

A MODEST

R E P L Y

TO THE

Unanswerable Answer

TO

Mr. *H O A D L Y*.

WITH SOME

CONSIDERATIONS

ON

Dr. *Sacheverell's* Sermon before
the Lord Mayor, *Novemb. 5.*
1709.

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*in a Letter to a Member of the Honourable
House of Commons.*

L O N D O N,

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*A Modest R E P L Y to the Unanswerable
Answer to Mr. Hoadly, with some Con-
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before the Lord Mayor, &c.*

Honour'd Sir,

TWAS your Opinion, That the Answer to Mr. *Hoadly's* Book against the Bishop of *Exeter's* Sermon, would admit of such a Reply as might, in some measure, satisfy the Author of that Answer himself; because (as you said) he is a Scholar, and able to see Faults in his Reasoning, when they shall be laid before him in a modest way, with that clearness as you suppos'd me to be capable of giving him in my Reply, which you desir'd me to write. Now, Sir, tho I shall endeavour to satisfy the Obligation you have laid upon me to consider the Answer, yet I cannot suppose (were I Master of ever so much Truth and Clearness) I could give any Satisfaction to that Writer, tho I take him to be a Man of Learning. As to the Point he writes upon, he is as confident as if all his Arguments were Mathematical Demonstrations, tho they are very far from such, as I shall endeavour to shew to you, but not to him, till he can divest himself of some degrees of Assurance which appear in all his Writings: whereby it must come to pass, that Reasoning will not be calmly consider'd or well digested by him, unless you can prevail upon him by way of Preliminary, to consider with himself, that the highest pitch of human Understanding is to be acquainted with our own Weakness, Vanity and Misery; that all other Parts of Knowledge and Improvements of Reason, tho attain'd with great Labour, are made use of not so much to satisfy our Wants, as to set off our selves to the World: so that, with respect to these Improvements, a Man may be esteem'd a vain-glorious, rather than a rational Creature.

If you can convince this Writer, that 'tis only thro' Vanity that any Person thinks himself free from Pride, he might then see that the Spirit of Imposition and Persecution was always inseparable from the *Laudean* Faction, whose Cause he has espous'd with no small Zeal. This Party always laid high Claims to Authority, and exercis'd it with a high hand whenever they gain'd it; insomuch that it was no small occasion of the late Civil War, and would now produce the same effect if it could take place, and find the same Encouragement as before: which plainly appears by the Complaints and the Rage which they take all occasions to manifest against the People of *England*, who will not be subject to their Impositions. The People's Subjection to the legal Powers of this Land would never satisfy this Party; but the King must be absolute, and free from the Boundaries of Law, I mean the Laws of this Kingdom; and his Will must be the Supreme Law to his Subjects, whose Obedience must be call'd Apostolical, and declar'd to be the Duty of every Subject upon pain of eternal Damnation.

'Tis no wonder that Men who indulg'd themselves in such absurd Opinions, were always inclin'd to Persecution of their Brethren: for the Belief of Absurditys has all along been the common Cause of Persecution, especially when such a Belief is impos'd under the pretence of Revelation. From hence it is that *Jews*, *Turks* and *Christians* have been the greatest, if not the only Persecutors; and amongst the *Christians* the *Roman Catholicks* have ever been, and still are the greatest and most inhuman Persecutors, as being the most absurd Believers: and the very Point upon which their fiercest Persecutions have arisen, and are now continu'd, is that Article of their Faith, which is of all others the most evidently absurd; whereof our Right Reverend Church-Historian makes this judicious Remark: *There was no Opinion for which the Priests contended more ignorantly and eagerly, and that the People generally believ'd more blindly and firmly, than the Presence of Christ in the Sacrament; as if a strong Belief were nothing else but winking very hard.* Hist. Ref. Part 2. p. 104. I am far from believing the Christian Religion carries any Absurdity in it; but Experience confirms, that some Men will use their utmost Skill and Confidence to support their own absurd Notions from Texts of Scripture, as the Papists would confirm their Transubstantiation by *This is my Body*. Let
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any Man of an ordinary Capacity consider only the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, and it will at first sight shew it self to be a monstrous Absurdity ; but when he shall hear a Priest, with an Air of Authority, cite the Text I have now mention'd, and tell the poor Layman, that he will certainly be damn'd if he does not believe Transubstantiation, the poor Man is stagger'd, and will do his best to believe any thing rather than be damn'd for want of Faith.

Now to remedy this Inconvenience, the first Reformers from Popery taught the People, that they should not suffer themselves to be frighted out of their Senses by the air of a Priestly Authority and Confidence, but rather consider with themselves, and by what helps they could get, the meaning of those Texts which the Priests made use of : and if upon examination they found the Conclusions which were drawn from the Texts to be absurd, they should esteem such Conclusions to proceed only from the Ignorance or Craft of the Priest, but not to be Deductions from Holy Scripture. And till of late it has been held in *South-Britain* for a Protestant Rule of interpreting Scripture, to leave that Sense of a Text which implies any Absurdity, and content our selves with that Sense which the words will bear without any such implication. So that at present when a Popish Priest will cite the Text, *This is my Body*, in order to convince a Man of Transubstantiation, and tell him he'l be damn'd if he does not believe it : all this confidence has no effect upon an *English* Protestant, because the Priest's Authority has not weight enough to overballance the Absurdity of the Opinion.

And if any other sortment of Priests shall use the same Method to impose absurd Notions upon us ; as for instance, That God has subjected *Great Britain* to the Tyranny of their Supreme Magistrate for the time being ; and endeavour to bully us into Slavery by repeating a Text of Scripture, *viz. The Powers that be are ordain'd of God ; and they that resist shall receive to themselves Damnation* : The People are now grown so wise, that they will not be Priest-frighten'd into Slavery, but will consider whether this Text won't admit of a fair Interpretation consistent with the legal Rights of *Englishmen*. And if they can find out an Interpretation of this nature, they will, as Protestants, prefer it before the crafty Insinuations, or the bul-

lying Rants of the Priesthood ; but more especially if it be probable that the Priest does not believe his own Doctrine, which is the Case of this Writer. His chief Argument is drawn from St. Paul's Expression, *The Powers that be are ordain'd of God* ; which he supposes to refer to the Reign of *Claudius* or *Nero* over the *Roman* Empire. Now, Sir, if he does really believe that *Claudius* or *Nero* had been commission'd by God, would he not have thought himself oblig'd by St. Paul's Doctrine to have sworn Allegiance to either of them, and by the same Rule now to the Queen of *Great Britain* ? Oh ! says he, there is a Prince ; and, say I, he is so much a Scholar as to know, that there was a Senate, who had an undoubted Right to govern the *Roman* State before it was usurp'd by *Julius Caesar*, and that Usurpation continu'd by *Claudius* and *Nero*. 'Tis strange that this Writer can put so much weight upon that Text, as to infer that the *Roman* Emperor then reigning was commission'd by God, and yet cannot see that the Queen of *Great Britain* now reigning is as much commission'd by Him by whom Kings reign, as *Claudius* or *Nero* can be suppos'd to have been in the time of St. Paul. Does he think this Text was made only for him to bully and banter withal ? Consider farther, Sir, what it was which prepar'd the People of this Land to cast off the Yoke of Popery : 'twas this, The People saw that the Priesthood as then was made use of Scripture-Authority to enslave them to a Power which was set up, not for publick Good, but for the private Interest of themselves. This Discovery gave the Downfal to Popery : so that People are now Damnation-Proof against all the Thunder of *Rome*.

Honour'd Sir, Don't you now perceive that the Authority of the Church of *England* is not at present what it has been, nor even that of the Scriptures themselves ? And whence can this Misfortune arise ? Do you not easily discern that every base, absurd, selfish or slavish Doctrine abetted from the Holy Scriptures, is a Millstone hung upon the Book of God, directly tending to sink its Credit with Mankind ? This Writer would do well to lay this to heart, because where the sacred Authority of Scripture has been question'd, he took up with a sorry way of defending it, viz. Common or Anniversary Customs being kept in use to commemorate any suppos'd Facts, is sufficient proof that those Facts were real : whereas, Sir, you very well know

know that Anniversary Feasts are still kept up with great Solemnity, to confirm many absurd Popish Legends. You may see every year a solemn Procession in the City of *Lisbon* in *Portugal*, to confirm you that *Jesus Christ* and the Virgin *Mary* came from Heaven to play at Cards with *Sancta Rosa*. You may see three Persons carry'd about the Town with *Put-Cards* in their hands, to represent this Fact. It must be a large Volume which will contain the History of all Solemnitys tending to this purpose. This Writer had better have left the Scriptures to stand upon their own bottom, as containing a Moral not Political Doctrine, fit for God to give, and for Men to receive: such a Doctrine as does not make void human Reason, but assist it; and therefore is well consistent with good Sense and common Honesty, and far from being pernicious to the publick Interest of Societies. If these Writers will believe this of the Holy Scriptures, not only the common People, but all Men of good Sense will believe with them: but if they will cull out particular Expressions, and accommodate them to such particular Designs, as visibly tend to the extreme hazard of a Country, how can it be thought that these Priests are in earnest for the publick Good? Oh, say they, 'tis to warn People that they may not be damn'd. Warn them therefore like a Protestant, and do not bully them like a Papist; and make such an Interpretation of the Text as is agreeable to common sense, and which will infer no Absurdity or pernicious Consequences, and at last leave every one the liberty to examine it; and don't rant and rail down every one who dissents from your Opinions. This Conduct is most becoming a Divine, because it favours most of a Protestant, that is, of an Evangelical Christian Spirit.

But this noble Divine and his Sortment will say, That these Texts of *St. Paul* have their Interpretation settled already in the Book of Homilies, and therefore they require peremptorily our Belief accordingly. However, pray you, Reverend Sir, give me leave to examine if it be so; and then to examine how far it is the Will of God that we should believe in the Book of Homilies. Archbishop *Land* has said, that even the Subscription of a Clergyman does not engage him to believe every Sentence contain'd in the Homilies. I suppose his meaning was, that Subscription was intended only to signify his Consent to the use of the Book, which might be very useful; tho being only a human

human Composition, some few Mistakes should be found in it : so that the Subscription of the Clergy does not forbid them, much less any other Persons, to examine the Contents of it. Nor can it hinder the Legislative Power from enacting any thing for the publick Good, tho' it should be contrary to some Doctrine contain'd in the Homilies. And since a Case of this nature was lately suppos'd to happen, the Arms of Resistance, whereby the Prince of *Orange* became our rightful King, may with good reason of Law be defended, tho' they should not have been agreeable to the Homily-Book. For the Homilies, as this Writer says, were enacted by Law; and therefore may, upon just occasion, be in any Case repeal'd by Law: and so far are they repeal'd by Law, which enacted King *William* rightful King, that no Clergyman can be now understood to be oblig'd, by his Subscription, to preach up Passive-Obedience to any future Tyranny which shall happen in the Government of *Great Britain*.

But because I perceive the Doctrine of the Homilies bears so great a sway with this Writer, I will consider it more particularly for his sake, whom I suppose to be (notwithstanding what has been before suggested) a Man of Conscience as well as Letters. Wherefore I desire leave to consider whether the Doctrine of the Homilies be from Heaven, or of Men. If it be from Heaven, it obligeth the Conscience, by virtue of its Divine Authority, and the Legislative Power of *Great Britain* cannot derogate a Tittle from it; but then the proof of its Authority must be made plainly appear from Scripture. This is what this Writer, and such as he have endeavour'd to do; and when they have receiv'd Answers to the Arguments which they have drawn from Scripture, they fly back again to the Homilies as their last retreat; not considering that the Homilies have no Divine Authority, but what the Holy Scriptures give them. But if the Doctrine of the Homilies be of Men, it may be null'd by the same Authority that establish'd it. This Author said in his Answer, that 'tis establish'd by Law; and I say, that the Doctrine of Passive-Obedience, as contain'd in the Homilies, is null'd by Law: for that Law which declar'd *William* the Third (of Glorious Memory) to be rightful King of this Realm, did determine the Means by which he came to the Crown to be rightful Means; so that if Resistance be establish'd by Law,

Law, Non-resistance in the like case is null'd by Law.

But after all this he will say, that those Divines who compos'd the Homilys were otherwise minded. And what if they were, may not you and I differ from those Divines, if we see cause? And if they had no Authority over you and me, what Authority can they claim over the Legislative Power of *Great Britain*? Arguments drawn from Authority were ever held to be of the weaker sort, and by Logicians call'd Inartificial Arguments. Nor can any Arguments prevail over a Man who has addicted himself to the use of his Reason, but what are drawn from the Right of the Cause or the Reason of the thing. What then signifies the Opinion of antient Fathers, or of those later Fathers who compos'd our Homilys, unless they had left behind them the Reasons upon which they grounded their Opinions? And if they had left those Grounds to us, we are still not only permitted, but oblig'd to examine whether their Grounds were well laid; that is, whether they infer'd their Opinions rightly or not from Sacred Scripture. And this is a Right which all Protestant Divines claim at this day.

I will instance in a known Case of that celebrated antient Father St. *Austin*, whose Opinion was that Infants dying without Baptism shall surely be damn'd. This Opinion he grounded from this Text, *Except a Man be born again of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, John 3. 5. Good Sir, may not you and I examine whether St. *Austin's* Inference from that Text be good or not? And if by reading the learned Annotations of Dr. *Hammond*, and thereupon consulting the Gospels, we find that the *Kingdom of God* does very frequently signify the Condition of the Church in this World under the means of Grace; may we not say, that St. *Austin* infer'd a wrong Conclusion, upon a mistaken Supposal that the *Kingdom of God* did always signify the Condition of the Christian Church in a State of Glory? Has St. *Austin* any such Authority over you or me, as to enjoin us to believe that he infer'd right, when we plainly see that his Argument was grounded upon a mere Mistake? Nay, can there be any such Authority in the World, which can convince us against Conviction?

Now if St. *Austin's* Inferences may be examin'd, why may we not examine the Inferences of our Forefathers of a
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later date, who compos'd the Book of Homilys? Their Argument for Passive Obedience is set forth in *An Exhortation concerning good Order, and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates*, contain'd in the Book of Homilys printed by the King's Printer, A. D. 1623. in the latter end of which Exhortation the Argument stands thus, viz. *St. Paul writeth to the Romans: Let every Soul submit himself to the Authority of the higher Powers, for there is no Power but of God, &c.* And so repeating several Verses of the same Chapter, *Rom. 13.* thus the Homily infers, viz. *Here let us learn of St. Paul; The chosen Vessel of God teacheth, that all Persons having Souls (he excepteth none, nor exempteth none, neither Prince, Apostle nor Prophet, saith St. Chrysostom) do owe of bounden Duty, and even in Conscience, Obedience, Submission, and Subjection to the high Powers, which be set in Authority by God; forasmuch as they be God's Lieutenants, God's Presidents, God's Officers, God's Commissioners, God's Judges ordain'd of God himself, of whom only they have all their Power. And the same St. Paul threatens no less Pain than everlasting Damnation to all disobedient Persons, to all Resisters against this general and common Authority; forasmuch as they resist not Man, but God; not Man's Device and Invention, but God's Wisdom, God's Order, Power and Authority.*

Now, Sir, what hinders but you or I may examine whether the Conclusion in the Homily be rightly drawn from the Premises of *St. Paul*; especially since implicit Faith is reckon'd with us as a Popish Sophistry? Be pleas'd then to consider, that the Principle from whence Passive Obedience is drawn, is this, viz. *The Powers that be are ordain'd of God.* Now the Writer of the *Unanswerable Answer* will agree with me in this Point, that it cannot be infer'd from this Text, that either *K. William III.* or her present Majesty did receive each of 'em a Commission from God, to discharge the Supreme Magistracy in the Island of *Great Britain*. If he would have infer'd thus much from the Text, he would not refuse the Oath of Allegiance. Who can refuse Allegiance and Active Obedience to God's Order, Power and Authority, as the Homily attributes to Sovereign Princes? But if this Writer will interpret the Text of *St. Paul* of the Partition and Lodgment of Supreme Power in this Realm, then it must signify that the Legislative Power is in the Queen, Lords, and Commons of *South and North-Britain*, and the Power of War and Peace

Peace in the Queen only; but you know, Sir, that this Distribution of the Legislative Power, whereby the *North-Britons* were join'd with us, was but of yesterday. Why may not this Writer then agree with me, that the Meaning of that Passage in *St. Paul's* Epistle to the Christians at *Rome* was only this, to let them know that their receiving the Christian Doctrine did not in any degree vacate or supersede the Magistrate's legal Authority over them, but still they ought to continue subject to the Laws of their Country in all things lawful and honest; because 'tis the Will of God that Government should subsist in all Nations without being disturb'd upon the account of the Christian Doctrine? This Interpretation is much more probable than to say, That *Claudius* or *Nero* had a Commission from God to rule the *Roman* Empire. And if this be the meaning of the Text, 'tis manifest that the Conclusion which our Writer deduceth from it, and which as he conceives the Homily deduces from it, is not rightly infer'd. And this is a sufficient Reply to all that this Author ever did write, or ever can write upon this Subject.

I am willing to shew my Respect to the Book of Homilys, and to those worthy Divines who compos'd it: and therefore if I can take their meaning by the right handle, I will not catch at the wrong. And truly I am of opinion, that we ought not to look upon Passive Obedience to be the Doctrine design'd to be taught in the fore-mention'd Homily; or that the Composers of it intended to infer that Doctrine from *St. Paul's* Epistle to the *Romans*. But their principal Design was to shew from *St. Paul*, that Papists, even Priests as well as Laymen, ought to be subject to the King's Authority, as appears from the Conclusion of the Homily before-cited, *viz. All Persons having Souls (he excepteth none, nor exempteth none, neither Priest, Apostle, nor Prophet, saith St. Chrysostom) do owe Obedience, &c.* I know, Sir, that there are other Homilys which are commonly cited for Passive Obedience to Tyranny, which if nicely look'd into, would not bear all that weight which is usually laid upon them: however it well becomes a Protestant Minister of the Gospel to give a favourable Construction to the Homilys, and not to use the Authority of those Books in favour of Popery, which were made by our Reformers in opposition thereunto. And if our Forefathers, trusting to the then Circumstances with which they were

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exceedingly bless'd by God under Queen *Elizabeth's* steady Administration, did make too high a Compliment to the Royal Power in her hands, whereby they had been rescu'd from cruel Persecution ; it ill becomes us now to stretch it so far, as to subject our selves to the same Persecution from which we have ever since been deliver'd.

But yet I cannot but observe, that all those high-principled Prerogative-Men, who have distinguish'd themselves by the Characteristick of Loyalty, have ever been distinguish'd also by offering up Incense to Popery. 'Twas this sort of People who encourag'd K. *James I.* to forget the Powder-Treason so far, as to dispense with those Laws which had been made thereupon against Papists, and to command his Judges to forbear the Execution of them notwithstanding their Oaths to the contrary, and notwithstanding that Bishop *Williams*, the then Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, laid before him very great reason to do otherwise. The same sort of Men, especially Archbishop *Laud*, discourag'd the just Aversion which honest Protestant People express'd against Popery in K. *Charles I's* Reign ; and the same Prelate, by assisting the Queen's Popish Intrigues, brought both his King and himself into a fatal Suspicion of being Popishly-affected, and this Suspicion occasion'd a Civil War. In K. *Charles II's* Reign, this sort of People were the Favourers of the D. of *York's* Succession to the Crown, notwithstanding he had been judg'd by the Commons of *England*, in three Parliaments, to have render'd himself incapable of executing the Kingly Office in these Realms, by apostatizing to Popery. And this Party does still shew their inveterate Hatred to the People of *Britain*, for taking the Forfeiture of the Crown, and disposing it to the Prince of *Orange*, when K. *James II.* was actually introducing Popery into the Realm. And 'tis by this Faction only, that the Succession in the Illustrious House of *Hanover* is now incumber'd, by setting up this Principle of Passive Obedience to null the late happy Revolution and Act of Settlement ; many of them having hereupon forsaken the Communion of the Church of *England*, and withdrawn themselves into Conventicles. And yet after all this they have the Whore's forehead to say, that they alone are the true Members of the Church of *England*.

But God be prais'd, that the Body of the People will not join with them in their Faction, but rather suppose them

to be Papists in mask. Perhaps some will say, 'tis an uncharitable Judgment: but why so? Did not *Jesus Christ* leave us this Rule to judg Men by; *Ye shall know them by their Fruits*; Men do not gather Grapes from Thorns, nor Figs from Thistles? And if this Party has upon all occasions serv'd Popish Interests, who can judg them to be any otherwise than Popishly-affected? They differ indeed from Papists in some Doctrines, and so they do from Protestants; but their *Nostrums* and particular Doctrines tend only to serve the Popish Interest. And tho I or some others, who have observ'd that 'tis usual for some Men thro Passion or Prejudice to contradict their own purposes, may suppose this Answerer to be no Papist; yet I cannot see that it would be any Breach of Charity to think otherwise of him. For suppose, Sir, that the late Revolution had not been grounded so well as it should have been, because it was gain'd by the Arms of Resistance; yet since twenty Years have establish'd it to the Content of almost all the People of *Great Britain*, what need is there now to take so much pains to unravel it, and make it their whole business to shew how deficient it was in its very Foundation? What end can this serve but to set up the Pretender, and by his means Popery?

This Writer adviseth Mr. *Hoadly* to wink at small Faults, and not strain the Bishop's Sense too far, and make the best of things. Had he taken that advice himself, he would not have strain'd the Book of Homily's to the imminent Danger of his Queen and Country. What if the Clergy of *England* did strain a Text a little too far, in shewing their extraordinary Respect to King *Edward VI.* and Queen *Elizabeth*; why should he keep it still upon the strain, and not suffer it to come to it self by its own elastick Motion? It becomes him as a Divine to clear the Scriptures from all Difficultys. And what if the Sense of the 13th to the *Romans* should be no more than this, viz. *Let all Christians know that the Christian Institution does not free them from their Subjection to the Temporal Powers under which they happen to live*; for 'tis the Will of God that Government should be maintain'd in Societys: so that Rebellion in a Christian is no less a damnable Sin than in another Man. And since the Design of Civil Government is the Security and Peace of all its Subjects, the Christians can have no cause to exempt themselves from Civil Establishments. Thus far the Text will go
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of its own accord. But to infer from it, that God has made every King a Judg in all Causes wherein the Subject is concern'd ; and tho he judgeth wrong, yet we must submit to it : is to stretch the Text beyond the Staple, and by that strain to make the Text affirm what is false in fact. For no King of *England* was ever a Judg in all Causes, neither can our good Queen determine a Cause in her own Bench, Common-Pleas, or Court of Exchequer. You may make her Majesty a Referee, if you please: but God has not made her a Judg, nor any body else a Judg in this Realm. For our Judges were all made by the Queen or her Predecessors, who had Power from the *English* Constitution so to do. Yet these Judges are far from being uncontrollable ; but if they are faulty in the discharge of their Duty, they are subject to Punishment like other Men. In short, the Office of a Judg owes its being to the Laws and Customs of these Realms before they were united. And every Magistrate, as to his distinct Character and particular Power, is, as St. Peter saith, a *Human Ordinance*. Here is Scripture for his Scripture : and if this Text were nicely examin'd, all Mr. *Hoadly's* Scheme might be prov'd by it as fully as this Writer has made out his System from St. *Paul*.

But to draw a Scheme of Political Government from a Text of Scripture, is too pedantical. Do not we laugh at all Sects for forming their Systems from single Texts ? *This is my Body*, says the *Papist* : *Swear not at all*, says the *Quaker* : *Teach all Nations and baptize*, says the *Baptist* : And of late Mr. *Jacob* found out a Text, to shew that every Man ought to wear Whiskers, which were the Cognizance of his Sect. So the Powers that be are ordain'd of God, saith High-Churchman. Now I think that a Man may believe all these Texts of Scripture, without being of any of these Partys. I suppose the Answerer will agree with me as to the *Papist*, *Quaker*, and *Baptist*, who lay the stress of their respective Opinions upon a Text not well interpreted ; but does not perceive that he is caught in the same net, by interpreting his Text to signify that all Kings are commission'd by God : whereas 'tis this Interpretation alone which forms his System, and justifies his Separation. For if all Kings are commission'd by God, the People cannot take away such a Commission : nor can any King forfeit it, unless it be to God alone. And hereupon it will follow,

follow, that K. *James II.* was wrongfully excluded, and that the P. of *Orange* had no Right to the Crown; and many other such Consequences as these must be allow'd, if his Interpretation should be right. Wherefore it is absolutely necessary, that this Divine should make out his Interpretation to be very plain by concurrent Scriptures and evident Reasons. For till that be done, we can only rely upon his single Authority, which is scarce sufficient to bear so great a weight as the Welfare of the *British* Nation, and of the Protestant Interest all over the world.

'Tis true, it would be well for this Faction (at least they think so) if by the dextrous Interpretation of a Text they could gain Authority to dispose of Royal Titles: but they do not consider, that the Pretender will allow them no Right of interpreting the Holy Scripture at all. They do not consider, that hereby they take the Pope's pretended Power into their own hands. Wherefore it would be better for any Priesthood, which pretends to be Protestant, to lay aside these pretences, and to suffer the Laws of every Protestant Country to determine the Titles of Princes and the Obedience of Subjects; especially since the Protestant Laity are agreeable hereunto, and can distinguish Popery, tho' cover'd with a Protestant Mask. So that this Design being not likely to succeed, it may possibly take another turn than they are aware of, and give occasion to the Laity to look with a jealous eye not only upon the Priesthood, but on the Scripture it self: At least it will make them think, whether the Scriptures are not as immediately put into their hands, as into the hands of the Clergy; and whether they may not, nay ought not to interpret the Scriptures for themselves. In short, Sir, you know that Protestants expect that every Divine should make some proof of that Interpretation which he puts upon a Text of Scripture. And if this Divine shall not make it out that *St. Paul* in saying, *The Powers that be are ordain'd of God*, meant, as he interprets, That all lawful Magistrates are commission'd by God; both his *Unanswerable Answer*, and all his other Writings upon this Subject fall to the ground. He knows very well, that we are not to be put to prove a Negative against him; but 'tis his part, who has affirm'd, to make out the Proof. But to add to the Difficulty which lies upon him, it seems there are several probable Arguments, from whence it may be infer'd that he will never make out the Proof of his Interpretation.

1. Because it does not appear that our Saviour *Jesus Christ* laid down any Scheme of Politicks for the Government of any Country, or gave any thing of that nature in charge to any of his Disciples. And when the *Jews* put that ensnaring question to him, Whether it were lawful to pay Tribute to *Cesar* or not; he very warily avoided giving a particular Determination to it, but only answer'd in general, that they should give *Cesar* his Due. And according hereunto, *St. Paul* directed, *That Tribute should be paid to whom Tribute is due, Fear to whom Fear, and Honour to whom Honour.* The Design of *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles was of another nature, to instil moral Vertue into Mankind upon Principles of Faith in God's Promises, to make them just and kind to one another, to live as Brethren, to be useful in their Stations, and to give no disturbance to the publick Weal, or to any Man in his private Capacity.

2. 'Tis not probable that *St. Paul* did believe that the *Roman Emperor*, in whose Reign he wrote this Epistle, was indeed commission'd by God to take upon him that Government; for according to the best computation which Chronologers have made, this Epistle was wrote in the Reign of *Claudius* or *Nero*. Now if *St. Paul* knew any thing of the *Roman* Affairs, he may be well suppos'd to know that about eighty Years before *Claudius's* Reign, *Julius Cesar* usurp'd the Government of *Rome* from the Senate into his own hands, and that this *Claudius* was but the fourth Successor from the Usurper: so that it is not likely that *St. Paul* should suppose *Claudius* or his Successor *Nero* to be commission'd by God. But if all the Powers that be are commission'd by God, then *Julius Cesar* and *Oliver Cromwel* were so commission'd; and also King *William III.* and her present Majesty were as well commission'd as *Claudius* or *Nero*. And then, as our Homily Book says, all Priests as well as Laymen ought to own their Authority, according to *St. Paul's* Doctrine. But if *Claudius* and *Nero* only continu'd and carry'd on *Julius Cesar's* Usurpation, as appears in *Roman* Story; all this Writer's Argument is at an end: and to be ordain'd of God, signifies no more than to subsist by Divine Permission. However, *St. Paul* directs all Christians for peace-sake to submit in all lawful things to their Administration, to carry with them a peaceable Temper, and not to disturb a Government under which God's Providence has cast them.

By this you may see who are the Movers of Sedition and Patrons of Faction ; who with their King *Adams* and King *Noahs*, and such-like whimsical Fancys, endeavour to subvert the *Britannick* Government which is ordain'd by God ; such who by casting off the Ministry of *Jesus Christ* change themselves into ill Ministers of State, to breed disturbance in a settled Society under a good and gracious Administration : these, according to St. *Paul*, shall receive to themselves Damnation. I say, that if St. *Paul* had inquir'd into the *Roman* Government, he would have found that *Julius Caesar* by his Usurpation had set up the *Roman* Empire : but 'tis more probable he never enter'd into this Inquiry, his head being set upon other matters, the Care of all the Churches coming daily upon him, and the Discharge of his Apostolical Office, which indeed he receiv'd by a Divine Commission, taking up, as may be well suppos'd, all his thoughts : so that when he appeal'd to *Cesar*, it was only to gain opportunity to preach the Gospel at *Rome*. But whilst St. *Paul's* Example recommends to all Ministers of the Gospel, that setting aside Political Systems, they study to do their Duty, and live peaceably and quietly under that Government which God's Providence has set over them ; there are some who under pretence of St. *Paul's* Authority turn their Heads to Politicks, and laying aside their Evangelical Ministry are Preachers of Political Systems, to the Subversion of the Protestant, that is, the Evangelical Profession of the Faith of *Jesus Christ*, and to the overturning of all the Governments in the World for want of Divine Commissions. I speak it with a Christian Concern ; the Fault is very great, and so is the Punishment assign'd to it by St. *Paul*.

Consider, Sir, that the Doctrine of Passive Obedience, as it was first preach'd by *Sybothorp* and *Manwaring*, and approv'd at Court, gave such an occasion of Discontent, as at last fermented into a Civil War. Consider that the *Well-bred Doctrine of Passive Obedience* (as this Writer calls it) is but a scurvy Compliment to her present Majesty, and of dangerous consequence to the whole Kingdom, as serving only the turn of the Divinely-commission'd Pretender. And some of this Author's Expressions, tho in general words, intimate that he is not without hopes of writing long enough to bring about such a Revolution : tho all that he has writ hereupon is little else but Tautology and Repetition, there being but one Argument in all his

Writings, which must be answer'd over and over again, to satisfy his Importunity. And therefore I shall once again consider his Notion of a Divine Commission, which, according to him, all lawful Magistrates bear, not excepting Tithing-men and Petty Constables; tho the drift he chiefly aims at, is to shew that the Supreme Magistrate has such a Commission, and therefore that the People may not defend themselves against any ill use he may make of such a Commission.

This being the Subject of ten years Lucubrations of this Author, it must have been carefully consider'd, since it is so earnestly insisted upon, and the Souls of all the People of *Great Britain* are so much concern'd herein. But he has not explain'd how the Sovereign Powers of this World shall know that they have such Commissions, nor how the same Commission shall be made known to the Subjects; both which Inquiries are very material on both sides. For it is fit that an honest and prudent Governour should satisfy himself that he has indeed such a Commission, before he pretends to act by virtue of it; otherwise he may wrong others, and run a great risque himself. Wherefore to you it belongs first, O ye Kings and Princes of the Earth, to satisfy your selves of your Divine Commissions to administer your respective Governments, that you may justify your Actions to your People, and not be found Invaders of an Authority which God alone can dispose of: Such a Commission being a great Security to any Prince, not only against his Subjects at home, but against his Enemys abroad. What a Weakness was it in King *Augustus* of *Poland*, that he did not shew his Commission to the King of *Sweden*? Such was it in the *French* King, that he did not send a Copy of his Commission to her *Britannick* Majesty, who by the Principles of the Church of *England*, which she so faithfully protects and so brightly adorns, cannot but pay a profound respect to such a Divine Commission; so as to recal her Armys, that they may not distress, much less depose this Divine Commissioner. The *French* King is grown into dotage, to keep up so great an Army now Corn is dear, to defend his Frontiers; when only by shewing his Divine Commission, all this Charge might have been sav'd. And if *Lisle*, *Tournay*, and *Mons* had been in the Commission, his Frontiers would have been intire at this day. But tho Divine Commissions are not very frequent in these days,

days, yet it may be suppos'd that some such things have been heretofore. And therefore it may not be altogether needless to inquire, how such commission'd Officers were conscious to themselves, and how they did convince others that they were so commission'd. We read in the Book of *Exodus*, that *Moses* was commission'd by God to demand the Freedom of *Israel* who were retain'd in *Egypt*. But before he began to execute his Commission, he ask'd of God by what means he should satisfy *Pharaoh* that God had indeed sent him to make that demand. And hereupon God made himself known to him by name, and also made him conscious to his own Commission, by enabling him to work two Miracles upon *Aaron's Rod*, and empower'd him to demonstrate his Commission to the *Egyptians* by many more Miracles which he wrought before them. But by what means any lawful Magistrate (from a Sovereign Prince to a petty Constable) can convince himself or any body else of his Divine Commission, this learned Writer has not yet explain'd: but at this day it is only left to the Laws of *Great Britain*, to set forth the Buttings and Boundings of every Magistrate's Power within the Realm; and every Commission-Officer, both great and small, has his Commission only deriv'd from antient Laws and Customs of the South and North Parts of the Kingdom. The *Poles* commonly chuse their Kings, but the *Pacta Conventa* of that Nation determine their Power. The *English* upon extraordinary occasions have done the like, but the antient Customs and Statutes of the Land have limited their Authority: so that the Administration of the *British* Government needs not the Amusement of a Divine Commission.

But all this will not satisfy our Author, unless we can solve this doubt: for here, says he, is the difficulty, How shall the Sovereign Prince have power over our Lives but by a Divine Commission, since no Man has power to dispose of his own Life, at least no Man has Authority to kill himself? Now the utmost that this Argument amounts to, is this, That since he cannot understand upon what grounds Man may be put to death in a Civil Government, except the chief Governor be commission'd by God, therefore the chief Ruler is so commission'd. Thus the Papists argue, That because they cannot understand how there can be an end of Controversys unless God has made an infallible Judg, therefore such a Judg he has made. But to this the

Protestants reply, What if there be no need of such a Judg? then 'tis also probable that God has not made any such. And so say I, What if the Queen has no power over her Subjects Lives? then 'tis more than probable that she has receiv'd no such Commission. Our Lives in *Britain* are not subjected to the Queen, but to the Laws; neither have the Makers of these Laws any Commission from God to enact them. But a third Part of our Legislative Power is commission'd once in three years at least by the Freeholders, according to antient Custom; and by virtue of this Commission they can enact capital Punishments. And I can see no reason why the Queen and Lords should stand in need of a Divine Commission, any more than the Commons. The Legislature is justify'd sufficiently by antient Custom; and the late happy Conjunction of the Legislative Powers of *South* and *North-Britain* into one, is justify'd by the mutual Consent of both Parts of the Island. And now since all our Lives and Fortunes are subject only to the Laws, and not to the Queen's Will, it must be a great Presumption for an *Irish Priest* to take upon him to assure a *British* Monarch, that all our Lives are given by a Divine Commission into his power. But since the Notion of Kingly Power's being the same with Patriarchal, does not permit a Queen to be capable of any Sovereignty, the well-bred Doctrine of Passive Obedience, which is so amply set forth by this Author, is not well-fitted to be entertain'd in her Majesty's Court. And yet this Faction have for twenty years past valu'd themselves for complimenting the *Crown* with the insignificant Doctrine of Passive Obedience, tho at the same time 'tis their study to shew, that this Obedience is not due to the Sovereigns who wear it. *All Magistrates act by Divine Commission*, says this Author, pag. 7. numb. 4. But has the Queen this Commission? No surely he will not allow that; but *K. James* had it, and the Crown has it still: so that at present Passive Obedience lies dormant, and yet makes more noise than ever it did.

Suppose that a *Spanish* Priest had liv'd in *Amsterdam* when the *Dutch* made their Revolution from the *Spanish* Tyranny, and claim'd their Rights which had been deny'd them; and that this Priest should have shewn his dissatisfaction thereat, not only by refusing his Concurrence thereto, but by openly writing for many years together against the Principles and Grounds of that Revolution: supposing also that this

Priest

Priest had been permitted by the chief Pensioner of *Holland*, who is as it were Principal Secretary of State, to write thus in opposition to the Government, tho at the same time he exercis'd his Authority against an honest *Dutch* Writer, who made it his Business to *observe* the Ignorance and Impudence of this *Spanish* Priest : Supposing also that an eminent Divine of *Amsterdam*, dignify'd by a particular Call of the State, should have fallen into the same measures with the *Spanish* Priest, and asserted the same treacherous Notions, tho a little obscur'd, in a publick Sermon before the States-General, and this had been suffer'd with Impunity ; doubtless many would be the Speculations of the Merchants and Traders of *Amsterdam*. Some would call to mind the Complaints of their Fathers, and bethink themselves how they should harden their Necks to receive the *Spanish* Yoke again. The Religious Protestants would think of *Antichrist*, and the Whore of *Babylon*. Wife and Children would take up the Thoughts of the common Burghers. All wise Men will take care how they declare themselves against the *Spanish* Title, and the Friends to the *Dutch* Government must needs be discourag'd. But what would the good *Genius* of *Holland* say upon such a Case ? *Arise honest Dutchmen out of your Slumber, and let your Moderation be known unto all Men, to your Friends as well as Enemies.*

As for Dr. *Sacheverell's* Sermon, preach'd at *St. Paul's* last fifth of *November*, of which you desire my Thoughts ; 'tis such a Rant from beginning to end, that it will not admit of any methodical Consideration, because there is no Method in it. It has been usual for Preachers, upon that high Festival, to confute some *Popish* Doctrine, commonly the *Pope's* universal Sovereignty over the Church of Christ, and to shew that it had no ground in Scripture or Reason ; or else to establish some Protestant, *i. e.* Christian Doctrine, which was undermin'd or contraven'd by *Antichrist*. But instead of something of this nature, the Doctor shews his Resentment against such Protestants, who are, like true Brethren, willing to bear with such Christians who hold the fundamental Doctrines of *Christ Jesus*, such as Faith, Repentance, Charity, and the like, tho they do not join in the same Forms and Ceremonies with others of the same *Christian* Profession. These are the People against whom he shews his Resentment with such a

Spirit of Popery, as was futable to the Temper of *Hildebrand*. This sort of Protestants he calls false Brethren, and says, that they are perilous to the Church, by being willing to barter the *Catholick Doctrines* for a Mungrel Union of all Sects, by taking in Schismatical Presbyters without Episcopal Ordination, which would unchurch the very Church, and annihilate her Constitution, pag. 10. He goes on with his Complaint, That some People defend Toleration, and under pretence of Moderation excuse Separation, and lay the fault on the true Sons of the Church for carrying Matters too high, *ibid*. These are the things which the good Doctor is very much disturb'd at, and for which he prescribes a Remedy. Pag. 23. Let our superior Pastors do their Duty in thundering out their Ecclesiastical Anathemas; and let any Power on Earth (says he) dare to reverse a Sentence ratify'd in Heaven. Another thing which grieves the Soul of the Doctor, is, That the utter Illegality of Resistance, upon any Pretence whatsoever, which has been so long the honourable and distinguishing Characteristic of our Church, is now, it seems, quite exploded as an unfashionable and dangerous Tenet, pag. 12.

By these short Sketches you may see what are the great Grievances the Doctor complains against to my Lord Mayor, viz. the late Revolution, and what soon follow'd, viz. the Toleration: These two extraordinary Contingences he thinks have made such a breach in the Doctrine of the Homilies, that Popery has been kept out of Britain these twenty years last past. For if the Revolution had not happen'd, there would at this day have been no want of thundring Anathemas against the Doctor and his true Brethren, if they had stood their ground: so that methinks, tho the Revolution was not gain'd by Passive-Obedience, yet a true Churchman, if he were also a true Protestant, might overlook a small fault in the Revolution, which preserv'd the Church of *England* from a tyrannical and foreign Jurisdiction; and might endure that a few Protestant Dissenters, who join'd to save our Church from Popery, might enjoy their Consciences in the Worship of God, when the true Churchmen, who heretofore separated from Popery, never pleaded any more for their Separation than merely their Consciences. At leastwise this Doctor ought to have shewn by Scripture or Reason, that the late Revolution was a damnable Sin, and so likewise

was

was it that Protestants should permit one another to be sincere in the Worship of God. But the Doctor does not think fit to lay down his Texts of Scripture, or his Reasons hereupon; but only insinuates that the Authority of the Homilies is in some measure a Sufferer, by permitting these things to be done. Did the Doctor think that my Lord Mayor, and Aldermen, and Citizens, do not understand Scripture and Reason, as well as Homilies? But this way of proceeding had not been agreeable to that haughty magisterial Air, which he was pleas'd to set himself off by, in commanding rather than convincing his Congregation.

I am thinking, Sir, that if such Sermons were frequent, the only effect they could produce is to raise up a Spirit of Discontent in a few hot-headed People, which at last may deserve the notice of a Parliament; such Discourses bringing no Light to the Mind, but only Heat to the Brain. Suppose you should be of Opinion, that the Church were not in any danger, yet this Preacher would cast all the Suspicions he could raise into your Mind, and shew you that you ought to believe the Church was in danger in the general, tho in no particular Point whatsoever. I think he would have it that the Homilies are in danger, but I have wrote so much in this Letter about them, that I do not care to add any more, unless you should think fit to move the Honourable House of Commons to declare by a Vote, That henceforward there shall lie no Obligation from the Book of Homilies upon any Churchman, who has subscrib'd them, to shew their true Church of *England* Zeal, either against the late happy Revolution, or the Act of Toleration; as also to declare, That no antient or modern Fathers of the Church have any Authority to limit the Power of a *British* Parliament, in matters belonging to the Churches and State of *Great Britain*. Hereby 'tis possible that this Controversy may in time be brought to a Conclusion, or else the Homilies of the Church will be urg'd in contradiction to the Acts of State, till it shall appear whether the State will be at the pains to govern the Church, or else submit to be govern'd by it.

Something methinks should be done, by way of prevention, for the greater Security of future Parliaments: for if the good Bishop of *London*, being an old Man, should be succeeded by Dr. *Sacheverell*, and he should think fit to thunder out his Anathemas against the Parliament, which shall be

be conven'd at *Westminster* within his Jurisdiction, what Power on Earth dare reverse a Sentence ratify'd in Heaven?

I have but one word more to say to you, and that is by way of Supply of a deficiency in the Doctor, who has omitted in his Discourse one false Brother. I mean such a Brother who cannot be satisfy'd, till he has by Persecution compell'd all sorts of Men to come into the Church. He cannot endure that Atheists, Deists and Socinians are permitted to abstain from our Holy Communion. Now I think that a true plain-dealing Brother would rather suffer the *Atheists, Deists, and Socinians* to distinguish themselves by their Separation from the Church, that they may be better known than trusted in the State, as also lest our pure Church of *England*, the Bullwark against Popery, and Crown of the Reformation, should be disparag'd with a numerous Communion of *Atheists, Deists and Socinians*, who by penal Laws will suffer themselves to be wrought upon to frequent our Communion, whereby our Church will be croud'd with Hypocrites, and our State supply'd with a dangerous sort of Churchmen.

To conclude, Sir, let these furious Men harangue with ever so much Oratory against Toleration and Moderation, yet Gentleness, Meekness, Tender-heartedness, Readiness to do good, Calmness and Benignity, are sure Declarations of Divine Communication to Men, and belong to Man's Holiness and Integrity in the carriage of himself in God's Family towards his Fellow-Creatures; and if any thing is clearly reveal'd beyond all dispute in the Gospel, 'tis Toleration of one another, and Moderation towards each other. These things are so very plain, that for ought I see a Man had need to commence Doctor in Divinity, in order to mistake so plain a matter.

I am, SIR, with respect,

Dec. 2. 1709.

Yours, &c.

F I N I S.