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(16)

Seasonable Advice
TO THE
MINISTERS
OF THE
CHURCH of *Great Britain*,
(Especially to those in and about the
City of LONDON)

Not to meddle, as some have done, with
Matters of State, or Controversal Preaching.

Taken *verbatim* out of the Present Bishop of
London's seventh LETTER of the Conference
with his Clergy, held in the Year 1686.

U P O N

King JAMES II. his LETTER dated 1685. and di-
rected to the two Archbishops, with Directions
concerning Preachers.

To which is Added,

A Recommendation of MODERATION, in
the Example of Bishop *Wilkins*, by Arch-
bishop *Tillotson*.

L O N D O N :

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*Seasonable Advice to the Ministers of the
Church of Great Britain.*

GOOD BROTHER,

I Am sure you must now be convinced, as I make
no question you was then, that nothing could
be more pernicious to Prince or People, than
to carry the Duty of *Submission* beyond the Bounds
of just Reason, or due Patience; and that therefore
the first Article against *meddling with Matters of State*,
was a great Inducement to me, to invite you to this
Conference upon the whole *Directions concerning Prea-*
chers, which was manag'd to this effect.

You cannot but be every day more sensible than
other how seasonable this Letter of his Majesty's
was, and how highly it concerns us to reflect upon
it. Indeed there is nothing in it, but what has been
formerly directed by his Royal Predecessors after the
same manner; and yet the Matter is of that weighty
Consequence, as not to be one jot the less necessary
to be repeated at this time.

The Reasons his Majesty urges, are from Politick
Considerations, and so Reasons of State; but there
are others which may be taken from moral Topics,
of that great Consideration, that we may boldly say,
The King has not more Interest in them, in his Royal Capa-
city, than the Ministers of the Gospel have in their Spirit-
ual Capacity. For *Disobedience* is as reproachful to
the *Religious*, as to the *Politick Person*; *Sedition* as
pernicious, and *Rebellion* as criminal.

But to come to the purpose.

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' *First*, As to *Matters of State*: We are forbid to De-
 ' clare, Limit, or Bound the Constitutive Laws of the
 ' Realm between *Prince and People*. Every Nation
 ' has its peculiar Rights and Customs, the Decision
 ' of which belongs Ultimately to the Resolutions of
 ' *Parliaments*, as they do Ordinarily to the Exposition
 ' of the Judges. These things depending upon An-
 ' cient Customs, *Original Contracts* and Constitutions,
 ' contained generally in the publick Records, are
 ' quite besides our Purpose; *they come not within the*
 ' *compass of our Studies*, but are more proper for *Statesmen*
 ' *and Lawyers to meddle with*; and as they are of pub-
 ' lick Concern, so are they likewise of publick Inter-
 ' pretation. However, should our Curiosity lead us
 ' into an Enquiry after them, *their Doctrine would by*
 ' *no means be a proper Subject for us to descant upon*; be-
 ' cause our *Business is to teach a Christian Behaviour upon*
 ' *all Occasions*, without entring into the Merits of any
 ' Cause betwixt *Prince and People*.

' We have been happy above all other Countries,
 ' in having Kings, that out of their Grace and Boun-
 ' ty, have made ample Concessions for our Ease and
 ' Security, by so *fixing our Liberties and Properties*,
 ' that we cannot be wronged in either without the
 ' open Violation of a *Solemn Oath*. If therefore we
 ' would speak honestly to this Matter, we ought to
 ' do Right to both Parties; and then think but how
 ' improper and ridiculous this would look out of a *Pul-*
 ' *pit*, to be stating the *Secular Rights and Privileges* on
 ' both sides.

' But if we exalt the *King's Prerogative* above the
 ' *Law*, we do as good as tell the People, that notwith-
 ' standing their Rights, *the King may ravish their Wives*,
 ' *spoil their Goods, and cut their Throats at Pleasure*. And
 ' thus we should pursue a *Method the most contrary to*
 ' *the Mind of God*, that possibly could be. For it would
 ' prove a *Doctrine that might do much Harm*,
 ' and could never do Good; either, it would alarm
 ' the

' the People with an Apprehension, that some Design
 ' were working against their just Rights ; (for which
 ' *pernicious Strain of Courtesy*, we may be sure a Wise
 ' Prince, as ours is, would give us small Thanks ;
 ' since the least Mischief we could expect, would be
 ' Dissatisfaction, Murmuring, Jealousy, and a Readiness
 ' to rebel.) Or, if it should operate as we intend,
 ' if we intend any thing else by it, we should
 ' thereby make a *Halter for our own Necks*, by disposing
 ' Men to *avow a Principle*, that should invite their
 ' King to put a Yoke upon them. So that I look upon
 ' it as a Rule, that we ought in common Prudence to
 ' set our selves in this Affair, to be as cautious of *flattering*
 ' *our Prince into Tyranny*, as of *stirring up the People*
 ' *to Sedition and Tumult*. For we have Scope enough
 ' without a *servile Flattery*, to do our Prince Right,
 ' and our selves too, by preaching up a *Peaceable and*
 ' *Christian Temper*, to wait with Patience for the good
 ' Effect of those ordinary Remedies we have by *passive*
 ' *Obedience*, *Westminster-Hall*, *Parliament*, and what *o-*
 ' *ther Methods* may be ; which if they prevail not, will
 ' produce that in God's good Time that may.

' *Secondly*, As to *Controversial Preaching* ; there is such
 ' a Prudence and Discretion requisite *in the managing*
 ' *thereof*, as is not every Man's Talent. It is therefore
 ' very justly advised, not to be hasty in entering upon
 ' such Undertakings, but rather avoid the Invitations
 ' our own Forwardness will be but too apt to draw us
 ' into.

' It is the ready Way to draw Attention, and gain
 ' a sort of Applause, if we do but say *sharp Things*
 ' *and satyrical* : For the more slightly the Controversy
 ' is handled, the better it takes, provided the Argument
 ' be heighten'd with *earnest Expressions* or *foolish*
 ' *Jesting*.

' But however this *Style* may be *pleasing* at the first
 ' *Accost*, it can make no solid Impression to Edifica-
 ' tion, which ought to be the End of all Preaching.

' It will always be despised by *Wise Men*, and do *Fools*
 ' no real Good. And yet there is another sort of
 ' treating our Adversaries, which is still worse; that
 ' is, *foul and reviling Language*. Such Behaviour will
 ' either prejudice our Cause, or at least render us
 ' contemptible, that *serve it in so dirtily*. The Way
 ' to avoid this in a great measure is, not to affect
 ' and force controversial Points upon a Text, but ra-
 ' ther forbear, till we are constrained to it, by the
 ' Drift of the Subject we treat upon, or from the Ne-
 ' cessity of Time and Place. All things are likeliest
 ' then to proceed in the most reasonable manner,
 ' when they flow most easily and naturally from the
 ' Subject of our Discourse. For then we are most apt
 ' to do wisely, and speak like rational Creatures. We
 ' shall then be better compos'd for the putting on of
 ' a *Christian Spirit*, in Expressions of *Compassion*, *Good-*
 ' *will*, *Gentleness*, *Modesty*, and whatever other Virtues
 ' may best soften and steal into Mens Hearts.

' To tell a Man at the first Salute, that he is a *He-*
 ' *retick*, and is *Damned*, is to provoke Choler rather
 ' than Attention, and utterly to frustrate our own
 ' Endeavours by *frighting* away those that we would
 ' be thought to *invite* to us.

' We ought to be very cautious how we enter into
 ' Controversy, and very careful in the handling of it.

So far the Bishop of London.

MODERATION recommended by Archbishop
 Tillotson, in his Preface to Bishop Wil-
 kins's Sermons.

Speaking of the admirable *Candour* and *Moderation*
 of Bishop *Wilkins's* Temper in Matters of Diffe-
 rence and Dispute, the *Archbishop* adds,

' I purposely mention his MODERATION, and like-
 ' wise adventure to commend him for it, notwithstand-
 ing

ing that this VIRTUE, so much esteemed and magnified by Wise Men in all Ages, hath of late been declaimed against with so much Zeal and Fierceness, and yet with good Grace and Confidence, as if it were not only no VIRTUE, but even the Sum and Abridgment of all Vices. I say, notwithstanding all this, I am still of the old Opinion, that MODERATION is a VIRTUE, and one of the peculiar Ornaments and Advantages of the excellent Constitution of our Church, and must at last be the Temper of her Members, especially the CLERGY, if ever we seriously intend the firm Establishment of this Church; and do not industriously design, by cherishing Heats and Divisions among our selves, to let in POPERY at these Breaches.

To the CLERGY.

THE Servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient; in Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

He should be an Example of the Believers, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity, 1 Tim. iv. 12.

Blameless, Vigilant, Sober, of good Behaviour, Patient, not a Brawler, 1 Tim. iii. 2, 3.

Not Proud, Fierce, Heady, High-minded, 2 Tim. iii. 2, 3, 4.

To speak evil of no Man, but Gentle, shewing all Meekness unto all Men, Tit. iii. 2.

I beseech you, as you have any Tenderness for your own Reputation, for the Dignity of your Callings, for the Peace of the Nation, for the Honour of Religion, that you would be very jealous of all such things, as may reflect Disparagement on your Holy Calling. Bp. Wilkins's Sermon on Tit. ii. 15. at a Visitation holden at London.

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