: Let us return to what we were *once*, to our brave, noble *English* Principles as at the first; ἢ μέρωμυ

Greg. Naz. ὅπως ἐσμὲν, ὅπως ἦμεν ἡρώμεθα, Let us return to what



what we sometimes were, and continue no longer as we are. *Let us stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and we shall find rest for our selves and for our Nation.* For as long as we are off the Hinges from our old Principles, we are in a preternatural and violent State, and cannot rest; nor can the Politick Body, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil, any more than the Natural one, long subsist and endure under so much Violence.

Again, Secondly, Let us not prejudice our Cause by a slight and cold Defence of it, by concealing or dissembling our Principles, in a time that requires us to stand up and own them, in Opposition to the powerful Combinations, and united Impudence of our Enemies. There is nothing that has more, or more frequently contributed to the Ruine of a good and worthy Cause, than the sedentary and unactive Principles of good Men, fully convinc'd indeed in point of Conscience of the Justice of it; but either too secure, or too low-spirited to contend with Zeal and Danger for it, against a powerful and prevailing Party. What was it that drew on the late fatal and universal Révolution, the Ruin and Confusion of Church and State, and that so suddenly, and by such weak, and seemingly ineffective Instruments, but that these ill Men were more active and industrious to pull down, than honest Men to keep up and support; and acted far more vigorously upon a false and fiery Zeal, than good Men thought themselves concern'd to do upon a true, a lawful, and a necessary One. These latter acquiesc'd within

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them.

SERM. I. themselves in the Justice and Honour of their Cause, and for that Reason were secure about the Success and Issue of it : But this was a Conclusion, we know, prov'd fatal then, and may do so again in times less dangerous than those.

Would we then be *safe*? Let us be awake, and at least upon our Guard against our buisy and prevailing Adversary. But if we mean by *Safety* a false Prudence and Caution how we engage in an hazardous, though a good Cause; that so by not appearing in it *now*, we may have fairer Opportunities to retreat *hereafter*, without the Reproach of Inconstancy, and so be well provided against the worst that may happen; this is base and dishonourable; unworthy the Courage of a Man, or the Spirit of a Christian. What Safety then dare we speak to our selves, when our Church and our Government are threaten'd by the Malice and Cunning of so many seditious and turbulent Spirits? What Safety, what Peace, as long as the Designs of our Enemies, the Practices of our false Friends, and their Treacheries are so many? The Ark of God is almost in the Enemies Camp, and would'st thou be *safe*? The Fundamental Principles of Religion are struck at, and would'st thou be *safe*? The Divine-Apostolical Essential Form and Right of Church-Government, is well nigh deserted by some amongst us that are nearly concern'd to maintain it, and would'st thou be *safe*? The Church of England, the Constitution, are ready to *reel* by the Iniquity of those that press upon them, and would'st thou be *safe*? Wrap thy self then in thy Security; but know withal, thou shalt bear the Guilt and Punishment of desert.

1 Sam. 4. 11.

Ij. 24. 20.

deserting the Cause thou wilt not defend, and SERM. I.  
be reckoned as an Accomplice to all the Vil-  
lanies it was in thy Power to discourage and   
prevent, and thou would'st not. For if the Eph. 6. 14.  
Truth it self shall suffer by our Negligence or  
Cowardice; if the Endeavours of other Men  
are slacken'd, and their Zeal chill'd by the  
malignant Influence of our Example, we are  
no better than Traytors to the Truth it self,  
and shall have the same Reward.

He that by his Reputation, or his Autho-  
rity, by his Wisdom, or his Fortune, has it  
in his Power, in a great measure to form the  
Zeal of another that depends upon his Judg-  
ment, and perhaps takes his own Inclinations  
from those of his Superiour; If *He* shall,  
for fear of lessening his own Honour, and  
seeming too familiar with his Inferiours, in  
engaging in the same Cause with them, draw  
back, and refuse his Countenance or his Word  
to the Support of Truth when it is necessary;  
some Men perhaps may call him a reserv'd and  
cautious Person, but none will think him a  
Man of true Zeal and Honour, and most will  
Condemn him, and that, most probably, for  
a safe Hypocrite, for a sly, close, and a self-de-  
signing Knave.

*I have now done speaking* of our own Prin-  
ciples; I will add a Word or Two concerning  
our Behaviour towards those, I mean the bad  
ones, of other Men; and shall so conclude:  
And it shall be only this;

That we make it our great Care and Endea-  
vour to discountenance, and discourage as far as  
we are able, by all lawful means, any growing  
Corruption that insinuates it self into the Prin-  
ciples



SER M. I. ciples of other Men, and may prove anyway destructive of the Peace of the Church and Government. And this I do not take to be a Matter of meer Prudence, or Counsel only, but of Duty: Because it is so very necessary to break the Attempts, and to damp the Resolutions of ill Men. Vice, we find, is able to support it self by the joint Applause and Countenance of Men espousing it, notwithstanding the Voice of God and Conscience to the contrary: But when the Testimonies of common Respect are withdrawn from it, and 'tis left to stand alone upon its own Interest and Bottom, it must necessarily fail, and give way; having no Voucher in the Breasts of Men, of Reason or Religion to support it: For as much then as all Vice is thus insufficient in it self, and its own Strength, and the bravest Sinners of them all, whatever they may pretend, must sink and rise in their Spirits upon observing the different Behaviour of others towards them, and according to the Degrees of Approbation or Dislike, express'd to their Designs and Practices; upon this account it becomes our Duty *always* to stand off, and enter our Protestation against the publick Sins of Men, and that of how much more dangerous Consequence they are, with the greater Zeal; if it be possible, by this means, at least, to put in a Check to the Career of Iniquity, or to dash it out of Countenance for ever.

In doing this indeed, there is no doubt but we shall meet with a great deal of Opposition from our Enemies; and many plausible Reasons urg'd against us with a Colour of Truth, at the same time that these very Men themselves



elves are ruining Truth it self in its chiefest SER M. I.  
Interests.

Thus, for Instance, we are told in our present Controversy with these Men, that we endanger a Breach of Christian Charity, of that Lenity, and *Moderation*, which becomes the Spirit of Meekness, and of Christ, thus to inveigh against; and fall foul upon those that differ but a little from us in Opinion about little things: That we seem to violate the Nature and Essence of Religion it self; only to secure the Fringes and Borders of it: That surely we are much too hot in our Quarrels about things so Insignificant, and with a Difference about which, they tell us, Peace might well consist. Are they then *little* things at last, about which our Contest lies with these Men? Is the Preservation of one of the best Churches in the World, a *little* thing? A Church, which cost so many Lives of Martyrs to plant and raise it; and the infinite Labours of the best Men, and best Christians to continue and establish it. Where the *Beauty* of Holiness, the Glory of Christianity in its best and purest Ages, is preserv'd entire! A Church, which is equally distant in its Discipline from those Extremes that are most opposite to a Spirit of Religion, and admirably well qualified to procure the present Peace, and eternal Salvation of its Members! And is all this *little* or nothing to them? Are we to be blam'd for expressing a just Zeal about such things as these? And would they have a Zeal without *Heat*?

Our Expostulation with these Men is of a much like Nature, and surely with as good

**SE R M. I.** reason as that of *Micah* with the Men of *Dan*,  
 when they had plunder'd him of what was  
 nearest and dearest to him, and then found  
 fault with him for complaining; *Ye have taken*  
*away my gods which I have made, says he, and*  
*the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have*  
*I more? and what is this that ye say unto me,*  
*what aileth thee?* These Men are doing us all  
 the Mischief they are able, are unsettling our  
 Religion, changing, or debasing our Priest-  
 hood, dissolving our Discipline, corrupting our  
 Doctrine, erecting a Tyranny over us; in short,  
 in the last Result and Consequence, under-  
 mining our whole Church and Constitution:  
 And then they ask, *What aileth us!* What so  
 great Danger, or from whence? Why all this  
 Heat and Passion? Why, where is our Heat  
 and Passion in any Case lawful, if not where  
 our very Life, our Religion is concern'd? But  
 still they urge us, to what purpose is all this?  
 What End of Religion, or Reason do we serve  
 by it? Do we not indeed serve any? The more  
 Shame on them for being past the means of  
 their Reformation. But if we cannot convert  
 them, we may a little quash their Insolence;  
 and they may learn to be more modest, where  
 they will not be inform'd. If Reason will not  
 always prevail, yet Zeal may sometimes do  
 good. A Man that is either too dull, or too  
 stubborn to submit to an Argument, may yet  
 feel a *Lasb.* We know *Gideon* taught the  
 Men of *Succoth* with Thorns; and sharp Re-  
 bukes may enter, where cool Remonstrances  
 and sober Reasonings would have no Effect.  
 'Tis true, no Man's Cause, or Conscience, will  
 give him leave to Rail; but if he can keep  
 with-

Judg. 18. 24

Judg. 8. 16.

within the Bounds of Innocence and Duty, and at the same time serve the Interests of Religion and of Truth by a good Spirit, or a good Wit, is it then unlawful? Where can these Gifts better be laid out and sanctified than upon the Altar? Or against whom better employ'd, than against Hypocrites, and Blasphemers of our Church?

And thus I have gone through every Part of my Design. If any Man here think I have spoken some things a little more severely, in the several Parts of this Discourse, it was from a just Abhorrence at the Occasion of this Day: And let *that* Man but seriously consider with himself, what the Principles and Practices of these Men are, and what they deserve; what they have already done, and what they would do; what has been the *former* Consequence, and what is *now* the natural Tendency of their Designs; and *then* he will excuse me.

What now remains, but that we return to the proper Business of this Day; and, in a deep Humiliation and Contrition for our Sins, beseech Almighty God to be gracious unto us; to our Land; to our *Queen*, and to Her People: That he would defend her Excellent Majesty from the secret Attempts and *open* Violence of her Enemies, by which her Royal Grandfather fell as upon this Day: That he would bless her Person, direct her Counsels, and establish her Throne. That he would moreover confirm and promote the Wisdom and Courage of our Noble Senate; That he would guide their Minds to discern always what is the true Interest of this Church and Nation; and continue their Resolution to pursue it.



SERM. I. Above all, Let us Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem that they may prosper that love her: That  
 Psal. 122. 6. God would look down in Favour upon Zion, the City of our Solemnities: That our Eyes may once more see Jerusalem a quiet Habitation, a Tabernacle that shall not be taken down; that  
 Is. 33. 20. not one of the Stakes thereof may ever be remov'd, nor any of the Cords thereof be broken: That our Church may be built as a City that is  
 Psal. 122. 3. at Unity in it self; her Divisions clos'd, and her Distempers heal'd, and her self as firmly establish'd, as the Truth of her Doctrine, and the Justice of her Cause. And that our Sins may not hide these good things from us, by separating between our God and us. Let us return to him with Fasting, and with Weeping, and with Mourning; beseeching him to be merciful to all our Sins, and especially to wipe off the Guilt of *Royal Blood* from our Church and Nation.

Hear, O Lord, Hear us, and lay not innocent Blood to our Charge, nor Remember our former Iniquities; but spare us for thy Mercy sake, and for the sake of thy Dearly Beloved Son, who died for us, and whose *Blood speaketh better things than that of Abel*.  
 Heb. 12. 24.

Now to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain for us, and has wash'd us from our Sins in his Blood, together with the Blessed Spirit, be ascrib'd all Praise, Honour, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now and World without end. Amen.



*The Nature and Necessity of Religious Resolution, in the Defence and Support of a Good Cause, in Times of Danger and Trial.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the A S S I Z E S,

And before the

*University of OXFORD,*

July XIX. 1705.

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*The Fourth Edition.*

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PROV. XXIV. 10, 11, 12.

10, *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.*

11, *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain:*

12. *If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not: doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

**T**HE very Style or Manner, in which these Words are here deliver'd by the *Wise Man*, if we observe it, is somewhat peculiar from the rest of this Book; and appears plainly to run with more Train and Consequence than is usual in a Course of Proverbs. And the Reason of it we may justly suppose to have


SERM. II. have been, the Weight and Importance of the Subject, upon which he was engaged; which might well prevail with him (as *Wise a Man* as he was) to go a little out of his way, to take a nearer View of it; to stand and consider it with more than common Attention, and to draw out and pursue his Reflections on it to a greater length. For 'tis *Courage* and *Resolution* of Mind in Defence, or in Pursuance of our Duty, against, or under, Difficulties, that he makes it his Business in this place to recommend: A Vertue, which, in the Accounts of mere Reason and Nature, stood always in the first Rank, and had the highest Character: And under Christianity 'tis become of so much more especial Use and Necessity, as the Difficulties that lie in the way of our Obedience are liable to be greater, and our Sufferings for it more. Besides that, 'tis not only a main Instance of our Christian Practice in it self, but a Guard and Security to all the rest; of a wide and universal Influence upon our whole Conduct; which reaches through all the Distinctions and Conditions of Men; and very nearly affects them all, as in their general, so in their several and distinct Capacities. Every Man is bound to the Observance of it in a greater or less Proportion: Indeed Men under a publick Character, in a high Station, more particularly so: But at the same time not the *meanest* and *lowest* of the *People* can be wholly exempted from its Obligation: Because a private Vertue can be no more secure without it long, than a publick Trust can be well executed. And since 'tis a Duty thus excellent and necessary in its Nature and

Con-

Consequence, and yet learnt at all times with S E R M. II. so much difficulty, and practis'd still with greater, I hope a Discourse on it, in *these Days* at least, will not be thought Unseasonable, nor altogether Impertinent to this Occasion.

I have therefore pitch'd upon these Words of *Solomon*, because they express the Duty it self, in some of its chiefest Instances, and contain very powerful Engagements to the Practice of it; in that they prescribe against the Breach and Violation of it, with an Authority and Stress very peculiar; with an Application highly serious and affectionate, grounded upon Arguments, and enforc'd with Appeals drawn from Religion and Conscience; *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain: If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not: Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

The Sense and Force of which Words may be resolv'd into these plain, easy Propositions: That if our *Courage* and *Resolution* fail us in a time that most requires it, 'tis good for nothing: If, when a just and good Cause is like to suffer, and stands in need of our Assistance, we then withdraw our selves upon Motives of our own Security and Advantage, or whatever other Reason, and forbear to rescue it from the Malice and Methods of ill Men; *to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain*; Then whatever Pleas and Pretences we may contrive and offer for our selves


 selves, to hide our Baseness from the World; as if we should say, *Behold we knew it not*, we were not aware that the Truth was in so much Danger, or of the Consequences of our Neglect; Yet God sees through the Vanity and Hypocrisy of them all, and will not fail to call Men to a severe Account for such Behaviour; *Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

According to this Explication of the Words, and within the Compass of it, I shall proceed in my following Discourse; and since 'tis plain from *Solomon*, that some sort of *Resolution* in Men may fail, and one need not the Wisdom and Observation of *Solomon* to convince him in these Days it may do so;

I shall therefore endeavour, in the *First* place, to state the true Nature of *Courage* and *Resolution* in general, and shew upon what Principles it must be form'd, and with what Conditions qualify'd, if ever we design it should stand out against those many Powerful Arguments, that may tempt us to forego it.

*Secondly*, I shall observe, That Times of Danger and Difficulty, when the Cause of Truth comes to suffer, and, it may be, is ready to sink for want of a Support, are the most proper Season, in which we are to express our *Resolution*, and that, if it then fail, 'twas never real and well grounded: *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain.*

*Thirdly*, I shall consider, and try to answer, the



the Excuses that Men may possibly make, and have usually done so, for deserting, or not defending a good Cause, when it was certainly their Duty, and within their Power to encourage it: And this from hence, *If thou sayest, Behold; we knew it not*: For that these Words were intended by way of an Excuse, and as a Palliation for a base and cowardly Spirit, is plain from their Coherence with the other.

*Fourthly and Lastly*, by way of Application, I shall draw nearer to the present Design of this Assembly; and, as some have thought, to the more particular Intendment of my Text; and shall crave leave to represent the Necessity there is of a firm *Courage* and *Resolution* of Mind in those, that are more immediately entrusted with the Administration of Judgment and Justice; as they tender a right Execution of their Charge, and will answer it to *God, the Judge of all men*, at the great *Tribunal*: *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain: Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

And, *First*, I shall endeavour to state the true Nature of *Courage* and *Resolution* in general, and shew upon what Principles it must be form'd, and with what Conditions qualify'd, if ever we design it should stand out against those many powerful Arguments that may tempt us to forego it.

By *Resolution*, here properly taken, we are to understand a firm and steady Purpose of Mind, that a Man forms to himself, to main-  
tain

SERM. II. tain and pursue his Duty, what Difficulties soever he may encounter, or whatever Inconveniencies he may suffer by it. And the Reasonableness of this is founded upon a plain infallible Truth, That the least Sin whatever is of greater Consequence, and with more Care to be avoided, than the utmost Sufferings of the present Life. So that according to this Account of *Resolution*, we see the Matter, about which it is employ'd, is a point of Duty, something Good or Evil, either in its own Nature, or as enjoin'd by some Law of God or Man: And 'tis clear from hence it is so, because *Resolution*, in the Sense we now consider it, is a moral Duty, improv'd upon Principles of Religion; which must therefore always respect an Object, either Good or Evil. And therefore things altogether indifferent, as excluded from both of these, and partaking of neither, are not the proper Subject of a true *Resolution*. And if a Man propose a Matter of this Nature to himself about which he is left purely free, and not determin'd one way or other, by any Law of God, or Nature, neither immediately, nor by consequence; though he pursue his purpose never so regularly, nor decline ever from it, till he brings it to Effect; we may call this Steddiness, or Constancy in him, if we will; and if the Matter will bear it, he deserves our Praise, and perhaps our Admiration; but surely we cannot properly either call it, or account it to be, the Vertue of *Resolution* in him, because 'tis indeed, strictly speaking, no Vertue at all. Which plainly appears from hence, that a Man is never bound in Conscience, from the  
Rea-

Reason of the thing it self, or from any Law **SERM. II.**  
 about it, not to recede from his Purpose in a  
 Matter of this Nature, though by a Sense of  
 his own Honour and Reputation he may be so.

This then is the Nature and Notion of a true Religious *Courage* and *Resolution*, a fixt and immoveable Purpose of acting always according to our Conscience, whatever Temptations may tend to move us from it, or whatever may be the Consequences of our doing so. And how to bring our selves to this Strength and Firmness of Mind, in the regular Pursuit of our Duty, shall be more distinctly consider'd in these following Particulars.

*First* then, That our *Resolution* may be fix'd and lasting, we are to form it after sufficient Enquires, upon calm and deliberate Reason; after an intimate and thorow Conviction of the Justice and Goodness of our Cause.

And therefore, *Secondly*, We are not to make Passion, or Prejudice, a Respect to Persons, or Parties, but a due Regard to the Nature and Quality of Things, the Ground and Motive of our *Resolution*.

And, *Thirdly*, That our *Resolution* may stand in the Day of Trial, 'tis necessary, that we not only look to the Goodness of our Cause, but to our Selves; That we carefully weigh and estimate our own Strength; That we search out our own Temper and Inclinations; Consider wisely where we are most liable to be assaulted, and what kind of Temptations may take hold of us soonest; and so, by proper Applications before-hand, we are to take care to strengthen what is weak within us, and to guard and secure our Vertue by a wise Presumption of our Enemy. And





Gen. 49. 4.

And all this that I have mention'd; must we do in an humble Dependence upon the Grace of God; and out of a just Sense of our Need of his Assistance, without which, when we have done our utmost, we are yet *unstable as Water*, and shall never be able to *excel* to Perfection in any Vertue whatsoever.

And, *First*, That our *Resolution* may hold out always, we are to form it upon sufficient Enquiries into the Matter before us, and to take it up on calm and deliberate Reason, and after an intimate and thorow Conviction of the Justice and Goodness of our Cause.

For all the Force and Firmness a true *Resolution* has within it at any time, it derives from Reason and Conscience; and it proceeds all along in the Execution of it self; in the Strength and Consequence of those Arguments on which 'twas built at first: A Man *therefore* thinks himself bound to pursue any thing with more or less Steadiness and Application, according to the Opinion he has fram'd to himself of a greater or less Necessity in it: And the Grounds and Measure of a right Opinion lie for the most part Retir'd; and out of Sight, in the Nature and Quality of Things, which must therefore, by a close and deep Reflection, be laid open to our Minds, in order to leave those Impressions there, which may afterwards continue to influence our Practice. *Resolution* therefore in the Will, when 'tis form'd as it should be, must have a strength in it proportionable to the Convictions of our Judgment: 'Tis our Fault and Weakness, indeed, if it have less, and we are accountable for it; but more we are sure it cannot have,



as long as it is reasonable: For when once it comes to run beyond Judgment and Evidence, 'tis off from its proper ground, and, so far, is without Reason. A Man therefore that shall purpose any thing to himself, without, or besides Directions from his Reason and Judgment, how stiffly soever he may adhere to his own Choice, and whatsoever he undergo in the Prosecution of it, yet still 'tis not really *Resolution* in him, but *Obstinacy*: For the proper Notion of *Obstinacy* lies in this, in a forceable bending our Wills any way, without, or against the Convictions of our Reason. And whatever the Nature of the Cause it self may happen to be, yet in a Man that shall thus blindly pursue it, it makes no Difference at all, as to the Nature and Quality of his Actions: 'Tis Stubbornness in him even to propose and follow a Right and Vertuous Cause: For tho' there may be never so much Reason for it really, and in the Nature of the Thing it self, yet this Man is able to give none for it, because he has none; but lets his Will rashly to work, without the Information of his Judgment.

The Necessity therefore of a sound and thorow Consideration, e're we resolve in any Cause, would appear sufficiently, were it only from hence, that our *Resolution* might have any Worth and Vertue in it; which it can never have, as I have already prov'd, if we make it in the *dark*; even although we could be sure to stick to it afterwards: But it is not very likely that we will do so, nay 'tis almost impossible we should. For the Foundation being thus shallow, the Superstructure will be

SERM. II. apt to reel and totter upon: every Gust of Temptation. A strong, a present Influence of Good or Evil will be apt to turn the Will any way, because there is nothing to support and keep it right to one side more than another.

Will a Man, think we, care to turn off his present Advantages? Will he put by the warm and vigorous Applications of a mighty Interest just before his Eyes? when it comes attended with such Variety of Graces, and strikes upon him with all the Force of Art without, assisted with the powerful Inclinations of his own Nature within? Will he be able to give it a Repulse? Will he have the Heart to say, *Get thee hence*, when it thus soothes and caresses him? And all this, out of a mere stiff and sullen Humour, because he is resolv'd to stick to a former Purpose, which he has made, he knows not why? Yet this is the very Case of that Man that resolves to be on the side of Truth, which he never examin'd, nor cares to understand!

Again, on the other side, will this Man have the Face to confront the grim Visage of Terrors and Sufferings? Will he be able to bear up against the Discountenance of Power, when it threatens him? When it hangs dark and gloomy over him, and points out to him *below*, the Bones and Carcasses of others, that have thus stood out, and fallen before him? If he can, 'tis more than can be reasonably expected from him, and more than himself can ever justify from his own Condition and Circumstances. For it cannot be deny'd that these, I have mention'd, are real Terrors, and ought to move a wise Man at any time, when  
he

he has no stronger Reason to oppose against SERM. II. them; which the Man in the present Case is suppos'd not to have; and therefore how comes he thus to follow his Duty, so inconsistently with himself, and to *commit the Action* of a wise Man upon such a *Foundation* of Ignorance and Folly?

But now an Obligation in point of Conscience, which always arises from an impartial Enquiry into the Nature and Consequences of Things, is stronger than all these Arguments put together, than even the Terrors of *Death* it self: And therefore will be able to carry a Man through with his Duty, whatever may oppose him; and make his *Resolution* hold out against all Importunities of Times and Interests.

I need not here make an Application of this general Discourse to our Selves, and our own Case at present: Every one, that knows any thing of it, is convinc'd of the Justice and Firmness of our *Cause*. And the more he looks into it, the more he will still be satisfied, that his Zeal toward it is highly religious and reasonable; and therefore his *Resolution* to stand by it ought to be perpetual. And here we have reason to bless the good Providence of God, that those Men have always been, and still are, the best Friends of our Church and Constitution, that understand it best, and know the Bottom upon which 'tis founded, and those excellent Advantages with which it is adorn'd. It will stand the Test of our utmost Scrutinies, and does not require a bare and naked Submission to its Doctrine and Discipline, but lays it self open to our Exami-

SERM. II. nation, and invites and enjoins Men not to accept of it, but upon clear and uncontested Evidence.

<sup>a</sup> 'Twas an Objection against Primitive Christianity, made by some of the worst Enemies of it, that it render'd all Argument useless, and shut out the Enquiries of Reason into its Articles and Doctrines, and requir'd in its Profelytes a <sup>b</sup> mere *simple* Faith to receive and entertain it. And how do the Fathers of the Church answer this? But by the same Argument which will serve us against our Adversaries; by referring Men to a strict, a close, and impartial Trial of it; by leaving it to their best Judgment to consider it, and then to refuse, or comply with it, according to the clearest Light and Evidence of their own Reason. And do not we desire the very same in all those that have the Skill and Abilities to weigh our Cause? And we are sure the Balance must *then* turn on our side.

<sup>c</sup> And those that by their Education and Circumstances are not so well able to examine it themselves, let them trust the Resolutions, and depend upon the Judgment of wiser Men in this Case, as they must necessarily do in many other Matters, that are yet of the

<sup>a</sup> Μὴ ἐξέταξι, ἀλλὰ πίστεσον. Origen *contra Celsum*, lib. 1. p. 8, 9. Edit. Cantab.

<sup>b</sup> Οἱ δὲ ἔργων καὶ πίστεως ψιλλῆς βεβαιώμενοι. Irenæus, lib. 1. p. 29 Edit. Oxon.

<sup>c</sup> εἰ δὲ τῶν ἀμύχανον, πῶς μὴ διὰ τὰς τῶν βίαι ἀνάγκας, πῶς δὲ καὶ διὰ τὴν ἰσχυρὰν ἀδύνατον, σοφία ὀλίγων ὅτι ἢ λόγον ἀπύκτων, &c. Orig. *contra Cels.* *ibid.*



greatest Moment and highest Consequence to SERM. II. them. And 'twill be a sufficient ground for their pious Zeal and *Resolution*, that they have done their best; God and Man will commend them for it, and they shall not fail of their Reward.

But, *Secondly*, We are not to make Passion, or Prejudice, a Respect to Persons or Parties, but a due Regard to the Nature and Quality of Things, the Ground and Motive of our *Resolution*, if we design it should be lasting.

\* For Passion can never hold always, and it is not fit it should; and then whatsoever is built upon it, must necessarily sink and *tumble* with it: And Prejudice, 'tis to be hop'd, in time will be remov'd, and then what becomes of a *Resolution* that depends upon it? The truth is, 'tis great pity that both, or either of these mean Qualities should ever *seem* to be the Parent of so noble an Offspring. For that they can never *really* be so, is beyond all question, and will presently appear, if we consider it. A bold and haughty Humour indeed, whetted by Opposition, very often puts on the Face of *Courage* and *Resolution*; but 'tis sure, there is nothing at a greater Distance from it, and 'twill be found so, whenever there is Occasion to prove it. Because those very Arguments, that are most powerful in themselves, and most proper to try the Temper and Completion of our *Courage*, do, by a sort of

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\* Εἰσὶ δ' αὖ ἄλλοι δοκῶντες ἀνδρεῖοι εἶδ' διὰ τὰ πάθη οἷον οἱ ἐρώντες, ἢ οἱ ἐνθουσιαζόντες· ἐδὲ δι' ἑτέρας σαπέον ἀνδρείας εἶδ'· ἐστὶ γὰρ αὐτῆς τὸ πάθος ἀφαιρεθῆναι, ἢ κέλι εἶσιν ἀνδρεῖοι. Aristot. Mag. Mor. lib. 1. cap. 21.

natural Efficacy, tend to remove, or rebate, the Force and Edge of our Passion and Prejudice, which yet are here suppos'd to be the only Ground and Foundation of our *Courage*. And when the same Engines are busily employ'd, at the same time, to batter the Edifice it self, and to undermine the Foundation upon which it stands, he that does not see what is like to be the Issue, does not deserve to be inform'd.

Thus for Instance, If a fond and foolish Affection to any Cause, or Party, be the only fundamental Principle of our Zeal towards it, the proper and usual Course in such a Case as this, is to countermine the Force of this soft Passion, by the Methods of a contrary Representation: 'Tis only to sour the Blood a little, by laying Terrors before the Fancy; and so to damp the Jollity, and reduce the extravagant Gaiety, of the Spirits. For Terrors and Fondness, with Regard to the same thing, cannot dwell long together in the same Neighbourhood; and therefore the one is a most proper and effectual Remedy for the other. Again, if Anger or Disaffection to *One* Cause, or Body of Men, be the Ground of our Zeal and *Resolution* for *Another*, here must be quite different Measures taken by him that shall attempt it: Affable and Courteous Applications, Insinuations of Favour, and apt Addresses are here to be made use of by Men, in order to soften the Rigour of the Passion, 'till it comes to bend and ply to their Designs. For, tho' Anger be a *stubborn*

<sup>a</sup> Ἡ ἔκ ἐννερόνκας ὡς ἀμαχόν τε καὶ ἀνίκητον θυμὸς; ἢ παρόντῃ, ψυχὴ πᾶσα πρὸς πάντα ἀφοβὸς τε καὶ ἀίλλητῃ. Plato, *Polit. lib. 2.* Ἀίλλητον γὰρ ὁ θυμὸς. Aristot. *Eudem. lib. 3. cap. 1.* Pas-

Passion, yet a *soft Tongue*, we know, is able to *break* it, to take down the Rage and Swelling of it, and to overcome its utmost Violence, by a gentle Management. So that we see, 'tis only to play one Passion against another, and to apply to each by proper Movements, and you may turn and manage a Man, that has nothing else but Passion in his Cause to trust to, which way you will.

SERM. II.  
  
 Prov. 25. 15.

And this the Great Masters of Human Life, the Men of *Business* and *Knowledge* of the World, are very sensible of; and therein indeed lies the Advantage which they think they have above other Men. They have nicely observ'd the Turns, and Variety of Windings in Human Nature, and imagine they can take hold of a Man, let him be never so slippery: And though perhaps they may not understand the Philosophy of the Passions so well as *Scholars*, nor be able to discourse finely upon the Seat and Complection of them, of the Springs from whence they rise, and of the Ways in which they *should* Move and Act *Regularly*; yet how they *will* Move and Act in common Life, these Men know better than we can tell them; and are found too hard for us many times, though we stand prepar'd and girt with the whole strength and defence of our Learning.

'Tis necessary therefore, if these Men at any time should have more Skill than Honesty, (which not seldom happens) when they attempt to beat us off our Ground in a Good Cause, that we should have some other Security to guard us, besides what these Men are so well acquainted with; even the  *Armour* and Defence of a  *Good Conscience in the sight of God*;



SERM. II.

*God*; a Mind well form'd and settled upon Principles of Religion and Reason, and under lively Convictions of its Duty. For, these are such kind of Arguments, as these Men know not how to deal with; they lie quite out of their Way, beyond the Reach of all their *Policy, Cunning and Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* But a Man of mere Heat and Passion, in his Cause, these Men despise; and know that, when he has run his Lengths, they shall have him come about at last, and may take him as they please. We see then plainly how our Passions are liable to Betray us; and therefore there is no safe trusting them with our *Resolution.* For this we may depend upon for certain, that as much of Passion, of what kind soever, as goes into the Frame and Constitution of our *Courage* at first, so much more will there be left of Lame-ness and Imperfection in it, when this Passion is once remov'd; and how this may be done we have seen already, and Men of Artifice and Cunning know very well how to do it.

Eph. 4. 14.

*Thirdly,* That our *Resolution* may stand in the Day of Trial, 'tis necessary, that we not only look to the Goodness of our Cause, but to our Selves; that we carefully weigh and estimate our own Strength; that we search out our own Temper and Inclinations, and consider Wisely where we are most liable to be Assaulted, and what kind of Temptations may take hold of us soonest; and so by proper Applications before-hand, we are to take care and strengthen what is Weak within us, and to guard and secure our Vertue, by a wise Pre-  
sumption of our Enemy.

'Tis



'Tis our Saviour's own way of Arguing, and Advice to as many as would come into his Religion, not only to look upon the bright side of it, and to have their Thoughts and Hearts wholly taken up, and intent upon Contemplating the glorious Proposals and Privileges of His Gospel; though these were infinitely Greater than any other: But that Men would do well likewise to consider, on the other hand, what they must resolve to part with, or submit to, in Compliance with their Duty. How much of their present Satisfaction they must often forego, and what severe Dispensations many times they would be bound to accept, in Pursuance of His Religion, in Contradiction to the very Grain of their Natures, their strongest and most deeply rooted Desires. For otherwise, if the former Advantages were only attended to, and a Man would be sure to meet with the latter Evils in the Course of his Obedience; this would be a terrible Surprize to him, apt to make him start and fly from his Purpose, and renounce his Duty, to secure his present Interest and Pleasure. And therefore a Man should sit down calmly, and debate with himself the Arguments, not only for, but against, his present Purpose; wisely compute the Measures of his own Strength, and that of his Enemy; and then proceed, or retreat in time, according to the best Judgment he could make of his own Temper and Condition: Otherwise he would by no means be fit to engage, or persist, in a Design of such a Nature and Consequence as *that: If any Man come to me, says our Blessed Lord, and hate not his father, or his mother,*

SERM. II. *mother, and wife, and children, and brethren  
and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot  
be my disciple; that is, unless he be so coolly  
and indifferently affected towards all these  
Things, as to be ready to part with them all,  
whenever they come to stand in Competition  
with his Duty. And whosoever does not bear  
his cross, and come after me, cannot be my dis-  
ciple. And then he goes on, and illustrates  
his Argument by this just and lively Resem-  
blance. What King going to War against ano-  
ther King, sitteth not down first, and consulteth,  
whether he be able with ten thousand to meet  
him that cometh against him with twenty thou-  
sand; or else, while the other is yet a great way  
off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth condi-  
tions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of  
you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can-  
not be my disciple.*

And what our Blessed Saviour here pro-  
nounces, of our taking upon us the Profession of  
Christianity in general, will hold as true of  
any particular point of Duty, that comes to be  
the Matter of our *Resolution*. Unless we pru-  
dently cast up with our selves before-hand,  
what we may gain, or lose by it, either by  
quitting, or retaining it; and take care to ba-  
lance the one against the other, to see which  
way the Scale will turn in point of Reason, it  
will be impossible, that either we our selves,  
or any Body else for us, should lay any great  
Stress and Dependence upon our *Resolution*.  
For a Good Cause is quite a different Thing,  
when we look upon it in *Idea*, and consider it  
abstractedly, stript naked of all disadvanta-  
geous, and evil Appendages; and when we  
come

come actually to *feel* the *Weight* of it, and to SERM. II.  
 find it beset with *Thorns*, and *Perplexities* on  
 every side: We shall *then* have quite different  
 Thoughts about us, quite different Motions  
 and Turnings in our Souls, upon this Occa-  
 sion; and 'twill put us into an Agony to think,  
 how we shall get through these things, unless  
 we have taken care some time before to enure  
 our Minds to the Apprehension of them.

Our Business therefore is *now*, while we  
 have Time and Leisure before us, e're the *evil*  
*days come*, when we can no longer consult, but  
 must execute our *Resolution*, now by *quick* and  
*lively* Representations upon our Minds, to put  
 our selves sometimes into the Posture, and  
 Condition of suffering Men; to work up our  
 Passions and Affections, if we can, somewhat  
 to the same Pitch and Height, and to give them  
 a turn, and ply like that they will have, when  
 these things come actually to lie before them.  
 And 'tis certain if we do this, we shall be no  
 Losers by it; for we shall not by this means,  
 as some would fear, *anticipate* and *prevent* the  
 Evil of our Sufferings, (because we do not  
 here consider 'em as certain, but as probable)  
 nor shall we make them more troublesome  
 than they need to be, by antedating them; but  
 we shall abate the *Edge* and *Smart* of them  
 when they come, and to be able to act con-  
 sistently with our best Reason, and Judgment,  
 in the midst of all the Tumult and Hurry of  
 our Passions.

But there is one thing, which I had almost  
 forgot, That 'tis not only the Temptation of  
 Evils and Sufferings, against which we ought  
 to prepare, and arm our selves, in the Defence,  
 and



SERM. II. and Support of a good Cause; but there is another very powerful one, that, in some Constitutions, is found to prevail more effectually than the former Terrors; by being a *Bait* to draw and allure the Minds of Men to a Compliance, where the former could not drive them. And 'tis the Temptation of Favours and Advantages, which a Man may certainly, or very probably, procure to himself, by going over from his *Duty*. This indeed is a very dangerous, and powerful Temptation in it self, and our *Enemies* know how to apply it to all Advantage, and 'tis found very often more successful than the other. For some Tempers, that will bear up against Trouble and Vexation, will yet bend to Pleasure: *Opposition* will sometimes make a Man Resolute, when *fair* and *soft* Applications to him would break his Force: A *rough* and *boisterous Storm* will put a Man upon his Guard, make him wrap himself Close, and gird his Defence about him: When the gentle Insinuations of Heat, the kinder Influences of *Favour* descending on him, may prevail with him, by Degrees, to lay himself open to take any Impressions, and to be form'd and \* soften'd to any Compliances whatsoever.

Not, that I think it a thing unlawful in it self, for a Man to take, and use, the Favours of Ill Men, whatsoever Design they may have in giving them: For they *may* prove Happy

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\* — \* Η κ' πρὸς πòθές τε, κ' ἡδονάς, κ' πίνας δεινὰς θωπείας κολακίαν, αἱ κ' ἄρ' σεμνῶν ὀιομένων εἶναι πρὸ θυμὸς μαλάττωσαι, κείνους ποιεῖσι πρὸς πάντα ζῶμεντα. Plato de Leg. lib. prima.



Advantages to Vertue, and Noble Occasions of **S E R M. II.** commending our Integrity before God, and all the World. But if a Man *suspect* his own Strength at all, if through the Grace of God, and his Experience of himself, he dares not *trust* his own *Resolution*, let him *fly* those Advantages that may chance to *ruine* him; *shake his Hands* from the Gifts of these Men, as from *Bribes*, so many dangerous Occasions that come to rob him of his Honour and Honesty.

And, indeed, 'tis enough to make a Man a little afraid of himself, to see the Fate of others, that have by this means fallen before him: Men, that appear'd once to have as much Integrity, and Zeal in a good Cause, as any: That spoke as Bravely, and acted in Defence of it, and perhaps *wrote* for it; and whom all Men thought, as they verily might themselves, as far from ever relinquishing it: Yet, *How* have these Men, whom Terrors could never have mov'd, yielded at last to *Courtship*! The\* *Jaw-bones of these Lions*, *How* have we seen them *fall away like Water*, till they could not *speak*! These Noble Champions, *How* have they been foil'd in a slippery place of Preferment! Till they could no longer *act* (as all Men had reason to expect they would always) as became Brave Men, in Correspondence with their former Character, and those Assurances they had given the World! But they have *tamely*, and *quietly* surrender'd themselves up, quite *drain'd* and *dispirited* of their ancient Zeal and Vigour, to the *Sway*

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\* *Psalm* LVIII. 6.

SERM II. and *Management* of those, by whom they were Advanc'd.

'Tis enough therefore to make us a little jealous of our selves, and to suspect the Force of these Arguments in general, from the Success we find they have had upon others, perhaps once as stout as we may now think our selves. And therefore 'tis not safe for us to enter the Lists, and put our selves to the Test against them, till we have survey'd our selves well, and through God's Assistance dare trust the Strength of our Arms approv'd every way, by Art, as well as Nature: For, if we trust only to the natural Goodness of our Temper and Constitution in this Case, it may perhaps deceive us: In as much as this kind of Arguments does more *often* indeed, and more *effectually* prevail upon the *best* Natures; upon those, that have not usually the *hardiness* to suspect a *design*, where they receive a *kindness*. A Man had need of a little *roughness*, and even *surliness* in his Complection, to have his Breast guarded with *Brass and Iron*, to keep out the Insinuations of \* Flattery: 'Tis a Poison that works so strongly upon our Self-love, that we take it in greedily, and swallow it without Suspicion, and will not be perswaded we are at all Sick by it, till every Body else sees we are past Recovery.

So that, if we would have our *Resolution* prevail above all these numerous and mighty Temptations, it must be our Care to know

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\* Οἶον, γόλακι, δεινῶ θηρίω, καὶ βλάβη μεγάλη, ὅπως ἐπέμιξεν ἢ φύσει ἠδονὴν πάντα ἐκ ἀμύσσον. Πλάτῳ τῆς Phædro.

our selves well; to place Guards and Fences SERM. II.  
 about our Hearts; to prop up and support  
 what is weak, and insufficient within us; And  
 to secure all the *avenues* of our Souls that lie  
 open, and are liable to be assaulted any way,  
 either by *Storm*, or by more gentle *Approaches*.  
 And if we do this carefully *now*, 'tis sure we  
 shall find Occasion to applaud our selves *here-*  
*after*; we shall find in the Day of Trial we  
 have acted wisely, and that our *Courage*, like  
 a *true Friend*, will *then* stand by us, *when* we  
 have most need of its Assistance. Which  
 brings me to

The *Second* Thing I propos'd to observe  
 from my Text, That Times of Danger and  
 Difficulty, when the Cause of Truth is like  
 to suffer, and stands in need of a Support, are  
 the proper Season, wherein we are to express  
 our *Resolution*, and that, if it then fail, it was  
 never real, and well grounded; never well  
 prepar'd, and establish'd, according to the Di-  
 rections I have already given.

For the proper Perfections of every Thing  
 is to attain its end; and if our *Resolution* fall  
 short of this, whatever we may pretend, *Wise*  
*Men* will easily see through it, and be sure to  
 lay the Fault, where it ought to be, in its  
*proper* Place. If we say, we design'd always  
 well, but were over-born by the Violence of a  
 present Temptation to leave our Purpose;  
 What do we? But really own, in the Nature  
 of the thing it self, and in the true Mean-  
 ing of our own Excuse, that our Purpose  
 was never *perfect*, as it should have been,  
 at first, and but half form'd in the *Beginning*.

<sup>a</sup> For

For we ought to have foreseen our Danger; if we had been truly Valiant; the very Notion of *Resolution* and Fortitude implying, and requiring a sufficient Apprehension of the Evils we may chance to suffer in the Prosecution of it: But the Man, that does not at all consider into what Consequences he runs himself by his Designs, we may term him *Rash*, but not *Resolute*; <sup>b</sup> *Bold*, but not *Courageous*. To satisfy the World therefore, that ever we resolv'd and design'd well, let us act so, whenever the Times, and State of Affairs demand it of us.

But *here*, when we mention the Danger and Difficulty of Times, should we do this with a particular Reference, and Direction to our *own*, perhaps we might offend: Some Men would, in their great Gravity, tell us, that surely we are much to blame for busying our selves about such Things as these, and which do not belong to us; and perhaps, by a wrong Application, quote the Words of *Solomon* upon us to this Purpose: *Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.* We are out of Humour, they say, and want *Preferment*, and that makes us complain of

Eccles. 7. 10.

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<sup>a</sup> Οἱ γὰρ ἀπειροὶ οὐκ ἐκβουσμεύων ἢ φοβῶνται διὰ τὴν ἀπειρίαν· ἔδει δὲ τὸ τέλος φαλέον ἀνδρείους. Arist. Mag. Mor. lib. 1. cap. 21.

<sup>b</sup> Οὐ γὰρ ἴε ὡς Λάχης ἔγωγε ἀνδρεία καλῶ ἔφη θηρία, ἔφη ἄλλο ἔστι τὸ τὰ δεινὰ ὑπὸ ἀνοίας μὴ φοβέμενον, ἔλλ' ἀφοβὸν κῆμειν. Plato in Lachete.

<sup>c</sup> Ταῦτα ἔν αὖ οὐ καλεῖς ἀνδρεία, καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ, ἐγὼ θεασάμενος καλῶ ἀνδρεία ἢ τὰ φερίμα. Plato *ibid.*

the



‘the Times; and ’tis our *Forwardness*, and SERM. II.  
 ‘*Folly* that we do so. ’Tis not some Men’s  
 Wisdom, we grant it, to Complain of any,  
 because ’tis their *Interest* to Comply with *all*.  
 But how do we not *wisely* to complain, if we  
 have *Reason* for it? And whether we have  
 not Reason sufficient in *these evil Days*; I ap-  
 peal to all Men, besides our Enemies, all the  
*wise* Men of the Nation, and the common  
 Sense of *honest* Men.

What *Solomon* then design’d by these Words,  
 \* If they must at all relate to *Politicks*, was  
 this, that we should not Complain without  
 Reason; not to be querulous, and uneasy  
 under Government, when the Advantages of  
 the Times, in which we live, are great, and  
 the Inconveniencies but little and common,  
 such as are almost necessary, and can hardly  
 be avoided at any time: For that this is in-  
 deed unreasonable, and an Argument of a rest-  
 less and seditious Spirit: But, surely, *Solomon*  
 could never intend, by these Words, to ex-  
 clude a just, and reasonable Complaint of the  
 Times; unless we’ll make his *Wisdom* contra-  
 dict the Rules of *common Sense* and *Prudence*.  
 For it may be our Duty to complain, and to  
 appeal against the Corruptions of the World,  
 and of these *Men* more *especially*, in order to  
 prevent the farther Growth of Evil.

And then as for *Preferment*, whatever we  
 may think of *it*, or they of *us*; we hope how-  
 ever, no Proposals, or Expectations of *Pre-  
 ferment* will take us off from our *Honour*, and  
*Conscience*, how little soever some Men may

\* For there is no Necessity they should; See Pool’s Synopsi  
 on this Place.

SERM II. seem to have, that do enjoy it. But *surely* one would have thought these *wise Men* had known the way to *Preferment* in these Days, a little better; and that 'tis not to *complain* (as I hinted before) but to *comply*: Can they think us then so foolish, that we would take so very ungracious a Method to disappoint our selves of it, as this? Upon these Grounds then we may hope for these good Men's Excuse, if we do *complain* a little; and they may *well bear with us*, since they make their own Advantage so much by *that*, which is the Ground of our *Complaint*.

But let them *know*, that 'tis not *Interest*, and *Preferment*, but *Religion* and *Conscience*, that oblige us to behave our selves *thus*; and to stand up in *Defence* of our *Holy Church*, and *Constitution*, against the ill Effects of their Principles, and Practice. Were it only our own Ease, and Advantage we consulted, we could fairly sit still as well as others; and though with less Satisfaction to our own Consciences, yet, we know, with the *better Opinion* of these Men: Or, we could run in with the *Stream* of the Times, and be carried *smoothly* down by it, till we should be thrown, one time or other, upon a Condition, surely more Reconcilable with our *Ease* at least, than these *wearisome Contests* are: But we *believe*, and *therefore* we *speak*: We are verily persuaded in our Selves, that our Church, and Holy Religion are the best constituted, to all Purposes of true Piety, of any in the World; most agreeable to the Purity of Christ, and the best Patterns of the primitive Ages; and 'tis *this* that makes us so much concern'd, and  
so

So very apprehensive of Danger, from the SERM. II. Designs of ill Men, that plainly appear to threaten them. And God forbid their Malice should out-live our Zeal, or that we should ever approve, or not protest against those Methods, that are every Day taken to undermine our Peace!

And since I am led so near to it, I shall crave leave, in this *Venerable Audience*, to take off the Malignity of an *Ill-natur'd Reflection*, that has been made upon us of this Body more particularly, by a sort of Men, that, by other Instances, as well as this, appear to have no great Kindness for our *Profession* in general. 'We are a *fond* and *humorous* People, they say, of *narrow* and *contracted* Spirits; *quickly pleas'd*, and *easily offended*: 'We are presently flush'd with a little Prospect of Advantage in the Government; and our Discourse, and our Expectations run high; 'But if every thing be not carried exactly to our Humour, we turn *sullen* immediately, and *mutinous*; and don't stick to *quarrel* at the *Government*, and censure its Proceedings. It may be hop'd, that those that know us better, have entertain'd no such disadvantageous Opinion of us, nor found *amongst us* any such *Behaviour*: As we our selves are not sensible of any such, and are sure, if there be, 'tis what by the Doctrines, and Principles of our *own Church* (which yet we may be suppos'd to know and believe, as much as others) we must for ever discountenance and disapprove. But if there should chance to have been such at any Time; we hope only for *common Candour*, and *Charity* from the World, in this Case, and




SERM. II. that the Misbehaviour, and Imprudence of a *few*, will not be charg'd upon our *whole* Body; when what they do is against the *general* Consent.

As for our being so quickly touch'd with Good or Evil, that affects our Church, and our being so soon rais'd or sunk upon it; 'tis not from our own particular Hopes, or Fears of finding our own Account in it, or not; but 'tis from an exquisite and lively Sense we have of the common Interest of Religion, above what may be well presum'd in the Generality of Men, whose Business lies more involv'd in secular Affairs. 'Tis ours chiefly to have our Eyes always awake, and open for the Preservation of our excellent Religion; and therefore we are so very apprehensive of all Occurrences that concern it; because he that touches *that, touches the Apple of our Eye*, the most sensible, and tender part about us.

But as for what these Men say of our *Quarrelling* at, and *Censuring*, the Government, we answer; if they mean by the *Government*, all those that are entrusted with any Share of the Administration, we may hope in this Case to be excus'd, as well as the rest of the World, if we do not think our selves bound in *Honour* and *Conscience* to *approve* what every one of them shall propose and execute: though for their Office sake, and for our Conscience sake, we are, and ought to be, tender of their Character.

But if they mean by the *Government*, Her Majesty's sacred Person; Far be their Accusation from us! Let it be turn'd against *Her* Enemies, and those that hate *us*! May *Her* Name and Person be for ever highly honour'd amongst  
us!



us! Is it possible *She* should ever be the Mark of S E R M. II. our Dislike, or our Reflection? *She* that was  the only Stay of our Hopes in the worst of Times, and our main Dependence, and Expectation in these: Under *whose shadow we always said we should have rest*; and shall be sure to find it once, howsoever the present Intricacy, and Perplexity of Affairs may disturb Her Reign. For surely, that native Goodness and Excellency of Temper, improv'd upon the best Principles and Education; That firm Zeal for the Honour of God and Religion, express'd so often, by Her Suffering, and Acting for it: Those many serious, and affectionate Professions of Her Tenderness to this Church, and Her declar'd Resolutions to support, and encourage the best Members of it, can never be *long* without the most glorious and happy Fruits: *In time* they must break through all those Disadvantages that *surround*, and *attend* Her at *present*, and discover themselves, to the Triumph, and Glory of our Church, and Holy Religion, to the Disappointment of our Enemies Designs, and to the Confusion of their Faces. However, if the *Church of England* must always wear the proper Badge of Her *Blessed Saviour*; be always suffering, always conflicting with Her Enemies; Let Her still be for ever Untainted in Her Loyalty; Let us cut off this Occasion of boasting from our Enemies, who *wait* for our *Halting*, and would be glad to spread some of their *own* Shame upon us; Let us not be remov'd from our *Principles*, by any Changes in our *Condition*; Let us *hold fast our Integrity as long as we live*, and 'twill be our Glory after Death.

We know then of no Reflection made upon Her Majesty's Government by *us*: if there be any, 'tis what *these Men themselves* have made, who can have the Impudence to give out, or even suppose, so very bad a Cause, as their own, to be countenanc'd by Her Favour and Authority.

When 'tis *once* come to this, Is it not Time for us to awake, and begin to bestir our selves? Can we think our selves *secure*, whilst these Men are so *active*? 'Tis a sign they draw pretty near their *Point*, when their *Motion* grows so *violent*. And if, upon the late *insolent* *Demeanour* of these Men, our *Fears* begin to rise a little, can they blame us? when both *they*, and *we* know Nothing but our very *Ruine* will give them an entire Satisfaction.

If *Kindness* would do them any Good, if 'twould make them the *better Men*, or the *better Subjects*, we should not be so much concern'd about it? But when the *Snake*, from being cherish'd, only gathers Life, and Strength to his, and sting the more; when they become only the more *Enrag'd* and *Extravagant*, and *Mad*, under the Sense of a *present* Advantage, or within the Prospect of a *future*, Are these Men fit to be *encourag'd*? They may Complement and Address the Government, under which they live, 'tis true, for any Favours, which they either have, or falsely presume themselves to have, from it; But let not the *Government* ever think it self the more secure for this, any longer, than 'tis not in these Men's Power to overturn it; nor when it is, must any *Prince* upon the *Throne* of *England* expect a kinder Treatment from them, than the *Best* of *Kings* has met with. This

This they perhaps may say is *Railing*, the SERM. II. *Over-flowings* of our *Gall*, and *Bitterness* of *Spirit*; no more than what they might expect to hear from Men of our *Character*, and especially in this *Place*. It may be so, But is it not true? Do we charge them falsely in this point? Have we not seen all this exemplified in former Experience? And do we not find things tend to the very same at present? *How*\* did they deal with that *merciful* Prince, King *Charles* the First! *How* did they multiply their insolent Demands upon him, one after another, till they had extorted from him, and driven him out of all, that he could possibly grant, even all, that he had, but his God and his Conscience! And these he must have parted with too, if he would have gone any farther with them: And were they ever the more pleas'd with him, ever the more obedient to him for all this? Were they ever satisfied till they had his very *Life* and *Blood*? May that Day's Action never be forgotten! Never be blotted out of the *Records* of Time, what ever some Men may desire! May it always be remember'd, to the Shame, and everlasting Reproach of these Men! And to teach us and our *Posterity*, the *Children* of the *Generations* to come, what we must expect hereafter, if ever the Justice of God, for the Sins of this Nation, should suffer the Hand of these Men to prevail again.

*How* much we owe for our present Security from the Designs of these ill Men, to the *Courage* and *Resolution* of our brave *English* Gentlemen,

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\* See this sufficiently made out, once for all, from their Proceedings with the King in the Treaty in the Isle of Wight. *Ld. Clarendon*, 3d Part, Book XI. Page 160, &c.



SERM. II. we can only think in Silence. 'Tis not in our Power by all the *Eloquence*, this *ancient Seat of Learning* abounds with, to make You an Acknowledgment equal to the Zeal and Industry You have *more especially* shewn of *late*, towards the Defence and Preservation of this excellent Church and Constitution, against *Your Enemies*, and *Ours*. May God and Your own Honour and Conscience be Your Reward! May You live to see the Fruits of Your own *brave Actions*, and *generous Endeavours*! May the Church and State always flourish as You desire! May the  *blessings of peace and prosperity rest upon your head!* while Your *enemies are cloth'd with shame and confusion*, and while *all those that have evil will at Zion, become as grass wither'd afore it be grown up; all their Designs blasted, and fruitless; and themselves the Scorn and Contempt of the present, and the Abhorrence of future Generations.*

Psal. 129. 5. 6.

I shall now go on to consider Persons of a very different Character from these *noble Patriots*; and shall endeavour,

*Thirdly*, To examine, and answer, the Excuses Men may possibly make, and have usually done so, for *deserting*, or not *defending* a good Cause, when 'tis certainly their *Duty*, and within their *Power* to encourage it.

And here, *First*, some Men perhaps may think it enough to say for themselves, after all their shifting, and changing sides, and leaving a good Cause, and their old Friends, that they do it upon good Reason, and better Informations? 'That they were once indeed mistaken, 'as many an *honest* Man may be, and acted then 'in Pursuance of that Mistake: but *since*, they  
' have



‘have with more Care examin’d the Matter, S  
 ‘and are now come to be of a different Opinion,  
 ‘and have accordingly taken up other Reso-  
 ‘lutions; and hope all the World will excuse  
 ‘them for it, since, they assure us, they have  
 ‘done nothing in this Case, but upon very  
 ‘weighty, and sufficient Arguments.

What kind of Arguments these *Gentlemen* may possibly have met with, we cannot so well tell, but, we know, some are very *enlightening*. And perhaps it may not be so very difficult to trace the Steps, and Methods of their *Conversion*, if we look a little nearer into the Change of their *Condition*. However, do they think their own *bare Word* enough for us to depend upon in this Case, that they have good Reason for their *Change*? when all the *wise* and *honest* Men in the World are sure themselves *have*, and are every Day able to give, such innumerable Reasons to the contrary! 'Tis true, a Man may be allow'd to change his Opinion at any time, upon *good Reason*; and no length of Days, no Multitudes, nor Authority of Men ought to prescribe against the Truth. But, surely, when a Man goes off from the general and concurrent Opinion of Men as *wise*, or, as he may modestly presume, *something wiser* than himself, there is so much Respect and Reverence due to the common Sense of Men, as that he should endeavour to give the World some reasonable Satisfaction for it. Yet we can instance in some Men, and those no very inconsiderable ones, that, we are sure by comparing their *former Writings*, and their *present Practice*, have, within the compass of a few Years, very much alter'd their Opinions. But they  
 have

S. E. R. M. II.

have never done us the *Favour* and *Civility* all this while, to let us know, upon what *Grounds*; and, if we ask it of them at any time, we receive indeed *Passion* enough, but no *Reason*, for our Answer. They are displeas'd and angry with us, that we will not believe, and act as they do, when they won't let us know how they *could* ever come to do so *themselves*, and we can't imagine how any *wise* or *good* Men ever *should*.

If a Man then will be *changing* at any time from a *Cause* that has, at least, the highest *Presumption* of Truth on its side, and that, for a long Course of Time, has carry'd off the Approbation, and Judgment of the greater Part, and those the wisest Men, to another, That for the *main*, is only cried up in the *Assembly of Fools*, applauded by the Suffrages of vain and idle, weak and vicious Men; If he designs to escape the Shame and Censure of the World in this Case, let him be able and ready to shew his Reasons for his Change, and we will hear them. But merely for him to say, that he has such Reasons to himself, is not sufficient; *especially* at a *time*, when he cannot but know, his Veracity lies justly under a strong Suspicion, upon the account of his very *Change*. We would fain then know, what these Men have to say *for themselves*, and *against* our *Cause* at present; If they have any *Arguments*, let them produce them; Let them bring out their *strong Reasons*, that we may *know* them; And if we cannot chuse out a Man amongst us that shall be able to answer and overcome them, we will promise to go over, and serve their Cause; but if we *can*, and we don't question it, we expect, and that *justly*, they *should*

should return to us: Otherwise, let them be contented to take the Consequence, as to what the World will be apt to say, or think of them upon this account; and that, upon very good Reason, much better, we may suppose, than any they have to plead for themselves.

SERM. II.

This then is our Reply to those Men that have quite *deserted* us; *gone off totally* from us; upon *Principles*, as they pretend, but really because *they were never of us: for if they had been truly of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us.* I Job. 2. 19.

But there are others, *Secondly*, That, though they do not quite *fall off*, and utterly *renounce* a good Cause, yet think it less necessary to *stir* much in it, because they are not aware, *they say*, the Truth is in so much Danger, as we would seem to make it.

*How long* will it be e're these Men come to *awake* and *apprehend* how *near* they are *undone*! If we are *safe*, as these Men would fain persuade us, and our worst Enemies would have us believe *at any Purchase*; What means then all this Noise and Stir of late to insult us? All those indirect, and illegal Methods to oppose, and undermine us? Those many villanous Practices to *serve a Cause*, which no Pretence can ever justify, nor any Law of God or Man excuse? He that does not see all this, and plainly perceive to what it tends, is *willingly ignorant*, and may justly be suspected of a Party with our Enemies, whose Designs he would endeavour thus to *screen* from our Suspicion: Or a fatal Slumber has seiz'd his Spirits, and he sleeps upon the *Beach*, till a *Wave* roll in upon him, and take him away for ever.



SERM. II.

I shall not enter any farther into Particulars, nor will your Patience bear it; But, surely our Case at present is *such*, that if there was ever a Time, that call'd for our Zeal and Activity, 'tis now; and we are false to our God, to our own Conscience, and to our excellent Constitution, if we don't employ our utmost; if we don't think our selves concern'd to avoid a Ruine that *threatens* us at our very Doors, and is ready to *come in* at our Windows. Let us make our enemies themselves our judges in this Case: would they, think we, appear so very much exalted? Would they rejoyce, and triumph at *this rate*; if they did not take themselves to have a great Advantage over us? And did not yet expect a greater? And can they have any long, without our Ruine? If we don't know when 'tis time for us to *arise*, and take care of our selves, they know how to make use of our *Supineness*, and will shake the Rod of Slumber over our Heads, till the Ship, in which all our Hopes, and Happiness are *embarqu'd*, crack under us; till the Frame of our Constitution *dissolve*, and we are plung'd in irrecoverable Ruine.

Jer. 9. 21.

Virgil. de Pali-  
nuro, Æn. 5.

‘But we have Men of *tender*, and *charitable*  
 ‘Spirits amongst us, (as they would be  
 ‘thought) Men of sweet, gentle, and pacific  
 ‘Natures! That can't bear so much as a *just*,  
 ‘and *severe* Reflection, though it be upon a  
 Mat. 3. 8. 12. ‘generation of vipers, a Race of Villains! And  
 34. 23. 33. ‘though it be never so necessary to make us  
 Luk. 3. 7. ‘aware of them, and take care, they don't stab  
 ‘us to the Heart.

In God's Name, does not Charity begin at home? Are we bound to be charitable to our  
 De.



*Destruction?* Must we never *think* Men can have ill Designs upon us, till we are *ruin'd* by them? Is there any such *Charity* due to a vicious, lewd, profligate, factious Combination of Men? That appear to have no other Concern, what *becomes* of our *Government*, than to make their own base Ends by it: nor about Religion, any farther, than as 'twill serve, as an *Engine* of their own Designs; and, in the mean time, by the Malignity of their own vile Example, endeavour to break the very *Heart* and *Power* of it, and, as much as they can, to *erase* the very Notions of it out of the Minds of Men, by their *loose* practising, or *countenancing* Hypocrisy? What *Charity* can be due to such Men as these; unless it be to oppose them as much as *possibly* we are able, and to hinder 'em from *doing* all the *Mischief* they *intend*? This indeed is properly our *Charity* towards them; and to Pray to God, for *their* Sake, and ours, that he would *confound* their Designs, and *convert* their Hearts: But to sooth, and encourage them in their ill Practices by our Silence; and not to protest against them, in the *Name* of God and *Religion*: but to *gloze* 'em with Lies, and to speak *smooth* things to them, and to *have* their persons in admiration because of our own *advantage*; is this our *Charity*? 'Tis our *Sin* and *Folly*, indeed, and we shall find it so hereafter, when God shall call us to a *severe* Account, for contributing so much to the Corruption of the Age we live in. Jude 16.

Again, *Thirdly*, Men will urge, as a *Cloak* for their own Fears, and want of *Courage*, that they like the *Cause* well enough, in which we are engag'd, but don't altogether so well approve our *Methods* of *pursuing* it. 'Tis

SERM. II.

'Tis really Matter of our *great Concern*, that *wise and good Men*, who have shewn their Zeal for Truth so *often*, and are ready, *we don't doubt*, to do so *always*, should ever fall under a Suspicion that does not belong to them, by dissenting from their Brethren upon *Scruples* of this Nature. If the Cause be necessary, and the Means be lawful, and, more than that, esteem'd probable likewise, in the Opinions of *wise and good Men*, upon whom we may depend at any time; Why should we endanger the *End* it self, when 'tis of such mighty Consequence to our Happiness, by our little Differences about the *Means*, which are of no Value, but what they derive from their Fitness to serve the *End*? However, we must not condemn every Man for a *Deferter*, that does not always fall in exactly with our *Opinion*; when he has ever given *before*, and is prepar'd to give *again*, the highest Evidence of his Truth and *Honesty*. 'Tis the *unhappiness sometimes*, and not *always* the *fault*, of good Men, that they cannot come up to a perfect Harmony in Judgment: And we must in Christian Candour and Charity, spare those Men, whom we know to be our Friends by other Arguments, though they may not *always* entirely consent to our *Opinions*, how good soever. *Time* and *Reflection* may rectify those Mistakes, which were *innocent* at first; and unite us all in the same pursuit, by the same Means to the same blessed End and Consequence, the firm *Security* of our *Holy Church*, and the perpetual *Establishment* of our *Peace*.

But *Fools* and *Knaves* make use of this Pre-  
tence upon quite other Grounds; to *conceal*  
their

their own *base* Fears, and Nakedness, or to **SERM. II.**  
*disappoint* the End it self, by a *counterfeit Re-*  
*jection* of the Means. Thus, for Instance, These  
*good Men* tell us, 'That we are quite *mistaken*  
 'in the present Controversy between them and  
 'us about our *Church*: They love the *Church*,  
 'they say, as well as we, and are as much con-  
 'cern'd for its Establishment; but they don't  
 'think, we take the readiest way to preserve  
 'it; and therefore they propose and follow a  
 'much better, if we will believe them: which  
 'is not by Heats and *perverse Disputings*, by  
 'zealous Contentions and fierce Struglings, a-  
 'gainst the Enemies of Truth: but by the  
 'milder Methods of Kindness and Moderation;  
 'by the gentle Influences of a *healing* Spirit, to  
 'soften the *perverse*, and *harsh* Tempers of  
 'Men; to *smooth* the rugged Humours, and to  
 'allay those *intemperate* Heats, and Heart-burn-  
 'ing amongst *Brethren*; and so to make up the  
 'Breaches of our Peace, by the *Cement* of a  
 'Christian *Compliance* and *Charity*. But do they  
 think to impose upon us still, by all this *Cant*,  
 this idle *Harangue* of Words, which we have  
 answer'd over and over? Christian Charity and  
 Moderation are *excellent* Things in their true  
 Name, and Notion, we grant it; and God for-  
 bid we should deny it: But surely, they are  
 such Qualities, that if we may guess any  
 Thing by these Men's Behaviour, they *have*  
*not* the least *Part* nor *Share* in themselves; nor  
 would be concern'd that *others* should, unless  
 'twere to serve their own bad Ends the better  
 by it. The Truth is, they are afraid of ap-  
 pearing against a *Party*, which they have such  
 a *Liking* for, and which they find so very  
 Power-



SERM. II. Powerful, and so many Ways able to do them  
 ~~~~~ Good or Hurt, to raise or sink, to prefer or  
keep 'em under; and this is the *true Reason*,
 that they will not venture to disoblige them,
 even because of their own *base Hopes* and *Fears*.
 And since they can't for Shame of the World,
 openly *renounce* their Church, they are for
 rendring all Means and Methods to maintain
 and preserve it, as *ineffectual* as possible; So to
 gratify their own *good Friends*, and our *worst*
Enemies, the more. And 'tis certain they are
 the better able to serve these Men's Designs upon
 us, whilst they continue in the *Bosoms* of our
 Church, than out of it; because they can by
 this Means find a Place, wherein to *stab* it more
effectually, and so carry off the greater Renown
 and richer Spoils by doing so.

But what *Methods* are they *after all*, by
 which we endeavour to support our Church,
 which these Men can't find in their Hearts to
approve of, and *comply* with? I have not time
 to reckon up particulars; but I appeal to the
 Sense of every Man, whether they are not such,
 as, if we could succeed in them, would *only* put
 it beyond these Men's Power to do us any fur-
 ther *Mischief*: and that is the *true Reason*, in-
 deed, they are offended with us, and there lies
 the real Ground of their Complaint.

I shall mention but one *Refuge* more, behind
 which Men seek to hide their Want of *Courage*,
 and *Resolution* in a good Cause; and that is,

Fourthly, That 'tis to *no Purpose* for them to
appear in it; they can *do* but little Good, for
 their own Part, they say, towards the Promote-
 ing it; and therefore they think it enough for
 them to *Wish* it well, and so throw up all fur-
 ther

ther Concern about it, by an idle *Reliance* upon SERM. II
other Men, that are better able to provide for
its Success.

And if it *does* happen to succeed, through the Blessing of God, and *other Men's* faithful Care and Pains, no Thanks however to these good Men for it; They may share indeed in the *present* Benefits, and enjoy themselves at the Expence of other Men's Sweat and Blood, *Menz* much better than themselves; but let them not expect any Share of the Reward *hereafter* for Well-doing, which shall be given only to the *good and faithful* Servant.

But if the slender Hopes of Success, which these Men offer as a *Pretence* for themselves, were never so *True*; Is it any *Reason* for us to neglect the least part, or instance of our Duty? Why do we not then renounce our *Orders*? Why do we not throw up our *Ministry*? Why do we take this Pains to *Preach* to Men, and to press upon them their Duty at all times, *in Season, and out of Season*? When we find we can do so little Good by it, *after all*, and have no more Thanks at last for all our Pains; but, it may be, are *persecuted and hated* for it; or at least *discountenanc'd*, and that by *those Men* too, from *whom*, considering the *Character* they bear amongst us, and their near *Relation* to our *Order*, we might expect another kind of Treatment.

But howsoever Men may deal with us, let us not *be weary nor faint in our minds*: Our Reward is *sure* to us, though it be not *present*: In the mean time, Are the *Satisfactions* of a good Conscience Nothing with us? The *bright and cheerful* Reflections that we have done our
F
Duty,

SERM. II. Duty, and answer'd the Trust repos'd in us by God, and our *Superiors*, according to the Rank and Order in which the *Providence* of God has plac'd us? Every Man is able to contribute something towards the common Good of his *Country*, and the Support of his *Religion*; either by his own faithful Endeavours, or by his Advice and Encouragement, or at least by his Prayers; which, if he can do no more, God will accept of, and reward as much as all the rest: but if he can, and will not, his *Prayers* are *Hypocrisy*, his *Dependence* is *Vain*, and his *End* will be *Disappointment*. Let every Man then do the best he can, and leave the *Success* of all to God; And *then* whatsoever may be the *Issue*, 'twill not be so much his *Trouble*, because 'twas not his *Fault*.

How great Evils are coming upon us, what times of Suffering the Providence of God may have reserv'd us for, He knows best in his own infinite Wisdom. But, surely, we ought in Prudence to lay in the best *Supports* we are able, the best Stock of Comforts we can get together, against a *time*, when all will be *little enough* to sustain, and bear up our Spirits. But *now*, if it be through our own Negligence and Inadvertence, that we come to suffer, we, by this means, deprive our selves of one of the main *Pillars* of our *Support* in *Trouble*, and shall be ready to *bite* our *Tongues* with Anguish, and *vexation of spirit*, in the Day we come to *feel* the Evils, which, but for our own stupid Folly, might have been once *prevented*. If God *smite* *Jonah. 4.* *the gourd, that he has brought over us for our*
7, &c. *comfort*, because we would not *labour for it*, nor be at the pains to *make it grow*; how shall we
 be


be able to answer him, unless it be in such peevish Language, as *that* of his angry Prophet; which will be a fresh Aggravation of our Misery, and a new Enhancement of our Guilt. SERM. II.

And thus I have endeavour'd to consider the *Excuses*, that are most usual with Men in this Case, and to answer them by Arguments proper and peculiar to every one.

But there is one, besides all these, more general yet, and which reaches 'em all together, and which the *Wisdom* of God in *Solomon* makes use of in the *Text*, drawn from the Consideration, How little these vain Excuses will avail us in the Presence of *Almighty God*, when he comes to take Account of all our Actions: *If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not: Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

Does not he count all the *Wandrings* of our Steps, be they never so *secret*? Observe and weigh every *Prevarication* of our Spirits? *Sound* our *Corruptions* to the very *Root* of them? See through the *Frame* and *Temper* of every one of our Souls? Take *special* Notice upon what Principles we begin to move at any time, how we go on, and what Ends we drive at? And will not he *deal* with us according to his own *infallible Knowledge*, and not our *vain* and *hypocritical Pretences*? To what Purpose is it then for us to *walk* in the *Dark* for a little while, and to impose upon our selves, and the rest of the World, for a *few Days*, and by *shuffling*, and *tricking* with God, and our own Consciences, in the mean time, to betray

SERM. II. our Cause, and our Selves, to utter Ruine?

 When the Time is hastening upon us all, and not far off from any one of us; when all these false *Colours* shall surely fade, all these formal *Disguises* be taken off, and both our Actions and Principles pass under a severe Trial, and our whole Behaviour be scann'd and sifted to
 Pr. 13. 5. the *bottom*! How *loathsome* shall we then appear, *in that day*, when the Hand of Justice shall dragg us out of all our *holes*, and *lurking places*, into the Presence of the *Great God*, and his *Holy Angels*, with all our *Baseness*, and *Corruptions* about us! *We*, that cannot *now* bear a little Shame of the World, and of Men our *Fellow-servants*, and therefore seek thus to make
 Is. 28. 15. *Hypocrisy* our *Covering*, and *Lies* our *Refuge*: How shall we be blank'd and confounded, in that Day, to see all our close and wicked *Intrigues*, all our *Deeds of Darkness*, brought out into the full Splendor of *heavenly Light*, and before the whole *Universe* of Creatures! How much therefore does it concern us all, and of what infinite Consequence is it to every one of us, that we take care to behave our selves uprightly in all our *Ways*: without *Guile* and *Hypocrisy*; with all *Openness*, *Sincerity* and *Truth*; as in the Presence of our *Great Judge*, and *Searcher* of all our *Hearts*! That, when He shall approve, and acquit us in the *Last Day*, whatever we may have suffer'd, in the mean time, from the Hands of Men, for a good Cause, either in our Name, or Interest, or otherwise; we may *then* have the everlasting Praise, and Approbation of the whole World. But if He shall finally condemn us, whatever vain Applauses we may *now* give our selves, for our indirect Dealings,
 or

or receive from the vain World about us; we shall then, to our *eternal Shame*, be exploded and *hiss'd* off the Stage for ever. SERM. II.

Will it be *then* any Satisfaction to the Wisdom and Justice of our Judge, or any Comfort to our selves, when we have betray'd our Duty, and suffer'd Innocence, or a just and upright Cause, to sink under Injury and Oppression, for want of *putting to* our Hand, for its Deliverance and Rescue, for us to say *slightly* and *vainly*, before God and the Holy Angels, *that it was an error, Behold we knew it not, non putâram*, the Refuge of *Fools*, in whom he has *no pleasure*? When Men have destroy'd Themselves, their Church, and Country, by their *treacherous Dealing*; and have ruin'd one of the best Constitutions in the World, by their Coldness, and want of Zeal, not to say by worse Methods; What will they be able to answer for themselves! How will they *hold up* their *Faces* to God and us, in the Day of their own, and our Calamity! Will they plead *Ignorance* as their Excuse? Will they say, *Behold, we knew it not*; that they were not *aware* of it; that they could never have *imagin'd* once, Things would have come to this; and that they are now *sorry* for it? But have we not often *forewarn'd* them of the Danger of these Things! Have we not plainly *foreshewn* them, what would be the *Consequence*; *told 'em over*, and *over*, *what would come of it*, and they would not hear us!

I shall make no Reflections upon any body, but I pray God all those, that *have the Rule over us*, and by God's Providence are appointed the Watch-men over our *Holy Church*, and

SERM. II. should always stand upon her *Towers of Defence*, would in due time lay this to heart; *Psal. 48. 12.* Lest by too *forward* and easy Compliances, by vain Proposals and Overtures of *Reconciliation*, they admit an Enemy within the *Gates of Zion*, *Psf. 87. 2.* which afterwards 'twill be beyond their Power to *drive* out, or to *controul*; An Enemy, that shall *enter into her sanctuaries, break down all* *Psf. 74. 6,7.* *the carved work thereof with axes and hammers, and defile her holy places to the ground:* with rude and unhallow'd Hands, utterly *despoil* our *Church* of all its excellent Ornaments, and *Psf. 110. 3.* *beauty of Holiness*; and those, that preside over *it, themselves*, of all their Power, Honour, and *2 Cor. 10. 8.* *Authority*, which *Christ* has given them, for *edification, but not for our destruction.*

I shall now crave your Patience a *moment* longer, only just to mention the Necessity there is of a firm *Courage* and *Resolution* of Mind in those, that are intrusted, more especially, with the *Administration* of *Judgment*, and *Justice*: I shall do it in as few words as possible, that I may not seem to give Advice to my *Superiors*.

For, *My Lords*, I would not presume to question the *publick Wisdom*, by which You are appointed to this *High* and *Honourable* Office. And when we take upon us, at any time, to speak these things before You, 'tis not to tell *You*, and the *World*, what You *ought* to be, but what You *are*; Invested with an Authority of infinite Consequence to the Peace, and Happiness of our Church and State, and endued with qualities equal to the execution of it. 'Tis hardly possible for *us*, who live and act so far beneath You, to conceive, or apprehend the numerous Temptations
and

and Difficulties You are sure to meet with in **SERM. II.**
 Your *Highb Stations*; and which *indeed* require
 the most *invincible Courage* and *firm Integrity*
 of Mind. The Frowns, and secret Menaces of
 Men in Power: The Malice of the Crafty; the
 Pride, and Insolence of the Haughty; the Facti-
 ons of the Turbulent; the restless Cries, and Im-
 portunities of the Miserable and Afflicted (with
 many more such things, which we cannot think
 of) must all be prevented, or sustain'd by you in the
 steady Prosecution of your Office. When *cun-*
ning, and *ill* Men shall seek to pervert the *Law*,
 and to *turn aside* the Course of *Judgment*, they
 receive their Check from You. When a *great*,
 and *powerful Sinner* shall presume upon Impu-
 nity; when an *Honourable Thief*, or a *Right*
Worshipful Murderer, shall expect the *Law*
 should condescend to his *Quality*, and that God,
 and his *Vice-gerents* must deal with him as a
Gentleman, 'tis You that let him free from his
 Mistake, and let him *feel* by his *present* Sen-
 tence, what he must *expect hereafter*. And all
 this You are sure to be assaulted with from
without, besides what You are liable to feel
 from *within*, from your own *Bowels*, in the se-
 verer Part of Justice; from your own *good, ten-*
der and *merciful* Nature; which may sometimes
 betray a Man, if he does not take heed, to *wave*
 his Duty, when no Terrors could affright him,
 or Violence over-power him to *desert* it. And
 therefore God Almighty, by an express Pre-
 cept, thought it necessary to set a Guard upon
 this weak and softer side of our Temper, to
 prevent the Evils it might otherwise expose
 us to, and to cut off all Excuses for Commission
 of them. *Neither shalt thou countenance a poor* Exod. 23. 3.
man

SERM. II. *man in his cause*, was the direct Command of that *merciful God*, who professes himself, all along, in his Holy Word, to have *no more near and tender Respect* for any, than for the *poor and needy*. But so *very much*, we find, is he concern'd for the right Execution of *Justice* in the World, that no Pretence of Mercy in Men must presume to *triumph over it*: Though his own infinite Mercy does always so, (and 'tis well for us that it does so,) being founded at once upon infinite Goodness, and conducted by infallible Wisdom, which ours, we are sure, cannot be.

These, *My Lords*, and many more such Objections, incident to the Execution of your Office, render it a Matter of your *Fear*, rather than your *Ambition*: And all the *Honours*, that you receive from it, are too little to compensate the great *Charge*, and *Burden* you sustain under it: *Enough* to make a Man almost *tremble* to think of them; and to *justify* the Counsel of the *wise Man* in the highest *Import*, and to the utmost *Consequence* of it, *Seek not to be Judge*, being not able to take away iniquity, lest at any time thou fear the person of the mighty, and lay a stumbling-block in the way of thy uprightness.

What remains then, as the Conclusion of this *long Discourse*; But that *You*, and we, and all, by a faithful Discharge of our Duty in our several Degrees and Places, endeavour to engage the Protection of Heaven on our Side; and to draw down a Blessing upon our Church and Nation, *if it may be a lengthening of our tranquility*! To that end, that we be never *courted* from our Duty by any Favours, nor
frighted

frighted by any Terrors, of the World. Let **S E R M. II.**
 us arise therefore, and be of good Courage, at
such a time as this is more especially, and let
 us play the men for our people, and for the Cities
 of our God. Let us do our own Duty for the
 Defence of our Religion and Country; and
 leave the Success of all to God Almighty: Who
 can tell; but He will yet Bless us, and the Work
 shall yet prosper in our Hands? *If we find
 favour in his eyes,* He will either prevent our
 Sufferings, or, in his own good Time, remove
 them. And though He should suffer evil Men
 for a while *to ride over our heads,* and even to
 cast us out from God's inheritance: yet, we have
 found, He can by his Almighty Power bring us
 again; and shew us both it, and his holy habitation.
 But, if He now say thus unto us, *I have no de-
 light in you, behold here we are, let him do to us*
as seemeth good unto him. What can we do,
 but hide our faces in the dust, and confess with
 the deepest Humility, and Dejection of Spirit be-
 fore him; *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just art
 thy judgments!* 'Tis sure our Sins are great and
 numerous, and have deserv'd it from him: Our
 Profaneness and Hypocrisy, our Non-profici-
 ency under the best Means of Grace, in one
 of the best Churches, and under the purest
 Worship in the World; Our going off from
 our old Principles, and shuffling with our Con-
 sciences; Our trifling with Oaths, and bring-
 ing down the *high and holy name of God* to our
 own Vanity, to secure our present, little, in-
 considerable Interests; These things may have
 made Him see it Necessary, to let us pass through
 the *Furnace of Affliction* to refine us from our
 Dross. But let us return, and amend our Ways,
 and

2 Sam. 10. 12.

Esth. 4. 14.

Ps. 66. 12.

2 Sam. 14. 16.

2 Sam. 13.

15. 6.

Ps. 119. 137.

Is. 48. 10.

SERM. II. and still hope for Mercy. Or if He has otherwise determined concerning us, and the Hand of Justice must take hold of us, *Yet, O merciful God, chastise us in measure, we beseech thee, correct us with judgment, not in thine anger, lest thou bring us to nothing: Take the matter into thine own hand; we commit our selves unto thee; for very great are thy mercies; but suffer us not any more to fall into the hands of men.*

Jer. 10. 24.
46. 28.
1 Chron. 21. 13.

From whose Designs and Practices against us, of his infinite Mercies deliver us all, for Jesus Christ his sake: To whom with thee, O Father, and the Blessed Spirit, be ascrib'd all Praise, Honour, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

*The Church's Security, from the Providence of
G O D Defending Her, and the Goodness of
Her own Cause and Constitution.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd Before the

M A Y O R,

A N D

Corporation of O X F O R D,

A T

St. Martin's Church, on Monday,

November the Fifth, 1705.

The Third Edition.

ISAIAH LIV. 17.

*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;
and every tongue that shall rise against
thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn.*

THE Promise here made of a Divine Protection and Security from Evil, is immediately directed to the Church of God, against which, God assures *her* upon his infallible Word, and upon the Pledge of his infinite and uncontrollable Power, no De-
signs

SERM. III. signs or Practices of *her* Enemies should ever prevail, how well soever form'd and set together by the Rules of Policy, or the deepest Skill and Artifice of Malice. In all their secret Plots and Contrivances, and in their more Open and Violent Assaults, he tells us, he would be sure to disappoint them by the Might of his *own* Hand: And in their *more* refin'd, but not *less* malicious Methods of Proceeding against *her*, by the way of Cavil and Objection, Dispute and Controversy, *she* *her* *self* should be sufficiently able to Confute and Baffle them, by the Clearness and Evidence of *her* Truth: *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.*

And beyond these two things, if we consider them both together, the mighty Strength of *her* Defence and Preservation from *without*, and the firmness of *her* own Cause and Constitution *within*, there can be nothing else necessary to give us the utmost Satisfaction of *her* Continuance and everlasting Establishment.

To this purpose therefore God is pleas'd, from the 11th Verse of this Chapter, to display the full Force of both these Arguments for the Church's Security, as it relies upon *his* Providence, and *her* own internal Excellency; and to speak so great things of *her*, and in Terms of such high Importance, as imply the most glorious State of Perfection in the *Church*, that 'tis possible for any Constitution in this World to arrive to. Speaking to the *Church*, in the 11th and 12th Verses, by the way of Resemblance of *her* to a *Building*, (a Style
very

very frequent both in the *Old and New Testa-* SERM. III.
ment) he tell *her* thus, *I will lay thy stones*
with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with
Saphires; And I will make thy windows of
Agates, and thy gates of Carbuncles, and all
thy borders of pleasant stones; that is, he would
 spare no Cost or Charge about *her*, that every
 part of *her* Structure should have in it a due
 Proportion of Ornament and Strength, of
 Firmness and Beauty together: For this we
 know is the peculiar Excellency of those *pre-*
cious stones, that are here brought in by the
Prophet, as the choice *Materials* of *her* Com-
 position.

And because they are so, and for that the
 Church is here said to be *founded* upon, and
built up with them; hence we are enabled the
 better to understand what is here intended by
 this *figurative* way of Speaking, *viz.* *All*
 that divine Excellency of *Doctrine* and *Govern-*
ment, which are necessary and essential to the
 Church of God; upon which it was *at first*
 founded, and by which it must *always* stand.
 Which appears more evident yet from what
 follows in the *13th* and *14th* Verses, where
 the *Prophet* comes a little to explain himself;
All thy Children shall be taught of the Lord,
and great shall be the peace of thy children. In
righteousness shalt thou be establish'd.

Thus far then we see the *Prophet* repre-
 sents the Church's Security from *her* own *in-*
ward Strength and Constitution. In the two
 next Verses before the Text follows *her* Pro-
 tection from *without*, from the Power and Pro-
 vidence of God surrounding and guarding *her*
 on every side, from the Secret and Open At-
 tempts

tempts of those that hate *her*: *Behold*, says God in the 15th Verse, *They shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather against thee, shall fall for thy sake*: That is, he would certainly Blast and Defeat the Designs and Intentions of *her* Enemies, how strongly soever combin'd in their *Numbers*, or united in their *Counsels* against *her*. And for a Conviction to Men, that he was *able* to do all this, which he had declar'd he would do, *He* appeals, in the 16th Verse, to his absolute and irresistible Power, upon which all Creatures, even the most hurtful of them, Depend, not only for their Being, but their Power of Action: And therefore, to be sure, nothing could ever prevail to do Mischief beyond the Bounds and Limits that were set to it by *his Will*, and *high Permission*. *Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy*: There is no Artificer of Fraud or Malice, but proceeds upon a borrow'd Strength, and can go no farther than God will let him. The *smith that with the tongs worketh in the coals*, as this Prophet elsewhere expresses it, and *fashioned it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms*, must *fail and faint* in his Spirits, were it not for that God, from whom he derives the very Strength, which he abuses to the Instruments of Cruelty and Superstition; he depends, both for his Ability, and for his Success in his Work, upon a Power above him. And therefore where God has once made the Promise, the Church may rely upon him with a full Security,

rity, that *No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against her in judgment, she shall condemn.* SERM. III.

Which words, we now see, are a short Inference drawn from the joint Force of both the former Arguments; the watchful Providence of God over his Church, and *her* own sufficient Establishment; for that God is infinitely Powerful and Careful of *her*, therefore *No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper*: and because *she* is Established upon everlasting Grounds of Truth, *she* must prevail against all Expectations of *her* Enemies, and *condemn* and silence every tongue that shall rise against *her* in judgment, to Arraign *her* Truth and Innocence.

In Discoursing upon these words, I shall, *First*, Enquire how far the Promise of Protection, made to the Church in *general*, may be apply'd to our own in *particular*, and upon what Grounds we may hope for the Accomplishment of it to our selves.

Secondly, I shall endeavour to represent our former great Deliverances, by the Providence of God over us; and how fully God has acquitted his Promise to our Church hitherto, in defending us, both from the Designs, and against the Objections of our Enemies; and this with a more particular Regard to the Occasion of *this Day*.

Thirdly, I will shew how well qualified our Church is at present to Answer the Cavils and Reproaches of *her* Enemies against *her*, and upon what Conditions;
ON

A SERMON *Preach'd*

on our part, we may yet hope to be secur'd from their Designs.

I shall *First* enquire how far the Promise of God's Protection and perpetual Defence to his *Church in general*, may be apply'd to *our own in particular*; and upon what Grounds we may hope, through God's Mercy, for the Accomplishment of it to ourselves. And 'tis no more than necessary for me to make a *Distinction* in this case, because there is so great a *Difference* here to be observ'd between a Promise made to the *Catholick* or Christian Church in general, and the same when apply'd to any particular Church or Constitution whatsoever; and we can't depend upon the Performance of a Promise, when 'tis referr'd to this, or that, or any one part of the Christian Church, with the same Evidence and Certainty of Faith, that we may for God's continual Preservation of the Church it self. For his Engagement to the Church in general was this, that he would build it upon a secure Foundation, and preserve it by his Providence over it, and Presence in it, *to the end of the world; that the gates of hell should never prevail against it*, that is, no destructive Methods of the Enemies of the Christian Religion should ever prevail, to the final and universal Ruine of it; But that he would always keep up the Light of his Truth in the World, and take care, that whatsoever *darkness might cover the earth* and *gross darkness the people*, yet his Blessed Son should have always a *Lamp* before him in the World; always a Number of Men upon Earth, some where or other, professing

Is. 60. 2.

1 King. 15. 4.

fessing his holy eternal Truth. But then, **SERM. III.**
 that this Society of Men owning and pro-
 fessing the Faith of Christ should be always
 the very same, and confin'd to the same Place
 and Nation, he has given us no such infallible
 Security from his Word, that we know of; and
 we are sure, by the Event, it has been, some-
 times otherwise; and God himself has often
 threaten'd the contrary, and executed it for
 the Sins of Men; When he has *remov'd* his
Candlestick from a Nation, for their Abuse of Rev. 2. 5.
 the Light which he had given them; and
 translated his *Kingdom* from one People to an-
 other, that would *bring forth the fruits of it* Matth. 21. 43.
 in their Lives and Conversations. Where
 are now the Seven famous Churches of *Asia*,
 that were once the Glory of the Christian
 World! Has not God quench'd their Light,
 and put it out in *Obscurity*? Has he not with-Prov. 20. 20.
 drawn his more especial Presence from them,
 and given them up to be so far over-run with
 Ignorance, Barbarism, and Superstition, that
 there is hardly the Print of true Religion to
 be found amongst them! And does he not still
 suffer them to live under the Tyranny and
 Oppression of their Enemies, that rule over
 them with a Rod of Iron! So that what we
 now see and read in the *Prophecy* that went
before concerning them, in the *Revelation* of
St. John, seems to be only an *historical* Ac-
 count of the Evils they have suffered.

We see then, that God does not think him-
 self bound by his Faithfulness, or by Vertue
 of any Promise to the Church in *general*, to
 preserve any one *particular* Church, any longer,
 than it has those Conditions of Holiness and

SERM. III. Purity in its own Constitution, and in the Members of it, which he expects. He will indeed always have a Church in some place or other of the World, till the End of it: But whether our Church, or our Neighbours shall be that, or any part of it, must depend upon other Considerations yet, of the Nature and Quality of the Church it self, and the Behaviour of those Men that live under it. That there shall be some true Christian Church, as long as the World continues, he has absolutely promis'd, and 'tis but the just Reward of his Son's Sufferings, and *he* may claim it in the Right and Vertue of the Covenant between God and *him*; for he died to that End, that he might purchase *to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*. And therefore God has engag'd his own Truth to him, for the Certainty of the Event, that he may see *of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied*. But then, we can no otherwise pronounce our own particular Church at any time to be that, which he will always continue to preserve, unless we find, upon a just Enquiry, those Marks of a true Church in it, which we may hope will never fail: So that, in short, you see, the Promise of Protection made to the Catholick Church, as such, is *absolute*, and without reserve, founded only upon the Merits of our Saviour, and with respect to those alone: But the Promise to any particular Constitution is *conditional*, and must depend both upon the Nature of that Constitution, and upon our own Lives too, who are the Members of it.

Tit. 2. 14.

Isaiah 53. 11.

I shall therefore now endeavour to shew, that the *Church of England* has those Qualifications or Conditions in it, so far as concerns it self, as, through the Mercy of God, will always engage his Presence in, and Protection over it, if we are not wanting to our selves.

The Two great things, that go to make up the Nature of a Church, are *Doctrine* and *Discipline*, and therefore where these are found the best and purest, that Church in it self is, beyond all question, the most sound and excellent in its Frame and Constitution of any other in the World, and has the surest Title to the Divine Protection upon that account.

Now there is in the *Church of England*, and we may appeal to all the World for it, the greatest Purity of *Doctrine* and Worship possible; an exact Conformity between the Laws and Rules of our Religion, as it is establish'd amongst us, and the Religion of our Saviour, as we find it in the Gospel. The *Articles* of our *Faith* are most of them expressly asserted in very Words in the Writings of the New Testament; and the rest are deduced by plain and evident Consequence from thence: And the *Articles* of our *Church*, as it stands distinguish'd from any other, are, every one of them, laid out and fram'd according to the just *proportion of Faith*, the general Tenour of our Saviour's and his Apostles *Doctrine*. Is there any one thing, in the whole *Scheme* of our Religion, that we enjoin as necessary in its own Nature, which is not clearly so by the Laws of Christianity? Or do we corrupt the Gospel of our *Saviour*, by *wresting* it to

SERM. III. any false and violent Sense, either to serve our Interest, or disguise the Faults of our Practice? Do we deal with the Scriptures as the Church of *Rome* does? Do we either *conceal* or *cancel* any part of them, in order to reconcile it to our Vices, that so it may less thwart and oppose any erroneous Opinions or Customs amongst us?

He that shall look into the Rules of Faith and Manners deliver'd by the *Papists*, will find them overcharg'd with such Numbers of *unnecessary*, and therefore *unlawful* Articles; he will find the *Inventions* of Men bound upon the Conscience, under such impudent Pretences of a Divine Authority, when there is not *one word* to be found for them in the Holy Scriptures, but a *great deal* that makes against them; he will find the plainest Rules of Life and Practice, either so expressly deny'd, or clearly disappointed of their just Influence, by the false and impious Interpretations of their *Doctors*, that he must presently conclude the great Folly and Danger of that Religion to the Souls of Men, and that surely *in vain they do worship God, teaching for doctrines* such *commandments* as they do. They defeat the main Design of the Christian Faith, and render the only means of Grace almost utterly ineffectual, by mixing with it so many of their own Corruptions.

That we have *then* utterly renounc'd the Errors of these Men, and all others, and that we are clearly *gone out* from amongst them, and have reform'd our selves upon the true Model of all Religion, the Word of God himself, *is* and *ought* to be some ground of Comfort

fort to us, and an Encouragement to depend on God for our Defence and Preservation. For being the God of Truth, he will be the great *Patron* and *Protector* of it; and we can't but think him *there* to be more immediately concern'd for its Interest, *where* he finds it in the greatest Purity and Perfection: And therefore we may be sure that, unless the Sins of Men exceed, and provoke his Justice beyond measure, he will never suffer his own Cause to fall under the *Adversary's* Hand, to be either *undermin'd* by the secret Attempts, or to be *over-born* by the violent Assaults of Error and Superstition.

So much then for the *Doctrine* of our Church; and as for our *Discipline*, and the outward Circumstances of our Worship, even there, where 'tis left undetermin'd by the Word of God, and referr'd to the Prudence and Direction of our Church-Governours; yet 'tis all so full of Order and Beauty; so well adjusted to Men's Necessities, so wisely suited to express the inward Frame and Temper of Religion, and to assist and promote a true Devotion in the Hearts of Men; that if we judge not according to our Prejudices, but our *Reason*, we must conclude, that he, that is *the God of Order*, is highly pleas'd with it, and that he will be jealous of its Honour, and will stand up in its Defence himself, as he requires in us a just Zeal and Concern for its Support. For as there is nothing which the Providence of God is more concern'd for in the World, than the Practice of Religion, so there can be no Frame and outward way of Worship more agreeable to his Will than that,

SERM. III. which best serves the End and Interests of Religion. And therefore those Ceremonies, and that Worship, are certainly the best and purest, which tend to give us the most worthy Opinions of God, to create the most serious Awe and Reverence in the Hearts of Men towards him, and to teach Men how to express their inward Respect and Veneration, by a suitable Demeanour in his Presence.

I hope there is no need for me in this place, nor can I be expected, to go through the several Instances of Religion and Worship, in order to convince you both of the *internal* and *outward* Excellency of it. Those, that constantly attend the House of God, are better acquainted with *the Beauty of Holiness*, than that they should stand in need, upon every Occasion, to have it prov'd to them by long Arguments, which they can't deny. 'Twere easy otherwise to run through all the Doctrines of our Church, and shew the Agreeableness of every one of them to the holy Scriptures; and then to take each part of our Discipline asunder, and to prove its Conformity to the Word of God, or to the Practice of the purest and most primitive Ages of the Church, before ever *Popery* was heard of in the World; when Religion was at the highest pitch of Perfection, both in the Hearts of its Professors, and the Circumstances of its Worship. But these things 'tis sufficient for me to assert *now*, and not to prove; my Design being only to shew into what comfortable Consequences this one Truth of the Purity and Excellency of our Church might be improv'd; and what Strength of Argument might be drawn from
thence

thence to conclude God's more especial Providence and watchful Concern for the Preservation of a Church, which has so much of Perfection in the Frame and Constitution of it.

If we observe the method of the *Prophet's* Reasoning in the Verses before my Text, we find he infers the Promise and Title it has to God Almighty's Protection and Defence, as a just Consequence from those admirable Advantages of Truth and Beauty laid in the Foundation and Structure of it. *I will make thy windows of Agates, and thy gates of Carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones: and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children: And from hence it follows, No weapon that is form'd against thee shall prosper.* When the Church was arriv'd to that Perfection and Glory, which God himself design'd for it, and in which himself delighted, there should then be a *Defence upon all this glory*; and he would spread out the Arms of his Protection over it, as being a Charge more worthy of his more immediate Concern and Tuition.

Isaiab 4. 5.

We find in the Holy Scriptures, with what Reluctance God himself is represented to proceed, when the Sins of Men oblige him to desert, and extirpate a Church which himself had founded, more particularly in the 5th Chapter of *Isaiab*, where he is brought in under Expressions of the greatest Tenderness and Passion, expostulating with the *Jews*, why they would force him by their Disobedience to *pluck up and root out his own vineyard*, when he design'd the greatest Care and Kindness over it, and had taken all the Me-



Is. 5. 3. 4, 5.

thods possible for its Preservation and Continuance. But they had disappointed all by their Sins, and therefore he was *now* constrain'd, even contrary to his own Inclinations, to desert them, to break down the *hedge* of their Defence, and to leave them open to the Rapine and Violence of their Enemies. *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be troden down.* And tho' we have now no new Prophecies deliver'd us, every day, concerning the methods of his dealing with the Church on Earth; yet being himself always the same, we may be sure he observes still the same measures of Wisdom and Justice in his Dispensations towards it. And since we plainly find the Purity and greater Perfection of the Church's Constitution, in old times, to be a greater Argument for his Preservation and Deliverance of *her*, we must conclude the same *now*, with respect to any Christian Church at present, where the Purity of Religion shall prevail. The same tender Care for the Salvation of Men's Souls will incline and oblige the *Father of Mercies* to continue them in the Possession of the best Religion upon Earth, *our own*, till there is no Hopes left that Men will be the better for it, and till they render themselves utterly unworthy of the Blessings

sings they enjoy : And when they are *once* come to *such* an height of Iniquity as *this*, it then becomes Mercy in God to withdraw the means of Grace from them ; since, upon their want of Improvement under so excellent a Religion, it must only turn to their greater *Condemnation*.

I have now endeavour'd to shew you, how far we may depend upon the *general* Promise of Protection made to the *Church*, as it respects our selves in *particular* ; and by what measures we may judge of God's more especial Regard to, and Care over, any Constitution ; namely, as 'tis the best and purest in it self, and produces answerable Fruits in the Lives and Practice of Men.

I shall now go on, *Secondly*, to represent our *former* great Deliverances by the Providence of God over us ; and how fully God has acquitted his Promise *hitherto*, by defending us both from the Designs, and against the malicious Objections, of our *old Enemies of the Church of Rome* ; and *that* with a more *particular* regard to the Occasion of *this Day*.

'Tis well known, amongst those that have heard, or understand any thing of the History of our *Reformation*, what violent measures, and sly artifices of *Devilish Policy* were made use of, in those first and *perilous times*, either to keep us *always* in our Errors, or to bring us back *again* to them, by a Set of Men of the *loosest* Principles, and blackest Malice ; who regard Religion it self no further than as the Pretence of it will serve to gratify their own wicked Designs, and keep up the Pomp and Grandeur of their *Apostate Church*. For *Poper*y is a Religion, if it deserves that Name,
that

SERM. III. that strikes at the very Root of Christianity, and wounds it in the most *tender* and *vital* parts; bringing down the high and heavenly Doctrines of our *Blessed Saviour*, to serve a mere worldly *carnal* Interest, and to keep up an unjust Usurpation upon the Estates, Liberties, and Consciences of Men: A *Religion* whose *Godliness* is only *Gain*, whose Doctrines are *Sensual* and *Devilish*, whose *Devotion* is *Superstition*, and whose *Discipline* is *Tyranny*: Which endures no Restraints of Conscience, when they stand in Competition with present Interest and Power: Which indulges Men in a Life of Looseness and Sensuality, changing or reversing all the Sanctions of the Gospel; and evacuating the utmost Force of them, by accepting, instead of constant Holiness of Life, an easy Penance; and for the eternal Punishments of another World, denounc'd upon *every soul of man that does evil*, proposing only a slight Censure, or a Sum of Money.

And 'twas with these Men's Principles and Practices our Church has been *now* conflicting almost Two Hundred Years. And their Malice against us has been always heighten'd and enrag'd, by the greater Opposition there was still between them and us in Matters of Religion.

And as they never wanted Principles, so neither did they frequently Opportunities to our Ruine, had not the Hand of God himself interpos'd for our Security. When our Church at the Beginning of the Reformation was yet tender, and but a very *little Flock*, it was Forc'd however to grapple with a long-settl'd Usurpations of Prejudice, and against all the

Dis.

Disadvantages of an Enemy, arm'd with Ter- S E R M. III.
 rors, and fir'd with Revenge. How many
 Designs were still in hand, either by Fraud or
 Violence, to have overturn'd the *Church of
 England*, and to have stifled it in its very In-
 fancy! 'Twas compass'd in by Enemies on
 every side: *without were fightings, and within
 were fears*: Fears even from *those* who pre-
 tended to be *her Friends*, and yet were ready,
 upon any favourable Occasion, to have let in
 the Enemy upon *her* with all his Violence.
 And yet we see the invincible Strength and
 Firmness of *Truth*, however *naked* and un-
 arm'd with *temporal* Advantages, when sup-
 ported and sustain'd by the secret Aid and In-
 fluence of Heaven. How did our Church,
 in *those days*, stand firm in the midst of all the
 Floods of *her* Persecutors, pass safe through
 all their Attempts, and at the same time
 Triumph over all their Objections.

For neither did they fail in any supply of
Wit or Artifice of *Learning*, if any had been
 sufficient, to oppose the Truth, and to have
 supported Error. Almost all the Means and
 Opportunities of Learning were, at that time,
 in their Hands; and by a long Use and Pre-
 paration, they had Arguments ready upon
 every turn; and Industry enough to apply
 them with all Advantage. And yet even *then*,
 by the good Providence of God, there were
 found Men amongst us able to stand up in our
 Defence; to encounter our sharpest Enemies
 at their own *Weapons*; and to bear them *down*,
 by the Force of Truth, to their *Confusion*.

Such as this was the perpetual Contest for
 many Years; and notwithstanding our Adver-
 saries

SERM. III. *faries* were still the more whetted by constant Opposition, and had gone as far in the Researches of Learning, as 'twas possible for Men of the best Abilities, and greatest Application, of that time; yet God Almighty never left his Church without able Pillars to sustain *her*; and added more Strength, where the Weight was heavier, and the Exigence and Necessity of times requir'd it. So that even the *Jesuits* themselves, those refin'd Disputants, so well vers'd in all the *Shifts* and *Quirks* of Reasoning, have been forc'd to give out in their way at *last*; and silently to own the Burden too great for them, and their Cause too bad to be defended by such Methods. So far has the Promise of God, in the *Text*, been verified to our Church already; in that *She* surmounted all the Objections of *her* worst and most ingenious Adversaries, and condemn'd to Silence every tongue that rose in judgment to oppose *her*.

But when these Measures were entirely disappointed, there were other still succeeding, to undermine our Church, by the more subtle Arts of Policy, and deep Contrivances of *dark* and *hidden Designs*. And 'tis to these our *sure* and *fast* Friends the *Jesuits* have chiefly had Recourse of late, being less concern'd *now* for that mighty Reputation of Learning, *once* in their Order, if they can serve their own Cause, and confound their Enemies, by Arguments found much more effectual than Disputing; I mean, those very powerful Ones of *Fire* and *Fagot*; of Cruel *Massacres*; of Plots and Conspiracies against the Lives of Kings and their People: *one* of which

which well urg'd, and set home, has very often done them more Service in a Nation, than *fourty* Arguments from Reason. SERM. III.

And amongst the rest of these, the *Conspiracy* of this Day claims the Precedence of hellish Policy; and represents all their Skill in Ruine, and refin'd Arts in Blood and Murder, at one View. A Design hatch'd with so much Malice, so deeply laid, and so secretly carried on; so nearly effected, and of so wide and destructive an Influence if it had succeeded, that we may defy the Records of *former* Times to *shew* an Instance like it, or the utmost Villany of the present and future Ages to *contrive* one. A Design, that must have overturn'd our Constitution at one blow; laid all the Honour of our Nation in the Dust, at once; and have for ever prevented the means of our Recovery.

If we judge then of the Greatness of a Deliverance by the Greatness of the Danger we escape; it becomes us often in our private Thoughts, upon every Occasion, however always upon the grateful Return of this Solemnity, to render our highest Tribute of Praise and Thanks to the God of Heaven, for this so great a Blessing, that so very nearly concerns us *still*; the Influence of which we feel all of us at this very Day; since without it we should either, most of us, not have been at all, or have been always miserable. And now we are all well and happy this Day, and rejoicing under the Protection, and in the Sense and Influence of God's Mercy; *For which thy name, O God, be prais'd from generation to generation. The fathers shall tell the children and declare*

SERM. III.



Psalm, 46. 2, 3.

declare thy truth. For is there a nation under heaven, that has God so near to them for their defence and safety, as this great and happy people; Happy if they know their own Happiness, and have the Hearts to give God the Praise and Glory for it! He is the rock of our defence, and the God of our salvation; Therefore will we not fear though the earth be moved; and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof rage and swell; and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.

And so I come to the *Third* and *Last* part of my Discourse, to shew how well qualify'd our Church is at present to answer the Cavils and Reproaches of *her* Enemies, and how we may *still* hope to be secur'd from their Designs.

And this I take to be very pertinent to the Aim and Intendment of my Text, which is not levell'd at the Church's Enemies of any one *particular* Strain or Denomination: but reaches out a Promise of Protection and Security from their Attempts and Objections against *her* in all Ages. I shall mention those however, that have the nearest Relation to this present Time of our *Solemnity*; and which, though we have answer'd them never so often before, by Arguments drawn both from our Principles and Practice, are yet *still* produc'd and urg'd against us, by some Men, in order to their own Designs; when, at the same time, they themselves are, or ought to have been, entirely convinc'd, both of the utter Vanity and Slander of them: And they are these that follow;

That our Church is *Popish* in its Ceremonies
and

and Discipline; and that those Men, who stand up with the greatest Zeal in her Defence and Vindication, are *Popishly* inclin'd, and affected to a *Popish* Interest.

As to the *Former* of these, one would have expected, after so many laborious *Tracts*, written on purpose to vindicate our Church in this Point by Men, who many of them themselves suffer'd in their dearest Interests, and some of them in their very Lives, for their Opposition to *Popery*, that surely this Objection should have been now quite out of Doors; and that, though Men might have retain'd the same ancient *Malice* still against our Church as ever, yet they might, in *Prudence*, have spar'd themselves the *idle pains* of attacking it by a Weapon, that had lost all its Edge and Force against us so long ago. 'Tis not possible for me, in a Discourse of this short Compass, to pass through the long Stages of this Controversy in all its parts; it may be sufficient only to refer Men to some of these substantial *Treatises* written in our Defence upon this Subject, with so much Clearness, and Strength, and Force of Argument, that we have never known them yet answer'd to any purpose; and we are sure they never can be. Those that I shall mention are, Bp. *Jewel's Apology for the Church of England*, and Mr. *Hooker*, and Mr. *Chillingworth's* Books; the *last* of whom was treated with all the Rudeness and Insolence by the *Faction*, both in his * Person and † Memory, for no other

* See *Ld. Clarendon, Book VIII. p. 365, 6.* † By Cheynell at his Burial, See Cheynell's *Account of Mr. Chillingworth's Sickness, Death, and Burial, especially his Speech at his Funeral.*

SERM. III. Reason so much, that we can think of, unless 'twas, because he had so effectually prevented and weaken'd their old Charge of *Popery* against the *Church of England*, by vindicating her so very clearly and powerfully from any Imputation of that Nature. And to those Men, who, after all the Pains and Travel of these great Men I have here nam'd and others, the most learned in the World, will have the Courage, or the Impudence, still to be suggesting this old thred-bare Cavil against us, I think it necessary at present to make no other Reply than this general one; That almost every Usage of any Consequence, enjoyn'd at present by the *Church of England* in her Service, is to be found in the ancient *Liturgies* and *Histories* of the Primitive Church; long before ever *Popery* came to prevail in the World, or the Church of *Rome* was known for its Corruption*.

But then, as for the other Objection against us, That Church-men, in the Zeal they shew for the Church, have ill Designs, and are affected to a *Popish* Interest; this is a Cavil indeed of a more modern Date, and fresher Stamp, and fit to spring up in an Age so very corrupt as this, and so utterly lost to the true Spirit and Temper of Religion. We may remember however, how much Service this Cry of *Popery*, against the true Defenders of the Church, did those ill Men, whose Design was nothing less than to overturn it in the Beginnings of the last great *Rebellion*: And, when they urge it against us now, upon no

* And for any Man's more thorough Satisfaction in this point: let him consult L'Estrange's Alliance of Divine Offices.

more Reason, and with the same or greater SERM. III.
Violence, than they did even *then*, in those
worst of Days; when all Men saw, by the sad
Consequences, *what* they had been all along
driving at; I would only ask, whether it may
not give us some Suspicion, that there is a
Race of Men in the World taking their Aims,
by the same means, at the same *Blessed Ends*,
their Forefathers once accomplish'd; to the
utter Subversion of our Constitution, both in
Church and State.

But how *unreasonable* are Men in these ma-
licious Suggestions against us, *for ever*! What
greater Evidence could possibly have been
given at any time, that the Members of the
Church of England are at the greatest Distance
from any *Popish* Inclinations, than what we
have already given them? Have we not taken
all the Oaths to the *Queen's Majesty*, and
the present Settlement, that were requir'd of
us? And I am sure, they are bound in Charity,
and by the Laws of Christianity, to think we
have done it with a good Conscience, and
thorow Satisfaction to our Selves, till they can
prove we have not; which we hope they never
will be able. And yet after all, *still* we must be
Popishly affected!

If Arguments from Reason and Charity
will not satisfy them, let us come now to
History, and the Experience of *former Times*.
Who, but the *Church of England*, and her
best and most zealous Members, in a *late un-*
happy Reign, when *Popery* was just rolling in
upon us like a mighty Deluge, stood up with
that Strength and Bravery to oppose its Pro-
gress, and were the great *Banks and Shores* to

S E R M III. break the Violence and Fury of it? When the Dissenters, (to their eternal Shame and Conviction be it spoken) paid all their Addresses and Complements to the *Government*, and its Proceedings; and accepted many insinuating Favours from it, which the *Church-of-England-men* refused, upon Principles of Conscience. But these Good-men! (notwithstanding their seeming Stiffness against *Popery* at other times) could then comply to any thing, if they could but lessen the Church's Esteem and Authority by it; and come *Popery*, or whatever else, were very easy and well pleas'd, and carefs'd themselves in their own Priviledges, only to see us, of the *Church of England*, beneath themselves.

I shall not here insist, that almost all those noble Defences, that were written against *Popery* in those times, were done by the Hands of Church-men; all besides Three *cold Pamphlets*, that *stole* out as it were in *Moon-light*, as if their Authors had been ashamed of them, and perhaps they had some reason. But I will not urge this any longer as an Objection against these Men, that they wrote no more against *Popery* in those Days, for it may be they were not able; I am sure 'tis an Argument of our Charity for them, if we think so.

But then besides, Did not many of us actually suffer in our Resistance of *Popery* at that Time? In this great and learned Body of our own *University*, was there not one whole Society turn'd out of all their Interests, for their brave Defence of their Religion, and a good Conscience? And all the rest were prepar'd in Mind and Will to undergo the same,

little

little less than *fiery Trial*, upon the same Reason. At *that* Time, Men that had no great Kindness for us before, even our worst Enemies; were *asham'd*, and *convinc'd* that we had no mixture of *Popery* in our *Principles*, when they saw our *Practice* so clearly prove it beyond all Question. And *why* is this Argument in our Behalf, so soon forgotten in these Days? And *why* must Church-men still be arraign'd as *Papists*? when the *Papists* themselves will own, they met with no severer Checks and Opposition to their Proceedings, than from the best Members of the *Church of England*.

Will nothing satisfy the endless Jealousies and Suspicions of Men? Will they never believe us that we are no Friends to *Popery*, that we are at the greatest Abhorrence to, and Distance from it, and are ready to undergo any thing rather than comply with it? Will Men never be perswaded that we are willing to suffer *again*, unless they see us do so? And to see *this* indeed might perhaps serve to gratify their *Malice* against us; but, I am sure, there is nothing wanting, without it, to satisfy their Reason.

I could say a great deal more on this point, but I must hasten to a Conclusion: And if what has been already said, be not sufficient to put them, in some measure, out of Countenance with this Objection of *Popery* against us, 'tis to be fear'd that nothing will: And therefore 'tis to no purpose indeed to dwell any longer upon this Argument.

And since there is so much Reason on our side, against the Objections of our Enemies,

SERM. III. we may still hope to be secur'd from the *De-*
signs and *Practices* of evil Men against our
 holy Religion, if we are not wanting to our
 selves; if we don't desert and leave our ex-
 cellent Church in these evil Days, nor suffer
 our *Love* towards it to *wax cold*, by reason of
 that great *Iniquity*, with which these Times
abound; if we continue to possess our Minds
 with a just Value and Esteem for our holy
 Faith; if we maintain a firm and unshaken
 Zeal for it in our Hearts, and be ready to ex-
 press it, upon all Occasions, in our Words
 and Actions, by a just and vigorous Defence
 of our Religion. Otherwise, the Goodness
 of God will never think it self concern'd to
 secure us in the Continuance of a Church a-
 mongst us, though never so good a one, if we
 our selves despise it, and judge our selves un-
 worthy of the great Advantages we enjoy:
 For he has no Delight in slothful Men, but will
 suffer those Evils to overtake them, which
 they fear; and from which, tho' their very
 Hearts tremble at the Apprehension of them,
 yet they will not so much as reach out their
 Hands for their own Security.

Above all, let us be sure to add to our Zeal
 for our Religion, the Virtues and Graces of
 a pure and holy Life; for these will be our
 best Security from Evil, and will fight for us
 more than *an armed Man*. They will most
 effectually silence the Calumnies and Igno-
 rance of our Enemies, and engage the firmest
 Protection of Heaven on our side. Let us be
 careful therefore to *Add to our faith* and Zeal;
 2 Pet. 1. 5, 6. *vertue; and to vertue knowledge; and to know-*
ledge temperance; and to temperance patience;
 and

November V. 1705.

117

SERM. III.

and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity; for if these things be in us and abound, they will make us that we shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the best Means of Grace, and the purest Religion in the World.

And may God Almighty give us all Grace, at least in this our day, to know the things that belong to our Peace, before they are for ever hid from our Eyes, for Jesus Christ his Sake: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be given all Praise, Honour and Glory, throughout all the Churches of the Saints, now and for evermore. Amen.

*The sins and vices of men's lives, the chief
cause of their Ignorance, and Corrupt
Opinions in Religion.*

A
S E R M O N

*Preach'd before the
Univerfity of Oxford,*

December 11th 1709.

The Second Edition.

J O H N III. 19.


*—Men lov'd darkness rather than light,
because their deeds were evil.*

IN the former parts of this Chapter our Blessed Saviour had been discoursing with *Nicodemus* upon some of the most fundamental points and articles of our Religion, of the nature, design and advantages of the Gospel he came to publish to the World, and of the means of mens admission into it. And how *Nicodemus* receiv'd and entertain'd doctrines of this sublime and heavenly nature, we are inform'd in part, and may guess at the rest, by the exception he took, and the objection he made to our Saviour's argument at his very first entrance on it: *How can a man be born again,* says *Job. 3. 4 9.* he, *and how can these things be?* Our Saviour however goes on with his discourse to him on these Subjects, and about the conclusion of it, comes
and

and assigns a reason, not only why this *ruler of Jews* found it so hard to submit his Faith to embrace the Gospel, but why really it should ever make so little progress, and meet with such constant opposition from the World; and that was indeed, because of the lusts and sinful inclinations of men, which would be sure to stand up and make head against it as an *enemy* that came to give them causes of disquiet; though 'tis certain 'twas design'd by the mercy of God, as the sovereign and utmost remedy for the corruptions of mens *nature* and the *miseries* of their condition. But whatever the Gospel might be in it self, or whatever design it came about, yet as long as men were under this fatal *slumber* from their sins, they would not care to be *awaken'd* out of it, and would either turn away their heads, or endeavour to remove at a distance from them, any *light of truth*, that should come to break in upon; and molest them under the present *easy*, though *evil* posture of their souls. *Men lov'd darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.*

By *darkness* in these words we are not to understand mere *ignorance*, but *error* likewise, not only a bare *privation* or *absence* of *truth* and *knowledge*, but the *presence* of it's contrary *falsehood*, indeed any thing that stands in opposition to *light*, that *wholsome Metaphor* under which the doctrine of our B. Saviour and his Gospel are here represented.


The design and sense of these words of my text may be very well drawn into, and compris'd under this one easy proposition, which shall therefore be the Subject of my following discourse, namely, That the reason of that re-

SERM. IV.  reluctance men have, and that resistance they make against the *laws* and *doctrines* of *Christianity*, is from their own vicious *lusts* and *inclinations*, which would either keep them in utter ignorance of their faith and duty, or dispose them, if that might not be done, to corrupt and pervert the doctrines of the Gospel, in order to render them more compliant and less offensive to their loose and sinful practices.

In the pursuit of this doctrine I shall in the *first* place endeavour to lay before you the reasons whence it comes to pass that men are thus in love with *darkness*, that they will either not see the rule of their duty, or will endeavour to pervert the right sense of it, to *bend* it to a more easy *compliance* with their lusts; and thus our *Saviour* informs us, *men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

Secondly I will consider how many ways men thus express this their love to darkness, and by what methods they proceed thus to deceive and mislead themselves in the great concerns of Religion.


And *First*, my design is to *represent* the reasons, whence it comes to pass, that mens sins, their lusts and vicious habits are apt so far to darken and abuse their minds, that they either chuse not to see their duty, or apply themselves to confound and corrupt the truth, in order to make it more easily comport with their evil inclinations. To which one productive principle, I may be bold to say, almost all the poisonous opinions and heresies, that either in the former ages of the Church, or in these later days have struck at the foundation and purity of the Christian faith, do owe their rise and original.

original. 'Tis from the lives and practice of S E R M. IV.
 men that generally those *filthy steams* arise, 
 which thus *cloud* and *overcast* their understand-
 ings, and give so strange a *turn* and *determi-*
nation to their very *thoughts*; so far, that if we
 observe what course and train of actions a
 man has for some competent time pursued, we
 may give more than a guess to what opinions
 he leans, and how he stands affected as to the
 notions of his duty. The first acts indeed and
 beginning of any habit take their rise and
 model from the thoughts, but when the course
 of action once comes to be fix'd, and attended
 with delight and pleasure, then it begins to
 act by a *backward influence* upon the thoughts
 themselves, and to fix or change them accord-
 ing to the present *stream* of *habitual inclination*:
 Men come to *think* in time as they *wish*, they
 wish according to their *inclinations*, they derive
 their *inclinations* from *moral habits*, and these
 are produced by *frequency* of *acting* any way,
 whether good or evil. But I shall now set my
 self more immediately to shew what *influence*
 and *tendency* a *corrupt* and *vicious practice* has
 to incline men either to *reject* or *oppose* the
 true Religion, and for what reasons.

First, because the *light of truth* would dis-
 cover to an ill man the baseness and deformity
 of sin and vice, and make him a *terror to him-*
self, by representing him in his own true co-
 lours, under all the corruptions and filthiness
 of his present state; *and this he desires not to see.*

Secondly, 'twould convince him of the great
 danger of his present course, and by conse-
 quence of the necessity of reforming it, which
 cannot be done, he imagines, without great
 trouble,

SERM. IV. trouble, and therefore desires not to think of it.


 Thirdly, it would take off the edge of his relish, and abate the eagerness of his inclination to his present unlawful interests and pleasures, and *these he cannot endure to part with.*

And First the *light of truth* would represent him truly to himself, which would be a *terrible* sight indeed, and therefore all possible care must be taken that so troublesome a guest be not admitted. Therefore 'tis, our Saviour tells us in the words immediately after my Text, *that he hates the light, neither comes to the light, he dares not approach it, lest his deeds should be reprov'd,* and made appear to be really what they are. For there is indeed so much *modesty* still left even in the most corrupt and deprav'd natures, from a secret principle of shame that God has *hid* within the consciences of men, that let a man be at never so much *pains* with himself, he can never thoroughly reconcile sin and vice to his own reason and private approbation. 'Tis true he may by a *clamorous* and *tumultuous* way of life, and by the advantage of his outward state and fortune make a shift to get above the opinions of other men, and perhaps *boast* and vaunt himself openly that he can *do mischief*, and so for a while drown and silence the reflections of his own mind, in the height and hurry of his passion. But upon the first occasion, in the *calm* and *cool* of the day, his thoughts of his own evil doings then return upon him with a redoubled force, fill him with a silent *confusion*, and smite him with a secret sting which he cannot *bear*. And after he has been a long time *labouring* with *his sin*, and at last *brought forth* his *iniquity*, after all
his

his pains and *uravel* in evil, he presently turns S E R M. IV. and starts at his own *production*, and would willingly disown it, and fly from it, and even from himself, from the rebukes and censures of his own mind. And therefore when the convictions of religion and conscience come thus to press him hard, he *chuses* by all means to *strangle* his reason and thought, and to *overwhelm* all sober *Reflections* that meet him, in any foolish or absurd Diversion how bad soever, that will any way promise to sooth his Pain, or stupify his present Sense of it. Which is a very strong and convincing Argument, by the way, that the distinction of Vice and Vertue are laid a great deal deeper than in the mere Opinions of Men; and that they do not, according to a late sort of *wild Philosophy*, depend upon the *arbitrary Custom and Constitutions of Mankind*, but that the ground of our Perception of the vast Difference between them, is *interwoven* in our Nature, and *wrought* into the Frame and Constitution of our Being. This seems to appear if from no other Argument, yet sufficiently from hence, from that wonderful *agreeableness* that Actions of Piety and Vertue have to the best Sense and Relish of Men's Minds, and the disagreeableness of the contrary, and the utter *abhorrence* that our Nature carries in it to Sin and Vice: So far, that a Man cannot, by all his Artifices, upon cool Thoughts, *avoid* or *overcome* the shame and upbraidings of his own Reason, that attend a loose and wicked Course of Life. Upon this account therefore a state of Sin must ever be an irreconcilable Enemy to the knowledge of God's Will and Law, in as much as this would
bring

SERM. IV. bring out the Sinner to his shame, into clear and open Light, and leave him Defil'd and Loathsome in his own Eyes. And therefore he thus endeavours to shut them as fast as he can, and is willingly Ignorant of the Rule of his Duty, which he has so often and so heinously broken. For though he may have learnt by the *deceitfulness of Sin*, to pass a Cheat upon the World about him, who cannot see his Thoughts, nor look into the *rottenness* of his Heart, yet when the *Scourge of God's Law* sounds in his Ears, and the *Book of Life* lies open to the view of his Mind, he *trembles in secret*, and durst not behold, and therefore seeks to draw a veil of Ignorance or Error before his Eyes, that he may not be forc'd to condemn himself to his own Confusion. And by this means, tho' against his Will, he gives the strongest Evidence and Testimony to the *Word of God*, that can be, which yet he refuses to acknowledge: By his own behaviour he proves it to be *quick and powerful, and*

Heb. 4. 12. *sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow, and that 'tis a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* And if he would but look sufficiently into it, he is too sensible it would present him with a sight too Terrible for him to behold, of all his base and *treacherous Dealings* with the great God and Author of his Being, and best Benefactor of his Life; 'twould bring to his Remembrance from what he is fallen, that he has stain'd and polluted the Dignity of his Nature, and sunk himself into a Condition worse than that of a Beast, and force him to lament and bewail him-

himself in the *Dust*. 'Twould search and try **SERM. IV.**
 his heart to the bottom, and leave no corner of 
 Corruption in it undiscried. It would rip up
 all his Base Designs, and unmask his Hypocri-
 tical Pretences, and make the thick *scales* of
spiritual blindness drop from off his Eyes, that **Acts 9. 18.**
 he might see his own Vileness and Misery,
 with a clear and uninterrupted view. And
 such Thoughts, and such a View as this, he
 cannot bear, because 'twould sink his Courage
 to the Ground, and put him to utter Disgrace
 with, and in Detestation of himself for ever.
 This, this would be the case of every grievous
 Sinner, could he come to a right sense of his
 Condition. And because it would be so, and
 he suspects it would, on that account he so
 carefully avoids the *light*, or, which comes to
 the same, endeavours to *quench* and *stifle* it. 'Tis
 for this Reason that the Apostle brands the Sin-
 ful Actions of Men under the *dismal* Title of
works of darkness, not only because *darkness*, is **Ephes. 5. 11.**
 most properly the Principle from whence they
 flow, inasmuch as all Sin whatsoever proceeds
 from a *present* blindness and inadvertency of
 Mind, but upon this account more especially,
 because *Darkness* is the proper *Region* and *Co-*
vering under which such Works would, if
 'twere possible, lie conceal'd for ever; and
 even escape the Eyes and Thoughts of those
 that do them. So far then is a sinful Life a
 Friend to *darkness*, in that *light* is the greatest
 Enemy it can have, making all its *Spots* of
Pollution appear, and reflecting the greatest
 Dishonour and Reproach upon it.

But then *Secondly* the *Light* of *Divine Truth*,
 the Principles of *Religion* and *Conscience*, would

CON-

SERM. IV. convince a Wicked Man likewise of the infinite Danger of his present Course, and by consequence of the Necessity of Reforming it; and this cannot be done, he thinks, without great trouble, and therefore desires not to be disturb'd about it. Which, one would think, should be a strong and powerful Argument on the contrary, that because he *at least* suspects himself in so much Danger, he should therefore be the more concern'd before it is too late, to look out for the means of its prevention. But we are not to expect that a Man enslav'd under the Power and Dominion of Sin, should act reasonably in any matters, that relate to his Spiritual Condition. Habits of Sin and Vice do, both by a natural and judicial Consequence, so Blind and Infatuate the Minds of Men, that they go perfectly the Reverse to the Principles of Reason and Nature, and take the nearest Method to their *Ruin*, while they think they are providing most for their own *Security*. 'Tis impossible otherwise, that a Man of common Understanding, and in whom the Principle of *Self-preservation* is not quite Extinct, should chuse, only for his *present Ease*, not to apprehend a Danger, which, unless he does, is a little after Irrecoverable; the sad Consequence of which, he must *Feel and Rue* for ever. But when we go on to consider the Matter a little more nearly, we shall find wherein 'tis this strange power of Sin, to deceive Men in a Matter of such infinite Consequence, lies; and what 'tis that thus Betrays them to their Ruin.

This is the Fatal *Snare* of Sinners, the Secret *Gin* that takes them by the Heel, and retains

tains them in *darkness*, the strong Suspicion SERM. IV. that lies at the bottom of their Hearts, that if they once come to look throughly into the Business of Religion, into the Punishments and Terrours it *denounces* to Disobedience, they shall *then* be no longer able to hold up their Faces, or justify their Practices with any Courage; or with any appearance of Reason, be able to Account to themselves for their own *Proceedings*. And that every *Sin* they commit, after a thorough Conviction of their Danger, will be an Eternal Blot upon the *Reputation* of their *Wisdom*, and be constantly checking and upbraiding them with their own desperate Madness and Folly. And this obliges the Sinner, in pursuance of his *secret* and *stedfast Resolution*, not to change the Course of his Life; to look as little into the Rules and Doctrines of Religion, and to be as little acquainted with the *Arguments* and *Representations* of another World, as may be. For, under the *force* and *power* of such Convictions, there is no way left to escape the severe *Lashes* of his own Thoughts, the constant and *cutting Reproaches* of his Reason, but by entering upon new Resolutions, and *taking up at once*, and changing the whole Course and Tenour of his Practice. But this, he concludes, is attended with so much difficulty, there are so many *Lions* of masterly Lusts and beastly Inclinations to be encounter'd with *in the way* of his Duty, that he can never expect to be a *match* for, or hope to overcome them; and therefore chuses to lie down *tamely* in his present Pollutions, and that he may do so *quietly*, turns his face to the wall, from seeing the heavy Judgment that

Prov. 26. 13.

SERM. IV. that awaits him, and which he is *infinitely* *jealous* will shortly take hold of him in another World. This is the fatal influence of Sin, that it robs a Man, first of his Virtue and Innocence, and then enfeebles all the powers of his Soul, and quite *dashes* all Resolutions of Recovery. But remember and shew your selves men, bring
Isaiah 46. 8. it again to mind O ye transgressors! Where is that vigorous manly principle of Spirit and Resolution which God has put within your Breasts? Awake from this deadly slumber, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you
Eph. 5. 15. light. A beam of that light from heaven struck upon the Soul, will pierce it through; will rouse and quicken a Man, even under this senseless benumn'd Condition of his Spiritual Estate.

Another great hindrance of Men's enquiries into the matters of Religion is, *Thirdly*, this, that a quick and lively Sense of these things, of the Powers and Arguments of *another World*, would take off the Edge of their Relish, and abate the Vigour of their Inclination to what they only value, the present unlawful Pleasures and Interests of this Life; and *these* they cannot endure to think of parting with. And so far these Men are certainly in the right, that a due Knowledge of, and a thorow Acquaintance with their Duty, would effectually cool and allay that distemper'd Heat of their Desires, with which they pursue the sinful Enjoyments and Pleasures of this World; for this is indeed their Disease, and Religion is design'd on purpose to remove it. But then this surely ought to be no Objection against Religion, but against themselves; For why
 are

are they not better inform'd, as they might be, SERM. IV. with a little care, of the Pleasures that are to be had in exchange, in the way of their Duty, of an infinitely more refin'd and excellent Nature than those of Sense. And therefore to *stick* and *cleave* so eagerly to these, to the prejudice, or forfeiture of those that are so far more desirable, is the greatest instance of Weakness, and making a *foolish Bargain*, that can be, which yet these Men are so much afraid of being censur'd for.

'Tis as if a Man should be fond of a *Feaver*, and not care to part with it, because it gives a *sharp* and *quick Relish* to his present *Draught*: When those that stand by, and know the Pleasures of Health, would only take such a Man to be so much farther gone in his Phrensy, and therefore conclude, that he stood in need of a more immediate Care, and present Remedy.

But whatever *Religious Men* may think; or *Wise Men* may argue of the Pleasures of another World, yet when the *gust* and *relish* of Mens Minds comes once to be deeply deprav'd, by a long Train and Course of sinful Enjoyments, nothing that can be said will ever come near, or touch the Heart of such a *Sensualist*; all the Inclinations of his Soul draw one way, and nothing shall find admittance to his Thoughts, but what comes to gratify him in his own *Sense*, and brings him Advice how to satisfy his present worldly Lusts and Interests. His Desires run all *gross* and *dreggy*, and he has no more Apprehension of, or Affection for any other Goods, but those that lie before his Senses, than a *Blind Man* has of *Colours*; or

I any

SERM. IV. any other sense of an Object that is *unproportion'd* to it by Nature.

Now *allowing* this *Man's Principles*, that there is nothing *better for a Man* indeed, than
 Eccles. 8. 15. *to eat and drink and to make his soul enjoy sensual Pleasure*, he is certainly much in the right in his *Conclusion*, that the restraints of Religion would only breed Disturbance to him, and therefore are not to be allow'd Access, because they would pretend to confine and cramp the Man in the pursuit of what he thinks his supreme Good and only Happiness; but therein lies his desperate and irrecoverable Mistake.

Religion commands a Man, in prospect of a Bliss, at present invisible, to subdue and kill his worldly Lusts, and to tear the dearest Objects of Affection from his Heart, whenever they come to be inconsistent with his Duty;
 Matt. 5. 29. *to pluck out a right eye, and to cut off a right*
 Colos. 3. 5. *hand, and to mortify all our members upon earth,*
 2 Cor. 7. 1. *and to cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, in expectation of, and in dependence upon Promises hereafter, which will have no Completion in this World. And can such Arguments as these take hold of a Man whose Mind is entirely Earthly and Sensual? 'Tis impossible they ever can in his present state, and lest perhaps they should hereafter, he is resolv'd to keep them off at a Distance from his Thoughts, and to give the powers of*
 Heb. 6, 5. *the world to come no Advantage upon him, by a nearer Conversation within the reach of their influence; since they come to robb him of his present Satisfaction, and he neither knows, nor desires to be acquainted with any better. This is the true state of the Case, and these*

these that I have mention'd are the Reasons, SERM. IV.
 that, to their own infinite Unhappiness, keep
 off ill Men from an acquaintance with those
 Things, which it most of all concerns them
 to know and consider *well*, the great Truths
 of Religion, and their own indispensable Obli-
 gations to Obey them. I have almost only
 mention'd these things, it not being so agree-
 able to my present Argument to stand long to
 expose the Absurdity of them; and then *this*
 is so very Clear and Evident upon the slightest
 Reflection, that there is no need of doing so.

I now proceed in the *Second* place, to shew
 after what *Manner*, and in what *Instances*
 more especially, Men express this their love
 to *Darkness*, which our Saviour here so se-
 verely charges them with, in my Text, and
 by what Methods they proceed to Deceive and
 Abuse themselves, in the great Concernments
 of Religion: And these in general (to which
 the rest may be reduc'd) are Two,

First, by keeping themselves under a *gross*
 and *affected Ignorance* of the Doctrines, and
 Obligations of Christianity; or,

Secondly, by a *corrupt and perverse Interpreta-
 tion* of them; and so disappointing them in their
 main Design, the Reformation of Mens Lives.
 And this latter I call *Error* in contradistinction
 to *Ignorance*, which is the mere absence and
 privation of Truth, and supposes no deter-
 mination in the Mind, one way or the other,
 either for, or against a Thing; but *Error* is a
 great deal more, and implies something of a
positive Nature, to wit, wrong resolutions of
 Judgment and Opinion, about those Things
 that are the Subject of our Thoughts.

SERM. IV. And *First*, Men express what our Saviour here stiles their *love of darkness*, by keeping themselves under a gross and voluntary Ignorance of the Affairs of Religion: Which by sad Experience we may be convinc'd 'tis possible for Men to do, even in a Christian Community, where yet the Doctrines of Religion are perpetually press'd and inculcated, and where even, as the *Prophet* expresses it, *The whole*
Isaiah 11. 9. land is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; where Instruction abounds, and where Wisdom and Understanding, in the Language of the Wise Man, utter their
Prov. 1. 20, 21. voice in the streets, and meet a Man almost at every corner, in the chief places of concourse, and in the opening of the gates: Yet even under all these Great and Numerous Advantages of Knowledge, how many Men pass on their whole Lives under a supine negligence of Spirit, without ever coming to a true Information of Religion and their Duty. I don't speak this only of the poor labouring illiterate part of Mankind, who are diverted and harrass'd by the Necessities of Life, and unqualified by the dullness and slowness of Apprehension, to arrive at any great Perfection of Knowledge; but even some Men of refin'd Parts, and curious Reflection in other Matters, yet when you enter with them upon a discourse of Religion, they betray such an inadvertence, such an unapprehension of Soul, even in the plain Truths and Doctrines of Christianity, that a Man would stand surpriz'd, and hardly think so great an Ignorance under such happy Opportunities possible in Nature, if he did not find it true in Fact. And what should be the
Reason

Reason of this, but that these Men have entertain'd some secret *Lust*, or vicious Inclination, which turns away their Minds from beholding the Truth, and *hides knowledge from their Eyes*. And then let a Man's parts and faculties be what they will, if he will not reflect and consider, there is no remedy, he must continue Ignorant: Especially in matters of Religion, that relate almost purely to *another World*, and lie so quite cross to the main Designs and Interests of *this*. In these things, that concern our Spiritual Estate, there is more than ordinary Attention requir'd to give a Man a true Sense and Apprehension of them, even under the same and equal Advantages. Because the Minds of the Generality of Men lie under great moral Indispositions, and have need to be thoroughly awaken'd, and are perpetually apt to *start* and *fly* off from Considerations of a Nature so little grateful to their present Sense: So that, before Men's Minds will be duely prepar'd for the reception of these things, and become *of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*, as the Prophet *Isaiab* styles it, Isaiab 11. 3. there are a great many Preparations necessary; a great many Prejudices to be remov'd, and Mistakes and false Views in the Notion of Good and Happiness to be rectify'd, and Men are to be deliver'd from under the wrong Byass of their false and vicious Interests, and to be at least under an Indifferency, in order to their receiving Benefit from Instructions of this Nature. And because most Men will not be at the pains with themselves, to bring their Minds to this Frame and Temper I have mention'd, there lies the unhappy Ground of that *Darkness*

SERM. IV. *ness* and Ignorance of their Duty; the sad effects of which discover themselves so much in their Practice, and the ill Conduct of their Lives.

The *Second Step* Men take to *wrapp* themselves in *Darkness*, and to be secure from the uneasy convictions of *Light* and *Truth*, under a sinful State of Life, is by a corrupt and perverse Interpretation of the *Doctrines* and *Principles* of Religion, by this means to break the Force, and disappoint the main Design of Religion, the *Reformation* of their Lives. And this is their great Sin of *Error*, as the former was of *Ignorance*, but both arise from the same ill Principle, the same *root of Bitterness in their Soul*; both proceed with the same Design, and determine in the same miserable Event, which is to sin on without Disturbance or Molestation. Ill Men contrive to throw Dirt upon the *Beauty of Holiness*, to *Stain* and *Sully* Religion by a *perverse Handling* of it, so to bring it to their own Humour, and to an *Aspect* favourable on their own ill Practices. And that no part of it may escape the Pollution of their Hands, they endeavour to *blacken* and *traduce* it in both its Capacities, its *Precepts* of Life, and its *Doctrines of Belief*.

Heb. 12. 15.

And *First* its *Precepts* they endeavour to evacuate, by a vain Pretence, that they direct us far above our Strength, above all the Proportion, and all Assurances of Human Nature. That in the Sense they generally *are*, and, as we say, *ought* to be understood, they are all *Hard Sayings*, that no Man is able to support the Weight and Burthen of them; That to comply with them in a strict and rigorous Sense,

Sense, would be to renounce all the Pleasures and Comfort of Living, and to be at a continual Contest and Struggle with our selves; That God and Nature never put such Strong Inclinations into our Souls only to Rack and Torture us, by a violent Restraint and Confinement of them, and therefore that these strong Natural, *as they say*, and, *as we are sure*, *Vicious Propensities*, are plain Indications that the God and Author of *Nature* intended we should gratify them to the *full*; and consequently, to assert that God Almighty has bound up our Liberty, from what he has given us such eager and passionate Desires after, is to represent him as a *cruel and hard Master*, that intends only to *mock* us, and sport himself in the *misery* of his Creatures. Such as these are the vain *Apologies* that Men of loose and profligate Lives make to hide and palliate their Vices. And are not all these so many plain Calumnies upon Religion, and the Holy Word of God? What is there to be found in the whole Rule of our Duty, which it would not be the Beauty and Perfection of our Nature to observe? Does the *Merciful God* demand any thing of us above our Natural Strength, but *where* he takes care by his *Holy Spirit* to provide us with a *Principle of Grace* more than equal to any difficulty we meet with? *He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world*, says the blessed Apostle. Nor does God forbid us any *pleasure*, which it would not really be for our hurt to enjoy; and what we part with of this Nature for his Sake he makes us infinitely more than amends for, in the peace and satisfaction of our own Consciences, in

SERM. IV.



Psal. 63. 3.

Psal. 73. 8.

those *joyous* and *blissful* Reflections, that by our Obedience we are intitled to his *Favour*, which is above all Pleasures, even *better than Life* it self. So that these Reflections upon Religion, as it is the Rule of our Practice, appear from hence, to be mere impudent Slanders, the *prophane suggestions* of a *corrupt and naughty Heart*, and the *sad and deplorable Consequences* of an *impure and sinful Life*; as I could easily shew more at large, were it so immediately to my present Purpose; which is not so much at this time to *disprove*, as to *represent* before you the false Accounts these Men give of our Religion, and for what Reasons; and by which they impose upon themselves, and *corrupt others*, in these their *wicked blasphemies*, and *talking against the most high God*; the main and original Design of which, is to screen themselves from the guilty Reflections of their own Consciences, and the just Reproaches of the World for living as they do. For if they can but once perswade themselves and others of the Truth of these Loose and Atheistical Cavillings at Religion, the main Difficulty, they know, is over, and the great Objection against a wicked and sensual Life answer'd, and disappointed of its Force: Because *then* the Comparison between their *Life* and the *Rule* of it will be less *Odious*, the more they can bend and ply that *Rule* to their own vicious Humour and Interests: According to the grave Advice of that Famous *Cardinal*, whose *holy Counsel* it was, That since Men's Lives could not come up to the strictness of Religion, therefore they must try to bring down Religion to their Lives: In which Assertion of his,

Card. Pallavini, Hist. Council. Trident.

his, I dare say, he gave a true Account of his **SERM. IV.**
 own Religion, and spoke the real *Sense* and
Aim of all *Loose, Profligate, Atheistical Wretches*
 like himself.

But Men of this Stamp and Character are not satisfied only to wrest and pervert Religion and the Holy Scriptures, as they stand the Rule of our practical Duty, and we hope ever will do so, notwithstanding the wicked Attempts of these Wretches to the contrary; But the *Articles* of our *Holy Faith* too must suffer a Diminution by their means, must be scann'd by the partial Enquiries of these Men, and *sifted* with their *sieve of vanity*; and the infinite Knowledge and Wildom of God himself Isa. 30. 28. must not be allow'd to Understand and Reveal any thing, but what the *scanty* Mind of Man, even the blind, prejudic'd, benighted Understandings of these *sinner's against their own souls*, may be able to Comprehend. Our *Faith* must be made out upon Principles of Human *Reason*, or they won't accept of it. Nothing must be admitted in Religion, that is not of a level to the Natural, that is, (as the case now stands, and as we know) the deprav'd Sense of Mankind. All *Mysteries* must be discarded as Impositions upon Human Understanding; These Men are the great *Rescuers* and *Deliverers* of the World from *Error* and Prejudice, from the cruel Yoke and Tyranny of *Faith*, into the spacious Liberty of *Nature*, and the Benefits of a *reasonable Service*. They must have a Religion that is easy, and more suitable to Men's Inclinations, that is, their *Vices*; not one like ours, that is stiff and tullen, and inflexible, bound upon us by the strongest, and
 on

SERM. IV. on one side, the most terrible Sanctions; but they must have a *Religion* that is more Compliant, and Manageable upon fit Occasions, and one that, when Men have a Mind to give themselves a *Licence* in their *Practice*, will admit of a *loose* in its *Interpretation*; These are the impious Demands of these Men, their vain Pretences, and the dangerous Ends they aim at, in spreading their poisonous Infections. And is it out of any real design, though even of mistaken Charity to Mankind, that these Men pretend to set up for the great *Doctors* and *Masters* of Truth themselves, and come to set others free from the *Usurpations* of *Faith* and *Conscience*, as they love to speak? Is it not for their own base Ends and Interest, for peace and security in their own belov'd, detestable Vices, that they endeavour thus to undermine our Faith? Is it not to *Entrench* and *Fortify* themselves in those Sins, which they are secretly determin'd not to leave? They know that every *Article* of our *Faith* is a standing Protestation against them, as long as it prevails in the true Catholick Sense of it, and will be an eternal Reproach and Rebuke upon their wicked and impious Lives. But if they could be once allow'd to *debase* and *alloy* our Faith, by taking it in their own Sense, which they pretend is the only *reasonable* one, their main business would be done, and the Truths and Mysteries of Religion render'd as tame and quiet, and passive, and ineffectual as they could wish, quite drain'd and dispirited of all their ancient Strength and Vertue, and utterly despoil'd of all those powerful Motives, by which now, *thanks be to God*, they inforce Obedience
upon

upon the *Lives* of Men, with so much awe and authority upon the Conscience. I shall only give an Instance of this, in one Article of our Faith, that Great and Fundamental one of the *Divinity of the Son of God*; The Denial, or erroneous Exposition of which *shakes* the very *Frame* of our Religion, and draws after it almost the Ruin of the whole *Christian Practice*. For by disowning Christ to be the *natural and only begotten Son of the Father*, we extremely sink and diminish the Price and Value of his sufferings for Sin, and this will tend to give us the less *abhorrence* of Evil, and we shall be with less difficulty reconcil'd to it in our Practice, when we consider it was bought off at so easy a purchase. Whereas a right belief in this matter casts the blackest *odium* and reflection upon Sin that can be, and represents it as the extremest Evil; the guilt of which no less than the *blood* of the *Son of God himself* could expiate. And then to suppose our Saviour a mere Man like our Selves, would be very much to weaken the Awe and Authority of his Laws, and this would be a *chill* and damp upon our Obedience. Besides we shou'd by this Error *disarm* our *Judge*, in a great measure, of that Terror and Vengeance with which now we believe him *cloath'd*; and which we are sure is infinite; the *fiery* consequences of which we cannot hope to escape without a careful obedience to his Laws. And how could we think that a Man only equal in Nature to our Selves, should have that *Power* and *Interest* in the Court of Heaven, as we are told our Saviour has? And to make a question of this, would be to lessen our dependence upon his Intercession,

and


SERM. IV.



and very much abate our lively expectation of rewards and blessings from his hands; which are some of the main *sinews* of our obedience, as well as the chiefest *instances* of it. 'Twere easy to pursue this Argument farther, and to shew how it holds proportionably true in all other *Articles* of our most *Holy Faith*, a right understanding of, and assent to which afford the main Spring and Encouragement to a *Holy Life*, and give the greatest discountenance and terrour to an *evil one* that can be. This, I think, is a plain account of that desperate Malice, that the Enemies of Vertue and Religion entertain, and express against the Doctrines and Mysteries of Christianity. Who because they can't be quite *Ignorant* of these things, they meet with them so often, and are encountred with their evidence at every turn, they therefore take another way to deal with them, to break and invalidate their force, by blending and polluting the light of these Heavenly Truths with their own evil Opinions; thus to cast a veil of *darkness* both over the truth and themselves, in order to excuse, or palliate their own corruptions.

Mat. 8. 28, &c.

And thus I have endeavour'd to shew that a Man's Sins and Vices will either make him oppose his Religion, or turn away his Eyes from it: And what do these Men do in effect, but deal with our Blessed Saviour, as that *foolish* People in the *Gospel* did, when his Power prov'd Destructive to their Swine that *perished in the waters*? When ever Christ comes in the way of these Sinners, either by his Word, or by his Ministers, and would remove and cure their Brutish Inclinations; as he makes his Ap-
proaches

proaches towards them, they go out to *meet* **S E R M. IV.**
him, as that People did, not to *conduct* him in, 
 but to *prevent* and *stop* his further *progress*,
 and, like them also, *when they see him*, they *de-*
fire him that he would depart out of their coast: Mat. 8. 34.
 And, with the prophane Libertine, in *Job*, Job 21. 14.
 they *say unto God*, *Depart from us*, for we
desire not the knowledge of thy ways. From
 which so grievous Sin of these Men, and
 the dreadful Consequences of it, the *removal*
 and *desertion* of *God's Grace and Holy Spirit* in
this World, and an eternal Banishment from his
 glorious Presence in the World to come, God
 of his infinite Mercy deliver us all, for *Jesus*
Christ. his sake, to *Whom* with the *Father* and
 the *Blessed Spirit*, be rendred all *Praise, Honour*
and Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion,
throughout all Churches of the Saints, now and
for ever. Amen.

A SERMON Preach'd

*A return to our former good Old Principles
and Practice, the only way to restore and
preserve our Peace.*

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd Before the

*University of OXFORD*At St. *MART's*,On Sunday, *May* the 14th 1710.

 The Fifth Edition.

JEREMIAH VI. 16.

*Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways
and see, and ask for the old paths, where is
the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall
find rest for your Souls:—*

THESE words, we see, are deliver'd
in God's own immediate *Name*, as
well as by his *Authority*, to the Na-
tion of the Jews; and intimate to us the ex-
ceeding greatness of *Corruption*, that had
grown amongst that People, in that they here
expres the Remedy for it, with so much ad-
dress of Affection and Concern: *Thus saith
the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask
for the old paths, where is the good way, im-
plying*

plying that they were quite out of the way, at present, and had been so for a long season: and that it was now a matter of no less difficulty in it self, than of moment and importance to their happiness, to *reduce* and set them right. And therefore 'tis, we find God here by the Prophet applies himself to them in terms of such pathetic earnestness; that he sets all their *Activity* to work, and employs their utmost force of enquiry, in search after the Truth, from which they were gone off; and were now by an inveterate depravation, both in Knowledge and Practice, quite grown stiff in Error, and, as it seems, hardly to be recover'd. That they were so indeed, we need no farther evidence, than to look back to the Three former Verses before my Text: Where the Prophet *sadly* complains of an universal Degeneracy in all Orders and Degrees of Men, and almost a total Forfeiture of the Primitive *Integrity* of their *Religion*. In the 13th Verse he tells them, and us, that *from the least of them even to the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely*: Their *Laity*, it seems, from the Peasant to the Noble-Man, were wholly set upon corrupt Practices of Oppression, Fraud, and Bribery; and the *Church-Men* themselves had given too much occasion, and countenance to these *Sins of the People*, by their own Example and Authority; by soothing great and bad Men in their Vices, for their own private Ends and Ambition; and by taking all opportunities to assure them there was no *Danger*, when they were just
upon

SERM. V. upon the very edge of Ruine: For so it follows, Verse 14th, They, that is, the Priests and Prophets, *have heal'd also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, peace, peace, when there was no peace*: Telling them, that all was *safe and flourishing*, and that to follow the Courses and Principles they were engag'd in at present, was the only true way to *settle the Nation*, and secure the Interest both of publick and private Happiness; for so much, I think, the repetition of the word *Peace* may very well import to us.

And yet as bad as we see they *were*, and are assur'd by God's own Authority they *were*, they had not the least *sense* or *feeling* of it; not so much *modesty* left them, as to acknowledge they had ever been in the *wrong*; And tho' the Prophet by his Threatenings thunder'd in their Ears, and remonstrated against them in God's Name never so loudly, yet there was no coming at them; they had not the least resentment either of their Sin or Danger; their *Principles* were so quite perverted, their *Apprehension* strongly barr'd against all Re-proof, and their *Attention* quite *retir'd* and *lull'd* in the deepest Security. *For were they asham'd*, that is, both People and Priests together, *when they had committed Abomination?*

Verse 15. *Nay, they were not at all asham'd, neither could they blush.*

To such a wretched state were things reduc'd, that there was hardly any Foundation remaining, any good *Old Principles* enough left amongst that People, to reform them on. He that would make them better, must begin with them entirely anew; quite rip up and unravel

travel their present inbred settled Notions of **SERM. V.**
Good and Evil, and implant even the very first
 original Seeds of Vertue and Goodness in
 their Souls. So much indeed as this they
 stood in need of, and 'tis no less than this, that
 God himself directs them to, in the former
 part of my Text: *Thus saith the Lord, stand
 ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths,
 where is the good way, and walk therein;* that
 is, put an immediate stop to all your present
 Proceedings, for every step, you take *now*, is
 out of the way; go back to the place from
 whence you first set out; and since there are
 so many *ways* of Sin and Error, and but one
 of Truth, stand a while at the Head of all
 these *Paths*, and consider with your selves the
 extreme danger of mistaking, and that 'tis a
 point of infinite Concernment to you, that
 you determine your selves to the right: *Stand
 in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths,
 where is the good way and walk therein, and ye
 shall find rest to your Souls.*

What was the Consequence and Issue of this
 Advice, we may see at the latter end of *this*,
 and in the following Verse; but that is not my
 present Business to consider.

From the Words I have *now* read before
 you, I think these *Four* following Obser-
 vations do very naturally arise.

First, That God here by his Prophet puts
 that People upon so very strict and diligent a
 search and enquiry for the Truths of Religion,
 argues an entire Corruption and Apostacy in
 the main Body of that Nation, from the true
 Knowledge and Practice of their Duty: That
 K they

SERM. V. they had even lost the very first *Elements* of Vertue, and were perfectly at a *stand* and *puzzled*, to find out the *good old* Rules and Principles of Duty, by which their *Forefathers*, for so many Ages, had so happily guided and govern'd their Steps: *Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way.*

Secondly, We may observe the Matter and Subject of all this Enquiry here enjoyn'd them, the Old Truths and Principles of Religion, to which the Prophet here directs them; under which Head I think it will not be unnecessary to shew what advantage of Argument the former prevailing *Authority* and *Antiquity* of a Religious Doctrine has, to its being found and good, above any *new-stamp'd* *modern Pretences* whatsoever; *See and ask for the old paths, where is the good way.*

Thirdly, We have here the proper End, and what ought to be the true Design of all our Enquiries and Discoveries in Religion, the right Government of our Lives and Practice by its Rules and Precepts: *See and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.*

Fourthly, We see here the blessed Event and Consequence of such a Course propos'd; and what good Effects so *desirable a return*, both in Knowledge and Practice, would work for any People; a *restitution* of them from under their present deplorable distracted State, to their former happy Days, and quiet Enjoyment of Themselves and Country: That this is the *only* method to save them from their Ruine, and that nothing else will do it; *See and*

and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your Souls. SERM. V.

And, *First*, that God here by his Prophet puts that People upon so very strict and diligent a Search and Enquiry after the Truth, argues an entire Corruption and Revolt, in the great Body of that Nation, from the true Knowledge and Practice of Religion; that they had lost the very *Elements* and first Principles of Vertue, and were perfectly at a stand and puzzled to find out the good *old* Laws and Rules of Duty, which their Forefathers had so long and so happily profess'd, and acted by. We find the Holy *Prophets* often lamenting the dismal Effects of a National Ignorance in Matters of Religion; and that Men's Minds were grown into such a *rust*, by not attending to the Light of Truth, or had contracted so perverse a *bent*, by acting contrary to it, that they could not tell how to take hold of them by any *application* whatsoever, nor knew where to begin their first *Instructions*; *Whom* Isa. 28. 9, 10. *shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?* says *Isaiah*, *them that are wean'd from the milk, and drawn from the breast*; intimating to us, that hardly any of those of riper Years were capable of good Impressions, by reason of an old Stubborn Indisposition they were under, from former Errors and Prejudices. And that even amongst those, who were in the best and nearest Preparation to this purpose, yet there was no small *difficulty* to be expected by the *Man* that should go about to teach them Knowledge, on

SERM. V. the account of their Weakness and Incapacity to receive it. *For precept, says the same Prophet, must be upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little,* the same Instructions repeated over and over, and broken into minute and small portions, for fear of overcharging their Apprehension. And this general *Apostacy* from the Truth, this Night of Ignorance, that spread it self over *Judah* and *Jerusalem*, where yet the Law of God had publick Authority, and prevail'd, at least in the open profession of it, was yet so very great, that it had *wrapt* every Order and Distinction of Men under its *gloomy covert*; as we are assur'd by the Prophet *Jeremy* in other places, besides the Chapter of my Text. In *one*, he had observ'd the gross Ignorance, and corruption of Manners that prevail'd amongst the *common People*, and was *weary* to see it: He makes the best excuse for them however that he could, and says, *Surely these are poor, they are foolish for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God*; that is, they had not those Opportunities, on account of the meanness of their Fortunes and Condition, to attain to any great Knowledge in the Affairs of Religion, that lay so quite beside their common and ordinary Conversation. But from Men of *Birth* and *Quality*, and *Capacity* and Opportunities of *Learning*, he expected other matters, as he tells us himself: *I will get me unto the great Men, says he, and will Speak unto them, for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God*; that is, they very well might and should have known it: But what account does

does he return us of *these* Men? why, that *these* had altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds; tho' they knew the Laws of God, and their Duty better than most other Men did, yet they look'd upon them as too great Restraints and Confinements on their Liberty, and *disdain'd*, and were impatient to get loose from under the *Yoke* and *Obligation*. And because there was no other way for them to be easy under these Resolutions, and this Temper of Mind, than either not *to think* at all of Religion, or to bring themselves to a *stubborn disbelief* of it, for that reason, and from what we see some Men of their *Posterity* and *Quality* follow at this day, we may easily guess what Methods they took in order to so very *Honourable* a Design.

We see then, how great a swerving and declension there was from the Truth of Religion, both in the Principles and Manners of Men, in the Jewish Church and Nation, at the time, when God thought it necessary, by the *Power* of his *Spirit* in his Prophet *Jeremiah*, to *stir up* and *awaken* the Sense of the Kingdom, by his bold and resolute protesting against the Vices and Corruptions of the Times he liv'd in; in whatsoever *Order* or *Character* of Men they were found, whether in Church or State. And this he went on to do, notwithstanding their defiance of his Authority, their secret Threats or more open Combinations against his Person, or any Pains or Dangers he sustain'd at their Hands in the steady prosecution of his Duty. For to that purpose indeed, God had some time before *prepar'd* and *Strengthen'd* him, when he gave

SERM. V. him his Prophetical Commission, at his very entrance on his Office; as we read in the first Chapter of his Prophecy, 17, 18, and 19th Verses: *Thou therefore gird up thy loins, says God to him, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismay'd at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land; against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the Land. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.* And so we are sure he has always been, and, we may depend upon it, ever will be, with those his faithful Servants, who shall dare maintain his Cause, the Cause of Truth and Right, at the expence of their own present Ease, Interest and Safety, whatever *secret* or open *Counsel of wicked Men*, may rise against them, or howsoever any powerful *Combination of Worldly Politicians* may contrive to overthrow them.

And as long as every Church and Kingdom is liable to the same *Disorders* and *moral Distempers*, in the Frame and Constitution of it, that we are sure, the *Jewish* labour'd under: *As long* as there may be Reasons of State and Government, or present Safety, that may seem to make it *necessary* sometimes, that there should be a wry Turn given to the Principles of Religion, by a *sort of Men* who have Themselves before acted contrary to it; and who would be otherwise very *Uneasy*, and *fling* about them with *Impatience*, if Religion should

be

be kept up in its *pure genuine Truth* and *Lustre*, to their utter Shame and Condemnation; *As long* as Men of *little, or no Religion* themselves, in point of *Principles*, and of *loose and profligate Lives*, in point of *Practice*, may have it in their Power to joyn their mutual Assistance to encourage one another, and to corrupt the rest of the World, and to run down and discountenance the *Truth of God*, and the *Professors* of it: *As long* as most Men's secular Advantages may lie at the *controul* and disposal of others, *that mind their own things* Phil. 2. 21. *only*, and are not heartily affected to the Interests of Religion: *As long* as these things may be so; *so long* we are sure the *Church of God* must be in *Danger* of general, grievous; and disastrous Corruptions: And *so long*, there will always need some Men of *shining Piety*, of a *sublime* and *generous Zeal* for the Honour of God and Religion, who shall dare *appear*, be able to *oppose*, and effectually give a *Stand* to the Torrent of Iniquity, which is ready to *overwhelm* the Age: and without such Men, we may hope and pray, that God will never leave his Church, in the times of her *Destitution*, and *Calamity*, whensoever they shall happen: Such *true sons of our Holy Mother the Church*, of her own *bringing up*, and *nursing* by *her side*, *that have been dandled upon her knees*, Isa. 66. 11, 12. and *suck'd the breasts* of her purest Doctrine, that, in the day of her *Enemies*, shall *own* her, shall *take her by the hand*, be her true Isa. 51. 18. *Support* in *Weakness*; *guide* and direct her to the means of her Recovery, and lead her in the ways of Truth and Peace. Which brings me to my *Second Observation* from the Text.

SERM. V. *Namely, The method the Holy Prophet here prescribes to the Jewish Church and Nation, for a remedy for all those fatal Disorders they were under; and what was to be the great subject Matter of all their Search and Enquiries, to wit, the old Truths and Principles of Religion; Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way.* Under which Head I cannot but think it necessary, to consider what advantage of Argument, the former prevailing *Authority*, and *Antiquity* of a Doctrine of Religion has, to its being sound and good: For so we find both *Characters* here joyn'd together by the Holy Prophet, *See and ask for the old paths, where is the good way.*

Not that all ways are good which are Old, neither; for then Idolatry might claim a right of *Prescription*, in comparifon of what has been Since, to be the *Religion* of the World; it having continued longer, and with less Interruption in most parts of the Earth, and made a more Universal Spread than any one at present. And yet we know that the *true worship* of God, takes place even of *that*, in point of *Antiquity*, and was deriv'd down *through one line* at least, from the *Creation* of the World to the Flood; and from thence to *Abraham the Father of the Faithful*, in whose Family it took up its perpetual abode, till *the fulness of time was come*, at the appearance of our blessed Saviour. So that still we see that the *good paths* of Duty are the *oldest* too, and have the Precedence in point of Time, as well as of Perfection. And since the Reformation of the World, by the Gospel of our Lord, we must date the *Truth* and *Authority* of Religion from
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the *Antiquity* of it; because 'tis impossible that any *Doctrine* or *Precept* of Religion should be true, that was not at first deliver'd by *Christ* and *his Apostles*, and maintain'd by the first and purest Ages of the Church. And therefore all other more modern Pretences, how *enlightening* soever they may seem, are but Innovations of Men of *corrupt Minds* and base Interests, Sway'd by their Pride, or Passion, or Lust, or Humour to wrest, and pervert, and *barter* the Word of God in order to raise themselves a *Character*, or to *flatter* and *comply* with other Men's Vices, thereby to procure their own *Advancement*. Such are all those novel Expositions of the Articles of our Church and Holy Faith, that have appear'd of late amongst us; which speak in a language unknown to *Antiquity*, which *break* up the *old Foundations*, and put the Strength of Christianity upon the *Sandy* bottom of new, weak, subtile and trifling Arguments, which serve only to betray it; That under a pretence of late Improvements, and a more perfect way of *Reasoning*, have endeavour'd to Slurr and Slight the Doctrines of our Religion, and Mysteries of our Faith, which stand upon the Authority of God Himself.

² Tim. 3. 8.

² Cor. 2. 17.

But where is now that *Beauty of Holiness*, that *primitive venerable Simplicity* of Religion, under which *Christianity* appear'd in Times of *Old*, adorn'd like a *reverend Matron*, with a *native Strength* and *Grace*, inimitable by all the Tricks and Refinements of these *Gentlemen of Reason*! But now we have her trimm'd like a *strange woman*, in the attire of a *barlot*, painted with false Colours, and dress'd in all
the

SERM. V. the wantonness of Men's extravagant Schemes
 and Fancies; sunk from that Reverence and
 Dignity, by which she once struck an awful
 Love upon the Eyes of all that beheld her;
 and made now basely to serve with men's sins,
 and to truckle under their unrighteous Designs
 and vicious Interests. Take but the Church of
 England, as it stood from the First Days of
 Queen Elizabeth, till about the Death of Charles
 the Martyr, and how unlike Her self does she
 now appear! That Her primitive Fathers and
 Pastors would not know Her; the Strength
 and Sinews of Her Discipline so broken, the
 pure Fountains of Her Doctrine so pollu-
 ted, so many of those who attend Her Al-
 tars, and act in Her sacred Rites and Mysteries,
 so utterly gone off, and estrang'd in their Prin-
 ciples from Her; and going so directly counter
 to Her Tenets, and dearest Safety in their
 Practice! But if ever we would again be a
 wise and happy People, 'tis thither we must
 return from whence we are fallen; *Antiquam
 exquirite matrem: Stand in the ways and see,
 and ask for the old paths, where is the good way,
 and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your
 souls*——.

It ought in reason to be one Objection with
 us against any Doctrine or Interpretation in
 Points of Religion, that 'tis New; that 'twas
 never broach'd before, nor receiv'd in any
 Churches of the Saints; that we can see no
 clear undoubted Authority for it in the Word
 of God; That the Passages alledg'd thence to
 confirm it are *dubious*, or appear in its Favour
forc'd and *violent*; That Men may have pre-
 sent Designs of their own to serve by it; and
 that

that the *Corruptions* of the Times we live in **SERM. V.** may give too much Countenance to it, and have made it perhaps *beneficial*, or almost *necessary* to be advanc'd, in order to take off the Reproach and Scandal of *former* Practices, or to justify the Iniquity of the *present*: These are the Exceptions that any new Doctrines and Expositions in Religion are justly liable to; and therefore without the clearest Reason in the World, no wise Man would easily entertain them; there being so great an hazard in doing so, (especially when they appear *against*, as well as *without* the Authority of ancient Times) whatever seeming *Subtilties* or *Niceties* of *Argumentation*, may be made use of by Men of Parts to support and promote them.

But now the primitive Truths of Religion carry a *plainness* and *veneration* in their Face; have good *Reason*, as well as the best *Authority* to shew for them; are not wrapt up *in*, nor to be drawn *out of*, the *thin Cobwebs* of *School* Distinctions; not intricatèd and intanglèd with Difficulties and Perplexities, that *witty* Men may make, and *wise* Men do not care to answer; but they are easy and level to common Apprehension; being intended by the Mercy and Goodness of Almighty God for the general Benefit and Happiness of Mankind; so that *he that runs may read them, and the wayfaring Man, though a fool, cannot err therein.* *Isa. 35. 8.*

I do not say, that the *newness* of any Doctrine is a sufficient Reason why Men should immediately reject it; unless it carries an open Absurdity in it, and a plain Inconsistence with the *Analogy* of Faith. But 'tis certainly *Rom. 12. 6.*
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SERM. V. one of the *best Reasons* in the World for our *Caution*, and utmost Examination of it; and that we take care we are not fond of embracing it, out of an *itch* and humour of *Novelty*; till we see much better Arguments for it, than we are sure there are against it; especially when the whole weight of Authority leans quite on the other side of the Question. And if it comes with no better Authority than of the Men that first advanced it; and does not bring with it indisputable Reason, to balance the Authority of our own excellent Church, the primitive Church, and all the best Churches in the World; he, that shall then demand other Men's Submission to his Doctrine of this nature, only shews the greatness of his own *Modesty*, and may, no doubt, expect to meet with a suitable Entertainment from the World.

And yet we know, how by the cunning and *artful* Sophistry of a late Writer, (whose Name is deservedly *Odious* amongst good Men) and his vain and empty Appearance of close Reasoning, upon a wrong and rotten Foundation, one of the *principal* Doctrines of *Christianity*, and of the *Church of England*, has been shaken, and almost subverted: Had not the Good Providence of God stepp'd in to prevent it, in a great measure, by the Sufferings of *Another*; *Sufferings*, somewhat like those the Doctrine it self teaches, and like those, by which it was at first promoted in the early Preachers of the Gospel.

But this comes of that proud conceited Humour, that fulness of Spirit, that prevails so much of late, in one Sort of Men; and from their Setting up only for themselves, and re-
jecting

jecting all manner of Authority whatsoever they don't like; that is, all the *Opinions* of all the wise and good Men in the World, even of the Church of God it self, and relying only on their own *shallow, empty, bloated* Reason. By which means, some of these admir'd Gentlemen run into downright Heresy; others have entertain'd such a *Latitude* in Opinions: Others, such a sett of *odd, singular, separating Notions*, as are both to their own great Unhappiness, and odious and offensive to all the World, besides themselves.

These Men tell us, they will take nothing upon *Authority*; I wish they would not in some cases, and then we should not so often see them follow others, as they now do, with no better Reason. But is the *Authority* of the Church of God in all former Ages, and the present, nothing? Are the Opinions of all the wise and good Men that have been in the World before us to be rejected, because these Men were not the first Inventers of them? If an Opinion of the Church, universally receiv'd in former and present Times, had not much reason otherwise on its side, yet if it had no Reason to shew in the least *against* it; that I am sure a modest and ingenuous Man would think a very good Reason *for* it; (I am sure the *Apostle* thought so in this case) at least, it is a *Reason*, why a Man should not pertly, and forwardly, and impudently Oppose it; and betray his own want of Sense and Modesty, by running so directly cross to that of all Mankind besides.


1 Cor. 11. 16.

Authority, 'tis true, must never prevail *against* clear Reason, let it be never so ancient; but
when

SERM. V.

when there is no Reason against a Doctrinè, and (which is our case) the best Reason in the World for it, and the whole *Stream* of *Antiquity* flowing in to us besides, he, that does not satisfy himself to believe as other Men do in this case, whatever specious Pretences he may make, does not so much intend to *improve*, as to *perplex* and intangle the Truth; nor does he really discover his Charity to Mankind, by venting and propagating his new, raw, indigested Notions, but his *Pride*, and *Singularity*, and *Conceitedness* of his own Reason. I have stay'd too long on this point, tho' I am sensible, it was never more necessary and seasonable than at present.


I come now to my *Third* Observation from the Words of my Text, what is the proper *End*, and ought to be the true Design of all our Enquiries and Discoveries in Religion, the right Government of our Lives and Practice by its Rules and Precepts, when we are once rightly inform'd of them in our Minds and Judgments: *See and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein*: For without this, our Knowledge is our Reproach, and good Principles the greatest marks of Shame we can carry about us; rendering our *Faults* and *Miscarriages* the more *Notorious*, our *Persons* *inexcusable*, and our *Characters* *inconsistent*. Without this, how *high-flown* soever we may be in our Professions, how *Zeaalous* soever in our Protestations, how active soever in our Prosecutions of an honest Cause, we are yet still but *Hypocrites* in *disguise*, and do our excellent Church and Religion more real *Disgrace* and *Disservice*, by the Looseness

of our Example, than we can do it good by **SERM. V.**
 all our Interest, our Places, our Power and 
 Authority.

Don't we see, by a *late* Instance, how ready Prophane and Atheistical Men are, (as they have always been) to stain and slur a *good Cause* it self, by endeavouring to fix an immoral; tho' undeserv'd Character on the Person that appear'd in the Defence and Support of it; by translating their own Sins and real Shame on a *Man* so much better than Themselves. In which malicious Design of theirs, we know, and may thank God, they were so happily mistaken this time, and hope they will always be so; in any other case of a like nature, as well as in the Success of all their own ill Designs at all times. But still we must own, these Men were very much in the right in the general (however mistaken in the particular Application) that the nearest and most probable way to cast a foul *aspersion* and *blot* on a good Cause is to weaken the *good Opinion*, and to sink the *Authority* of those that are concern'd in its Defence, by reflecting on their *Morals*. And if so, *what manner of Persons then ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness*, not knowing how soon we may be call'd to answer for the Truths of our Religion before *Men*; and, we may be sure, not long after, at the *awful Tribunal* of God, the Judge of all Men, for the Scandal we shall otherwise have given to Religion, by our careless or profligate Demeanour.

Surely a warm, zealous, lewd, vicious *Church of England Man*, is one of the greatest Contradictions in the World. To hear a Man
 talk

SERM. V. talk loofely and prophanely, swear and blaspheme, and at the same time Vow that he will *stand* by the Church's Cause as long as he lives, when he is ready to *fall* by his own Intemperance, is a thing so nauseous, that a Man must be past all *sense* and *apprehension* himself, that does not think his Company has *enough* left to take notice of it, and be offended at it; and if he knows they may be so, can he offer a greater *affront* to their Conversation? For God's Sake *then*, for the Sake of our *Holy Religion*, for *our own* Sake, for our *Enemies* Sake, let us cut off this Handle, at least, from them that Hate us, and prevent all Exceptions of this sort however, against our selves. Let us endeavour to answer the Purity and Holiness of our Principles and Profession, by the Regularity and Exactness of our Manners. This God, we see, expects from us as the true end and issue of all our Studies and Improvements in Knowledge; and this we must do, if ever we intend to be really useful to our Country, or find any true Quiet, or well-grounded Satisfaction at home, within our own Breasts and Consciences. From whence I pass to my *Fourth* and *Last Observation* from the Text, What would be the blessed End and Consequence of such a Course, and what good Effects such a desirable *Return*, both in *Knowledge* and *Practice*, would work for us, a restitution of us from under our present deplorable distracted State, to our former happy Days and peaceful Enjoyment of our Selves and Country; that this is the only method to save us from our Ruine, and that nothing else will do it: *See, and ask for the old paths, where is the good*

good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find SERM. V.
 rest to your Souls. If ever we desire to be a 
 free and happy People, the Truth, as our John 8. 32.
 Blessed Saviour tells us, must make us so;
 Ignorance and Error, Disquiet and Perplexi-
 ty being inseparable Companions; the for-
 mer filling either the publick or private state
 of Man, where-ever they reside, with the
 latter, with Disorder and Confusion, and e-
 very thing that is Evil. Isa. 57. 20. 21
There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked; and again, *the*
wicked are like a troubled sea, when it cannot
rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. A
 Man under the Possession of *perverse* and
reprobate Principles is in a violent State, car-
 ried by a wrong *biass*, and can never be easie,
 either to himself or others. All Error is a
restless and *turbulent* thing, perpetually work-
 ing in the *lees*, and always changing, and
 shifting from one Point of the Compass to
 another, because it can find no fix'd Central
 rest in any one. Whereas Truth is ever *re-*
gular, and *congenial* with, and fits *easie* up-
 on the Mind of Man; and where-ever 'tis, it
 convinces, clears, calms and cherishes the
 Heart, on which it *shines*. But these are
 but *wide* and *general* Considerations. Let us
 now survey these Truths *exemplified* in *par-*
ticular, in the Publick State: Where we
 may see how mistaken and wrong Notions,
 in Religion or Politicks, *quite ravish the* Bp. Wilkins
Spheres of Government, and *put them into a* Nat. Relig.
preternatural course; tending continually to
disturb and *overturn* what is already settled,
 and being able to *produce* and *establisth* no-
 thing.

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When,

SERM. V.



When, *once*, our own happy Government, both in Church and State, were at *first* violently *shock'd*, and *then* push'd from their ancient *basis*, by the Roughness and Rebellion of those Times, the *genuine* Issue of those ill Principles some amongst us maintain at present; What Peace and Quiet was then in our Land? Was not *War* and *Strife* perpetually in our *Gates*? Could a Man go out, or come in with Safety? A Spirit of *Rout* and *Confusion* stalk'd up and down our Country, and *Ruin* and *Desolation* attended by its side! Religion and Liberty were the universal cry; but was there any thing *less* to be found amongst us? Every Man almost had his different Religion, and all of them in the wrong; and hardly any Man had the same a Month together: till Men were grown quite Sick and Giddy with *Revolutions* (which is the usual Effect of them indeed) and knew not *where* they *stood*, nor *what* they would be *changing* to. And shall we trust those dangerous *Tenets* again, and let the Folds of the *old Serpent* wind about us once more, till he has us *fast*, and may hurry us into *Ruin*?

Men may *fancy*, may *protest*, may *declare* what they please, that there is no *Danger*; but if a true and genuine Cause never fails to produce its Effect, when all Circumstances requisite for acting are in the way; we may then depend upon it, that those *Seditious*, *Republican*, *Atheistical*, *Impious* Notions, that have been so much of late *broach'd*, *promoted*, and *encourag'd* in our Land, are a *ferment* lay'd within our Bowels, which
when

when once it has *spread*, and wrought it self S E R M. V.
to a *head*, must break out to the *endangering* 
our whole *State*, if not to our final Ruin.

Yet we don't seem to be apprehensive of all this, and are angry with those that would awaken us into a sense of it! Under all these Weaknesses and Diminutions of our happy Establishment, we *fold our hands together*, and cry *peace, peace, when there is no peace*; and the *gray hairs* of our decay are *here* and Hos. 7. 9.
there upon us, and we do not, we will not *know it*. But, * *O that men were wise, that* Deut. 32. 29.
they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! what the end of these things will be, what it *must* be, without a timely Return to our first Principles of Religion and Loyalty, to a true Knowledge and Practice of our Duty!

'Tis certain we are strangely gone off from our *first love* to our Holy Mother the *Church* Rev. 2. 4.
of England; and are *slidden back* by a *perpetual backsliding* for many Years together, Jer. 8. 5.
encouraging one another, and *comforting* our selves in *running* down and disparaging those excellent Doctrines of our Religion, upon which our main Security depends; upon which the Reign and Safety of our Most Excellent Sovereign, The *QUEEN* (whom God for ever Bless and Prosper) *the Anointed of the Lord, the Breath of our Nostrils,* Lam. 4. 20.
and the Welfare of all Her Kingdoms is supported.

* This is the true Interpretation of that place in Moses Song.

SERM. V.



Would any one have been bold to say, a few Years since, that we should have liv'd to see a *Doctrin*e of Christianity, I mean that of *Non-resistance* to the Supreme Power; a *Doctrin*e authoriz'd and acknowledg'd for Divine by the constant Practice and Preaching of the primitive Church; and from thence deriv'd down to our own Times through many Ages, without Dispute amongst those that held the* Truth; wrought into our own *Establishment* as a *strengthening* to the whole, *enacted* by the *legal Authority of England*; declar'd, acknowledg'd, and confirm'd by *both* our *Learned Universities*, yet to see this very *Doctrin*e *spurn'd* at and *flouted*, by those Men, who say too, they have some Religion; to see it rejected by its *former Friends* and *Patrons*; to see it dragg'd out to its *Condemnation*, with *Shame* and *Contempt* by its *Enemies*, and censur'd as a *Principle* dangerous and *dammable*? If this be not something of a *Change* from what we were once, when or how shall we know there is any? or by what *Signs* or *Tokens* can we find it?

And yet this *Perfection* in *Revolt* we came to, by *gentle* and *leisurely* Measures; first, by *breaking* in upon our *Rules* a *little*, as the *exigency* of times seem'd to make it *necessary*; but at first we were *modest*: in the next place by *extenuating*, then by *justifying* our *Faults*, and then by *condemning*, and

* For that the contrary *Doctrin*e is *Popish* and *Fanatical*, see Dr. Falkner in his *Christian Loyalty*, Book 2. Chap. 1. Sect. 2. Paragraphs 9, 10, 11.

censuring,

censuring, and rejecting the Law it self, a-
gainst which we had offended. SERM. V.

The Measures, by which a *former* unfortunate Prince lost his *Throne* and Kingdoms, at first were *Abdication*: Now they tell us 'twas * *Resistance*; and in time, I suppose, some Men may have the Confidence to *call* and *own* it by *another* Name————

Thus we find we are *unravell'd* by degrees, our Doctrines struck at, one after another; the *threads* of our Constitution *pick'd* out, one by one, and the Principles of our Government *unbing'd*. And if our *kind* Enemies go on a little farther, we may be *quite chang'd in time*, and become *as they are* (which is as *bad* as possible) before we are *aware* of it, or almost sensible of the several steps and degrees of our Alteration.

But by God's Grace and Mercy let us endeavour to preserve, with a just Zeal and Concern, what we have, and try to recover what is lost. Let us, in the *Words*, and according to the *Advice* of the Holy Ghost to the Church of *Sardis* upon a like occasion; According to the counsel of that *All* Rev. 3. 2. 3 *seeing* Spirit, that *knows* our works that we *have* a name that we *live*, and yet are *dead*; *Let us be watchful*, and *strengthen* the things that remain, that are ready to die; for our works are not found perfect before God.

* The Speeches that go under the Names of the Bishops of Sarum and Oxford.

SERM. V.



God of his Infinite Mercy grant, That we may know those things that belong to our Peace, before they are for ever hid from our Eyes, for Jesus Christ his sake; to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascrib'd all Praise, Honour, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.
