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REMARKS ✓
UPON A
POSITION
OF

The RIGHT REVEREND the
Lord Bishop of *Bangor*

CONCERNING
Religious Sincerity.

WHEREIN

The Consequences of this POSITION are fully
stated, and his Lordship's pretended DEMON-
STRATION is shewn to be inconclusive.

By HENRY STEBBING, M. A.
*Rector of RICKINGHALL in SUFFOLK, and late
Fellow of St. CATHARINES-HALL in Cambridge.*

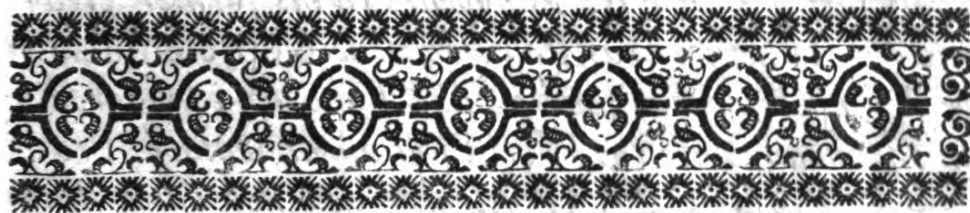
*To which is prefix'd a PREFACE by the
Reverend the DEAN of Chichester.*

The Second Edition.

LONDON,
Printed for HENRY CLEMENTS, at the *Half Moon*
in *St. Paul's Church-Yard.* 1718.

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T H E
P R E F A C E
T O T H E
R E A D E R.

THE following Treatise will give every judicious Reader so true an Idea of the Abilities of its Author, that I think it needless for me to tell the World what I know of him. The truest Character of any Writer is that which naturally arises from his Performance; and I would not be so unjust to my Friend, as to give any one reason to suspect that he owes the Opinion he shall have of him, to any Hand but his own.

The Charge of the Committee upon the Lord Bishop of Bangor with respect to his Doctrine of Sincerity, is in its main Parts so fully cleared in the following Treatise, that I see no occasion there can be to consider it over again. One Passage indeed there is relating to this Head which the Author has not undertaken to vindicate, and the reason is, because he was not en-

tively satisfied with it, as appears in his former Treatise *. Whether that Passage in the Representation be defensible or no, shall in due Time be considered; in the mean while the World has an undeniable Proof before them that this Gentleman did not enter into this Controversy with a Party Zeal, and a Determination to support the Charge of the Committee right or wrong, but with an honest and impartial Regard to Truth, where-ever it was, in his Judgment, to be found.

In his former Treatise, which is a Defence of the first Part of the Representation upon the Head of Church Authority, he has so carefully weighed and considered the Bishop of Bangor's Answer to the Committee on that Head, together with the Positions of the Sermon which gave Occasion to the Charge, and so closely pursued his Lordship thro' all his Turnings and Windings, and so plainly proved that the Doctrines, as well of his Answer to the Committee, as of his Sermon, subvert all Government and Discipline in the Church of Christ, that till I see new reason to the contrary, I shall reckon the Committee fully justified thus far in the Part they acted; for however Men may differ in their Opinions, and some may think that the Bishop deserves well for his worthy Endeavours to subvert all Church Authority, yet I verily think it can no longer be a Question whether he intended to subvert it or no. And this is the Point between his Lordship and the Committee.

For my own part, when I consider the Method of his Lordship's Answer to the Representation, and

* A Defence of the first Head, p. 3, 4.

see how carefully and resolutely he avoids declaring what one Branch of Authority he allows to the Christian Church, insisting nevertheless that he has not denied all Authority; upon which Plea, if Issue must be joined, the only Point in Debate will be concerning the Meaning of certain Passages in his Lordship's Sermon; when I see this, I say, I am surprized to hear his Lordship declaring to the World that he is engaged in a Subject of the utmost Importance to the future and present Happiness of Mankind; for surely it cannot be of such Consequence to the World to know what his Lordship means by properly, absolutely, or by an Hundred more such Words; and if the Controversy is never to rise above this noble Point, 'tis pity that one Sheet more of Paper should be lost in Pursuit of it. It had been of much more Service to the Cause of Truth, and of Religion, if his Lordship, instead of writing between 3 and 400 Pages to tell us what he did not mean, had been pleased to publish Ten only to inform us what he does mean, and what Authority he pretends to assert in consequence of his often repeated Plea, that he has not denied All. His Lordship has publickly told us that he intends to go on in this Cause, and if he does, I call upon him by all the Regard that is due to Truth, to Religion, to the Gospel, and to the Church of Christ, to say without Disguise what Authority he allows to the Church; this is a Point that well deserves to be treated with Openness, Plainness, and Sincerity; and whenever his Lordship shall take this Part, I will be ready to do either him or the Cause Justice, by subscribing to his Judgment, or by shewing the Reasons why I cannot.

It was once in my Thoughts to take this Opportunity of vindicating that Passage in the Representation relating to Sincerity, which the Author of the following Treatise has not entred into, but I found it would carry me beyond the Bounds of a Preface, and require more Time than my present Engagements will allow me; I shall therefore only say what may be sufficient to shew the true Meaning of the Passage, and leave the Prosecution of the Argument to another Season.

The Passage is this:

From this pretended Demonstration his Lordship infers, “ If this were duly and impartially consider’d, it would be impossible for Men to unchristian, unchurch, or declare out of God’s Favour, any of their *Fellow Creatures*, upon any lesser, or indeed any other Consideration, than that of a wicked Dishonesty and Insincerity; of which, in these Cases, God alone is Judge.”

If it be true that there is but one Consideration, *viz.* that of wicked Dishonesty and Insincerity, which will justify unchristianing, unchurching, or declaring out of God’s Favour, and of that one Consideration, in these Cases, God alone is Judge, there is evidently an End of all Church Authority, to oblige any to external Communion, and of all Power, that one Man, in what Station soever, can have over another, in Matters of Religion. *

* Report of the Committee, Oct. Edit. p. 12.

The Points here maintained by his Lordship are, That there is but one Reason in the Cases referred to for unchristianing, &c. viz. wicked Dishonesty and Insincerity, and that of this one Reason God alone is Judge.

The Consequence then drawn by the Committee from his Lordship's Doctrine is undeniable; for if there be in these Cases but one Reason for unchristianing, &c. and of that Reason God alone is Judge, 'tis evident that in these Cases there is no room for the Church to exercise any Authority by unchristianing, &c. For if the Church grounds a Sentence upon any thing but Insincerity, it errs in acting upon a Reason, which his Lordship declares to be no Reason. If it judges of Sincerity, it pretends to judge where 'tis impossible it should, God alone being Judge in this Point. Since therefore the Church ought not to act without Reason, since in this Case there is no Reason for it to act upon, the Church is evidently excluded from acting at all, or having any Concern in these Cases.

The Committee, who maintain that the Church has such Authority, are, I think, bound, in answer to his Lordship's Position, to shew at least one of these two Things, either that the Church may have in these Cases sufficient Evidence of Insincerity, or that there are sufficient Reasons to exclude Men from the Communion of Christians, without entring into the Consideration of their Sincerity or Insincerity.

This is the true State of the Case. And that 'tis possible oftentimes to judge of Men's Insincerity in the Choice they make of external Communion, is
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one of those things of which no Man of a plain Understanding can doubt. Do we not every Day see how wantonly and peevishly Men separate from the establish'd Church? How common a thing it is for a little Dispute between the Parson and his Parishioner, to end in the Parishioner's forsaking the Church? And when we see Men hurried into the Meeting-Houses by their Passions and Resentment, and reviling the Church in which they were born and bred, only because they could not get Twenty Shillings, or perhaps but Twenty Pence, abated in their Offerings or Church Rates, shall we be afraid of saying that such Men are dishonest in their Choice, and use the Indulgence granted to tender Consciences only as a Protection, whilst they act without any Conscience at all?

As to the other Case. Let it be supposed if a Number of Men should form themselves into a Communion upon Terms directly opposite to those laid down in the Gospel, that they should, for Instance, reject the Use of the Sacraments, declare the Scriptures to be a dead Letter, and deny that Christ came in the Flesh, &c. here now is an external Communion, such as it is, and let his Lordship tell us whether the Church of Christ may declare the Men of this Communion to be no Christians upon Account of their Doctrines and Praëctices held in Opposition to the Gospel, or whether it must maintain that these Doctrines joined to Sincerity become the Terms of the Gospel, and entitle Men to the Privileges of Christianity?

In all Cases of this nature, if you suppose Men to act with Sincerity, you must also suppose their
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Sincerity to be attended with great Ignorance and Weakness; for when Men reject the very Terms of the Gospel with Sincerity, you must either say that the Sincerity is attended with Ignorance and Weakness, or you must say that the Terms of the Gospel are such, that an honest sincere Man after a full Examination, may, and ought to reject them: His Lordship, I presume, will hardly affirm this; and therefore he must allow us to say, that by Sincerity, in the present Case at least, he means no more than a Man's acting according to his present Opinion, without considering whether such Opinion arises from the due Exercise of Reason, or from Passion and Prejudice: For remove Ignorance and Passion out of the Case, and where is the Sincerity which will refuse to submit to such Terms of Communion as the Gospel has made necessary, or indeed to such as are in their own Nature indifferent, and required only for the sake of external Order and Decency?

This is the true State of the Case.

The only Difficulty now is, to ascertain the true Meaning of his Lordship's Words, to unchristian, unchurch, or declare out of God's Favour.

To unchristian, must, I think, mean to declare a Man to have forfeited the Rights of a Christian: To unchurch, must mean to throw a Man out of the Communion of the Church: Thus far I should hope for his Lordship's Consent to what I say. The third Expression is, to declare out of God's Favour: There are two ways of understanding these Words; either by the Favour of God you mean, that Favour which he has published, declared, and promised to Mankind thro' the Means provided in the Gospel;

or you mean in general that Goodness and Mercy of God, which, for ought we know, he may extend beyond the Limits of the Gospel, even to such perhaps as have in the Sincerity of their Hearts, and in the Weakness of their Understandings (for these two things must go together) rejected the Conditions of the Gospel: But jurely 'tis highly reasonable to understand a Christian Bishop, and in a Controversy relating to the Church of Christ, in the first Sense. His Lordship speaks of unchristianing, unchurching, declaring out of God's Favour, in relation to one and the same thing; it must therefore be supposed that the three Expressions have some relation to one another, and consequently, that by the Favour of God, he means that Favour which we are entitled to as Christians and Members of the Church; but as Christians and Members of the Church, we are concerned only with that Favour of God, the Terms of which he has declared in the Gospel. Besides, the Subject which his Lordship was treating on, seems necessarily to require this Sense of the Words: Church Authority was the Subject; but the Church having nothing to do to judge one way or other about the Favour of God, but only as he has declared it in the Gospel, and as he has committed the Dispensation of it to his Church under the Use of the Means, and Rules prescribed by himself, it cannot consistently be supposed that his Lordship in this Argument spoke of it in any other Sense.

But to clear this Matter, I add; that if his Lordship shall declare, that he did not mean the Favour of God as promised upon the Terms of the Gospel,
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but that general Favour which he may extend to all whose Circumstances shall recommend them as Objects of Mercy: In Answer to it I say, that the Church has no Concern in this Part of his Assertion: it never did, it never can pretend to meddle with, or to declare any thing about the uncovenanted Mercies of God: The Gospel is its Rule; it declares those only to be out of the Favour of God who reject the Gospel, and the Means of Salvation there offered, or who live in open Disobedience to the Precepts therein contained.

But if his Lordship shall own, that by the Favour of God he means the Favour of God as declared in the Gospel, upon the Terms of which we are admitted to be Disciples of Christ, and Members of the Church, then I deny that there is but one Reason, viz. wicked Dishonesty and Insincerity for declaring Men out of God's Favour; and my Reason is, because I will not say that every Man who does not receive all that the Gospel has made necessary, is wickedly, i. e. knowingly and wilfully Insincere: But those who do not receive, or who reject the Conditions of the Gospel, are no Christians, and the Church has a Right to declare them so; or which comes to the same thing, to declare them to have no Title to God's Favour as it is set forth by Christ Jesus.

The Case is now clear: If his Lordship means only that such Sincerity as is attended with Weakness and Ignorance (for of such Sincerity in the present Case he must speak) will be a compassionate Plea for Favour or Mercy, I have no Inclination (my own Infirmities forbid me to have any) to dispute it with

him: But then I beg of his Lordship to tell me what this has to do in an Argument of Church Power: did he ever hear that the Christian Church pretended to be the Dispenser of God's uncovenanted Mercies, which would be in Truth to make Rules for God, whereas the Church must ever hold it self bound to judge only according to the Rules made by God; and whilst it does so, it is so far from being chargeable with the extravagant Presumption of obliging God to execute its Sentence, that the Church does in truth pass no Sentence of its own, but speaks in Obedience to the Obligation it finds it self under to publish and declare the Sentence of God.

But if his Lordship means that this Sincerity is such a Plea or Title to the Favour of God, that no other Terms of obtaining it ought to be insisted on; he must argue this Point not with the Church, but with an higher Power, the Author of the Gospel. The Church has no Right to declare any Terms or Means of Salvation, but what are declared in the Gospel. His Lordship then before he blames the Church for declaring the Favour of God upon other Terms than Sincerity alone, must shew that the only Term or Condition of Salvation proposed in the Gospel is Sincerity: he must shew that when we are required to be baptized, the Meaning is, that we should sincerely accept, or sincerely refuse Baptism; that when we are commanded to believe in Jesus Christ, the Meaning only is, that we should either sincerely believe in him, or sincerely reject him; that when we are required not to forsake the assembling our selves together, the Meaning is, that we should either sincerely go to Church, or sincerely stay away; that when
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we are commanded to continue the Memory of the Death of Christ till his coming again, the Meaning only is, that we should either sincerely do it, or sincerely let it alone: In a Word, that the Preachers of the Gospel shou'd confine themselves to this one Speech, "Men and Brethren, this is the Method of Salvation, which God thro' Christ has offered to the World; but if you like any other Way better, better it is that you shou'd follow your own Opinion."

This Doctrine of Sincerity, his Lordship, you see, applies to the Case of difference in Communion, and particularly to the difference between Popish and Protestant Communion, and affirms, that a sincere Papist is in just the same Case with a sincere Protestant; and therefore the Committee rightly observed that he left no Difference (as to the Favour of God) between the two Communions; for if Sincerity in one Communion is as good a Title to the Favour of God, as Sincerity in the other, what possible difference, in this respect, can there be? I ask his Lordship now, whether it be not against the Doctrine of the Gospel, and of natural Religion too, to pay Worship and Adoration to Creatures in the manner the Church of Rome requires: If he says it is not, it will then be manifest whose Principles tend most to Popery, his Lordship's or his Adversaries: But if he says, that it is contrary to the Rules of the Gospel to pay such Worship, I then ask him, whether he thinks that when the Gospel forbids Creature Worship, the only Meaning is, that Men ought either sincerely to worship Creatures, or sincerely not to do it: If his Lordship will not assert this Interpretation, he must then own that every sincere Papist offends against the

Rules

Rules of the Gospel; and if after this he will still maintain, that a sincere Papist has the same Title to the Favour of God, as a sincere Protestant, he must say, that as to the Favour of God, a sincere Disobedience to the Gospel, is just as good as a sincere Obedience.

Upon his Lordship's Principles, I cannot see with what Reason or Conscience he can ever endeavour to convert a Papist: Let us suppose his Lordship to attempt it, and let the Papist say to him, "For what Purpose would your Lordship convert me? I am at present free from Doubts, and sincere in the Profession of Popery, and your Lordship has told me, that I am therefore in as good a Case, as fully entitled to the Favour of God, as if I were a sincere Protestant; what Advantage then do you propose to me by a Change? Is there any other reason, besides the Hopes of God's Favour, for which Men ought to change their Religion? How this is to be answered upon his Lordship's Principles, I profess I know not; and were I of his Lordship's Opinion, I should think it one of the wickedest things in the World, to disturb any Man in his settled and sincerely embraced Errors in Religion; for since those Errors certainly entitle him to God's Favour, since an Attempt to remove them may possibly raise Doubts and Scruples, and put it out of the Man's Power to act with so clear a Perswasion of being in the right as he did before, how could I justify my self to God or Man in hazarding unnecessarily my Neighbour's Title to the Favour of God, which stood secured by an happy Ignorance, and Prejudices so strong that they admitted no Doubts?"

Nay

Nay further; if there be no real difference in this Case between Truth and Falshood; if he who believes a Lye sincerely, and he who embraces the Truth sincerely, are equally in the Favour of God, to what End was Truth brought down from Heaven? Why was the Gospel published, and the World disturbed with the Light, since it was before not only at Ease, but equally secure in Darkness? His Lordship will answer perhaps that Truth is a real Good, that there is an essential difference between Truth and Falshood: Away with this Metaphysical Goodness; the Question is, how Truth is better to the Purpose of Religion than Falshood, since if you add a sincere Perswasion to both, both become the same thing, and are equally entitled to the Favour of God.

St. Paul tells us, that upon some Sort of Sinners God shall send a strong Delusion that they shou'd believe a Lye; believe it they cannot, without being sincerely perswaded of it, and consequently upon his Lordship's Principles they must be entitled to the Favour of God, if they act according to the Lye they believe: And thus in the Bishop's Scheme, that is the surest, nay, the only Title to God's Favour, which in St. Paul's is not only the Forerunner, but oftentimes the immediate Effect of his Vengeance.

Upon these Principles there is nothing in which Men are capable of deceiving themselves, but it may be justified. His Lordship has applied these Principles to Popery, and expressly taught that sincere Papists are justified by his Rule. Let us hear now from his own Mouth what it is that Sincerity does justify in this Instance: Popery, he tells us, is a Religion which wherever it is receiv'd, must act univer-
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fally and equally in the same Way: It is a Religion which leaves nothing to Variety of Tempers or Principles, but layeth the same Necessity on all those who receive it, either to sacrifice all the World to it, or to be sacrificed to it themselves *

Tell me Sincerity what art thou! (O dea certe!) that can't entitle those to the Favour of God, who are universally and equally bent to set the World on Fire, for the Sake of a false corrupt Perswasion! that can't dissolve all the Bands of natural and revealed Religion, and sanctify even the Cruelties of an Inquisition! That can't justify all the Forms of Error and Impiety which ever a deluded People were made to think to be Religion; and secure to all, what belongs only to Virtue and Truth, the Favour of God!

But I transgress the Bounds of a Preface, and shall therefore dismiss the Reader to the Consideration of the following Treatise, assuring him that it is put into his Hands as it came out of the Author's.

THO. SHERLOCK.

* Preservat. p. 19. 4th Edit.



REMARKS
UPON A
POSITION
OF THE
Bishop of *BANGOR*
CONCERNING
RELIGIOUS SINCERITY.

Bishop of *BANGOR*.

THE Favour of God follows SINCERITY CONSIDERED AS SUCH; and consequently EQUALLY follows every equal Degree of SINCERITY. *Preservative, p. 91.*

R E M A R K S.

In order to the finding out the true Sense of this Position, it needs only to be observed, 1. That *Sincerity*, according to his Lordship (and as the Truth indeed is) is when a Man follows the Dictates of his own Conscience or Understanding, after having made use of the best Means he has for his Information. *A Man*, says he, (a) is always supposed to use his utmost Endeavours and Application—and then, and only then, to be justified by—his private Judgment. Again, (b) *Sincerity* cannot be supposed, where a Man does not take all proper Methods of being rightly informed. 2. That by *Sincerity* consider'd as such,

(a) Answ. to the Repref. Chap. 1. Sect. 19. p. 23. (b) Ibid. p. 95.
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his Lordship means Sincerity of it self; or Sincerity alone. This needs no Proof. 3. That when he says, that the Favour of God follows Sincerity, his Meaning is, that Sincerity gives a Man a Right or Title to the Favour of God. This will be plain from the following Passages. (c) *Either a Man must be INTITLED to Heaven by the perfect Sincerity of his Choice; or else none can have a TITLE to it, but those who are in the Right.* Again, (d) *Almighty God puts our TITLE to his Favour upon our present Sincerity.* 4. That Degrees of Sincerity there can be none. For either a Man has used his best Endeavours to inform himself rightly, or he has not. If he has not, he is not sincere at all, because Sincerity is only when a Man has used his best Endeavours. If he has, he cannot be more sincere than he already is, because no Man can do more than use his best Endeavours. Wherefore, 5. The full Sense and Meaning of his Lordship's Position appears to be this, viz. *That all Persons who use their utmost Endeavours to inform themselves rightly, and act according to the best of their Judgments, have an equal Title to God's Favour; or, that all such Persons have a Right to an equal Share or Degree of the Favour of God.* Thus stands his Lordship's Doctrine, which I shall examine first *a posteriori*, by considering its Consequences; and secondly, *a priori*, by considering what Foundation it has in the Nature and Reason of Things.

First, I will consider the Consequences of this Doctrine, most of which I find already drawn to my Hand by the learned Committee, Represent. p. 7. 8. where his Lordship is charged with having made *all Methods of Religion alike with Respect to Salvation, or the Favour of God; with having put all Communions upon an equal Foot, without regard to any intrinsic Goodness, or whether they be right or wrong; with referring every Man's Choice of a Communion to his own private Judgment, as that which will justify even the worst he can make; and finally, with rendring all Church Communion unnecessary, in order to intitle Men to the Favour of God.* These Consequences might all of them have

(c) Ibid. (d) Ibid. Sect. 21. p. 104.

been expressed by one single Proposition, That *all sincere Persons have equally a Right or Title to God's Favour, whatsoever Method of Religion they follow.* But I chose to make use of the very Words of the *Representation*, that I might hereby give my self the fairer Opportunity of vindicating them against his Lordship's Exceptions. In the mean time, I am verily perswaded, that there is no considerate Man, who will not see at the very first Glance, that these Consequences do every one of them naturally and necessarily follow from the Principle above laid down. For if all sincere Persons are *alike intitled to*, i. e. have a *Right to an equal Share or Degree of God's Favour*, pray what can it signify as to the Favour of God, whether a Man follows *this* Method of Religion, or follows *that*, provided he be but *sincere* in that which he follows? To say that the *Nature*, i. e. the *intrinsic Goodness* of the Method, makes any Difference in the Case, is directly to give up the Point. For if the intrinsic Goodness of the Method must *in the least* concur, to intitle a Man to God's Favour, it is not then true, that Sincerity *alone* will give him this Title. And if the intrinsic Goodness of the Method does not *in the least* contribute towards the entitling a Man to God's Favour, his Title will be the same, whether this intrinsic Goodness be *present* or *absent*. For an *Effect* can receive no Alteration from that which has not the least Relation to it under the Notion of a *Cause*. Upon this Principle therefore it must follow, that *all Methods of Religion are alike with respect to Salvation, or the Favour of God*; that in the same Respect, *all Communions* how unequal soever they may be as to their *intrinsic* Worth and Excellency, are *upon an equal Foot*; and that therefore, if a Man *chuses the worst* Communion possible, the Sincerity of his Choice will *justify him* in so doing, even so far, as that he shall have a Right to as great a Share of God's Favour, as if he had chosen the *best*. Upon the same Principle it also follows, that with respect to the Favour of God, *all Church Communion is unnecessary*. For how is it possible, that Church Communion should be at all *necessary*, if Sincerity *alone* be *sufficient*?

There is not, I believe, a *Demonstration* in *Euclid* that concludes more strongly than this Argument; it is however very fit that we attend a little to his Lordship's Exceptions. And therefore,

1. Whereas the learned *Committee* have observed, that his Lordship has *made all Methods of Religion alike, &c.* and *put all Communions upon an equal Foot, &c.* his Lordship answers, That (e) *what he says about private Perswasion relates to the Justification of the Man before God, and not to the Excellency of one Communion above another, which it leaves just as it finds it, and cannot possibly alter.* Now by this it is very manifest, that his Lordship supposes the Charge of the *Committee* to be, that he has made all Methods of Religion alike, and put all Communions upon an equal Foot, *with respect to their real, natural, and intrinsic Excellency*; which, were it true, it would not in the least affect the Consequence as it is now stated by me; which, as it is evident, does also *leave the intrinsic Excellency of every Communion as it finds it, and relates solely to that which his Lordship's Principle relates, to wit, the Justification of the Man before God.* I have indeed supposed this to be the Sense of the *Committee* in their Charge; and therefore, if it be not so, I must, I own, be silenced, so far as I am concerned in their Vindication. But I will leave the World to judge between us, who is guilty of a Misrepresentation, his Lordship, or I. That which the *Committee* say is, That his Lordship hath put all Communions upon an equal Foot, *WITHOUT REGARD TO any intrinsic Goodness, or wh ther they be right, or wrong.* That which his Lordship represents the *Committee* as saying, is, that he hath put all Communions upon an equal Foot, *WITH RESPECT TO their intrinsic Goodness.* But are these two Assertions the same? It is manifest that they are not. For whereas the *latter* supposes that his Lordship hath *destroyed* all *real intrinsic* Difference between one Communion and another, the *former* supposes no such Matter; but only this, that his Lordship in his Argument *hath had no Regard to*

(e) *Ibid.* Sect. 23. p. 113.

any such Difference, or *hath not considered*, whether a Communion be either *right* or *wrong*. Yes, but the *Committee*, you'll say, still charge his Lordship with putting all Communions upon an equal Foot. Upon an equal Foot? In what respect? In some *other* respect you may be sure; for what Sense is there in saying that all Communions are put upon an equal Foot, *i. e.* made equal with respect to their *intrinsic* Goodness, *without regarding their intrinsic Goodness*, or *whether they be right or wrong*? He that puts all Communions upon an equal Foot in this Sense, is always supposed to *have regarded* or *considered* the *intrinsic* Goodness of all, and to have compared them one with another; and therefore had the *Committee* intended any such Charge against his Lordship, they would have expressed themselves *barely* after this manner, that *he had put all Communions upon an equal Foot with respect to their intrinsic Goodness*, and would not have added those Words, *without regarding whether they be right or wrong*, which indeed is a very shameful Inconsistency. And what now is that *other* Respect in which the *Committee* charge his Lordship with having put all Communions upon an equal Foot? Why, they tell you as plainly as Words can express it, that it is with respect to the *Efficaciousness* of them, in order to the *intitling* Men to *God's Favour*. All Methods of Religion, say they, are made alike, not *simply*, but *with respect to Salvation or the Favour of God*. So that the Meaning of the *Committee* in these Passages appears plainly to be this: That notwithstanding there is a manifest Difference between one Communion and another, and one Method of Religion and another, with respect to their *intrinsic* Goodness; and notwithstanding it ought in reason to be supposed, that the *intrinsic* Goodness of the Communion or Method a Man follows, has at least *some* Share in intitling him to *God's Favour*; yet that his Lordship, as he hath stated the Matter, has made it to signify nothing at all to this End, and therefore has in this respect put all Methods and all Communions upon an equal Foot. This, I say, is manifestly the Meaning of the *Committee* in these Passages, and common Equity requires, that all
other

other Passages relating to this Point, in the *Representation*, be interpreted after the same manner, if the Words themselves be fairly capable (and that they are so, you will see presently) of being brought to this Sense. Thus when the *Committee* charge it upon his Lordship, that according to this Doctrine *no one Method of Religion is IN IT SELF preferable to another*, the Meaning of this Passage is not, as his Lordship supposes, that there is no *real* Excellency or Goodness in *one Method above another*, but that no one Method of Religion is *of it self*, or upon the Account of any *intrinsic Goodness* that it has above another, *preferable to another*; I say *preferable to another*, *i. e.* with respect to any *Virtue or Efficacy* which the *intrinsic Goodness* of it will give it *above another*, towards procuring *Salvation*, or the *Favour of God*. So likewise when they charge it upon his Lordship, that *in Vertue of his Principle, he hath left no Difference between the Popish and our Reformed Church, but what is founded in Personal Perswasion only, and not in the Truth of the Doctrines, or in the Excellency of one Communion above the other*; the Sense of this is not what his Lordship has made it to be, that the Communion of the *Reformed Church* is not (according to his Lordship's Principle) *really better* than the Communion of the *Popish*, but that the Communion of the *Reformed Church* is *in it self of no greater Efficacy* towards the *intitling Men to Salvation*, than the Communion of the *Popish*, and consequently, that his Lordship in Vertue of his Principle, hath *in this Respect* left no Difference between the *one* and the *other*, but what is founded in *Personal Perswasion*.

Upon the whole therefore, I think it is manifest, that the Sense of the *Committee* is exactly as I have stated it above, *viz.* That his Lordship in consequence of his Doctrine hath made all Methods of Religion alike, and put all Communions upon an equal Foot, *with respect to any Vertue or Efficacy that is in them towards intitling Men to God's Favour*. Which had his Lordship duly attended to, he might, perhaps, have spared himself and *his Readers* a great deal of fruitless Trouble, there being no less than *one intire Section*, and part of a *Second*, which run upon this general Mistake, that the *Committee* had charged

ged him with making all Methods of Religion alike, and putting all Communion upon an equal Foot, *with respect to their intrinsic Goodness*; and which consequently do not in the least contribute towards removing the Difficulty which is now fastned upon this Doctrine. The most of what his Lordship has else said upon this Matter is by way of *Retortion* upon the *Committee*, whom he first of all supposes (I think) to have claimed all *absolute Authority* in *some* to oblige *others* to a particular *External Communion*, and then argues, that their Doctrine is liable to the same Objection with his. About this he hath spent near three *Sections* more; all which, supposing it were true (which it certainly is not) how little it is to the Purpose I need not to observe. But it was his Lordship's wisest way to *evade* the Charge by such Methods as these. For the *Consequence*, I perceive, is of such an *untoward* Nature, that tho' it demonstratively follows from his Lordship's Principle, his Lordship does not yet care *plainly* to own and defend it. But

2. With respect to the *next* of the Passages above cited, his Lordship's Management is yet more extraordinary. That Passage lays it upon his Lordship, that in following any particular Communion he has *referred every Man to his own private Judgment, as that which will justify even the worst Choice he can make*. Here his Lordship peremptorily denies, that he has ever taught any such thing, and is (f) forced to complain of the *Committee* as having framed this *Opinion* for him. The Reader will soon be convinced how small a Matter will force a *Complaint* from his Lordship: For even as he himself has been pleased to represent the Matter, the Ground of this Complaint is no more than this, *viz.* That the *Committee* have framed this *Opinion* for him IN WORDS he neither ever did use, nor will own. Well; be it so; I hope there is no great Harm in this, provided his Lordship will but own THE THING. And that he will, and does own *the thing*, is plain: For how does he go about to clear himself? Why, truly he says, that his *constant Doctrine* is not that a *Man's private*

(f) Ibid. Sect. 19. p. 92, 93.

Judgment will justify him in the WORST Choice that he can make, but in the BEST Choice that he can make! This, you'll say, perhaps, is a very manifest Contradiction: But pray consider whether that which the *Committee* call *the worst* Choice, and that which his Lordship calls *the best* Choice, may not possibly be *the same*; and if you will not be so easy as to be carried away merely with the Sound of Words, you will find this to be the very Case. For what do the *Committee* mean by *the WORST* Choice? Why, plainly, the Choice of that Communion which is IN IT SELF *the worst*. And what does his Lordship mean by the *BEST* Choice? Manifestly, the Choice of that Communion which, upon the strictest Inquiry, APPEARS TO BE *the best*. But may not that Communion which *appears* to a Man to be *THE BEST*, be, *in it self*, *THE WORST*? His Lordship will not deny it. Suppose then, that a Man should chuse the *worst* Communion, *thinking* it to be *the best*, will the Sincerity of his private Judgment justify him in this Case? His Lordship owns, and contends that it will. Who sees not then, that this is only a Contradiction of *Words*, and that his Lordship owns the very thing charged upon him by the *Committee*? I am sorry his Lordship should descend to such mean *Sophistry* as this! Pardon the Expression; for if it be *not* *Sophistry*, his Lordship must have supposed, that by the *worst* Choice the *Committee* must have meant the Choice of that which *appears* to a Man's own *Judgment* to be *the worst*. But what Sense can there be in this Supposition? Or who but his Lordship speaks after this Manner? Every one knows, that, in common Computation, the Goodness or Badness of a Man's Choice is not measured by his *private Perswasion*, but by *the real intrinsic Value* of the thing he chuses. And I believe, that should any one, in the *pure Simplicity* of his Heart, chuse *Silver* instead of *Gold*, as the more valuable Metal, his Lordship would hardly be brought to affirm, that he had made *the better Choice*.

3. It is farther charged upon his Lordship, by the *Committee*, that he hath *rendred all Church-Communion unnecessary, in order to intitile Men to the Favour of God*. Now this
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this likewise his Lordship declares that he has not taught, and says, that it is *an Opinion framed for him* by the *Committee*. But what has his Lordship done to shew, that this is not his Opinion; or that this Consequence does not necessarily follow from his Principles? Why nothing, except it be this, that he has pretended as if *this Part* of the Charge were *contradictory* to the *former*. The two Parts put together stand thus, and are thus set down in the *Representation*. *All Church Communion is render'd unnecessary in order to intitle Men to the Favour of God, and every Man is referred in these Cases (i. e. in the Case of chusing a Communion) to his private Judgment, as that which will justify the worst Choice he can make.* (g) *The Words* (says his Lordship) *in which this Charge is drawn up, are very extraordinary.* (For) First, *It is declared, that in my Book all Church Communion is render'd unnecessary in order to intitle Men to God's Favour; and then it is immediately supposed, that the same Book makes Communion with some Church or other necessary, but only leaves every Man in these Cases (I suppose they mean in this Case) to his private Judgment.* I think truly, that this Observation is very *extraordinary!* For *where* or *how*, I pray, is it supposed, that his Lordship hath made Communion *with some Church* or other *necessary*? Why, his Lordship, it seems, hath declared, that when a Man *does* chuse a Communion, the Sincerity of his private Judgment will justify him if he chuses *the worst!* Very true! But may not the same Person also very consistently affirm, that the same Sincerity will likewise justify him if he chuses *none at all!* On the other Side, may not he who makes all Church Communion *unnecessary*; may he not, or rather *will* he not by his Principles naturally be led to say, that if he does think fit to follow any Communion, it signifies nothing at all which he follows? But his Lordship, I perceive, was in great Streights; and what should he do, but have Recourse to *Art*, where *Reason* would not bear him out? His Lordship's general Maxim is, that Sincerity *alone* justifies a Man. What then can be more plain, than, that if a

(g) Ibid.

Man be but sincere, whether he joins himself to *any* Communion, or to *no* Communion, he is *equally justified* ?

Thus then you see what the Consequence of his Lordship's Doctrine is, *viz.* That a Man who joins himself with *no* Society of Christians, who frequents *no* Place of publick Worship, who partakes of *no* Sacraments, may yet have a Title to God's Favour, and that in the same Degree with him who sincerely keeps the whole Law. His Lordship has indeed said something, which, were it true, would in a great Measure destroy the Force of this Objection: But besides, that it would also make his whole Doctrine about *Sincerity* to be utterly insignificant, the Supposition is attended with this farther Unhappiness, that it is *actually false*. The Supposition is in short this. That those who *(h)* *sincerely believe in Christ, will be led by their Regard to him to the Profession of that FAITH, and to the outward Use of ALL THE MEANS which he appointed.* Which is as much as to say, that those who sincerely believe in Christ will be led by their Regard to him to BELIEVE and Do as the Gospel directs them. This will be farther plain from another Passage, where he declares, that *(i)* *it CANNOT BE SUPPOSED—* that a Man who sincerely is subject to Jesus Christ alone in the great Affair of Salvation, will not follow Jesus Christ's Direction, and join in the Worship of God with other Men, or will not be induced to follow ALL his Master's INJUNCTIONS. Indeed, my Lord! Why then, for whose Use I pray, was this *new Scheme of Justification* contrived? I always apprehended, that it was for the Benefit of such Persons as should in the Sincerity of their Hearts be led to act *contrary* to Christ's *Injunctions*. But now it seems there neither *are* nor *can be* any such Persons; for *all* sincere Persons, we are told, *will, and must* be led to follow Christ's *Injunctions*; and that not only a *few*, but *all* of them. But where, if I may presume to ask, did his Lordship learn this? Does Experience teach it? I would to God it did. But Experience, I trust, is full against him; and since his Lordship has not in another Case

(h) Ibid. Sect. 15. p. 81. *(i)* Ibid. Sect. 14. p. 79.

thought it beneath him to appeal to the *Quakers*, let me have leave also to appeal to them in this, where I think they may much more properly be appealed to. This People, it is true, are joined together in a Communion, and frequent Places of Publick Worship among themselves; so far therefore they must be excepted out of the present Argument. But then his Lordship knows, that they are not led by their Regard to Christ, to the Profession of that Faith which he has appointed; for they err in several very important Matters of Faith. His Lordship is also sensible that they are not led by their Regard to Christ, to the outward Use of all the Means which he has appointed, or to follow all his Injunctions, for they reject both the Sacraments. I ask then, are this People any of them sincere, or are they not? If they be any of them sincere, his Lordship's Assertion, that all sincere Persons will be led to follow all the Appointments or Injunctions of Christ, must then be false. If they are not any of them sincere, his Lordship damns them all, and the *Quakers* will have Reason to thank him for his Charity. Why should I mention the *Papists*, who according to his Lordship's Rule must also be all of them insincere, and consequently in a State of Damnation? But his Lordship cannot but be farther apprized, that there are even among Christians a Sort of Men who neglect wholly to join in any publick Worship, and to partake in any Ordinances of the Gospel. These Men will tell us, that in their Opinion they may serve God as acceptably by saying their Prayers and reading their Bibles at Home, as they can by resorting to Church, or to any other Assemblies of Christians. And are then all such Persons insincere? For my own Part, I dare not affirm it; and if his Lordship should, it will be more than he will ever be able to prove, unless he could determine precisely how far Men may or may not be led aside by the Error of their Understandings, which is a thing utterly impossible.

In short; That Sincerity alone should be sufficient to lead Men to observe ALL the Appointments or Injunctions of Christ, is a Doctrine so new, so contrary both to Reason and plain Matter of Fact, as that nothing can be more.

And it may justly be wonder'd what could draw from his Lordship an Assertion so extraordinary in it self, and so entirely destructive of his own darling Scheme! That he was then, when he said this, upon another Point, and little thought of his general Principle, you will easily guess; and tho' it signifies not much as to the present Controversy, to be informed what that Point was, I will yet beg Leave just to mention it. His Lordship then had in his Sermon defined the *Church* to be *The Number of Men, whether small or great, whether dispersed or united, who truly and sincerely are Subjects to Jesus Christ alone, in Matters relating to the Favour of God and their eternal Salvation.* The Fault which the Committee found with this Definition, was, that it was too general; for that his Lordship had left out of it several Particulars *which are necessary to form a just and true Notion of THE CHURCH,* inslancing particularly in *Preaching the Word, and Administering the Sacraments.* This the Committee spoke with reference to the *Visible Church* of Christ, supposing (as indeed they very reasonably might suppose) that *this* was the Subject of his Lordship's *Definition.* In Answer to this, his Lordship says, that he was not then speaking of *A VISIBLE Church (to which alone, as such, visible outward Signs belong)* but of the *Universal INVISIBLE Church made up of such as sincerely believe in Christ.* Upon this Foot (could his Lordship have defended his Definition) he would have had nothing to answer for but the Impropriety of defining *one* Sort of Church, when the Nature and Tendency of his whole Discourse led him to rectify the Mistakes about *another.* But there was a rougher Difficulty yet that stood in the way, even with respect to his Notion of the *invisible Church, viz.* That according to it a Man might be a Member of Christ's *invisible Church,* tho' he were *not* a Member of *the visible one.* For if every one who is *sincerely subject to Christ alone,* is a Member of the *invisible Church,* the Consequence is clear, that he is *still* a Member of *that Church,* tho' in the Sincerity of his Heart, he should be led to *cut himself off from the visible one,* even by neglecting the *Sacraments* and every thing else, in the joint Practice and Participa-
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tion whereof *visible* Communion does consist. So that his Lordship found himself still liable to that which the *Committee* had objected against him, to wit, the having thrown out (by his Definition) the Participation of the *Sacraments*, &c. as not essential to the denominating a Man a *true Member of Christ's Church*. What now was to be done in this Case? Why there were but two things possible. The first was for his Lordship to have retracted his Definition, and *once in his Lifetime*, to have confessed himself *in the Wrong*. The other, to say that a Man could not be a sincere Subject of *Jesus Christ*, and yet neglect the *Sacraments*, &c. This latter his Lordship thought fit to chuse; and how well it answers his Purpose, I shall now leave every Reader to judge. (k) To make, says he, such Objections as these, is to make Objections that have no Weight in them, unless they who make them suppose, that by taking Christ for their Lawgiver and King, Men will not be led by him and his own Directions to the two Sacraments, and to the Use of his own Appointments; a Supposition which I shall take Care never to be guilty of. My Lord! I know of no Crime that there is in making such a Supposition as this; or if there be any, it certainly lies at your Lordship's Door: For your whole *Scheme of Justification* depends upon this Supposition. But *this*, I think, is a Crime (and I am sorry your Lordship should not think it so too) to take so unwarrantable a Step to get over an Objection, which you must needs have been sensible, is impossible to be removed.

To return; It appears from what has been said, that his Lordship in consequence of his general Principle must affirm, that provided a Man sincerely believes in *Jesus Christ*, it signifies nothing as to his Title to God's Favour, whether he be of *this* Communion of Christians, or of *that* Communion, or of *any* Communion at all; and consequently, that in this Respect he hath not only put all Communions upon an equal Foot, but render'd all Communion unnecessary. But to add one Consequence to those already drawn by the *Committee*; I say,

(k) Ibid. Sect. 15. p. 81.

4. That upon his Lordship's Principle, even the *Religion of Jesus Christ*, in the largest Sense of the Word, or as it takes in *all those who believe in Jesus Christ*, is of no greater Efficacy towards procuring God's Favour than the *Religion, v. g. of Mahomet*. To make this plain, I will apply that Argument which his Lordship is pleased to call a *Demonstration*, and leave you to judge whether it be not every whit as conclusive with respect to *Christians and Mahometans*, as it is with respect to *Protestants and Papists*. "What is it then which *justifies the Christians* in refusing to follow the *Religion of the Mahometans*? Is it that the *Religion of the Mahometans* is a corrupt and false Religion, or that the *Christians* are persuaded in their own Consciences, that it is so? The latter without doubt, as appears from this *Demonstration*: Take away from this Perswasion; they are so far from being *justified*, that they are *condemned* for their refusing. Give them this Perswasion again, they are *condemned* if they do not refuse, &c." Now 'tis manifest that this Argument may be put as strong on the Side of the *Mahometans*, as it is on the Side of the *Christians*. For that which justifies *us* against *them*, must also justify *them* against *us*. I ask then; Can there be, or is there any such thing as a *SINCERE Mahometan*, or (for it is all one as to the Argument) a *SINCERE Jew or Heathen*? If not, then his Lordship hath left *all the World*, except *Christians*, irretrievably in a State of Condemnation; a *Supposition*, which (to use his Lordship's own Words) *I shall take care never to be guilty of*. But if otherwise, then by his Lordship's Argument so many of *all Sorts* as are *sincere* are *justified*, *i. e.* (for this is evidently what his Lordship means) they are *upon the same Foot with us* with respect to any *Right or Title* which *either* of us have to *Salvation* or the *Favour of God*. The thing indeed is clear, and speaks it self: For if *Sincerity alone* be that which gives Men a Title to God's Favour, as his Lordship asserts, then *all sincere Persons, Jews, Heathens, Turks, Christians*, or whatever else you can conceive them to be, are in this Respect all alike, *i. e.* no one
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of them hath a greater Title to God's Favour than another.

Thus I have shewn you the plain and necessary Consequences of his Lordship's Principle, and we are at last brought to this general Conclusion, *that provided a Man be but SINCERE, it signifies nothing what Religion he is of.* I proceed now to consider

Secondly, What Foundation the Principle from whom this Conclusion follows, has in the Nature and Reason of Things. And here if the Reader be disposed to take his Lordship's Account of the Matter, he will think I am going to make either a very bold or a very fruitless Adventure. For the Argument upon which this Principle is built, his Lordship in his *Preservative* THINKS to be a DEMONSTRATION in the strictest Sense of the Word; and in his Answer to the Representation, he is VERY CERTAIN it is so. I shall only beg that he would suspend his Judgment, for a Moment, while I try his Lordship's *Infallibility*.

The DEMONSTRATION then (for so let it be called for the present) is thus introduced, *Preserv. p. 89. You, says his Lordship (speaking to the Nonjurors) say that God's Favour is not dispensed but in the strict Communion of your particular little Body or Church. I am not now going to accuse you of a Heresy against Charity, but of a Heresy against the very Possibility and Nature of Things; or of holding that which throws Men out of the Favour of God which way soever they act. You know there was a Schism amongst your selves upon this Account. Mr. Nelson, for Instance, thinks himself obliged in Conscience to communicate with some of our Church. Upon this you declare he hath no Title to God's Mercy. And you and all the World allow, that if he communicates with you whilst his Conscience tells him it is a Sin, he is self-condemn'd, and out of God's Favour. He is therefore entitled to God's Wrath, both if he doth communicate with you, and if he doth not. That Notion therefore which implies in it this great invincible Absurdity, cannot be true.*

The fundamental Maxim upon which this Argument stands, you see is this: That it is an Absurdity to suppose that a Man should be entitled to God's Wrath, WHICH WAY

SOEVER HE ACTS. And this his Lordship himself elsewhere declares: (1) *Whatever*, says he, *supposes a Man condemned by God, WHICH WAY SOEVER HE ACTS, cannot be admitted; but the Notion I was there* (referring to the the Place now cited) *opposing, implies THAT in it, and therefore must be false.* I hope therefore that this Argument will be sufficiently replied to, if I can make out these two things, *viz.*

First, That there is *no Absurdity* in supposing that a Man may be entitled to God's Wrath, *which way soever he acts.*

Secondly, That supposing *there were*, this Argument does not come up to the Point in Controversy.

First then, I say there is *no Absurdity* in supposing, that a Man may be entitled to God's Wrath *which Way soever he acts*; and that for this plain and unanswerable Reason, *viz.* That a Man may be under such Circumstances, as that he must needs SIN *which Way soever he acts*, or whether he *follows* his Conscience, or follows it *not*. This will be made plain by a few short Observations. As,

1. That it is *always* a Sin for a Man to act *against* his Conscience, whether *erroneous* or *not erroneous*. This his Lordship's Argument supposes, and therefore it needs not be proved.

2. That supposing a Man's Conscience to be *erroneous*, it is a Sin to act *according to* his Conscience, provided that Error was occasioned *thro' his own Fault*. This is plain, because the only Reason why the Error of a Man's Conscience or Judgment can be supposed to excuse him is this, that no Man can deserve Blame who has always acted according to the *best* of his Abilities. But if the Error of a Man's Conscience is owing to *himself*, he does not in following his Conscience act according to the *best* of his Abilities, because it is supposed that *if he would*, he might inform his Conscience *better*. I leave it therefore to the Reader's Judgment, whether these Two Observations

(1) Ibid. Sect. 19. p. 94.

do not suggest to us a very manifest Case, wherein a Man must needs SIN *which way soever he acts*; even when his Conscience is erroneous for want of taking proper Means for his Information. If he acts *against* his Conscience, he sins that way, for this very Reason *because* he acts *against* his Conscience. If he acts *according* to his Conscience, he sins that way, because he breaks the Law of God *thro' his own Fault*. But this, you'll say, does not hit the Case in Hand; for the Case put by his Lordship is of a Man who is *sincere*, and consequently is supposed to have used all proper Means of informing himself. But where is this Case put? He that can see it in the Argument, has better Eyes than I. The Case his Lordship has put, is that of Mr. *Nelson*, whom he supposes to have thought himself obliged in Conscience to communicate with our Church. But that Mr. *Nelson* was *sincere* in this Perswasion, *i. e.* that he had used all proper Means for his Information, is not *said* to be supposed, or any thing like it. Again, his Lordship's Rule is, that 'tis absurd to suppose that a Man should be intitled to God's Wrath *which Way soever he acts*. And thus it is set down both in his *Preservative*, and in his *Answer* to the *Representation*. But this Rule, as it appears, is *false*, and therefore the Argument which is built upon it must be so too. I do not make this Observation, because I think any Advantage can be taken from it as to the main Point in Debate; for the Controversy is about *Sincerity*; *Sincerity* therefore ought to be supposed in the Argument. But it is a new Way of writing DEMONSTRATIONS, to leave that to be *supposed* which gives the Argument *all* the Force it has; and I believe Mr. *Whiston* would hardly have been guilty of such a Mistake. With his Lordship's Leave therefore, I will put his general Maxim as it ought to be put, and say as I believe he intended to say, That *it is absurd to suppose that a Man should be intitled to God's Wrath which Way soever he acts WITH SINCERITY*. But even this is not true. For

3. SINCERITY is when a Man acts according to the best of his *present* Abilities: This his Lordship owns. *Almighty God*, says he, *puts our Title to his Favour upon our*

PRESENT *Sincerity*, i. e. upon a faithful and honest Use of those Means which we *at present actually* have. But it is notorious, that the *Voluntariness* or *Involuntariness* of *Error* is not to be measured *barely* by a Man's *present* Abilities, but by those Abilities also, which he has had *at any time before*. For that *Error* is certainly *voluntary*, which either *immediately* or *originally* is occasioned by a Man's *own Fault*; and ALL *voluntary Error* is *sinful*. Supposing therefore that I *once had* those Means which by a due Use would have brought me to the Knowledge of the Truth, and that by my own Negligence I have *now lost* those Means, it is plain that my *present Sincerity* will not justify me in a wrong Perswasion; because upon this Supposition it is *my Fault* even that I *am sincere* in that Perswasion, i. e. it is my Fault that the *best Use* of the Means I *now have* is not sufficient for my Information. *Sincerity* therefore *as such*, i. e. *mere Sincerity* in a wrong Perswasion, is not sufficient to make a Man who acts according to that Perswasion, an improper Object of God's Wrath. It must ever be attended with this Circumstance, that his *Sincerity* in that Perswasion is not *at all* owing *to himself*, i. e. to the *Neglect* of *any Means* which he *once had*, and which, if carefully improved, would have informed him better. But

Secondly, Admitting that it was an Absurdity to suppose that a Man should be intitled to God's Wrath, which Way soever he acts *with Sincerity*; I say that this Argument does not come up to the Point in Controversy. For what does this Argument conclude? Why, manifestly, and at most no more than this, *viz.* That *no sincere Person shall be DAMNED*. But is this the Question? Or is this the whole of what his Lordship hath maintain'd? Why, so indeed his Lordship *once* thought fit to tell us. *There is not*, says he, *(m) the least Tendency in any thing I say——but only this; that supposing an honest Christian in the Integrity of his Heart to have chosen that which is not the Best——Almighty God WILL NOT CONDEMN him at the last Day for not seeing what he was not able to*

(m) Ibid. Sect. 21. p. 105.

See, &c. But let us hear his Lordship's general Principle once more. *The Favour of God follows Sincerity* CONSIDERED AS SUCH; and consequently EQUALLY follows every EQUAL DEGREE of Sincerity. The Meaning of which, as I have already shewn, is plainly this; That in dispensing his Favours, God has no Regard to any thing but the Sincerity of a Man's Heart, and that therefore all sincere Persons have a Right or Title to an equal Degree or Share of God's Favour. Now if his Lordship can see no Difference between these two Assertions, I am sorry for it; for surely there is a very wide one, unless it were true that all Persons who are not damned are intitled to an equal Share of God's Favour! Can this then be affirmed, or can it not? Why, this too I am willing to try. Only let it be observed that his Lordship's DEMONSTRATION is not quite done withal, as falling manifestly short of the Point to be proved. That which his Lordship (as it is now supposed) has proved by his Argument is, That no sincere Person SHALL BE DAMNED. The Doctrine built upon this Argument, and which therefore ought to be proved by it, to make it conclusive, is, That all sincere Persons are INTITLED to an EQUAL SHARE of God's Favour. Whether this latter Assertion can be maintained, or not, is now the Question. But this must be determined not by that Argument, but by Arguments of another Nature.

And here without any more ado, I am willing to suppose the Meaning of the Question to be this, *viz.* Whether all Persons who are not in a State of Condemnation, are entitled to an equal Share of God's Favour, notwithstanding any Difference that there is between them with respect to the PARTICULAR METHOD OF RELIGION, which they each of them follow. This you'll say, perhaps, is a very large Concession to one that deals so much in DEMONSTRATIONS. For according as his Lordship has stated the Matter, 'tis plain, that he hath left no Room for God Almighty in dispensing his Favours in a Life to come, to make any Difference between one Man and another upon the Account of their Moral Qualifications. His Lordship, I presume, will not venture to affirm, that all Per-

sons who are *sincere* in their *Perfwasions*, and act according to what they are thus sincerely perfwaded of, do yet make *equal Improvements* under those *Perfwasions*. If therefore the Favour of God follows Sincerity *as such*, i. e. If God in dispensing his Favours has *no* Regard to *any thing* else but Sincerity, then how different soever the State and Condition of *one* sincere Man may be from the State of *another* as to *such Improvements*, his State as to the Favour of God must be the very same. But I am willing to use his Lordship with all the Fairness imaginable, and therefore will not suppose that he *intended* any such thing, because I hope he does not *believe* any such thing, and because it was no way *suitable* to the *Matter* he was upon, to have *affirmed* any such thing. The Case of a Man's chusing in the Sincerity of his Heart, a *wrong Method* of Religion, was the Case in Hand; and it is upon his Resolution of this Case, that his general Rule is founded. If therefore the Assertion can be made good *in this Respect*, it answers his Lordship's End. Whether it can or not shall therefore be the only Question, and I think it may soon be resolved by the Help of a few plain Propositions, the Truth of which I hope will not be disputed.

The Propositions are these, *viz.*

1. That he who is intitled to the Rewards of the Gospel, is intitled to a greater Share of God's Favour, than he who is not.

2. That no one can have a Title to the Rewards of the Gospel by Vertue of *his own Merits*, but only thro' the Merits and Satisfaction of Jesus Christ.

3. That Jesus Christ having procur'd these Rewards for us, he may dispose of them upon what Terms and Conditions he pleases.

4. That

4. That whatever *Terms* or *Conditions* have been *fixed* upon by *Jesus Christ* for the obtaining these *Rewards*, those *Conditions* must be *performed*, or otherwise we can have *no Title* to these *Rewards*.

5. That there is *no other* Way of knowing upon what *Terms* *Jesus Christ* has proposed the *Rewards* of the *Gospel*, but by his *positive declared* Will.

6. That the *positive declared Will* of *Jesus Christ* can be learned *no where* but *from the Gospel*.

7. That therefore *no one* has, or can have a *Title* to the *Rewards* of the *Gospel*, but he who *performs the Conditions* laid down *in the Gospel*,

The Question now therefore is, whether *SINCERITY* be the *ONLY Condition* required in the *Gospel*, in order to give us a *Title* to the *Rewards* of the *Gospel*. And when his Lordship has once proved that it is, I will lay my Hand upon my Mouth, and not say one Word more. But this as yet he has not so much as attempted; and he was sensible, I suppose, that it would be in vain. The *Conditions* there laid down are *FAITH* in *Jesus Christ* and his *Doctrines*, and *OBEDIENCE* to his *Laws* and *Commandments*. These are inculcated upon us over and over; but *no where* do I find any *Promises* made to *SINCERITY* exclusive of these. No where can I learn, that he who in the *Integrity* of his Heart shall *fail* in these *Conditions*, is equally *intituled* to the *Favour* of God, with him who in the *same Integrity* shall *fulfill* them. If his Lordship can find any such *Texts* as these, I should gladly see them produced: But till then, I shall not be afraid to affirm, that (by any thing God has been pleased hitherto to reveal to us) no Man can be *certain*, that he is *intituled* to the *Rewards* of the *Gospel*, any farther than he is *certain* of his having *believed* and *done* as the *Gospel commands*. The *Justice* and *Mercy* of God, which his Lordship

ship so constantly appeals to, cannot in the least help him. For his *Justice* is cleared if he does *not punish* those who have always used their best Endeavours to serve him, tho' in a wrong Way. His *Mercy* will be conspicuous, if he *rewards* their Sincerity with *more* than they can *claim*; but neither *Justice* nor *Mercy* require that he should reward them *after the same Manner* that he rewards those who have sincerely and honestly served him in that Way which he has *prescribed*. That God may do this, if he pleases, I deny not. But this I say, that he has not *bound himself by Promise* so to do; and that what he *actually intends* in this Case, he has not thought fit any where to reveal. Therefore I dare not say even that God will have *no Regard* to the *Method of Religion* a Man has followed, in dispensing the Rewards of a Life to come. I dare not affirm, that he *has reserved no greater Degree of Glory* for *sincere Christians*, than he has for *sincere Jews, Turks, or Heathens*; nor for *sincere Orthodox Professors*, than for the *sincerely Erroneous*. I think it much more decent and modest in ME, to sit down contented with what I find revealed, and to leave *Secret Things* to him to whom *Secret Things belong*, who tho' (we may assure our selves) he will deal by all hereafter in such a Manner as that none shall have Occasion to complain, yet he will not be tied down by such Rules as even the *most lifted up* among the Sons of Men shall aforehand think fit to prescribe for him.

But if this be the Case; (n) If none have a Title to the Rewards of the Gospel but those who are in the Right, then none can be secure of it here upon Earth, because none can be infallibly or absolutely certain (that they are in the Right) without the Possibility of being mistaken. This Consequence his Lordship it seems does not like, and therefore declares (o) for HIMSELF, that HE will never put HIS OWN Salvation upon his being certainly in the Right till he is certain of his own INFALLIBILITY, (i. e. till he is infallibly Infallible) nor can he see any Comfort (upon this Principle) for the most sincere and most deserving Christians. Had it been

(n) Ibid. Sect. 19. p. 95. (o) Ibid. Sect. 21. p. 107. 108.

left to his Lordship to have fixed and determined for himself the Conditions of his Salvation, such a Speech might have well become him; but since it is *not*, he must for ought I know be content with *such a Title* as the Conditions laid down by *Almighty God* will afford him. And if his Lordship can find *no Comfort* without being *infallibly certain* that he has this *Title*, his Condition is really to be pitied and lamented. Even *his own Terms* will not afford him a sure Ground; for so long as *the Heart is deceitful* (and we are told, and we find, that its deceitful *above all things*) so long will it be impossible for a Man to be *infallibly certain* of his own *Sincerity*, and consequently so long it must be impossible (according to his Lordship's own Principle) for him to be *infallibly certain* of his own *Salvation*. But if any thing *less* than *Infallibly* will satisfy his Lordship, I think verily that the *Terms of Salvation* as they are now stated, will administer a *sufficient Ground* for *Comfort*. For 1. So sure as every Man is that he has always acted with *Sincerity*, so sure he may be that he shall *not be condemned*. 2. So sure also as a Man is of this, so sure may he be of meeting with a *good Reward*. But then 3. As to those who are for disposing of Men of *all Religions* in *the Kingdom of Christ* hereafter, as they would fain have them disposed of *here in the Kingdom of Men, i. e. upon an equal Foot*; who will not be comforted unless they, tho' they should happen to be never so much in the Wrong, may promise themselves the *same Share* of God's Favour, the *same Rewards* hereafter, with those who are never so much in the Right, and this too in the way of *Claim* and *Title*; I say, to Men of such *Comprehensive Principles* as these, I have *no Comfort* to give, and that because I am verily perswaded that the *Gospel* has given them *none*.

I have remarked these few Things, 1st. For the Honour of the Learned and Reverend the *Committee*, with whom (to speak modestly) I think his Lordship has not dealt *very sincerely* in this Dispute *about Sincerity*. 2^{dly}, And most principally, For the Honour of our common Lord and Master *Jesus Christ*, upon whose Wisdom I think it is no small Reflection to say, without any War-
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rant from him, that tho' he came on Purpose to teach us a New Religion, tho' he has taken Care by his Apostles, and by his Ministers which he hath appointed to continue to the End of the World, to propagate this Religion, and to keep Men sound and stedfast in the Faith and Practice of it, to say, notwithstanding all this, that this very Religion is *in it self not a surer or a better Way to Salvation than any other.* 3^{dly} And Lastly, To encourage Men earnestly to study and endeavour after the Knowledge of the Truth. For tho' 'tis a good Encouragement to Men to do this, to let them know that they shall for this Reason, tho' they should happen to be in the Wrong, be rewarded *well*, yet it is a *better* to say, that if their Endeavours should lead them into the right Way, they shall, so far as we can judge by the revealed Will of God, be rewarded *better*.

F I N I S.

