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THE  
ADVANTAGE  
OF THE  
MEMBERS

OF THE  
CHURCH of *England*,

Over THOSE of the

CHURCH of *Rome*.

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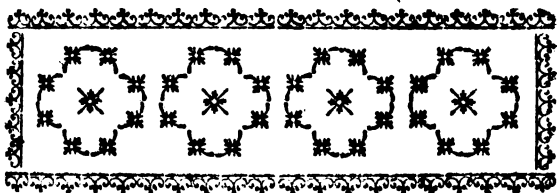
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T H E

## A D V A N T A G E, &c.

Lay this down as an undoubted Truth, “ The  
 “ more the Doctrine of any Church agrees  
 “ with the Scripture, the more readily ought  
 “ it to be received.” And on the other  
 Hand, “ The more the Doctrine of any  
 “ Church differs from the Scripture, the greater Cause  
 “ we have to doubt of it.”

2. Now it is a known Principle of the Church of *Eng-land*, that Nothing is to be received as an Article of Faith, which is not read in the Holy Scripture, or to be inferred therefrom, by just and plain Consequence. Hence it follows, that every Christian has a Right to know and read the Scripture, that he may be sure what he hears from his Teachers agrees with the revealed Word of God.

3. On the contrary, at the very Beginning of the Reformation, the Church of *Rome* began to oppose this Principle, that all Articles of Faith must be proveable from Scripture, (till then received throughout the whole Christian

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fian World) and to add, if not prefer, to Holy Scripture, Tradition, or the Doctrine of Fathers and Councils, with the Decrees of Popes. And soon after she determined in the Council of *Trent*, “ \* That the Old and New Testament, and the Traditions of the Church, ought to be received *pari pietatis affectu ac reverentiâ* (with equal Piety and Reverence);” and that “ it suffices for Laymen, if they believe and practise what the Church believes and requires, whether they understand the Ground of that Doctrine and Practice or not.”

4. How plain is it, that this Remedy was found out, because they themselves observed, that many Doctrines, Practices, and Ceremonies of their Church, not only could not be proved by Scripture, but were flatly contrary thereto?

As to the Fathers and Councils we cannot but observe, that in an hundred Instances they contradict one another: Consequently, they can no more be a Rule of Faith to us, than the Papal Decrees, which are not grounded on Scripture.

5. But the Church of *Rome* does not stop here. She not only makes Tradition of equal Authority with the Scripture, but also takes away the Scripture from the People, and denies them the Use of it.

For soon after her Writers began to teach, yea and assert in entire Volumes,

“ That the Scripture is obscure, and hard to be understood;

“ That it gives an Handle to Errors and Heresies;

“ That it is not a perfect or sufficient Rule of Life;

“ That it ought to be understood no otherwise than the *Church*, (that is, the *Pope*) explains it;

“ That consequently the reading the Scripture is of more Hurt than Use to the Generality of Christians.”

And, in fact, they not only publicly spoke against the Reading the Holy Scriptures, but in most Countries abso-

lately forbad the Laity to read them, yea and the Clergy too, 'till they were ordered to preach.

And if any did read it without a particular Licence, they condemned and punished it as a great Crime.

6. Thus the Case stands to this Day: Yea, the late Controversies in *France* make it undeniably plain, that the Church of *Rome* does now labour more earnestly than ever, to take away the Use of the Scriptures, even from those who have hitherto enjoyed them.

Seeing therefore the Church of *England* contends for the Word of God, and the Church of *Rome* against it, it is easy to discern on which Side the Advantage lies, with regard to the grand Principle of Christianity.

7. But that it may the more clearly appear, how widely the Church of *Rome* differs from the Holy Scriptures, we have set down a few Instances, wherein they flatly contradict the written Word of God.

Thus the Church of *Rome*, after acknowledging that the Apostle terms *Concupiscence* Sin; yet scruples not to add immediately, "The Catholic Church never understood, that this is truly and properly Sin:—And if any think the contrary, let him be accursed." †

Thus, although *Christ* Himself says to all his Disciples, *Without Me ye can do Nothing*; yet the Church of *Rome* condemns this very Proposition, as false and heretical, "The Grace of *Jesus Christ*, the effectual Principle of all Good, is necessary to every good Work. Not only Nothing good is done without it, but Nothing can be done." †

8. In like Manner, the Church of *Rome* does not scruple to impose upon the Consciences of Men, in the Doctrine of the Mass, various Traditions, that have no Authority from Holy Writ: And also takes away the Cup in the *LORD'S* Supper from the Laity, contrary to the

† *Conc. Frid. Sess. 5.*

† *In the Bull Unigenitus.*

plain Institution of *Christ*, as well as to the acknowledged Custom of the Primitive Church. Whence it manifestly appears, that it is not the Design of the *Roman* Church to conform itself to the Rule of the written Word.

9. Again, the Church of *Rome* pronounces all those accursed, || who say,

“ That Baptism, Confirmation, the LORD’s Supper,  
“ Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony,  
“ are not Sacraments instituted by *Christ* Himself: Or,

“ That there are more or fewer Sacraments than  
“ seven: Or,

“ That any of these is not truly and properly a Sacra-  
“ ment: Or,

“ That they do not confer Grace barely by the Work  
“ done.”

Now whereas these Positions cannot be proved by Scripture, and yet are enjoined to be believed under Pain of an *Anathema*, it is hence also plain, that the Church of *Rome* does purposely teach, and also maintain by open Force, Things which partly are not founded on Holy Writ, partly are contrary thereto.

10. As to their Sacraments in particular, it is easy to shew, that they require in each of them such Doctrines and Customs, as are wholly unsupported by, if not also contrary to, the Word of GOD.

For Example. They teach, that

In Baptism, “ § The right Intention of the Minister is  
“ so indispensably necessary, that if it be wanting, the  
“ Baptized receives no Benefit: That

“ \* Confirmation was a true and proper Sacrament  
“ from the Beginning: That

“ † In the LORD’s Supper the Bread and Wine are con-  
“ verted into the natural Body and Blood of *Christ*:

“ That every Particle of what is consecrated is no  
“ longer Bread, but the entire Body of *Christ*:

|| *Conc. Trid. Sess. 7.*

§ *Ibid.*

\* *Ibid.*

† *Sess. 13 and 22.*

“ That

“ That it ought to be worshipped and adored: And

“ That the Laity ought not to receive the Cup:”

‡ In Penance, “ That a full Confession of all our Sins to the Priest is absolutely necessary, or they cannot be pardoned:

“ That the Penances imposed (such as Pilgrimages, whipping themselves, and the like) do meritoriously co-operate toward the Forgiveness of Sins:

“ That this Forgiveness is obtained, not through the Merits of *Christ* alone, but also through the Merits and Intercession of the Virgin *Mary* and other Saints:

“ That

“ || Extreme Unction is a true and proper Sacrament, instituted by *Christ*:

“ That the Oil, blessed by the Bishop, eases the Soul of the Sick, and preserves him from the Temptations of the Devil: That

“ § Ordination is a true and proper Sacrament, instituted by *Christ*:

“ That an indelible Character is given thereby:

“ That there were from the Beginning those seven Orders in the Church, Priest, Deacon, Sub-deacon, Acolyth, Exorcist, Reader, and Door-keeper:

“ That the proper Business of a Priest is, to consecrate and offer the Body and Blood of *Christ*, and to remit or retain Sins in the Chair of Confession: That

“ Marriage is a true and proper Sacrament, instituted by *Christ*:

“ That nevertheless Marriage may be dissolved by either Party's entering into a Convent, even against the Consent of the other:

“ That it is unlawful for any of the Clergy to marry.”

11. Now seeing all these Doctrines are unsupported by, if not also contrary to the Word of God, which yet the Church of *Rome* requires to be received as true, and pronounces all accursed who do not receive them, we cannot but conclude, that the Church of *England* enjoys

‡ *Seff.* 14.

|| *Ibid.*

§ *Seff.* 23.



an unspeakable Advantage over the Church of *Rome*, with respect to her Doctrines, which are wholly agreeable to, and founded on, the written Word of GOD.

12. The Advantage of the Church of *England* over the Church of *Rome*, is equally great with regard to Public Worship.

For it is manifest, that the Public Worship of the *Roman* Church is wholly degenerated from the Nature of *Christ's* Kingdom, and the Simplicity of the First Christians:

That at present it consists in magnificent Buildings, Altars, Images, Ornaments, and Habits; in splendid Ceremonies; in Processions and Pilgrimages; and Prayers in an unknown Tongue; and in reciting the Creed, the LORD's Prayer, and the *Ave Maria*, over and over, according to the Number of their Beads:

That they are not instructed to worship GOD in Spirit and in Truth, as their loving and most beloved Father; and to praise Him, and comfort one another, with Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs:

That their Souls are not edified by Sermons and Catechising, out of the Word of GOD; the Scriptures being cited very sparingly in their Sermons, and generally in a strained and allegorical Sense:

That they are not permitted to search the Scriptures at Home, and seek Food for their Souls therein:

That the common People are by this Means purposely kept in the grossest Ignorance and Superstition.

13. It is manifest also, that they are held in Doubt as to the Salvation both of the Living and the Dead, by the Doctrine of Purgatory:

That hereby the Minds of those who want to be assured of the State of their Souls, are disquieted and disturbed:

That Pardon of Sins, Release from Punishment due thereto, and Redemption from Purgatory by Masses and Indulgences, either for the Living or Dead, are daily sold for Money.

14. It is no less manifest, That their Trust in *Christ* alone, the one Mediator between GOD and Man, is hindered.

dered so much the more, the more the People are referred to the Merits and Intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and other Saints:

The more they are taught to adore their Images and Relicks; to make Vows to them, and to implore their Help in any Trouble:

Yea, and to place therein a very considerable Part of their Worship and Devotion:

As well as in a bare outward Observance of Saints-Days, and other Festivals of the Church; and in the abstaining from some particular Kinds of Meat, on what they call Fast-Days.

15. All these Practices, wholly unsupported by Scripture, the Church of *Rome* retains to this Day; at the same Time that she rejects and pronounces accursed all, whether Practices or Doctrines, that make against her, be they ever so plainly contained in, and grounded on, the Word of God.

Our Reformers seeing this, judged it needful to enquire, whether it could be proved by Holy Writ,

That the Bishop of *Rome* is the Successor of *St. Peter*:

That he is *Christ's* Vicar upon Earth, and the Visible Head of the Church:

That he has a Right of interpreting the Word of God according to his own Pleasure:

To introduce and prohibit Doctrines, besides and against the written Word:

To license Things which the Scripture forbids:

To exercise a spiritual, and, in many Cases, a secular Power, over all Christians, Kings and Emperors not excepted:

To anathematize all that oppose his Will, depose Princes, and absolve Subjects from their Allegiance:

To pronounce Hereticks; to curse, kill, torture, and burn alive, all who do not submit to him in every Point.

16. Some of the Reasons they had to doubt of these Things, were those which follow:

That neither *St. Peter*, nor any of the ancient Bishops, had the same Doctrine or Manner of governing the Church, which

which the Bishop of *Rome* now has, as is clear both from the Epistles of *St. Peter*, from the *Acts of the Apostles*, and the antient Ecclesiastical History:

That *Christ* alone is made of *GOD* Head over all Things to the Church, Eph. i. 21. iv. 15. Col. i. 18. Who is with them always, even to the End of the World:

That the Kingdom of *Christ*, being not of this World, bears no Resemblance to the Hierarchy and Monarchy of the Papal Kingdom:

That the possessing the See of *Rome* no more proves the Pope to be the Successor of *St. Peter*, than the possessing the City of *Constantinople* proves the *Great Turk* to be the Successor of *Constantine the Great*:

That if the Pope were the Vicar of *Christ*, (which is not yet proved) still he would have no Authority to change or abrogate the Laws of his LORD and King; much less to make Laws just contrary to them, or to exempt any from obeying the Laws of *Christ*:

That Attempts of this Kind denote an Adversary, rather than a faithful and upright Vicar of *Christ*.

17. They doubt of these Things the more, because the Primitive Church knew of no such Thing as an Universal Head:

Because no Bishop was acknowledged as such, at the Time of the Council of *Nice*:

Because *Gregory the Great* declared, " He should account any Man to be Antichrist, who called himself by such a Title:"

Because it is apparent, that *Boniface III.* the next Pope but one to him, about the Year 606, was the first to whom the Title of Universal Bishop was given, as a Reward for his absolving the Tyrant *Phocas*, after he had murdered his Master, the Emperor *Mauritius*, with his Empress, and eight Children:

Because the succeeding Popes acquired one Part of their Power after another, by various Methods, either of Fraud or Force:

Because many of them have been notoriously wicked Men, and Encouragers of all Manner of Wickedness: Notwithstanding all which, Men are required to believe that

that they are all enlightened by the Holy Ghost, in so extraordinary a Manner, as to be rendered infallible; although one Pope is continually contradicting another, and reversing the Decrees which his Predecessor had most solemnly established.

18. When the *Romanists* are desired to prove by Scripture, that the Pope is the Head of the Church, they urge that *Christ* said to St. *Peter*, 1. *I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.* 2. *Feed my Lambs: Feed my Sheep.*—Therefore

We answer, These Texts by no Means prove that *Christ* made St. *Peter* himself his Vicar; much less that He gave that Dominion to the Pope, which he now usurps over the Consciences of Men.

And hence we are the more clearly convinced,  
That the Papal Power is not of Divine Original;

And that we have great Cause to bless God, whom the Pope has excluded from his Communion, and thereby restored to that unshaken Liberty of Conscience, wherein, by the Grace of God, we shall always stand.

19. In this Liberty every Member of our Church, if he gives himself up to the Guidance of God's Holy Spirit, may learn the Foundation of his Faith from the written Word of God;

May read and meditate therein Day and Night;

May devoutly pray, in the Spirit of Adoption, like the holy Men of antient Times;

May comfort and quicken himself and others, with Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs;

May enjoy all the Ordinances of *Christ*, according to his own Institution;

May be assured of the Remission of his Sins, and of his Justification through Faith in *Christ*, the Spirit of God witnessing with his Spirit, that he is a Child of God;

May study to have a Conscience void of Offence, both toward God and toward Man;

He may freely enjoy every Blessing which God bestowed upon our own Church; and

May

May make Advantage of whatever Good the Providence of God has still preserved in the Church of Rome :

He may cheerfully look for a happy Death, and a blessed Eternity :

And at length, by resting on *Christ* alone, and patiently partaking of his Sufferings, he may, with certain Hope of a Resurrection to eternal Life, without any Fear either of Purgatory or Hell, resign his Spirit into the Hand of God, and so be ever with the LORD.

F I N I S.



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