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KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the Honourable

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

A T

St. Margaret's, Westminster,

O N

MONDAY, Jan. 30, 1748-9.

Being the Day appointed to be observed
as the Day of the Martyrdom of King
CHARLES I.

By ANTHONY ELLYS, D. D.

A N D

Prebendary of the Cathedral Church of Gloucester.

L O N D O N :

Printed by GEORGE WOODFALL at Charing-Cross.

Martis 31 Die Jan. 1748.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this House be given to the Rev. Dr. ELLYS, for the Sermon by him preached yesterday before this House, at St. Margaret's, Westminster; and that he be desired to print the same: and that Mr. Campbell of Calder, and the Lord Parker do acquaint him therewith.

J. DYSON,

Cl. Com. Dom.

Ground of Suspicion to the Civil Government, about his Design in gathering Disciples, and forming a Church; and partly, that he might not give Opportunity to any of his Followers, whom he knew to be not yet sufficiently apprized of the true Nature of his Kingdom, to make wrong Inquiries and Requests about it:

However, when the Pharisees and the Herodians proposed to him a Question that concerned the Duty of the Jews to their civil Governors, in a Point of Importance, he made no Difficulty of giving it an Answer; and one that was not only sufficient to determine their Conduct as to that Point, but was expressed in such Terms, as might at once comprehend their Duty to their civil Governors and to God, from whom the Authority of those Governors was derived. The Question was, "*Whether it was lawful to give Tribute to Cæsar, or not.*" If he should say it was not lawful, they designed to accuse him to the Roman Governor, as guilty of Sedition against the State. If he should say it was lawful, they thought that this Answer would make him unpopular among many of the Jews, who reckoned this Tribute a Matter of Reproach and Oppression to them. Our Lord, though he knew their insidious Design against him, yet would not deviate in the least from the Truth,

or from his high Character of Teacher of it to Mankind; but only endeavoured by the circumstances of his Answer to make the Truth of it so evident, that it might not be easily misunderstood by any who were present. With this View he bade them produce a Piece of the Tribute-Money, and tell him whose Image and Superscription it bore. When they said it was Cæsar's: He immediately replied, "*Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the Things that are God's.*"

In which Words he determines that Tribute ought to be paid to Cæsar, because the Coin, being stamped with his Image, shewed he was possessed of the sovereign Power in that Country; and by Consequence, as he afforded them the Protection of his Government, he had a Right to Tribute from them in return for that Benefit. But whether his *Title to the Sovereignty* was *rightful* or not, our Lord does not determine: for as that Point could not be justly inferred from the Right to receive Tribute, which stood, as I have said, upon another Bottom; and as our Lord said nothing but what had Reference to this latter Right, the other Point therefore was left undecided, not having indeed been so much as mentioned. Our Lord, by his Silence about it, shewed that he did
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not think fit to interpose in a Point of such a Nature ; which he left to be settled, if there should be at any Time a Necessity for it, by a due Regard to the national Laws, to the Matters of Fact relating to the Conquest or Submission of that People, and by other Reasonings usually employed in Questions of this sort.

And this Conduct of our Lord was imitated by his Apostles, in their Writings relating to the Authority of Sovereigns, and the Duty of Subjects. Both St. Peter and St. Paul are indeed very earnest in their Exhortations, that Christians should be subject to the higher Powers as ordained by God, not only for Fear, but for Conscience-sake, or from a Sense of their moral Obligation : And that in like manner they should pay Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour.

But that those Apostles did not intend, by these general Precepts, to fix the Duty of all Subjects in every Country upon the same Bottom, or to determine that all should be obliged to pay whatever Tribute their Sovereigns should demand ; we shall easily see, if we consider the particular View with which these Exhortations were made, and to what false Notions they were opposed. By mistaking the Intent of some Passages of Scripture, a Number
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of the Jews had been led to think, that they, as being the People of God, could not lawfully submit themselves to any foreign Government, nor pay Tribute to it. And this Notion was from them derived to not a few Christian Converts; who also misunderstood what they heard from our Saviour and his Apostles, about the Liberty to which they were intitled by the Christian Religion: What was meant of Spiritual, they understood of Civil Freedom; and full of these high Imaginations, they thought it beneath them to be subject to Heathen Princes or Heathen Masters.

In Opposition to these Notions, St. Paul assures them, that all Power is from God, and that the Powers then in being were ordained of God: For though they were also, in some Respects, of human Constitution, as St. Peter observes, yet as all Civil Power came originally from God, they might for that Reason be justly considered as ordained by him, and so were entitled to the Obedience of their Subjects. It was not only lawful but necessary for Christians to submit to them, and pay them due Tribute, Custom, and Honour, as well from a Sense of the Obligation they were under by the Law of God, as from Fear of the Punishment they should suffer from their Sovereigns, if they failed. But we cannot, from this arguing,
justly

justly conclude, that the Apostles intended the Rights of Sovereigns over their Subjects should be the same in every Country. They must certainly have known that there had been civil Constitutions of various Kinds, in different Countries; and in the same Country, in different Ages: And that in some of these the supreme Magistrates, although they bore the Title of Kings, had, not the same Authority with those who were stiled so in other Countries. In the antient Time of the Egyptian † Government, the Kings could neither levy Money upon any one, nor judge or punish him from Anger or Pride, or any other unreasonable Motive: The like Politics had been, and might be again in other Countries. Now, as I have shewn that our Saviour did not intend to make any Alteration in the Forms or the Rights of any temporal Governments, the same thing may justly be presumed of his Apostles; since they never say or intimate any thing to the contrary; and therefore we may conclude, that though, after the Example of their blessed Master, they delivered their Precepts to yield Submission and Obedience, Tribute and Custom, in general Terms, yet they intended that these Precepts should be understood with some *Limitations*, agreeably to the several political Constitutions,

† Diodor. Sicul. lib. ii.

tutions, to which any Christians should happen to be Subjects.

I have made these Observations with a View to a Doctrine which, a little more than a Century ago, was vented often in this Nation, as it is still in others, both from the Pulpit and the Press; and had no small Share in producing the Calamities we now lament. This Doctrine was, “That the King’s Will and Pleasure, in imposing Taxes without Consent of Parliament, [I give the Words of a noted Sermon † in those Times] doth oblige the Subjects Consciences, upon Pain of Damnation; and that those who refuse Obedience, transgress the Laws of God, insult the King’s supreme Authority, and are guilty of Impiety, Disloyalty, and Rebellion.” But however strongly this Doctrine is asserted, I have plainly shewn that it has no Foundation in the Holy Scripture, *unless* our civil Constitution gives the King this Authority. And that this is far from being true, must be known to every one who is at all skilled in our Laws and History, from the Great Charter down to this Time. Attempts indeed have been made by our Kings, in several Ages, to gain this Right; but they always have miscarried, and not seldom ended in Recognitions, that the Right of imposing Taxes belongs
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† Dr. Manwaring’s Sermon of *Religion and Allegiance*.

only to the Representatives of the People in Parliament. This Right therefore is warranted, as I have shewn, by the Holy Scripture, as well as by our Laws; and of consequence, the Breaches that were made upon it in the Reign of that Prince, whose Misfortunes are this Day the Subject of our Thoughts, were justly considered as Grievances to the People; and though indeed it was some Excuse for him, who would not have done any thing which he knew to be wrong, that his Bishops and Judges, approved his Conduct, or put him upon it; yet this did not make it less contrary to Law, or less a Hardship to the Subject. And its being so, justified both the People and their Representatives in making any legal Remonstrances against it.

And the like Observations may be justly made on the Hardships which in that Reign were put upon many others of the Subjects, on Account of their performing their Duty to God in a Manner which they conceived to be right, and refusing to do it in any other. These Hardships, in some Cases, were very great; affecting their personal Liberty, and Property, as well as the publick Profession and Exercise of their Religion. They were indeed grounded upon a Doctrine, concerning the Punishment of Errors in Religion, which had long prevailed in the Christian Church, and had, like

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most other Corruptions in it, been made much worse by the Papal Influence: Nor could the Reformation itself extirpate this out of the Minds of Men, where it had a strong Root in their natural Passions, not easily mortified by the Spirit of the Gospel. It was allowed to be true, and put frequently into Practice, in all the other Protestant Reigns, as well as that we are speaking of: So that it had great Precedents and some Laws on its Side. But neither any Precedents nor human Laws could justify a Doctrine, which certainly is contrary to the Reason of Things, and the Law of God. He does not give Authority to any Persons to force others, by temporal Penalties or Hardships, to profess, or do any thing in Religion contrary to their Consciences: Because he expects that Religion should be free, and the Service of the Heart. Hypocrisy, which must be, in many Cases, the Effect of Force, is odious to him. Perhaps indeed Penalties, may be, in some particular Cases, of Service to promote the true Religion. But this Circumstance can never give a Right to the Use of them: for if any Sovereign be authorized to use them, the Consequence must be, that all Sovereigns are vested with the same Authority: for neither the Law of Nature, nor the Gospel, confine this Authority to any one Prince, or Number of Princes, exclusively of others,

others. Now if all Princes were to use it, when far the greater Part of them will always be in Error, the Mischief produced by that general Use, will so much exceed the good Effects of it, that it is not conceivable that God should allow any Prince to use them ; except in the Case of Errors that directly hurt the Civil State. Against those indeed there is Ground to suppose, that he allows Penalties or Restraints to be employed. Because otherwise it might happen, that Civil Societies could not be maintained in the Safety and Peace, which he designs they should enjoy. And from thence it follows, that Princes must have a Right to use Force or Restraints against those Religionists whose Doctrines or Practices naturally tend to do any Hurt to the Civil State.

But this Charge could not be fixed on all who refused Communion with the Church of England. Great Numbers of them were peaceable and well-affected Subjects, on whom, for that Reason, no Penalties or Hardships could justly be imposed. A proper Toleration for Religious Worship ought to have been allowed to them. Though the Governors, as well in the Church as in the State, might probably have used these penal Methods with good Intention, yet still they were Grievances ; and neither the Subjects, nor their Representatives, could

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justly

justly be blamed for applying to the Throne in a proper way, to have them redressed.

But those Measures which might justly be taken to maintain the Rights and Liberties of the Subjects, could not be justified, when they were employed to depress and impair, in too great a Degree, the legal Authority vested in the Crown: For that Authority was designed for the national Good, and is necessary to that End. It keeps up the Balance in the Constitution, by hindering those Encroachments from being made by one Part upon the other, which, if they were suffered to go to any Length, would weaken, disorder, and ruin the whole.

These ill Effects were actually produced in several of the famous Constitutions of Antiquity; which, though at first they were limited Monarchies, yet from the Want of sufficient Power in their Kings, were reduced by Degrees into Governments more and more Democratical, till they fell into those Factions, and Seditions, which popular Licentiousness, when not controlled by some higher Power, will always produce, and which generally end either in the Conquest of such a Nation by some foreign Enemy, or its falling into Servitude under an arbitrary Monarch of their own.

These Considerations make it appear, that it was not really for the publick Good, to demand such Abatements, as the Parliament did, in the Prerogative of the Crown, which had been before sufficiently reduced. A Number of Declarations and Laws, in Favour of Liberty, had been obtained. The Grievances suffered in Matters both Ecclesiastical and Civil, had been redressed: The most solemn Promises had been given by the King, that nothing of that Kind should be put upon any of his Subjects for the future; the Meeting of Parliaments every three Years had been enacted, whereby Opportunities for remedying Grievances, and supporting Liberty, would have been afforded; and an Amnefty had been offered, by which all Persons, who might fear that they had made themselves obnoxious to their Prince, would have been secured against any Effects of his Resentment.

In this State of Things, was it just to give way to Suspicions, Jealousies, and Fears, for which there was no sufficient Ground; to make such Demands as could not be granted, without great Detriment, both to the Crown, and to the whole Constitution; to urge these Demands by Tumults of the Populace, dangerous to the Person and Family of the King; and, at length, to levy War openly against him? Undoubtedly, if they had not
stronger

stronger Reasons than any that now appear to us, their Conduct was not to be justified to God or Men. Opposition to Magistrates was, even by the wiser Heathens, condemned, when there was not a real Necessity for it. *Tully* † agrees with *Plato*, in affirming, that they who resist them in any other Case, are like the *Titans*, whom the Fables supposed to have assaulted Heaven: Which Passage shews, that these great Men, like many others in Antiquity, saw, even by the Light of Reason, that the Authority of Sovereigns is derived from God; and, generally speaking, ought to be maintained with the highest Respect; because, if it be resisted, Confusion and Rapine, Bloodshed and Misery, must naturally ensue.

In the Case of evident *Necessity* indeed, when the Ruin of a Polity could not by any other Means be prevented, nor its Welfare be secured, they owned, that the Use of Force, in Opposition to Magistrates acting against the Laws, and therefore without Right, was to be allowed, and even approved: They took it to be clearly the Dictate of Reason, that Civil Societies were designed for the Safety, Welfare, and Interest of all their Members, as far as possible; and that the Authority of the Governors of them was granted for those Ends:

From

† Tull. de Leg. lib. iii.

From whence they concluded that the general Happiness was not to be given up to the Abuse of this Authority, in any Case where Resistance being plainly for the real Benefit of the whole Society, the far greater Part will concur in making it, and therefore no ill Effects, of Moment to the Whole, can follow from it.

Resistance, or Opposition, by any small Number of private Persons, on Account of Grievances suffered only by themselves, must produce much more Hurt than Good to the Society of which they are Members. And as it is the Duty of every Member of such a Society, to prefer the Welfare of the Whole to his own ; it follows, that Resistance, in the Case last mentioned, must always be unlawful. But when the Welfare of a whole Society, and its legal Constitution, are so far endangered, that nothing but Resistance to the Sovereign can preserve them, a Regard to the whole is then the great Rule, by which the Conduct of every good Man ought to be directed.

Now supposing these Maxims to be, as they are, the Dictates of right Reason ; we may justly consider them as agreeable also to Divine Revelation : Since it has been shewn, that neither our Saviour, nor his Apostles, intended to make any Alteration in the Measures of Submission due to Sovereigns,

reigns, but left them as they were, upon the Foot of Reason, and of the Constitutions in the several Countries to which the Subjects belonged. Which Point, however, as it is of great Moment, may be farther supported by the following Observations.

First, That if the sacred Writers had designed to forbid Resistance in all Cases, without excepting those wherein Civil Constitutions must otherwise be ruined, and if their Doctrine to this Purpose had been fully understood, it must soon have made a great Alteration in all the free Politics that then did, or ever should, subsist among Christians. For Princes desirous of absolute Power would have hardly failed to take Advantage of the Obligation which they knew their Subjects to be under, not to resist them on any Account: And national Rights, for which no effectual Defence could be made, would soon have been suppressed, and reduced to nothing: so that the Governments, in all Parts of Christendom, however limited they were before the Subjects embraced the Gospel, must afterwards have been turned into absolute Monarchies. This would have been one important Consequence of the Doctrine now supposed to have been taught by the Apostles; and to this, no doubt, they would have had some Regard.

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But, in the second Place, they must also have known, that the Generality of Mankind had always thought that Resistance to Sovereigns was undoubtedly lawful, whensoever it was made on Behalf of a legal Constitution, which could not by any other Means be preserved. In this Case, the Apostles would hardly have delivered a contrary Doctrine, without expressing it in such plain Terms as could not well fail to be understood: Because, otherwise they would have suffered Men to fall into the Sin of Resistance, without having any due Warning to avoid it; which Neglect, on the Part of the Apostles, would not have been agreeable to the Goodness of their Character: And therefore they would either have particularly mentioned the Case of Resistance, for the Sake of a Community, and declared against it, or they would have expressed their Prohibition to resist, in Terms so very strong, and so clearly guarded against any possible Exception, that there might be no room to question its universal Extent. But since the Apostles have neither specified the Case above mentioned, nor expressed their Prohibition of Resistance in such Terms as admit of no Exception; since we know, on the other Hand, that there were false Opinions among some Christians, to which the Apostles Prohibitions might be opposed, and yet might not be

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designed to take in all Cases of Resistance; since our Saviour's Declaration, that his Kingdom was not of this World, appears to imply, that he did not intend to make any Alteration in the Politics of it; we may, from these Circumstances taken together, justly conclude, that the sacred Writers did not design to forbid Resistance in all Cases, but to leave that Matter upon the same Foot as it was by the Law of Nature. And, according to the Dictates of natural Reason, though Resistance to Sovereigns, when it is made by private Persons, is unlawful, yet when it is made for the Preservation of a whole Community, against unjust Violence on the Part of a Sovereign, it is certainly allowed and approved by God.

These Observations are designed to justify a great Transaction, by which our National Constitution was preserved, and on which our present Establishment is founded. The Opposition made to the Prince, who was then upon the Throne, could not have been avoided, unless the Nation had been resolved to give up entirely its Freedom, and Rights, both religious and Civil, and suffer a Polity, the generous Work of their Forefathers, and cemented with their Blood, to be torn in Pieces, and utterly destroyed. They justly presumed, that this could not be the Intention of God: And *therefore they stood*

stood fast in the Liberty with which he had made them free, and would not be entangled with the Yoke of Bondage †. We now have the Benefit of their noble Spirit, and Enlargement of Mind, and may it be continued to those who succeed us in all future Ages!

But this great Event ought not to be applied to justify undue Opposition to Sovereigns, when there is neither any Need, nor just Cause for making it; which, as far as we can judge, may be truly said of the Beginning of the War that brought on the Miseries this Day lamented. The Reasons alledged for entering upon it were either not true, or not sufficient. They were not for the real Benefit of the Nation. It's Constitution, Peace, and Welfare might have been secured without the Guilt of a Civil War; and therefore the making it must in general be condemned; though, under the strong Suspicions and Fears, that several well-meaning Persons had, about the Continuance of very great Danger, both to the Nation and themselves, their Conduct may admit of some Excuse. But when the ambitious and wicked Designs of the principal Managers came to appear, and plainly tended to subvert the Foundations of our antient Constitution; when, after the strongest Protestations to the contrary,

trary, Violence was done to the Person of the King, which the Laws represent as in all Cases sacred; when this Violence was extended even to Murder, with the utmost Aggravations of Indignity and Insult; when Royalty itself was, with utter Contempt of all Law, and Right, abolished in Form; and Tyranny over the Consciences and Fortunes of the greater Part of the Nation, was exercised in its stead; when the utmost Confusions in Religion were encouraged, and the Majesty of God was affronted by Hypocrisy far more vile than any the World had known before; can any thing be offered to vindicate, or even excuse these Proceedings? No! All good Men will ever regard them with Detestation: And it is with great Reason that our Laws have endeavoured to prevent the Infamy that our Nation would otherwise have suffered, by publicly declaring, that all the most shocking and barbarous Parts of them were not the Acts of the Nation in general, nor of its Representatives, but only of a small Number of them, who by odious Hypocrisy, and lawless Force, had gotten the Power from all the rest; which every one skilled in this Part of our History, must know to have been true.

However, it is certainly a Duty incumbent on the Nation in general, to make a right Use of these
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past Troubles, by endeavouring to prevent any Dispositions to the like for the future. With which View it is requisite seriously to consider, that though indeed, in order to secure the Welfare of Civil Societies, God does, in Cases of Extremity, allow such Resistance to be made to the Governors of them, as is necessary to that End; yet he does withal most strictly require, that in the common Course of Things, Submission and Obedience, Honour and Affection, be paid to them, as his Vicegerents, whose Character and Authority he will duly support: And therefore, if their Subjects either act contrary to their Duty towards them, or fail in the Performance of any Part of it, they will certainly fall under his severe Indignation.

The Duty of Subjects in every Country is settled by the Laws and Usages of it; but ought also to be performed in the Spirit of Christianity, which teaches us, that *Whatever we do, we should do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto Men* †. The latter of these Courses is taken by those who, while they pay outward Submission to a Prince, acknowledge his Title, and promise him Allegiance, are yet in their Hearts disaffected to him, wish ill Success to his Undertakings, endeavour to asperse or detract from his Character, misrepresent every

† Colos. iii. 23.

every Part of his Conduct, falsely impute to him sinister Designs, raise Jealousies and Fears in the Minds of his Subjects, corrupt their Principles, and alienate their Affections. These Things may be done with too much Effect, under Covert and Protection of our national Liberty; and they who *thus use it as a Cloak for their Maliciousness*, may please themselves in thinking they do it without Danger. But let them remember that One who is higher than the highest on Earth, regards their Works, sees the Bottom of their Hearts, and will certainly hereafter require an Account of all the malignant Words and Actions that have escaped with Impunity here. To this Great Account all Men who have not quite abandon'd serious Thoughts will at some Times have a View: and be influenced by it, not only to forbear such gross Violations of their Duty to their Sovereign, but carefully to perform it in all respects, as far as they can, by rendering him the Service, Honour, and Affection which the Laws of the Land, and of Christianity, require.

It is our Happiness that the Laws, which determine the Measures of our Obedience, are very well known, and can hardly be in any Case grievous to us, because they have been, for the most part, made by Persons chosen to represent our Ancestors or ourselves; which Reason obliges us to be more willing

ing to obey these Laws, and will make us more blameable if we transgress them. The wisest Men in those Nations of old, which had the most Freedom and best preserv'd it, were solicitous to impress upon the Minds of the People a Reverence and Attachment to the Laws of their Country. They represented them as having their Authority from Heaven itself; which indeed is true of all Laws that are for the Publick Good. It is not therefore to be thought an indifferent Matter whether they be obeyed or not. As long as they are in force, the Observance of them ought to be made a Point of Conscience: And the utter Unconcern of many among us, in this Respect, is the Symptom of a great Disorder in the Nation, which, if it be not remedied, must have very ill Effects. It is the less to be excused, because our Sovereign himself is always attentive to make the Laws the Rules of his Government, and expects nothing from us but what is entirely agreeable to them. Far from attempting to undermine or impair our Liberty in any respect, he discovers in the general Tenour of his Conduct a noble Frankness and Greatness of Mind, a strict Regard to Justice and Honour, and the highest Courage, temper'd with Goodness and Affection to his People. Such Dispositions can never consist with Thoughts of oppressing or injuring those who
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are under his Protection. On the contrary, from the whole Course of his Reign it is clear, beyond doubt, that his Heart is intent on providing for their lasting Safety and Happiness; which excellent Dispositions He appears to have transmitted to his Royal Descendants. And must we not then be guilty of Ingratitude in a high Degree, if we are wanting in any Part of our Duty to him? We are certainly under as strong Engagements as can be laid upon any Subjects in general, both to pay, on all Occasions, the highest Honour and Reverence that are due to His Majesty, and to serve him in all the Ways we can with Fidelity and Affection; not only by our constant and earnest Prayers for a long and happy Continuance of his Reign, but by our Endeavours in our several Stations, to aid and facilitate the Exercise of his Government, and put a Stop to any Corruptions that tend to the Disturbance or Detriment of it.

One of this Sort is, particularly suggested by the Words of my Text, as having been spoken of the Payment of Tribute. It is the pernicious, but too frequent, Practice, of defrauding the King of of the Customs assigned for the Support of his Government. If private Property ought to be inviolate, how much more sacred ought that to be which is vested in the Sovereign for the public Good?

Good? The great Iniquity of breaking in upon it must be seen clearly by every Man who thinks at all: And therefore if any continue in this Course they must have got above the Reproaches of their Consciences, and so will proceed from one Crime to another, till, at length, they will come to be, as Experience has shewn that too many are, quite hardned and abandon'd to the greatest Wickedness. It is certainly the Concern of all good Men to forbear encouraging this Practice, by purchasing Goods so unlawfully acquired. They ought, on the contrary, to take all Occasions of declaring how base and criminal it is to follow this, or any such Methods of private Gain, to the Detriment of the Public; and they are yet more obliged to give Examples of a public Spirit, and of all other social Virtues, which will naturally tend to support this Establishment and make the Nation powerful and happy, and are indeed the only Things that can do it with any great and lasting Effect. These Hints are all that my Time at present will allow me to give of our Duty to *the King*.

To GOD, our sincerest Thanks are due for the Happiness of our present Condition, in full Enjoyment of the Light of the Gospel, of Liberty and Peace, the most justly valued Advantages in Life. His Providence signally interposed in delivering our

Nation from the Troubles and Miseries this Day remember'd, without permitting its Constitution in either of its Parts, Ecclesiastical or Civil, to be alter'd for the worse. The like great Mercy was afterwards vouchsafed in Circumstances of Danger that seem'd not to be avoided: And this latter Deliverance has been followed and confirmed by several other Events in our Favour, which have reach'd almost to the present Time. These Blessings are so great, that Acknowledgements of them in Words alone, on this or any like Occasion, are far from being sufficient Returns. God certainly expects that when a Nation has been so much favour'd, its Gratitude should be shewn by exerting its Endeavours to promote His Glory, which chiefly consists in the spiritual and moral Improvement of Mankind. As we have Advantages greater than most other Nations about us, we ought to excel them in Piety and Virtue. But if instead of doing that, we imitate and exceed them in their Corruptions, if we fall into as great Immorality as they, and greater Unbelief as to the Truths of Religion; what are we to expect but God's just Indignation, and that he will deprive us of those eminent Blessings we have hitherto enjoyed.

If he should resolve to punish us as we deserve, it is not difficult to conjecture the Way in which it
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may be done. We need only to be left to the Fruit of our Doings. Infidelity and Vice will produce, foment, and strengthen each other. Our Wealth and Plenty will be squander'd and exhausted by Luxury and Profusion: Distress and Indigence will be the Portion of Numbers among us, who have been accusom'd to better Things; and the rough and strong Spirits of the People of this Nation, when under such Pressures, will not sink, or be dejected and broken: Many would struggle with what they would reckon to be their ill Fortune; would grow disaffected even to those who had no hand in bringing it upon them, and would go into any Measures to better their Condition. They would have no regard to Liberty, which, in their Case, would lose the Satisfaction attending it. They would act in opposition to the Interests of it, and even to those of Religion itself. And as Numbers would probably be thus disposed, there would always be danger of Seditions and Tumults; and Encouragement would be given to the Enemies of the Nation to form Designs and Attempts against it. These are Dangers which every one who looks forward has reason to apprehend: They may, indeed, be kept off for a Time; but sooner or later they will certainly come, unless there be due Provision

against them; which, therefore, every one who loves his Country will endeavour to make.

The Method most likely to be effectual to this End, is to cultivate the Growth of Piety and Virtue in the Body of the People; for these will, in some Measure, counterwork and prevent the ill Consequences of Vice and Unbelief. Men will be then sober, industrious and frugal, duly respectful to their Superiors, faithful, and just and benevolent to all; and as these Virtues will make them easy in their Fortunes, they will love Order, Peace and Safety, and be heartily attached to the present Establishment; by which they are protected against Persecution in Spiritual Matters and Tyranny in Civil, and made capable of acquiring, in a competent Degree, whatever is conducive to the real Happiness of this Life, as well as of that which is to come.

It must indeed be own'd, that however desirable national Virtue and Religion may be, they are not without Difficulty raised again when they are fallen very low. New Laws would hardly be sufficient to produce this Effect. For they would soon be, like many good ones at present in Force, but little regarded or put into Execution. The chief Thing likely to be of Service is, the good Example of Persons of Rank. Though that indeed would not
have

have so much Effect on the right Side as the wrong; yet it would have a good deal. If the Generality of Persons of Distinction would agree to do their Part, the Consequence would be exceedingly good. It would be so, for instance, if they would be frequent in attending the public Worship of God. At present the Civil Establishment of Religion fails, in great measure, of having the Effect for which it was design'd; because so great Numbers absent themselves from public Worship. When the lower People observe it to be neglected by those above them, they make no scruple to follow their Example: And yet this Worship is certainly enjoin'd even by the Law of Nature; which appears from the good Effects which it naturally tends to have upon the bulk of Mankind. Many of them have no other Way but this, to be instructed in the Truths and Duties of Religion. Some, by observing the Attention, Fervour and Humiliation practis'd by good Men in these Assemblies may, themselves, take advantageous Impressions. The meeting of Men of different Ranks for the Worship of God their common Father, *who, without Respect of Persons, is good unto all*, may tend to abate the high Thoughts of the Great, and inspire them with Charity and Condescension towards their poor Brethren; while these are taught to submit to the Appointment of
Divine

Divine Providence, which obliges them to preserve a due Respect for those above them, and employ their Labours and their Prayers to God on their behalf, in return for the Advantages which they receive from them. As these Dispositions tend to promote the Glory of God, and the Welfare of Men, we may justly presume that he requires the Worship that tends to produce them. Men, as they are Members of a Civil Society, are plainly obliged to join with their Fellow-Subjects in Prayers to God for the Mercies and Benefits of which the Community stands in need, and to return their Acknowledgments for those that have been received. All civilized Nations have been of this Opinion; and the Practice of the wise and good Men among them has been, in all Ages, suitable to it. The Christian Religion not only requires Men to assemble together for God's public Worship, and the Participation of that Sacrament of the Eucharist, which he has ordained as the Token and Means of their Spiritual Union, but farther obliges them to continue this Practice to some degree, even when it may be dangerous to their Fortunes or their Lives in Times of † Persecution.

It is to be hoped that Persons of Rank will seriously consider their Obligations in this Respect; and

and will do what a Regard to the Honour of God and the Advantage of Mankind requires plainly at their Hands. Nor ought they to be wanting to take proper Care, that *those Things of God* belonging to this Service, to which our Lord, in the Words of my Text, appears to have had a particular View, be rendered to him. As the Things that were *Cæsar's*, meant the Tribute to be paid to him; so the like Phrase, *the Things that were God's*, had reference to a Tribute that was due to God. It was the half Shekel that was annually paid by every Jew above twenty Years old to the Temple at Jerusalem. And was designed to provide the Sacrifices with other Things, at that Time requisite, in the public Worship. When this Tribute was demanded from our Saviour himself, *Matt. xvii. 24, 25.* he observ'd, that, as being the Son of God, he might justly have exempted himself from the Payment; but, nevertheless, thought fit to make it; by which he intended to teach his Followers, how careful they ought to be to provide for the Maintenance of that Christian Service which was soon to succeed to this of the Temple, and was to be kept up in all Ages of his Church. This great Example, enforced by some Precepts to the same Purpose in the Writings of the Apostles, had such an Effect upon the primitive Christians, that they never fail'd to make voluntary

luntary Contributions, sufficient to maintain a public Worship and Ministry, till their Religion had been established by the Civil State. Since that Time Revenues of a different Kind have been settled for this Use in each Christian Country, and as they have been solemnly devoted to God, they may justly be considered as *the Things of God*; I mean, so long as they continue to be really useful to his Service: For, in that Case, we may justly presume that he is willing to retain his Property in them. And while he does so, it must be sinful, in a high Degree, to break in upon it. The Persons who are vested with his Authority are certainly concern'd to be Guardians of his Right. In Cases of great Importance, indeed, such Measures may be taken with relation to it, as the Interest of Religion, and the Public require, and as he may be justly presumed to approve. Of these, the Legislators are the proper Judges; but they ought to judge as in the Cause of God, to whom they must render an Account of their Proceedings. They ought to take Care, that those sacred Revenues be not diminished by Fraud, Neglect, or Want of Protection, but be duly preserved, and applied to the Uses for which they were designed; and withal, that the Persons who are intitled to receive them shall attend and perform their Duty, so as to edify the People committed to their Charge.

Charge. Supposing this done, our Spiritual Establishment is so well fitted to promote the Knowledge and Practice of Religion among the People, and is so agreeable to the Model of the State, that if it receives due Credit and Support from the frequent Attendance of Persons of Rank at the public Worship, it can hardly fail to have very good Effects on the Nation in general. The Prejudices of some Protestants against it are likely to decline and wear off by degrees; as they see a truly Christian Spirit in those of the Establishment, willing to receive with Candour and Respect any Dispositions or Advances to them; and such a Spirit there is at present, backward to nothing but to Unsettlement and Innovation. Upon these, as being often dangerous, true Friends of their Country will seldom be inclined to venture without Necessity. But gentle and rational Applications to cultivate true Principles, and social Affections, among their Fellow-Subjects they will be ready to employ upon all Occasions, and have hopes that, in doing it, they shall meet with Success.

If some *in* the Establishment have Prejudices and Resentments of a different kind, it will hardly be possible that they should retain them for any long time, when they seriously consider, that this Establishment is built upon the Ground of public Happiness; and that if it ever should be subverted, Popery joined with arbitrary Power, and followed

by unrelenting Persecution, and abject Servitude, would enter at the Breach, and be fixed upon the Nation, perhaps without Remedy, for Ages to come. It is not possible that any dispassionate serious Men can be willing to venture the Suffering these Evils upon little Piques or Views of private temporal Interest, at best uncertain, and quite unimportant to those who have any true Regard to their present Country, or to a far better, eternal in the Heavens. They who enlarge their Views to these Things will see the Folly and great Iniquity of the Proceedings, to which the Warmth of their Passions may incite them; and will be sensible of the Measures which both their Spiritual and Temporal Interest should engage them to pursue. And if they be once truly sensible of them, their Practice will be agreeable to them. The Minds of Men will be more and more reconciled to each other. The opposite Extremes of Parties among us will be carried by the Weight of Reason and Interest towards the Mean, and be nearly, if not entirely, united. The Foundations of the Establishment will be strengthened; the Nation will be able to support itself against all its Foreign and Domestic Enemies, if any of the latter should remain; and by the Blessing of God, its Liberty, Religious and Civil, will be transmitted to late Posterity. Amen.



