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Priestcraft

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CHRISTIANITY

BY

WILLIAM

(LONDON: 1800.)

PRIESTCRAFT

Distinguish'd from

CHRISTIANITY.

S H E W I N G,

- I. That Wicked *Priests* are the real *Antichrists* mention'd in *Scripture*.
- II. That the Corruption of the *Laity* in all *Christian States* proceeds from the Corruption of the *Clergy*.
- III. That there was a more *General Vertue* in the grossest Times of *Paganism*, than there has been since our SAVIOUR came into the World.
- IV. That there is a more *General Vertue* in other Parts of the *Globe*, than in the *Christian World*.
- V. That there was a more *General Vertue* in our own Nation in the Times of our *Ancestors*, than there is in our own Times; and that *Priestcraft*, and *Corruption of Manners*, have increas'd together.

By Mr. DENNIS.

By their Fruits ye shall know them.

The THIRD EDITION, Corrected.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the *Oxford Arms* in
Warwick-Lane. MDCCXVIII.

Christians

CHRISTIANITY

S H E W I N G

I. That which is the real substance of the
in nature. 5

II. That the Corruption of the Earth in all Christian
proceeds from the Corruption of the Clergy.

III. That there was a more General Wars in the
times of Ahab, than there has been since
ever our came into the World.

IV. That there is a more General Wars in all
the Globe, than in the Christian World.

V. That there was a more General Wars in our
Nation in the Times of our Ancestors, than there
is out our Times; and that Picts, and
of Ahab, have increased together.

By Mr. DENNIS.

By their Prints ye shall know them.

The Third Edition, Corrected.

L O N D O N.

Printed for J. Bland, near the Royal Exchange, in the Strand, by M. D. B. 1704.

PREFACE.

THAT the Doctrines which the Clergy preach to the People, and the Examples they give them, have an extraordinary Influence upon their Thoughts and Actions, is evident from Experience, and from the very Reason of the Institution of the Order. That the Examples which too many of the Clergy have lately given them, and the Doctrines which they have preach'd to them, have been neither Christian nor Moral, is too evident from the dismal Consequences of them; from the Divisions which they have caus'd in their Hearers; from their groundless Fears and Jealousies; from their Malice and their implacable Fury; from their Hatred and their Enmity, not only to each other, but to their Native Country, to their very Rights and Liberties; from the unfor-

The P R E F A C E.

tunate Event of the late War, in spite of Success, and an unparallell'd Series of Victories; from a Peace more calamitous than the most fatal War, and more destructive of Commerce; from the dreadful and horrible Dangers which we have so narrowly escaped by the immediate Hand of God, without any Thanks to our own Prudence and Virtue; and lastly, from the Dangers and the Calamities which still threaten us, and still hang over us, and over all the rest of the Christian World.

To remove the Causes of all these Mischiefs, that the Effects may cease, it is necessary to lay down a plain and certain Rule, by which the very meanest of the People may be able to distinguish a Zealot from an Incendiary, a Priest of God from a Priest of Baal, and the Precepts of the Gospel from Human Traditions and the Doctrines of Devils.

That I have discover'd and reprov'd the Vices of some of the Clergy by the
very

The P R E F A C E.

very same Method by which They have caus'd our Miseries ; that I have done this by a Sermon, by a chosen Text, and by severe, but too just Reproaches, is, I hope, excusable in me, or They are altogether inexcusable : For whereas They have made use of Calumny and Defamation ; I have kept strictly within the Bounds of a modest Satyre, which spares the Persons and attacks the Vices, and never censures the Deserving, nor condemns the Innocent ; and whereas They have had recourse to Calumny and ungenerous Slanders, only in order to cause Divisions, and to inflame Animosities, I have endeavour'd by just Reproaches to revive and restore Charity.

The Author of the following Discourse was born and bred in the Communion of the Church of England ; and nothing in the following Sheets is in the least design'd by him to reflect on that Pious, Learned, and Numerous Body, who are truly Christian Priests
of

The P R E F A C E.

of the Church of England. But then he declares, that he cannot apprehend how any one can be a truly Christian Priest, who makes it the entire Business of his Life to root Charity out from the Souls of Men, and by that Means to drive from the Face of the Earth the very Life and Soul of Christianity. And as he cannot conceive that any thing can be a Part or a Member of a Body, which has not a Communication with, and a Subordination to, the Head of that Body; as he cannot conceive that any one can be a Priest of the Church of Rome, who disowns the Papal Supremacy, so he cannot believe that any one can be truly a Priest of the Church of England, but he, who being united to the Faithful and Obedient Part of the Clergy, does with them acknowledge King GEORGE alone, for his Rightful Head, and his Supreme Ecclesiastical Governour.

THE

T H E

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- That if Christ is a good King, Antichrist must be a wicked Tyrant. *ibid.*
- That if Christ is the holiest of Priests, Antichrist must be the vilest. *ibid.*
- That if Christ is a true Prophet, Antichrist must be a false one. *ibid.*
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1. *To restore the Law of Nature.* *ibid.*

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A D I S



A

DISCOURSE

UPON THE

First EPISTLE General

O F

St. J O H N,

Chap. 2. and part of the 18th Verse.

Even now there are many Antichrists.



HERE have been several wild and extravagant Explanations, or rather Applications of *Antichrist*, by those who have had a mind to fix it upon some particular Person, as upon the *Pope*, or *Mahomet*, or some other spiritual or secular Tyrants, according as they who apply'd it were corrupted or misguided by Interest, or Malice, or Passion, or Fanatick Enthusiasm; but by *Antichrist*, in the genuine

Sig-

Signification of the Word, may be meant every one who is thoroughly and entirely oppos'd to the Lord's Anointed, *i. e.* to Christ: But because there are no Creatures so oppos'd, and so contrary to him, as the Devil and his Angels they are most properly the Antichrists of whom the Apostle speaks, who appear in sundry Shapes upon this Earthly Globe, and make use of humane Instruments and humane Organs to accomplish their infernal Designs. And as we may find, by the Words of our Text, that many of them appeared in the World, even in the most pure and primitive Times, who is so easy as to believe that they are not more numerous in our Days? In order then to the describing and distinguishing them, so that they may be clearly known and discover'd, we intend in the ensuing Discourse to handle these three Points.

First, We shall give the general Marks of this thorough and entire Opposition of Antichrist to Christ.

Secondly, We shall consider the Designs, the Doctrines, the Examples, and the Influences of one and the other, according to those general Marks of Opposition.

Thirdly, We shall reduce all these Marks to one grand Characteristical Mark; and when we have done this, it will be easy
for

for you (Brethren) to make the Application your selves, and to point out these to one another; of whom it may be said, in the Words of the Text, *viz. Even now there are many Antichrists.*

First then, As our Saviour was a Priest, and the best and holiest of Priests; Antichrist must be likewise a Priest, acting by the Suggestion of the Devil; for no one can be thoroughly and entirely opposed to the best and the holiest, but the most profligate and the vilest of Priests.

Secondly, As Christ is a King who is perfectly good and gracious; Antichrist must be the worst and most insupportable of Tyrants.

Thirdly, As our Saviour was a Prophet, and an infallible Prophet, because he could not but foretel the Events which he himself had decreed; Antichrist, in Opposition to him, must be a Prophet, and for this Reason a false and deluding Prophet, because he has neither himself any Power over the Future, nor is influenc'd and enlighten'd by him who has. But now we come,

Secondly, To consider the Designs, the Doctrines, the Examples, and the Influences of Christ and Antichrist in their Priesthood, their Prophecies, and their Empire.

First,

First, We shall begin with their Empire, because Christ was a Prophet and a Priest, only to advance his Kingdom; and Antichrist too is a Prophet, and a Priest, only to promote his Tyranny. Let us now see what sort of Kingdom the one, and what sort of Tyranny the other, came into the World to establish.

Since then the Kingdom of Christ, or of the Messiah, is a Spiritual Kingdom, or the Kingdom of Heaven, the Tyranny of Antichrist must be a Spiritual Tyranny, or the Tyranny of the Prince of Darkness.

Let us now enquire what this Kingdom of Heaven is, and in what it consists; how it began and flourish'd; how it came to be impair'd, and how far our Saviour came to restore it; and we shall see, by making this Enquiry, what sort of Tyranny the Tyranny of the Devil is; how it began, how it increased, how it came to be impair'd; and how far Antichrist has a design to restore it.

The Kingdom of Heaven then, is a Kingdom whose King proposes the Happiness of his Subjects, as the ultimate End of his Reigning over them; for God is perfectly happy in himself, and wants not our Obedience, nor our Service. A Kingdom whose King proposes to make his Subjects easy and happy here, to prepare them
for

for eternal Happiness hereafter. *Matt. 11. 28.* *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* His Empire then must be an Empire of Reason and Law, and, by Consequence, an Empire of Liberty. *St. James 1. 5.* *But who so looketh into the perfect law of liberty, that man shall be blessed in his deed.* 'Tis this Law of Liberty which establishes the Rule of Reason, to restore the Kingdom of God, his Empire over the Soul and Conscience, and frees Man from the Slavery into which he was brought by his Passions, which is the Empire and Tyranny of the Devil, and of Antichrist his Son.

For this Tyranny of Antichrist, being in every thing opposite to the Kingdom of Christ, must design both the Temporal and Eternal Misery of his Subjects; must design to make them unhappy here, in order to the making them eternally miserable hereafter, and must not be a Rule of Reason and Law, but an Empire of Passion and Will; and must tend in every thing to subvert the Empire which Christ hath established upon Earth, and to restore the Tyranny of the Devil, whose Kingdom, as it began at first, so it hath ever since continued, in Opposition to, the Kingdom of Heaven. And as our Saviour teaches his Disciples to renounce the World, the Flesh,

and the Devil, in order to advance his Kingdom upon Earth, Antichrist obliges his to make use of all three, to promote his spiritual Tyranny.

The Kingdom of Heaven began with the Creation of Angels. God reign'd over those blessed Spirits, who are entirely happy in their Obedience; and their great and comprehensible Law was Love, the Love of God and their Fellow Creatures. They loved God, because they saw him as he is, all Beauty and all Attraction; and they loved their Fellow Creatures, because they saw them the Objects of their Creator's Love. Gosp. of St. John, Ch. 15. ver. 12. *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.* 1 Epist. of St. John, Ch. 4. ver. 11. *If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* And this Love was at once their Duty and their Happiness; a Love attended with perfect Pleasure, and with Joy unspeakable.

But when afterwards the impious Aspirer, *Lucifer*, drew off his Love from his Creator and his Fellow Creatures, and placed it upon himself, that Self-love was immediately attended with Pride, and Rage, and Envy, and Hatred, and Malice; Passions till then unknown in Heaven, as being inconsistent with perfect Happiness.

Thus

Thus fell *Lucifer* ; but alone he fell not ; Millions of immortal Spirits be drew after him into Perdition. By his Lies he seduced their Souls, defaced in their Minds the Love of their Creator, and of their Fellow Creatures for their Creator's sake, and planted the Love of themselves there. With Divine Love away went all their Happiness. Self-love was immediately followed in them, as in their Seducer before, by Pride, and Rage, and Envy, and Hatred, and Malice ; and they who while they were united to God by Love, were Angels, divided from him by Pride and Hate, became immediately Devils ; and from the most glorious, most happy, most beautiful part of the Creation, became all on a sudden the most execrable and the most horrible : And as before they fell, that Divine Love by which they were united to God, was at one and the same time their sovereign Law, and their supreme Felicity ; so when by Pride and Hatred, and the rest of their Diabolical Passions, they broke that Divine Union, their Pride, their Hatred, and the rest of their tormenting Passions, became at once their Transgression and their Hell.

It was after this that God created Man, to supply the Room of the fallen Angels, and to plant the same Kingdom upon Earth which remained among the blessed

Spirits in Heaven. He created him little lower than the Angels; enlightned, innocent, happy, immortal. The Empire of his Maker was the same in him, that it was in those blessed Spirits, an Empire of Reason and Law; and the same Law was given to him which made the Angels happy. That great and comprehensive Law was Love; the Love of his Maker and of his Fellow Creatures, for his Creator's sake; *which* (as the Apostle of the Gentiles tells us) *is the fulfilling of all Law*; and which our Saviour had told us before, Gosp. of St. John, Chap. 14. ver. 23. *If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* And as long as this charming Law remained in the Heart of Man inviolated, it was always attended with Peace, and Joy, and inexpressible Happiness.

But Satan, who in every thing by Divine Permission opposes the Designs of God, attempted to destroy that Kingdom upon Earth, which he had before impair'd in Heaven. And what Wonder if the Seducer of Angels succeeded in his Attempts upon Man; if he extinguish'd Divine Love in his Heart, and inflam'd it with Self-love; if he dissolved that Union which Man had with God, and overturn'd his

Depen-

Dependance on him; destroy'd the Empire which Heaven had set up in his Soul, which was an Empire of Reason and Law, and establish'd his own Tyranny there; an Empire of Will and Passion, of Pride, and Rage, and Hatred, and Malice, and all those accursed and damnable Passions, by which the Tormentor is himself tormented, to which the Tyrant is himself a Slave?

Thus Satan brought Sin, and Misery, and Death upon Man; who was created innocent, happy, immortal: And the Kingdom which he established here upon Earth, in opposition to the Kingdom of Heaven, encreas'd so fast, and extended so wide, that Charity, which is the Love of God and our Neighbour, was almost extinguish'd upon Earth; that Men were miserably divided from God, and from one another; and that all Mankind, to the reserve of a small Remnant, were become abandoned Slaves to the Devil, and to Devilish Passions, when Jesus Christ came into the World to restore the Kingdom of his Father, and to destroy the Tyranny of the Devil.

For this Purpose the Son of God was manifested, *That he might destroy the works of the Devil,* 1 Epist. of St. John, Chap. 3. Ver. 8.

When

When the Son of God came into the World to destroy the Tyranny of the Devil, and to restore his own and his Father's Kingdom; that Kingdom of Love, and Peace, and Joy, which was by the Divine Permission impair'd upon Earth by the Devil, at the Fall of Man, and under which the blessed Spirits are for ever happy in Heaven; in order to restore that Kingdom, he assum'd the Priesthood. Not only because there was a Necessity for a Priest, who could make a propitiatory and satisfactory Sacrifice for the sins of the World; but because also there was a Necessity for a Doctrine, which might incline and rectify the Wills of Men, by enlight'ning and convincing their Understandings; that as Man fell from Perfection freely and of his own choice, he might likewise be restor'd freely and of his own choice; since if the Change in him should be wrought wholly by Grace, his Conversion would proceed from a Force as it were upon his Mind, and would not be the Action of a free Agent.

The Kingdom then that our Saviour came to restore, was the Empire of Charity, the Love of God, and of our Neighbour for the sake of God. For where-ever that Divine Love reigns, there is the Kingdom of Heaven; and where-ever that Love

(111)
is wanting, is Hell and outer Darknes.
Beloved (says St. John) *let us love one another. Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love,* St. John's first Epist. Chap. 4. Ver. 7, 8. But here, by the way, we are to take notice, that this Love of our Neighbour is to be extended to all Mankind, even to our most cruel Enemies; But it ought to be more intense or remiss, according to the different Relations in which Men stand to each other. We ought to love Christians more than Infidels; our Parents and Kindred more than our Acquaintance; our Acquaintance more than Strangers, and our Country Men more than Foreigners.

As the Law of Divine Love, in the Observation of which lay the Happiness of the first Man, and the Perfection of his Nature, was subverted by Self-love, upon the Suggestion of the Devil; our Saviour, that he might re-establish that Divine Love, endeavour'd to root out the Love of one's Self, by a Doctrine that was best adapted to the reasonable Nature of corrupted Man. He attack'd it therefore in all the several Branches of it, Pride, Avarice and Luxury; or in the Words of St. John, *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*: to which he oppos'd a pro-
found

found Humility, a rigid Mortification, and a sincere Disinterestedness. Not that fantastick Scorn of the World which proceeds from a Stoical Pride, but that which is founded upon the most solid Foundation, the Interest that one has in God: For he to himself being self-sufficient, he who has him, has all Things.

But as Pride is the most dangerous of the three foremention'd Sins, (for that is the continual Feaver of the Mind; whereas the other attack it but by irregular Accesses, Pride insolently intruding at the very Altar, where the others never dare to approach,) there is no Vertue that our Saviour recommends more throughout the whole Gospel, than Humility; nay, almost every Vertue which he recommends to his Disciples, appears to be founded on that; as Poorness of Spirit, Meekness, Gentleness, Patience, Forbearance, Peace-making, Long-suffering, Mercy, Forgiveness: for nothing is more usual than for the Proud to be swollen and drunk with Vanity; to be provoking, disdainful, insolent, fiery, impatient, intractable, cruel, revengeful, implacable. That Sorrow and Remorse which is necessary to Repentance, implies a severe Mortification, upon a View of the Turpitude of Sin, and the Vileness of our own Natures. Even the three Cardinal

Vertues

Vertues of the Christian Religion are founded upon Humility. Not only Charity, to which the other two are subordinate; for as Pride is the Effect of Self-love, Self-love is augmented by Pride: but Faith, which is an Assent to Truths above our Understanding, because they are revealed by God to us, is an owning of the Weakness and Blindness of our Reason, as the Hope of Salvation by the Merits of Christ, is a manifest Confession of the Depravity, and Corruption, and Impotence of our Wills.

As true Humility is the solid Foundation of every Christian Vertue; a Foundation which extending as low as Hell, is the Basis of a Fabrick which reaches to the very Heaven of Heavens; our Saviour's Doctrine attack'd Pride in all its numerous Offspring, Anger, Envy, Hatred, Malice, and in all their unrighteous Effects, *viz.* bitter and barbarous Invectives, presumptuous and damnable Judgments, Debate, Contention, Strife, Revenge, and Murder; and opposed to them the contrary Vertues, Gentleness, Meekness, Patience, Forbearance, Peace-making, Mercy, Longsuffering, and Forgiveness; nay more, real and unfeigned Love to our most cruel Enemies. Those who had the foremention'd Graces, our Saviour pronounced Blessed, and left

it to be demonstrated by Experience, how much accursed they were, who were tormented by the Passions, and the Sins.

Thus our Saviour taught the Will of his Father, which descended from Heaven to Earth with him; and being for ever an High Priest after the Order of *Melchizedec*, the Prince of Peace, an Order which is infinitely superiour to the *Aaronical* Order, infused into the Hearts of his Disciples; not a windy, contentious Zeal, for the Observation of Forms and Ceremonies, and the Political Government of an Establish'd Church; but Vertues and Graces which no Philosophy, and no Religion had ever taught before; *viz* a profound Humility, and a Love Divine.

But tho' this Doctrine was never so conformable to the reasonable Nature of corrupted Man, and tho' it was confirm'd by Signs and Wonders, that manifested a Power which commanded Nature, and which made the very Devils obey; it would never have prevailed over the Minds of Men, which are influenc'd so forcibly and constantly by their Senses, if it had not been enforced by the Example of him who taught it. His Life and his Doctrine were all of a Piece: and as the Design of his coming down from Heaven was, by the means of Humility, to restore Charity,

to re-unite Mankind to God, and to one another; his Life and his Death, his Incarnation, his Birth, his Baptism, his Choice of the most abject of Men for his Disciples, and his Submission to the Death of the Cross, were each of them so many eternal Lessons of Humility, were all of 'em so many amazing Miracles of unparall'd Condescension, and of Love Divine.

His very Miracles were of a Piece with the rest of his Life, and were so many Examples to that Doctrine of Charity which they confirm'd by their Power; as different in this from those which were wrought by *Moses*, as their Designs were different. For as the Design of *Moses* was to separate and distinguish one Nation from another, and to establish one by the Extirpation of many; the Wonders which he wrought were answerable to that Design, attended by Terrour, and followed by Destruction, wrought in favour of a few, comparatively speaking, to the Plague, and Misery, and Destruction of many.

But as the Design of our Saviour's descending from Heaven, was to remove all Separation, and all Distinction, and to heal all Divisions amongst Men; as his Doctrine was adapted to all Nations, and to all Men, contrary in that to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Judaick Law; as it was

framed to comprehend all, to unite all, and to make all its Followers easie here, and eternally happy hereafter: So likewise his Miracles, without Partiality and without Distinction, brought Help and Comfort to all, The *Roman* and the *Samaritan*, as well as the *Jew*; had nothing of Terrour, had nothing of Destruction in them; but were peaceful and gentle all of them, as the Dove that descended from Heaven upon him who wrought them.

If Men were hungry in desert Places, he was at the Expence of a New Creation to feed them; if they were languishing under Diseases, by a supernatural Power he healed them: he healed them by that gentle and peaceful Power which calm'd the Winds and Seas that were about to destroy them; that Power that controul'd and rebuk'd the Devils that were busied in tormenting them.

As our Saviour's Miracles were all of a Piece with his Doctrine, his Delivery of that Doctrine was worthy of them both.

It was with Power that penetrated to the inmost Soul, and astonish'd and confounded his most obdurate Hearers. St. Luke

Chap. 4. Ver. 32. *And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power.*

And St. Matth. Chap. 7. Ver. 29. *For he taught them as one having authority, and not*

as the Scribes. His Delivery of his divine Doctrine, was not like that of the cold, unconcern'd and flegmatick Teachers of the Law: No, there was no less than God in his Voice, in his Mien, and in his every Action.

As Religion so far resembles Civil Government, that it must be carried on by the same Methods by which it first began; the Apostles, after our Saviour's Ascension, continued to preach the very same Doctrine that he had taught before, confirm'd it by Miracles of the same Kind, enforc'd it by an Imitation of their Master's Life, and by their own wonderful Delivery of it. When the Apostle of the *Gentiles* preached to the *Grecians*, his manner of speaking appear'd as new to them as the Doctrine he taught: And as he spoke of Things to them, which neither Eye had seen, nor Ear had heard, nor had it entred into their Hearts to conceive; so he spoke to them in such a manner, as never Man had spoke to them. And there was something in his Delivery, as far above the Thunder of their *Pericles* and their *Demosthenes*, as the Things which he had said to them, were of infinitely more Importance, and more Concern to his Hearers. And he, who when he spoke of the Things of this World, was so very cold, and so unconcern'd, that his Bodily
Presence

Presence was weak, and his Speech contemptible; even this cold and unconcern'd Apostle, when he discours'd of Righteousness, of Temperance, and of Judgment to come, was so strangely animated, so wonderfully penetrated with the Heavenly Truths which he utter'd, that the very Tyrant who came to Judge him and to Condemn him, trembled at what his Prisoner spoke. *Acts 24. 25.*

Which naturally brings me to the Effect and Influence, which so Divine a Doctrine, thus enforced, and thus deliver'd, had upon the Minds of its Hearers. Which is as much greater than the Impressions which the Discourses of the *Grecian* Orators had upon their Assemblies, as Heaven is greater and higher than Earth. And whereas those Orators thought they effected a mighty matter, if they changed the Opinions of their Assemblies, in relation to their own, their Friends, or their Countries Reputation and Interests; our Saviour and his Apostles prevailed upon those who heard them, to contemn all earthly Reputation and Interests; to despise Riches, and Power, and Glory, and even Life it self. And the working this Change in the Heart of corrupted Man, was a greater Miracle, than the changing the Elements, the healing Diseases, or the driving out Devils.

Behold

Behold Thousands of Souls flaming with Charity, and loving their Creator with all their Might, and their Neighbours as themselves. Behold them parting with all they have, and willing and contented to suffer Want, to relieve the Necessities of others.

Acts, Chap. 4. ver. 31. to the end. Behold Thousands of Souls gladly choosing, and joyfully embracing Poverty, and Infamy, and Sorrow, and Pain, and Death, to render themselves acceptable to him whom they love. So much was the Kingdom of God restored, and the Tyranny of the Devil impaired, in the Hearts of Men.

Such were the Effects of our Saviour's Doctrine, such was the Influence which it had on the Minds of Men; at which Satan, alarm'd; contriv'd by a Master-piece of infernal Malice, to make this very Religion, by which Christ design'd to unite Men to God and to one another, the Occasion of introducing a more dangerous and desperate Division between them, than ever had appear'd upon any worldly Account; of making Self-love to take a deeper Root, and spread with more luxuriant Branches; of kindling in Mens Hearts a spiritual Pride, more fierce and more fiery than had ever appear'd before; a Pride attended with a more implacable Anger, a more inveterate Malice, and a more ir-

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reconcilable Hatred. And in order to succeed in this Devilish Design, he who knows by himself, who ruins Man by soothing and by pleasing him, that there is no Enemy like the Traytor-Friend, and that so Divine a Doctrine could not be resisted effectually, if it were opposed openly; attempts to destroy it, by a Pretence to propagate it; delegates his spiritual Tyranny to some Christian Priests, and prevails upon them, in order to extend it and establish it, to divide, and weaken, and ruine the Church, by a pretended, impudent, obstreperous Zeal for its Unity; to teach his Will for the Will of the Most High, and by a Height of Wickedness, which would be incredible if we had not so often seen it, to prove the Doctrine of the Devil by the Word of God, miserably wrested to the Perdition of the perfidious Teachers, and the credulous Hearers. *I Tim. 4. 1. Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, That in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits, and to doctrines of Devils.*

These are the Antichrists mention'd in the Text; who to promote their own and the Devil's spiritual Tyranny, preach not the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, but the Devil's and their own. 'Tis not their Business to preach up Charity, or to teach Humili-

ty, or any of the Vertues that produce or maintain Charity, as Gentleness, Meekness, Patience, Forbearance, Peace-making, Mercy, Long-suffering, and Forgiveness. If at any time they take Notice of the Doctrine of Christ, in order to mingle it with their own, and make the latter pass unsuspected, they do it after such a manner, as shews very plainly, that it is not that they espouse; as shall be further observ'd in its proper Place. Their Business is to preach Division and Dissention, a Spirit of Party and of Faction, and to incite and inflame those Passions that create or nourish Division; as Anger, Envy, Hatred, Malice, evil Speaking, evil Surmizings, impudent and opprobrious Invectives, presumptuous and damnable Judgments, pretended Distrusts and ungrounded Jealousies, audacious and provoking Threatnings, Debate, Contention, Strife, Revenge, Confusion, Riot, Murder. 'Tis their Business to incense and exasperate their Disciples against all who contradict their Opinions; not what they pretend to believe as to the *Credenda* of Christianity, but the Faith they profess as to their own Traditions, and the Doctrines of Devils. And therefore 'tis their Business to inflame their Disciples, not against Infidels (whether *Jews* or *Turks*,) or against Pagans, but against

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those of the Christian Faith; nor against those, who while they have only the Name of Christians, are either Deists or downright Atheists by an open avowed Profession, or are thought to be such at least in their Hearts, by the horrible Sins in which they live impenitent; but against true and sincere Believers; against those who are under the Fear of God, and the sacred Power of Conscience. These they account their mortal Enemies, against whom they exasperate and inflame their Disciples, exhorting them both by Voice and Example, sometimes to laugh, sometimes to rail with unmanner'd frontless Invectives, at all the most venerable Christian Vertues which shine so bright in the others, as Humility, Meekness, Moderation, Union, Charity; to hate them with an irreconcilable Hatred, to keep no Faith with them, to hold no Trust inviolable, to be bound by neither Vows nor Oaths, but as often as they find Opportunity, to pursue them to the Destruction of their Reputation, Liberty, Goods, and Life it self; and to break thro' all Bonds, both Divine and Humane, to oppress them and destroy them.

And as the Power of this World is necessary for the supporting their spiritual Tyranny, they never fail to insinuate into their Disciples, that 'tis their Duty to throw

as much of it into their Hands, as they are able to grasp; to persuade them, that they are bound to espouse the Cause of those temporal Tyrants, with whom They their Pastors have made an implicit Contract for the mutual enslaving of Mankind. And the more these temporal Tyrants are the Devil's Vicegerents, the more they trample upon Law, and Reason, and Equity, which are Bonds of Peace and Union to Mankind; that 'tis still more their Duty to extol them, to obey them, to serve them, and to adore them. And if these Tyrants are the Rulers of the Native Countries of these Antichrists and their Disciples, these Teachers industriously inform their Hearers, that they are absolutely and indispensably bound to obey them, whatever exorbitant Things they enjoin, or to suffer whatever they are graciously pleased to inflict; and this, contrary to Nature's original Law, (the first and strongest Precept of which is Self-preservation, and in order to it Self-defence,) that Law which our Saviour came to restore and to fulfil, and which none but the Devil and his Disciples can ever come to destroy. And to induce them to this blind and impious Obedience, they endeavour to prove, that these Tyrants are their Lords by Virtue of Fatherhood, and their Sovereign by Right

Divine; tho' as good, as wise, and as forcible Arguments may be brought to prove, that the Devil is a Lord by Virtue of Fatherhood, and a Monarch by Right Divine, and consequently, that he ought always to be obeyed, and never to be resisted.

And as these Antichrists teach their Disciples to hate and persecute those Christians most, who are under the Fear of God, and the Power of Conscience; of all their Country Men and Fellow Subjects, they instruct them to hate and malign them most, who are the most Zealous for the Maintenance of their native Rights, and the Validity and Power of Law.

But if the aforementioned secular Tyrants are the Rulers of foreign Nations, and are mortal Enemies to the native Countries of these Antichristian Teachers, and of their Disciples; they are so far from being discouraged by this, that they are animated and encouraged the more to prevail upon their Hearers to espouse them and to assist them, to rejoice at their Successes, and to mourn at their Calamities, and to declare themselves Enemies to their native Country, and their native Rights, and Traytors to their lawful Prince, and to their very God, in spite of the most sacred and binding Oaths which they have taken to the contrary.

contrary. Nay, they exhort and prevail upon those Disciples to take the most solemn and binding Oaths to be true to their Prince, their Country, their Religion, and their Liberty, only that they may oppress them with the greater Security, and betray them more effectually.

Nor is the Doctrine of Antichrist more remov'd from Charity, than his Life, which is the most contrary to it that possibly can be imagined. He divides from his Brethren of the Priesthood, as soon as he finds that they are oblig'd to profess peaceful and Christian Vertues, and that he cannot with them compass his spiritual Tyranny. And St. *John*, in the Words of the Context, makes this very Division one distinguishing Mark of Antichrist. 1 Epist. of St. *John*, Chap. 2. Ver. 18, 19. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby ye may know that it is the last time. Ver. 19. They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest, that they were not at all of us.* He lives, converses with none, preaches to none, but such as profess Divisions; divides from all who are under the Power of the Gospel, or the Power of Law; is a Foe, not only

only to good Subjects, but to good Princes, and a Friend to Tyrants alone: A Traitor not only to his Prince, but to his Country, whose Constitution he attacks by his enslaving Doctrines, and his more wretched abject Politicks of absolute Non-resistance, unconditional Obedience, the most insufferable kind of High Treason. For if he so justly suffers Death, who only attempts the Executive Power, what may he not deserve, who audaciously attacks, not only all the Legislative (which includes the Executive,) but the very Law? He not only hates both Princes and Subjects, who govern by, and declare for Law, but hates them with a more envenom'd Hatred, a more felonious Rancour, than ever has been known, upon a mere secular Account: Reviles, reproaches, misrepresents, calumniates them, and, as far as lies in his Power, oppresses, ruins, curses, kills, and damns them.

Instead of a profound and a Christian Humility, he manifests a more than Humane Pride; exalts himself above all that the World calls Great, with his independent Power, his uninterrupted Succession, his indelible Character, and his Right Divine. And that Pride is attended, against all who oppose it, with a Rage, an Envy, a Hatred, a Malice Inhuman and Diabolical.

But

But above all, a disdainful, ridiculous Fury, and an unheard of Cruelty; a Cruelty that spares no Age, no Sex, and no Degree; that has destroy'd entire Nations, the People and their Kings together.

Instead of the abject contemptible Condition of our Saviour and his Disciples, behold his Opposite with pompous Titles, and pompous Equipages, and an Ambition still unfixable. Instead of their Poverty, and their Disinterestedness, behold him loaded with Benefices, Sinecures, Pluralities, Dignities; flowing with Wealth, yet pining still with Avarice. Instead of their rigid Mortifications, behold him indulging himself in Feasts, more luxurious than the Feasts of others; behold him meditating a lazy, a refined, and a temperate Luxury, that pampers and indulges Nature; instead of oppressing her; that keeps all her Appetites sharp and keen, and raises all her Lusts and Passions high.

As his Doctrine is confirmed by his Example, it is extremely enforced by his manner of Delivering it. But because he is oblig'd to mix the Doctrine of the Gospel with his own, in order to make the latter pass by Virtue of the former, let us distinguish what he preaches into, *First*, The Doctrine of Christ; *Secondly*, Humane Traditions,

ditions, and Humane Inventions ; and, *Thirdly*, The Doctrines of Devils.

First then, He is obliged to preach the Doctrine of our Saviour in order to make his own pass. And that Doctrine comprehends, *First*, the Duties, and, *Secondly*, the Mysteries of Christianity. These Duties likewise are either, *First*, purely Moral, or, *Secondly*, Christian. For those that are purely Moral, he preaches them coldly, enforces them feebly, dehorts from the contrary Vices faintly ; scarce ever mentions those which are most raging and most epidemical ; or if at any time he does mention them, he has nothing in his Air, in his Tone, in his Action, that shews an ardent Concern for the Glory of God, for the Prosperity of the State that he lives in, or for the Salvation of the Souls of Men.

For the Christian Vertues, and especially those of Charity and Humility, his Hearers can never have any Notion of 'em from him. Charity, in his Mouth, dwindles to mere giving of Alms, which is but a poor and inconsiderable Branch of that Divine Vertue. He seems to be afraid to let his Disciples so much as hear of the Love of God, and of all Mankind for the sake of God ; or if he does at any time mention it, even that ardent Vertue grows cold in his Mouth, and expires upon his Antichristian

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stian Tongue, scarce ever reaching the Ears of his Hearers, much less piercing their Hearts. His Soul is an utter Stranger to those Heavenly Emotions, those Divine Raptures that inflame the Hearts of the ravish'd Hearers with Seraphick Love. He never so much as preaches one Sermon, never so much as writes one Treatise of that attractive Vertue Humility, the soft and tender Nurse of Charity. He either says nothing of Patience, Submission, Forbearance, Long-suffering, or he preaches them after such a manner, that in his Mouth they produce Tumult, Fury, Faction, Riot, and Rebellion, and all those Diabolical Passions and Diabolical Vices, which are so destructive to the Temporal and Eternal Happiness of Men.

And all these Duties, both Moral and Christian, are but feebly and faintly enforced by the Mysteries, even those stupendous Mysteries, that are capable of supplying him with the most moving and sublimest Eloquence, with a more than humane Force and Fire, and with a Vehemence irresistible; those Mysteries so wonderfully important to himself and to his Hearers, which no Man can believe and speak of as he ought to do, but he must alarm and alter Nature in the Hearts of all who listen to him; raise the most transporting Joy on the one

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side, or the most dreadful Astonishment, the most amazing Horrour on the other; those very Mysteries are spoke of by him after so cold and languishing a Manner, as causes Unbelievers to turn Scorers, and Believers to become Apostates. How does the Deist smile, and the Atheist laugh, to see this Preacher discourse of Death and Judgment, of Heaven and Hell, calmly and without Emotion, who the Moment afterwards, falls into a Flame upon an empty Dispute, of turning to the East, or bowing to an insensate Altar!

But he who is so unconcerned for the Salvation of the Souls of Men, for the Honour of God, and the Interest of Religion, comes immediately to be warm and eager, when his own Reputation and his own Interest are never so little concern'd. And he who daily with Phlegm and Temper hears the Name of his Maker profan'd, his Mysteries revil'd, his Threatnings defy'd, his Protection renounc'd, nay, and his very Being deny'd, contends warmly and eagerly for Humane Traditions and Humane Inventions; for Forms, and Rites, and Habits, and Ceremonies, and whatever serves to nourish his Spiritual Pride, and indulge his Lust of Power.

But

But when in order to extinguish Charity, to divide Mankind, and to increase his own and his Father's spiritual Tyranny, he preaches the Doctrine of Devils, preaches Rage, and Hatred, and Envy, and Malice, then is his Delivery becoming of his Doctrine; then you may behold him burning with Fury, and distorted with Convulsions, and both Body and Soul entirely possess'd with the same infernal Passions, which he would excite in his Hearers.

Let us now consider the Influence which such Doctrines, such Examples, and such a Delivery has upon the Minds of Men. We have already hinted, that the Design of the Devil by Antichrist, is, to take Occasion from the Christian Religion, by which our Saviour design'd to unite Mens Affections to himself and to one another, to introduce a more dangerous and desperate Division among them, than ever had been known before: And now we shall shew, that he so far obtain'd his Design, that there was a more general Vertue among Men in the grossest Times of Paganism, than there has been since our Saviour came into the World, excepting the first and most primitive Times of Christianity; that is, those Times when the Supreme Magistrate was not as yet Christian, and Christian Priests were yet undebauch'd by

worldly Power and Greatness; and *Secondly*, That there is at this Time a more general Vertue in other Places, than there is in the Christian World; and *Thirdly*, That this Deficiency, and these Corruptions among Christians, have proceeded, and do proceed, from the Antichristian Lives and Doctrines of several among their Clergy.

First, There was a more general Vertue in the Times of Paganism, than ever there has been since our Saviour came into the World. In those Times of Idolatry, there were more free Nations in the World, than ever there have been since the Establishment of the Christian Religion. And since there was more Liberty then, there was more Union, more Justice, more Fortitude, more Publick Spirit. For Antichrist, in order to extinguish Charity, and to raise Divisions among Men, makes it his Business, with all his Might, every where to establish Tyranny. For as Civil Liberty is founded upon Vertue, and Reason, and Law; Tyranny is establish'd upon Will, and Passion, and Vice: And as Mankind is united by Reason, and Vertue, and Law, they are divided by Humour, and Passion, and Vice. Among those free States that flourished in the Times of Paganism, there were two more illustrious than the rest, who before Corruption crept in amongst them,

them, had the Moral Vertues in so high a Degree, as no Christian Nation has ever been able to boast of. There was a successive Race of Heroes among them, who had not only a Temperance and Justice, a Valour, but even a Disinterestedness, and Magnanimity, and an Height of Heroic Fortitude, which made them as much superiour to other Men, as other Men are to Beasts. Nay, without being taught Charity by Divine Revelation, or sustained in it by the Greatness of the Christian Hope, they practised a very good Degree of it, either by the Force of Reason and Nature, or by some secret Inspiration. For they had a Publick Vertue and Publick Spirit, which the Christian World has thought more proper for its Wonder, than Imitation. They loved Liberty and their Country more than Life, hated Slavery more than Death, looked upon all who favour'd Tyrants, as so many Monsters and Parricides, and pursued Tyranny with extream Vengeance, even in their nearest Friends and their dearest Relations. They laid down their Lives with the greatest Alacrity, for their Country and the Publick Liberty, and never used their Valour against either. They never had any Faction or Division upon a Religious Account, had but few Civil Wars among them, and not one Religious, except

cept the *Egyptians*, who had degenerated into so Bestial a Fanaticism, as made them contemptible to the rest of the World, which easily understood by the Force of Reason, that Religion was design'd to unite and compose, and not to divide and embroil the World.

If from ancient *Rome* or *Athens* we turn our Eyes upon our own Nation, and upon our own Times, where shall we find the least Footsteps of their general publick, or private Vertue? That we have not so much as the Shadow of their general publick Vertue, is plain, even to Sense; for we see Thousands among us disclaiming all Pretence to it. We see Thousands that speak and act with Impunity against their Sovereign, their Country, their Liberty, and their Laws; Persons against whom those Laws have made no Provision, because that our Ancestors never believed that there could be such Monsters and Parricides in Nature. We see Thousands openly threatening Destruction to their Country, their Friends, their Relations, and to every thing that ought to be most dear to them; and contriving Success to the mortal Enemy, of all that ought to be valuable, of all that ought to be sacred to them. Since then we have not the general publick Vertue, nor publick Spirit,

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which rendred those ancient States so illustrious; it follows, that we have not their general private Vertue. For publick Spirit is founded upon private Vertue, and is the necessary Result of that; so that thro' whatever Nation publick Spirit is spread, through that Nation private Vertue must be generally diffused. And therefore, if we daily see so many attempting the Ruine of their Country, 'tis because their Pride, their Avarice, their Necessity, and their Luxury, have made their present Condition insupportable, and any Change desirable. But if any one thinks those ancient States ow'd their general Vertue to the Forms of their Government, which were both Republicks, to him we answer, that no modern Republick either hath, or has had, the Vertue which those ancient States had: Besides, that *Rome* was vertuous under its Kings, and so was *Sparta* and *Macedon* among the *Grecians*, as likewise *Persia* in the Times of its first Monarchs.

But *Secondly*, If we consider only our own Times, we shall find a more general Vertue, both publick and private, in any Civiliz'd Nation upon the Globe, than in those of the Christian World. Cast your Eyes, for Example, among the *Mahometans*, you shall find among them less Ambition, less Avarice, less Luxury, less Fraud, less Injustice,

Injustice, less Perjury, less Perfidiousness, than you shall meet with among Christians. You shall find, that while every Christian State is at present engaged against some other Christian Nation, in a desperate bloody Contention, that these Infidels at the same time have no Wars with those of their own Religion; but that *Mahometans* with *Mahometans*, the *Ottoman* with the *Persian*, the *Persian* with the *Mogul*, living in Friendship and a profound Peace, listen with astonish'd Ears to the numberless, endless Quarrels of the Sons of Charity. What Opinion must they conceive of our Religion, when they find, that the only Persons who profess the practice of Charity, are they who live in endless Wars with those of their own Faith? That they are not only eternally engaged in Civil Wars, which are so rare among themselves, but even in Wars unheard of among the Infidels, and which they cannot think of without Horror, I mean in Wars of Religion? What Opinion must they conceive of the Christian Religion, and of the Faith of those who pretend to teach others Charity, when they find that our very Priests, those Dove-like Messengers of the Prince of Peace, have been the Causes, the Abettors, and the Incendiaries of all those Foreign, and Domestick, and Religious Wars among

mong Christians? When they hear that it was a Priest who first laid the Plan of the *French* Universal Monarchy, which has been the Cause of shedding so much Blood, and of such horrible Devastation in these *Western* Parts of *Europe*? That it was a Priest who first began the Design of the *French* Succession to the *Spanish* Monarchy, and that it was another Priest who finish'd it, which has let out another Deluge of Blood to overflow the Christian World? That it was a Priest who put our first King *Charles* upon those violent Measures, that occasion'd the Civil Wars of *England*? That it was a Priest that involved *Poland* in all that Misery and Devastation in which it now lies waste? That they were Priests who gave up the Liberties of *France*, and afterwards those of *Denmark*? That they are Priests who are at present doing their utmost Endeavour to deliver up our own? What must they think of the Christian Faith, when the very vilest Priests, even of all the vile ones which we have mentioned above, those Priests who put a late unfortunate Prince upon breaking through all those Bonds Divine and Human, which united him to his Subjects; those Incendiaries of Souls, those perfidious Pests of Societies, and common Disturbers of the Christian World, are called by the

Name of the blessed Founder of our Religion, as the most profligate Lay Man that ever was upon the Earth is entituled the most Christian.

But *Thirdly*, if we consider only our own Nation, and our own Times, compared with those of our Ancestors, we shall find that there was among them a more general publick and private Vertue, than we our selves can boast of; and that Priestcraft and Atheism, Ecclesiastical Hypocrisy and Laical Deism, Right Divine and Socinianism, Non-Resistance and Publick Treason, Passive Obedience and unnatural prodigious Luxury, have grown up and increas'd together.

Since then there neither is, nor has been, among Christians, the general publick and private Vertue, that there was in the grossest Times of Paganism; nor is there now in the Christian World the same degree of Vertue that is to be found in some other Parts of the Globe; nor have we, in our own Nation, as much general publick and private Vertue as our Ancestors formerly had; and we yet profess a Religion more pure than our Ancestors formerly knew; a Religion that teaches a more perfect and exalted Vertue, than the Religion, or the Philosophy of the *Gracians* and *Romans* taught, or than is taught by any Religion

gion that is at present establish'd out of the Christian World: It follows, that the want of general Vertue among Modern Christians, must proceed from the Hearers, or the Teachers, of Christianity. But from the Hearers it cannot proceed; for Men are by Nature the same that they were formerly; have the same Force of Understanding; the same passionate and ardent Desire to be rightly instructed, and to be truly happy; and are the more adapted and prepared for Instruction and for Happiness by a greater Light of Knowledge, and a greater Experience of Things.

The Fault being neither in the Doctrine, nor in the Hearers, it follows, that the want of general Vertue must proceed from some of the Teachers, who contaminate the Doctrine of Christ by their own Inventions, and the Doctrines of Devils. But that the want of general Vertue among us, and our deplorable Corruption of Manners, does principally proceed from the foresaid Cause, is evident from that which follows.

A general Vertue depends upon Religion; for all Vertue proceeds from good Sense, or is the Result of Religion: But not one Man in fifty having good sense, a general Vertue must be the Result of Religion; which is likewise proved by Experience: For all States thro' which a ge-

neral Vertue has been spread, have been at the same time Religious.

But here we ought to observe, that the Religion upon which a general Vertue depends, must be a revealed Religion: For natural Religion speaks to cultivated Reason, which is so rarely found among us; but Revelation speaks to Sense, which is common to all Men.

But of all Revelations, the Christian Religion is most proper, even without the help of supernatural Assistance, to establish a general (both publick and private) Vertue: The publick, because 'tis the only Religion that teaches Charity; which Divine Vertue is the very Height and Perfection of publick Spirit: The private, because every Vertue is comprehended in Charity, and because the Christian Religion has provided the most effectual Remedies for the three chief Causes of the Corruption of Manners; which are, in the Words of the Apostle, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.*

Now every Religion, like every Government, is, humanly speaking, maintain'd by the very same Methods by which that particular Religion was at first establish'd; as that of *Mahomet*, which began by the Sword, was maintained and carried on by the Sword; and the Modern *Roman* Reli-

Religion is maintain'd by the same Force and the same Fraud to which it owed its Origin. And every Religion loses its Force by the contrary Methods to those which at first established it.

As then the Christian Religion was at first establish'd by the Doctrine of Charity, and by the great Examples of Charity, which our Saviour and his Apostles gave through the whole course of their Lives, as it was maintain'd by the same Methods; So Christian Piety can only decay, by the Antichristian Lives, and Antichristian Doctrines, of those who pretend to teach it.

Since then a general Vertue in every Nation depends upon the Revelation establish'd there, whether true or pretended; and the Revelation established in every Nation is maintained by the same Methods to which it owed its Origin, and loses its Force by the contrary Methods as far as it can humanly lose it: And since the Christian Revelation owes its Establishment to the Doctrine and Examples of Charity, which shone in its first Teachers; it follows, that the want of a general Vertue, and that deplorable Corruption of Manners that reigns among us, are owing to the uncharitable Doctrines and Examples of

of some of the Modern Teachers of Christianity.

Thus we have done our Endeavour to shew how Antichrist stands opposed to Christ in his Priesthood, and in his Tyranny. We shall only say one Word of his Opposition to him as a Prophet. And because we have reason to fear that we have been already tedious, we shall pass by the other Prophetical Functions, which are so nearly ally'd to those of the Priesthood, and only just say something of his Predictions. Our Saviour foretold the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the Second Temple, to confirm the Faith of Christians, and to augment their Charity, by shewing how little Dependance is to be had upon the Pomp and Glories of this World, and upon outward and appearing Sanctity. Antichrist foretells the Fall of the Third Temple, which our Saviour has assur'd us shall never fall, only that he may divide and embroil the World, and extinguish Charity. For the Danger of the Church has now for some time been the general Outcry. But may we not have Leave to ask those many Antichrists, when they say the Church is in Danger, What they mean by the Church, and of whom it is compos'd? What the Danger is with which it is threatned? Or, from whom or whence

it must come? May we not have Leave to ask them one plain Question? Are the Souls of Men to whom they preach in danger? If they are not, why do they preach to them? But if they are, is that the Danger they speak of when they say the Church is in Danger? Or, is it another Danger? If they say 'tis another Danger, can any thing be more ridiculous? Can any thing be more absurd, when the grand Concern, nay, the only Concern, the very All of those to whom they speak lies at Stake, to allarm them with Trifles? For what compar'd to that is not a Trifle? There is not one of them that preaches to a very numerous Congregation, but every Sermon which he preaches is the last to some of them, to one of them at least. And who knows when they are assembled, who that one may be? Who knows how near he himself is to Death and final Judgment? How near to a Danger horrible even to conceive? And can this foolish, this trifling, this impudent Preacher pretend to allarm them with another Danger, a Peril of something more remote, a Peril perhaps in Fancy or in Fiction only; a Danger, be it what it will, that is not worth a Moment's Thought, compared to this stupendous Danger? Is not this like putting a Man in mind, who is about to perish in a

Storm, a thousand Leagues off from Shore, just in the Moment that the Ocean opens its dreadful Abyfs to swallow him, of putting him in mind of some trifling Loss that he is like to sustain on Shore? Would not this be a barbarous, would not this be a monstrous mocking of him, just in the terrible Moment that he is about to perish? Would it not be, by so much the more barbarous, by so much the more monstrous, in that it should come from one who must be about to perish with him?

But if by this Danger, he means the Danger of Damnation, which the Souls are in to whom he preaches; from what or whence is this Danger fear'd? Is it from the actual and habitual Sins of his Hearers? Or, have they so few of both, that they are at leisure to apprehend Damnation from something more foreign and more remote? If 'tis from their actual and habitual Sins, and that extream Corruption which reigns in the Congregation to which he preaches; for in what Congregations at present does not extream Corruption reign? Is not this a foolish, is not this an impudent insulting of them? Have some certain Preachers brought them into this Danger? And is it in their Power to help them out of it? And are they contented with barely threatenning it? Has it

not been made most clear and most perspicuous, that the extream Corruption of the Laity, proceeds from the Antichristian Doctrines, proceeds from the Antichristian Practices of some certain Preachers? Let but those Preachers reform their Doctrines, and reform their Practices, and I'll engage that the wretched Laity shall reform immediately.

But alas! the Danger that those Preachers threaten, is not from the Sins of the People to whom they preach; is not from the extream Corruption of Manners that reigns in their Congregations. For when have these Prophets ever inveighed against their most predominant Vices? By what Sermons have they ever signaliz'd themselves against their Ambition, against their Avarice, against their Oppressions, their publick and private Rapines, against their new, their unheard of, their unnatural Luxuries? Did they ever threaten them with Danger from these? Are they really in no Danger from these? Are they not in a thousand times more Danger from these, than they can be from any thing else in the World? if they are, why are they not told so? if they are not, from what wonderful, what unconceivable thing is it from which they are more in Danger?

From what has been said, 'tis plain that by the Danger of the Church, these Preachers mean not the Danger of Damnation which their Hearers are in from their numerous and crying Sins. It follows then, that they mean something that is of no Concern to their Hearers: for if they would speak of things that are of any Concern to them, why not their main, their whole, their tremendous Concern? Why do they omit that, and threaten them with Trifles? Why do they either not mention it, or while they mention, speak of it so very coldly; they who while they speak of the Danger of the Church, declaim so very warmly? Is it not shrewdly to be suspected, that by the Church they mean themselves, mean their own Interests and their own Power? O foolish and miserable Laity! to be so much alarm'd, and deluded, and divided by these, who are so cool, so unconcern'd for you; so very warm, and so very much concern'd for themselves! who not only neglect your real Dangers, but by falsely alarming you with imaginary ones, bring you into the only real, the only dreadful Danger. For let me ask you once more, What is this pretended Danger of the Church? Is it the Danger of the Catholick Church, against the which our Saviour has told us, that *the gates of Hell*

Hell shall not prevail? Is not this Assurance enough, that it shall not fall? Or are some Priests more dangerous than the Devil? Or, by the Danger of the Church, do they mean the Discipline and the Government of some particular Church? As for Example, the Discipline and the Government of the National Church of *England*? Are these in Danger to be alter'd? Supposing they were: These are Things, by the Confession of all, of no Necessity to Salvation; and Things, by the Confession of all but themselves, at liberty to be alter'd in every Nation, at the Will of their Legislators. And consequently, if this Danger were real, it would be of no Significancy to their Hearers. But this Danger is not real; and no Shadow of Proof has been brought to shew, that the Discipline and Government of the Church are in any manner of Peril; nay, unanswerable Arguments have been brought to prove, that they are not in Danger. O foolish and wretched People! to be thus incensed and exasperated against each other, by the vain fear of a fictitious Danger; which, were it true, would be Ten thousand times less than the Danger into which it brings you; a Danger, which, by the Confession of all, is the most real, and most horrible of all Dangers; the Danger of Eternal Damnation from your want of Charity.

The exactest Discipline of the most Perfect Church is only in order to the saving of souls. The Design of our Saviour's coming into the World, was to save souls, and not to establish Discipline: For where is the Discipline which our Saviour establish'd? Can any thinking Man believe, that our Saviour Jesus Christ, who came to pull down the Partition Wall that was between the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, by abolishing the Ceremonial Law, and the Ecclesiastick Discipline of the *Jewish* Nation, could ever design another certain Discipline, and other certain Ceremonies, which he could not but foresee would create a Division among his future Disciples? But Antichrist designs, by destroying Charity, to damn Souls, that he may preserve Discipline. 'Tis the Danger that Ecclesiastical Discipline is in, at which he is constantly allarm'd. O vain and impudent Pretence! For suppose the Danger true, as it is certainly most false, how very foolish must that Preacher be, who pretends to be allarm'd at any thing more, than the Danger of those Souls which alone he preaches to save, than the Danger of those Souls for which alone our Saviour died? How many of those miserable Souls have been forever lost, while they have been hearkning to the Danger of the Church,

Church, and dying impenitent in Hatred and in devilish Malice, by the Instigation of these their Pastors against their innocent Brethren; have, to their Everlasting Confusion, found in Hell that the Church is not in Danger!

Thirdly, Thus I have given you the Marks by which Antichrist stands oppos'd to Jesus Christ, as a King, a Priest, and a Prophet. I shall now sum up all those Marks in one grand Characteristical Mark, that as we have shewn above that Antichrist is a Priest, so it may be plain to the meanest Capacity who these Priests are of whom it may be said, in the Words of the Text, *Even now there are many Antichrists.*

Every Priest then, who, when he preaches, does apparently and maliciously wrest the Gospel, or the Epistles which explain the Gospel, to say something that is quite contrary to the great Design of our Saviour, that Priest is Antichrist. Now the great Design of our Saviour in preaching the Gospel of his Kingdom, was to do principally two Things; *First*, to restore the Law of Nature; and *Secondly*, to revive and restore Charity.

First, The great Design of our Saviour's coming into the World, was to restore and fulfil the Law of Nature. *Matt. 5. v. 17.*

Think

Think not that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. And ver. 18. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Now, what was the Law that our Saviour came to fulfil? Not the Ceremonial Law; for that he came to disannul. Epist. to the Hebrews, Chap. 6. ver. 18. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. ver. 19. For the law made nothing perfect. And what Law is it which our Saviour says must remain to the End of the World? Not the Ceremonial Law, for that is already abolish'd. Heb. 10. ver. 8, 9. Above, when he said, sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offering, thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law. Then he said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. Now, what is this Second Law which our Saviour came to establish? What but the Law of Nature, or the Moral Law; as appears by the foremention'd Chapter, Ver. 16. This is the covenant that I will make with them, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them. Since then the great Design of our Saviour's Doctrine was

to restore the Law of Nature, every Priest who wrests the Gospel, or the Epistles which explain the Gospel, to say any thing which offends against the Law of Nature, that Priest is Antichrist. Now the eldest of Nature's Laws, and that which Man is the hardest brought to violate, by the unanimous Confession of all who have treated of it, is Self-Preservation. But this is most evident, that without Self-Defence the Law of Self-Preservation cannot be kept inviolated; and that without Resistance there can be no Self-Defence. Whatever Priest then pretends to make the Scripture say any thing against any manner of Resistance of unjust Violence, that is necessary to Self-Preservation, this eldest Law of Nature, this Law which God has put in our Hearts, and has writ in our Minds, and which only the Devil and his Disciples can ever design to deface; that Priest is as much opposed to our Saviour, as any thing possibly can be opposed; and is therefore one of the many of whom we may say in the Words of the Text, *Even now there are many Antichrists.*

But *Secondly*, The other great Design of our Saviour's Doctrine was to restore Charity. Gosp. of St. *John*, Chap. 15. Ver. 12. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another.* And this great Design comprehends

hends the other, viz. the restoring of the Law of Nature, Gal. 4. Ver. 15. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* And Rom. 13. ver. 8, 9, 10. *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* v. 9. *For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* v. 10. *Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* Thus Charity includes the Law of Nature. But it likewise includes a great deal more. For by the Law of Nature, as it stands now, is meant only that which can be gathered by the Light of Reason: but the Law of Charity includes more than what can be gather'd from the Light of corrupted Reason, and is the first Law of Nature which was given to *Adam* in his State of Perfection, 1 Epist. of St. John, Chap. 3. vers. 11. *For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* Charity is the greatest of all the Christian Vertues; by which alone our Saviour tells us, *Matt. 25. that men will be saved at the last day; and for want of which alone he tells us, they will be damned;*

than

than which nothing can be more reasonable and more just: For all other Vertues are but in order to, and as it were the scaffolding of that; and are included in that. When that is perfect, the rest shall cease to be; and all shall at last be swallow'd up in Charity: which shall make the Felicity of the Blessed Ten thousand Ages, after Temperance, Prudence, and Fortitude, nay, after Faith and Hope themselves shall have been no more. Now Charity being the only Vertue that reigns in Heaven, he who has not been habituated to it on Earth, would go thither like a Stranger to a remote Country, whose Language and Customs are both unknown to him, and entirely different from his own; and where, by Consequence, he could neither keep any Company, nor find any Pleasure. The Advancement of Charity then was the great Design of our Saviour's coming into the World; for the Advancement of Charity is the Salvation of Souls: And therefore, that Priest who wrests the Scripture to say any thing destructive of that, is emphatically Antichrist.

St. Paul, by what he has said of Charity in the 13th Chapter of the 1st Epistle to the *Corinthians*, has set before us several Marks to know when the Scripture is

wrested to the Destruction of that Divine Vertue.

Charity, says he, vers. 4. suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up. v. 5. Doth not behave it self unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; v. 6. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; v. 7. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. From which it is plain, that whatever Priest makes use of the Scripture to stir up Division amongst Men, to nourish their Malice, their Envy, their Pride; to raise groundless Fears and Jealousies amongst them, and to destroy the Confidence which Members of Societies mutually have in each other, and to compass all this by impudent ill manner'd Invectives, and a sort of Ecclesiastical *Billingsgate*; that Priest wrests the Scripture to say something that is very destructive of Charity, and is emphatically Antichrist.

Nothing can be more seasonable, than here to consider, what the Apostle St. James says of the Tongues of such Men, and themselves, *Jam. 3. ver. 6. The tongue is a fire; a world of iniquity: So is the tongue among the members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell. v. 7. For*
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every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind. v. 8. But the tongue can no man tame: it is abundantly evil: full of deadly poison. v. 9. Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. v. 10. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. v. 11. Doth a fountain send forth at the same time sweet water and bitter. v. 12. Can the Fig-tree, my brethren, bear Olive-berries? either a Vine Figs? So can no fountain yield both salt water and fresh. And the Apostle declares in the following Verses, that these Church-Incendiaries who make it their Business to curse, when 'tis their Duty to bless, who are agitated with Rage, and Envy, and Malice, have a Spirit in them that is directly contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel; ver. 13. *Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation, his works, with meekness of wisdom.* v. 14. *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lye not against the truth.* v. 15. *This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.* v. 16. *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work.* After that the Apostle has, in several of the foresaid Verses, shewn

you the Spirit of Antichrist ; in the following Verses he describes the Spirit of the Gospel, ver. 17. *But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easie to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisie.* And in the next verse he tells us the Effects of it ; v. 18. *And the fruit of Righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.* But alas ! how little is there of this Wisdom, this Spirit, and this Fruit among some Modern Preachers !

Thus St. James declares Railing to be contrary to the Spirit of Charity, and consequently of Christianity. And this is the unanimous Sense both of the Apostles, and of the Evangelists : and that it is never to be allow'd of against any Person or Persons, upon any Pretence or Occasion whatever, let the Crime be never so great, or so horrible. The greatest Crime that ever was committed, was the first ; the Apostacy of *Lucifer* from his Creator ; the greatest of Sins, excepting the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and equal even to that : like that so great, that it was never to be attoned for by any Repentance, and never to be forgiven. Yet *Michael* the Archangel, when contending with the Devil, he disputed about the Body of *Moses*, durst not bring against him a railing Accusation,

tion, but said, *the Lord rebuke thee*. The greatest Crime next to these, was the murdering of the Lord of Life : And yet we find not in any of the Apostles, or in any one of the Evangelists, the least Invective, or the least Bitterness, against *Judas* who betray'd him, or the High Priest who condemn'd him, or *Pilate* who deliver'd him to the Soldiers, or the Soldiers who mock'd and scourg'd and crucify'd him. And will our Modern Antichrists after this pretend to take Occasion from the Gospel of Peace to rail? Will they yet further defend their Railing, by wresting the Scriptures still more to their own Destruction, and the Destruction of their credulous Hearers? Shall the 4th Chapter of St. *Paul's* Epistle to *Titus* be brought to justify this Spirit of Antichrist: *I charge thee therefore before God* (says St. *Paul* to *Titus*, Chap. 4. Ver. 1.) *and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom, ver. 2. Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.* To what is it that the Apostle in this Chapter exhorts *Titus*? Why to preach the Word in Season and out of Season, that is, to preach the Son of God, and the Doctrine of Charity. And shall this be made use of to justify preaching up Division, Dissention, Sedition, and the Doctrines of Devils? Shall the Apostle's Exhortation to reprove, and to rebuke, be made use of to vindicate want of Manners, and such Rudeness as better becomes a drunken Bully than a sober Divine, and a midnight Tavern than

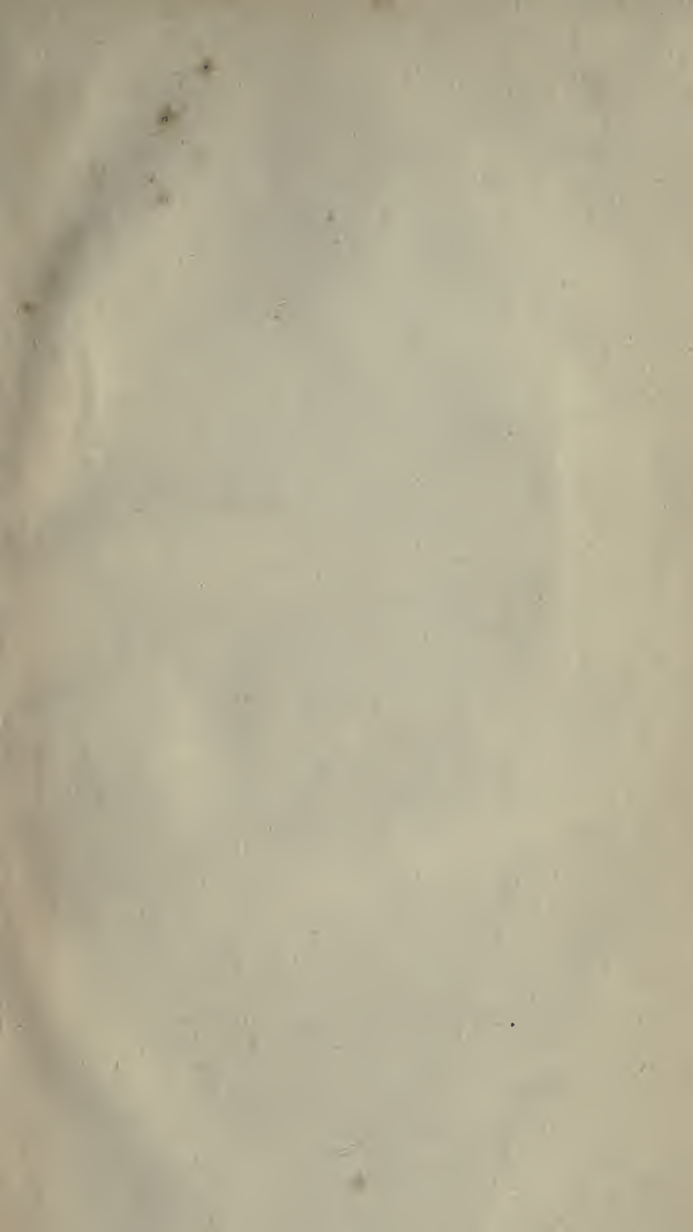
than a Pulpit? especially when St. *Jude* in the 9th Verse of his Epistle mention'd above, has as it were oppos'd Rebuking to Railing, telling us, that the Archangel *Michael* durst not bring a railing Accusation against the Devil, but only said, *The Lord rebuke thee.* And St. *Paul* tells *Titus* in this very Verse, *that his rebuking, and reprov- ing, and exhorting, must be with all long-suffering, and with doctrine,* that is, with Charity. The true Christian is certainly the best well-manner'd Man in the World, if that be the truest good Breeding, which makes a Man most easie, both to himself and others: and no Man who calls himself a Christian ever wanted Manners, but that Man at the same time wanted both Faith and Charity. But if no manner of Railing, in order to excite Envy, and Hatred, and Rage, and Malice, is allow'd of by the Christian Religion, then certainly the most Criminal of all Railings must be that which is pretended to be drawn from this very Religion, which by its principal Commands, a Command comprehensive of all its Commands, obliges us to hate no Man, and to rail at no Man. But as the Railing of our Modern Preachers can by no means be justified by St. *Paul's* exhorting, rebuking and reprov- ing; can the grievous Sufferings of that Apostle for the sake of Righteousness, and the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, be compared to a just and a moderate Punishment inflicted by an offended Legislature, for the preaching Division and Sedition, and the Doctrine of Devils? especially when this very Apostle has told us, *1 Cor.*

13. ver. 3. *Tho' I give my body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.* From which we may conclude, that many a Martyr has gone to Hell, and pass'd from one Flame to another. Is there no difference between a light Suffering and a heavy one, a nominal one and a real one, a just one and an unjust one? Is there no difference between doing the Work of Christ, and the Work of the Devil and his Angels? With whom I will not say, according to their own charitable Christian way of dealing, that I will leave these well-natur'd Preachers, tho' 'tis with the Company they have always kept, as, I believe, has been made pretty plain; but I humbly pray to Almighty God to deliver them out of the Hands of their old Acquaintance, who first seduced them and debauched them, and whom, as is manifest by their Works, they still frequent continually; and of whose House and Family they may most properly be said to be; 1 *John* 3. ver. 10. *In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, nor he who loveth not his brother.* We pray to God to deliver them from these wicked Spirits by a sincere Repentance, for all the Mischief which they have done themselves, and for all which they have been the Occasion of in others; for all the Antichristian Hatred, that is, for all the Murder of which they have been guilty themselves; and of which so many Thousands have been guilty by the Suggestion of them and the Devil. For *St. John* tells us in the 15th Verse of the

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the foremention'd Chapter, *Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer.* The Reason is plain, because whoever hates another would kill him, if he were not restrain'd by the fear of Corporal Punishment. For this is evident, that he is not restrain'd by the Law of Nature, nor by the positive Law of God; not by the Law of Nature, because that obliges him not to hate him, by its great and comprehensive Rule of doing as one would be done by; for no Man is willing to be hated by another: nor is he restrained by the positive Law of God, because that obliges him not to hate him. It follows then, that he is only aw'd by the fear of Corporal Punishment. And how often has this Religious Hatred, this Hatred excited by Antichrist and the Devil, broke out in Wars, in Murders, in Burnings, and in Massacres? How near did it come to these Confusions and these Horrors lately! How soon would it yet come to them, if it were not restrain'd by the Wisdom of our Legislators. We humbly beseech Almighty God, to cleanse the Hearts of all these Antichrists by a severe Repentance, for the numberless Murders of which they have certainly contracted the malicious Guilt, and for perfidiously sapping, at the same time, the Foundations of our Constitution, and the Fundamentals of Christianity. We humbly beseech thee, O God, to pour into their Hearts thy Spirit of Peace, of Meekness, and of Charity, that they may be deliver'd from every evil Work, and preserv'd unto thine own Kingdom. To whom be Glory for Ever and Ever. *Amen.*

The E N D.



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