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Thomas Gordon, *The Independent Whig, vol. 2 (7th ed. 1743)* [1720]



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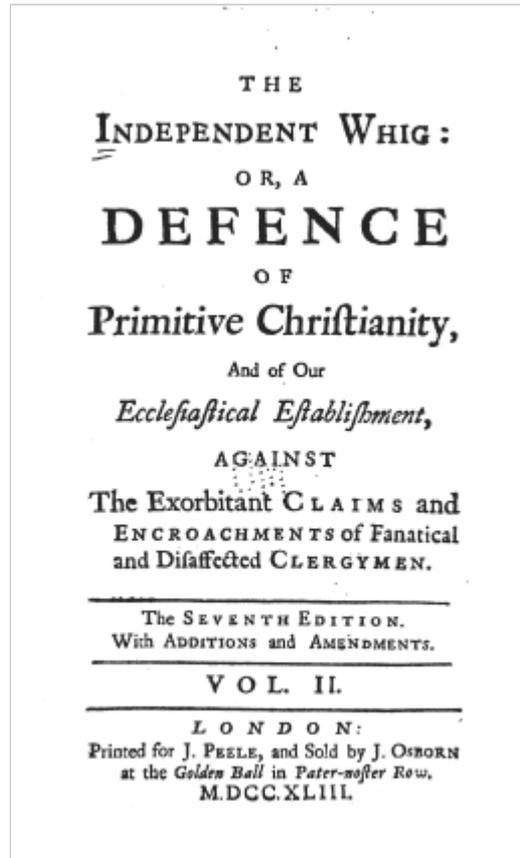
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Edition Used:

The Independent Whig: or, a Defence of Primitive Christianity, And of Our Ecclesiastical Establishment, against The Exorbitant Claims and Encroachments of Fanatical and Disaffected Clergymen. The Seventh Edition, with Additions and Amendments (London: J. Peele, 1743). Vol. 2.

Author: [Thomas Gordon](#)

Author: [John Trenchard](#)

About This Title:

Trenchard and Gordon wrote articles for this weekly journal during the period 1720-21 just before they began work on their better known periodical *Cato's Letters* which appeared 1720-23. In a total of 53 essays they criticized the power and abuses of the ecclesiastical establishment in Britain. As Trenchard died in 1723, Gordon edited the essays for later publication. The second edition was published in 1741. Vol. 2 contains no. 33 (August 31, 1720) to no. 54 (January 18, 1721) and a poem to the memory of Trenchard..

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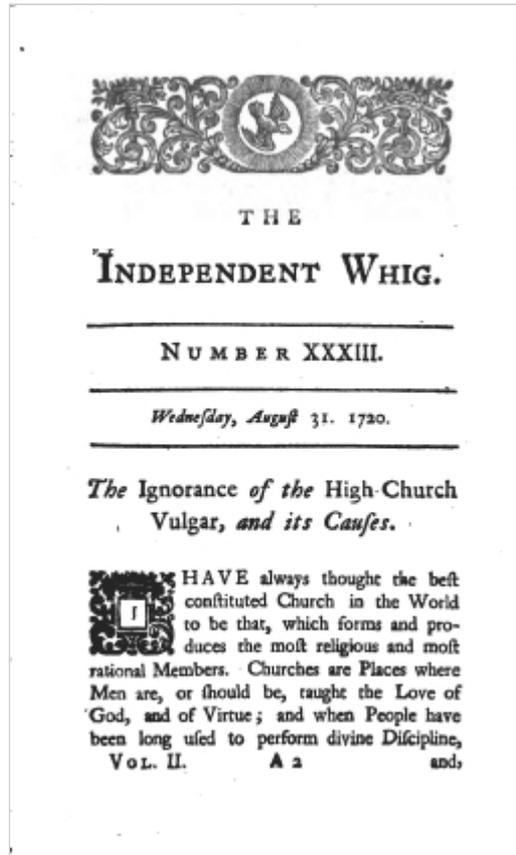


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THE Independent Whig.

Number XXXIII.

The Ignorance Of The High-Church Vulgar, And Its Causes.

Wednesday, August 31. 1720.

I HAVE always thought the best constituted Church in the World to be that, which forms and produces the most religious and most rational Members. Churches are Places where Men are, or should be, taught the Love of God, and of Virtue; and when People have been long used to perform divine Discipline, and, as they imagine, receive Instruction in Moral and Evangelical Duties, in these stately Fabrics, they generally conceive a deep Reverence and Devotion for the Buildings themselves, and for every thing that is said in them, as well as a great Opinion of the Wisdom and Sanctity of the Teachers, who preside there, and dictate *ex Cathedra*: They esteem them as Persons sent by God himself, to deliver a Message from his own Mouth; for which also they have often the Word of the Preacher—No small Reason to *the Many* for the believing of it!

So that here is an unaccountable Prepossession in favour of every Doctrine, or every Dream, which corrupt Priests shall think fit to deliver. And indeed, the High-Church Clergy have never failed to make their Advantage of this superstitious Awe and Credulity of their Hearers; and to sanctify every Falshood, and every Whimsy and Impiety uttered by them, with a misapplied or perverted Text of Scripture; and so prostituted and profaned the high and holy Name of God, to patronize their Impostures. I shall give some Instances.

When they have had a mind to flatter a cruel or a foolish Prince, in order to make him serve their Purposes, and do their Drudgery: they have instantly intituled him *God's Vicegerent*, tho' he acted at the same aime by the Instigation of his Lust, or of *Satan*. And, because *David* and *Saul*, being appointed by God himself, by Word of Mouth, were called the *Lor'ds Anointed*, therefore every Tyrant, who was not appointed by God himself, but seized a Crown by Violence or Surprize, became also the Lord's Anointed. And because *Adam* was the Father of his own Son, therefore he was the King of his own Son; and therefore all such Kings, who had not *Adam* for their Father, were nevertheless, in Right of *Adam*, Kings and Fathers of their Subjects, who yet were not their Children, but for all that owed them the Duty of Children, whilst they were plundering and ruining them; and all the Rapine and Murders which they were prompted to commit, by their Anger or their Avarice, were called the *Ordinance of God*, and were to be submitted to with *Christian Stupidity*, on Pain of Damnation; that is, it was made Damnation to resist Actions and Cruelties which deserved Damnation. And as you were to submit to Law, and Justice, on Pain of Damnation, so ought you to submit to the overturning of all Law, and all Justice, on Pain of Damnation also. And, because, when we have any Matter of Complaint, we are bid to

acquaint the Church with it; therefore the People, who are the Church, are, in every Case, to be determined by the Parson of the Parish, who is not the Church. And, because we are to confess our Sins one to another; therefore we are to do it to a Priest, which is not doing it to one another. And, because *Abraham* gave the Tenth of his Plunder to *Melchisedek*, who was not a Priest of our Church by Law Established; therefore our Established Priests, who have nothing to do with *Melchisedek*, nor know any thing of him, have a Divine Right to the Tenth-part of every Man's Estate and Industry. And, as the Tribe of *Levi* had a Right to Tythes, though they and their Tythes are long since abolished; so ought our Parsons to have the same Tythes by the Gospel, without being in the least a kin to *Aaron*'s Person, or Heirs to his Estate, or Successors to his Institution. And, though our Saviour's Kingdom is not of this World; yet the Kingdom of the High Clergy, who, if you will take their Words for it, are his Representatives, is, and ought to be, of this World. And, because the reprobate and gluttonous Monks had, by endless Rogueries, and diabolical Lyes, plunder'd the deluded Laity of their Possessions, and engrossed to themselves most of the Lands of *England*; therefore our Modern High Priests have a *natural* and *hereditary* Right to enjoy the same: And though they have, upon Oath, renounced all Power, and all Pretence to Power, but what the Law vouchsafes to grant them; yet they have a Power independent on the Law, and Principles independent on these very Oaths, though renounced by these very Oaths.

All these, and many more Absurdities, equally vile and impudent, have been blasphemously fathered upon Scripture, and the Author of Scripture; though they all contradict the Scripture, as well as they do common Sense, and common Honesty, But as the Vulgar do always take that to be the highest Point of Religion, about which their Teachers make the most Noise; for the Time being, whether it be Tythe, or Dr. *Sacheverel*, or the *Pretender*, or the late Duke of *Ormond*, or King *Charles the First*; so vicious and corrupt Clergymen, on their part, have always tacked the Name of God, or, which is much more powerful with the Mob, the Name of the *Church*, to any Assertion, or any Claim, or any Invention of theirs, be it ever so monstrous, or mischievous; and instantly it becomes, with weak People, an Article of Faith, upon which Salvation itself depends. For, as it is their first Care to force a Testimony from Heaven for every Whim or Forgery of theirs; so their next Concern is to make every Contradiction and Opposition to it damnable.

Hence it comes to pass, that the same Virtues are not of the same Importance at all Times; but Virtues are made Vices, and Vice is made Virtue, just as the present Temper, or the present Views prevail; and, by corrupt Priests, Things are often taught under the Name of Christianity, which are opposite to the Nature of Christianity: Religion is pretended, and Power meant. In consequence of this, Duty is converted into Sin, and Sin into Duty. Thus, the worshipping of God according to one's Conscience, without which there can be no Worship, is made by the High-Church Priests a damnable Sin; and the not worshipping a Table in the Chancel, though in Opposition to one's Conscience, is as bad. Sometimes the *resisting of unlawful Power*, is certain Damnation; and sometimes the *not rebelling* against the most lawful Power, has the same terrible Penalty annexed to it. To doubt or deny their uncharitable, unintelligible Explications of Mystery, which cannot be explained, is the

most heinous Atheism; and to whip a seditious, forsworn Priest, is crying Infidelity, and a Wound to Christ, through the Sides of his Ambassador.

At one Time, *Predestination* is of high Consequence, and *made an Article of Faith*, and all *Free-willers* should be banished the Land, or locked up in Dungeons, like wild Beasts; which was the Judgment of the Bishops in King *James* the First's Days, concerning the *Arminians*. At a different Season, when Preferments run high on the other Side, as in King *Charles* the First's Reign, and ever since; *Arminianism* not only recovers Credit, but grows modish, and consequently *Orthodox*; while *Predestination* becomes an old-fashion'd Piece of Faith, and a sure Sign of *Fanaticism*: And yet it continues one of the XXXIX. Articles, and yet it must not be believed, and yet it must be signed and assented to with a sincere Assent.

In all these Marches and Counter-marches, the Passions of too many of the People keep pace with those of the High Priests; and they are constantly disposed to be Slaves or Rebels, Free-willers, or No-willers, Believers of this, or Believers of that, just as Almighty High-Church commands them.

Such Men do not pretend to teach their People the Meekness of Christianity: — No, their Zeal is to be Anger, and their Religion Cruelty. That Fierceness, which is inconsistent with the Spirit of a Christian, is to be the certain Criterion of one whom they call a *true Churchman*; and that Mercy, which is inseparable from the Gospel, is inconsistent with the Temper of High-Church. Their Votaries are not taught to be *Christians*, which would spoil the Project, but *High-Churchmen*; and instead of an Army of Martyrs, they are to be an Army of Martyr-makers. Nor is any Portion of Knowledge fit for them; for that might endanger the Loss of their Vassalage; and the teaching them to know for themselves, might extinguish their Zeal, and intirely change their Belief and Behaviour. The poor People are, in short, by such Guides taught to be ignorant, and to let others know for them: They must give up common Sense to learn their Duty; and abandon Christianity, without which they cannot have the Grace of God, to embrace rigid Conformity, which is neither a Sign, nor a Cause, of that Grace, but often a Bar and a Contradiction to it. This is so true, that whoever can reconcile *Human Authority to Christian Charity*, may reconcile Water and Fire, or do any other Impossibility.

Tenderness and Moderation to those who devoutly differ from us, though they are evident Principles and Duties of Christianity, and even the Result of Reason, Justice, and Humanity, yet are never mentioned by the Mouth of Orthodoxy, but as Terms of Contempt or Reproach: Insomuch that a pious Indulgence to Men of a different Communion, the most honest, virtuous, inoffensive Men; and an Indulgence for the invincible, and perhaps rational Persuasions of the Mind, is the common Topic of Satire, and either ridiculed or reviled; whilst Men of the same Side may go what Lengths they will in Violence and Villainy, without Anger or Rebuke: And while one Man shall have his House burned, his Brains beat out, and his Family ruined, for having a scrupulous Conscience, which is much more offensive than none at all; another Man shall break all the Ten Commandments with Reputation.

Hatred, and Bitterness of Spirit, are the first Lessons which the unhappy People are taught by such Men; and the Gospel must be laid aside, and Good-nature be extinguished, before modern Orthodoxy can be swallowed, or modern Zeal infused. Some of them may probably have learned to repeat the *Catechism* by Rote, and even to have practised profound Respect and Submission to their *Spiritual Superiors*; but for the great and indispensable Duties of Religion, how can it be expected, that they should mind them, while they daily see their Teachers express a much more warm Concern for their own Dignities and Revenues, than for the Honour and Interest of pure unmixed Religion, which was ever highest when Ecclesiastical Power, and Ecclesiastical Excise, were lowest?

When a Congregation sees the Doctor much warmer against Dissenters, than against Sin, and not half so zealous for the absolute Necessity of a virtuous and sober Life, as for the absolute Necessity of a rigid Conformity; what can they conclude, but either that he derides them, or that a stupid Compliance with him, and a raging Resentment against Nonconformists, are the great Duties of Churchmen? Add to this, that if his Life be vicious, such a Conclusion is still the more natural to vulgar Understandings. When they see Church-Power so violently contented for, and Gospel-Holiness so little regarded, or so easily dispensed with; what can their stupid Understandings infer, but that a blind Submission to the Ecclesiastics is beyond all evangelical Grace, and every moral Virtue? They find by daily Experience, that they may commit Drunkenness or Whoredom with Impunity, or at small Expence; but if they do not give the Doctor what he calls his Due, even to the last Sheaf of Corn, or the last Pound of Wool, they are exposed in the Pulpit, harassed in the Bishops-Court, and probably, at last, surrendered to *Satan* and Damnation.

Besides, they oftener hear Texts quoted, in some Pulpits, to abuse Separatists, than to recommend Godliness and Virtue; and see the Mode of performing a Duty more vehemently urged, than the Duty itself: Thus Kneeling at the Lord's Supper is made by many of equal Importance with the Sacrament itself; and the Cross in Baptism must no more be parted with, than the Ordinance of Baptism.

It is therefore no Wonder, that the Affections and Antipathies of the common People have neither proper Causes, nor proper Objects; and that they neither love the Gospel as such, nor hate Sin as such; but form their Faith and Devotion upon the Word and Behaviour of their Priests, who have the keeping of their Religion, their Zeal, and their Passions. And what hopeful Use they make of this terrible Dominion, we all know: For indeed the Christian Religion is not so much as known to the High-Church Vulgar, nor suffer'd to be known; and as little do they feel, or are suffered to feel, the tender Impulses of Good nature and Humanity; but possess an Implacableness of Spirit, as opposite to the Spirit of *Christ*, as was the Spirit of *Mahomet* to that of *Moses*.

G.

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Number XXXIV.

Of Fasting. Part 2.

Wednesday, September 7. 1720.

IN my 27th Paper, I have made a Dissertation upon *Fasting*: In this I shall continue it.

Monsieur de Fontenelle, in his *History of Oracles*, tells us, from *Philostratus*, that the Oracle of *Amphiaraus* in *Attica* delivered its Answers in Dreams; and that those who consulted it, must first fast well in order to dream well: But when Fasting failed to produce a Frensy of Brain, and by it the Meaning of the God, who had no other way of ascending into the Head, but upon the Fumes arising from empty Bowels; then the Priest helped his Master to bring forth a Dream, by wrapping up the devout Querist in the Skins of Victims, which being rubbed and impregnated with intoxicating Drugs, disposed him to dream most divinely, and filled his Noddle with very hopeful Prophecy. This satisfied the believing Querist, saved the Credit of the God, and brought pretty Offerings to his *Vicar*.

Such Use did the *Pagan* Priests make of the Duty of Fasting; and that the *Romish* Priests have perverted it to as wicked and deceitful Purposes, I have shewn in another Paper. It is agreeable to their Cunning, and their Avarice, to make the People poor and mad; and it must be owned a pretty priestly Art, that of driving Men out of their Estates, and their Understandings, with their own Consent; and leading them into a Belief, that Starving is a Duty, and Lunacy is Grace.

By the Law of Nature, we are not obliged to fast at all, unless in the way of Physic, when we are ill, through an Over-fulness of the Vessels, or any other Disorder, which may be removed or lessened by Abstinence. In this Case, we ought to fast for our Health-sake; and whatever is necessary for Self-relief, or Self-preservation, becomes also a Duty, and a Piece of Natural Religion, when it does not contradict a positive Law of God. But to abstain, upon certain Days, from the comfortable Use of God's good Creatures, which ought to be received with Thankfulness, out of a vain Pretence to please him, or to promote our own Salvation, is a strange and barbarous Chimera, which the Law of Nature abhors; and can be the Effect of nothing but Distraction in the People, or Craft in the Priests. We might as rationally imagine, that going naked at certain severe Seasons of the Year, would draw us nearer Heaven; and that the afflicting our Skins with Frost and Snow would do great Service to our shivering Souls; and that though Self-preservation be an essential Law of Nature, yet Self-destruction is also an essential Law of Nature.

Fasting, therefore, being no Part of the Law of Nature, the *Jewish* Law of Ceremonies, which is abolished, cannot make it a Duty: And for the Examples of Fasting, taken from the Prophet *Daniel*, and other holy Men of the *Old Testament*; they were either voluntary, such as any one may perform when he is in a fasting Humour, which

nobody pretends to restrain; or they were the Effect of Sorrow, when Grief had destroyed Appetite, and then there was no Devotion in them; or they were extraordinary and supernatural, and being inimitable, cannot be necessary. Miraculous Fasting cannot be a Duty, where the Gift of Miracles is not given.

As to the *New Testament*, there is not a stated Fast appointed in it: We are indeed commanded to fast and pray; but we are no-where told how much, or how often, we are to do either; but are left to chuse proper Occasions, and proper Inclinations, for doing both. St. *Paul* is such a generous Advocate for Liberty of this Kind, that he condemns all those who condemn others for taking it: *Let not, says he, him that eateth, despise him that eateth not: And let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him. One Man esteemeth one Day above another: Another esteemeth every Day alike. Let every Man be fully persuaded in his own Mind* (Rom. ch. xiv. ver. 3, and 5.). The same Spirit of Charity, and the same good-natured rational Advice, runs through the whole Chapter.

The Institution of *Lent* was founded upon our Saviour's Fast of Forty Days in the Wilderness; as if weak impotent Mortals could imitate the Omnipotent Son of God, in Works done by Divine Power only! They might as well pretend to walk upon the Sea once a Year, or to raise the Dead at all times: Besides, our Saviour performed this Fast but once, and his Apostles never, as far as we know. *Once a Twelve-month you must keep Lent*, is not a Gospel Precept.

No Society, therefore, of Men can injoin any Time, or Measure, of Fasting (except where the Law directs the same) without departing from the Gospel, contradicting St. *Paul*, and setting up their own Authority in Defiance of both the Gospel and the Saint. Such an Injunction would be impracticable, and even cruel. To many Constitutions it might be dangerous, and even fatal; and to all Men it would render Life wretched and burdensome. The good God has no-where commanded frail Men to worship him with Pain and Sickness of Body, nor to hasten their own. Death by the Means of their Devotion. This would be to represent him as delighting in human Misery, and human Sacrifices; a sort of Worship suitable to the terrible Spirit of *Moloch*, or any other *Demon*, but no wife acceptable to the God of Mercy, and *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

The Popish Priests know well, that it is intirely impossible, that all Men should comply with this their Discipline of Hunger; and perhaps that very Impossibility is their best Reason for maintaining it. It is certain, that from hence they draw vast Gain, by hiring out Dispensations for Eating on the Days of Fasting; and the Lucre which they make by breaking the Canon, is an unanswerable Argument for defending it. No Man is denied the Privilege of breaking *Lent*, who can pay for breaking it. He who cannot fast at all, may, for a competent Fee, eat Fish, which is a more luxurious Diet than Flesh; and he who cannot fast upon Fish, may, for a more competent Fee, fast upon a Belly-full of Roast-beef; which, tho' a chaster sort of Food than Fish, is more strictly forbidden by that Church.

Indeed, such are the vast Fees arising to the Popish Church, from Licences for a Liberty to eat, when it is a Duty to fast, that the whole Institution of Fasting *there*,

seems only a religious Roguery, design'd for starving the People, to feed the Priests. For myself, I think the Parson has so little to do with this Matter, that I do not think, that any Direction ought to be taken about Fasting, but from our Constitution, or our Physician. If it be our Duty to fast on certain Days, no Tribe of Priests can dispense with the Pleasure and the Laws of Almighty God; though it is a Task which (for Money) they never refuse: And if it be not our Duty, it is insolent and wicked in them to command what neither God nor Nature requires; and it is in us a Sin and a Folly to obey them. Even the Protestant Priests, long since the *Reformation*, have known how to make the right Use of this Power. I myself have seen several formal Dispensations, signed by Archbishop *Sheldon*, under the Archiepiscopal Seal, to license the eating of Flesh in *Lent*; which Dispensations, I presume, were not granted without Application and Fees.

Religion is a voluntary Thing; it can no more be forced than Reason, or Memory, or any Faculty of the Soul. To be devout against our Will, is an Absurdity; and it is ridiculous in others to hope to make us so, in spite of ourselves. We have no Power over the Appetites of others, no more than over their Consciences. Neither a Man's Mind, nor his Palate, can be subject to the Jurisdiction of another; and whoever takes upon him to regulate one's Throat and Stomach, and direct one how much to swallow, may (with equa Reason) assume Dominion over the other Offices of Nature, and dictate how much one ought to discharge. If Fasting be good and pious, because it afflicts and mortifies the Human Spirit and Frame; a Surfeit, or a Debauch, or a Kick on the Guts, or a broken Leg, must be good and pious, for the same Reason, if given or taken with the same View.

As Fasting ought to be left to every Man's Discretion, because every Man is the best Judge of his Constitution and his Conscience, so ought it to be exercised with exceeding Care and Caution; otherwise it will be apt to sour our Tempers, or disorder our Heads, and probably do both. Now, neither Ill-nature, nor Enthufiasm, is any-wise related to true Religion; far otherwise, they are the greatest Enemies which it has. A bitter Spirit, and a raving Brain, may be occasioned or increased by Fasting; but Christianity never produces them, nor owns them. We may fast ourselves into Peevishness, and call it *Christian Zeal*; and into the Vapours, and call the Wind in our Heads, *Inspiration*. But, by all this, we only shew, that we know nothing, at least, possess nothing, either of *Inspiration* or *Zeal*.

But the same immoderate Fasting does not only render People whimsical and passionate, and has consequently helped to give Birth to many ridiculous and uncharitable Principles of Divinity, which have infatuated and inflamed Mankind; but it also creates narrow Thoughts, and an abject Poorness of Spirit; and renders the Mind prone to Delusion and Slavery. It is manifest, that a moderate Use of the Blessings and Enjoyments of Life, of which Eating and Drinking are not the least, has a wonderful Tendency to create or improve a good and beneficent Disposition of Heart; which, in my Opinion, is as absolutely necessary to Devotion, as to good Neighbourhood. I can never think, that Ill-nature, or Baseness of Mind, can be an acceptable Oblation to the Wise and Merciful God; or that Religion should command what common Sense forbids. I must own, I am always best pleased after a good Meal, and therefore best disposed to love God and my Neighbour, which is the Sum of both

Tables: I feel, at the same Juncture, the Love of Liberty, and the Spirit of *Whiggism*, strongest in me. And if Eating and Drinking makes us thus bold for our Constitution, let us, we beseech you, in the Name of Public-spirit, promote moderate Eating and Drinking.

It is a Principle in Politics, that a happy People will never bear a tyrannical Prince: He must therefore make his Subjects wretched, before he can make himself absolute. And this Principle holds equally true, in the Business of *Church Dominion*. The Laity must be Fools, before they can think the Priests to be Oracles; and they must be Slaves, before they can think the Priests to be Lords. Here then is an unanswerable Reason, taken from the standing Rules of Ecclesiastical Polity, why the Lay-Beasts of the People, as Mr. *Lesley* kindly calls us, should be always kept senseless, always starving. I would therefore intreat all my loving Countrymen, that, as they love their Liberty, and the Protestant Religion, they would love their Victuals.

G.

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Number XXXV.

Of Reason.

Wednesday, September 14. 1720.

Reason is the only Guide given to Men in the State of Nature, to find out the Will of God, and the Means of Self-preservation. The Senses are its subordinate Instruments and Spies: They bring it Intelligence; and it forms a Judgment, and takes Measures, according to the Discoveries which they make. It compares Things one with another, and chuses them, if they are good; or neglects them, if they are indifferent; or shuns them, if they are bad. It discovers a First Cause, the Maker, Contriver, and Preserver of all Things; and therefore it teaches Submission to his Will, Admiration of his Wisdom and Power, and Thankfulness for his Goodness and Mercy. It distinguishes Subjects from Slaves; and shews the Loveliness of Liberty, and the Vileness of Vassalage: It shews that, as to political Privileges, all Men are born equal; and consequently, that he who is no better than others, can have no Right to command others, who are as good as himself; unless, for the Ends of their own Interest and Safety, they confer that Right upon him, during *their* good Pleasure, or *his* good Behaviour.

Reason has invented all *Science*, pointed out all Commerce, and framed all Schemes for social Happiness. It has polished Mankind, set the *Greeks* above the *Barbarians*, and the *Romans* above the *Greeks*. It has been observed, in Praise of its great Power and Excellency, by a celebrated Moralist, that *we have not sufficient Strength to follow our Reason as far as it would carry us.*

To Reason we are beholden for all the Comforts and Conveniencies of Life, next after the first Author of them; and for our Defence against the Assaults of Beasts of Prey, and of one another; and for our Shelter from the Inclemencies of uncertain Weather, freezing us, or scorching us, according to the different Seasons of the Year. The Earth, with all its Abundance, affords but rude and displeasing Entertainment, without the Dexterity and Refinements of Reason. Thus, even the Gifts of *Nature*, before they arrive at us, and are made fit for our Use, become also the Gifts of Reason. Without Reason, we had lived like the *Brute Creation*, upon raw Fruit, tasteless Herbs, and the cold Spring; or exposed to the merciless Jaws of Famine, when a severe Winter had frozen up the Scores of the Earth, and locked the Waters under Ice.

Reason checks tumultuous Passion, the greatest Enemy to the Peace of the Mind, and to the Peace of Society. Hence it has been observed, by the same Moralist, that all our *rational* Pursuits are *temperate* Pursuits; and that what we pursue with Reason, we never pursue *with Violence*. Reason subdues Anger, and prevents Cruelty; it makes a Man less fierce than a Lion, and less ravenous than a Bear. It is not *human Shape*, but human Reason, that places a *Man* above the *Beasts* of the Field, and lifts him into a Resemblance with God himself. Hence it is justly styled *Divinæ particula Auræ; a*

Ray or Impulse of the Divinity. And, in what Sense can a Man be said to be *made after the Image of God*, unless by his possessing that Reason, which is a *divine Particle* of the Godhead? We *resemble* not our Maker in *Person* or *Complexion*; and therefore can only resemble him in Reason, and in *Mercy*, which is the Child of this *Divine Reason*.

Were we not *rational Creatures*, we could not be *religious Creatures*, but upon a Level with *Brutes*, to whom God has made no Revelation of himself, because they want Reason to discern it, and to thank him for it. *Revelation* therefore presupposes *Reason*, and addresses itself to *Reason*; and God himself, by persuading us, as he does in his Word, by the Voice of *Reason*, appeals to our *Reason*. We cannot glorify God but with our Understandings; and we are convinced of his Goodness, before we adore it. To praise him, without *Reason*, is a Contradiction, and an Impossibility. The Devotion which he requires must be *free, rational, and willing*; and where it is not so, it is *Folly* or *Hypocrisy*.

Nor is there any Opposition between *Reason* and *Grace*, whatever some may weakly or dishonestly maintain. In Truth, *Grace* is never given, but where *Reason* was already given; and the former *cannot* subsist, where the latter *does not*. We may have worldly Wisdom without Piety; but cannot possess Piety without Understanding; nor does *Grace*, though given in the greatest Abundance, at all supply the ordinary Offices of Reason. We do not find, that St. *Luke* was a better Physician, for having written a *Gospel*; or St. *Paul* a better *Sailor*, or better *Tent-maker*, for being an *Apostle*. But neither could St. *Luke* have been an *Evangelist*, nor St. *Paul* an *Apostle*, unless God had given them *Reason* as well as *Grace*. Indeed they are both the Gifts of God, only the one is *ordinary*, and the other is *extraordinary*.

Reason, even without the Light of *Revelation*, teaches us to investigate Nature, and praise God for the Wonderfulness of his Works. It must judge of Revelation itself, what is so, and what not; and of the Words and Language, in which the Holy Oracles were at first conveyed; and of the Words and Language into which they were afterwards translated. Now Words, many of them, being obscure or equivocal, and signifying different Things to different Men, it is left to our Reason to determine, in what Sense these Words are to be understood. The Spirit of God has invented for us no *new ones*, or such as carry in their Sound certain and determinate Ideas, which cannot be mistaken, but must infallibly be the same to every Man.

By the Light of Reason, we see about us. It warns us against Craft, and arms us against Force; and the same *Reason*, which commands us to believe in God *implicitly*, and obey him *passively*, does also command us to trust to no Man without Inquiry, and to submit to no Man without Cause. Thus, what is our Duty in relation to God, would be Madness in relation to one another: The good God cannot deceive us; but Men have Pride, Folly, Interest, and Complexion, all conspiring to deceive themselves and others.

Our first Attempt to make Converts is an Appeal to their Reason, by which they are to judge *for themselves* of the *Reasonableness* of our Religion, and of the Arguments which we bring for the Defence and Recommendation of our Religion: Which Method

would be exceedingly absurd and dishonest, if we did not suffer them to judge of our Religion, with the same Freedom, after they are come into it, as they did before they embraced it. This would be Trepanning one's Reason into Captivity, with its own Assistance; first to make *use* of it, and then to vote it useless: A strange inconsistent Piece of Treachery, and a flat Contradiction to that *Liberty with which Christ has made us free!* As if we were to receive any *System* upon the Grounds of our *Reason*, without which it never can be sincerely received, and then to reject *our Reason* upon the Grounds of our *System*.

Pray how do we distinguish the Beauty and Truth of the *Gospel*, from the Imposture and Absurdity of the *Alcoran*, but by our *Reason*? How do we detect the impudent and senseless Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, but by our *Sense* and *Reason*? Why did we, or how could we, leave *Poper*y, and embrace the *Reformation*, but because our own private *Reason* told us, and *Scripture*, of which we made *ourselves the Judges*, told us, that we left Slavery, Falshood, and Cruelty, for Truth, Freedom, and Innocence? How did our *Saviour* prove himself the *Son of God*, but by Miracles, which every Eye saw, and every Ear heard? He appealed to the *Sense* and *Reason* of Mankind; and all were convinced, that would be convinced. How do we know the *Scripture* to be the Word of God, but by the Deductions and Information of *Reason*? How can we prove our own Church, *as by Law established*, to be the *purest and best constituted Church in the World*, but by the Testimony of impartial, *disinterested Reason*? For it is plain, from the great Number of *Gain-sayers*, and *Arians*, that her *gennine Sons* have not the miraculous Gift of inspiring, *from above*, all Men with their own *Orthodox* Sentiments. How can we distinguish Religion from Enthusiasm, Grace from Superstition, Faith from Credulity, the Love of the Church from the Love of Power, and the Authority of God from the Impositions of Men; but by *Reason*, or by the *Scripture*, interpreted by *Reason*?

In short, all who are Friends to Truth, are Friends to Reason, the Discoverer and Champion of Truth; and none are Foes to *Reason*, but those who have *Truth* and *Reason* for their Foes. He, who has dark Purposes to serve, must use dark Means: Light would discover him, and Reason expose him: He must endeavour to shut out both; and make them look frightful, by giving them ill Names; for farther than Names the Vulgar inquire not.

From this Cause, Religion and Liberty flourish, where *Reason* and Knowledge are encouraged; and where-ever the latter are stifled, the former are extinguished. In *Turky*, Printing is forbid, *Inquiry* is dangerous, and *Free-speaking* is capital; because they are all inconsistent with the Mahometanism *by Law established*. Hence it comes to pass, that the wretched *Turks* are all stupidly ignorant, are all Slaves, all Infidels. Nor have the *Papists* much Advantage to boast above the *Mahometans*. Their Guides and Governors lock up from them the *Scripture*, which is the Book of Knowledge: They teach them, that *Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion*: They banish Liberty, they brow-beat *Reason*, they persecute Truth. In consequence of all which, the deluded Votaries of the *Romish Church* are as ignorant as the *Mahometans*, as great Slaves, greater Idolaters, and greater Persecutors; that is, in Barbarity they exceed the *Turks*, who in Barbarity exceed most others.

Here, in *England*, why are we *free*, why *Protestants*; but because we are guided by *Reason*, and judge for ourselves? And none amongst us complain of the *Liberty of the Press*, or the *Growth of Free-Thinking*, but those who would found a Dominion upon *Stupidity* and Persecution. Vile and woeful is that Cause, which must be supported by Ignorance and Misery! And yet there are those in *Great Britain*, who, though they wear a holy and venerable Livery, yet have the Boldness and Blasphemy to christen that *impious Cause*, the *Cause of God*, and of *his Church*.

To conclude, *Scripture*, and *Reason*, without which Scripture can have no Effect, are the only Tests of every Falshood and Imposture, and every Superstition. Suppose, for Example, a Reverend Doctor is touch'd with an odd Zeal for *Bowing to the East*; he ought to convince my *Reason*, that *Bowing to the East* is enjoined in Scripture, before he enjoins me to bow also. If he say, that it is enjoined by the Authority of the Church, he then must satisfy my Reason, that the Scripture teaches the Church to teach her Members to make Bows. If he answer, that neither does the Scripture teach to bow to the *East*, but that the Church thinks *Bowing* decent and edifying; he must then prove, by rational Evidence, that what every Church thinks decent is a Duty. If he reply, that this is only true of the one Orthodox Church; then he must prove, that his Church is the sole Orthodox Church, according to the Rules of the Gospel. And if the Doctor cannot do this to my Satisfaction, then there will be an End of his Argument for his Ecclesiastical *Bowings*.

As we judge from Scripture, what is Orthodoxy; so we must judge from Reason, what is Scripture.

G.

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Number XXXVI.

Of The Peace Of The Church.

Wednesday, September 21. 1720.

IT is a shameful Insult upon our Understandings, that of sanctifying the most wicked Purposes, and most cruel Actions, with the most honest and innocent Names; and yet nothing is more frequently practised. Thus the worthy Name of Ruler shall be prostituted and pronounced aloud, to palliate, and even to justify, the Barbarities of a Tyrant; and that peaceable Word *Obedience* shall be forced to signify an unmanly and unnatural Patience of *Servitude*. Laws, which were intended to protect and encourage good Men, and to restrain and punish ill ones, are often perverted into deadly Instruments in the Hands of Robbers and Usurpers, against the Virtuous and the Harmless; and the Means of Preservation are turned into Engines of Destruction. The Lord's *Anointed*, a Phrase which at first signified only a Man approved and chosen by God himself to be the Ruler of his People, has been since wrested to mean an over-grown Plunderer, who *chose himself* to be a Destroyer of God's People.

These are some Instances of the Abuse of Words in *civil Life*. In Religion, the Abuse has been, if possible, still greater; of which I have given already many Proofs, and shall continue to give more in the Course of these Papers. I shall at present confine myself to a Phrase, which is indeed a very good one, but which I have never known applied to a good Purpose in my Time, nor at any Time before; I mean that of the *Peace of the Church*.

By the *Peace of the Church*, when it is taken in a rational and warrantable Sense, I take to be meant no more than this, namely, That any Number of People, who have agreed among themselves upon Terms of religious Communion, shall quietly enjoy the sacred Privilege of meeting together to worship God; and whoever disturbs them, let his Title or Pretensions be what they will, is a Breaker of the Peace of the Church. Or if any other Society greater than the former, and of longer Standing, think fit to be provoked at this religious Indulgence, and call it a Breach of the Peace of the Church, they bring home the Charge upon themselves, who, by breaking the Peace of the Church, mean only the not submitting to their own proud Spirit, which finds Peace only in the Exercise of successful Tyranny. Or if the smaller Society should usurp Dominion over the Thoughts of its own Members, and demand of them a Belief contrary to the Light of their Minds, or a Behaviour contrary to the Dictates and Conviction of their Consciences; they justify the Claims of the greater Society over themselves, and leave themselves without Excuse for having left it.

A Man, who leaves the Communion of any particular Church, does no more break the Peace of that Church, than a Man, who leaves the Realm, breaks the Peace of the Realm; or than a Man breaks the Peace of a Family, who, whilst the rest dine upon Flesh, does himself dine separately upon Fish. But he doe, evidently break the Peace

of the Church, who would by Violence keep any one in that Church; forasmuch as, by so doing, he violates Conscience, which is the Seat and Centre of Religion, there being no Religion where there is no Conscience, and consequently no real Church. He who prays without Book, does not break the Peace of the Church, provided he forces nobody to pray as he prays: But he who would compel others to pray by his Pattern, against their own Liking, does not only break the Peace of the Church, but destroys, as far as he can, its very Essence; because a Church is constituted by the *voluntary* Devotion performed by two or three met together in Christ's Name. If it be not *voluntary*, it is no Devotion; God will be worshipped *in Spirit and in Truth*: And if it be voluntary, no Man can controul it.

Hitherto, for the most part, the *Peace of the Church* has been unnaturally made to signify a blind Submission to the Dictates of Priests in Matters of Devotion; and a blind Acceptance of all their Schemes, Dreams and Forgeries in Matters of Faith. Now here is no Church at all; but, on one hand, the Invention and Imposition of deceitful and tyrannical Men, defacing and misrepresenting Religion, and wresting it to serve their own wicked Purposes; and, on the other hand, a Tribe of Fools and Slaves, sacrificing their Senses, their Freedom, and their Consciences, to Antichrist, and worshipping him, and not God. If one of these groveling Bigots resume his Eyes, and break his Fetters, he forsooth is a *Schismatick*, he breaks the Peace of the Church.

Why will these Men, so famed for bring close and crafty, be so plainly shewing us, that by the Church they mean only Themselves; and by the Worship of God they mean only the Worship of their own Persons and Authority? But they make this manifest, as by a Thousand Instances, so particularly by this; namely, that the greatest Rebel to God shall find good Quarter, provided he be but a good Subject to them; and the most conscientious Servant of the Living God shall find no Mercy, if he dispute to bend to their Usurpations, and to swallow their Inventions for Divine Oracles. It is no matter whether you live like a Christian or no, provided you do not break the *Peace of the Church*; but if you do, your being a Saint will not atone for it, nor stand you in the least Stead.

If I do all I can to please God, I shall certainly please him. Now if the Clergy had the same View and Design, my pleasing God would also please them. In consequence of this, if I thought my Abode and Communion with them a Sin, it is their Duty to encourage and exhort me to leave them, and to obey God rather than Men. But far from this, the Plea of pleasing God is often no way of pleasing them; and they seldom fail to damn a Man for those very Actions, by which, through Christ, he shall be saved; namely, deserting Authority for Conscience, and finding out the Truth for himself.

A stupid Servitude to unbounded Dominion, supports the Peace of the Church in some Countries, just as Ignorance, Poverty, and many Dragoons, do the Peace of the State in others.

The breaking of the Peace of the Church, as the same is generally understood by the ignorant People, and always by the ambitious Clergy, is both a rational and a religious Duty, and the best Action which a Man can perform. That Man must be as void of

Reason as of Religion, who quarrels with me for having different Faculties from him, and a different Way of conceiving Things. He might with as much Propriety quarrel with me for having a different Complexion, and a different Palate, neither of which is in my own Power.

If I christen my Child without the *Sign of the Cross*, or a *human Form of Words*; how do I, by this, break the *Peace of the Church*, or of good Neighbourhood? But he, who oppresses or calumniates me for thus doing my Duty, by discharging my Conscience, commits an Outrage both upon Humanity and Conscience; and not only breaks the Peace of the Church, and of Society, but by his Want of Charity declares his Want of Christianity.

If I follow the best Light which I can get, I do my Duty; and if I do my Duty, I please God. And who shall dare to tell me, that though I please God, yet I break the Peace of the Church? Would not this be to own, that the Will of God, and the Will of the Church, are opposite Things?

I do not believe, that there are upon Earth Two Men who think exactly alike upon every Subject; and yet our different Tastes in Meat, Drink, Building, and Dress, make not the least Difference in human Society; nor is it likely, that they ever will, unless we establish by Law, and tack Preferments to one particular Mode of Eating, Drinking, Building, and Dressing; then indeed we may soon expect to see the established and orthodox Mason, Cook and Taylor, very zealous and loud for *Conformity* and *Penalties*. But at present, Ten Men, in Ten different Suits, can dine together upon Ten different Dishes, and give Ten different Opinions upon One Piece of Painting or Architecture, without breaking Friendship or good Humour. If indeed they be drunk either with Wine or Zeal, they will be apt to fight about the *Church* or *something else*: But why Men in their Senses should clamour and quarrel at their Neighbour's particular Conscience, any more than at his particular Palate, no Reason can be assigned, but the Delusions of Priestcraft operating upon its genuine Issue, Bigotry. Is not Conscience dearer to a Man, than his Palate, or his Fancy in Cloaths? God can receive no Worship that comes not from the Conscience; and he who commands you to follow him against your Conscience, commands you in Effect to provoke God out of Complaisance to Men; and rather than do this, I hope it is lawful to break the Peace of the Church. Where the Church quadrates with a Man's Conscience, he will of course comply with the Church; but where it does not, he is in Conscience bound to desert it; otherwise, to be a Conformist, he must be a Hypocrite.

Can these Men be Christians, who demand Submission to their Dictates, in Opposition to the Dictates of Conscience, and at the Peril of Salvation; and who, provided you obey them, care not though you mock God? But if they will allow *every Man to be fully persuaded in his own Mind*, which is the Apostle's Rule and Precept, then the Cry of breaking the *Peace of the Church*, is an empty knavish Cry.

Indifferent Things in Religion there are none; and therefore the pretended Power of the Ecclesiastics to impose them, is wicked and ridiculous. If they be indifferent in their own Eyes, why are they imposed? And if they were indifferent in the Eyes of others, nobody would refuse them. But if I dislike them, they are no longer indifferent

to me; and if you lay any Stress upon them, they are no longer indifferent to you. But to oppress, imprison, and ruin People for Things *allowed to be indifferent*, is such a Piece of Impudence, and wanton Cruelty, as cannot be described.

To call any thing indifferent in Religion, is to own, that it has nothing to do with Religion. Now, can any Reason be given, why Religion should be interested in that, in which Religion has no Interest? Sure these Men mock us, and would seem to be in Jest, did not their Proceedings, when they have Power, shew them to be terribly in Earnest.

If I neglect a Ceremony, or a Cringe, which I think a Reproach to Religion and Reason; do I break the *Peace of the Church*, for thus doing Honour to Religion and Reason? Or is it not rather an Insult upon Both, and a manifest Breach of Charity, to use me ill for acting upon such righteous and laudable Motives? Do I break the *Peace of the Church*, in worshipping God after a Manner that I am verily persuaded he will accept? Or do I not rather dishonour him, in using that as Worship, which my Mind tells me is no Worship, though it should be established by Law?

In *Popish* and *Mahometan* Countries, you see neither true Religion, nor the Practice of it, and yet the *Peace of the Church* there is wonderfully well secured by great Armies, and capital Penalties. Fire and Sword, Halters and Dungeons, are all employed to protect the *Peace of the Church*. And in every Nation under the Sun, where the *Church* enjoys the most *profound peates* the People enjoy the most profound Misery, Ignorance and Slavery. Civil and Religious Liberty are certain Signs of each other, and live and die together; but I believe I may lay it down for a Maxim, that *in any Country where there is ne'er a Separatist from the Church, there is ne'er a Freeman in the State*. To which Maxim I may venture to add another, namely, that, *in the Ecclesiastical State, the Peace of the Church is but another Phrase for the Power of the Priests*.

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Number XXXVII.

The Enmity Of The High Clergy To The Bible.

Wednesday, September 28. 1720.

WE can never sufficiently admire and adore the infinite Goodness of God to Mankind, in giving him a perfect Rule or Law for his Direction and Conduct; and delivering it in Books and Scriptures, which are plain and easy in all things necessary to be known to every one, who shall make a proper Use of his natural Faculties, and not weakly trust a Pope, or somebody like a Pope, for their Interpretation, who will ever have ambitious or other worldly Purposes to serve, by imposing false and wicked Meanings on those sacred Writings.

How ought we then to value our Bibles, daily to read them, and search ourselves for those Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge! And how jealous should we be of trusting our temporal and eternal Happiness to the Judgment and Conduct of others, who, for the most part, from imbibed Prejudices, or worse Designs, represent the most ridiculous, chimerical, absurd, contradictory and immoral Opinions, to be fundamental Articles of Christianity!

Notwithstanding, such is the Power and crafty Malice of the Popish and Popishly-affected Clergy, that in most Countries they have either taken the Bible (even on the Pretence of Religion itself) out of the People's Hands, or have made it useless there; and such is the senseless Stupidity of the gaping Herd, that they observe not the Injury done them, and not only suffer this worst Sort of Robbery, Violence, and Injustice, but kiss the Rod, and esteem themselves to be kindly and religiously dealt with.

In all Popish Countries, before the *Reformation*, the Bible was locked up in the learned Languages; which effectually hindered the People from being acquainted with that Holy Book; the Priest saying, and the poor ignorant Laity believing, *That it was heretical, and the very Foundation of all Heresy and Schism, for the People to read the Bible.* Indeed, after the *Reformation*, some Translations were made of it into the Vulgar Languages of particular Popish Countries; but were the People ever the better for it? No such Matter, I can assure you; for no one was suffered to read those Translations without a special Licence, which was dangerous to ask for, and rendered a Man suspected of heretical Pravity; and the Priest never granted it but to those, who either would not or could not make any Use of it; that is, to such as he well knew were preengaged by strong Prejudices, or stronger Interests, to favour the Sacerdotal Power, and who durst not understand the Word of God differently from the Clergy, who called themselves the *Church*.

But in other Popish Countries, and particularly in *Spain*, the Bible is not extant in the vulgar Tongue, and consequently must be unknown altogether to the People, who are incapable of reading it even by Licence; which can scarcely be called a Privilege lost,

considering how few durst ask, or can get Licences, who they are that can obtain them, and what Danger they would incur in making a right Use of them.

Especial Care is taken to prevent the Importation of any Translation of the Bible in these Countries; and no sooner does any Ship of a Protestant Nation come to Anchor in any Popish Port, where the Inquisition prevails, but she is visited and searched narrowly for Heretical Books, and particularly for Bibles, by the Officers of that Court, which are immediately carried to the Inquisition, and there burned.

The brave old Marshal *Schomberg*, when he was last at *Lisbon*, told a Friend of mine, with Tears in his Eyes, That having, when he came ashore there, left a *Dutch* Bible (which had been his Grandfather's) upon the Table of his Cabin, it had been carried from the Custom-house to the Inquisition; and that tho' he had sent to the chief Inquisitor, and had spoken to him himself for it, he had not been able to recover it.

Let us now approach nearer Home, and see how Protestants are used in respect to reading the Bible. And in order to consider this Matter, I shall premise two things: *First*, That the End and Design of reading the Bible, is to find out the Will of God, or the Meaning which God holds forth to us therein, that we may regulate our Belief, and form our Practice thereby. And, *Secondly*, I premise, That to such reading the Bible, it is requisite, that we should not be prejudiced by Education, in Behalf of any Fancies; that we should pay no Regard to the Authority of weak and fallible Men; that no Opinions should be imposed on us as Christian Opinions; as for Example, Consubstantiation, Predestination, the peculiar Opinions of *Arius* or *Socinus*, and other Doctrines, pretended to be derived from the Word of God; and that no Man should be hurt in his Body, Name, or Goods, for understanding the Bible in that Sense which he thinks to have been intended by God; but that we should act, and be permitted to act, in this Matter, as we do in understanding any other Book: For if such Arts, and Crafts, and Force are used, to make Men understand the Bible in a *Lutheran*, *Presbyterian*, or *Socinian* Sense, as form Mens Minds so strongly to those Senses, that not a Man in the Countries, where any of those Opinions prevail, does or dares differ from the Sentiments of the Public, or hurts himself any way by so doing; that Man is not properly allowed to read the Bible, or to take his Religion from thence, but receives his Religion from his *Lutheran*, or *Presbyterian*, or *Socinian* Priest, and might as well take his Religion from a Popish Priest, without using any Bible at all. For what is the Difference between taking a Popish Priest's Word for the Sense of the *Bible*, about the Infallibility and Authority of the Pope and the Church, or the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, (which Bible the Priest keeps solely in his own Hands) and taking a Presbyterian's Word, or being influenced by him, as to the Sense of the Bible, in respect to the Doctrines of the divine Right of Presbyters, and Predestination (which Bible he does, for Form's sake, put into the Laymens Hand, but keeps the Sense in his own)? If there be any material Difference, it is in this, that the Popish Priest acts a fair, open, and consistent Part, in denying the Use of the Bible; and that the Presbyterian does the same thing hypocritically; and that the Presbyterian Layman makes a more shameful and contradictory Submission to his Presbyterian, than a Popish Layman does to his Priest.

When the Minds of the Youth, and their Passions, are thus engaged in behalf of certain human Compositions; when they are taught to reverence Men, who are hired and paid to maintain those Compositions; when they are bred up to hate the Persons of Men of other Persuasions, to abhor their Doctrines, and think it Matter of just Disgrace to change the Principles of their Education: And when all this is taught as the Dictates of the Holy Scriptures; must they not, under these Prejudices, read the Scriptures, without understanding them? Is not that Impartiality, which is necessary towards finding out the true Sense of a Book, intirely taken away? And is not a Partiality, which must lead Men to mistake the Sense of a Book, introduced?

But even this is nothing to what those must go through, if they dare to understand the Bible differently from what is vulgarly understood in the Country where they live: They will be deemed *Heretics*; which is “supposed to include every thing that is bad in it: It makes every thing appear odious and deformed; dissolves all Friendships, and extinguishes all former kind Sentiments, however just and well deserved. And from the time that a Man is deemed an Heretic, it is Charity to act against all Rules of Charity. And the more Men violate the Laws of God in dealing with him, it is, in their Opinion, doing God greater Service*.” And besides being thus put into a *Bear-skin*, and made a Scare-crow; what is called Heresy, undoes Men in their Trades and Callings, subjects them to Ecclesiastical and Civil Prosecutions, and deprives them of all Preferments in the Church or State: Whereas a Person who understands the Bible, as he is led by the Nose to understand it, which is for the most part falsly, has not only fair Quarter and Reputation, and all manner of Preferments in Church and State attending him; but may be as lewd as he pleases, provided he have a sufficient Portion of Zeal for his Orthodoxy, or rather for the Orthodox Priest.

Is it not therefore a mere Mock-shew, to recommend to Men the Reading of the Scriptures, if, when they read them, they must understand them just as their Master, the Priest, tells them, under the Penalties of all the foregoing Inconveniencies, and the foregoing Rewards, which the Priest, by his Power and Influence, bestows? Bishop *Bramhall* tells us plainly, (and too many of our modern Divines agree with him) That “the promiscuous Licence which Protestants give to all Sorts to read and interpret the Scripture, is more prejudicial, nay, pernicious, than the overrigorous Restraint of the Romanists.” This is Protestant Priestcraft with a witness! For, as Mr. *Chillingworth* most judiciously observes “He that would usurp an absolute Lordship and Tyranny over any People, need not put himself to the Trouble and Difficulty of abrogating and disannulling the Laws made to maintain the common Liberty, *or of locking them up in an unknown Tongue from the People*; for he may compass his own Design as well, if he can get the Power and Authority to interpret them as he pleases; if he can rule his People by his Laws, and his Laws by his Lawyers. Nay, the more expedite, and therefore the more likely way to be successful, is to gain the Opinion and Esteem of the public and authorized Interpreter of them.” For by *this Means* he *presses* the Laws into his Service, *to advance his Designs*; and can, in Accommodation to the Opinion which Men have of the Excellency of the Laws contained in the Scriptures, with a sort of Grace, *put a Crown on their Head, and a Reed in their Hands, and bow before them, and cry, Hail, King of the Jews! and pretend a great deal of Esteem, Respect, and Reverence to them*, while he is in a more effectual manner misleading the People

about their Meaning, than if he destroyed the Scriptures themselves, or lock'd them up in an unknown Tongue from the People.

C.

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Number XXXVIII.

Of Penance And Religious Revellings.

Wednesday October 5. 1720.

I Have, in two former Papers, consider'd the Nature, Use, and Consequences of *Religious Fastings*. I shall, in this, inquire a little into the Merits of *Penance*, and the Devotion of *Festivals*; a Couple of potent Engines in the Hands of Churchmen.

Joy and Sorrow proceeding, as they do, from certain Causes, which necessarily produce them; the one troubles the Imagination, and the other delights it, whether we will or no. They are different Names given to different Operations of the Animal Spirits, which bring to God Almighty no voluntary Worship, and consequently no Worship at all. The same Disorder in the Blood or Nerves, which discovers itself in Sighs and Groans, would in a greater Degree, bring forth Rage and Convulsions, which are not the Symptoms of a Gospel-Spirit, but rather the Marks of Spirits dispossessed in the Gospel. People under Trouble, or in the Spleen, are too apt to mistake their bodily or mental Disorders for the Workings of Divine Grace; as if the wise and mild Spirit of God delighted to play childish and mischievous Pranks with weak and unhappy Men, by filling them with wild Freaks, or cruel Agonies. I doubt there are few of these Sort of People, who can give a Reason why the great God should be better pleased with a sorrowful Heart, than an aching Head.

If God Almighty be pleased with our afflicting ourselves, he must be pleased best when we afflict ourselves most; and a greater Degree of Suffering must beget a greater Portion of his Favour: And consequently, the cutting ourselves with Knives, as did the Priests of Baal, must be more acceptable to him, than the bare whipping ourselves with Rods, as do the Priests of Rome, &c. By the same Rule, if the endangering of one's Life be well-pleasing to him, the destroying of one's Life must be more pleasing to him; and Despair and Self-Murder are more grateful Instances of Duty and Devotion to the God of Mercy, than barely being afraid of him, and barely making our Lives miserable. The pious Consequence of all which must be, that the Blessed and Beneficent God, who is the Giver of all Good, is the Author of all Evil, and all Misery; and the Maker and Preserver of Mankind, who is the Father of Mercies, is also the Destroyer of Mankind, and the Father of Cruelties.

Nor is this Reasoning so strange, or these Conclusions so unnatural, as some may ignorantly imagine; since the Priests, who, for the godly Ends of Dominion and Gain, were the first Inventors of *Sacrifices* and *Penances*, have frequently proceeded so far in their inhuman and diabolical Craft, as to butcher Men to appease their Deity. And indeed, when once you had taken their Word for the divine Will, you renounced all Right and Pretence to judge for yourself, or to dispute any Measure of Devotion which they had thought fit to prescribe. Thus, for Example, if the Priests told you, that their God graciously longed for a Bonfire, and had, in his divine Goodness, appointed

you to be the principal Faggot; as averse as your carnal Spirit might be to this great Honour, yet you could not decline it, without the terrible Imputation of Disobedience, or Apostasy, and probably of Atheism: For, having given the Priest the Property of your Body, your Thoughts, and your Behaviour, you were become All the Priest's.

The Duty of *Penance* is, according to certain Churchmen, a very necessary Duty: But there is another Duty quite opposite to it, yet very necessary also; and that is, the Business and Duty of *Festivals*. These two may indeed seem Contradictions to each other, and to the Eye of unsanctified Reason are so; but where they are enjoined by *Church-Authority*, it is our Duty to think them orthodox and consistent, and so to be merry or melancholy, and to weep or laugh, just as *Mother-Church* commands us, in Defiance of our Constitutions, and our Understandings. We are to mourn on *Good-Friday*, because on that Day our *Saviour* died; though, if he had not, we could not have been saved: And we are to take our Belly full of Meat and Mirth on *Easter-Sunday*, because Christ rose on that Day from the Dead; though it was impossible for him to have continued there.

Penance is a ghostly Punishment imposed by a Priest, or voluntarily suffered by a Penitent, for some Offence real or imagined. Sometimes it consists in Abstinence from certain Meats, which, it seems, are not so much in Favour with Almighty God, as are others: A Piece of Cod, for Example, with rich Sauce, is less savoury in God's Sight, than a plain Piece of Beef and Cabbage, and a greater Atonement for Sin. Sometimes it is performed by Change of Apparel; and a dirty Hair-cloth is more pious and meritorious, than a clean Holland Shirt. Sometimes it is performed by rambling to some Church, to stare at a *wooden-Saint*, and kiss an old Coffin. Sometimes this holy Severity rests altogether upon your Pocket, and God's Wrath is fervently and successfully bribed away by the prevailing Intercession of some potent *Pieces* to his Priest, who will infallibly persuade him to overlook your Guilt, and be good Friends with you. Sometimes you are to scarify your Backside for the healing of your Soul, and reconcile yourself to Heaven by the Dint of Lashing; which will sometimes serve for *another Purpose*: And so a Scourge made of Broom, is made the Scourge of God. But, if drawing Blood on this Occasion be so pious, because so painful, I do not see why the Drawing of a Tooth would not do as well; or why the Omnipotent would not be as propitious to desolate Gums, as to blistered Loins.

So much for praising God by being sorrowful; in which Case, Sickness and Pain are great Blessings. Now for the Method of pleasing him, by being joyful; in which Case, Festivity and Merriment are great Blessings too! So that, we see, the Almighty is highly pleased both with our Misery and our Happiness.

Worldly Blessings are, no doubt, the Gifts of God, and we ought to receive them with joyful Hands, and grateful Hearts; and Religion, and Philosophy too, teaches us to submit to Afflictions and Calamities with Patience and Humility, and to consider them either as Effects of our own Intemperance and Folly, as the necessary and inevitable Concomitants of human Nature, or the Strokes of Providence intended for our Correction and Amendment; nor do I deny, that it may be sometimes lawful, and expedient too, mechanically to prepare our Minds with Dispositions suitable to the Actions which they are to produce.

Every one's Experience shews him, that his Mind and Body operate upon one another: Both are improved by Exercise and moderate Food, raised and exhilarated by Music or Diversion, enervated by Sickness, oppressed with Drunkenness and Gluttony, fatigued with Labour; and often all the noble Faculties of the former are quite destroyed and extinguished by Distemper and Accidents.

It may be therefore not only lawful, but our Duty, by proper Food, agreeable Conversation, and due Exercise, to prepare and keep ourselves in such a Temperament, as may best qualify us for cool Reflection, and enable us in the best manner to exert our Faculties: But from what Principle of Reason or Religion do we find, that we must work up our Passions beyond their natural Pitch, and endeavour to destroy the Serenity and Calm of our Minds, to do Homage to the Deity? who will accept no Service but what flows from a sincere and upright Heart, elevated and raised by a due Contemplation of the divine Perfections, and the Benefits received from our great Creator, or humbled by the Consideration of human Infirmities; and not intoxicated with various Music, pompous Shews, delicious Banquets, or Bottles of Brandy; nor depressed or sunk with Mortification, Penances, Fasting, or unwholesome Diet; all which have nothing to do with true Religion, though they have been always essential Parts of every false one.

Let us now see what Sort of Devotion these *Holy Days* produce.

Idleness is the Nurse of Vice, and fills the Taverns and the Stews with many debauched Customers, who, had they any thing else to do, or would do any thing else, might live as chaste and sober as any of their Neighbours, that are so, because they are well employed. The common People think of a *Holy Day* with no other View, than that they shall then have their Belly-full of Ale, and Rambling, and Idleness. Perhaps, in the Morning, they hear a Sermon; which is often calculated to drive Peace and Religion out of their Souls, and to fill them with Bitterness and Rage against those who provoke them, by being sober Subjects, and conscientious Christians. Next comes a gluttonous Meal, and a Load of Liquor, which adds fresh Fuel to the Orthodox Zeal which they imbibed in the Morning, and inspires them to deface or demolish Places sacred to God's Worship, and to affront and insult every sober Man, who has not been at the Brandy-shop, and will not pronounce *Hell* and *Damnation* according to the Word of Command. After all this Mischief and Bravery, they have recourse to more Liquor, over which they swear and triumph upon their late *Orthodox Exploits*. Probably, at last they vomit up their Devotions in *Drury-lane*, and finish the *Holy Day* in a *Bawdy-house*. Next Morning, the Sum of the Reckoning will be this: They have lost a Day, and with it their Innocence: They have risked their Health and their Souls: They have provoked God, and in his Name committed Outrages upon their Neighbours. Sweet Jesus! Is this the Spirit of *thy* Church? Can these be *thy* Followers, or the Followers of *thy* Servants?

Upon the Whole, a Man may ply his Imagination with black and dismal Ideas, till he has made his Heart as sad and sorrowful as he pleases: He may also, by playing with his Fancy, and by amusing it with, agreeable and humourous Images, render his Soul as merry as he pleases; and by these Means create either *Comedy* or *Tragedy* within himself: But neither is Wantonness of Spirit any Worship of God; nor is this

Gloominess of Soul any Devotion to him. The *Mahometan Dervises*, and *Indian Brachmans*, exceed us by far in Fasting and Austerities: It is incredible what voluntary Torture and Plague they undergo in the Way of Religion. And as to godly Ranting and Roaring, the old *Pagan Bacchanals* were as mad and as drunk on *their Holy Days*, as we of the Established Church can be on ours.

G.

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Number XXXIX.

Priests *Afraid Of* Ridicule.

Wednesday October 12. 1720.

RELigion, as the Popish Priests have disfigured it, is only a wicked and ambitious Scheme, contrived by them, to set themselves above the People. This is so true, that where-ever the Priests have the most Power, Religion has the least. Being neither appointed by the Law of Nature, nor the Law of Christ, they are only Intruders into the Affairs of Religion; which is therefore under an Usurpation, while it is under them. So that their Foundation being false, they are in most Countries reduced to support it by false Facts, and deceitful Appearances. And as they are thus obliged to cover Fraud with Fraud, and support one Violence by another, it is no Wonder, that we find it often so carefully hidden under Inventions, and deformed by Absurdities; and all those Inventions and Absurdities defended by Cruelty, and a strong Hand.

This strange Jumble of Fictions they have the Front to call by the holy Name of *Religion*, and gravely to create Faith out of Lyes: And with the groveling Multitude, whose Eyes are in the Earth, all this passes off well enough; They have fearful Hearts, and simple Heads, and so stand always prepared to be frightened or deluded at the priestly Word of Command. But because the Craft lies subject to daily Detection from rational and discerning Men, its Champions have raised loud Cries, and strong Prejudices, against the two principal Weapons by which their Cause is most annoyed; I mean the Weapons of Reason and Ridicule; the former of which discovers Truth, and the latter exposes Fraud.

What civil Treatment these Reverend *Seers* afford to *Reason*, I have shewn elsewhere; and shall handle, in this Paper, the Business of *Ridicule*, which they always represent as impious and profane, when ever it meddles with the Cassock; and yet always exercise it according to their Talents, without Mercy, when the waggish grave Creatures are pleased to be arch upon *Dissenters* or *Free-Thinkers*.

To them is no doubt owing, that frequent, but false Saying, now in the Mouth of every *Ignorant*; namely, that *it is an easy Matter to make a Jest upon Religion or the Priesthood*; which, whether they are aware of it or not, is saying that their Religion and its Priests are a Jest. For he, upon whom the Jest is made, does, in Effect, make the Jest; otherwise it is none. Religion and Virtue cannot be ridiculed; and whoever attempts it, by shewing himself a Villain, raises Horror instead of Laughter, which is the End of Ridicule. But the vending of Grimace for Religion, and setting up for Piety without Virtue, are the natural Subjects of Jeet and Merriment.

Whoever fears Ridicule, deserves Ridicule. He is conscious of a weak Side, and knows that he cannot stand a Laugh. This is the Case of sacred Grimace, or *Gravity*, which Men of Sense see to be only a studied Restraint laid upon the Muscles of the

Face, and the Joints of the Body, and teaching them to move, not by the Impulses of Nature, and the Motions of the Heart, but by Design, either to attract Admiration, or obtain Credit, or gain Followers. And therefore sacred Grimace dreads Men of Sense. However, it is never to be set aside; for this same affected Demureness, ridiculous as it is in itself, is a solemn Bait to catch the Mob, whose Respect always follows their Wonder. The Vulgar are caught, like Woodcocks, by the Eyes; and led, like Calves, by the Ears; Shew and Sound lead their fat Heads captive. It is therefore no Wonder, that in Popish Countries, a shewy Chancel, a curious tall Steeple, gilded Organs, and a delicate Ring of Bells, keep the *Many* on the Parson's Side, make them all good Churchmen; and always get the better of a plain Religion, that has its Abode only in the Heart, and wants all the above-mentioned Marks of the true Church. Besides all this, there is more Mirth, and more Holy Days, in their Orthodox Faith, than in the contrary Scheme, which obliges Men to earn Heaven with the Sweat of their Brows, and take Pains to be saved.

These, however, are but small Instances of *Ridicule*, taken from the Force and Grimace of an external Religion. I shall here give Instances much more considerable, as well as much more ridiculous. Do we not see the pretended Successors of the Apostles, at home and elsewhere, instead of making Tents, or converting the World, living voluptuously, and promoting the Excise? Do we not frequently see the Embassadors of God, sent to promote Virtue and Peace, and the Observance of his Laws, promoting Strife, frequenting debauched Houses, rooking after Wealth, and plaguing and reviling their Neighbours? Do we not see holy Men, who have the Call of the Spirit, rioting in all the Works of the Flesh? Do they not buy Livings with Money, and then claim them by Divine Right? Do they not chop and jockey away poor Parishes for such as are richer, and yet pretend to have upon their Hands the Cure of Souls; though, by such vile Bargaining, they shew that they value as little those Souls which they have just bought, as they do those which they have lately sold? Do not many of them, though they are void of all Merit, yet demand great Respect; and though ignorant, pretend to teach, and to reveal God's Will, which is already revealed, and yet live as though there were no God? And do they not, without obeying God, set up to command Men? Do they not seek Honour from their Cloth, which yet they dishonour? And do they not, for the blackest Crimes, claim Sanctuary from the Church, which Church is the People, which People they abuse and deceive? Do they not pretend to mend others, without being better than others, but in Truth more idle and proud than all others; two Qualities neither suited to the Welfare of Religion, nor of human Society? Do they not flatter and support the worst of Tyrants, plague and distress, and often destroy, the best of Kings; and in both Cases do they not belye the Holy Ghost, and pervert his Meaning? Do they not pretend to be appointed for the Good of Mankind, and yet always make Mankind, where-ever they have Power, thoroughly miserable, base, poor, ignorant, and wicked? And finally, do they not invent vile Lyes for vile Ends, and then blasphemously make God Almighty to father them?

Here is such a motley Mixture of opposite Principles and Practices, as will always render those, who are chargeable with them, the Contempt or Abhorrence of all Men who have Eyes and Understanding. Jest and Scorn will subsist as long as their Causes subsist; and Clergymen, of all others, will be most exposed to them, while they

continue to deserve them; because more Modesty, Truth, and Consistency, may be expected from them than from any others. It is but a Piece of Justice due to Religion, to ridicule those, who, as far as they can, ridicule Religion, though they set up for its Defenders. Ridicule, when it has no longer Matter to feed on, will die of itself; and the Clergy, to avoid it, have no more to do, but not to deserve it: But to go on complaining, without amending, is to nourish Raillery and Satire, by their own Actions. But as the reforming themselves is a Practice seldom known among High-Churchmen; Clamour, Lyes, and Oppression, are the constant Remedies they apply to the great Grievances of Wit and Ridicule, as often as they meddle, or seem to meddle, with the Cloth. This will abundantly appear from the following Instance, which will also shew the wonderful Vigilance and Jealousy of Churchmen, in Behalf of the Trade.

moliere, having, in his Plays, brought upon the Stage Characters from the highest Quality and Professions in *France*, without offending either, drew, in his *Tartuffe*, an excellent and strong Picture of a Hypocrite, who, though carefully distinguished from a Man *sincerely* religious, yet happened to resemble the *Churchmen* so much, that they raised a terrible Outcry against the Play; and, according to their laudable Custom, drew Heaven, Head and Shoulders, into their Quarrel. *Tartuffe* was, it seems, their Representative General, and in ridiculing his godly Grimaces, and Stoical Devotion, *Moliere*, they said, ridiculed them. In fine, by exposing the concealed Villain and Debauchee, the whole Posse of the Priests thought themselves exposed.

Zealous therefore for the Dignity of the Cassock, and justly apprehending, that a Contempt upon Hypocrisy would bring a Contempt upon the *Order*, they applied to the Court; I say to the *Court*, where, by a religious Subserviency to the Ambition, Lust, and all the Rogueries of the Great, this Sort of Creature always finds Friendship and Countenance. That arbitrary and debauched Court could refuse the Priests nothing; and the Play was forbid. Thus the *Tartuffes* of the Church redeemed from Scorn the *Tartuffe* of the Stage: The *Picture* was secured from being shewn, by the Number, Clamour, and Interest of the *Originals*.

Not content to rail with all due clerical Bitterness against this Comedy, and curse the ingenious Author by Word of Mouth; they detached one from their Body to curse him in Print. This Christian Author, without ever having seen the Play, pronounced it Diabolical: He affirmed, that *Moliere* had a Devil, that he was a Devil incarnate, a Devil in Man's Shape, a Libertine, an Atheist, and one who ought to be *burned* in this World, as he would assuredly be *damned* in the next. For the Vengeance of these Messengers of Peace never stops at the Death of their Victim, nor will they allow their Maker to have more Mercy than themselves.

To shew how justly these holy Persons were alarmed on this Occasion, I shall here give a Sketch of *Tartuffe's* Character, as drawn in that Play. He is a Fellow, who, from his godly Outside, and great Poverty, is taken by an honest Gentleman, credulous and devour, into his Family, and permitted to govern it. He is a great Glutton, and a great Pretender to Fasting; a great Despiser of Money, but rooks all he can from his deluded Patron. He will not speak to my Lady's Maid, till he has covered her Bubbies with his Handkerchief, so afraid is the Saint of Temptation; but at the

same time he tempts my Lady herself to Adultery, and endeavours to debauch his Benefactor's Wife with Heaven in his Mouth. The Gentleman's Son discovers to his Father these Solicitations of the Hypocrite, which he had overheard; and the Lady owns and confirms them; but neither of them is believed: The poor bewitched Man cries, *You are all Enemies to the godly Tartuffe*; and tells him, that to make him Amends, he will give him his Daughter, and settle his House and Estate upon him. *The Will of the Lord be done*, says the Hypocrite. Accordingly, by an instant Deed, to the apparent Ruin of his Family, he makes this godly Villain Heir of all he has, with a Right of present Possession. The Lady, not knowing what was done, does, by putting her Husband under a Table, make him a Witness of the holy Lecher's Designs and Importunity. He is by this convinced; but when ashamed of himself, and enraged at the Ingrate, he bids him get out of his House: *No Sir*, says *Tartuffe*: *It is your Turn to get out; the House is mine, and you shall know it; I will be revenged on you on Behalf of Heaven, which you would wound through my Sides*. Behold an Orthodox Pattern of the usual Claim of *Divine Right* to the Wages of Villainy and Delusion!

All this Behaviour, and these Speeches, were such manifest Marks of the Church, that all its genuine Sons dreaded their coming upon the Theatre. Their Rogueries are all sacred, and must not be set to View.

molier, to take away, as much as was possible, all reasonable Ground of Clamour from the Ecclesiastics, had not so much as suggested in the Play, that *Tartuffe* was a Priest; and only called his Comedy, *The Impostor*, in general. Besides all this, he had dressed up his Rogue like a Man of the World. He had not given him so much as a flapping Bever, but a smart secular Cock, with a Sword, a good Head of Hair, a Cravat, and a gaudy Coat. But all this Precaution of *Molier*'s availed not; *Tartuffe* had the Conduct, Craft, and Spirit of a Priest, though disguised like a Layman; and the Clergy found themselves whipped upon *Tartuffe*'s Back.

Eight Days after *Tartuffe* was forbid to be acted, the Court was entertained with a very irreligious Play, called *Scaramouch*. After it was over, the King told a certain Prince, that he wondered why those People, who were so scandalized at *Molier*'s Comedy, did not say a Word of this. *O Sir*, answered the Prince, *the Reason is plain; the Play of Scaramouch only makes a Jest of God and Religion, in which these Gentlemen are no wise concerned: But Molier has dared to bring the Priests upon the Stage; which is not to be suffered*.

G.

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Number XL.

Of Priestly Cruelty.

Wednesday, October 19. 1720.

A Good Man is distinguished by his Humanity, as is the good God by his Mercy. Where there is no Humanity, there can be no Grace: We cannot possess at the same time the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of a Brute or a Demon. Charity itself, the most sublime Christian Grace, seems to be only Humanity guided and animated by Piety: And this is the more likely, for that it is the Business of the Christian Religion, to recover to human Nature those Virtues, which were either lost or lessened by the Fall of *Adam*. Had Man continued as he was made, perfect, a new Covenant, and another Institution, had been unnecessary.

Humanity then is an amiable Virtue, and the Characteristic of a Man; and of a Man civilized, gentle, benevolent; purged from all Rage, and every unsociable Passion.

But the Appetites and Passions of Men being too powerful for Reason, and the Law of Nature; Religion was instituted to regulate and quell them. For this End, it proposes, as Sanctions and Restraints, the Favour of God to the Virtuous, and threatens his Displeasure to the Wicked, in this Life; and, in the next, still more adequate Rewards and Punishments, even those of Heaven and Hell. This is the great Design of Religion; and it effectually answers the same, where its own honest and simple Dictates are observed and followed; than which Dictates nothing can be more plain and reasonable; the principal Precept of the Gospel, next after our Belief in *Jesus Christ*, being that of Peace and Love: *A new Commandment*, says our blessed Saviour, *I give unto you, that you love one another.*

In Consequence of this Doctrin, and of the Heavenly Temper which it inspired, the first Christians lived together in perfect Concord, Love and Charity; and yet there is no Question to be made, but they differed from each other in their Conceptions about some Points in Religion; as we see the Apostles themselves also differed on several Occasions, and expressed some Warmth in these their Differences.

This same Spirit of Charity and Love continued amongst the first Christians, till lying, crafty, and selfish Men, calling themselves Ministers, and assuming to be Teachers, filled them with the Spirit of Discord, and instructed them to hate one another. They rent them into Parties, inspired them with the Bitterness of Faction, and taught them its Watch-words, by which they were to distinguish themselves from all other Christians: *I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas*, and the like Cant, full of Zeal, but void of Sense and Religion, had a direct and mischievous Tendency to abolish Faith in Christ, and to place it upon Men; and, in fine, to turn Christianity into Caballing. They likewise marked out all who would not be driven nor deceived by them, with malicious and opprobrious Names, proper to expose them to Hatred and ill

Usage. *Heretic, Apostate, Unbeliever, Schismatic*, and the like hard and equivocal Words, were found strangely effectual towards stirring up Rage, Revenge, and relentless War, against those unhappy People who were miscalled by them; so effectual! that the same Set of Men have never suffered the same Set of Words to wax obsolete, but to this Day use them, and cause them to be used, to the same impious and antichristian Purpose, and (where the Law does not restrain their bloody Hands, and guard the Innocent) with the same Success.

When these ungodly and merciless *Ecclesiasties* had thus, under the Cloak of Religion, craftily raised the blind Resentment, and impious Zeal, of their deluded Followers, against their Christian Brethren, who preferred the Spirit of the Gospel, and the honest Convictions of their Consciences, to the Pride and Commands of Men; there followed such amazing Instances of Cruelty, and such terrible Scenes of Blood, as must affect the Hearts, and the Eyes, of all who read them, or hear of them, if they possess either Christian Grace, or natural Compassion. Christians were, by their Priests, set on to butcher Christians; and to make Havock of each other, in the Name of that Religion, which was distinguished from all other Religions, by a Spirit of Meekness, Mercy, and Love: And all this, perhaps, for their different Manner of explaining a Mystery, which could not be explained; or which, if explained, ceased to be one.

This restiess and unrelenting Rage, which Christians practised, at the Instigation of their Clergy, upon one another, for Thoughts and Opinions which they could not help, was a strong and lasting Stumbling-Block in the Way of the *Unconverted*; who could have but small Appetite for a Religion, which disowned all Kindred to Peace and Humanity, and inspired its Votaries with such cruel Hatred, and such dreadful Fury: For, in short, that was the Religion which they were to embrace; a Religion no longer to be sound in the Gospel of *Christ*, but in the ridiculous Systems, and selfish Inventions, of *Priests*. And it was no wonder that the *Heathens* were backward and afraid to embrace a Religion, in which the involuntary Mistake of a priestly Distinction, without a Meaning, might cost them their Lives, and ruin their Families.

So terrible and deformed had merciless Christian Priests rendered the merciful and amiable Christian Religion! Their outrageous Zeal was become so powerful, and had such bloody Effects, that the *Pagan* Persecutions were real Advantages to Christianity, as they gave it a breaching Time from the more fatal Persecutions, and even Adulterations, of its own Priests; who, while the civil Sword was over their Heads, being obliged to abscond or fly, could not throw about their Balls of Contention and War; and therefore, against their Will, left Religion to flourish, as it always did, under those *Pagan* Persecutions, which their own turbulent and seditious Behaviour had often brought upon it. This is indeed their highest Praise, that the Church reaped Good from their Wickedness.

The *Pagan Persecutions* no sooner ceased, but the War of the *Christian Priests* recommenced; and the Persecutions raised by them were ever more merciless, and more dreadful, than those which were raised by the *Heathen* Princes; forasmuch as they added, as far as they could, the Destruction of the Soul to that of the Body: So complete was their Vengeance! And, besides, it had no End: The Severity of the

Heathens had long and frequent Intermissions; but the Cruelty of the *Priests* was insatiable.

The Persecutions practised by the *Pagans*, had moreover this Mitigation, that they were occasioned for the most part by the Words and external Behaviour of Christians, who contemned their Gods, neglected their Temples, and ridiculed their Manner of Worship: In all which, though they had Reason and Truth on their Side; yet they provoked by so doing these ignorant Bigots, whose false Religion laid no Restraint upon their Passions, but on the contrary greatly inflamed them. But the priestly War was waged against the Mind itself; the free and independent Mind! They would be controuling the *voluntary, necessary, and invincible* Motions and Operations of the Soul; and be putting Bonds upon the Imagination, which is as ungovernable as the Wind or the Sea. You must say after them, nay, you must *think* after them, and believe by their Direction; and either be Slaves or Hypocrites. A terrible and inflexible Tyranny! It was to no Purpose to alledge, that you could not perform Impossibilities, nor see with other Mens Eyes: You must be punished for what you could not help; you must be delivered to *Satan*, in spite of your Innocence; and rewarded with Hell for your Sincerity, and Well-meaning: And the same honest Qualities which intitled you to the certain Favour of God, provoked the certain Vengeance of his pretended Embassadors; to whose Empire, Virtue and Truth are ever the most formidable Foes. To complete this ghostly Barbarity, not appeased by Death and Damnation, your good Name must be murdered with your Body, and your Memory loaded with monstrous Calumnies, and bitter Defamations; which merciless Treatment could be expected only from that accursed Spirit, who had been a *Liar and a Murderer from the Beginning*; or from those who are acted by him. To pity you, was unpardonable; and to speak well of you, was to involve all those who did it, in your Doom. Thus holy Wrath is, of all others, the soonest kindled, the fiercest while it burns, and the slowest in going out, if ever it goes out.

It would be endless to give Instances of the bloody Spirit of such sort of Churchmen. They are the only Body of Men upon Earth who possess least of human Compassion. They have been even ingenious in Cruelty, and shewed vast Invention in their rigid, various, implacable, and exquisite Manner of executing it. *Ita feri, ut se mori sentiat*, seems to have been the Doctrine and Delight of the *Church*, as well as of *Caligula*. Neither he, nor *Phalaris*, nor *Perillus*, nor *Nero*, nor any other *Pagan* Monster, who made himself Sport with human Agonies and Misery, has exceeded them in the Variety and Inhumanity of his projected Tortures, nor equalled them in the Length.

It is a melancholy Observation, that the *Mahometans*, who by Principle use the Sword as their great and most prevailing Apostle for the Propagation of their Religion, do yet frankly tolerate Christianity, and every Sect of it, all over their Dominions; and that, on the contrary, *Christians*, who by the Doctrine of the Gospel are allowed the Use of no Means but those of Gentleness and Persuasion, to promote the Faith of *Jesus Christ*, do yet exercise Fierceness and Barbarity upon all who differ from them, where-ever the Mercy of the Government does not restrain the Cruelty of the Clergy. Thus far the *Turks* act, as if they were conducted by Grace, and obeyed the Precepts of our blessed Saviour; and thus far the Christians act, as if they had adopted the Spirit and Fierceness of *Mahomet*, and renounced the Gospel for the *Alcoran*.

However, that I may not seem partial to the *Mahometans*, I shall add this mournful Reflection; namely, *That too many of the Christian Clergy do justly share with these Infidels, the infamous Praise of having almost dispeopled the Earth. The Infidels have slain their Thousands, and They their Ten Thousands.* They have been the great Promoters of Cruelty, and the Sword; they have been the constant Patrons of Arbitrary Power, that mighty Engine for rendering Mankind few and miserable; they have been the continual Authors of War, Famine, and Massacres; and, in fine, they have been the great Instruments of driving Virtue, Truth, Peace, Mercy, Plenty, and People, out of the World. *Kill all*, said the Abbot *Arnold*, a Monk militant, to the Army, which being employed by the Church to slaughter the poor pious *Albigenses*, had taken the City of *Bezeir*, and being Laymen, were inclining to have some Mercy; *Kill all*, cried this bloody Priest: *God knows his own, and will reward them hereafter.* Accordingly Two Hundred Thousand of these conscientious Christians, and Catholics mixed with them, were instantly butcher'd for the Church.

To conclude, our modern Claimers of Church-Authority do but contend for the same Power and Advantages, which enabled and prompted these their Brethren to execute such numerous and melancholy Mischiefs; and whether they ought to possess that Power, and these Advantages, or no, I take to be the great Point in Debate between the Bishop of *Bangor*, and his Adversaries.

G.

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Number XLI.

The Folly Of The Clergy'S Demanding Respect When Their Characters Are Bad: With The Equity Of Universal Toleration, And Of Judging For Ourselves.

Wednesday, October 26. 1720.

There is not a greater Insult upon the Understandings of Mankind, than for Priests to challenge Respect from their Habit, when they have forfeited it by their Behaviour. There is no Sanctity in Garments. A Rose in a Man's Hat does not enlarge his Piety. Grace is not conveyed by a Piece of Lawn, or Chastity by the wearing of a Girdle. A black Gown has neither more Sense, nor better Manners, than a black Cloak. Nor is a black Cloak more edifying than a Fustian Frock; no more than a Cambrick Bib is an Antidote against Lewdness, or an Atonement for it.

This consecrating of Garments, and deriving Veneration from a Suit of Cloaths, is barefaced Priestcraft. It is teaching the Practice of Idolatry to a Gown and Cassock. If a little senseless Pedant, who is a living Contradiction to Virtue, and good Breeding, can but get into Orders, and cover himself with Crape, the first thing which he does, is to overlook and affront all Mankind, and then demand their Reverence. His Surplice is his Citadel, and he claims the Impunity of an Ambassador for being graceless and saucy.

As to the common Defence which is made for their Immoralities; namely, That they are Flesh and Blood as well as other Men; it is a wretched Piece of Sophistry. If they are not better than others, how are they fit to mend others? And if they cannot leave their Captivity to Sin and *Satan*, how come they to claim so near an Alliance with Heaven? If they have God's Commission in their Pockets, and yet will engage in another Service, what Name and Treatment do they deserve? We know the Fate of Rebels and Deserters in Lay-Government. Can Men succeed to the Apostles with the Qualities and Behaviour of Apostates? How will they reconcile a holy Calling to infamous Lives? A Clergyman who is as bad as an ill Layman, is consequently worse. In a holy Character, there is no Medium between doing Good, and doing Mischief; since the Influence of Example is stronger than that of Precept. As the Doctrine and Practice of Piety make up the Profession of a Clergyman, he who deserts Truth and Holiness, deserts his Profession, and ought to be no longer owned for a Teacher of Religion, but shunned and hated, as a Foe to Religion and Mankind.

I have great Respect for the Office of a Clergyman; and for his Person, if he deserve it. But if his Doctrine or Practice disgrace his Order; we cannot help contemning the Man. The Clergy are the best or the worst of Men; and as the first cannot be too much honoured, the latter cannot be too much despised. It is of good Example, and there is equal Reason in it. Why should Virtue and Villainy fare alike? Names do not change Qualities, nor Habits Men. Where is the Equity of Rewards and Punishments, and

consequently the Force of all Laws, Human and Divine, if vile Men must be revered, and the good can be no more?

It is but reasonable, that all Men should be judged by their Actions, and revered, or scorned, according to the Goodness or Wickedness of their Lives, without any Regard had to their Titles or Garbs; which signify no more than a Breath of Wind, or the Bark of a Tree.

The Clergy have made such a terrible and inhuman Use of Power, in all Ages and Countries where they could come at it, that the Laity ought to keep their Nails always pared, and their Wings clipped, in this Particular. Reason and Liberty are the two greatest Gifts and Blessings which God has given us, and yet where-ever a priestly Authority prevails, they must either fly or suffer. They are Enemies to the Craft, and must expect no Toleration. Darkness and Chains are the surest Pillars of the sacerdotal Empire, and it cannot stand without them.

Let us remember Archbishop *Laud*, who having got the Regal Power out of a weak Prince's Hands, into his own, set his Face against Truth, Property, Conscience, and Liberty, and trampled them all under Foot for several Years together. A Spirit of Cruelty and Dominion governed this Man, and he governed King and People. His Heart was so impiously bent upon destroying Conscience, and the Constitution, and exalting the Priesthood, that when any Man was oppressed in a paltry and tyrannical Bishop's Court, the Judges in *Westminster-hall* durst not obey their Oaths, and the Law, by relieving him; but were forced to be forsworn, to avoid the Anger of his *Grace*: This upstart, Plebeian Priest hoped to see the *Time, when ne'er a Jack Gentleman in England would dare to stand before a Parson with his Hat on*. A fine Scene truly! to see a Gentleman of Fortune and Breeding, stand stooping, and bare-headed, to a small, ill-nurtured Vicar; who had, perhaps, formerly cleaned his Shoes, and lived upon the Crumbs that came from his Table.

Let us look back into former Ages, and round *Europe*, at this Day, and see whether abject Slavery in the People is not, and always has been, the certain Consequence of Power in the Priests. It cannot be denied.

I thank God, I know no Power which our Clergy have, but that of suing for Tythes, and the like Privileges, which they receive from the Law alone. Those Ecclesiastics who claim, by Divine Right, any other Power, than that of Exhortation, talk Nonsense, and belye the New Testament. To the Law, and the People who made that Law, they owe their Bread; and to set up for an Independancy, in Opposition to both, and pretend to a Mastership over them, is arrogant, dangerous, and ought to be penal. I am told, that it is capital, here in *England*, for a Protestant to go over to the *Romish* Religion; and yet shall a Priest dare publicly, from the Press and the Pulpit, to claim and justify the most essential, and most formidable Principles of Popery; and thereby declare his Reconciliation with that bloody Religion, which is supported by Frauds, Bondage, and human Slaughter? And shall be, for all this, go unquestioned? This, in my Opinion, is to contend with Impunity for Usurtion and Rebellion.

Some would seem to qualify these Pretensions, by saying, That they claim a Power, but not an independent Power. Which seems in this case a sort of Contradiction: For if it is a Power, and yet depends upon another Power; then it is, properly speaking, a Jurisdiction of Subjection, and an Authority under Authority. And while the Law, and the Hierarchy, are thus owned to be Master and Man, we desire no more.

It is certainly as impious as unjust to deny an unlimited Toleration to all Dissenters whatsoever, who own the Laws, and our civil Form of Government. As to their religious Opinions, they are justified in them by Sincerity; and even where that is wanting, God alone is able to judge, and alone has a Right to punish. In Matters of Conscience, he who does his best, does well, though he be mistaken. Here all Men must determine for themselves. He who follows another in this Case, without Inquiry, is Man's Votary, and not God's. As we have a Right to inquire into the Truth of any Religion, we have also a Right to leave it, if it appear false: But if it stand the Test of Examination, and appear true, then is our Adherence to it founded upon our own Judgment, and not upon Authority. If there be no Right of Inquiry, where is the Use of Persuasion, which implies Doubt? Or of reading the Scripture, which implies Understanding? We believe not a thing, till we think it true; and cannot believe it, if we think it false: And to punish Men for having Eyes, or having none, is equally devilish and tyrannical.

Men disagree daily about Matters which are subject to the Examination of Sense; and is it likely, that we can be all of a Mind about Things which are invisible and disputable? Doctors themselves are daily cavilling; every one contradicts another, yet all are in the right, and each demands our Faith to his particular Invention. We cannot follow all; and among equal Authorities, pray which is the best? For the same Reason that we cannot believe every one of them, we need believe none of them, upon their own Word.

It is moreover just, that all Protestants should be equally employed in a State to which they are equally well affected. The Magistrate has nothing to do with Speculations that purely concern another Life: Nor is it of any Consequence to him, whether his Subjects have a greater Fondness for a Cloak, or a Surplice: Their Affections to the political Power, and their Capacity to serve it, are only to be consulted and encouraged. Provided a Man love Liberty and his Country, what is it to the Commonwealth whether he sing his Prayers, or say them? Or whether he think a *Bishop*, or a *Presbyter*, the nearer Relation to St. *Paul*?

These two Words (*Bishop* and *Presbyter*) signify, in Scripture, one and the same thing, and are equally used to design one and the same Officer. Our great Churchmen, indeed, have been pleased to think the Bible mistaken in this Matter, and to be in the right themselves. They have made Episcopacy and Presbytery as opposite to each other, as Paradise and Purgatory; and have frequently gone to cutting of Throats, to prove their Point.

I must confess, that a Diocese, and a Seat in the House of Lords, are unanswerable Reasons for the Divine Right of Episcopacy. There is no way of confuting them. You may as well argue with a *Guiney* Merchant against the selling of Slaves.

Besides, a Lordly Creature, who never preaches, (Miracles having long ago ceased) and keeps a great Table and Equipage, and enjoys all the great and good Things of this Life, carries in all these Marks such an Evidence of his being St. *Paul's* right Heir, in a lineal Descent, that I wonder any body dare doubt it.

However, as the plainest Things in Faith are made doubtful among Divines, who have an admirable Knack at starting Difficulties, where nobody else would expect them; I am of Opinion, that the Teacher who walks on Foot, has as good a Title to dispute about Religion, and to maintain his own, as the Right Reverend Doctor, who supports his Orthodoxy with a Coach and Six; and should be as much encouraged by the Civil Magistrate, if his Principles and Behaviour square with the Constitution. Is a Man a better Neighbour, or Subject, for nodding to a Table, at the upper End of a Chancel, or for pronouncing his Faith towards the East? Our Churchmen may find good Cause to injoin these *necessary Things*, which the Scripture had forgot, and enjoy great Benefit and Obedience from the Practice of them; but in temporal Matters, I am not fully convinced, that they make a Man's Head wiser, or his Heart honester.

A good Protestant is such, not because he was born so, according to the canting Absurdity in Vogue, or bred so, since in Infancy Religion is acquired like a Lesson in Grammar, purely by the Help of Memory; and therefore Children learn it, whether it be good or bad, as they do Language, from their Nurse, or their Parents: But he is a Protestant, because his Judgment and his Eyes inform him, that the Principles of that Faith are warranted by the Bible, and consistent with our civil Liberties; and he thinks every System which is not so, to be Forgery and Imposture, however dignified or distinguished.

I cannot here omit taking Notice of an old fallacious Cry, which has long rung in our Ears, namely, that of *No Bishop, no King*. This solid Argument was used, with Royal Success, by King *James* the First, when he sat Deputy for the Clergy, and disputed with the Puritans, at the Conference at *Hampton-Court*, as became the Dignity of a great Prince. It was, indeed, the best which he could use; however he strengthened and embellished it with several Imperial Oaths, which he swore on that Occasion, to the utter Confusion of his Antagonists, and the great Triumph of the *genuine Clergy*, and the Archbishop; who bestowed the Holy Ghost upon his Majesty, for his Zeal, and Swearing on the Church's Side.

This stupid Saying has formerly filled our Prisons with Dissenters, and chased many of them to *America*; and by this means weakened the Kingdom, and the Protestant Religion, to keep up good Neighbourhood between the Bishops and the Prince. But they were neither the Bishops, nor their Creatures, that restored King *Charles* the Second, but a Set of true-blue Presbyterians, who were rewarded for it with Gaols, Fines, and *Silent Sabbaths*.

Loyalty is not confined to the Mitre. Bishops have given more Disturbance, and occasioned more Distresses, to Prince and People, than any other Sort of Men upon Earth. This I can prove. Our own Bishops, for near an hundred Years before the *Revolution*, were in every Scheme for promoting Tyranny and Bondage. On the other hand, our Dissenters were very eminent Opposers of Arbitrary Power, and always

lived peaceably under those Princes who used them like Subjects. If they took up Arms when they were oppressed, Churchmen have done the same, and often without that Cause.

Had it not been for Dissenters, I question whether we should now have had either this Constitution, this King, or this Religion. It is well known, that a great Majority of our Churchmen assert Claims and Principles utterly irreconcilable to either. The most mischievous Tenets of Popery are adopted and maintained, and the Ground upon which our Security and Succession stand, is boldly undermined. It is dreadful and incredible, what a reprobate Spirit reigns amongst the High Clergy.

The Convocation have fallen fiercely upon those who have fallen upon Popery and Jacobitism. And what a Popish, impious, and rebellious Spirit reigns at *Oxford*, they themselves save me the Trouble of declaring. Disaffection is promoted; open and black Perjury is justified; and it is held lawful to defy Almighty Vengeance for a Morsel of Bread. A Man's Conscience is tried by an Oath, and he that can swallow any, has none.

But it is not enough to shipwreck their Souls for their Livings, nor to keep this hellish Corruption at Home. As they practise, so they teach; and the spreading of their own Guilt, and the making others as bad as themselves, (if Laymen can be so) is made the Duty of their Functions, and the Business of their Lives. Can Antichrist do worse? And are these Men, who walk in the Paths of Atheism and Perdition, fit to lead others to Holiness and eternal Life?

*One of the greatest Men of the last Age told King *william*, That the Universities, if they continued upon the present Foot, would destroy him, or the Nation, or some of His Successors. And they have ever since been endeavouring to make good his Words. That Prince was so thoroughly apprised of the dangerous Genius and Principles of these two Bodies of Men, that he intended a Regulation, but, as it is said, was prevented by the pernicious Advice of the late Duke of *S*———, who had at that Time gained the King's Confidence, and was at the Head of the Whigs, but was deserting both, and making a Party with the Tories, as afterwards plainly enough appeared.

How far, and how fast, these Seminaries have since then corrupted and inflamed the People, every body knows, and the Nation feels. Had it not been for them, we should have lighter Taxes, and fewer Soldiers.

G.

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Number XLII.

Of High-Church Atheism.

Wednesday, November 2. 1720.

THat Religion, or the Worship of a Deity, is natural to Man, is confessed by Mr. *Hobbes* himself in his *Leviathan*, wherein he endeavours to assign the natural Causes thereof: And no History or Voyages give us an Account of any Country, in any manner civilized, without Religion, as well as Priests or Ministers, and Temples or Places of Worship. Men have been in all Ages so prone to Religion, that rather than not have one, they have been contented to worship the most abject Beings in Nature; and indeed, nothing seems to have been too absurd and ridiculous for them to believe and practise, under the Direction of any Men, who had Confidence enough to take upon them to be spiritual Guides of the People. It was ever sufficient to pretend to teach Religion, to make any thing to be received as Religion.

*Th' Egyptians worshipp'd Dogs, and for
That Faith made internecine War.
Others ador'd a Rat, and some
For that Church suffer'd Martyrdom.
The Indians fought for the Truth
Of th' Elephant's and Monkey's Tooth.
But no Beast ever was so slight,
For Man, as for his God, to fight.
They have more Wit, alas! and know
Themselves and us better than so.*

Hudibras.

Nor is this Disposition at all abated in the World. The Pagan Part is much the same: And many Christians are more prone, if possible, to Absurdity and Folly, than the Pagans. The Popish, *Greek*, and several other Christian Sects, worship a *Breaden God*; and, besides other numerous Absurdities and Follies, exceed them in that grand one of all, *of delivering up their Persons, Estates, and Consciences, to the Priest; and of hating, damning, persecuting, and burning one another, and all who have any Difference in Opinion with them, as he inspires them*: In all which they outgo both the antient and modern Pagans, who have generally given Toleration to Men of different Religions from themselves, and have in no Place gone those Lengths in Persecution, which some Christians (or rather some Persons pretending to be Christians) have done.

As a farther Proof, that Religion is natural to Man, I observe, that no History informs us, that ever *Atheism* (by which I understand, a direct Denial of the Existence of a

Deity, a Providence, and Worship) was able to introduce itself among the People of any Country whatsoever.

Religion is not only natural to Man, but esteemed necessary to Government by Princes and States, who, whether they themselves have believed any Religion or no, have established Forms of Religion, and been willing, that their Subjects should obey them, and defend their Country, upon a Principle of Religion, as knowing its powerful Operation on the Minds of Men.

And besides, Religion has a great Support from Priests or Divines, who are very numerous every-where, and have a Zeal for every Form which they profess, equal to the Interest which they derive from it: And if the Interest of one Form runs low, many of them can change their Party, and become zealous for another Religion; as they did three times in the Compass of five Years in *England*, in the Reigns of *Edward* the Sixth, *Mary*, and *Elizabeth*; the non-complying Clergy never amounting to Two hundred under any of those Changes.

Great Complaints indeed have been and are daily made in relation to the mighty Growth of *Atheism*. But those Complaints seem to me, for the most part, if not altogether, groundless, and to be generally Calumnies of High-Church Priests, and High-Church Men, upon the best Christians, namely, such who profess themselves ready to submit to the Authority of Jesus Christ, but refuse Submission to any Priests, whether they be *Greek*, *Muscovite*, *Roman*, *Dutch*, *Scotch*, or *English*.

There is not, therefore, and cannot be, any Danger of the Overthrow of *Religion*, as long as Men continue Men; Religion will necessarily prevail among us, and every-where else, in Virtue of Mens general Disposition to Religion, either under one or several Forms, according as the Civil Magistrates of the World are more or less persuaded, that they themselves are to dictate (or to dictate after a Priest) Religion to their Subjects.

The noisy Outcry therefore of the Danger of Religion from *Atheism* or *Irreligion*, is a mere Chimera of the High Priests; which, in all Likelihood, they start, to put Men on a false Scent, and to disguise and carry on their own Designs of Power and Wealth: For while People are alarmed with the Fears of *Atheism*, they are disposed to fall into all the pretended Measures of the Priest to suppress it, and to become zealous for him, who never fails to make use of the Panic or Madness of the People (which is his Opportunity) to establish Doctrines and Practices for his own Advantage; which at his Suggestion they falsely suppose to be most opposite to *Atheism*, and to be the best Means to suppress it.

But the constant Danger, and the great and only Concern which we ought to have, is, lest under the Colour and Name of *Religion*, or the Worship of God, we have not only Falshood and Superstition put upon us, but the most detestable and wicked Practices introduced; such as tend to the Destruction of all Peace, both public and private; all Virtue, Learning, and whatever is praiseworthy among Men. This is *practical Atheism*: This is the Atheism to be dreaded and feared: This is the Atheism whereof we are in Danger: This is the worst Consequence we have to fear from *speculative*

Atheism; for no Man can say worse of speculative *Atheism*, than that it leads necessarily to all Immorality: And in fine, this *Atheism* the Priest has, in most Places of the World, introduced as Religion, to the utter Overthrow of true Religion (which consists chiefly, if not solely, in such Particulars as are for the Good of Society); for by making Men wicked out of Conscience, and upon a Principle of Religion, he as effectually destroys true Religion, as if he introduced speculative *Atheism*. What is it to a Believer in Christ, whether he be persecuted for his Religion by a *Papist*, who does it religiously, and upon a Principle of Conscience; or by an *Atheist*, who does it either to protect himself, or to get Credit in the World, or to share with the Priest, in the Advantages arising from Persecution? Do Men suffer less by a Civil or Foreign War, begun by Zealots, on a Principle of Religion, to promote Religion; than if begun by *Atheists*, for the sake of Ambition, Glory, Power, Rapine, or Murder? Are the Feuds, Animosities, and Passions, stirred up by Priests on account of Religion, fewer, and less disturbing of the public Peace, than those of Men left to the Conduct of *Atheistical* Principles! Is it not equal to Husbands to be wronged by *Atheists*, who need no Pardon, as by *Popish Priests*, who can pardon one another; or by High-Church Men, who, notwithstanding such Actions, can be countenanced by the Priest, and merit greatly with him on account of their Zeal for the Church, that is, the Priest? Nay, is not the Danger of Cuckoldom equal from a *Popish Priest*, (who, by his Power of Confessing and Absolving the Woman, has so glorious an Opportunity) as from an *Atheist*? And would our High Priests, if they could get the Nation to be persuaded, that they have the same Power of Confessing and Absolving, (as they have of late been attempting to do in their Books and Sermons) be less Cuckold-makers than *Popish Priests* and *Atheists*?

Could an *Atheist* be a greater Calumniator than Dr. S-----e? Could an *Atheist*, who thinks no Deference due to a Bishop, have less Regard for the Honour of a Christian Bishop than Dr. S-----e, who pretends to think Bishops have Divine Authority? Could an *Atheist*, after he had been convicted of Calumny, and forced to confess, that his Evidence for the Calumny failed him, be more hardened in Villainy, than to make no Satisfaction to, and ask no Pardon of, the Person injured; but persist in supposing, that Time will discover his Charge to be true? Could a Set of *Atheists* have patronized *Calumny* more, than to have called that Doctor to be the Head of their Society? And might they not, with equal Regard to Virtue and Religion, have chosen a Highwayman, or a Pick-pocket, who gives his Money for the Augmentation of poor Livings? Has a modern Bishop more Satisfaction in being thus attacked by a High-Church Priest, supported and abetted by others, or is the Society less disturbed by such Proceedings, than if such Priests were all *Atheists*?

Lastly, Is it not equally destructive of Liberty and Property, for Ecclesiastics to use religious Cheats and Tricks to get Money from the People, towards raising and maintaining a needless Army of Black-coats, to live lazily in Monasteries, and other Religious Houses; as for *Atheists* to use any civil Tricks to maintain a needless standing Army of Red-coats, for by their Arts to plunder the Public for any of their other Purposes?

The Design therefore of some following Papers shall be to shew, how the High-Church Jacobite Clergy promote true *Atheism* and Irreligion: That the Laity may be put on the

true Scent of *Atheism*: That they may have a just Dread of the true *Atheism*: That they may cease to be *Atheists*, or Worshippers of the Priest, and cease to receive Religion on his Authority; and that they may return to God and Christ, the sole Authors of all true Religion.

C.

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Number XLIII.

Of High-Church Atheism. Part 2.

Wednesday, November 9. 1720.

I Proceed, as I promised in my last, to shew, by an Induction of Particulars, how the High-Church Priests promote *True Atheism* or *Irreligion*, by which I mean *Practical Atheism*.

I. And first, I will begin with *Perjury*, or *False Swearing*.

I will venture to lay it down as a Truth in Politics, that Oaths (or something equivalent to them) are, on many Occasions, necessary in Government; and that Peace among Neighbours, Punishment of Rogues, and the Settlement of Property, depend upon them. In the next Place, I will lay down as religious Truths, that an Oath is a solemn Act, both of natural and revealed Religion; that Oaths to a Government are to be kept; that there is no greater Irreligion, no greater Affront to God, no greater Insincerity and Injustice to Man, than *Perjury*; and no Point of Religion, upon which the Honour of God, and the Welfare of Mankind, are more highly concerned, than in keeping Oaths; that Oaths of Allegiance to a Government intend Loyalty; that Oaths are to be taken in the Sense of the Imposers: that the Heart is to concur with the Lips in repeating them; that Men are to have no mental Reserves in taking Oaths; and that they must not design to break them, nor take them with Design to repent of them.

And yet, on this Head, *Atheists* cannot be guilty of greater Irreligion, than some of our High-Church Men, (under the Conduct of our High-Church Priests) who sometimes are not for restraining our Kings by their Coronation-Oaths; and at other times, are not for restraining the People by their Oaths of Allegiance; that is, they are at one time for breaking Oaths, by contending for unlimited Power, and unlimited Obedience; and at another time for breaking Oaths, by retrenching the Authority of the Prince, and Allegiance of the Subject. Under this Reign, they are for the latter *Perjury*; as appears by their open Rebellions; their irreverent Discourses of the Person, and Family, of his Majesty; their Endeavours to alienate from him the Hearts of his Subjects; and inspiring the People with Disaffection to his Government; their inventing and reporting defamatory Stories, to blemish his Character, and weaken his Authority; their rejoicing at any public Distractions; their taking Sides with the *French*, *Turks*, *Swedes* *Spaniards*, and *Muscovites*, whenever any of these Nations are in Measures contrary to the Interest of his Majesty; and lastly, by the ridiculing and cracking Jests upon the State-Oaths, and citing, as a Sort of Scripture, these Verses of *Hudibras*:

*He that imposes an Oath, makes it;
Not he that for Convenience takes it.
Then how can any Man be said
To break an Oath he never made?*

And these Things are done by them, not after an Atheistical Manner, not under the Appearance of attacking and ridiculing Religion and Virtue, the Joye of Heaven, and the Fears of Hell; but almost as if Slander and Calumny, Treason and Sedition, were Articles of their Church, which they were in Duty obliged to perform. They pretend all the while to be religious Men, good Churchmen; concerned for the Church's Safety; Enemies of false Religion, and particularly of Presbyterianism; and zealous for the Orthodox Faith, contained in St. Athanasius's Creed. And though the High-Church Priests have not as yet written any Books to defend this Manner of taking and keeping Oaths; yet they take a Method no less effectual to recommend it: They not only do not bear their Testimony against this open Wickedness, this open practical *Atheism*, (as is their Duty) but are active themselves in the same Practices, and countenance the Guilty, by the Credit and Applause which they give them; and by the Distinction which they shew towards them, recommending them as good Churchmen, and reviling others, principally, for being faithful to the Oaths which they have taken to the Government. All which is more effectual to promote Perjury, than direct dogmatizing in Behalf of it; for this sly Way gets them the Applause of many, and prevents the Clamour of others against them; who would be generally detested, notwithstanding the Devotion of the People towards them, if they openly defended Perjury.

Now, pray, what is the Difference between these High-Church Men and *Atheists*? Can *Atheists* be less bound by Oaths? Can *Atheists* be worse Subjects? Are not *Atheists* detestable, because it is supposed, that they cannot be bound by Oaths? And are others less detestable, whom Oaths do not bind? Can any thing be said worse of *Atheists*, than what Mr. Lesley says, (in his Answer to *King's State of the Protestants in Ireland*) that the *Parliament cannot make an Oath, which the Clergy will not take*? Had not King *George* Reason to apprehend as much Mischief from his Swearing ---- Religious----Faction ---- Rebel----Church-Subjects, as he could have from Swearing-Rebel-*Atheists*? Was the Case of the Dissenters, and other good Subjects, who were plundered before the Rebellion for their Loyalty, or suffered in the Rebellion, better for receiving such Usage from the Hands of High-Churchmen, than from *Atheists*? They are plainly as bad as *Atheists* can ever be supposed to be; worse than *Atheists*, acting by the Principles of Ease and Self-preservation, which may be supposed to be the most general Principles of Action in *Atheists*; and, in fine, worse than any profligate Libertines that I ever met with in *Italy* itself, that Seat of High-Churchship; where I never heard even such talk so irreligiously about Oaths, as I have heard some High-Churchmen, or deliver such open Perjury as Parson *B----se*. What adds to the Wickedness and Guilt of these High-Churchmen, is, that they pretend to be Christians, and to take their Religion from the *New Testament*; that they are of a Church, whose distinguishing Doctrine is Loyalty to the Prince, and which they extend so far, as to allow Resistance in no Case to be lawful; and that they have a Sovereign, against whom they have nothing to object, but his Virtues, his mild, equal, impartial, and just Administration of Government; for, as to his Title, (which is the best of Titles, even the voluntary Establishment of a free People by an Act of their Legislature) these swearing High-Churchmen can have no just Scruple.

These High-Churchmen therefore are *true Atheists*; they are practical *Atheists*. The speculative Difference between them and *Atheists*, is a Matter of small Moment; for,

what is it to their Neighbours, while they act like Atheists, that they believe in God and Religion? For, while they act like Atheists, they do all the Mischief that Atheists can do, and all those Things for which alone *Atheism* is so justly detestable. For if speculative Atheism did not lead Man to Immorality, to Faction, to Rebellion, &c. it would be so far from being detestable, that it would be preferable to any Religion that spoiled Mens Morals, and made them bad Subjects: And I would rather have a speculative Atheist for my Neighbour and Fellow-Subject, and run the Hazard of his being a vicious Man, than an Orthodox-religious Man, whose Religion made him vicious.

C.

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Number XLIV.

Of High-Church Atheism. Part 3.

Wednesday, November 16. 1720.

THE next Article of *Atheism*, that I charge upon High-Church Priests and High-Church Men, shall relate to the very Being of Religion, and that is, *Toleration of Religion*; for unless there be a *Toleration of Religion*, Religion, which is a Matter of Choice and Conscience, is almost excluded the World.

It is asserted by Mr. *HOBBS*, that the Civil Magistrate of every Country is the Legislator in Matters of Religion; that his Subjects ought to obey him therein; and that, if they do not, they should be compelled by Force to profess that Religion which he enjoins. This Doctrine implies *Speculative Atheism*, as it destroys *God's Dominion*, by subverting his Authority and Laws, and by making a God of the Magistrate; and as it roots out all Religion, by taking away Mens Right to follow their Consciences therein; which constitutes the very Essence of Religion: And it must introduce *Practical Atheism*, if followed; by disturbing, distressing, imprisoning, and taking away the Lives of the best Men; by setting Men at Variance with one another, and causing civil Wars on a religious Account; and by leaving Men to be governed only by the Laws of the civil Magistrate, and taking away all Motives to good Actions drawn from Conscience towards God.

Now the Speculative Principles of High-Church Priests, and those of Atheists, differ but little from each other: And the Practices following from both their Principles are the same; that is, the High-Church Priests must be no less *Practical Atheists*, than the *Speculative Atheists* themselves.

1. For, First, as to the *Speculative Principles* of High-Church Priests: Though the High-Church Priests contend for a *Law of God*, a *Bible*, and a *Consciences*; yet they as effectually subvert those good Things, as the *Atheists*, by asserting, at the same time, a Right in the Civil Magistrate to compel Men by Laws, or Force, to embrace the true Religion: For, what is the Difference between a Right in the Magistrate to compel Men to embrace the true Religion, and a Right in the Magistrate to compel Men to embrace *his Religion*, which he will always think the best and true Religion?

All the Arguments of High-Church Priests for Church-Authority, and the Church-Unity, imply the same *Atheism*. For, do they not therein contend for *Submission to Man* in Matters of Religion, and for the Sacrifice of some Mens Consciences to the Judgments of other Men? Which is subverting the *Law of God*, the *Bible*, and *Conscience*, no less, than vesting the Power and Compulsion in the Civil Magistrate.

But their Arguments against all Innovations, in Matters of Religion, are most Atheistical. They contend so generally against Innovations, that they cite with

Approbation *mæcenas*'s Advice to *AUGUSTUS*, namely, Thaa he *should follow constantly the Established Religion of his Country; for all Innovations would foment Sedition in the State, and be a Means to subvert his Government.* Now though this Advice so manifestly asserts *Atheism* and *Hobbism*, and implies, that neither *augustus*, in whose Reign our Blessed Saviour *christ* was born, nor any other Pagan Prince, ought to permit Christianity, which is the most pure and peaceable Religion, to become the *Established Religion* of their *Country*; yet Dr. *Dawson* has lately had the Confidence to lay it before the present Archbishop of *Canterbury**; whose Conduct and Writings, before he was promoted to that See, gave not the Doctor the least Ground to suspect, that this worthy Prelate would approve such *Atheism*, Irreligion, and *Antichristianism*; and no Man dares say, that they have done so since.

2. Secondly, The Practices following from the Principles of High-Church Priests, are the same with those following from the Principles of *Atheism*. For, do not many Christian Civil Magistrates exercise the Right asserted by High-Church Priests to belong to them, and fine, burn, imprison, inflict corporal Punishments, take away Mens natural Rights, merely because Men follow their Consciences in what they are persuaded is the Law of God? And what more can be done in virtue of any *Atheistical Principles*? Nor do the Notions of a *Bible*, a *Law of God*, and a *Conscience*, (however inconsistent such Notions are with making penal Laws in Matters of Religion) render High-Churchmen less Persecutors, than if they were acted by any *Atheistical Principles*; as is manifest from what is done in most Countries, where, in proportion to the Power and Influence of High-Church Priests, Degrees of Violence upon Mens Consciences prevail. Nor do the Precepts of Christ, who requires all Men to *search* the Scriptures, and to believe and live according to the Rules there laid down, and who never sends Men to the Magistrate, or the established Priests, for the understanding of the *Bible*, abate in the least their persecuting Zeal. Nor lastly, does the most perfect Morality taught by Christ, who every-where inculcates *Love* of Mankind, *Forbearance*, (with Forgiveness even of many Immoralities) and universal *Charity*, and who has said, *By this shall all Men know, that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another*; I say, even this heavenly Doctrine of his, does not restrain the High-Church Priest from stirring up in Mens Minds the utmost Hatred, Malice, and Fury of Men against one another; who seem to learn little else from their Priest as matter of Religion, but the *Doctrine of Malice* against those whom he dislikes; which *Doctrine* they practise with such Warmth and Zeal, as if it was the principal or only Article of Religion: And therein do more Mischief, than Men acted by *Atheistical Principles* can be supposed to do; for *Atheism* is as incapable of making Men uncharitable to one another, on account of Religion, as it is inconsistent with true Religion to be uncharitable.

How these *Atheistical Practices* have prevailed in *England*, even since the *Reformation*, (for I will not mention the Times before, wherein this priestly *Atheism* was rampant) is apparent from our History, which gives an Account of the burning, hanging, fining, imprisoning, starving in Gaols, banishing, inflicting corporal Punishments, and harassing Thousands of good and religious People, on the score of Religion; upon which I crave leave to make these Observations:

1. First, That as the High-Church Priests have been always most forward in making and defending penal Laws; so they have been the most barbarous and malicious in putting them in Execution, where they were intrusted with it, as is manifest from the Proceedings in the *Star-chamber*; where, under the Influence of Archbishop *laud*, and such High Priests, exorbitant Fines, Slitting Noses, Cutting off Ears, Branding the Face with hot Irons, severe Whipping, the Pillory, and Imprisonment for Life in Dungeons, or in Places either unwholsome, or remote from Friends, were common Punishments; and sometimes all inflicted upon one Man. Upon pronounceing one of these Sentences against *leighton*, *laud* pulled off his Cap, and gave Thanks to God. But the Lay Part of the Court were merely priest-driven and outwitted by *laud* in such Sentences: For when a Knight moved one of the Lords about the Dreadfulness of the Sentence, intimating, that it opened a Gap to the Prelates to inflict such disgraceful Punishments and Tortures upon Men of Quality; that Lord replied, '*Twas but in terrorem, and that he would not have any one think, that the Sentence should ever be executed.* But that Lord (either judging of other Men by himself, or perhaps joining in the Sentence, upon a Promise from *laud*, that it should not be executed) found himself mistaken in *laud*, who, having long divested himself of all *Lay Pity*, caused the Sentence to be rigorously put in Execution.

2. Secondly, The Ecclesiastical Commissioners in the High-Commission Court put the *Oath, Ex Officio*, upon those brought before them on the score of Religion; an *Oath* unjust in itself, as it obliges the Parties to answer all Interrogatories, and thereby made all honest Men, if guilty of any thing esteemed a Fault, their own Accusers; and an *Oath*, neither founded on Act of Parliament, nor on Common Law, in that Case. After what manner this usurped Power of administering that Oath was exercised, you cannot have better expressed, than in the Words of the Lord Treasurer *burleigh* to Archbishop *whitgift*: *Your Articles are so curiously penned, so full of Branches and Circumstances, that the Inquisitors of Spain use not so many Questions to comprehend and entrap their Preys.*

3. Thirdly, I observe, that whenever the Parliament has been disposed to introduce the Practice of our Saviour's *Doctrine of Love and Charity*, by repealing any penal and sanguinary Laws, the High-Church Bishops always opposed such Repeal. In Proof whereof, I will give the Reader but one Instance, referring him to his own Observation for more Proofs in the Case. In 1677. when the Nation and Parliament were under great Apprehensions from Popery, and a Popish Successor, and feared, lest the *Law for burning Heretics* would be soon put in Execution against Protestants, a Repeal of that *Law* was attempted, and succeeded: But it was opposed by the Bishops, who desired that this *Law might continue in terrorem to Fanatics*, though *God forbid*, said they, *that it should ever be put in Execution!* This Fact, and many others of the same Kind, will soon be made more known by the late Bishop of *Sarum's History of his Times.*

4. Fourthly, I observe, that the Persecutions since the *Reformation* have mostly been for arrant Trifles, and things of the least Importance to the World: We have been chiefly plagued and set together by the Ears, about *Caps, Hoods, Surplices, Ceremonies, external Forms*, removing *Tables* from one Part of a Church to another, and *Railing* them in. But the most extraordinary Subject of Persecution and

Animosities, and that seems peculiar to our High-Church, was the *Book of Sports*. High-Church having taken a Fancy to make it Religion to have no Sermons on *Sundays* in the Afternoon; but, instead thereof, to make the People *dance* and *play*, in Opposition to *Puritans* and *Dissenters*, who, it seems, were so irreligious as to think, that they were obliged to spend their *Sundays*, after Divine Service was over, in Family or private Devotion: That Book was issued out by Authority; and many godly Clergymen were harassed for not reading it, as many Laymen were for not turning that *Holy Day* into a *Play Day*.

But, to the Glory of King *george*, this priestly Atheism of Persecution is now vanishing. His Majesty began his Reign with a noble Declaration for *Toleration*, wherein he allows his Subjects to have a Right to a Religion and a Conscience. The Persecution, commenced by a High-Church Priest against honest *whiston*, fell; and the Promoter is defeated of all Hopes of getting his Charges by a Bishoprick. The Bishop of *Bangor** has preached up the Authority of *God* and *Christ* before his Majesty; and his Majesty (the Head of our Church, the supreme Ordinary, and the sole Fountain of all Ecclesiastical, as well as Civil Authority) has preached it to the Nation. Some penal Laws have been repealed; wherein our truly Christian Prelates had, to their immortal Honour, their Share. Liberty of Examination and Debate (which is the most sacred of all Principles, as it is the sole Foundation of all common Sense, Truth, and true Christianity) grows upon us. A Majority of Dissenting Ministers, assembled in a Synod, have declared for the *Bible*; which was never before done by any Synod of Priests, who have always endeavoured to establish their own or some other Human Authority. The High Priests dare not plainly excite the Mob to burn, plunder, and molest their Neighbours; but are in great measure reduced to Pulpit and private Railing and Damning. The *sole Persecution* now on Foot, and countenanced by Authority, is, *That High-Church cannot persecute Dissenters*; for it is esteemed by some a *Church Persecution* not to be able to persecute others. And lastly, I dare write the *Independent Whig*.

O Glorious King *George*! O the Happiness of a Nation to be governed by such a Monarch! Of whom I cannot but observe, that he seems to me the Favourite of Heaven, which so blesses all his Designs with Success, that he need not fear Success in any truly virtuous or religious Designs. And (that I may use the printed Words of Mr. *bold*, an excellent Divine of our Church) “It is no small Encouragement to all, who have any Acquaintance with the Christian Religion, to rest assured, that God will, in due Time, notwithstanding all the Machinations and Efforts of ill People, bring Matters in this Land to an happy Issue, because none are against the Government of our most Excellent Sovereign King *george*, and the Protestant Succession, but who are also against the Lord Jesus Christ being sole King in his own Kingdom, and consequently against his being sole Law-giver to, and Judge of, his own Subjects, in Matters of Conscience, and which relate to their eternal Salvation.”

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Number XLV.

Of High-Church Atheism. Part 4.

Wednesday, November 23. 1720.

AS a further Proof of the Charge of Practical Atheism upon High-Church Priests, I proceed to shew how they confound and subvert all Morality and Holiness of Life; which is the main Design of all Religion, and more particularly of the Christian.

1. This they do, in the first Place, by teaching the most immoral and unholy Doctrines, and thereby leading Men to Actions, in the highest Degree, prejudicial to human Society.

To *do as we would be done unto*, and to *love our Neighbour as ourselves*, are Moral and Christian Principles, of daily and most general Use. We cannot converse a Moment, without acting agreeably or contrary to them: And the Happiness of Society consists, in great measure, in the Practice of those Duties; as the Misery of Society consists in their Breach. For what is Happiness in Society, but the Prevalency of universal Love, and equal Favour and Justice? And what greater Degree of Love can we shew to others, than that Love wherewith we love ourselves? And what can a whole Society wish for more, than that equal Favour and Justice be distributed among them? And what is Misery in Society, but Malice, and Hatred, and Partiality; and their Consequences, Disorder, Confusion, and War?

Now the High Priest dogmatizes against these fundamental Maxims of Morality, whenever he contends against the Right of Men to judge for themselves in Religion, which he pretends to use himself; whenever he contends for Penalties or Discouragements of any Kind, against those who differ in Opinion from him, which he would not at the same time think just to have inflicted on himself for differing in Opinion from them; whenever he damns Men as Heretics and Schismatics, in Cases wherein he would not damn himself; whenever he judges whole Sects or Bodies of Men insincere, (as is his constant Method towards Dissenters) and would not at the same time be thought insincere himself; and in fine, whenever he preaches contrary to that Love of all Men, that Forbearance, that Forgiveness of Injuries, that Meekness, that Peace and Quiet, that Beneficence to all in Distress, and that Charity (the greatest of Moral and Christian Virtues) which *beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*, which is the Charity taught in the Gospel: All which he cannot but be willing to see prevail in the World, with respect to himself. How often the High Priest preaches after this manner; or rather how seldom he preaches otherwise; and how successful he is in introducing the *Practical Atheism* suited to such Doctrines, namely, Factions, Quarrels, Violence, Injustice, Plundering, Partiality, Devastation, and Murder; every Observer may be satisfied by his own Experience.

Rebellion is the actual Dissolution of Order in a Society; and is ever founded either on the Jealousies and ill-grounded Animosities of the People in relation to their Sovereign, or to one another; or on supposed Defect of Title in the Sovereign. Now these our High-Church Priests promote and inculcate, by their constant Lectures of Church Peril; of the sad State of the present Times, beyond all that ever were before them; of their own Want of Power; of Passive Obedience, and Hereditary Right; and several other favourite factious Subjects: and this way they lead the People to Rebellion; and that in Breach of Oaths, which are the most sacred Band of Society.

And as the High Jacobite Priest thus teaches the very worst Vices, so nothing recommends a Layman to him so much as the Practice of them.

2. Secondly, The High-Church Priest subverts Morality and Holiness of Life, by laying an undue Stress on Matters of little or no Importance; and thereby engages the Thoughts and Affections of Men about them, to the Neglect of Morality, and that Holiness of Life, which is the End and Design of all Religion. For whoever places Religion in Trifles, will (like the *Jews*, who were much concerned to pay to the Priest Tythe of Mint, Anise, and Cumin) *neglect the weightier Matters of the Law*.

What Work have we in *England*; what Hatred, Damning, and Uncharitableness is there among us, about mere Ceremonies, and external Forms? And what Arguing and Zeal is there for imposing them; when a general Agreement in them (as it would be managed) would be so far from being of any real Use in Religion, and tending to Peace, that it would be a Conspiracy against the Rights of Mankind, and against that Peace and Charity, which would otherwise prevail? For have not Men a Right to follow their Judgments in Matters of Religion, and especially in such Matters as are allowed to be indifferent in themselves; and is not that Right invaded by imposing them? And would not Peace and Charity (which, we see, exist not under Imposition) prevail, by allowing Men to practise as differently as their Judgments direct them; as we see they do prevail in Countries of Liberty and Toleration, in proportion to the Degree of Liberty and Toleration allowed?

What Work is there at this Time, how many Volumes are there daily published, and how deeply concerned is all *England*, about certain Speculations, whereof the People can understand nothing, and about which the Priest confounds himself? Can the People understand any of the various Schemes and Hypotheses invented by Divines, in relation to the Trinity in Unity, and the Incarnation of God? Does Dr. *Waterland*, who is a very learned, acute, and ingenious Person, and has writ two great Books on this Subject, know what he contends for himself, when he expresses the Sum of his Doctrine of the *Trinity in Unity*, in these Words, “That each Divine Person is an individual intelligent Agent: But, as subsisting in one undivided Substance, they are all together, in that respect, but one undivided intelligent Agent?” That is, One Individual is Three Individuals, One undivided Agent is Three undivided Agents, and One Person is Three Persons? And can any Mortal suppose the People to be in the least concerned about such sophisticated Chimeras, crabbed Notions, bombastic Phrases and Solecisms? And must not Zeal about Ceremonies, and unintelligible Speculations, as much supplant and take the place of Morality, as ever *Rites* did among the *Jews*, or the religious Trumpery of the *Pagans* did among them? Even Zeal for Truth in certain

Points, is not of such Importance as is commonly supposed. I have been much pleased with the Judiciousness and Charity of the following Passage in a Sermon of the present Archbishop of *Dublin*, the most worthy and truly profound Dr. *King*: “Let us suppose one, who takes all the Descriptions we have of God in *Scripture* literally; who imagines him to be a mighty King, that sits in Heaven, and has the Earth for his Footstool; that at the same Time has all Things in his View which can happen; that has Thousands and Thousands of Ministers to attend him, all ready to obey and execute his Commands; that has great Love and Favour for such as diligently obey his Orders, and is in a Rage and Fury against the Disobedient: Could any one doubt but he, who in the Simplicity of his Heart should believe these Things as literally represented, would be saved by virtue of that Belief; or that he would not have Motives strong enough to oblige him to love, honour, and worship God? The Imperfections of such Representations will never be imputed to us as a Fault, provided we do not wilfully dishonour him by unworthy Notions, and our Conceptions of him be such as may sufficiently oblige us to perform the Duties he requires at our Hands.” The like may be said of a Man who has mistaken Notions of the Trinity in Unity, and of the Person of Christ; provided he do not *wilfully* dishonour God and Christ by his Notions, and do *conceive* Christ to be a Legislator, and a Ruler sent from God, than which *Conception*, nothing can more oblige us to perform the Duties, that both God and Christ require of us.

3. Thirdly, There is no Crime, but what has, at Times, and on certain Occasions, the Support and Encouragement of the Popish Priest; as there is no Virtue which he does not at Times, and on certain Occasions, discourage. Let a Man be Whoremaster, or Drunkard, or Lyar, or Slanderer, or Passionate, or Revengeful, or Cheat; and he may meet with fair Quarter from the High Priest, be seldom or never reprov'd by him, have his Esteem and Countenance, and the Character of a good Churchman from him, and be sure of priestly Absolution at last; provided he heartily espouse the Interest of the Priest, that is, contend for his Power and Wealth. On the other Side, let a Man have ever so many virtuous Qualities, and let him also be a sincere Believer in Jesus Christ; but without the Quality of espousing the High Popish Priest's Interest; and he will never stand so fair in the Priest's Eyes as the aforesaid Profligate-Good-Churchman. This Conduct of the Priests has a mighty Influence on the Actions of Men, and tends to make them as bad as their Inclinations and Temper dispose them to be; inasmuch as the general Esteem and good Name of most Men will depend on the Characters given of them by the Priests, who are the general Gossips, and are revered every-where for their inward Sanctity, their external long Gowns, and broad-brimmed Hats, the latter sufficiently manifesting the former. I will not deny, but that the Priests had much rather, that their Followers were virtuous than otherwise; since they must well know, that Credit is to be got by having such Men among them, and that the best Harvest is to be made of the Weakness and Superstition of virtuous Men. But the Bulk of Men being vicious, and the virtuous Man of Sense being in the Interest of Religion, and against Priestcraft; the aforesaid High Priests are reduced to the Necessity of countenancing the Vicious, to carry on their own Interest with a sufficient Party.

4. Fourthly, High-Church Priests, by the Weakness of all Popish States, (except the Commonwealths of *Venice* and *Norica*) and of most of the Protestant States, are let

into too great a Share of the Civil Governments of *Europe*; and thus, by becoming *acting Politicians*, confound all national, public, and political Morality. For, as the late Bishop of *Sarum* observed, “The Priests have a Secret to make the Natives of *a Country* miserable, in Spite of any Abundance with which Nature has furnished them. They have not Souls big enough, and tender enough, for Government: They have both a Narrowness of Spirit, and a Sourness of Mind, that does not agree with the Principles of human Society. Nor have they those Compassions for the Miserable, with which wise *Governors* ought to temper all their Counsels; for a stern Sourness of Temper, and an unrelenting Hardness of Heart, seem to belong to that Sort of Men.”

C.

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Number XLVI.

Of High-Church Atheism. Part 5.

Wednesday, November 30. 1720.

SPeculative Atheists exist but in few Places, and have never been numerous any-where; even though all those be accounted such, upon whom Atheism has ever been charged. But where they do exist, they seem to me to owe their Rise principally to Superstition and Priestcraft; and the higher the Church and Priests have been, the more numerous have been the Atheists: Nay, there seems to me more just Cause to suspect the High-Church Priests of Atheism, than any other Men.

1. Whoever reasons himself into Atheism, undoubtedly reasons very wrong, and either proceeds on false Principles, or makes wrong Conclusions from true ones. But among the several false Arguments, by which the Atheists and loose People impose on themselves, and endeavour to seduce others; there is none more frequently urged, than that the current Absurdities and Superstitions taught by Priests, and the Priests Hypocrisy and Villainies, are sufficient Reasons to make all Religion be deemed a Cheat, and *Priests of all Religions to be deemed the same*. The Poet says, in the Person of a Libertine,

————— *We know their holy Jugglings,
Things that would startle Faith, and make us deem,
Not This, or That, but all Religions false.*

This indeed is pitiful Reasoning, and ought to be extended no farther than to those Doctrines and Priests, against whom the Objections lie. But so it is Men reason; and Experience will prove, that 'tis the High-Church Priest, and his Proceedings, which make the Atheist. But before I proceed to that Experience, I will say this in Behalf of this Argument for *Atheism*, that the Evil apparent in the World (which some urge as an Argument against the Existence of a Deity) seems to me most visible in the Actions of Priests, who do, in my Opinion, create the greatest Disorder among Men.

The late Bishop of *Sarum* tells us, in his Travels, “That a Man of Quality at *Rome*, and an eminent Churchman, *said to him*, That it was a horrible Scandal to the whole Christian World, and made one doubt of the Truth of the Christian Religion, to see more Oppression and Cruelty in their Territories, than was to be found even in *Turkey*. *He says*, some Physicians in *Naples* are brought under the Scandal of Atheism: And it is certain, that in *Italy* Men of searching Understandings, who have no other Idea of the Christian Religion, but that which they see received among them, are very naturally tempted to disbelieve it quite; for they believing it all alike in gross, without Distinction, and finding such notorious Cheats as appear in many Parts of their Religion, are, upon that, induced to disbelieve the Whole.” And it is an Observation of Dr. *geddes*, that *there are more People of no Religion in Italy, than in*

all the World besides (Tracts, Vol. 3.). *England* is also said, by our High-Church Priests, to abound with Atheists, no less than *Italy*. But if there be such People among us, they are intirely owing to the Conduct of some of our Priests, who, I will be so bold as to affirm, are as *impudent* in their Pretences to Power and Authority, as the *Italian* Priests dare to be. This, though at first Sight it may seem matter of Admiration, that they should be so in such an enlightened Country as *England*, where so many understand right Reasoning, and true Christianity; yet is natural enough, if it be considered, that it is the *last Struggle* of Priests for *Popery* and *Slavery*: They contend for the most ridiculous Things, as necessary to Salvation; and by their Prevarications about Oaths, and Shiftings about Doctrines, according to their Interest, dispose Men to make the same Inference, as the *Men of Quality*, and *Men of searching Understandings*, do in *Italy*. And some among us may, perhaps, make that Atheistical Inference, considering how the Nation had been managed in the High-Church Reign of King *charles* the Second, when the *Design*, according to the late Bishop of *Sarum*, seemed to be to make us first Atheists, that we might more easily be Papists.

Dr. *hickes* tells us, that the Practices of the *Swearing Clergy*, since the *Revolution*, who had preached Passive Obedience before, “have tempted loose and unprincipled Men to turn Atheists; and that those Clergy have set open the Flood-Gates to that Deluge of Atheism and Impiety, that now overflow the Nation.” And he cites another Author with Approbation, for saying, “This Change has made many sober Men sceptical, and gone farther towards eradicating all the Notions of a Deity, than all the Labours of Mr. *hobbes*. I have been ready to suspect, that Religion itself was a Cheat; and others, of my own Knowledge, have the same Temptations to question Religion itself.”

Mr. *Lesley* says, “The Carriage of the Clergy in the *Revolution*, has given greater Occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and turned more Men from the Church of *England*, to the Church of *Rome*, and even to Atheism; has overturned, ruined, divided, and dishonoured our Church more, than if that Persecution, which some feared or pretended, had fallen upon them. He says, The Clergy banter and mock God to his Face; and that Atheism is a smaller Sin than this, since it is better to have no God at all, than to set up one, to laugh at him; and that the greatest Danger to which we are now exposed, by the Defect of so many of our Clergy, is a Contempt of all Religion, which is now spread over the Land, in a Manner unheard of in former Ages.”

Lastly, The late Bishop of *Sarum* tells us, “That since his Conversation with *Wilmot* Earl of *Rochester*, he had had many Occasions to discourse with People tainted with wicked Principles: And, says he, I do affirm, that the greatest Prejudice those Persons have at Religion, at the Clergy, and at the public Worship of God, is this, That they say they see Clergymen take Oaths, and use all Prayers, both ordinary and extraordinary, for the Government; and yet in their Actings and Discourses, and of late in their Sermons, they shew visibly, that they look another Way; from whence they conclude, that they are a mercenary Sort of People, without Conscience.”

2. Atheism being, in my Opinion, a most unnatural Thing, and a Crime, which, for its Madness, as well as Guilt, ought to shut a Man out of civil Society, I am not disposed to lay it to any Man’s Charge, though a vicious Person; much less to any sober Man’s,

without his open Profession of it, or an evident Proof of it upon him. But if, consistently with Charity, we may suspect any Men of Atheism, who deny themselves to be Atheists, we may certainly suspect such Priests, who live viciously; who play with Oaths; who, though swearing to the Government, are *Jacobites* in their Hearts (as Dr. *Hickes* says, I hope falsely, *the main Body of the Clergy, God be thanked*, are); who are uncharitable in their Censures, and are Persecutors; who defend plain Absurdities; who dispute against the Reasonableness of Reason; who contend for human Authority, that is, their own, in Matters of Religion; and argue for the Belief of unintelligible Propositions or Mysteries (For Men of common Sense, and common Honesty, can hardly be supposed to join real Belief and such Things together). And above all, those Priests are to be suspected as Atheists, who are constantly charging others with Atheism, and those oftentimes the most learned, best, and most religious Men, as *Cudworth*, *Tillotson*, and *Locke*. Upon such we may justly return the Charge of Atheism, in the Words of a modern Philosopher: “How, *says be to a High Presbyterian Priest*, could you think me an Atheist, unless it were, because finding your Doubts of the Deity more frequent than other Mens are, you are thereby the apter to fall upon that kind of Reproach? Wherein you are like Women of poor and evil Education, when they scold; amongst whom the readiest disgraceful Word is *Whore*. Why not Thief, or any other ill Name, but because, when they remember themselves, they think that Reproach the likeliest to be true?”

And, as many Priests give such Cause of Suspicion, so I would fain know what Mr. *lesley* must esteem the Priests of our Church to be, when he says, “That the Parliament cannot make an Oath which the Clergy will not take? And whether many of our Clergy must not be esteemed *Atheists*, according to the Saying of the late Bishop of *Worcester*, It was a great Providence of God, that so many of the Clergy refused the Oaths to the Government, lest People should think there was no such thing as Religion, and incline to Atheism?” And lastly, wha can be thought of the Majority of a Lower House of *Convocation*, who, in their *Representation of the present State of Religion, with regard to the late excessive Growth of Infidelity, Heresy, and Profaneness*, fell upon the truly religious (though erroneous) Books of Mr. *Whiston* and others, but passed over the *Tale of a Tub*, a Book of a Reverend Brother; tho’ that Book was the sole open Attack that had been made upon Christianity since the *Revolution*, except the *Oracles of Reason*; and was not inferior, in Banter and Malice, to the Attacks of *celsus*, or *julian*, or *porphyry*, or *lucian*! And what can we think of the Majority of another Convocation, which a worthy Member spoke to in these Words? “With what Face or Conscience, Mr. Prolocutor, can we offer to complain of the Licentiousness taken by Lay-Writers, and yet connive at the like Offences given by the Ministers of our Church; I doubt, greater Offences? For if all the ill Books against Religion, Scripture, &c. were here packed up together, I would undertake to pick out the worst of them, by pointing at those written by Clergymen, even of the most profane Drollery, as well as the most serious Heresy?” So that, upon the Whole, the High-Church Priests seem to me to derive a mighty Benefit from Atheism. They have it chiefly among themselves, and protect one another in it, and thereby have the Profit of Atheism, arising from taking false Oaths, and from doing many things without Scruple of Conscience, as also the Pleasure, as some of them esteem it, (see Dr. *Atterbury*’s Sermon at *Bennet*’s Funeral) arising from the Practice of Vice. And at the same time they themselves stand clear of the Imputation of Atheism, and brand

with it those whom they do not like, and such as aro oftentimes the best Men, and best Christians.

C.

P. S. The Author of this Paper, having received two very modest and religious, though anonymous Letters, which take Offence at an Expression in the *Independent Whig*, N^o. XXXVIII. about Godly Sorrow, returns for Answer, That *Sorrow for our Sins* is not there opposed, but *mechanic Sorrow*, and such as proceeds from wrong Causes; and the Author only supposes, that such enthusiastic People, as he has before mentioned, knew not the true Principles of Repentance, which he himself has described.

In fine, as to *Godly Sorrow, Sorrow for Sin*; I know it to be so much a religious Duty, that I know there can be no Religion without it.

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Number XLVII.

No Priests Instituted By The Christian Religion.

Wednesday, December 7. 1720.

I Will, in this Paper, shew, that there are no Priests or Sacrificers in the Gospel Dispensation, in any other Sense, than as every Christian may be called so, as he offers up to God the Sacrifices of Praises and Thanksgivings, and a pure and contrite Heart: and, in this respect, St. *Peter* calls all Christians, *a spiritual House, an holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices, a chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People, God's Heritage, or more properly, God's Clergy.*

It is undoubtedly true, that all Power, Superiority, or Distinction amongst Men, must be derived either from the positive Institutions of God, or the Consent and Agreement of one another; and therefore, whoever demands any Authority over others, their Goods, or Possessions, must support his Pretences by such Proof as the Nature and Importance of the Claim requires; and it must be very glaring and undeniable, when it is levelled at the temporal and eternal Happiness of all Mankind.

It is a severe Circumstance, which attends those, who oppose received Opinions, that they must not only contend against popular Prejudices, and Notions long imbibed, against the Interests and Passions of great Numbers of artful and combining Men, but in most Countries against the Weight and Force of public Authority. The labouring Oar too will always lie upon you: You must disprove what has no Proof to support it, and bring Clouds of Arguments to maintain Propositions that are really self-evident; a bare Possibility that you may be mistaken, shall be deemed a full Conviction; and sometimes the clearest Demonstration on your Side, shall be called only carnal and human Knowledge, not to be used about Spiritual Things; and even when the irrefragable Strength of your Reasoning forces Consent, you will have no Thanks for your Pains, but will be esteemed officious and factious, and be said to disturb Points already settled, if by chance you should escape the Censure of promoting the Cause of Deism or Atheism.

However, these Claims, in the Popish and popishly-affected Clergy, are so enormous, the Consequences of them so fatal to Christianity and the Arguments pretended to be brought from Reason and Authority for their Support, so weak and contemptible, the whole Design and current of the Gospel being directly against them; that I shall do my utmost totally to demolish and throw down the tottering Building, and shew that it has no Foundation in common Sense or Scripture.

No Proposition can be more evident, than that, before any positive Institution, every Man must have been his own Priest, and alone must have offered up his own Prayers and Thanksgivings; but when God Almighty instituted the *Jewish Dispensation*, which consisted of numerous Rites, Ceremonies, and Sacrifices, he also appointed

Persons to officiate and execute these Duties for the People as well as for themselves, who were called *Priests* or *Sacrificers*, with particular Salaries or Dues annexed to their Office, and they were to be only chosen out of one Tribe.

Accordingly, in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, chap. v. ver. 1. and chap. viii. ver. 3. a High-Priest is defined *as one taken up from amongst Men, and ordained for Men in Things pertaining to God; that he may offer Gifts and Sacrifices for Sins*: So that the Business of the Priesthood was for expiating Sin, and reconciling Men to God, by offering Gifts and Sacrifices: And the Apostle adds, *Verse the 4th, That no Man could take this Honour to himself, but he which was called of God, as was Aaron, whose Commission was couched in the plainest and most express Words imaginable, and the People's Duty and Obedience were prescribed even to the minutest Circumstance.*

As the *Jewish* Rites and Ceremonies were almost endless, and consisted of so many minute Particulars, that it was next to impossible not to commit some Breaches of their Law; therefore God appointed Atonement to be made for the lesser Transgressions of it, by Gifts and Offerings, and the Persons aforesaid to make those Offerings; but for the greater Sins, such as Idolatry, Perjury, Murder, Adultery, breaking their Sabbath, &c. no Sin-Offerings or expiatory Sacrifices were allowed; and for this Reason the Apostle, *chap. vii. v. 18, 19.* argues, *that there is verily a Disannulment of the Commandment going before for the Weakness and Unprofitableness thereof; for the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in a better Hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God.*

He adds, *chap. ix. v. 9. That Gifts and Sacrifices could not make him that did the Service perfect, as pertaining to the Conscience. And chap. x. v. 4. That it is not possible, that the Blood of Bulls and of Goats should take away Sins. And v. 6, 8. That in Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices for Sins, God has no Pleasure;* and he argues from thence, *chap. v. v. 4, 10. and chap. vii. from the 11th v. to the 19th, a Necessity that another Priest should arise after the Order of Melchisedek, which was an higher Order, and that he should be perfect (being to become Author of eternal Salvation to all them who obey him): for if Perfection was in the Levitical Priesthood, (under which the People received the Law) what Need was there, that another Priest should arise after the Order of Melchisedek, and not after the Order of Aaron? For the Priesthood being changed, there is made a Necessity of the Change also of the Law.*

And then he observes many Differences between our Saviour's and the *Jewish* Priesthood:

1. That *this Priest was not made after the Law of a carnal Commandment, but after the Power of an endless Life.*
2. That *he was made a Priest, not without an Oath, which the Jewish Priests were not, v. 20, 21.*
3. That *they were many Priests, because they were not suffered to continue, by reason of Death; but this Man, because he continueth, hath an unchangeable Priesthood:*

Wherefore he is able to save them to the utmost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them, v. 23, 24, 25.

4. *That the Law maketh Men High-Priests which have Infirmary; but such a High-Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, and made higher than the Heavens, who needeth not daily to offer up Sacrifices, first for his own Sins, and then for the People; for this he did once, when he offered up himself, v. 26, 27, 28.*

5. *That he obtained a more excellent Ministry, by how much he is Mediator of a better Covenant, which was established upon better Promises; for if the Covenant had been faultless, then should no Place have been sought for the second; for finding Fault with them, saith the Lord, I will put my Laws into their Minds, and write them in their Hearts, and they shall not teach every Man his Neighbour, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the greatest to the least; for I will be merciful to their Unrighteousness, and their Sins and Iniquities I will remember no more; in that he saith, By a new Covenant, he hath made the first old; and that which decayeth, and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away, chap. viii. ver. 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13. and chap. x. ver. 16, 17.*

6. *In chap. ix. the Apostle compares the Rites and bloody Sacrifices of the Law, and shews how far inferior they are to the Blood and Sacrifice of Christ, who not by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood, entered at once into the holy Place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us; for if the Blood of Bulls and of Goats, and the Ashes of an Heifer sprinkling the Unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the Flesh, how much more shall the Blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself, without Blot, to God, purge your Consciences from dead Works, to serve the living God? ver. 12, 13, 14.*

7. *In chap. x. he shews the Weakness of the Law-Sacrifices; which, being offer'd up Year by Year continually, could not make the Comers thereto perfect; for then they would have ceased to have been offered, because that the Worshippers, once purged, should have had no more Conscience of Sins. Ver. 1, 2. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy Will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second; by the which Will we are sanctified, through the Offering of Jesus Christ, once for all. Every Priest standeth ministring, and offering the same Sacrifices, which can never take away Sins; but this Man, after he offered one Sacrifice for Sins for ever, sat down at the Right-hand of God; for by one Offering he hath perfected, for ever, them that are sanctified; that is, those who obey his Commands, v. 9, 10, 11, 12, 14. And in v. 18. he tells them, Where Remission of sins is, there is no more Offering for Sins.*

In the rest of the Chapter, the Apostle exhorts the *Hebrews*, whom he calls his Brethren, to have the Boldness to enter in with him into the Holiest, by the Blood of Jesus; and having a High Priest over the House of God, to draw near with a true Heart, in full Assurance of having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and our Bodies washed with pure Water, and to hold fast the Profession of our Faith, without wavering; and to consider one another to provoke unto Love, and to good Works; not for saking the assembling ourselves together, as the Manner of some is;

but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching. And he enforces his Argument, by telling them, that if we sin wilfully after the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins.

Now, in all this Epistle, where this Matter is so fully and at large explained, (as well as in many other Parts of Scripture, where the *Jewish* Priesthood, Rites and Ceremonies are plainly abolished) there is not one Word or Hint given of any other to be established upon the Ruins of it. In all the Chapters which I have quoted, no Priest, Sacrificer, Prophet, Mediator, Intercessor, Reconciler, Benedictor, Ambassador, or Spiritual Prince, is once mentioned, but Jesus Christ alone; though one might have expected to have met with him, or to have heard of him here, if there was to have been any such Person in Nature. On the contrary, the Apostle himself addresses to the *Hebrws* as his Equals, and claims no Right, Privilege, or Superiority over them; talks to them always in the Plural Number; nor does he, in the modern Phrase, say, *Pray ye*, &c. but joins himself with them in every Act of Love and Duty.

If this was the Case of the *Hebrews*, who were Parties to the *Horeb* Contract, by which God became their temporal King, and consequently, they became bound, and Subjects to all the Laws of *Moses*; the Argument is much stronger in behalf of the *Gentiles*, who were never any way concerned in the *Jewish* Priesthood, Rites and Ceremonies; and there must be therefore a very plain and positive Institution and Establishment found out in Scripture, before they can be subjected to it.

T.

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Number XLVIII.

All Priestly Power Inconsistent With The Gospel, And Renounced By It.

Wednesday, December 14. 1720.

I Have fully shewn, in my last Paper, that as there is but one Sacrifice in the Christian Religion, so there is but one Sacrificer or Priest, who, as our Church declares in the *Communion Service*, made one Oblation of himself, and once offered up a full, perfect, sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the whole World; and agreeably to this Declaration, in the 13th Article, she calls the Sacrifices of the Popish Priests *dangerous Deceits*, and *blasphemous Fables*.

I cannot with my best Inquiry find out, that in the whole Christian Religion, there are any new Rites and Ceremonies appointed, or any Offices erected; nor in the *Gospels*, *Acts*, or *Epistles*, does any thing like an Institution occur, except that of *Deacons*; which Office is now quite laid aside, unless it may be said to be revived by virtue of the Act of Queen *Elizabeth*, which appoints Overseers of the Poor: for as to the modern Ecclesiastical Deacon, he has no Resemblance to the Scripture-Officer, *who was appointed to serve Tables, upon Complaint of the Grecian Widows, who were neglected in the daily Ministration*, which the Apostles were not at leisure to attend, because *of the preaching of the Word*, and therefore directed the Congregation to chuse others, whose Business it should be. *Acts*, chap. vi.

I shall therefore inquire how the Popish World came to be blessed with such a long Train of spiritual Equipage; and see what can be found in the Scriptures, to warrant or countenance their present Pretensions. In order to it, I shall observe, that Promulgation is of the Essence of a Law, which cannot be without Plainness and Perspicuity: It must not be expressed in doubtful and equivocal Terms: It must not depend upon critical Learning, or different Readings; nor receive its Explanation from the mysterious Gibberish, and unintelligible Jargon of the Schools; but ought to be such, as a plain, open, simple-hearted, sincere Man may easily discover, amidst the numerous and contradictory Schemes of the Ecclesiastics.

Weak and corrupt Men may, through Ignorance or Design, frame and enact Laws obscure and unintelligible; but the Almighty cannot intend to mislead his Creatures, or want proper Words to express his Meaning: Even such human Laws as enact Penalties, or restrain the natural Liberty of Mankind, are always construed strictly, and extended no farther than the Letter expressly warrants; and it is much more reasonable, that it should be so understood in divine Laws, upon which the temporal and eternal Happiness of all the World depends; not only because of the Importance of the Subject, but as there can be no unwary Omission, or Defect, in Words chosen by the Holy Ghost. We may therefore be very sure, that whatever is not expressed in

Scripture, plain and clear to common Understandings, was not intended for our Instruction, or can become a Duty.

With our Eyes thus cleared up, we will view those Texts and Parts of holy Writ, brought together to support this unwieldy Fabric. And here, for some time, I must beg Leave of my Reader, to stand amazed, and be at a Loss, which most to admire, the Stupidity and Acquiescence of the Popish and popishly-affected Laity, or the daring Insolence and Impiety of their Ecclesiastics, that without Reason, or the Appearance of Reason, without Scripture, or the Colour of Scripture, but directly in Defiance of them both, they could be able to form so complete an Empire over the Bodies and Minds of the greatest Part of *Christendom*; rob them of their Goods and Possessions, and make them Instruments of their own Ruin, hug their Chains, and mortally hate, murder, or ruin every one who would set them free.

But before I enter upon a particular Disquisition of the Texts produced, I would first inquire what Benefit can accrue to Christianity by such Powers in the Christian Clergy. A *Roman Judge* is honourably mentioned by *Cicero*, for always asking *Cui bono* (for what End or Advantage) an alledged Action was done; by which he could make some Judgment whether it was done or not, and who did it. The same is a reasonable Proceeding in this Case; for though it be no Objection to the Truth of what God has said, that it is not agreeable to the Sentiments of weak Men; yet whilst it remains a Question, whether God said it or not, there cannot be a stronger way of arguing used, than to shew, that it is unworthy of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, who can say nothing which is trifling and impertinent, or make any Ordinances useless or mischievous to his Creatures.

Nothing can come from God, but what is god-like; and therefore when any Number of Men, combining together, dare tell me any thing in his Name, of no Use to Religion or Virtue, and yet of apparent Advantage to themselves, or their Order, I shall always believe it to be an Invention of their own, forged to gratify their Ambition and Avarice, and shall ever vindicate the Almighty from the imputed Calumny.

Now of what Use is it to Religion and Virtue, that the Clergy should always make one another? Whether the Imposition of Hands be esteemed barely a Ceremony, to denote a Person appointed to an Office, or be the Appointment itself? Or whether he be chosen by laying on of Hands, or by any other Ceremony? Will the same Person, with the same Qualifications, be a better Man, better Christian, or abler Divine, if he receive his Orders in a direct Line from the Apostles, through the Canal of a Popish, High-Church, or Presbyterian Priesthood, or if only from the Civil Magistrate, or voluntary Societies? Or is it possible to believe, that whilst he is administering the Offices of Religion, and doing the Duties of the Gospel, the devout Christian—People shall lose the Effects of their Piety, and the Benefit of Christ's Promises, for the Defect of any Circumstance, or any Omission or Superfluity in his Adoption; Things which they could neither prevent nor know? Sure we have not so learned Christ!

Can we suppose, that Almighty God should make such an Establishment of Christianity, as must destroy Christianity itself; and put it under the sole Guidance and

Direction of a Society of Men, who will have a perpetual Interest to overturn or pervert it, and ever did so, when they had Power?

What can be suggested more absurd, then that the good God should send his Son from Heaven, to teach Virtue and Goodness to Men, to manumit and set them free from the Superstitions of the *Jews*, and the Idolatries of the *Gentiles*; who, whilst upon Earth, should not only disclaim all Power and Dominion himself, but suffer an ignominious Death, to make Mankind happy; and yet subject them to a Yoke, the most arbitrary and tyrannical in the World, without Redress, without Remedy; where the Governors have constant Temptations and Motives to oppress, and the Governed no Means to resist or oppose? For no less than this are the Popish and High-Church Demands upon us, and the inevitable Consequences of their wild and wicked Hypothesis.

If they are an Order of Men appointed directly by God, and have the Government of the Church by Divine Right, in all Things which relate to Spirituals (that is, in all Things wherein their own Interest is concerned); if they are to be the sole Judges of their own Powers, and what Doctrines they are to teach; if the People are to receive them implicitly, and to submit to, and be concluded by, their Determinations; and if no human Authority must controul them; which, I think, those whom I write against, all claim (though scarce two of them agree in whose Hands, or in what Part of the Clergy, these Powers are vested); then it is plain, that they are possessed of the most despotic, unlimited, and uncontrollable Sovereignty in the Universe, and which of Necessity must prove, and actually ever has proved, the most cruel and tyrannical in the Exercise.

But if they have not this Power, they can have none at all, but what the Civil Magistrate, or voluntary Societies, trust them with; for, what is the Name of a Power, which every Man is a Judge whether he will submit to or not? Or how can that be said to be Divine, which the Civil Magistrate can controul at his Pleasure? There can be no Medium in Nature betwixt another's judging for me, and my judging for myself: If another be to judge for me, I must submit to his Determinations, let them be ever so absurd, monstrous or wicked; but if I have a Right to re-examine them, they can amount to no more than Advice, and my own Judgment alone must determine me.

As I think I have amply proved, that it is inconsistent with the Goodness of God to trust the Powers so claimed with the Popish Clergy; so in my two next Papers I will as fully prove, that, in Fact, he has given them no Authority at all.

Indeed, to do them Right, the Popish Priests do not pretend to offer any direct Texts to their Purpose, expressing particularly the Powers given them, and the Persons in whom they are to be vested; as might be reasonably expected in a Case so nearly affecting the Liberties of all Mankind; and as was actually done in the *Jewish* Dispensation, where every Circumstance relating to their Worship, and the Priest's Office, was minutely described; but instead thereof, they pick up scattered and disjointed Sentences, and set them together by the Ears, to try what they can get by the Scuffle: They argue from Types, Antitypes, Parables, Metaphors, Allegories, Allusions, Inferences, Patterns, Resemblances, Figures and Shadows; and by such means can fetch every thing out of every thing.

The Bible is a miscellaneous Book, from whence crazed or designing Men, by joining or disjoining; by various Readings, corrupt or ignorant Translations; by far-fetched Interpretations, and putting different Meanings upon Words in Scripture from what they signify in any other Parts of Language; by trifling and knavish Distinctions, metaphysical Subtilties, no Definitions, but shifting the Significations of Words as they have Occasion; by References to antient Customs, and Twenty other Theological Systems of Reasoning, may always fetch Materials to serve their loose or wicked Purposes; as we actually find an Hundred different, and many of them almost contradictory, Religions are pretended to be deduced from that Book; and if the Priests were let alone, they would find a Thousand more, and burn for them all (I mean, other People). But if Men would be contented to judge of the Gospel Style, by the same Rule as they do of other Writings; if they could be persuaded, that God Almighty, when he condescends to make use of human Language, intends to be understood, and consequently uses Words in their common Acceptation; that when he designed to reveal his Will to Babes and Sucklings, (that is, to the Ignorant and Unlearned) he did not chuse to do it in Riddles, to make way for Interpreters, and that the Popish Clergy might have a Pretence for picking the Laity's Pockets; then I affirm, that the Bible is the plainest, openest, most moral, significant, and intelligible Book in the World, in all Things which can be the Duty of a Man to know; and in no Part of it more so, than in the present Dispute, which has been rendered so perplexed and intricate by Craft and Artifice: And I undertake in my two next Papers to make this out.

T.

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Number XLIX.

The Same Subject Continued.

Wednesday, December 21. 1720.

There is nothing in the Four Gospels to authorize or countenance the Distinction of Ecclesiastical and Civil; for as our Saviour renounced all worldly Power himself, so he gave none. He neither used nor allowed the Use of Force and Violence, to coerce and conquer Subjects to his Kingdom, which he declared was not of this World. As the Religion, which he taught, was not to consist of outward Actions and Ceremonies, like the Worship of the *Gentiles*, but was to reside in the Mind; so he chose proper Means to attain his End: He knew that the Sword might make Hypocrites and Slaves, but never Converts; he therefore instructed his Apostles to win Mens Affection by Love and Gentleness, to allure them by Example, and convince them by the Reasonableness of his Precepts; and he enabled them to prove their Mission by Wonders and Miracles; all which are directly contrary to the Proceedings of *Mahomet*, whose Aim was temporal Dominion, and his Religion Imposture; and consequently Violence was necessary to propagate both: For Absurdity can no way be supported but by Tyranny; but Truth can ever defend itself, and desires nothing but a fair Examination, a free Hearing, and equal Favour.

He takes every Occasion to caution his Apostles against spiritual Pride, and claiming Superiority over others, or one another: The Powers which he gave them were of another Kind, such as were proper to overcome the Prejudices of the innocent and well-meaning, though misled People; and to confound the Malice and Subtilty of the governing Priesthood; namely, *A Power against unclean Spirits, and to cast them out; to heal all manner of Sickness, and all manner of Diseases; and to raise the Dead.* Sure no Clergyman pretends to these Powers!

He bids them provide *neither Silver, nor Gold, nor Brass, in their Pockets; nor Scrip for their Journey; neither two Coats, nor Shoes, nor Staves:* Much less, Coaches. I presume that no Clergyman desires these Powers.

He orders them, *when they come into any House, to salute it; and if they do not receive them, and hear their Words, to depart from that House, and shake off the Dust of their Feet.* The Popish Clergy are for setting Fire to such an House, (as they did lately to several) and for burning and damning every one within it.

The Apostles Commission was to *preach Christ to all Nations, in Matthew; and in Mark, to go into all the World, and to preach him to every Creature.* The Popish Priest stays at home, and preaches himself only, to his own Parish, for Money.

Those who *believed in the Apostles, and were baptized, had the Power of casting out Devils in Christ's Name, and speaking with new Tongues: They could take up*

Serpents; no deadly thing they drank could hurt them; they laid Hands upon the Sick, and they recovered. Those who believe in the Popish Priest, are the best Friends that the Devil has; and instead of casting him out, for the most part, bring him in: They can speak Sense with no Tongue; nor dare venture on any Poison, but what proceeds from Gluttony and Drunkenness, with which they give their Votaries Diseases, instead of recovering them.

The Apostles were *to be Witnesses of all which they had heard or seen said or done by our Saviour*; and who else could be so? But the Popish Priest has no other Means of knowing Christ, than any Layman of equal Abilities, and equal Application; nor can have any greater Motive or Inducement to preach him, except his Hire; which, as it first suborned his Predecessors to betray his Person, and take away his Life, so it has ever since been the Occasion of crucifying him anew, by misrepresenting his Doctrines, and making them subservient to worldly Ambition and Interest; a Practice so universal, that no *Englishman* can set his Foot out of his own Country, but he fees the Clergy perverting the Scripture, and abusing the People.

Our Saviour himself appointed the Seventy Disciples, whom *he sent before him two by two, in every Place where he intended himself to go*; and gave them Powers almost equal to the Powers of the Apostles, *even to heal the Sick, to tread on Serpents and Scorpions, and over all the Power of the Enemy, and that nothing should hurt them*; but he was so far from giving any worldly Authority, that he tells them, *he sends them forth as Lambs amongst Wolves; that they should carry nothing with them; but whatsoever House they came into, they should say, Peace to that House, and should eat and drink such things as the People gave them; and whatever City they came into, they should eat such things as were set before them, for the Labourer is worthy of his Hire* (here it seems the People were to judge what Wages and Hire they deserve); *and if any Persons refused to receive them, they were to go into the Streets, and shake off the Dust of their Feet at them*; which was all the Excommunication that they were directed to use, and was nothing else but to leave them in their Sins, and preach to them no longer.

Whatever is meant by the figurative and abstruse Texts of binding and loosing, remitting and retaining Sins, is evidently confined to those whom it is spoken to, and seems to have relation to the other World alone.

Now I would be glad to know, By what Rules of Construction can the Powers, now claimed by any Set of Clergy in the World, be brought from these Texts, or in what Sense can any Clergyman be said to be a Successor of the Apostles, more than every Layman of equal Qualifications.

If our Saviour had intended to have conveyed down any Powers to any Man, or Set of Men whatsoever, it is impossible to believe but he would have expressed himself in the fullest and most significant Words; and left no Doubt behind him, what those Powers were, and to whom they belonged. No Statute enacted amongst weak Mortals is penned so loosely: What Lawyer in *Westminster-Hall* could have found out sovereign Power in the Precept, *Feed my Sheep*? Or in our Saviour's Promise to assist

the Apostles, and perhaps all Christians in general, in these Words, *I will be with you to the End of the World?*

The Priests of *Delphos*, uttering, for the most part, their Oracles in sorry and balderdash Poetry, gave Rise to a waggish Jest amongst the Antients, That *Homer* could write better Verses than *Apollo*, who inspired him. But sure no one among Christians will be so profane, as to give Occasion to the Suggestion, that the Attorney General can draw up a clearer and more intelligible Commission than the Apostles.

But though there be nothing in the Gospels to justify or excuse the priestly Demands upon the Laity, yet there are many Texts expressly against them, in which our Saviour disclaims all Authority over Men, and forbids his Disciples and Followers assuming Superiority over their Brethren, or censuring, judging, or using any one ill, for not receiving, or for opposing them.

In *Luke* the *xiiith*. v. 13. A Man desires of our Saviour to speak to his Brother to divide his Inheritance with him; and his Answer is, *Who made me a Judge, or a Divider, over you?*

In *John*, chap. *xii*. v. 47, 48. our Saviour declares, *If any Man hears his Words, and believes not, that he will not judge him; for he came not to judge the World, but to save the World.* And in the next Verse leaves him to the Judgment of the Father, and tells him what will be his Doom.

In *John*, chap. *xviii*. v. 36. he was brought before *Pilate* for speaking Treason against *Cæsar*, and claiming the Temporal Kingdom of *Judea*; and he took that Occasion to renounce all earthly Sovereignty, by declaring, *his Kingdom was not of this World*, and gave his Reason for it; which so satisfied the *Roman* Governor, ever jealous of his Master's Authority, that he pronounced him innocent, and would gladly have released him, if the *Jewish* Priests would have suffered it.

In *Matthew*, Chap. *vii*. v. 1, 2, 3. he says to his Disciples, *Judge not, lest ye be judged; for with what Judgment ye judge ye shall be judged, and what Measure ye mete shall be measured to you again, &c.*

In *Luke*, Chap. *ix*. v. 54. *James* and *John* desired of him, that they might command Fire from Heaven to punish the *Samaritans* for not receiving him; which he was so far from consenting to, that *he reproveth them for it*; and tells them, *Ye know not what Spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy the World, but to save the World.*

In the same Chapter, *John* said to him, *Master, we saw one casting out Devils in thy Name, and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us, is for us.* A plain Precept for Christians to tolerate one another.

Through the whole *xviiiith* Chapter of *Matthew*, our Saviour exhorts his Disciples to be humble, and to forgive Offences. And in v. 15, 16, 17. tells them, *If thy Brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his Fault between thee and him alone. But if he*

will not hear thee, take one or two more with thee, &c. and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church, or Congregation: And if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee like a Heathen or Publican; that is, have no more to do with him. And in the two Verses after, he tells them what a Church is, namely, When two or three are gathered together in my Name, I will be in the midst of them; and his Presence, methinks, should be effectual to constitute a complete Church, though a Parson is not one of the Company.

Indeed the whole New Testament is a Lesson of Humility, Humanity, and Morality; the Sermon upon the Mount is nothing else; and we every-where find constant Precepts and Cautions against Pride and Domination.

In the xxxi^{id} of *Matthew*, our Saviour spake to the Multitude, and to his Disciples, bidding them *not to be called Master; for one is your Master, even Christ, all ye are Brethren; but he that is greatest amongst you, shall be your Servant; and whoever does exalt himself, shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted.*

In *Luke*, chap. xx. v. 46. he warns his Disciples to *beware of the Scribes, who desire to walk in long Robes, and love Greetings in the Markets, and the highest Seats in the Synagogues, and the chief Places at Feasts, (hear, O ye Popish Bishops, Priests, and Deacons!) who devour Widows Houses, and for a Shew make long Prayers.*

In *Luke* xxii. v. 24, 25, 26. *There was a Strife amongst the Apostles which should be the greatest. And Jesus said unto them, The Kings of the Gentiles exercise Authority over them, and they that exercise Authority upon them, are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest amongst you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. The same in Matthew, chap. xx. v. 25, 26, 27. And he enforces this Precept in Verse 28. from his own Conduct, even as the Son of Man came not to be ministred unto, but to minister.*

Our Saviour did not, like others, preach Doctrines to his Disciples which he refused to practise; but teaches them Modesty and Humility by his own Example: For, in the xiiith of *John*, he *washes their Feet himself, and bids them wash one another's*. How different is this from the proud Spirit of his pretended Successors, who take Place of the Nobility and Gentry, and make the great Men of the Earth kiss their Slippers; salute them upon the Knee, as if they were Gods below, or sovereign Princes; nay more, set themselves above the Crown itself; for what is it else they mean, after saying Grace, and in their Cups, by putting the Church (by which they mean themselves) before the King and Royal Family? We all know too well their Kindness for the People, (who are the Scriptural and Legal Church) to suspect that they mean them.

Not many Years since, the constant Health among them was, *King, Queen, and Church*; but now all the High Clergy are guilty of the same Crime for which Cardinal *Wolsey* ought to have lost, and in all Likelihood would have lost his Head, if he had not prevented it, as it is said, by Self-murder, even the Crime of setting themselves above the Crown, and *viva voce* crying out, *Ego & Rex meus*, when they are in the Humour of owning him as such.

T.

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Number L.

An Inquiry Into Religious Establishments, With A Further Confutation Of The Impious And Absurd Claims Of High Priests.

Wednesday, December 28. 1720.

SO various and contradictory are the Opinions and Reasonings of Men, that no voluntary Society or Assembly can act, or long hold together, without establishing certain Rules and Orders, amongst themselves, regarding the common Interest and Conduct of the Society, and appointing Persons whose Duty it shall be, to see those Orders put in Execution; and if any Member does not think it lawful or expedient to submit to the public Regulations, they must have a Right to exclude him, or in other Words, to excommunicate him from their Body, if he do not chuse to separate himself.

If the Design of the Meeting be to worship God, to join in the same Prayers, and for Exhortation and Edification, (which Assembly is called a Church) there must be Time and Place appointed when and where they are to meet, and Persons to prepare and keep in Order all Things necessary for their Meeting: There must be one, or more, appointed to read those Prayers to the Congregation; in which they are to join, and to do all those Offices, which can be performed only by single Persons; and if the Society would avoid the Loquacity and Interruption of ignorant and conceited Members, they must confine Exhortation to one, or to a few Persons of approved Gravity and Wisdom. There must be also some Means of conferring and agreeing together, to support the common Expences of Buildings, Repairs, Utensils, &c. and consequently, there must be Debates, which cannot well be carried on without a President, Chairman, or Prolocutor, to regulate them, collect their Voices, and pronounce their Resolutions; without which Precautions, they will be more likely to fight than pray.

If several of these Churches, residing at too great a Distance from one another to meet together, should esteem it their Duty or Advantage to join in the same Form of Worship, and unite in a common Interest to support it, they must find out some Means of Communication, and contrive some Cement of their Union, otherwise they would soon separate again: This may be done by chusing Deputies to represent them, and to concert common Measures, or by submitting themselves to the Conduct and Determinations of one or more Persons, chosen by common Consent, in all such Matters as do not interfere with their Duty to God; and the Persons so chosen can have no more Power, nor of longer Duration, than their Principals think fit to give them.

If these Churches think it their Duty or Interest to enlarge their Bottom, and make Converts, they cannot take a more effectual Method to do it, than to choose, appoint,

or ordain, discreet and honest Men, who are acquainted with their Way of Worship, their Ordinances, and the Reasons of them, and send them forth to teach, persuade, and convince others; to exhort them with Meekness and Love, (the likeliest Way to gain them) and afterwards to preside and watch over them, and thereby prevent their Straying and Apostatizing.

This was the Case in the Beginnings of Christianity, before National Churches were established, as well as the present Case of independent, voluntary Societies. The Apostles Commission was, *to go into all the World, and preach Christ to every Creature*. This was impossible for them to do in their own Persons; and therefore as they made Converts, they exhorted them to convert others, as *Acts viii. v. 1, 4*. When the Apostles were left at *Jerusalem, the Church was scattered abroad through all Judea and Samaria, and those who were scattered abroad preached the World*. *Acts xi. v. 19, 20*. *They that were scattered abroad upon the Persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phœnice and Cyprus, and preached the Word to none but the Jews only; and some of them, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus Christ*. *Chap. iv. v. 4*. *Peter and John converted Five thousand*. *And v. 31*. *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with Boldness*.

And they were all enabled to prove their Mission, by having the Power of working Miracles; for *Mark xvi. v. 17, 18*. these Signs were to follow those who believed in Christ's Name: *They could cast out Devils, they could and speak with new Tongues; they could take up Serpents; no deadly thing could hurt them; they could lay their Hands on the Sick, and recover them*. *John, Chap. xiv. v. 12*. our Saviour says to his Disciples, *Whoever believeth in me, the Works that I do shall he do, and greater than these shall he do*: Which Gifts would have been unnecessary, if they had been to have made no Use of them; and by virtue of these general Powers given to all Christians, *Philip and Stephen*, who were chosen by the Congregation to the menial Office of serving Tables, preached, baptized, and did many Wonders and Miracles, *Acts, Chap. vi. v. 8*. *Chap. viii. v. 7*.

But besides the common Right which every Man had to preach Christ, and propagate his Kingdom, the Apostle prevailed with particular Persons to undertake it, and make it their Business, who were to assist and oversee the Brethren, as a Shepherd does his Sheep: Having the Gift of discerning Spirits, they knew who were fittest for the Employment, and who would engage in it without any sinister Views; but it is plain, they gave no Gifts or Advantages to them above other Christians. They could not give the Holy Ghost; which Power was confined to the Apostles alone, and as far as appears, was bestowed without Distinction upon all who believed, and were baptized.

The Power of speaking with Tongues, as is abovesaid, was given to all Believers; which appears to be in Scripture one constant and inseparable Mark of having received the Holy Ghost.

In *Acts the iid. v. 4*. *The Holy Ghost fell on the Apostles, and they spake with Tongues*. In *Acts x. v. 44, 45*. *While Peter spoke, the Holy Ghost fell on all who heard the Word, and the Jews were astonished when they heard the Gentiles speak with Tongues*.

Chap. xix. v. 6. *Paul lays his Hands on certain Disciples, and the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with Tongues, and prophesied.* Acts the xith. v. 15, 16, 17. *Peter, justifying himself to the Jews, for preaching to the Gentiles, says, And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the Beginning. Then remembered I the Word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with Water, but ye shall be baptized, with the Holy Ghost: Forasmuch therefore as God gave them (namely those who believed) the like Gift as he did to us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I should withstand God?* So that here, from the Mouth of *Peter* himself we have-it, that the *Gentiles* who believed, had the same Gift as the *Apostles*. Chap. viii. v. 14, 17. *When the Apostles at Jerusalem had heard, that the Samaritans had received the Word, they sent to them Peter and John; who laid Hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost, which they had not received before, though they were baptized by Philip.* In chap. ii. v. 38. *Peter* says to them of *Israel*, *Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost;* and v. 41. *They gladly received the Word, and the same Day were added to them about Three thousand Souls, who must have all consequently received the Holy Ghost.* Chap. xv. v. 8, 9. *Paul, speaking of the Gentiles, says, God, which knoweth the Hearts, bare them Witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no Difference between them, and us, purifying their Hearts by Faith.*

Therefore it appears plain to me, that all who believed, especially by the *Apostles* Ministration, received the Holy Ghost, and could do Miracles; and consequently, the Persons aforesaid, by whatever Names they are called, were not designed to be an Order of Men distinct from other Christians, with different Powers and Privileges. They undertook a Burden, not a Command. They were better and poorer than other People, not their Lords and Masters; nor is there a Word in Scripture, whereby we can guess, that they were intended to be Successors to the *Apostles*; much less that the Successorship was to continue to the End of the World; and it is evident in Fact, that there were no such appointed, because the Power of giving the Holy Ghost, and, in Consequence, of doing Miracles, soon ceased in the Church.

With this View let us now examine the *Acts* and *Epistles*, and see what there is which contradicts it.

Acts xiv. v. 23. *Paul and Barnabas ordained Elders in every City;* and chap. xx. v. 17. *Paul calls the Elders of the Church of Ephesus together;* and v. 28. tells them their Duty, *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own Blood.* Here luckily the Word *Episcopos* is translated *Overseer*, and not *Bishop*, because it is explained in the Text to import no more, than *to feed the Church of God;* that is, to assist them, to preach to them, to exhort them, to advise them, and to give them good Examples; but all this implies no Jurisdiction, nor had the *Apostles* any to give.

1 Thessalonians, chap. v. v. 12. *And we beseech you, Brethren, to know them which labour amongst you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.* Here *Paul*, with all Humility, intreats the *Thessalonians*, that they will know, that is, take Notice

of, and hearken to, those who labour for their sakes, who watch over them, and admonish them to mend their Lives.

Ephesians, chap. iv. v. 7, 11. *Unto every one is given Grace, according to the Measure of the Gift of Christ; and he gave some Apostles; and some Prophets; and some Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers; and in the next Verse tells for what, namely, for the perfecting the Saints, (that is, all the Faithful) for the Work of the Ministry, and for the edifying the Body of Christ.*

Romans, chap. x. v. 14, 15. *How then shall they call upon him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a Preacher? And how shall they preach, unless they be sent?* This relates plainly to the teaching of the Apostles, who were sent to preach the Gospel to the unconverted World, that otherwise could have known nothing of it; and possibly, in a larger Sense, may be extended to all Christians, who had the Power as well as the Means to preach it, and consequently might be said to be sent to do it: But I should be glad to know, by what Skill in Chymistry it has been discovered, or how it came to be guessed, that the Clergy of the many Nations in *Europe*, as by Law severally established, were the Persons meant; or if only one Sort of them, which that is; when 'tis plain, that they have no other Means of knowing Christ than the Laity have, and for the most part can tell them no more than they knew before.

Hebrews, chap. xiii. v. 7. *Remember them which have the Rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose Faith follow, considering the End of their Conversation:* And v. 17. *Obey, by others translated, Be persuaded by, them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your Souls, as those who must give Account.* Here, it seems, the Editors of our *English Bible* do not think fit to stand to their Translations; for in the Margin, against the Words *Rule over you*, in both Verses they have inserted the Word *Guides*, which does not give us altogether so frightful as Image.

The Word translated *obey* in the last Verse, is explained by the Word *remember* in the first; and the Reason given in the one is, *because you are to consider the End of their Conversation;* and in the other is, *because they watch for your Souls;* so that the *Hebrews* were exhorted to *remember, hearken to, or be persuaded by their Guides, who had spoken to them the Word of God, which was the End of their Conversation, and who watched for their Souls:* And, I think, all good Christians ought to do so still, when they know where to find them, and the Clergy have agreed amongst themselves who they are.

At the latter End of the Second Epistle to *Timothy*, in our Edition of the Bible, he is said to be *the first Bishop of Ephesus*, by which we are to understand, if we please, that he was in Possession of the Authority and Dignity of a modern Prelate; but the Text says no such Matter: Indeed *Paul's* first Epistle, chap. i. v. 11. says, that *the glorious Gospel of Christ was committed to his Trust*, that is, he was intrusted to preach it. And, v. 18. he *commits the same Charge to Timothy:* But in chap. iv. v. 12, 13. he tells him what he is to do; he is *to be an Example to the Believers in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Faith, in Purity; and, till he comes himself, he is to give*

Attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine; and the rest of the Epistle is spent in telling him what Doctrine he is to preach.

In his 2d Epistle, *Paul* says unto him, *And the Things thou hast heard from me amongst many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also;* which he expresses summarily before, in these Words, *Lay Hands suddenly on no Man;* a Ceremony always used amongst the *Jews*, to denote a Person appointed for any Purpose, as well as on many other Occasions; so that *Paul* himself knew, by Inspiration, who was fit for his Charge, and *Timothy* was to make good Inquiry after *faithful Men*: But there is no Power here given *but to preach the Gospel, and to employ others to do it;* which I have shewn every one was at Liberty to do, though all had not an equal Call, or were equally qualified for it; and therefore it was certainly good Advice to endeavour to find out such as were, and prevail upon them to undertake it.

In the Epistle to *Titus*, who, it seems, was another Bishop, he is directed *to set in order the things which are wanting,* (the Business amongst us of Churchwardens and Vestry-men) *and to ordain Elders in every City, as Paul had appointed him;* which alludes to private Directions before given, and proves nothing, but that *Paul* took the best Precautions, and most prudent Measures, to propagate Christianity, by reducing his Converts in every City, into orderly, though voluntary Societies, by finding out and appointing discreet and honest Men to assist and superintend the rest; and it cannot be doubted but the People, who knew him to be inspired, would be advised by him, accept his Recommendations, and consequently hearken to, trust their Affairs, and be directed by the Wisdom of Persons so powerfully recommended; which Respect and Deference has been always paid by every Sect, that ever appeared in the World, to their first Founders, and for the most part to their After-leaders too.

These are all the Texts that I can at present remember, which are usually brought to support the priestly Claims, except such as plainly relate to our Saviour himself, or his Apostles; but if any others occur hereafter, I shall take Notice of them in proper Time.

But what has all this to do with a formal and solemn Institution, and established Form of Government, a political Oeconomy, or, in Ecclesiastical Language and Style, a Spiritual Hierarchy?

What, must sovereign and independent Power (without which, as I have shewn in my 48th Paper, there can be in this Case no Power at all) depend upon figurative Expressions, and Allusions to Seniority of Age, as *Elders*; to mean and low Professions, as *Guides, Shepherds, Pastors, Teachers, Overseers*, notably translated *Bishops*? Or upon the critical Knowledge of antient Eastern Terms, of doubtful and disputed Significations, which would put it in the Power of the very few Men said to be skilled in the Oriental Tongues, to fettle what Establishments of Religion they please?

The Prophets and Evangelists often speak after the Manner of the Eastern Nations, which was for the most part figurative; where, *for ever, to the End of the World*, and such-like Language, was frequently used to denote a long Space of Time; and

therefore general Expressions in Scripture are not always to be taken strictly, as *Covetousness is the Root of All Evil: Swear not at All: Children and Servants, obey your Parents and Masters in All things: Take no Care for the Morrow: Take no Thought for your Life, what you shall eat, what you shall drink, or what you shall put on: Whatever you ask of my Father in my Name, he will give it you. Submit yourselves to one another: Ye younger, be subject to the elder; yea, be subject to one another. And there were many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written, the whole World could not contain the Books: And more than an Hundred others of the same Kind. When such Passages occur, we must construe them by the Rules of eternal Righteousness, the Reason of the Thing, and the general Bent of Scripture; and then we cannot mistake their Meaning, but in such Cases as are of no Consequence, whether we do or not.*

Besides, almost all Words vary their Meaning by Time; and every one, of the least Reading, knows that there is scarce a Word in Nature, (except the proper Names of Persons, Places, and Things) that is answered by any other in a different Language, so as to comprehend exactly the same Number of Ideas; nor is it probable, that any two Persons of the same Nation ever used one such Word precisely to the same Purpose; but if they were asked to give an adequate Definition of what they meant by it, would differ in some Particular: Therefore 'tis absurd to suppose, that Mens Duty and eternal Salvation should depend upon the nice Signification of single *Hebrew* and *Greek* Words; Languages so long since out of common Use, and dead.

The Almighty is too merciful to his Creatures to leave them at such Uncertainties, which is in Effect to let them throw Cross and Pile for their Religion. When he makes an Establishment, and gives Laws to Mankind, he always expresses himself in a manner not to be misunderstood; so he did in the *Jewish* Dispensation, where there was no Dispute about the Meaning of their Law. Though there is nothing in Scripture to countenance these Pretensions, yet the Gospel almost every-where forbids them, as I have partly shewn in my last Paper, and shall unanswerably make out hereafter, when I shall more fully consider the *Acts* and *Epistles*; and then I will shew, that the Apostles themselves claimed no Authority over other Christians, or any Power but that of Persuasion. I shall endeavour to shew, what is meant by Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and do undertake to prove, that the Clergy have no more Power from Scripture to administer them, than Women and Laymen, and that nothing is meant by Excommunication, but not keeping ill Company. I will shew too, that the Clergy, in the first Ages of Christianity, were always chosen by the People, and lived upon their Alms, and by what Steps of Impiety and Forgery the *Popish* Priesthood came to be Lords of so great a Part of the terrestrial Globe.

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Number LI.

Of The Three High Churches In England.

Wednesday, December 31. 1720.

HAVING, in my former Papers, given some Account of the Scripture-Church; I shall, in this, give an Account of the *Three High Churches in England*, which are very different from it. And, tho' in order to this, I shall be obliged to take in a good deal of Matter, and reveal many *High-Church* and *Jacobite Secrets*; yet I hope to give the Public a clear Notion of them in the Compass of one Paper. I shall, *First*, state what the *true Church of England* is; and then describe the *Three High Churches of England*, shewing how they differ from one another, and from the *true Church of England*.

I. First, What the *true Church of England* is. All Churches by Law established, are Creatures of that State, where they are so established. For whatever is established, necessarily depends on the Legislature, which can and does repeal and enact whatever it thinks fit, and always calls its present Constitution in Religion, *The Church by Law established*. The Church of *England* therefore by Law established, is whatever the Legislature has enacted; and continues in Force, in relation to Religion, together with whatever is enjoined by the Authority of the King, or is determined by the proper Judicatories, acting by the Authority of, and in Subordination to, the Legislature. Thus the Act of Parliament requiring the Subscription of the *Thirty-nine Articles*, the Acts of Uniformity, and the Act of Toleration, the King's Injunctions, the Canons of Convocation confirmed by the King, the Sentences of the Delegates, and the Determinations of the House of Lords, constitute the Church of *England*; and the Members thereof are good and true Members, who conform their Belief and Practice to the several Particulars aforesaid: As, on the other Side, they fall short of being good and true Members, who recede from any Particular established and settled as aforesaid. Nor can those be truly said to agree with, and conform to, a Church, who do not agree with and conform to it in the Sense intended by the Makers of the several Constitutions of that Church. This last is so plain a Truth in itself, and so manifestly implied in taking all Oaths, and making Subscriptions and Declarations, that it would have been needless to have observed it, had it not been for the Equivocation and Jesuitism of so many of our Priests, who think that they may take Oaths, and make Subscriptions, in Senses contrary to, and different from, the Intention of the Imposers; and yet be good, and true, and perfect Members of the Church.

II. Now the High-Churches, which differ from this Establishment, are *Three* in Number; which I shall rank under the Names of the most remarkable Leaders in them: 1. Dr. *Bungey's** High-Church. 2. Mr. *Lesley's* High-Church. 3. And Dr. *Brett's* High-Church. The two last are in an open Separation from one another, as well as from the true Church of *England*. But Dr. *Bungey's* High-Church has as yet made no Separation from the *true Church*. He and his People are only *Schismatics* in the

Church, (as were those upon whom St. *Paul* charges *Schism*, when they were met together in the same Church, 1 *Cor.* xi. v. 18.) being, as his present Grace of *Canterbury** describes some High-Church Priests, “a new Sort of Disciplinarians risen up among ourselves, who seem to comply with the Government of the Church, as others do with that of the State; not out of Conscience of their Duty, or any Love they bear to it, but because they cannot keep their Preferments without it: They hate our Constitution, and revile all such as stand up in good Earnest for it; and yet, for all that, go on to subscribe and rail.” Which Passage, from so great an Authority, cannot be too often quoted.

But to proceed to the Description of these three High-Churches, in their Order.

1. Dr. *Bungey*'s High-Church stands distinguished from the *true Church of England*, by their *Arminian* Doctrines, contrary to our old Orthodox *Calvinistical* Articles; by their Enmity to the Act of Toleration, and to the Principles on which it is grounded; by their claiming an independent Power in Priests to make Laws, and govern the Church; which is contrary to the Laws of *England*, that place the Power of making Church-Laws in other Hands, and particularly contrary to the Oath of Supremacy, which makes his Majesty Supreme Head of the Church; by teaching the Doctrines of Hereditary Right, and Passive Obedience, contrary to the Judgment and Practice of the Legislature at and since the *Revolution*, and to the *Determination* of the House of Lords, on the Impeachment of Dr. *Sacheverel*, and their *Condemnation* of the *Oxford Decree*; and by a Spirit of Faction against the present Establishment in State, and against his Majesty's Measures; by Rebellion and Perjury; by Uncharitableness to all Foreign, and more especially to Domestic Protestants; and by an implacable Fury and Malice towards all Dissenters among us, besides *Jews* and *Papists*: In which they act contrary to the known loyal Principles of our Church; to its Opinion of all Foreign Protestant Churches, which it esteems true Churches; to its Principles, which all tend to preserve Liberty and Property; and to its known charitable and peaceable Temper, and Regard to tender Consciences.

2. The Second High-Church is Mr. *Lesley*'s High-Church. At the *Revolution* several Bishops, who were deprived by Act of Parliament for not taking the Oaths to the Government, made an open Separation from the Church of *England*; and pretended, that they and their Adherents were the Church, charging those who filled their Sees with being Usurpers, and setting up Altar against Altar; and also charging them, and their Adherents, together with all the other Bishops, Clergy, and Laity, who joined in the same Communion with the usurping Bishops, with *Schism*. Hereby also they distinguish themselves in Principles from the Church of *England*; which, being a legal Establishment, asserts to the Legislature (which has a Right to preserve their Peace) a Right to deprive Bishops for Crimes against Law. They do not indeed so much distinguish themselves in Principles from Dr. *Bungey*'s Church, as they do from the true Church of *England*: For the Doctor's Church equally contends with Mr. *Lesley*'s Church against the Parliament's Right to deprive Bishops, and calls it Usurpation on the Rights of the Church; but is for Submission to such usurped Exercise of Power; and contends *Schism* to be on the Side of those, who separate on a Principle of defending the Rights of the Church, against an Usurpation of those Rights.

This new separate Church agrees with Dr. *Bungey's* Church, in the other Principles before-mentioned, which distinguish the Doctor's Church from the true Church of *England*. But in point of Honesty, or Adherence to those Principles, it greatly differs from the Doctor's Church; which goes on to *subscribe*, and swear, and practise contrary to what they do subscribe and swear; Mr. *Lesley's* High-Church honestly practising, in several respects, according to its villainous Principles.

3. Proceed we now to Dr. *Brett's* High-Church. Soon after King *George's* Accession to the Crown, the Bishops of the last-mentioned High-Church did all, except one, assemble in a Synod, where they resolved upon making *Four Alterations* in the Common-Prayer-Book: 1. *To mix Water with the Wine in the Sacrament.* 2. *A Prayer for the Dead.* 3. *A Prayer for the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Bread and Wine in the Sacrament.* 4. *An Oblatory Prayer, which goes upon the Ground that the Eucharist is a proper Sacrifice.* All which Dr. *Brett* is not only an Advocate for, as an Author, but (perhaps) as *Titular Archbishop of Canterbury*, exercised his Authority in injoining. This has split the last High-Church into Two Churches, Dr. *Brett*, and his Followers, adhering to the Bishops, or Church-Governors, of their Church, in Behalf of Wine and Water, &c. and Mr. *Lesley*, and his Followers, adhering to one Bishop only, in Behalf of *Wine*, &c. contrary to the Determination of their own Bishops, and all their own Principles, about the Authority of Bishops and Clergy.

To render my Account of our several High-Churches of *England* more complete, I shall, by way of Supplement, observe, that there is a Distinction in Dr. *Bungey's* Church; and his High-Church may be divided into Two High-Churches. Some of his High-Church are Swearers to the Government, and say the Church Prayers for his Majesty King *George* and his Family, continuing at the same time disaffected to him, and Enemies to his legal Title. Others of the Doctor's High-Church are *Non-swearers*; and though they come to the Church, disown joining with the *Swearers* in the Prayers for the King and his Family; which Practice of theirs the profound Mr. *Dodwell* has defended in a Book, (whose Title I shall, upon Memory, venture to give the Reader) intituled, *A further Prospect of the Case in View; proving that it is our Duty to be present at sinful Prayers, made sinful by Mistake of fallible Superiors, who have a Right of imposing Prayers.* So that I think, the High-Churches of *England* may not improperly be reckoned *Four* in Number; which may be justly distinguished by Things, as well as by Names of Men, after the following Manner.

- I. The Swearing and Forswearing High-Church.
- II. The Non-swearing High-Church, that contends for being present at the *sinful Prayers* of the Church.
- III. The Non-swearing Wine and Water Church.
- IV. The Non-swearing No Water Church.

C.

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Number LI.

*An Analogy **Between** Ancient Heathenism **And** Modern Priestcraft.*

Wednesday, January 4. 1721.

AS Extremes meet in a Point, and Corruption in terrestrial Bodies is the next State from Perfection; so all the Commands and Denunciations of Heaven have not been able to keep the Christian Priesthood, in most Countries, from running headlong into the Superstitions and Follies of the *Gentile* Idolaters. By a strange Sort of Fatality, they have jumped in the same Thoughts, and played over and over again the same Tricks; insomuch that if we but make small Allowances for the constant Alterations of Time, and such as must necessary result from different Languages and Fashions, the present *Romish* Churches might be easily mistaken for Heathen Temples, and the Services performed in them for Pagan Worship.

The Devil, as subtle and cunning as he is represented to be, with all the Assistance of corrupt Priests, has not been able to find out a new Device; but has ever danced the Hay, and made his Rounds within the same Circle. The same Arts and Stratagems have been always made use of to seduce and delude Mankind; the same Advantages taken of their Weaknesses and Passions, and in all Times equally applied to destroy true Religion, advance the Priesthood, and make the honest and industrious, but unthinking, Part of the World, the Prey and Property of Hypocrites and Impostors.

The All-powerful, All-wise, and All-merciful God himself, is too often represented, like the Heathen Deities, to be revengeful, cruel, capricious, impotent, vain, fond of Commendation and Flattery; and, in Effect, subject to all the other Passions and Imperfections of the weakest Men: His Being, which is boundless as Extension, and which the whole World cannot contain, is pretended to be confined to single Structures, and narrow Edifices built with Hands; nay, to Parts of those Edifices where he is supposed to be pleased and gratified, like frail Mortals, with costly Furniture, gilded Roofs, engraven and polished Marble, fine Carving, and other curious, though baubling Workmanship of Mechanics and Artificers.

I confess I am not wise enough to find out any essential Difference between the present and the old *Roman* Worship: They both dedicate their Temples to dead Men and Women, whom the Papists call Saints, and the Pagans called Demi-Gods and Goddesses: The Pagan Forms of *Hocus Pocus*, which they called Consecrations, were intended to conjure and call down their Deities to inhabit personally their Temples, their Images, and Idols: The Popish Priests consecrate their Churches for the same Purpose, namely, to obtain the more immediate Presence of the Deity: Like the old *Romans* too, they erect Altars in their Temples, where they worship Saints with Supplications, Tears, Grimaces, antic and distorted Faces and Gestures, Music, and Ceremonies, and tender Offerings and Oblations to them; and, like the others, often

make Processions, Cavalcades, and Shews in their Honour; and sometimes go in Pilgrimages to them, to obtain their Favour.

The Popish Priests have profaned the plain and simple Direction of our Saviour to his Disciples, for commemorating the Benefits which we have received by his Death, by turning it into an old *Roman* Sacrifice: Amongst them, the Pipers and Harpers were the Fore-runners of the Shew; and before the modern Sacrifice, the Organs strike up a Tune: There the Priests went up to the Altar in a white Garment free from Spots (being an Emblem of Innocence); in new *Rome*, the Priest wears a white Surplice: The Heathen Priest turned about to the *East*, being the Region of the rising Sun, and bowed; the Popish Priest does the same: The Horns of the Beast sacrificed were marked with Gold, and his Blood received in Golden and Silver Vessels; here the pretended Christian Sacrifice of the real Body and Blood of Christ is poured into the same costly Cups, or laid upon as rich Plates and Dishes. The old *Roman* Altar was raised by several Steps above the Floor of their Temples; so is the present: The Priest, amongst them, made a crooked Line with his Knife from the Head to the Tail of the Victim; the Popish Priest plays Tricks of *Legerdemain* with his Fingers over the Elements: Lastly, when the Beast was consecrated and killed, the Heathen Priests regaled themselves upon what was left, after their Gods were served; the *Romish* Priests make it profane for any Layman to drink of the consecrated Wine, or for any one even to eat the Bread but the Communicants.

The old *Romans* had different Orders of Priests, with different and distinct Offices and Revenues; the *High-Priest*, the *Luperci*, the *Augurs*, the *Haruspices*, the *Pontifices*, the *Flamines*, *Salii*, *Feciales*, the *Duumviri*, *Decemviri*, *Quindecimviri*, the Keepers of the *Sibylline Books*, the *Corybantes*, &c. The present *Romans* (besides the several Sorts which are in Use and Fashion amongst us) have a *Pope*, *Cardinals*, *Dominicans*, *Franciscans*, *Jesuits*, *Carmelites*, *Benedictines*, *Carthusians*, *Capuchins*, *Cistercians*, *Observantines*, *Augustines*, *Servites*, &c. In Imitation also of the Vestal Virgins, in old *Rome*, they have founded several Orders of Nuns, who take a Vow of Chastity, for the Breach of which they are immured, as the others were buried alive: And as they had a Right to deliver from the Hands of Justice any Malefactors, whom they casually met in their Walks; so the present *Romish* Priests claim and exercise an equal Right to protect all Criminals who can fly to them for Protection, which is borrowed from that of the old *Roman* Asylum.

The old *Romans* had their *Dies fastos & nefastos*, their Fasts and Feasts their *Sacrifioia*, their *Epula's*, their *Feria's*, in Honour of their Gods and Demi-Gods; the present *Romans* also make Distinctions of Days a great Part of their Religion; they too have their *Dies fastos & nefastos*, their stated Fasts and Feasts in Honour of their Saints, or to commemorate and condole past Misfortunes, or rejoice over signal Successes; and some of their Feasts, and particularly their Carnivals, exceed in Lewdness and Prodigality the *Bacchanalia* of the Antients.

The Heathens had their *Deos tutelares*, to whom the Desence of certain Countries was committed; and their *Deos Præsides*, who had the Safe-guard of particular Cities: The Papists have Saints who supply the same Offices. Artificers and Professions have also their particular Saints, who preside over them; Scholars have their Saint *Nicolas*, and

Saint *Gregory*; Painters, Saint *Luke*; as Soldiers and Lovers had formerly their *Mars* and *Venus*: Diseases too have their Saints to cure them; as the Pox, Saint *Roque*; the Falling-Evil, Saint *Cornelius*; the Tooth-ach, Saint *Apollin*: And even Beasts and Cattle have theirs; Saint *Loy* is the Horse-leech, and Saint *Antony* the Swineherd.

As the Heathen Priests would suffer none to come into their Sanctuaries but themselves; neither will the Popish Priests permit any Layman to come within the Rails of the Altar, and profane with unhallowed Feet that holy Place. As the Antients obliged all, who were initiated into their Mysteries, to confess, under the most severe Denunciations, all the Secrets of their past Lives; by which means they were so much in their Power, that they never afterwards durst blab out what they saw, nor give the least Opposition to their Designs; so the *Romish* Priests trust their Mysteries only to the *vere adepti*, (their trusty Associates) and have made the same Use of Confession (the Loss of which is sorely lamented by others): For they oblige, upon the Penalty of Damnation, all their Votaries to confess not only their private Sins, but secret Thoughts, as well as every thing else they know of other Peoples, which may any way regard the Interests of their Order; and so have Possession and fast Hold of all Families, and become acquainted with all the Designs, which may ever thwart their Pride; and consequently have secured their own Domination, and the People's Misery, beyond almost a Possibility of Redress.

Lastly, As the Heathen Priests sacrificed Goats to *Bacchus*, for browsing his Vines; and Men to *Pluto* and *Proserpine*, and other angry Deities, to appease their Wrath, and avert Evils from themselves; so the Popish Priests sacrifice and devote their Enemies, under the Names of *Heretics* and *Schismatics*, to the infernal Fiend: And as those Idolaters were allowed to know when was the most proper Time to make their Sacrifices to their Deities, and what Victims would be most acceptable to them, as being presumed to understand best the Minds of their provoked Gods; so the present ones are in Possession of the sole Judgment of what is Heresy, and of sacrificing by that means whom they please to their Ambition and Revenge; which equally subjects the unhappy Laity to them.

They have also imitated the Heathens in making every human Foible and Imbecillity, as well as every common and uncommon Appearance in Nature, contribute to their Interests; which shall be the Subject of my next Paper.

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Number LIII.

Priestly Empire *Founded On The Weaknesses Of* Human Nature.

Wednesday, January 11. 1721.

THERE is not a living Creature in the Universe, which has not some innate Weakness, or original Imbecillity, co-eval with its Being; that is, some Inclinations, or Disgusts, some peculiar Desires or Fears, which render it an easy Prey to other Animals, who, from their constitutional Sagacity or Experience, know how to take Advantage of this Infirmity; of which it would be needless, as well as endless, to enumerate Particulars. My Purpose is only to shew, that all the Dignity of Human Nature, and the Superiority which Almighty God has given to Man above other Beings, has not exempted him from this Imperfection; which probably was left in his Fabric, to put him in Mind of his Mortality, to humble his Pride, and excite his Diligence.

The peculiar Foible of Mankind is Superstition, or an intrinsic and panic Fear of Beings invisible and unknown. It is obvious to every one, that there must be Causes in Nature for all the Good or Evil which does, or ever can, happen to us; and it is impossible for any Man so far to divest himself of all Concern for his own Happiness, as not to be solicitous to know what those Causes are: And since, for the most part, they are so hidden and out of Sight, that we cannot perceive or discover them by our own Endeavours, we conclude them to be immaterial, and in their own Nature invisible; and are, for the most part, ready to take their Accounts, who have the Dexterity to make us believe, that they know more of the Matter than we do, and that they will not deceive us.

To this Ignorance and Credulity, joined together, we are beholden for the most grievous Frauds and Impositions, which ever did, or do yet, oppress Mankind, and interrupt their Happiness; namely, for the Revelations and Visions of Enthusiasts, for all the forged Religions in the World, and the Abuses and Corruptions of the true one; as well as all the idle and fantastical Stories of Conjurers and Witches, of Spirits, Apparitions, Fairies, Demons, and Hobgoblins, Fortune-tellers, Astrologers, and the Belief in Dreams, Portents, Omens, Prognostics, and the several Sorts of Divinations; all which, more or less, disturb the greatest Part of the World, and have made them the Dupes and Property of Knaves and Impostors in all Ages.

Every thing in the Universe is in constant Motion, and where-ever we move, we are surrounded with Bodies, every one of which must, in a certain Degree, operate upon themselves and us; and it cannot be otherwise, but in the Variety of Actions and Events, which happen in all Nature, that some must appear very extraordinary to those who know not their true Causes. Men naturally admire what they cannot apprehend,

and seem to do some sort of Credit to their Understandings, in believing whatever is out of their Reach to be supernatural.

From hence perpetual Advantages have been given to, and Occasions taken by, the Heathen and Popish Priests, to circumvent and oppress the credulous and unwary Vulgar. What fraudulent Uses have been made of Eclipses, Meteors, epidemical Plagues, Inundations, great Thunder and Lightnings, and other amazing Prodigies, and seeming Menaces of Nature? What juggling Tricks have been, or may be, acted with Glasses, Speaking Trumpets, Ventriloquies, Echoes, Phosphorus, Magic-Lanterns, &c. in the ignorant Parts of the World? The *Americans* were made to believe, that Paper and Letters were Spirits, which conveyed Mens Thoughts from one to another; and a dancing Mare was, not many Years since, burnt for a Witch in the Inquisition in *Portugal*.

Nature works by a thousand Ways imperceptible to us: The Loadstone draws Iron to it; Gold, Quicksilver; the sensitive Plant shrinks from the Touch; some Sorts of Vegetables attract one another, and 'twine together; others grow farther apart; the treading upon the Torpedo affects, and gives raging Pains to, our whole Bodies; Turkey-cocks and Pheasants fly at a red Rag; a Rattle-snake, by a sort of magical Power in his Eyes, as it is said, will force a Squirrel to run into his Mouth; Music will cure the Bite of a *Tarantula*; the Frights and Longings of Women with Child will stamp Impressions upon the Babes within them; People, in their Sleep, will walk securely over Precipices, and the Ridges of Houses, where they durst not venture when awake; Lightning will melt a Sword without hurting the Scabbard.

There is something within us, which we all feel, that baffles and gets the better of our best Reasonings and Philosophy; and this shews itself in Love, in Fear, in Hatred, Ambition, and almost every Act of the Mind; but in nothing so much as in Superstition: Sometimes we find a secret Panic, and at other times a strange and uncommon Energy, or Feeling of a mighty Power within us; and not being able to account, by any Conduct of Reason, or other Causes in Nature, for such Perceptions, we are easily persuaded to believe them to be supernatural. Hence great Philosophers, Poets, Legislators, famous Conquerors, and often Madmen, have been thought in many Ages, by themselves as well as others, to have been inspired; and even Distempers, such as Apoplexies, Epilepsies, prophetic Fits and Trances, have been deemed miraculous.

Nothing strikes so strongly upon our Senses, as what causes Surprize and Admiration: There are very few Men, who are not affected with unusual Sounds and Voices, with the Groans of others in Misery, the Solemnity of a Coronation, or any public Shew, the Pomp of a Funeral, the Farce of a Procession, the Power of Eloquence, the Charms of Poetry, the rich and splendid Equipage of great Men, or the solemn Phiz and Mien of an Enthusiast. Whoever therefore can find out the Secret of hitting luckily upon this Foible and native Imbecillity of Mankind, may govern them and lead them as he pleases. And herein has consisted the greatest Skill and Success of crafty Priests in all Ages: They have made use of this Power to turn us and wind us to all their Purposes, and have built and founded most of their Superstitions upon it; and consequently, have ever adapted their Worship rather to catch our Passions, than convince our

Minds, and enlighten our Understandings; all which is directly contrary to the Spirit of Christianity, and the Precepts of our Saviour, as shall be fully shewn in the next Paper.

For this Reason the Heathens built their Temples in Groves, in solitary, dark and desart Recesses, by or over Caverns and Grottoes, or in the Midst of echoing and resounding Rocks, that the hideous and dismal Aspect, and often hollow and hoarse Bellowing of such Places, might strike a solemn Awe, and religious Horror, into their Votaries; and sometimes help their Imaginations to hear Voices, and see Forms, and so intimidate and prepare them for any Stories and Impressions, which they should think it their Interest to make.

The Popish Priests have admirably well aped these their Predecessors; by building their Churches dark and dismal, with figured and painted Windows, to let in a false and glimmering Light; arched and contrived in such manner, as to resound the Voice hollow and shrill; with many private Apartments, Cœmeteries for their Saints, proud Inscriptions, whispering Places, secret Chapels for Confessions, saying Masses, Dirges, Penances, &c. Like the Heathens too, they build their Temples solemn and magnificent, in antique and uncommon Figures, adorn them with Silver and Gold, rich Carpets, curious Statues, and Images stuck about with Jewels; and their Priests appear in gaudy Vestments, and fantastical Robes and Caps, and perform their Worship with Music, and affected Ceremonies; all which Pageantry and Farce is calculated and intended to act upon the Passions, attract the Eyes, amuse, lull and suspend the Understanding, and draw Admiration and Reverence to those who preside in these haughty Fabrics, and this pompous Adoration: Their Bells too, which call the People together, are contrived to emit such Sounds as affect the Minds of most People with a sort of superstitious Melancholy.

Indeed, as the *Romish* Priests are more numerous, have vastly larger Revenues, and more Leisure, so they have greatly improved upon the Heathens in this Art of deceiving; insomuch that there is scarce an Imperfection or Error of Human Nature, which is not adopted into their Scheme, and made subservient to their Interest. Men of sprightly Genius and Courage are caught by their Ambition, and highly honoured, flattered, and raised up by their general Voice to the highest Dignities; and then are indulged in their Passions, and gratified with Confessors, who are not only to overlook or pardon, but assist them in their vicious Pleasures; by which Arts those great Talents, instead of being nobly employed to free Mankind from sacerdotal Usurpations, are meanly perverted to support and aggrandize the Monkish Empire.

Men of violent and impetuous Tempers are suitably employed to execute their tyrannical Designs, and to take Vengeance of their Enemies; and the Debauched and Wicked are made to buy their Peace of Heaven, by giving Money and Lands to the Priests; but none contribute so much to advance their System, as Visionaries and Enthusiasts: There are, in all Countries, Multitudes of People, whom Ignorance, Pride, Conceit, ill Habit of Body, melancholy and splenetic Tempers, unfortunate Circumstances, causeless and secret Fears, and a panic Disposition of Mind, have prepared to be the Objects, as well as Instruments, of Delusion, and they have been ever made use of accordingly.

Some of these are thrust or decoyed into Religious Houses, or persuaded to lead retired, recluse, and austere Lives, and to torture and punish themselves with Whippings, Penances, Fasting, and to walk bare-foot, in order to astonish the gaping Multitude, and thereby gain Reverence to the Priesthood, for their fansied Holiness; whilst the governing Ecclesiastics feast and riot in delicious Banquets, ride in State with Coaches and Six, attended by numerous Servants in costly Liveries; and Earth and Sea is ransacked, and Heaven itself profaned, to maintain their Luxury and Pride.

Such amongst them as are disposed to hear Voices, and see Forms, shall hear and see enough of those, which are real ones, and afterwards be made use of to divulge them; and in order to it, their Sanctity shall be proclaimed abroad, and their mad and incoherent Speeches be called Revelations, heavenly Dispensations, and incomprehensible Mysteries. Such crazed and fanatical Men and Women have been the Founders of most of the Colleges, Monasteries, and Nunneries of the *Romish* Church, (to say nothing of others) and their Follies and Madness been the Support of the Papal Dominion.

But this artificial Devotion, this mechanic Religion, has nothing to do with Christianity; which is natural Religion restored and improved, and consists in Virtue and Morality, and in being useful and beneficent to one another, as I shall shew in my next Paper,

The Prophets have taught us the same Lesson: The First Chapter of *Isaiah* fully shews, that Religion does not consist *in Sacrifices, in Burnt-offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts, in the Blood of Bullocks, and of Lambs, and of He-Goats, in vain Oblations, Incense, New-Moons, Sabbaths, and calling of Assemblies, in appointed Feasts, or many Prayers;* but in doing Good to Mankind. The Prophet sums up our Duty in these Words, *Cease to do Evil, learn to do well, seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow;* for, as another Prophet says, *What doth the Lord require of thee, O Man, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah, chap. vi. v. 8.

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Number LIV.

In What Only True Religion Consists.

Wednesday, January 18. 1721.

I Have undertaken in this Paper to prove, what, methinks, should want no Proof; namely, that the All-powerful God is not a whimsical and humorous Being, that governs his Creatures by Caprice, and loads them with arbitrary and useless Burdens, which can lerve no good Purpose in Nature.

The Almighty is infinitely happy in his own Perfections, and cannot receive Pleasure from such Things or Actions, as only the weakest Men are fond of, and the wisest contemn. He is not capable, like Mortals, of being ruffled by Accidents, or surprised by Disappointments. Wisdom, Goodness, and Felicity, are essential to his Being; and consequently, he could have no View in creating Mankind, but their own Happiness; for we can neither add to his, nor take away from it.

It is absurd therefore to suppose, that there can be any Merit in bare Opinions, and abstruse Speculations; or in the Performance of indifferent and useless Actions; or, indeed, that any thing can be Part of true Religion, but what has a Tendency to make Men virtuous and happy. The Father of Mercies will never perplex our Minds, or burden our Bodies, with any thing that signifies nothing.

moses indeed gave to the *Jews* a carnal Law, a Law of Bondage; a Yoke which neither they, nor their Posterity, could bear; Statutes which were not good, and Judgments by which they could not live. But these were given them for the Hardness of their Hearts, and as Punishments for their manifold Sins and Iniquities. And besides, they were only to last for a Time, and afterwards give way to a simple, pure, and perfect Law, to a spiritual, innocent, and undefiled Religion; free from their own fond Superstitions, and the stale Idolatries of the *Gentiles*; not loaded either with Priests, Sacrifices, or Ceremonies; a Religion, which was to consist *in Spirit and in Truth*, and intended to make Men wiser and better.

It seems plain to me, that there is but one Article of Faith in all this Religion, and that essential to the very Being of it; namely, that *Jesus is the Messiah*: Without this preliminary Acknowledgment, his Mission could not have been owned, nor his Precepts obeyed; which are nothing else but Exhortations to Love, and Directions for social Happiness; and which he has enforced, by annexing eternal Rewards to the Observance of them. Hitherto Virtue had expected its Reward in this Life; but our Saviour gave new Sanctions to it, by *bringing Life and Immortality to Light*.

There is no Proposition in all Scripture more evidently revealed, or laid down in more positive and express Terms, than that the Confession of this Truth was the Basis and Support of Christianity, the great Thing requisite to be believed: Every thing else is

practical Duty, and Belief is no farther concerned in it, than as it produces Practice. For before we can think ourselves obliged by a Precept, we must be satisfied of its Reasonableness, or of the Legislator's Authority.

The World has been so long corrupted by Superstition, and deluded and abused by selfish and lying Priests, who taught Wickedness for Virtue, and Nonsense for Philosophy, and placed Devotion in foolish Ceremonies and Sacrifices, and in ridiculous Cringes, antic Vestments, and Grimaces, that nothing less than a Divine Legislator, with the Power of Miracles, could restore Men to their Senses, and to Natural Religion. The sole Article therefore that our Saviour made necessary to be believed, were, That he came from God, and acted by the Authority of God. Then every one would see the Impossibility, that he could deceive or mislead Men; and consequently would take his Word for every thing else, in the Sense which he understood it.

And this Proceeding was agreeable to eternal Reason; namely, to make nothing necessary in Belief, which was not necessary to Practice: for, what Purpose could be served in obliging Men to believe, or rather to say that they believed, mysterious and unintelligible Propositions? Such Articles are only the Watch-words of a Party, and can never be the Objects of real Assent; for no Man can be said to believe what he does not understand, and has not suitable Ideas of, as far as his Belief goes. We must understand the Meaning of every Term in a Proposition, before we can assent to it, or dissent from it: for Words, of which we do not understand the Signification, are the same to us as if they had no Signification at all. How much therefore more honest and prudent would it be to own, at first, our Ignorance concerning certain abstruse Speculations, than to form Propositions about them, pretend to define and explain them, and then confess, that we do not understand our own Definitions and Explanations; and call out Heresy and Atheism, when we are desired to speak intelligibly, and tell what we mean!

But to the Proofs from Scripture: *John* iii. 18. says, *He that believeth in him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already.* And v. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life; and he that believeth not on the Son, shall not see Life.* And chap. vi. 40. *Every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may live eternally.* And v. 51. *I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven; if any Man eat of this, he shall live for ever.* And *Acts* x. 43. *To him all the Prophets bear Witness, that through his Name, whoever shall believe in him, shall receive Remission of Sins.* And chap. xvi. v. 31. *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy House.* And *Rom.* chap. x. v. 9. *If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart, that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved.* 1st Epistle of *John*, chap. iv. v. 2, 3, and 15. and chap. v. ver. 1. to the same Purpose.

These, with many more plain and direct Texts, make only this Article necessary to be believed, and supersede all others. Nor is this required of us, barely because it is true, or to gain adventitious Honour to the Deity, who wants not the Applause of poor mortal Men; for such Belief could signify nothing: But it was required of us to obtain Obedience to his Commands, and direct our Practice, to promote virtuous Actions,

and the Principles which produce them. *John* chap. v. ver. 24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my Word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting Life.* And chap. viii. v. 31. *Jesus said to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my Disciples indeed.* So that Faith in Christ is not enough, unless we obey his Word; or rather, we cannot be truly said to believe in him, whilst we reject his Commandments. First Epistle General of St. *John*, chap. ii. v. 3, 4, 5. *And hereby we do know, that we know him, if we keep his Commandments: He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Lyar, and the Truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his Word, in him verily is the Love of God perfected: hereby know we, that we are in him.*

Let us therefore see what are those Commands, in the Observance of which Christianity consists. It does not consist in the Observance of *Days, nor Months, nor Times, nor Years*, *Gal.* iv. 10. And *Rom.* xiv. v. 5. *One Man esteemeth one Day above another, another Man esteemeth every Day alike: Let every Man be fully persuaded in his own Mind.*

It does not consist in positive Institutions, in Forms and Ceremonies, *1 Cor.* chap. vii. v. 19. *Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the Commandments of Christ.* And *Gal.* vi. v. 15. *In Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature.* *Gal.* v. ver. 6. to the same Purpose.

It does not consist in Meats nor Drinks, in Fish nor in Flesh. *1 Cor.* chap. viii. v. 8, 9. *Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat, are we the better; nor if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest this Liberty of yours become a Stumbling-block to them that are weak.* And *Rom.* xiv. v. 17. *The Kingdom of God is not Meat nor Drink; but Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.*

It consists not in long Prayers, nor in many Prayers. *Matth.* vi. v. 7, 8. *When ye pray, use not vain Repetitions, as the Heathens do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be ye not therefore like them; for the Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask.* Indeed, it seems plain to me from this Text, as well as from the Reason of the Thing, that Prayer itself becomes chiefly a Duty, as it raises our Minds, by a Contemplation of the Divine Wisdom, Power and Goodness, to an Acknowledgment of his repeated Bounties to Mankind; and as it disposes us to an Imitation of those high Perfections, and to be merciful and beneficent to one another. For it is absurd to suppose, that we can direct the All-wise Being in the Dispensations of his Providence; or can flatter or persuade him out of his eternal Decrees. If therefore any Texts in Scripture seem to carry a contrary Implication, I conceive that they ought to be understood with the same Allowance as those are, which speak of God's Hands and Feet, and of his being subject to human Passions.

It does not consist in Sacrifices performed in pompous Churches, and magnificent Buildings, or in consecrated Trinkets. *Acts* xvii. v. 24, 25. *God, that made the World, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands, neither is worshipped with Mens Hands, as though he wanted any thing, seeing he giveth to all Life and Breath, and every thing.* *Acts* vii. v.

48, 49, 50. *The most High dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands. Heaven is his Throne, and Earth is his Footstool. What House will ye build to me, saith the Lord; or where is the Place of my Rest? Hath not my Hand made all Things?*

His Being is universal, not confined to Churches, Chapels, Choirs, nor Altars; but his Presence is every-where alike, and not more immediately in one Place than another. *Acts xvii. v. 27, 28, 29. He is not far from every one of us: For in Him we live, and move, and have our Being, as certain also of your own Poets have said, For we are his Offspring. Forasmuch therefore as we are the Offspring of God, we ought not to think, that the Godhead is like unto Gold, or Silver, or Stone graven by Art, or Man's Device.*

The Almighty has no favourite Opinions, Sects and Nations. *Acts x. v. 34, 35, And Peter opened his Mouth, and said, Of a Truth, I perceive that God is no Respector of Persons; but in every Nation he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him. Rom. ii. v. 11. There is no Respect of Persons with God. Colof. iii. v. 11. There is neither Greek, nor Jew, Circumcision, nor Uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, Bond, nor Free, but Christ is all, and in all. Gal. iii. v. 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither Bond nor Free, there is neither Male nor Female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

How therefore shall we worship him? how know his Will? *St. John* tells us, *chap. vii. v. 17. If any Man will do God's Will, he will know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God or not:* That is as much as to say, "Make use of the Judgment which God has given you; and see whether the Doctrine taught you, be worthy of an omnipotent Author; see whether it teach Peace and Love to your Neighbour, Compassion to all in Distress, Forbearance of Injuries, Humanity and Indulgence to all who differ from you, Duty to Parents, Submission and Obedience to the Laws of your Country, and Charitableness and Benevolence to all Mankind, and even to the Brute Creation; then you may be sure such Doctrine comes from God: But if it breathe forth Revenge, and implacable Hatred; if it raise Mobs, Civil Wars, and Persecutions, for trifling Opinions; if it have for its End Ambition and worldly Pride, and overturn every thing sacred and civil, which stands in its Way; if it encourage the worst Men, and oppress the best; if it discourage Industry, and depopulate Nations; then there are plain Traces of *Satan's*, or the Popish Priest's Foot in it, and such a Religion can never come from God."

When you have made this your best Use of the Faculties which God has given you, your Endeavours will certainly be accepted by him; and you will meet all the Reward which attends the judging right, since you have done all in your Power to do so; for God puts upon no Man the *Egyptian* Task of making Bricks without Straw; nor requires any thing which you cannot perform. *Rom. chap. ii. v. 10, 12. Glory, Honour, and Peace, to every Man who worketh Good, to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile: for as many as have sinned without Law, shall be punished without Law; and those that have sinned in the Law, shall perish by the Law. And v. 14, 15. For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the Things of the Law, they are a Law unto themselves: Which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts; their*

Conscience also bearing them Witness; and their Thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excluding, one another.

So that the *Gentiles* themselves are to be judged by their Sincerity, and not condemned for involuntary Errors. *Rom. xiv. v. 10, 11, 12, 13. Why dost thou judge thy Brother? As I live, saith the Lord, every Knee shall bow to me, and every Tongue shall confess to God; so then every one of us shall give an Account to God. Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more.* And, v. 22. we are told who will be judged to Happiness; *Happy is he who condemneth not himself in that Thing which he alloweth.* First Epistle General of *St. John*, ch. iii. v. 21. *Beloved, if our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.*

cornelius, though a Heathen, is commended in *Acts* the xth, ver. 2. as a *devout Man, and one that feared God with all his House, which gave much Alms to the People, and prayed to God always:* And *Lydia*, a Seller of Purple, though neither a Jew nor a Christian, is said to be a *Worshipper of God, and one whose Heart God had opened,* before she heard the Preaching of *Paul*, *Acts* xvi. v. 14.

This comprehensive Charity, this Spirit of public Beneficence, runs every - where through the new Testament; nor can I find any Precept there given, but what is manifestly advantageous to Mankind, conducing to their present Happiness, and deducible from eternal Reason, and the Result of it. *Matth. xxii. v. 35, to 39. A Lawyer asked of our Saviour, Which is the great Commandment of the Law? And Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind. This is the first and great Commandment: And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself. Upon these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

Another Lawyer asks him, (*Luke* x. 25. to 28.) *What shall I do to obtain eternal Life? And he said unto him, What is written in the Law? How readest thou? And he said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Soul, and all thy Strength, and all thy Mind, and thy Neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; do this, and thou shalt live.* And chap. xviii. v. 18, and 20, &c. *A certain Ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal Life? And Jesus said, Thou knowest the Commandments: Do not commit Adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false Witness; honour thy Father and thy Mother.* He indeed adds afterwards another Condition, which was *to sell all he had, and give it to the Poor;* which the Ruler could not bring himself to comply with: though I dare say he would have promised to have believed Creeds by the Dozen, if those would have done him any Service. But I cannot find, that in all Scripture, our Saviour does impose upon us the Belief of one modern Creed, or of any other but that *He was the Messiah.*

Chap. xix. v. 8, 9. *Zaccheus, a Publican, saith unto the Lord, Half of my Goods I give unto the Poor; and if I have taken any thing from any Man by false Accusation, I restore him fourfold: And Jesus said unto him, This Day is Salvation come unto thy House; without asking him one Question about his Faith.*

Rom. xiii. v. 8, 9. *Owe no Man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the Law: 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 is any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this Saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself.* The same Doctrine, in another Place, is thus shortly described; *By this all Men shall know, that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.* So that the Love of God, and of our Neighbour, is the whole Duty of a Christian. The first implies the Worship of God, or rather is the true and very Worship of God *in Spirit and in Truth*; and the latter comprehends all the moral and social Virtues. 1st Epistle of *John*, chap. iv. v. 7, 8. *Beloved, let us love one another, for Love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is Love.* Verse 16. *God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* And chap. v. ver. 3. *St. John* defines what the Love of God is, namely, *For this is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments.*

This appears still more evident, when we examine, for what Virtues and Crimes Men will be rewarded and punished eternally. Matth. chap. xxv. v. 31, &c. *When the Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and all the holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the Throne of his Glory, and before him shall be gathered all Nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as the Shepherd divideth the Sheep from the Goats; and he shall set the Sheep on the Right-hand, and the Goats on the Left. Then shall the King say to them on the Right-hand, Come, ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; in Prison, and ye come unto me. Then shall he say also to them on the Left hand, Depart from me, ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no Meat; I was shirfty, and ye gave me no Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me not in; maked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in Prison, and ye visited me not.*

But the Want of Faith is here objected to no Man: No one is rewarded, or punished, for believing, or not believing, in Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, or the Real Presence; in Predestination, or Free-will; or for having, or not having, right or wrong Conceptions of the Trinity in Unity, the Incarnation, Hypostatic Union, infinite Satisfaction, &c. Nor is the divine Right of Bishops, Presbyters, and Tithes, once mentioned. Not a Word about Obedience to spiritual Sovereigns, and Ecclesiastied Princes, or about our receiving the Sacraments from a regular Priest, descended in a right Line from the Apostles.

Such a Religion as this, which I have described, is agreeable to the Divine Justice; which does not punish any Man for speculative Opinions, and especially for Opinions, which neither do Good nor Hurt to any one, and for Opinions which no one can help.

This is a Religion every way worthy of its eternal Author; and we may know *by the Doctrine, that it comes from God.* It is a Religion for Men of Sense, for Philosophers, for honest Men; and comprehensible too by the meanest Vulgar, without a Guide; a

Religion of Reason, free from the blind Mazes, and studied Intricacies, of Popish Priests, and beneficial to Society at first View. It despises apish Gestures, and external Buffoonery; and effectually prevents, and puts an End to, all inhuman Fierceness, and holy Squabbles, ever occasioned by the selfish Religions of corrupt Priests. It leaves not unhappy Men in perpetual Doubts and Anxieties, nor tosses and tumbles them, for Relief, out of one Superstition into another; but esteems them all alike.

In short, this is a Religion, which every wise and honest Man would wish to be Religion; a Religion of Charity, the *Religion* of Jesus; and this is the Independent Whig's *Religion*.

T. and G.

THE

CRAFTSMEN:

A

SERMON,

OR

Paraphrase, upon several

Verses of the sixth Chapter

of the *Acts of the Apostles*.

Composed in the Style of the late

Daniel Burgess.

Nihil rerum mortalium tam instabile ac fluxum

est, quam fama potentiæ non sua vi nixæ.

Tacit.

The Sixth Edition.

M.DCC.XLII.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

WHAT gave Occasion to the following Sermon, was the Threats of a most Reverend Prelate, and some of his Brethren, to suppress the Independent Whig, which then came out Weekly, by an Inquisition very extraordinary, and unknown to our Constitution. To defeat therefore such a Prelatical and Unchristian Design, and, if possible, to shame the Authors of it, with other fierce and interested Bigots, out of all Methods of Violence in Matters of Religion and Opinion, this Sermon was composed and published, with no ill Success.

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THE CRAFTSMEN. A Sermon, *Or* Paraphrase, *Upon Several Verses In The 19Th Chapter Of The Acts Of The Apostles.*

I Shall not this Day, my Beloved, as the usual Manner is, accost you with the Scraps of a Verse, or only with a whole Verse, out of any Part of the Gospel; which Method is often made use of in such Places as this, purely to avoid telling what goes before, or comes after; but shall chuse for my Text the greatest Part of the *ninth* Chapter of the *Acts*: And in discoursing upon this Portion of Scripture, so fruitful in good Instructions and Examples, I shall confine myself to the following Method.

I. First, I shall make some general Observations upon the Behaviour of the Apostle *Paul* in his Ministry.

II. Secondly, I shall discourse more particularly upon several Verses in this Chapter: And,

III. Thirdly, and Lastly, I shall draw, from the Whole, some useful and seasonable Inferences, and then conclude.

I. I shall make some general Observations upon the Apostle *Paul*. And first of all, my Brethren, it is note-worthy, that *Paul* made the greatest Change that ever Man did, even from a Persecutor to an Apostle; two Characters as opposite as is that of *Lucifer* to an Angel of Light. As soon as Light from the Lord fell upon him, he no longer breathes *Threatnings and Slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord*, as he had in Fore-time, nor puts in Execution the Orders he had about him from the High-Priest, or Archbishop of the *Jews*, to bring the first Christians and Dissenters of those Days bound to *Jerusalem*. On the contrary, though he was just before an hard-hearted Persecutor for the Church by Law established, on a sudden, he becomes a Lover of the Saints; and now, *Behold, he prayeth!* Acts ix. 11.

1st, Let us learn a Lesson from hence, dearly Beloved, as we go along; namely, that as soon as the Fear of the Lord entereth into a Man's Heart, the Sword of Persecution droppeth out of his Hand. Peace, which is the Badge of the Gospel, and Cruelty, which is the Coat of Arms of *Satan*, cannot dwell together. *Behold, he prayeth!*

2dly, It is observable, that when a Zealot leaves his Party, and turns Christian, how very apt the High Party are, ungratefully to forget all his former wicked Merit, which made him dear to them; and to persecute him for apostatizing into Mercy and Grace. While *Paul* continued the fiery Flail of the Godly, the Priests held him in high Favour, and trusted him with their *Ecclesiastical Commission*: And for what? *Why, to bring bound to Jerusalem all those of this Way*: Of what Way? Why, all that forsook the *established Synagogue*, and followed Christ.

3dly, Observe, my Brethren, that Conscience and Non-conformity had the Powers of the World against them seventeen hundred Years ago. *Paul*, the Blasphemer, had a

Post; but *Paul* the Convert, *Paul* the Saint, is allowed no *Toleration*; yea, *they watched the Gates Day and Night to kill him*; for, *Behold, he prayeth!*

4thly, It is observable from the whole History of *Paul*, that the Grace of God makes a Man both meek under Sufferings, and bold for Christ. Here our Convert neither returns the Injury, nor slacks his Pace in planting the Gospel; both hard Tasks! He risked his Life, and laboured in the Vineyard, without Pay; a rare thing in this our Day! when the first Motive for overseeing of Souls, is so much a Year. The Apostle drove no Bargain about Preaching, nor made a Market of Salvation.

Oh! my Beloved, how many dignified Drones have we in our Time, who set up for a Likeness to the Apostles, without any Likeness; who take great Sums for Mock Apostleship, when nothing thrives by their Ministry, but their Bellies! This, my Friends, is lamentable, but it is lamentably true.

II. I haste now to my second general Head, and will discourse particularly upon several Verses in this Chapter.

I begin with Verse the 8th, *And he went into the Synagogue, and spake boldly for the Space of three Months, disputing and persuadeing the things concerning the Kingdom of God.*

1st, *and he went into the Synagogue.* Observe we here, 1st, my beloved Brethren, that as great Bigots as the *Jews* were, and as great a Dissenter as *Paul* was, yet they suffered him to preach in their Synagogues or Churches. He had a clear Stage, though perhaps not equal Favour. Now think ye, my Friends, if the same Apostle should come among us here in *London*, at this time, that he would be permitted to preach in his own Church, unless he first qualified himself according to the Forms and Ceremonies of the Church of *England* by Law established? Or would he, trow ye, get any Preferment, that the black Dons could hinder him from, in case he persisted to preach what his Master preached before him; namely, that *Christ's Kingdom was not of this World?*

2dly, My Beloved, we may see here the great Point of *Paul's* Preaching; *He disputed and persuaded the Things concerning the Kingdom of God.* Not a Word of his own spiritual Dominion; not a Word of Episcopal Sovereigns, who were to descend, as it were, from his Loins, and who, without his Inspiration or Miracles, were to succeed him in what he never had; worldly Wealth, worldly Grandeur, and worldly Power; Things which always mar the Kingdom of God, instead of promoteing it; there being no Fellowship between Christ and *Belial*.

Let us now proceed to the 9th Verse, and see what that says; *But when divers were hardened, (observe he says, when divers were hardened,) and believed not, but spake Evil of that Way before the Multitude, he departed from them, and separated the Disciples, disputing daily in the School of one Tyrannus.*

The Priests, no doubt, who traded in Ceremonies, and knew nothing of Jesus Christ, or of inward Holiness, were nettled at a new Religion, which taught Men a plain Path

to Heaven, without the Incumbrances of Sacrifices, or Priests, or Fopperies; a Religion, that had a professed Enmity to all secular Gain, and all holy Trifling.

Marvel not at it, my Brethren; a Religion without a Hierarchy, and Godliness without Gain, will never please any Set of High Priests: Nothing will go down with them but Pride and Grimace, and the ready Penny. Poor *Paul* had nothing about him of all this, nor did he teach a Religion that had. All that he brought, was a Christ crucified, and Salvation in and through him. *They therefore spoke Evil of that Way before the Multitude*; that is, the Priests told the People, that *Paul* was an Heretic, and his Doctrine was Schism; but for themselves, they had Antiquity and the Fathers on their Side, with an Orthodox Church full of decent Types and Ceremonies.

There needed no more to prevent the Apostle from doing any Good among them: *So he departed from them*. This was all the Punishment he inflicted on them, and this was enough. He who had the Holy Ghost, could have inflicted Death or Misery on them; but it was opposite to the Genius of his Religion, which allows spiritual Pastors to feed their Flocks, but not force them, nor to punish them, if they refuse to feed. If a Man has not a Mind to be saved, he has the worst of it himself; and what is it to the Priests? as Master *Selden* well remarketh.

This, my Brethren, was the primitive Excommunication. If you could work no Good upon a Man; or if that Man worked Mischief to you, or gave you Scandal; why you would not keep Company with him. But to give him to the Devil, because he was already going to the Devil of himself, is to be a Minister of Christ the backward way. Besides, there was no need of it. The Apostle, in my Text, neither curses these unbelieving High-Churchmen, *who hardened themselves* against him, nor censures them, nor fines them; all which he who had the Power of Miracles, could have done, had he liked it. He barely *departed from them*. And if he did not damn them for the Sake of their Souls, so neither did he surrender them to *Beelzebub* for the Sake of their Money. He demanded not a grey Groat of them; so far was he from telling them, *Gentlemen, I am your Spiritual Prince; pray pay me my Revenues*. *Paul* was a Witness of the Resurrection, a disinterested Witness, and claimed no Dues; though others since do in his Name, without being real Witnesses of the Resurrection, or disinterested Witnesses of any thing else about it.

disputing daily in the School of one Tyrannus. Mark here, my Beloved, that both Schools and Synagogues, or Churches, were open to him, though he was but a new Comer, and a Non-conformist. Mark, moreover, that he barely *disputed*, or *reasoned*. He was a Stranger to the Doctrine of *Compulsion*. He was an Apostle, by virtue of whose Words and Power, all Clerical Acts are pretended to be done ever since: And yet he himself did none, satisfying himself with saving Souls by Exhortation, and the Assistance of the Spirit, which are not *Clerical Acts*. He was the chief Pastor upon Earth, and held his Commission immediately from God; but he imposed nothing but his Advice, Reason, and good Words, upon those that heard him. He could have forced them (had the Spirit so directed) to have swallowed implicitly all that he said; and either destroyed or distressed all who refused. But the Lord Christ, my Brethren, in his Dealings with Human Kind, never uses Means that are *inhuman*.

Here you may distinguish the Spirit of Christ from the Spirit of *High-Church*. For trow ye, my Friends, that Christ or his Apostles ever delegated to weak and passionate Men Powers and Privileges, which, infallible and inspired as they were, they never assumed to themselves? Let us wonder, my Brethren, at the Impudence of some Men in Black!

AND this continued for the Space of two Years. Observe, it is not said, that he kept a Curate all the while.

Let us go on to some following Verses: *And God wrought special Miracles by the Hands of Paul; so that from his Body were brought unto the Sick Handkerchiefs or Aprons, and the Diseases departed from them, and the evil Spirits went out from them,* ver. 11, 12.

Observe, here are certain Signs of a Power from God; and they who pretend a Power from him, without manifesting the same by certain Signs, are certainly Cheats and Impostors. For a Power given by the all-wise God, must be given for some certain End, which will infallibly be brought about. It is not consistent with his Wisdom and Goodness to give it, and yet leave uncertain, that he has given it, when a plain Manifestation of it is of the utmost Importance to the World, and to the Purposes for which it is given. If a Man bring not infallible Proofs of his Power, how shall I know, that he has it? Demonstration must go before Conviction, and Conviction before Consent. We cannot embrace for Truth, what we take to be a Lye. All which will farther appear from the following Verses.

then certain of the vagabond Jews, Exorcists, took upon them to call, over them which had evil Spirits, the Name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth, ver. 13.

We may perceive here, that the Apostles had Apes in their own Time; Fellows who set up for their Successors, before they themselves were dead. They were *Exorcists* or *Conjurers*, so called, I presume, from their pretending to dispossess haunted Houses, by the dint of Spells and Forms of Words. They had now got a new *Form of Words*, and were going to work with them as fast as they could, boasting, no doubt, great things of their own Power. And indeed they took a politic Method to resemble the Apostle, had they succeeded in it; but they miscarried miserably, as will be shewn anon.

But what shall we say of some Moderns, (more shameless than these vagabond *Jews*) who will, right or wrong, be Successors to the Apostles, without doing any thing that is Apostolle, but what every reasonable Man may do as well? They shew no Signs but those of Gracelessness and Pride; and do no Wonders, but in the Luxury of their Lives.

and there were seven Sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and Chief of the Priests, which did so, v. 14. More Mimickers of Miracles! We see the Trade was growing sweet, but the Sauce proved sour; for the *evil Spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?* An angry and contemptuous Question, but full of good Sense.

But the worst follows: *And the Man in whom the evil Spirit was, leapt upon them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that House naked and wounded.*

1. Observe here, first, That we may easily learn what Power Men have from God, by their Power over the Devil. When *Paul* gave the Word of Command, the Devil did not stand shilly-shally, nor pretend to parly with one who was employed as the Lord's General against the *Power of Darkness*, but was forced to march Bag and Baggage; and glad, no doubt, that he could troop off in a whole Skin.

But it is quite otherwise, when Interlopers and *Craftsmen*, in Hopes to make a Peny of *Satan*, pretend to drive him out of his Quarters, though they come in the Name of the Lord. The Devil, in this Case, sets up the Flag of Defiance, and tells them they are Scoundrels to their Faces; *Who are ye?* Well spoken, *Satan!* They were *Vagabonds*, *Jews*, and *Priests*, and the Devil chastized them accordingly: *They fled out of that House naked and wounded.* The Devil got the Day, and remained Master of the Field and the Baggage: *He prevailed against them.* They forged a Commission, and the Lord Jesus, whose Name they abused, would not stand by them.

2. Let us here, *2dly*, my Friends, think it no Shame to learn a Lesson from the Devil, and take no Man's Word, who pretends to command us in Matters of Faith, and spiritual Obedience, though he come in the Name of the Lord. Let us examine him first, and try our own Strength upon him. *Who are ye?* A pat Question, and a proper! Let us, Beloved, never lose Sight of it, especially when any Man would controul our Belief. Be not determined by outside Shape and Colour. A long Gown may cover an *Exorcist*, but let us peep into his Inside, search his Life and Principles; let us try whether he is an Apostle in his Heart, and his Actions; and if he be not, let us despise him; yea, let us *prevail against him.*

3. Observe, *3dly*, What great and solemn Rogueries are carried on in the Name of Christ and his Apostles; even Conjurers and Formalists reap their Harvest, as it were, with the Sickle of the Gospel. And if such bold Cheats could be practised, as it were, under this great Apostle's Nose; what may not be done now he is so far off? How many *Exorcists*, how many Sons of *Sceva*, trow ye, have we at this time among us, and in this enlightened Protestant Country? Great Numbers, God wot! yea, great Societies. Every Man, who, in the Name of Christ or *Paul*, claims to himself Gain or Dominion, is a Son of *Sceva*, and can be no Guard against the Devil, who despises him. Judge ye now what Swarms we have!

4. Observe from hence, *4thly* and lastly, The true Reason of the great Wickedness which is in the World, namely, because we maintain an Army against the Devil, of whom he standeth not in Awe. In the first Ages he was driven out of every Corner, and now he possesses every Corner; for why? they had Apostles, and we have *the Sons of Sceva.*

and many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their Deeds, v. 18. that is, many who had been deluded and misled by these Reverend Deceivers, were now undeceived.

and many also of them which used curious Arts, brought their Books together, and burnt them before all Men; and they counted the Price of them, and found it Fifty thousand Pieces of Silver, v. 19.

How fertile must the World then have been in mysterious and conjuring Books! What Systems of Nonsense and Knavery must have been here! What Glosses, Commentaries, and Riddles! For we may be sure, my Beloved, these were not Books of useful Knowledge and Learning, or Books that taught Virtue and Morality, since such, without doubt, the Apostle would have preserved: But they were juggling and conjuring Books, such as contained Heathen Traditions, with false Miracles, and false Doctrines, and were probably full of metaphysical Distinctions, and the controversial Divinity of those Days; such as Bundles of foolish Sermons, Pagan Systems, Articles of their Faith, Formularies, lying Mysteries, Cabalistical Nonsense, and the High Church Pamphlets of that Age; all opposite to the divine Truths uttered by *Paul*.

so mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed, v. 20. Take Notice here, Men and Brethren, that the ready way to make the Word of God grow and prevail, was to burn all the Priests Books. Oh, my Beloved, that our Eyes were also opened! What Fuel should we have for Bonfires!

Nothing occurs remarkable between this and the 23d Verse, which tells us, that *the same time there arose no small Stir about that Way.* And then follows the Reason, v. 24, 25, 26, 27. *For a certain Man named Demetrius, a Silversmith, which made silver Shrines for Diana, brought no small Gain unto the Craftsmen, whom he called together, with the Workmen of like Occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this Craft we have our Wealth: Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much People, saying, That they be no Gods which are made with Hands; so that not only this our Crafts is in Danger to be set at nought; but also that the Temple of the great Goddess Diana should be despised, and her Magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the World worshipping.*

A notable Speech, and a fair Confession! He kept a Shop for the Deity, and got a World of Money by this godly Trade; and rather than lose it, he will oppose Christianity, and maintain his Craft against Jesus Christ.

This mechanical Priest, and his Brethren, Retainers to *Diana*, had lost many kind Customers by *Paul's* Preaching; their holy Gear began to lie upon their Hands; Folks Eyes were opened, and the Cheat was disclosed: Upon which the Reverend Dr. *Demetrius*, and the whole Convocation of Priests and Craftsmen, resolve to accuse the Apostle as *an Enemy to the Church*, and an Underminer of its *Rights and Interests*. *Sirs*, says Mr. Prolocutor, *ye know that by this Craft we have our Wealth.* "Now if this *Paul* goes on to persuade People, as he does, that all our Gain is built on Deceit, and that our Trade is of human Institution, our Function will fall into Contempt, and we into Beggary."

All this was artfully addressed to the Interest and Avarice of his Brother Craftsmen, who sharing the Benefit of the Cheat, and living plentifully upon Ecclesiastical

Revenues of the established Church of *Diana*, had Motives sufficient to engage them in the Defence of the said Church and Cheat.

Now he has a Knack for catching the Bigots, by telling them, what *Danger* there was of the *Church*; and lest *the Temple of the great Goddess Diana should be despised, and her Magnificence be destroyed, whom all Asia and the World worshipped*. What Pity it was, that so pure and primitive a Church, and the most orthodox and best constituted Church in all *Asia*, should be in such piteous Danger!

1. Observe here, first, dearly Beloved, what false Knaves, and godless Infidels, these priestly Crew were. If they believed, that their Mistress, the Goddess, who had indeed the best accustomed Church in all *Asia*, was as great as they pretended her to be, why did they mistrust her Power to protect her own Grandeur, and defend herself? Especially against a single Man, whom they represented as an Enemy to the Gods and their Church, and who was consequently the more easy to be defeated or destroyed? But if they knew her unable to defend her Divinity, and support her Church, with them, her Priests, and Tradesmen; then were they in Reality Cheats and Unbelievers, though outwardly grave and zealous Votaries.

2. Take Notice, in the *2d* Place, of the wide Difference that there is between these High Priests Church, and the Bible Church! The Priests Church being a Trading Church, and Money being her End, and Grimace her Ware, which were the Source of their Authority and Reverence; whatever enlightened the People, marred the Market of the Priests. *By this Craft we have our Wealth*: “While we can by Bawling and Lying put off our Trumpery for Religion, it will always sell well; otherwise, it will not be worth a Groat; let us contend for our Trumpery, and cry, *The Church!*” Accordingly we find the Auditory in the next Verse actually practising the Advice given them by this High-Church Preacher, and roaring for *Diana of Ephesus*; or, which is the same thing, *For the Church. By this Craft we have our Wealth*.

This, my Friends, was the Spirit of the Priests Church, so opposite to that of the *Bible-Church*; which being founded upon a Rock, fears neither Rain, nor Storms, nor Dissenters, nor False Brethren; yea, she is ounded upon a Rock, *which Rock is Christ*; and whoever trusts in him, and believes the Scripture, cannot think his Church in Danger. Indeed, if his Church is founded upon Hoods, and Caps, and Cringes, and Forms, and filthy Lucre, he may well dread the Judgment of God, and the Reason of Man; for they are both against him and his *Dowdy*, and his Church will rotter as soon as ever common Sense takes it by the Collar. By fearing for the Superstructure, he owns the Foundation to be sandy. *By this Craft we have our Wealth*.

These *Craftsmen* keep a Rout about the Danger of their Church. Why, my Brethren, it ought to be in Danger, like a sorry Bundle of Inventions and Gimcracks, as it was. But for the pure, the primitive Church of Christ, *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*. Yea, the *Craftsmen* shall not prevail against it, who are the sorest Enemies which it ever had—*It is founded upon a Rock*. *Paul* does not once complain in all the New Testament, that *his* Church was in Danger, nor does any other of the Apostles or Evangelists. *Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever*. What say our *Craftsmen* to this? Either they know it not, or believe it not. *Paul*,

whenever he mentions Dangers or *Perils*, in his *Epistles*, means Perils to his own Person: Nor did he, by his own Person, ever in all his Life, mean the Church. But *Paul* had the Spirit of God; he was no *Craftsman*.

We, my Beloved, who are Christians, trust to the Veracity of God, that he will for ever defend the holy Revelation that he has given us. Let us, on our Part, treat it as becomes its Dignity and omnipotent Author. Let us not turn our Religion into a Play, nor dishonour it with Baubles, as the Manner of the Popish *Craftsmen* is, who convert their Churches into Puppet-shews and Music-meetings; and then, when they are laughed at, cry they are in Danger. Pretty Fellows! to raise our Mirth whether we will or no, and then make us choak ourselves to keep it in. *Their Craft is in Danger to be set at nought*. They know its Value, and quake lest other People should know it too. Oh the Impudence of *Craftsmen*! how boldly they mock God, and in his Name pick Pockets!

3. Let us observe, *3dly*, my Brethren, that the Christian Religion, which prevailed against all the Powers of the World, cannot be in Danger from all the Powers of the World: And every Church may be in Danger but a Christian Church. Let us praise the Lord, my Christian Friends, that our Church is safe.

Proceed we now to the 28th Verse: *And when they heard these Sayings, they were full of Wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians*.

1. We may remark here, *1st*, my Friends, the violent Effects of a hot Sermon, however absurd and villainous. Here is Dr. *Demetrius*, whose Craft was all his Religion, lugs Heaven into a Dispute about his Trade, and tacks the Salvation of his Hearers to the Gain which he made of his Shrines; yet this awakened no Indignation in the seduced and ill-judging Auditory; but strait they *were full of Wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians: The Church! the Church!*

2. *2dly*, We may remark, that Ignorance is the Mother of Zeal. *They were full of Wrath*. For what? Why for *Diana of Ephesus*. A God created by a Stone-cutter; an insensible Piece of Rock, guarded by a Band of Priests; who, hard as it was, picked a fine Livelihood out of it. But *Paul* had opened some Mens Eyes, and the Loaves began to come in but slowly. This enraged the *Craftsmen*, and they enraged the People. The Priests lost Customers, and the People lost their Senses. Such is the Power of Delusion over dark and slavish Minds! Let but the Priest point at a Wind-mill, and cry the Church is falling, his Congregation will venture their Brains to stop the Sails. What a rare Army does Zeal raise, when Religion and Reason do not spoil the Muster, or stop their March?

The next is the 29th Verse; *And the whole City was filled with Confusion; and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, Men of Macedonia, Paul's Companions in Travel, they rushed with one Accord into the Theatre*.

and the whole City was filled with Confusion. Who doubts it, when *Church* was the Cry, and the *Priests* had begun it? Give them but their Way, and allow them but to assert their own Claims, they will quickly turn all things, human and divine, topsy-

turvy. Here is a whole City thrown into Confusion, purely because a Branch of the priestly Trade, infamous, forged and irreligious, was like to fall before the Word of God preached by *Paul*.

1st, This shews, Sirs, that there is nothing so lying, and so vile, that they will not justify. They knew that their Church was a Creature of their own Composing; that the Worship performed in it was burlesque Worship, contrived by themselves, and paid to a senseless Image; and they knew, that the Whole was an impudent Delusion, framed by human Invention. And yet, you see, my Beloved, how they raise Heaven and Earth in Defence of their Forgeries and Superstitions. Not a Tittle will they part with, not a Shrine, not a Ceremony. No, rather than this, they publish Lyes, they deceive the People, they decry sober Piety, they raise a Sedition, and confound all things. *By this Craft we have our Wealth.*

2. Behold here, *2dly*, the different Behaviour of Truth and Falshood! or, in other Words, of *Paul* and the *Craftsmen*! When Men contend for Truth, they do it calmly, because they are sure, that it will support itself. But Error, conscious of its weak Foundation, flies instantly, for Support, to Rage and Oppression. *Paul* reasons peaceably and powerfully; *Demetrius* deceives, scolds, and raises a Mob. But I defy the Craftsmen to shew me one Mob of *Paul*'s raising in all the New Testament.

The Apostle wanted no Mob; he neither blended Politics nor Gain with his Doctrine; he had no factious Designs; he meddled not with human Affairs; he taught Peace, and he practised it; he had no Grimace to support; no mock Reverence to acquire or defend; he abhorred pious Fraud, and exposed it; he shewed the People the manifest Truths of the Gospel, and of Reason, and that presently opened their Eyes to see the impious Delusions, and bold Impositions, of the reigning Priests; and hence began the Rage of Dr. *Demetrius* and his Mob.

3. From this you may learn, *3dly*, my Friends, that one Man, with Truth on his Side, is enough to frighten a whole Army, yea, a whole Hierarchy of Craftsmen, and to defeat them, if he has but a fair Hearing. You see also the graceless Methods that red-hot High Priests take, to confute such a Man: First, they dress him up as an Atheist, and an Enemy to the Church, and then set the Mob upon him; for the Law was not against *Paul*, as we shall see presently, and yet they meant to destroy *Paul* against Law. An implacable Tribe! No Power can satisfy them, that has either Mercy in it, or Bounds to it: Craft is their Calling, and Lyes, and Violence, the Tools of their Trade.

Oh, my Christian Friends! what Wolves are Men, yea, what Wolves are Priests, when they have hardened themselves against the Grace of God? Without Meekness and Peace there can be no such thing as the Fear of the Lord; Witness Dr. *Demetrius*, and those that are like him. Let us pray for their Amendment, that it would please the Lord to take away their reprobate Mind.

and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, Men of Macedonia, Paul's Companions in Travel, they rushed with one Accord into the Theatre.

Gaius and Aristarchus, Dissenters, to be sure, and Non-conformist Preachers! *Men of Macedonia*; Foreigners too, ever the Aversion of High-Church! *Paul's Companions in Travel*. How! bare Companions? Methinks that is something familiar, unless perhaps they were Lords Archbishops of some Country, where they did not reside. But *Paul*, you see, had no spiritual Pride, nor received his Fellow - Christians upon the Knee, as some who pretend to be his Successors at *Rome*, and elsewhere, do in our Days.

They rushed with one Accord into the Theatre. Ay, they had got their Prey, a Brace of *Non-cons*, and carried them into the Playhouse to bait them. What hooping and hallooing, I warrant ye, about the two godly Christians! How many Fanatics, think ye, they were called, and Disturbers of the Peace of *Diana's High - Church*? Doubtless they were charged with writing Books and Papers against *Diana's* Clergy, and the established Gew-gaws; and perhaps *Paul* was suspected for having a Hand in them, and some of his Epistles were produced to make good the Charge. Well! here they are, the Priests their Accusers, the Mob their Judges, and Truth their Crime! Men and Wickedness are still the same; we have seen the like in our Times.

and when Paul would have entered in unto the People, the Disciples suffered him not, v. 30. Here is, on one hand, the Boldness of a Man, who has God for his Guide; and on the other, the Prudence of Men, who knew the Mercy of Priests and Mobs. *And therefore certain of the Chief of Asia, which were his Friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the Theatre, v. 31.*

The 32d Verse is pregnant with Instruction: *Some therefore cried one thing, and some another; for the Assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.*

some cried one thing, and some another. The true Genius of a Rabble, led by their Priests and their Passions, against Peace and against Religion! They are united in their Zeal to do Mischief, but they differ how they shall go about it. They are for the *Church, Diana's Church*, it is true; and shew it by Rage and Noise: But they are under no Rules, except the general one taught them by the *Craftsmen*, namely, to be fierce for the Church, against the Apostle; for the rest, every Man is his own Master, and every Man will be heard first.

A rare Picture of our present Mob, headed by one of themselves in a Gown; I mean, our *modern Demetrius*. I think the Man is no great *Craftsman*; but he has got *Diana* in his Head, and he himself is in the Head of the Rabble: But, as to the Point of Understanding we may throw him and his Rabble together into one short Prayer, and cry with our Blessed Lord, when the *Jewish* Priests were putting him to Death, for bearing Witness against their carnal Inventions, their Hypocrisy, and their Cruelty; *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

the Assembly was confused. There was no Order, no Reason, no Moderation among them. The very Type of our High-Church Mob again! *And the more part knew not wherefore they were come together:* that is, though, as I said before, they came determined to do Mischief, yet they were at a Loss what Species of it to go about, till

their General, the Priest, gave them the Word. Oh, my Beloved, let us lament the horrible State of those poor unregenerate Souls, whose Pastors feed them with Poison instead of the Food of Life, and teach them Rage instead of Religion. Take Warning, Sirs, I say unto you, take Warning; beware of *Diana*, and her *Craftsmen*; and cleave to your Bibles, as you love your Souls.

and they drew Alexander out of the Multitude, the Jews (the believing Jews) putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with his Hand, and would have made his Defence unto the People. But when they knew, that he was a Jew, (that is, a believing Jew) all with one Voice, about the Space of two Hours, cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians! v. 33, 34.

Was there ever such a Couple of Twin-Cases as theirs and ours! Verily, our High-Church Bigots and Ragamuffins are the undoubted Descendants of *Diana's Tories at Ephesus* sixteen hundred Years ago. Nor is the Breed one whit mended; they are still the Black-guard of the Craftsmen, blind, outrageous, and loud.

We too, my Brethren, would, like the good *Alexander* in my Text, make our Defence unto the People; and they will not hear us. Pray mark the different Manner of our disputing from theirs, and the contrary Arguments we use; *we appeal to the Bible; they cry the Church!* and answer the Word of the Lord with a Brickbat: Oh horrible!

great is Diana of the Ephesians! High-Church for ever! and 'tis likely they swore to it. This was the *Cry for the Space of two Hours*. Poor Souls! it was all that they could say, and all that their Priests had taught them to say, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians!* Was ever Church more pithily defended! Certainly the *Craftsmen* of our Days have learned their Logic from their *Ephesian* Predecessors. *Great is Diana of the Ephesians!* I have heard a Sermon a full Hour long upon the same Subject, and yet not more said, nor better.

You have already, my Beloved, heard two Speeches, one from the *Craftsmen*, and the other from the Mob. Dr. *Demetrius*, being in the Chair, tells his Brethren of the Trade, that *by this Craft* (observe, by this Craft!) *they had their Wealth*. This is the first Part of his Sermon; and in troth, he puts the best Leg foremost, and uses his strongest Argument first: He fairly puts the Stress of his Faith upon the *ready Rhino*, and in the very Dawn of his Discourse, shews himself to be Orthodox. I dare say, the whole Convocation was convinced. He has, however, a rare Gudgeon behind for the Mob; and what should that be, trow ye, but a Charge of Heresy against *Paul*? The Apostle had the Assurance to publish, forsooth, that *they be no Gods which are made with Hands*: Terrible Atheism against the Established Divinity! and you see what a bitter Spirit it raised.

This, my Friends, was the Priest's Speech or Sermon: Now hear the Mob's Speech once more; for it is a Rarity, as we say in *Berkshire*. Why they cried out till their Throats were jaded, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*; and lugged a Couple of painful Dissenting Ministers into the *Bear-Garden*, where I am sorry we must leave them to the Mercy of High-Church Men.

Now, my Christian Friends, you shall hear a third Speech, which by its Honesty, Moderation, and good Sense, will refresh you after all the Knavery and Impudence in the *Craftsmen*, and all this Sottishness and Fury in the People.

and when the Town-Clerk had appeased the People, he said, Ye Men of Ephesus, what Man is there, that knoweth not how that the City of the Ephesians is a Worshipper of the great Goddess Diana, and of the Image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly: For ye have brought hither these Men, which are neither Robbers of Churches, nor yet Blasphemers of your Goddess. Wherefore, if Demetrius, and the Craftsmen which are with him, have a Matter against any Man, the Law is open, and there are Deputies: Let them implead one another, v. 35, 36, 37, 38.

This is the Speech of a Layman, and a Lawyer! Think ye not, my Friends, that he was a Low-Church Man? I wot he was.

seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against. Right, Mr. Town-Clerk! their dowdy Image was established by Law; and if it had been a Broom-stick, it would have had the Priests on its Side, and must have been worshipped: *Where the Carcase is, there will the Ravens be gathered together.*

ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. So they would, if the Priests had let them alone. But the *Craftsmen* had goaded their Sides with the Cry of the Church, till the poor Reprobates were stark mad.

what Man is there, that knoweth not, &c. Why, every body knew, that Madam Diana's Palace at *Ephesus* had more Superstition and *Peter Pence* paid to it, and consequently had a greater Swarm of Chaplains, than all the Divinity-Shops in *Asia* besides. She had Men and Money of her Side. What! could not all this secure her? No; her Bully-boys were afraid of Jesus Christ, and Two or Three Dissenting Teachers, his Servants.

and the Image which fell down from Jupiter. Fell down from *Jupiter!* what great Lyars some Priests are, my Beloved! They will needs fetch all their Fables, and filthy Ware, out of Heaven itself; and yet who has less Interest there? Their very Ballads and Rareeshews are fathered upon Divine Right. Oh Sirs, the brazen Front of some Men! The Town-Clerk here conforms himself to their Manner of speaking: But, take my Word for it, the Man knew better.

the Image which fell down from Jupiter. As I was just now saying, all the Priests Lumber comes from God; and yet they are scared out of their Wits, lest Man should take it from them; as if God could not defend his own Gifts and Institutions. This preposterous Conduct bewrays them. Either they believe not in God; or know that they belye him: Both Cases, my Brethren, are very common. *Whosoever feareth the Lord, need not fear what Man can do unto him.*

Mr. Town-Clerk proceeds: *For ye have brought hither these Men, which are neither Robbers of Churches, nor yet Blasphemers of your Goddess.*

Well urged, “If the Men are innocent, why do ye abuse them? If they preach false Doctrine, why do ye not confute them? If they come not to your Established Church, why do ye not convince them, that they ought to come? Or, because ye cannot answer them, do ye therefore mob them? It is plain, that the honest Men have neither stolen any of your Madam’s consecrated Trinkets, nor called her Whore.”

wherefore, if Demetrius, and the Craftsmen which are with him, have a Matter against any Man, the Law is open, and there are Deputies: Let them implead one another.

Better still! This is Reasoning now; a Practice which the *Craftsmen* do not care for; the Arm of Flesh is their best Argument, and at that too they are generally laid in the Dirt. “Gentlemen, (says the Town-Clerk) it is evident, that ye distrust your Cause, by not trusting the Merits of it to the Law. All external Advantages are for you; ye are in your own Town; ye have most Friends, and most Money; and let me tell you too, Gentlemen, ye have most Assurance; else I should never have found you here bawling for your Church, and breaking the Law, and, to your eternal Scandal, besetting with your Numbers a few harmless Men, whose only Arms lie in the Innocence of their Lives, and in the Force of what they say. If you are vanquished at these Weapons, have the Honesty to own it, or for Shame be silent. If these Men, Gentlemen, speak against the Law, why punish ye them not by the Law? But if ye have no Law against them, neither have they any Transgression.”

What Answer, trow ye, did the *Craftsmen*, or their Calves, the Multitude, make to this? Why, verily, such an Answer, I guess, as they are wont to make to us every Day: I suppose they damned him for a Whig, and so got drunk, and went home.

Oh, my Friends, the deplorable Condition of Men that are out of Christ! And such are they who take their Religion from the *Craftsmen*. The Worshipers of *Diana* would have been as outrageous for one of her Beagles, had the *Craftsmen* told them, that the Beagle came down from *Jupiter*. My Brethren, let us cleave to our Bibles; yea, I say unto you, let us cleave to our Bibles.

III. I come now to my third and last general Head, namely, to end my Discourse with a short Word of Application; having, as I went along, anticipated myself, and made several Observations which would else have arisen patly here.

The great Inference I shall make is, that *Craftsmen*, or *High-Church Men*, are at Odds with Conscience and Truth, and afraid of them. And indeed, to do them Justice, tho’, in relation to God and Religion, there is no believing what they say; yet, whenever they reason from their own Interests, they reason well: *By this Craft we have our Wealth*. As to their Flourish about *Diana*, and her *High-Church*, it has not, in point of Argument, common Sense in it. All they assert is, that all *Asia* worshipped her; as if, because *Diana* was then uppermost, therefore Jesus Christ ought to have been kept undermost. They could not stand *Paul*’s Logic; he appealed to Facts, he appealed to Reason, he appealed to Conscience.

They therefore (that is, *Diana*’s *High-Priests*, or the *Overseers* of her *Fopperies*, and *Fingerers* of her *Gain*) form a Design to oppress a Man whom they could not answer.

There was no bearing it, that Men should be conducted in their Religion by inward Conviction, and the Grace of God, and not by them, who had no Advantage from either, for the Support of their Impositions.

Beside, if all external Trumpery and Grimace in Religion were certainly ridiculous and vain, as the Christian Religion certainly teaches; if Postures, Cringes, Shrines, Music, and the like bodily Devotion, were so far from signifying any thing, that they were a certain and pernicious Contradiction to the simple Institution of Jesus, whose Will was fulfilled by believing in him, and living well; then were the *Craftsmen* like to be but little revered, and to have but little Custom for their Shrines, and their small Wares. A Priest dressed up in an antic Coat, and making Mouths before a dead Image, would make a merry Figure before the People, instead of an awful one, as formerly; and in the midst of all their holy Hubbub and Solemnity, a Christian need but ask them one short Question, *Who required these things at your Hand?* and they were confounded.

What do they do therefore in this Case? Do they defend the Church-gear by Reason, or by Reason confute *Paul*? No: *Paul* asserted, that *they be no Gods which are made with Hands*; the most self-evident Truth that ever was asserted by any Man. They cannot answer it; nor yet will they own themselves in the Wrong; but they will punish the Apostle for being in the Right. Well, in order to do this, do they go to Law with him? Not that neither: *Paul* and his Companions had offended no Law: They were peaceable Men, they were loyal Subjects, and good Livers: They were Contenders for Virtue and Piety; and they had not uttered a Syllable against *Diana's* Idol, but what resulted from the eternal Truths which they delivered.

What Course then do the *Craftsmen* take with them? Why, a very extraordinary one in itself, but very common with them; even the Course of unprecedented Power and Oppression. They were chargeable with no legal Crime: All their Offence was, that they enraged the *Craftsmen*, by opening the Gospel Day-light upon the dark Minds of the misled Multitude. They therefore shew their Rage, and have the innocent Men seized, and deprived of their Liberty, without the Shadow of any legal Process against them. Nay, it does not appear, that they had yet found a Name for the Crime that they alleged; but the Men were confined at Random, and probably *put to great Charges*.

This shews their Spirit; and that priestly Rage will be gratified over the Belly of Truth, of Innocence, of Humanity, of Law, and of Religion itself. It cannot brook the least good Office done to human Kind; all its Absurdities are sacred; and yet nothing is sacred enough to mollify or restrain it, ever unforgiving, ever gnashing its Teeth. Truth will perpetually be its Foe, and therefore it will perpetually be in a Flame.

And this shews too the Amiability of an opposite Spirit; I mean, the amiable Spirit of the Gospel. Where did ever our Blessed Saviour, who held all Power in Heaven and Earth, and could command Legions of Angels; where, or when did he, in the midst of Dangers, Opposition, and Abuses, ever oppress or punish even his unbelieving and implacable Enemies? Where did ever *Paul*, who had the Power and Assistance of the Holy Ghost, and who had the Power and Assistance of Miracles;

where and when did ever he shew any Resentment to his bitterest Foes among the *Jews*, or his most idolatrous Gainsayers among the *Gentiles*?

And what Account is to be given for this diametrical Opposition between these two Spirits; I mean, the Spirit of the Gospel, and the Spirit of High Priests? Why, none but this, that Christ and his Apostles sought no Empire but over Wickedness and Error, by the sole Means of Grace, Gentleness, and Persuasion; and they who have opposite Ends to serve, must bring them about by Delusion, Violence, and Force. This, I will maintain, is a certain Criterion to mark out Truth and Falshood, and true and false Teachers: And I defy all the Priests upon Earth to shew, that the internal Religion of Jesus wants, for its Stay, or its Advancement, the external Influence of worldly Power. It was always purest, and flourished most, when all human Power was against it. Slaves and Hypocrites may be made by it; but Religion rejoices in Liberty and Sincerity.

When Men are angry in Defence of their Opinions, and oppress for their sake; let them not belye Christ, and say, it is for him: but let their Passions be made to answer for what nothing but their Passions can produce. Why must Ambition, Avarice, and Revenge, be fathered upon Religion, which abhors them all? Why must Bitterness and Cruelty be laid at the Door of the Father of Mercies? *Pudet hac opprobria nobis, &c.*

We cannot bear such Violence offered to our Reason, and our Language, as any longer to hear Things called by wrong and unnatural Names; or to see barbarous and impious Actions varnished over with holy Colours, and godly Pretences. It gets the better of our Patience, and is an Affront to our Religion. We cannot find *Christ* in the Actions of *Belial*; nor can we see the *holy Man* in the Oppressor. They that would resemble *Jesus Christ*, must do as he did, and not do what he never did; and they who will in any Case follow the religious Measures taken here by the Idolaters of *Diana*, in the Case of *Paul*, must forego their Title to Christianity, and argue as these Idolaters did, *By this Craft we have our Wealth*: And then the Religion of the New Testament will not be profaned in their Quarrel.

But why seize *Paul*, or any body that belonged to him? Is one Man such a Terror to *many*, that he must be punished before it appears, that he deserved any Punishment at all, and before he is heard? Or is it dangerous to hear him? And are they afraid of his Defence in a legal Trial, as much as of his Preaching, and of his Reasoning?

It is plain, that downright Oppression, that is, Power without Law, was the whole Scope of their Proceedings, and Revenge their only Motive. It is plain, that *Paul* was not running away: His whole Business was to publish Truth; he was at *Ephesus* on Purpose; he did it every Day; he preached in Public; he taught in their Synagogues, he disputed in their Schools. And he did all this so publicly and so effectually, that the *Arch-Craftsman* charges him with having *persuaded and turned away much People*. Ay, that griped; his Reasoning prevailed, and the Craft was in Danger.

Let us now, my Beloved, mark the very different Situation of *Paul* and his Adversaries; they were in Possession of an established Church, and of all its Revenues, and of the Superstition of the People, who run mad for the Church at the

Pleasure of the Priest. The Law, no doubt, was partial to them, being made by Men of their own Religion; and the Judges and Magistrates were all of the same. The People were of Opinion, that their Church was of divine Institution, and that Heaven was on their Side. The Philosophers, and all they who governed their Schools, and had the Education of Youth, were of that Church, being every one Heathens, except perhaps a few, who judged for themselves, and could distinguish Natural Religion, instituted by God, from the absurd Medley of Rituals, invented by the Priests. The Christian Religion was as yet but in its Infancy. In short, the *Craftsmen* governed all Things; Earth was in their Possession, and Heaven they pretended was their Champion.

Here are Securities and Advantages enough to put Truth out of Countenance, had Truth been amongst them. In reality, she wants not so many: But Falshood can never have enough. The *Craftsmen* knew this, and shewed that they did so, by their outrageous Behaviour.

Let us now view *Paul*, and see what terrible Arms he bears, that are so frightful to the *Craftsmen*; he was a Stranger, he was a Dissenter; he had no Equipage to dazzle Peoples Eyes; no pompous Garments to win their Reverence, nor Wealth to bribe their Affections; he sought no Popularity, by indulging Men in their Vices, or encouraging them in their Errors. In short, all the numerous Advantages of his Adversaries, the Priests, were so many Obstacles and Disadvantages to him, the Apostle. To conclude, he had only Truth on his Side; which rendered him an Over-match for all the Priests then in the World. All the Privilege, all the Advantage, which he desired, was a fair Hearing. This, it seems, he had obtained of the Town; and it had its Effect. Here was his Crime, and here began the priestly Fury, the fiercest, the most brutish of all others.

Shameless Men! Was it not enough, that Reason and Religion were both against you; and that you would neither be Proselytes to them yourselves, nor suffer, with your Wills, that others should; but must you likewise be proclaiming *their* invincible Power, and your own Imbecillity and Nakedness, by virulently using direct, undisguised Force, to stop their Mouths? What Impudence! What Folly!

What! you that boasted your Conformity to the Law, and your Establishment by the Law! you that were the Possessors of all Scholarship! that were Proprietors of the Arts and Sciences, and of the great Endowments given for their Support! you that instructed the Young and the Old, and controuled the Consciences of both! you that were the sacred Administrators of Religion! you that shut and opened Heaven and Hell! you that were the Privy-Counsellors of the Gods! In the Name of Amazement what could undermine you; what could annoy you? Or, if you are not hurt yourselves, why do you oppress others? By this Method you do but shew your cloven Feet: Jesus *we know*, and Paul *we know*; *but who are ye?*

G.

A

LETTER

TO A

GENTLEMAN

AT

EDINBURGH,

CONCERNING

The Busy and Assuming Spirit of

the Ecclesiastics,

and

Their Extravagant Demands upon the

Laity.

The Third Edition.

M.DCC.XLII.

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A LETTER TO A GENTLEMAN AT *EDINBURGH*, &C.

SIR,

YOU desire to know something of the present Spirit and Conduct of our Clergy; a Curiosity to which you are prompted by the Behaviour of your own, who, you say, are so zealous for the Welfare of your Souls, as to concern themselves in all your Affairs, even in such as relate only to your Persons, Families, and Diversions. That, in former Times, the holy Men their Predecessors were wont to mix their reverend Spite and Impertinence with their ghostly Care, to confound Spirituals with Temporals, and to dictate in all things, is what I have heard; but was in hopes, that a freer Spirit, with an Increase of Liberty and Sense, had put an End to such Ecclesiastical Intrusion, and taught the present Set, that as their Ministry is known to be bounded by the Bible, and the Civil Constitution, they ought to keep themselves warily within the Limits of their Ministry; that if they break the Bounds within which they are placed, and usurp a Jurisdiction which they have not Force to maintain, People will scorn their Fairy Dominion, and they will lose their Credit, by grasping at Power. The Authority of Nurses and Pedagogues is confined to Infants and Pupils; it is stinted in Time, as well as in Measure, and ends where Childhood ends, and where the Years of Discretion begin. Should an old Woman take upon her to direct my Youth, because she fed and whipped me, when I was a Babe; or should my Tutor, who taught me to decline Verbs, or to chatter Logic, when I was a Boy, seek with his pedantic Talents to controul me, when a Man; I should be apt to think the Nurse and the Tutor, though perhaps alike wise, yet alike unfit for Mastership and Government.

The Province of our spiritual Nurses is restrained to Offices purely spiritual. In the Conduct of domestic and civil Life, in the Rules of good Sense and Business, or even in those of just Thinking and Reasoning; they are generally, of all Men, the most unfit to direct or advise. Besides their eminent Inexperience; besides the Narrowness of their Spirit, and that their Judgment is as defective and aukward, as is their Address and Behaviour; they generally meddle with the Affairs of other Men from Motives intirely despicable and selfish, from Pride and Peevishness, from Resentment or Revenge, or for some paltry Advantage, for a Fondness of being courted or feared, of being thought wise and important, or from some other Consideration unworthy of a Man of Sense, or Honour, or Spirit.

It is to no Purpose to say, that they only aim at correcting Vice, and ill Principles. For they often create Vice, and find it where it is not, in harmless Mirth and Amusement, and in Recreations where not only all Decency and regular Behaviour is observed, but where Vice and Impertinence are ridiculed and lashed, and where Lessons of Morality and Honour are recommended and enforced. And for ill Principles, what they call so, are often no other than harmless Speculations and Inquiries after Truth, or the Result of such Inquiries; often the most noble and beneficent Notions, such as represent the Deity uniform, dispassionate, and impartial, abhorring human Cruelties, forgiving human Weaknesses and Mistakes, pleased with a sincere Heart, nor expecting more

from his Creatures than he has given them, and disengaged from all little Prejudices in Favour of Sects and Parties.

This creating and multiplying of Sins, and finding Transgressions where the Bible finds none, has what the World calls Policy in it; because the more Sin abounds, the more necessary ghostly Men are thought; and this Policy they have improved so notably, where they have been encouraged, or even suffered, that they have turned almost every thing into Sin, except what is the most wretched and unmanly of all Sins, that of adoring and obeying Priests. But this Policy is attended with one flagrant Inconvenience: Every Man of Discernment will be apt to ask, If Iniquities are thus increasing, and Men grow daily worse, in spite of such numerous Monitors, in spite of their holy Counsels, their pious Examples, their awful and repeated Denunciations; then what avails an expensive Army of Priests, who own themselves daily conquered, and utterly unequal to the adverse Host? This looks like a Confession, that either *Satan* fears them not, or that they do not all that might be done against *Satan*.

In Popish Countries there are several Transactions, which appear like palpable Juggles between the Devil and the Friers; particularly in the Business of Exorcism, and casting out evil Spirits: The Devil in Possession often holds out a long and inveterate Siege, and when he is at last ejected, he is free to enter into the same Person again, or into somebody else. If they have indeed Power over the Devil, why do they not cast him quite out of the World, at least out of the Country? Would we not think, that a General mocked us, if he asserted, that he had beaten the Enemies every-where, driven them out of every Town, and every particular Place, but still they were as strong as ever, and still ravaging the Country? I should think, that he and his Troops deserved to be broken, notwithstanding his boasted Skill, and invisible Feats.

Methinks it is not the deepest Craft, for holy Men, armed with such high Powers, to be always appearing in a Fright, and crying for Help from unhallowed Laymen, upon every Phantom of Danger. Against the Cause of God, we are assured by himself, that *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail*; and to such as maintain his Cause by his own Assistance, what Danger is to be apprehended, what human Assistance can be wanted? The Apostles wanted none against the whole Pagan World, against all the Hosts of Jewish and Pagan Priests, breathing Persecution, and deadly Rage: Yet the Apostles had no Establishment, no Revenues, no privileged Tribunals to harangue in, no Laws against Heretics or Gainsayers, nor even against Blasphemers; and were but a few Men, dispersed over the World, without Money, without Mobs, and even without University Education.

At present, and for many Ages past, we have had Apostolic Men by Thousands in every Country, and Millions of Money they have cost almost every Country to maintain them. They are protected by Laws sufficiently indulgent, and without Number. Schools are erected and supported at the public Expence for their Education; they themselves govern these Schools, and conduct the National Teaching, both in the Schools, and in the Pulpits. The first thing learned by Infants is to reverence them; they catechise us when Children, they instruct our Youth, and when we are Men, we are not manumitted from their Instruction. Young Women are partial to them, Old ones adore them. When we are in Health, we wait upon them for Admonition; and

when sick, receive their Counsel and Discipline at home. 'Tis they that exhort, they that rebuke, they that preach to the People, they that pray for them; 'tis they who administer the Seals of the Covenant, work a holy and imperceptible Change in Wine, and Bread, and Water, and they who utter ineffable Mysteries: They bless, they curse; they offer Heaven, they possess Earth; they denounce Damnation; they cry aloud, they threaten, they terrify: They are Embassadors from God; they know his Will; they bear his Authority, they communicate his Intentions, deliver his Commands, distribute his Rewards and Terrors, apply his Blessings and Judgments: They shut the Gates of Paradise; they open those of Hell; they admit us into Christ's holy Church, they nature us in it, or exclude us out of it, and are daily apprising us of their own Power and Importance.

Now what can annoy, what ought to frighten or alarm, Men thus endowed and revered; thus adored and exalted; thus dear to Heaven; thus absolute upon Earth; thus encompassed and guarded by Securities Divine and Human, so signal and many? It is too great a Compliment to the Powers of Darkness, and, in my Opinion, inconsistent with Orthodoxy, to suppose them a Match, much more an Over-match, for the Children of Light; especially for the Envoys and Representatives of the Almighty. This would be introducing a terrible Doctrine amongst Men; it would be finding a Reason and an Apology for the Worship paid by the wild *Indians* to the Evil Spirit; who being an Enemy to God, and long since vanquished and damned, can never be an Object of Terror to sound Believers: The Wicked one has no Armour that is Proof against a lively Faith, which, as it can remove Mountains, must easily drive away *Satan*. It is therefore Want of Faith to fear the Devil, whom even Free-thinkers and Unbelievers fear not. It is indeed matter of Lamentation, that Christians, yea, the Directors and Conductors of Christians, should have less Courage than Men who are given up to a reprobate Mind; Men left to uncovenanted Mercy, and without Shield or Fence against the Assaults of the Enemy.

You therefore surprise me, by telling me, as you do, that a Pantomime, a poor Player, *tony ashton*, and his Comedians, have been able to ruffle and disquiet the Minds of the Reverend Ministers of the Kirk. What Tools he brings with him, terrible to the Hierarchy, I cannot conceive. The Laws, the Gospel, and private Persons, are protected by the Civil Power: And if *Tony* can hurt and insult neither Religion, nor *Cæsar*, nor Particulars, how comes he to occasion such Uproar and Alarms?

Doubtless there are several Plays too gross and licentious; and so, sometimes, have been many Sermons: Yet, when a Preacher has abused the Privilege of Preaching, advanced wild Opinions, and uttered dangerous and ridiculous Follies, as, upon Occasions, has happened; it has not been allowed to interrupt or contradict him. Nay, when the Civil Power has questioned him for insulting or calumniating the Civil Administration; his Brethren have waxed wroth and outrageous, that any of their Body should be questioned at any Tribunal but their own: A Right and Impunity, which, I think, are claimed as sturdily by the Fathers of the Kirk, as by our High-Church, or the High-Church in *Italy*.

But as this extravagant Claim implies, that all Rights and Powers whatsoever do directly or indirectly appertain to themselves, and dooms all Men to a vile and blind

Dependence upon the Clergy in all things; so it should warn every Man, who would not blindly tread in the Steps, and hang by the Cloak or the Cassock, of a Pedagogue, to preserve an Independence upon the Clergy in all things where the Clergy have nothing to do. Other Commission, than that of Counselling and Exhorting such as will bear them, I know none that our Blessed Saviour has given them; and this he has given to all Men.

What have the Parsons to do with our Recreations and Amusements? Does the Gaiety and Openness of the Spirit, occasioned by Festivity and Diversion, lead to Sin and Lubricity? Who told them so? Upon me it had never any such Effect; and by what Rule do they judge? In my Opinion, the opposite Commotions of Spirit, those of Bitterness, Ferocity, and Uncharitableness, are in themselves sinful: odious and unsociable, I am sure they are, and the genuine Attributes of Monks and Cynics.

With Pretences equally just, may they claim the Direction of our Persons, Tables, and Dress. The Ladies must not wear fine Silks, nor the Men fine Perriwigs, for Fear of exciting Concupiscence, and alluring one another: Nay, they must not wear fine Linen, nor wash their Faces, for the like Theological Reason. They must not enter a Tavern, for fear of being drunk; nor be merry, for fear of being profane; nor eat a good Meal, nor deal in Sauces and Dainties, for fear of pampering the Flesh.

There is no Length to which such impertinent Reasoning, when it is once admitted, will not go: And, in Effect, we see that in every thing which passes within the Heart of Man or Woman, or in their Dress, Eating, Drinking, and general Oeconomy, the *Romish* Priests act the Busy-body, and assume to be Comptrollers. Even in the conjugal Pleasures, those between a Man and his Wife, they assert a Right to be informed, and to dictate. They of that Religion know this by Experience; and by reading their Books of *Confession* and *Casuistry*; every one may know it. What, in the Name of Wonder, is it to a Man who deals in Spirituals, whether, when a Woman, in Bed with her Husband, lays her Leg upon his, he is to take it for a Signal, and obey it, though she say never a Word? Yet this Query is put by a grave Casuist, and answered in the Affirmative; *Imo, certe*, says he, *propter Modestiam Sexus*: So favourable was the good Doctor to the Ladies!

This meddling of theirs in every thing, and meddling like Masters and Governors, will make People tired and uneasy to be under their Direction in any thing: So that where they are not armed with the Civil Sword, and the Terrors of an Inquisition, as, I thank God heartily, they are not like to be with us; they will lose the Credit which they might otherwise preserve, and grow contemptible, by being troublesome and impertinent. The Pulpit is their Province, and even that is a Province which they should exercise with Modesty and Wariness; especially in a Generation like this, when People have learnt to assert their natural Liberty, and the Use of their Senses, and to dispute the Truth of Positions which they judge to be doubtful or false, however imperiously maintained by Men of Reverence and Name.

That Authority which depends only or chiefly upon the Esteem and Opinions of Men, is exceeding precarious, and will decay or perish, as those Opinions alter, or that Esteem is lost, or lessens. Many have lost all Credit by carrying it too high, or by

maintaining it by false and deceitful Supports. What has been the Consequence of all the wild and unmeasurable Claims contended for in behalf of Churchmen, by Dr. *hickes*, Mr. *lesley*, and the other Champions of that Cause? It is true, they were greedily swallowed by many of the selfish and aspiring Clergy; infatuated many weak Brains amongst them, and deceived several of the People, chiefly the Vulgar in Condition of Understanding: But their Triumph was short and contemptible. These extravagant Demands for extravagant Power in Ecclesiastics, occasioned a Number of such Answers, as have not only set the Authority of Churchmen very low in the Opinion of almost all Men, and demonstrated, that from Christ they derive no Power or Revenue at all, but, for all that they have, must be beholden to Laymen and the Law; but they have likewise, by Reasoning and Examples upon that Subject, shewn the Spirit of the Ecclesiastics almost in all Times, to have been so tyrannical, vindictive, and rapacious, that most Men are become loth to trust them with overmuch Wealth or Power, or indeed with any, independent upon the Civil Government.

As the Writings of these Divines were visionary, absurd, and indeed arrogant, full of Principles destructive of Civil Liberty, and all Liberty, opposite to the Spirit of the *Reformation*, and contrary to all good Sense, and all Modesty; and yet greedily read and approved by Numbers of the inferior Clergy; Men who had better Sense and Discernment, and wished well to the free Constitution of their Country, conceived Indignation at the propagating and encouraging of Notions so wild and mischievous; and have exposed them so effectually, that such Notions, and the Authors of them, are now as much contemned, as they were insolent and chimerical. Such, in Truth, was the Scheme of these Nonjurors, and their Followers; so exorbitant and wicked it was, that nothing but blind Popery, settled in the Church, and absolute Tyranny in the State, could have supported it: and I think, it is plain, that both these Supports were intended to be introduced. Indeed, the Scheme itself necessarily implied them; and without them, it was a mere Dream.

It is true, that some of these high Contenders for unbounded Power in the Church and the Crown, wrote against Popery, and set Bounds to the Prerogative in Church-Matters. But it is equally true, that they only contended against the Popery of the Pope, and against owning the Jurisdiction of *Rome*: They, at the same time, boldly asserted a Power to themselves equal to that of the Pope; asserted all the dreadful, all the selfish and lucrative, and most of the extravagant Positions of Popery; such as the Right of knowing Hearts by Confession; the Power of Damning and Saving; Prayers for the Dead; Extreme Unction; great and princely Power and Revenues, all holden in their own Right, without depending upon the Civil Power, and even in Spite of it. It I must be enslaved or oppressed by an imperious, assuming Priesthood, what is the Difference to me, whether my Oppressor live at *Rome*, or *Canterbury*, or *Edinburgh*?

The Manner also in which these High-Church Writers treat the Crown, is most insolent, shameless, and dishonest. They exempt themselves, and all that is theirs, which is whatever they have a Mind to call so, from all Cognizance or Authority of the Civil Power of the Prince. Their Persons, they say, are sacred, as well as his; nay, more sacred, and their Possessions defended by Privileges divine: So that though they surrender him the Laity, to be used or spoiled, fleeced or flayed, as he pleases; though they belye the holy Name of God to sanctify Oppression, to secure the Oppressor, and

to terrify the poor abused Sufferers from lifting up their Hand, or even their Voice and Complaints, for Relief; though they call every Attempt to preserve their Persons and Property, and to resist insulting Spoilers, a resisting of God, and for it threaten Damnation; yet, if he dare but to touch themselves, dare to meddle with their Revenues, to enter the Sanctuary, or to claim any Share of their Wealth or Jurisdiction, Heaven and Earth are summoned to assist them, and to resist him; Woes are denounced against the faint Heart, and feeble Hand; and the Crosier is reared against the Sceptre.

Is not such impudent Conduct enough to open the Eyes of all Men, even of the most stupid, bigotted, and blind? To see Religion turned into a manifest Market of Power and Wealth; the great God made the Voucher of an execrable Bargain between the Oppressors of Men in their Persons, and the Oppressors of Men in their Consciences; to see Men tied up or let loose, made tame or furious, crouching under unrelenting Tyranny, or armed against legal Power, just as they are directed, scared, or inflamed by Priests! To see these Priests claiming to themselves all sorts of Privileges, and Wealth and Power without Bounds; to see them assuming Principalities and Power, by virtue of Successorship to the poor, wandering, and persecuted Apostles; and yet denying the abused Laity, from whom they have all things, to have a Right to any thing, not even to their Property, and their Senses! Will such Clergymen, after this, complain that such Clergymen are not revered? Men, who by their extravagant and selfish Positions, discover a Spirit so unchristian and unsociable; such a one as undermines all the Rights and Pleasure of human Society, and of human Life. They are, indeed, contemned; and upon themselves they have drawn that Contempt. Will they complain of the Growth of Infidelity and Profaneness, when, by their Example and Principles, they had shewn, that they meant to debase Religion as far as it could be debased, by turning it into an Engine for Dominion and Opulence; and perverted the Gospel into a Scheme of Grandeur, Absurdities, and Persecution? What has propagated Infidelity so much as their own selfish Tenets and Conduct, and the vile Use which they made of the Bible; as if it had been nothing else but a Patent to exalt Priests, and enslave the Laity? Of all the Latitudinarian Books in the World, the Writings of High-Church Men are the most fraught with mischievous and horrible Positions.

I wish, for the Honour of the whole Body of the Clergy, that the Convocation had at any time branded such infamous and pestilent Doctrines, by some just and public Censure, such as they have been very free to bestow upon Books and Propositions which defended the common Rights of Conscience and Society. By their utter Silence in this Matter, they have ministered a Handle to some for suspecting, (I hope, unjustly) that, to Assemblies of Clergymen, the Happiness of the Laity was of little Concernment, and Liberty of Conscience a Matter of Offence: That they had Views irreconcilable to the *Reformation*, and the Establishment, and were pursuing an Interest opposite to that of the Public. What heightened this Suspicion, was the manifest Partiality of their Conduct: While they were assiduously searching after Books which defended the Civil Rights of Society, and the unalienable Right of all Men to think for themselves, in order to censure them; and in doing it, did notoriously misrepresent them; they thought fit to pass over Books which asserted the blackest of all Iniquities, that of Persecution; Books which reviled the Constitution, struck at the

Root of public Liberty, contended for public Servitude, (in the Laity only) and boldly revived and maintained the most dangerous and impudent Opinions of Popery. And when such impious Writings were laid before them, their Boldness and pestilent Tendency shewn, and Passages quoted out of them, shocking to the Ears of Freemen and Protestants; still that Reverend Body persisted to make no Animadversions.

What Conclusion, advantageous to their Reputation, could be drawn from a Proceeding so evidently unequitable and unjust, when a Set of Men, assuming to be Judges, were apparently Parties, and had so little Regard, or rather so much Aversion, to righteous Judgment, that upon Truths the most obvious, upon Principles the most benevolent, their Wrath and Anathemas fell; while the most daring Arraignment of private Conscience, and the most bare-faced Insults upon public Liberty, Civil and Christian, incurred no Blame? In one, for Example, it was a heinous Crime, and loudly censured, to have said, "That our Saviour's Kingdom was not of this World;" though after our Saviour himself he said it. But it proved to the Convocation no Matter of Offence, for another to have impiously maintained, that "Heaven itself waited for the Sentence from the Priest's Mouth, and God himself followed the Judgment of the Priest" ——— That "Kings and Queens are to bow down before the Priest, with their Faces towards the Earth, and to lick up the Dust of his Feet;" with many other mischievous and unhallowed Extravagancies, to the Disgrace of Religion, and common Sense. Was this the Way to be revered, to utter as the Oracles of God, such impudent and poisonous Falshoods, or to defend them, or not to stigmatize them: Was it not rather a way to forfeit all common Respect, and to incur universal Indignation and Scorn?

A Family is a small State, as a State is a great Family. Now, suppose the Master or Prince of a Family take into his Service a Chaplain, and give him Bread and Wages; Does this same Chaplain take a Method to be revered or believed, if he tell the Man who maintains him? "I am your spiritual Prince; you are my spiritual Subject; I can absolve or damn you: You must tell me all the Secrets of your Heart, let me judge of your Thoughts; submit without Murmuring or Hesitation to my Dictates and Censure, and be obedient to my Discipline. You must call me your Chaplain in no other Sense than you say, *my Lord*, and *my God*. You ought to fall down before me, and lick up the Dust of my Feet. My Government in your Family, as a Priest, is farther above yours, as you are a Layman, than Heaven is above the Earth; and my Revenue ought to be greater than yours, though you are a Prince in your House.

"And to make you Amends for thus shareing with you in your Power and Riches, I do hereby, in the Name of Heaven, doom all your Children and Servants, that is, all your Lay-Domestics, to be your Slaves, without Reserve; and I do assert your Authority over them, be it ever so cruel, unnatural and destructive, to be the Ordinance of God; and you to be his Vicegerent, however wicked and unlike God you prove. But my Person and Property you must not touch; for I am a sacred Person; in all the Money and Power which I take from you, I am independent and unaccountable; for I am the Lord's Priest, and my Wealth is God's Wealth. It would be Sacrilege in you to meddle with either: If you do, you will be damned. And if I can persuade your Lady, or your Son, to give me any Lands or Treasure, for the Good of their Souls, whatever Artifices I use to draw such Donations from them, you must protect me in the

Possession, against your Grandchildren, or any other Claimant whatsoever: For, to take it from me, or from any future Chaplain for ever, would be to rob God and the Church.

“Moreover, if any of your Family, your Lady, Children, or Servants, should presume to differ in Opinion from me, and follow their own Conscience, this is Schism, it is a damnable Sin; for out of the Church, that is, without my Permission and Management, there is no Salvation: And such Schismatics, Hereties, and Gainsayers, you must prosecute, that is, fine, imprison, whip, hang, or burn, as I shall direct you: If you do not, you favour Heretics and Schismatics, and I will excommunicate you, that is, deliver you to the Devil; and then you are unworthy of any Authority, and I will excite your Family to turn you out of your House, unless by Submission to me you shew yourself penitent, and worthy to be restored: Upon this Condition I will recall you, and turn off the Person that I put in your Room, whom I will call an Usurper, if he do not humour me in all things. For, ’tis I who can preserve Obedience, or stir up Strife and Fighting in your Family, and teach them the Necessity of obeying or resisting, by the Terrors of Divine Vengeance, which is always armed when I am angry, and asleep when I am pleased.”

Now, would Pretences and Claims, thus impious and shameless, be borne from any particular Chaplain, by his particular Lord or Patron? And yet are not such Claims asserted by the High Clergy in general? And do they not affect every individual Layman, by affecting the whole Body of the Laity? They treat us to our Faces, like Vassals blind and tame, and doom us without Ceremony, to bear Invasion and Tyranny with meek Hearts, and Hands bound. All that we have, is hardly enough for them. Yet were we to treat them as they treat one another, a very small Competency would appear a sufficient Appointment and Maintenance for the Successors of the Apostles. Do we not frequently see a Reverend Doctor possess Three, Five, nay Eight hundred Pounds a Year, sometimes more than a Thousand; and yet out of this great Revenue, which he thinks not too much, and hardly enough, though he do nothing for it, give no more than Fifteen, Twenty, Thirty, or at most Forty Pounds a Year to a Curate, for doing the whole Duty of the Parish? If this be enough for the Labour of a Clergyman, why do the Laity give any-where more? If it be not, why does the rich Doctor give so little? The Curate is furnished with all necessary Abilities and Qualifications as well as the Doctor, and has the same spiritual Powers, to baptize, to give Absolution and the Communion, to marry, preach, pray, bury, visit the Sick, and to take Tithes, if he had any to take.

Thus, in the Opinion of former Bishops, (Governors of the Church) who often kept Curates themselves, when they still retained a good fat Living *in Commendam*; and thus in the common Practice of the inferior Clergy; Wages sometimes not much higher than those of a Carter, scarce ever so high as those of an Exciseman, are sufficient for doing all the Functions of a Clergyman. Would this not seem a Rule to the Laity, a Rule taken from the best Authority in the World, that of the Practice of the Clergy, how to rate the Work and Worth of a Clergyman? Why should they expect, that Laymen should value the Labour and Use of a Clergyman higher, than the Clergy themselves do in Fact value it? They will not say, That Three, or Five, or Eight, or Ten Hundreds a Year, is little enough for the Sagacity of chusing, and the

Trouble of hiring, a Curate for Twenty, or Thirty, or Forty; though sometimes things equally foolish and absurd are said; for there are many Laymen who can drive a hard Bargain, and pinch their Workmen, and we too often find the Reverend Deputy of a great Doctor full as bad and insufficient, as if the Church-wardens had picked him up, and hired him. I would therefore be glad to know why any Man, why especially a Minister of the Gospel, who should labour in Season, and out of Season, should have any Revenue, especially a great Revenue, for nothing?

But I ramble from my first Design, though perhaps, had I pursued it, I should not have tired you less. But I am like other Authors, who, whilst they please themselves, think that they are furnishing Delight to their Reader. To your Information I pretend not to add any thing, not even in telling you, that I am, with great Affection and Sincerity,

SIR,

Your Faithful Servant,

G.

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M. S. Johannis Trenchard, Armigeri.

QUI, quamvis antiqua stispe ortus, multisque opibus florens,
Neque domo, neque pecunia, præcipuam sibi laudem Assecutus est.
Quam alii claritudine generis,
(Majoribus innixi)
Quam alii divitiis
Gloriam oftentant fortuitam & inanem,
Ille virtute ingenioque
Sinceram, propriamque, & mansuram sibi comparavit:
Solertia & morum sanctitate, imaginibus domus,
Præluxit.
Vim animi, integritatem vitæ, in patriam suosque caritatem
Pauci æquarunt; antecessere nulli.
Pucritia vix egressus, Foro vacavit,
Legum peritus, causisque orandis validus:
Sed jurgiis Forensibus atque lucro statim valedicens,
Secessum dilexit, vitamque privatam.
Reip. tamen curam, nunquam sibi neglectam,

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A Monument Sacred To The Memory Of John Trenchard, Esq;

A Gentleman descended from an antient Family,
And conspicuous for abundant Wealth:
Yet neither from his Race, nor his Fortune,
Did he derive his principal Renown.
Some boast a Glory derived from the Lustre of their Lineage;
And rely upon the Merits of their Ancestors:
Others vaunt the Glory of their Wealth.
Vain and accidental is all such Glory.
His was of his own acquiring, without Allay,
Personal and permanent,
The pure Result of his Virtue and Parts.
In his native Accomplishments, and in the Sanctimony of his Morals,
He gained Splendor surpassing that of his House,
In Vigour of Spirit, in Integrity of Life,
In Tenderness to his Country, to his Kindred and Friends,
Few ever equalled him,
None ever surpassed him.
Whilst yet a Youth, he attended the Bar,
Learned in the Laws, and a powerful Pleader.
But soon abandoning the Strife of Suits,
And the Pursuit of Gain,
Neque deposuit, nec frustra exercuit;
Dominacionis cujusvis generis hostis perpetuus,
Et vere timendus;
Libertatis, priscique moris,
Custos rigidus, Vindex acer.
Simul naturæ humanæ, pravitatis hominum,
Ambitusque & calliditatis Potentium,
Gnarus, ac probe suspicax,
Prætextus eorum a consultis, a domino Magistratum,
Discriminare valuit;
Vimque et superbiam, quandocunque lacerant,
Summa facundia increpare ausus est.
Missionem exercitus
Post finem belli Gallici, Gulielmo Principe,
Oratione scripta, adhuc Juvenis
Efflagitavit atque obtinuit,
Invitis Aulicis & frementibus.
Par ipse summis negotiis,
Et honores meritus, sed aspernatus,
Artibus privati præcelluit.
Mystarum Rabiem,
Tristes Fanaticorum ineptias,
Libertati civum atque bonis inhiantium,

Semper aversatus;
Petulantiam istorum & aviditatem
Ac iter redarguit & coercuit:
Nec Deum Opt. Max.
Truculentiae effraeni, vel vociferatui inani annuere,
Aut lapsu & erroribus mentis offendi Ratus est.
He preferr'd Retirement, and a private Life.
His Concern however for the Public.
(A Concern ever inseparable from his Thoughts)
He neither renounced, nor exercised in vain;
Of Encroachments and Domination of every kind
A constant and a formidable Foe;
Of public Liberty, and primitive Institutions,
A rigid Assertor, a powerful Champion.
From Observation he knew, from a just Principle he suspected,
The Frailty of human Nature, and the Pravity of Men,
With the Ambition and Artifices of Men in Power:
Between their avowed Pretences, and real Pursuit,
He could well distinguish,
As between the worthy Magistrate, and the lawless Ruler;
Ever resolute to encounter every public Violence,
And all the Insolence of Power,
With consummate Eloquence.
The Disbanding the Army after the *French War*,
In the Reign of King William,
By an Argument written and published.
Even in his Youth he undertook to procure,
Urged it with great Force,
And even succeeded,
In Opposition to the Efforts and Rage of the Courtiers.
To the highest Affairs his Abilities were equal;
But deserving public Honours,
And despising them,
Annos V. post L. vixit, sibi satis;
At non Patriæ, non amicis, nec uxori.
Cæterum, ut sine labe vitam transegerat,
Mortem absque formidine obiit,
Liberis viris & bonis nunquam non desiderandus;
Decemb. XVI. An. Ch. MDCCXXIII.
Manent Monumenta ingenii, semperque manebunt,
Scriptis multi generis sacrata.
He shone in the Accomplishments of private Life.
To the wild Fury of all Visionaries and Mystists,
To the direful Fooleries of all Bigots,
His Enmity was bent and perpetual,
As Men ever ravening against the Liberty, against the Possessions,
Of their Fellow-Citizens.
Eloquently he exposed, zealously he restrained,

The petulant Spirit and Avarice of such Men.
That the God of Nature, supremely Great, supremely Good,
Could ever approve wanton Cruelty, or devout
Clamour, and empty Sounds,
Or could ever be offended with the Mistakes and
Roamings of the human Soul,
Was what his rational Heart could never conceive.
To the Age of almost Fifty-five he lived,
An Age to himself sufficiently long;
But not so to his Country, nor to his Friends, nor to his Lady.
As he had passed his Life without Blemish,
He encountered Death without Fear,
A Man by all virtuous Men and Free-men
Worthy to be for ever lamented.
He died on the Sixteenth of *December* 1723.
Of his Genius and Abilities there are Monuments remaining,
Such as will for ever remain,
Consecrated to Time and Posterity in Writings of various Kinds.

[*] See a Pamphlet intituled, *The Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the Study of the Scriptures, in the Way of private Judgment*. A Pamphlet generally ascribed to Dr. Francis Hare, formerly Dean of *Worcester*, and late Bishop of *Chichester*, and Dean of *St. Paul's*.

[*] *Mr. Locke*.

[*] *The late Dr. William Wake*.

[*] *Dr. Benjamin Hoadley, now Lord Bishop of Winchester*.

[*] *A Name frequently given to the late Dr. Sacheverell*.

[*] *The late Dr. William Wake*.