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THE

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Bishop of St. DAVID's

SERMON

BEFORE THE

House of LORDS,

January the 30th, 172%.



Die Jovis, 1 mo Februarij. 1727.

Rdered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Assembled, That the Thanks of this House be, and are hereby given to the Lord Bishop of St. David's, for the Sermon by Him preached before this House on Tuesday last, in the Abbey-Church, Westminster: And he is hereby desired to cause the same to be forthwith Printed and Published.

Parliamentor'.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

Lords Spiritual and Temporal,

In PARLIAMENT Affembled,

INTHE

Abbey-Church at Westminster,

On Tuesday, January 30. 1723.

Being the Anniversary Fast for the Martyrdom of King CHARLES I.

By the Right Reverend Father in GoD,

RICHARD, Lord Bishop of St. DAVID's.

LONDON:

Printed for JAMES and JOHN KNAPTON, at the Crown in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1728.

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I SAM. xxvi. 9.

against the Lord's Anointed, and be guiltless?

HESE are the merciful and compaffionate Words of David in a very critical Juncture, namely, when a tempting Opportunity occurred of killing King Saul; a Person who had so entirely laid aside all Obligations of Honour, Gratitude, and Conscience, that from a Fatherin-Law he was become, upon the most unjust Pretensions, his implacable Adversary. After the Providential Defeats of many barbarous Schemes formed by Saul to take away the Life of his Son, the enraged King was now fo far possessed by his Evil Spirit, as to pursue David into the Wilderness, attended with a chofen Body of Troops, in order to furround and kill him. Whilst he was engaged in this unna- vers. 2. tural attempt, David (as we are told) came vers. 7. and

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and furprized Saul and the People with him, upon whom a deep Sleep from the Lord had falverf. 12. On this very favourable Occasion for putting an end to the Persecution of Saul by one compendious Stroke, and likewise on Abi-(hai's Suggestion, that God had then deliver'd verf. 8. his Enemy into his Hand; and that, if he were permitted, he himself would be the Executioner: David, we find, was so far from giving him Leave to Avenge him of his Enemy now in his Power, that in the very Moment of a fafe and eafy Attack he checked his officious Zeal, by faying, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his Hand against the Lord's Anointed, and be guiltless? And in the immediately following Verses, David is said to have added, As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall verf. 10, smite him, that is, with some fatal Disease, tI. that might put a judicial Period to his Life; or, fays he, his Day shall come to die; that is, his natural Time of Death would foon approach; or, as he goes on, he shall descend into Battle, and perish, as it actually came to pass. And he concludes accordingly, The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my Hand against the Lord's Anointed!

And this Forbearance of Revenge in David is the more remarkable, because some peculiar Circumstances concurred at that Time, to invite and encourage him to take away the Life of Saul. For Instance, Saul had been rejected by God from being King over Ifrael, for his Crime in sparing the Amalekites And

Chap. xv. verf. 24;

in Consequence of this Rejection, David had been Anointed by Samuel as King of Israel, at least as such in the Designation of Providence on the Death of Saul. So that David himself Chap. xvi. was at that very Time in some sense the Lord's veri. 1, 13. Anointed, though not yet actually advanced to the Throne. And again, a miraculous Sleep. which gave David the forementioned Opportunity, looks like a tacit Approbation of God himself. But notwithstanding these and other strong Inducements, David paid that Reverence to God's Authority in constituting Saul King over Israel, which he that gave it had not yet entirely annulled; that though Saul had very much Abused the high Authority delegated to him, and particularly in repeated Attempts on the Life of David himself, yet he piously resolved, that neither his own Hand, nor that of his warm Friend Abishai, should be employ'd in taking away the Life of his Sovereign. Even on the alluring Prospect of a Crown, the dutiful David restrains the Violence of his Passion, though impetuous enough on other Occasions, and is introduced as fedately faying, Destroy him not; for who can stretch forth his Hand against the Lord's Anointed, and be Guiltles?

Having thus explained so memorable a Fact, by the Context, and other Historical Passages. relating to it; I shall shew, on Occasion of the Words now read to you, and of the Humilia-

tion of this melancholy Day,

First, That the general Reasons against the Crime of Murder, are of vastly greater strength and weight, with regard to the Murder of a King, than of any other Person.

Secondly, That the Murder of a King, confider'd as the Lord's Anointed, is a Crime of an

high and aggravated nature.

Thirdly, That in the particular Instance of Murder we this Day lament, there were peculiar Circumstances of Barbarity and Guilt.

And Fourthly, That we ought to make that good Use of this Day's sad Solemnity, as with the greatest Caution to avoid hereaster all Tendencies and Approaches towards the Crime we now deplore.

In the first place, I am to shew, That the general Reasons against the Crime of Murder, are of vastly greater strength and weight, with regard to the Murder of a King, than of any other Person.

Nothing is more plain and obvious, than that he that takes away the Life of any Person what-soever, not only deprives him of the most valuable Property, but subverts the very Foundation of all other Property and Enjoyment in the present State; and that, consequently, a Violent Death is the greatest Injury possible that can be done to any Person. If then the Murder of any private Person be a very heinous Crime, it is most evident that the Murder of a King

King is a Crime of a more aggravated nature, both as it deprives him at once of his Life and his Royal Dignity, confider'd as the two highest Properties imaginable, and likewise of all Opportunities of promoting the Glory of God, and the publick Good, in that eminent Manner which his exalted Station gives him great Advantages of doing; which indeed is the peculiar Pleasure of Power and Greatness.

But besides this personal Incapacity occasioned by Murder, it ought here to be consider'd, that tho' the Wisdom of all well-constituted Nations has thought it necessary to punish the Murder of a Private person with Death, by fixed and stated Laws, in order to Deter men from a Crime so destructive of Society, and to prevent the Loss of the Members of it; and tho' the Protection of the Lives of Subjects, and the Security of their Properties from unjust Violence, be the great Ends of Government; yet it is evident even to Demonstration, that the Publick cannot be fo much affected, or in such a manner as to bear a Comparison, by the Loss of any Subject, or indeed great Numbers of them, as by the Loss of a Lawful King. For tho' the Loss of some private Subjects, by Murder, is very prejudicial to the Publick; yet fince the Happiness of the Publick depends so much on the Safety of the King, the Murder of him is a Crime of a more complicated Nature, and what usually throws the whole Community into the greatest Confusion possible. And therefore, since the Publick is

presumed to suffer to so high a Degree, on such an Occasion; the Murder of a King is not only to be consider'd as the blackest Treason, according to Law, against himself, but likewise against the Publick and the whole Body of his Subjects, in the extensive Consequences of it. And so it actually happen'd in Consequence of the Murder this Day committed, when our Legal Constitution, both in Church and State, Ex-

pired at once with the King himfelf.

Again; Tho' the Murder of any private Subject is directly contrary to the positive Law of God, which in the earliest Ages of the World did expressly forbid it, under no less a Penalty than the Death of the Murderer; yet the Reason assigned by God for the Punishment of it, holds more strongly by far of the Murder of a King than of a Private person; namely, that in the Image of God he made Man. For tho' every Man is in some respect the Image of God, yet a Lawful King is more emphatically stiled the Image of God, on account of his Authority and Dominion; which whoever totally destroys, most certainly defaces the liveliest Representation of God among Men, and thereby affronts the great Original; and that more especially, when the Regal Power is exercised with Wisdom and Goodness, which in Concurrence render a King most like to God. And to this Primitive Reason, we Christians ought to add the more important Consideration of another World. For, if no Murderer of a private Person has eternal Life abiding in him;

Gen. ix.

ui. 15.

certainly the Murder of a King, which has been shewn to be a Crime of a more complicated and heinous Nature, will be attended with a proportionable degree of eternal Mifery.

Having thus shewn, that the general Reafons against Murder hold more strongly against the Murder of a King than of any others, I now proceed to evince from some Reasons pe-

culiar to the Character of a King,

Secondly, That the Murder of a King, confider'd as the Lord's Anointed, is a Crime of a

very high and aggravated Nature.

The Reason why David, in our present Text, thought it Criminal to take away the Life of King Saul, appears very plainly to have been the Sacred Character of the Lord's Anointed, with which he was invested. This is strongly implied in his reprimanding Question, Who can stretch forth his Hand against the Lord's Anointed, and be guiltless? The meaning of which is best explained by God's own Nomination of Saul, and Samuel's subsequent sam. viii. Anointing of him to be King over Israel by Cod's express Command. And therefore I wil-x. 1, &c. lingly refer you to the History of that whole Transaction in the Holy Scripture.

It must indeed be confessed, that Princes, in the present State of the World, cannot be stilled the Lord's Anointed in the very same strict and exalted Sense as Saul was said to be so; since they now ascend their Thrones by

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the ordinary Methods of God's universal Providence, and agreeably to the Laws and Constitutions of the Kingdoms that they are called to Govern. Though, I say, they are not now immediately Chose, and expresly Appointed by God himself for governing particular Kingdoms, as Saul actually was for the Government of God's own People; yet, in the inferiour Sense of those Words, all lawful Kings are still the Lord's Anointed. They may justly still demand the Reverence of their Subjects, and Obedience to their lawful Injunctions, as they derive their Authority in the last Resort from God, who has founded the Necessity and Benefits of Government in the Wants and Exigencies of human Nature, and has likewife Providentially called to the Throne particular Perfons, according to the Laws and Constitution of every Kingdom. And when fuch Perfons have been Inaugurated by a folemn Unction, and Recognized by the Estates of their respective Realms, as those to whom the Fealty of Liege-Subjects is due, no good Reason can be assigned why they should not still be distinguished by the Character of the Lord's Anoint. And in order to be convinced that this Phrase, the Lord's Anointed, may justly still be understood in a lower Sense, we need only to recollect, that it has been actually applied in Holy Scripture to Kings that were not immediately Chose and expresly Appointed by God. Such, for Instance, was the King, most probably Zedechiah, of whom Jeremiah thus writes. The

The Breath of our Nostrils, the Anointed of Lam. iv. the Lord, was taken in their Pits, of whom we said, Under his Shadow we shall live among the Heathen; that is, during the Babylonian Captivity; and that too, after many Convulsions of Government, from the Time of the Divine Appointment of a King. And indeed the same Expression of the Lord's Anointed was applied by God himself to Cyrus, the celebrated Heathen King of Persia: Namely, Thus faith the Lord to his Anointed, to Cyrus; Ifa. xlv. 1. as the Prophet assures us. Whence it clearly appears, that this Phrase, the Lord's Anointed. is so far from being only applicable to a Person Anointed to be King by God's immediate Command, that it is not confined to the Peculium, but is indeed applicable to all lawful Sovereign Powers under all Constitutions in the World. And it is certain, that the Christian Religion has made no Alteration in this Matter, but has only prescribed Obedience in general to the Higher Powers every where, agreeably to the true Original and great End of all Government, and the particular Laws and Constitution of every Country.

Now though that Prince, whose unhappy Fate we this Day Lament, cannot be called the Lord's Anointed, in the highest Sense of those Words; yet he may be truly stilled so, as he derived his Power ultimately from God, was Consecrated with a Solemn Unction to his great Office, and invested with lawful Authority, according to our particular Constitution

of Government. It is evident then, that they that stretched out their Hands against the Lord's Anointed, their lawful Sovereign, could not be guiltlefs. And indeed they were guilty of an execrable Crime, according to our own particular Laws and Civil Constitution. For whatever just Provision may have been made in them for the Preservation of the Liberties of the People from exorbitant lawless Power, whatever mutual Checks may have been wifely contrived by our Ancestors, in the several Parts of our Constitution; yet it is most certain, that according to our Laws and Constitution, the Lives of our Kings are Sacred and Inviolable; and that it is by no means a Part of the Liberties of Subjects, expressed in the Great Charter, or any ancient Laws, to take away the Life of their lawful King.

If it be faid by way of Extenuation of the Crime committed this Day, that some Political Errours, not very consistent with the Pretensions of a Free People, had been made by the King, whose Violent Death we deplore; it is easily replied, that as some of those Errours are confessed by the Noble Historian of those Times, to have been committed in the more Unexperienced Years of that King, and others of them by the Advice of some Persons round the Throne, that seem neither to have understood our own Constitution, nor the Genius of their own Times; so it is equally certain, that those unhappy Mistakes in Po-

licy were acknowledged and reformed by the King, and guarded against for the future by good and wholfome Decifions of Law. Such a Correction therefore of some Mistakes in Government, ought to have been gladly Accepted, by all dutiful and well-meaning Subjects. For though our Kings are Sacred Persons, they are Fallible Men, and are not exempted from those Infirmities and Errours that are incidental to the rest of Mankind: Which, therefore, when they do not extend to a total Subversion of the Constitution, (as was notoriously the Case antecedently to the happy Revolution) and are likewise timely Reformed, ought to be cover'd with the decent Veil of human Infirmity. And more especially some Allowance for Mistakes is reafonably to be made, when we impartially recollect the great Difficulties of Government in Critical Junctures, and the numerous Temptations that are peculiar to those that are placed in fo elevated a Station. If therefore the Bulk of Mankind is indulged the Privilege of correcting Mistakes by all Persons of Candour and Humanity, surely the Higher Powers, that must be presumed to see iometimes with other Persons Eyes, have a just Title to that Privilege, upon a Reformation of their Mistakes in Policy.

But Thirdly, I am to shew, that in the particular Instance of Murder we this Day

Day lament, there were peculiar Circumstances

of Barbarity and Guilt.

Without entring, in a previous manner, into the Particulars of that Unnatural War. which had been too long carried on between the King and some Part of his Subiects, that are justly presumed to be well known to all this Audience: I think it is fufficient to make a few Observations on those Circumstances of Barbarity, that attended the Murder of the Unhappy King, and aggravated its Guilt to an high Degree. When, after various Turns of Success, the King's Arms visibly declined, and such Concessions were made by him, as were Voted by his very Enemies to be a sufficient Ground of Peace; this certainly was not only a most proper Juncture for a Publick Reconciliation, and one Universal Act of Oblivion of what had pass'd between both Parties, but it was the Duty of all that had made Opposition, to Submit, and Accept of the Legal Redress of their respective Grievances, that was offer'd them by their Condescending King. Since therefore Arms were Originally taken up, as was pretended; merely on the Account of some Political Errours that were now Corrected, it was the wild Fury of a Party-Zeal that Obstructed their Acquiescing in those Remedies, which were Acknowledged by themselves to be a Solid Foundation of future Peace on both Sides, by the Security of Clear and Express Laws, as the Eternal Boundaries of Liberty and Prerogative. But instead of such an Amicable Composition, we cannot but reslect with Indignation, that the King's Person was seized during the Treaty, and all surther Proceedings of Accommodation were interrupted by the wicked Artistices or Military Power of those Persons, whose Ambitious Views had been long Disguised by fair Pretences of the Publick Service; but that now effectually exerted themselves in a Manner preparatory to the Murder of that very King, who had granted them even more than was demanded by their Own Original Petitions.

Again; When Affairs were ripe for the Murder of the King, could there be a greater Instance of barbarous Fury, than the solemn Arraigning of him in a new and unheard-of Court, and of Condemning Him with all the Forms of Justice, who himself was the great Fountain of it? Could any thing be more Inhumane, than those Outragious men, that thought it not enough to take off the Crown from the Head of their Lawful King, but gloried in Trampling on it too, and treating it with the greatest Indignity and Scorn; who to the heinous Circumstances of his Murder added the most shameful Ridicule of Justice, and the invidious Pome of a Justice of Tribunel

Pomp of a ludicrous Tribunal?

Once more; It adds very much to the Barbarity of Murdering the King, that the Actors, on that Occasion, murder'd a Perfon that was Confessedly so good a Chri-The whole Course of his Life could not but be Acknowledged by his most malicious Enemies to have shone brightly with the Character of Virtue and Religion; and that if he were not the Greatest of Monarchs in some Secular Respects, he was eminently fuch in Goodness and Piety. Even Men of the most implacable Temper could not certainly but Admire that Meekness, Charity, and Resignation to the Will of God, that the latter Unfortunate Scene of his Life, and more especially his Preparation for Death, and Christian Behaviour upon the nearest Approaches of it, gave him peculiar Opportunities to exert with great Advantage, and to gain him the Title of a Saint and Martyr by the Loss of that of a King. Indeed fuch Cruelty, exercised on a truly Good and Religious Person, did unavoidably render the Cause of those that put him to Death the more Odious and Horrid in the Eyes of the rest of the World. Impartial Posterity cannot but Confess, that those very Persons that Condemned him for Transgressing the Laws, did themselves really Overturn the Constitution of the Church, and effectually Subvert the most Essential Liberties of their Country. And I do not think

the House of Lords, Jan. 30. 1727. 19

think it unbecoming me in my present Station to observe, that as the King in great Measure sacrificed his Life to his firm Adherence to the Episcopal Cause, which (as is evident from his extemporary Vindication of it in repeated Conferences with its Adversaries) he thoroughly understood, and therefore Valued and Defended; so his Enemies may justly be stiled Barbarous, for taking away the Life of a King, that refused to betray the Episcopal Constitution of this Church, with which he was entrusted, and which is as Ancient as the earliest Christianity in this Nation. And as his Preference of it to the Preservation of his own Life and Dignity, adorns and exalts his Glory of a Martyr, io it proportionably finks the Character of those, that very probably would have restored his Regal Dignity to him, on so unworthy a Condition as his Breach of fo Sacred a Trust.

But I proceed to the

Fourth and Last Thing I proposed to speak to, namely, That we ought to make that good Use of this Day's sad Solemnity, as with the greatest Caution to avoid hereafter all Approaches and Tendencies towards the Crime we now Deplore.

Though, God be thanked, the Enthusiastical Rage that exerted it self in the Days of our Forefathers has spent its Force, and

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is fucceeded by calm Reason and a better Temper; and though the Principles of Killing of Kings, which came Originally from the Jesuitical Faction in the Church of Rome (who no doubt contributed to the Tragedy of this Day) have been for some time Disowned by that Church, and indeed have not been openly espoused of late even by that bold Society; yet as it must be acknowledged that there are more Artful, and less Bloody Methods in Vogue, to Prejudice Subjects against their lawful Superiours, and in the Result of things to subvert the Government; so it is necessary to observe, that they are consequentially guilty of so high a Crime, that Vilify and speak Evil of the Higher Powers, that propagate scandalous Reflections on them, and that Slander the Footsteps of the Lord's Anointed. All such licentious Persons, therefore, as labour by fuch base Methods to alienate the Affections of Subjects from their lawful King, ought really to be consider'd as Traytors in some Measure to their King and Country; and as Incendiaries, that lay the Foundation of firetching out the Hands of themselves and others against the Lord's Anointed. For such false Representations of the Higher Powers, as they diminish the Reverence due to Crowned Heads, and too often inflame whole Multitudes into a Seditious Disposition, are, in the Nature of the Thing, previous to the open open Resistance of them, and indeed prepare the way for the last Act of Violence. The lamented Crime of this Day ought then to engage us to recollect, with a Seriousness fuited to the Occasion, that though Liberty be an excellent Cause, yet it has been in Fact carried on to Licentiousness; and that some Persons that made the loudest Pretenfions to its Service, were actually the greatest Violaters of it. And again, as no Argument of Weight can be drawn against so good and Valuable a thing as Publick Liberty from any Abuses of it; and as the Power and Prerogative of Kings, in our Constitution, is a Legal thing; fo it is necessary to support that legal Authority, in order to preserve the Liberty of the Subject. And indeed it is most evident from Experience as well as Reason, that in Case of an unjust Attack upon either of them, the other is in the greatest Danger; and consequently, that the Publick Tranquillity can only be preserved by a just Balance of them both.

And as by the good Providence of God we are now bleffed with a King, that makes our Laws and Constitution the Rule of his Political Conduct, and therefore Reigns in the Hearts of a willing People; fo ought we to be upon our strictest Guard, that none of those vile Arts of spreading Libels and defamatory Pamphlets, that were formerly introductory to a Civil War, may ever again prevail

prevail against our established Government. For is not Obedience to all lawful Power still a Gospel-Duty, though most truly explained by the legal Constitution of every Country? Or is that Doctrine for ever to be prostituted to the private Resentments of men Disappointed in secular Views, or to the Party-Animolities of those that are engaged in an Interest inconsistent with that of the Publick, and that too with a very ill Grace by the professed Patrons of Obedience without Reserve, or legal Limitation? If some Scars still remain of those deep Wounds that were given to our Ecclesiastical and Civil Constitution, in Consequence of the Calumnies that were industriously diffused among the People, to give them Prejudices against their King; how are we Admonished to beware of any artful Infinuations, of the like Nature with those that opened the way to Confusions, which ended in the Ruine both of Church and State? And as we are now Afsembled, in order to Deprecate those Judicial Effects of the Sin of our Forefathers, which have in some measure descended even to our own Times; fo let us Refolve to take the greatest Care, that by no Act of ours the Clouds may any more return after the Rain; and that though our Fathers have eaten sowre. Grapes, their Childrens Teeth may no longer be set on Edge. And therefore to our solemn Addresses to Heaven, let us hearty

hearty Zeal to give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's; and in Memory of this fatal Day, to pay to his Present most Excellent Majesty. with whose Interest that of the Publick is inseparably united, all that just Obedience and genuine Reverence, which the Gospel commands in General, and our own Constitution prescribes in Particular. Let us be instructed by the Experience of former Times: and be fo wife, at the Expence of our Ancestors, as to learn effectually, that as we are called unto Liberty, it is equally our Duty and Interest not to use that Liberty for a Cloke of Maliciousness, or for an Occasion to the Flesh, but to be excited by it with greater Chearfulness and Unanimity to Fear God, and Honour the King.

Which may God grant, &c.

FINIS.

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