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J. Potter
THE

BISHOP of OXFORD's

CHARGE

TO THE

CLERGY

OF HIS

DIOCESE,

AT HIS

TRIENNIAL VISITATION

In *July*, 1719.



LONDON:


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Reverend, and dear Brethren;

INCE we are under the highest Obligation, as Ministers and Stewards of *Christ*, faithfully to discharge in our own Persons, and to labour with our utmost diligence, that all others may so discharge the Duties of the Christian Religion, as well such as concern *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*, as those which more immediately relate to Practice; I shall desire leave under both these Heads to lay before you, with all the Brevity and Plainness I am able, a few things, which seem, at this time more especially, to call for your serious Attention.

I. To begin with Faith, the Foundation of all other Christian Duties. You cannot be ignorant, what Attempts have lately been made, and are still daily farther advancing, to destroy some of the principal Doctrines, not of ours only, but, of the Catholick Church in all Ages; and, I wish, I could not say, to weaken and undermine all the rest: *These things have not been done in a Corner.*

Great Industry hath been used, and that with too much Success, to revive the *Arian* and *Semi-Arian* Heresies; and with the Professors thereof to unite almost all other Sects of Christians, however they may differ from one another as to Opinion, in the same visible Communion. So that, instead of rejecting those, who deprave the Christian Faith, as St. *Paul* commands, or in Obedience to St. *John*, of refusing even to receive them into our Houses, or to bid them *God speed*, should this Design prevail,

vail, we must pray with them, and partake with them of the Lord's Table, and associate together in all other Parts of religious Worship; and those alone will be reputed Schismatics, who separate themselves from the Communion of Hereticks.

Some have so far proceeded in this Scheme of general Comprehension, or rather Confusion, as to assert, that all sorts of Error, except those which immediately relate to Practice, are innocent and unblameable. With these Men one may perhaps deserve the Name of an Heretick, who outwardly professeth something he inwardly disbelieves, and in that sense *condemns himself*: But in any other Case, besides this of acting directly against the Dictates of Conscience, under which 'tis on all hands confessed to be a Fault to defend the Truth itself, they plainly intimate, that there is no harm in maintaining even the Doctrine of *Mahomet*, or any other, tho' ever so
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opposite to the Christian Revelation. We must not therefore wonder to hear it affirm'd, that in order to be justify'd before God, there is no need of any thing more, than to act agreeably to our present inward Persuasion, or in other terms, with Sincerity; or, that equal Degrees of this Quality will in all Cases (for I find no Exception made) entitle Men to equal Degrees of divine Favour: Whence it follows, that they who denied or even crucified our Saviour, provided they did it without remorse or hesitation, might deserve an equal Reward with those, who are Martyrs for him.

We have been accusom'd, and this agreeably to the judgment of all other Churches, and the most evident Principles both of Natural and Reveal'd Religion, to think it the Duty of Christian Princes to *maintain God's true Religion and Virtue*; and the Church, our Mother, hath taught us
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in the Communion Office to pray, that *all in Authority under them* may do the same. Now, if by *God's true Religion* nothing be meant, but that moral *Virtue*, from which it is plainly distinguish'd in this place, then our new Masters may still perhaps allow the Magistrate to execute this part of his Office; but if *God's true Religion* signifies that, which it always hath signified among Christians, the Worship of One true God, as oppos'd to that of Idols and false Gods; or the Way of Worship prescrib'd in the Holy Scripture, in opposition to Heathenish, and other Superstitions; or, if *God's true Religion* be understood to imply the Belief of Three Persons in One Godhead, of the Incarnation, Sufferings, and Satisfaction of *Christ*, of the Resurrection of the Body, or of any other Doctrine ever so plainly reveal'd by God; then it is openly declared, that for Christian Magistrates to discourage

courage *false Religion*, even in the least degree, or to favour and encourage that which is *true*, is to do something highly inconsistent both with the Nature and Ends of their own Authority, and with the Kingdom of *Christ*.

This may seem strange Doctrine in a Christian Country: But, since the Faith was maintained for several Ages without the Favour or Protection of the Civil Magistrate, they who advance these and the like novel Opinions, may perhaps be thought more excusable, if they endeavour to recompense for the loss of these temporal Advantages by their hearty Concern and just Zeal for that Spiritual Power, which our Lord hath left in his Church. But, instead of this, these Men describe the Church, rather as a Number of Persons disunited from, and independent on one another, than as an orderly Society under lawful Governours of divine, or
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necessary Appointment ; and thus root up, as far as in them lieth, the very Foundation of all Ecclesiastical Authority at once. It might easily be shewn, how by the Schemes lately published, every Branch of this Authority hath been very much weaken'd, and impair'd; or, rather, totally subverted and destroyed: But I shall confine myself to the Subject, of which I have been chiefly speaking, *viz.* the Christian Faith; in things relating to which, it hath been thought, not only highly inconvenient, but absurd and impracticable, for the Church to have any sort of Authority whatsoever. Our own Church, indeed, in her twentieth Article hath expressly declared, that *the Church hath Authority in Controversies of Faith*: And therefore some of them, who do not approve this Passage, have taken great Pains to persuade the World, that it was not originally in the Article, but inserted

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there by some, who affected more Power, than of right belonged to them: But this Attempt not succeeding according to their Desires, the rest always speak of it with such Reservations and Evasions, as plainly shew they heartily wish it were quite expung'd. One of the chief Causes of their Complaint, is the obliging Men to declare their Assent to *Humane Decisions*, as they are called; that is, to Articles of Faith, or Doctrine, which, however clearly deduced from the Holy Scriptures, are not found there in express Words. For, when *unlearned and unstable* Men, to use the Words of St. Peter, *wrested the Scriptures to their own Destruction*, it was always customary, even from the most Primitive Ages, for the Church, in order to prevent the spreading of such Infections, to require her Members, especially such of them as had been distinguish'd by any publick Character, to make an open
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and solemn Confession of their Faith; not in the very words of Holy Scripture, which had been perverted and misunderstood, because that would have been ineffectual to the purpose intended; but in others more fully, and distinctly setting forth the true Sense and Interpretation of those Words. With this view it was, that the Fathers of *Nice* inserted into their Creed those Clauses, which declare the true Divinity of our Blessed Lord, against *Arius*; that not long after, in opposition to the Heresy of *Macedonius*, others were added by the General Council of *Constantinople*, to assert the Divinity of the Holy Spirit; and that in the next Century, tho' no farther Change was made in the Creed, other Declarations of the true Faith, concerning the Incarnation of *Christ*, and the personal Union of his two Natures, were composed by general Synods assembled at *Ephesus* and *Chalcedon*; when the two opposite

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posite Heresies of *Nestorius* and *Eutyches* first shew'd themselves in the World. In these later Times, indeed, this Authority hath been very much abused: Instead of Articles of Faith, Men have been compelled to declare their Assent, not only to disputable Opinions, but to such as are evidently contrary, as well to the Principles of natural Reason, as to the Holy Scriptures, and the Doctrine of the best Ages; and those worthy Men, whom *God endued with Power from on high*, to withstand these unjust Impositions, have been exposed to as many and great Tryals, as even the first Christians endured in the Heathen Persecutions. These Practices, together with the Principles from which they proceed, can hardly be too much detested. But shall we then, instead of reforming these or the like Abuses, quite discard that sacred Authority which hath been abused? If this be always held for a certain Consequence,

quence, that nothing must be retain'd, which hath been perverted to any evil purpose; what Institution is there in the World, how sacred soever, or necessary to the Welfare of Mankind, which must not immediately be abolish'd? Parents must lose their Authority over their Children; Masters over their Families; Princes over their Subjects; and all other Rights, whether divine or humane, must be utterly extinguished. The fatal Mistakes of the Church of *Rome*, may soon convince every considerate Man, how dangerous it is to impose on others the Inventions of any Person whatsoever for the Precepts of God. 'Tis far therefore from my Desire to have the Church, by such Methods as these, reduced within more narrow bounds, than our Lord himself hath confin'd it; into whose bosom, I rather wish, and he is no Christian who doth not heartily wish, that, if it were possible, all the Kingdoms of the

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the Earth might be admitted; that, *as in Adam all died; so in Christ all might be made alive.* And some where or other there must needs be a very great fault, when any one of the meanest Believers is excluded from Communion, who desires to embrace it on the Terms which God hath prescrib'd: But should it once be allow'd, that whoever shall confess the Holy Scriptures, I do not say to be divinely inspir'd, which seems not to be insisted on, and hath sometimes been openly denied, but only to be true; whereby, perhaps, nothing more is often meant than may justly be affirm'd of other historical and moral Books, in which there is a Mixture of human Frailty and Mistake; If, I say, it be allow'd, that whoever in this, or any other the like Sense, shall own the Scriptures to be true, whilst at the same time he manifestly perverts some of the most important Truths therein revealed, must thereby be made capable, not only of
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any Office or Employment in the State of which I am not speaking, but of Communion, and of any other Privilege in the Church; which is the thing aim'd at; then may *Arians*, *Socinians*, with other Sectaries, Enthusiasts and Hereticks of all Denominations, be promoted even to the very chief Places of Ecclesiastical Authority and Trust. In other Societies no Man is admitted to any publick Employment, till he hath first engaged himself by solemn Oaths to discharge it with due Care and Fidelity: How hard then is the Fate of the Church, if those are to be her Guides and Rulers, who, for any Proof or Assurance given to the contrary, may be her most inveterate Enemies, and disbelieve almost every Article of that holy Faith, whereon she is founded? I should be heartily sorry to have misrepresented any Man in the World; but, as far as I am able to judge, this is the plain Design, the natural and direct

direct Tendency of that happy and glorious State of Liberty, as it is falsely called, or rather, as indeed it is, of that miserable Disorder, which some of late have with so much earnestness labour'd to introduce among us.

These, however, are only the vain Wishes of such as are not satisfied with that excellent and primitive Constitution; which the pious Care of our Forefathers, through the peculiar Blessing of divine Providence, hath left us: This being, under God's Protection, our Security, that no Man is, or can be, ordained even to the lowest Ecclesiastical Office, or allow'd to serve any spiritual Cure, who hath not first solemnly declared his unfeigned Assent, and firm Adherence, both to the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of *England*, as now by Law happily establish'd. These are the Landmarks, over which 'tis not possible for any Man to pass without manifest Self-contradiction, who in any point of
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considerable moment differs from us: But we must not wonder, if the best Provisions, which human Wisdom hath been able to contrive, are sometimes eluded by such, whose aim it is, either to bring in an unbounded Licentiousness of Opinion; or to reconcile their own Heresies, I do not say, with the Doctrines, for which they seem not to be much concern'd, but with the Preferments of the Church. 'Twas a free Confession of *Socinus*, that he thought himself at liberty to deny our Blessed Lord's *Satisfaction*; since that Expression doth not occur in the Holy Scriptures: But that, if the very Word had been found there, he should have contriv'd some way to evade it; because the Doctrine seem'd to him inconsistent with Reason. The same, or, if possible, greater Liberty hath been used in perverting the true sense of the Liturgy and Articles of the Church; otherwise how could it come to pass, that profess'd *Arians* should

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subscribe to the *Nicene* and *Athanasian* Creeds, and in the last of these to their own express Condemnation; or that they, who, as well in their publick Preaching and Writings, as in their private Conversation, are known constantly to assert, that the Son and the Holy Spirit are neither the same in Substance with the Father, nor equal to him in Glory, Power, or any other Attribute, should declare in the Words of the Communion Office, that in the ever Blessed Trinity there are *three Persons in one Substance*; for that which we believe of the Glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any Difference or Inequality? To enumerate all the Shifts and Evasions, which are used on this and the like Occasions, would be next to impossible; these being varied for the sake of every new Heresy, and according to every Man's Fancy, or peculiar way of thinking: not to say, that, like other *Works of Darkness*, they

they are for the most part carefully conceal'd from publick Notice. But there is one, which, if applied in its full extent, may serve instead of all the rest. It is this; that all Subscriptions and other Declarations of Assent, are to be made with this tacit Reservation; *viz. so far, as they are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures: Or,* which effectually answers the same purpose, that they may be understood *in any Sense agreeable to the Scriptures,* even when this Sense is notoriously repugnant both to the natural Signification of the Words, and to the manifest Intention of those who impose them: Which is said to be highly reasonable especially among Protestants; whose fundamental Principle this hath always been, that nothing ought to be receiv'd as an Article of Faith, which is not plainly proved by the Scriptures. Now there might be some colour for this Practice, had our own, and other reform'd Churches, declar'd their Al-

lowance of it: But this is not pretended; and had any such thing been designed, instead of long Confessions of Faith consisting of many Articles, wherein, beside other Errors and Heresies, those of the Church of *Rome* are expressly condemn'd, it would have been sufficient, in one Article or Proposition, to have asserted the Truth of the Holy Scriptures; this being the utmost, to which any Declaration of Assent, under the before mention'd Reservation, doth amount: And, in this sense, the most warm and rigid Advocates of Popery may safely subscribe to all the Dictates of *Luther*, or *Calvin*. But, he that would be satisfied, how far this Practice is agreeable to the Forms of Subscription used amongst us, may have recourse to the Thirty Sixth *Canon*, where some of them are thus expressed: *That the Book of Common Prayer containeth in it nothing contrary to the Word of God:* And again; *That he alloweth the Book*
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of Articles — and acknowledgeth all, and every, the Articles therein contained, being in Number Nine and Thirty, to be agreeable to the Word of God. To which things every Subscriber is oblig'd, for the avoiding of Ambiguity, to declare his Assent in this manner: *I do willingly, and ex animo, subscribe to these Articles, and to all things that are contain'd in them.* So that the Reservation, before spoken of, being here inserted, the Subscription must be thus understood: *I do willingly, and from my Heart, profess that the Book of Common Prayer, so far as it is agreeable to God's Word, containeth nothing in it contrary to the Word of God; and, in the next place, I acknowledge all, and every one of, the Thirty Nine Articles, so far as they are agreeable to the Word of God, to be agreeable to the Word of God.* What thoughts must these Men have entertain'd of the Understanding, or Integrity of their Superiors, who persuade themselves

themselves, that they require or allow them, in one of the most serious Affairs in the World, thus to trifle? Neither is there any just Cause, why the Benefit of this Evasion should not be made use of in Popish Countries, as well as Protestant: for, tho' the Papists believe Tradition to be a sufficient Ground of Faith, yet they do not believe that Scripture and Tradition contradict each other; and their best Writers maintain, that all their Traditions are contain'd in the written Word of God; tho', perhaps, not so clearly and fully, as to be made Articles of Faith before the Decision of the Church. Here then is a Principle, which, had it been formerly well understood, might have saved the Lives of many thousands of Protestants; who, by saying only within themselves, that they intended nothing disagreeable to the Scriptures, might safely have set their Hands to the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, Purgatory, In-
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vocation of Saints, and whatsoever else hath been decreed, either by that of *Trent*, or any other Popish Council. But to advance a little farther: There being no Principle, wherein both Protestants and Papists, and all the rest of Mankind, do more universally agree, than this, that nothing repugnant to Truth, ought to be believ'd; which no Man in his right Senses ever questioned; to make this Reservation, that we assent no farther than is agreeable to Truth, which some have done, as I have been informed, will in all respects be as consistent both with Reason, and Religion, as this, That we assent no farther than is agreeable to Scripture: Which being once allow'd, what is there so absurd, or so impious; to which we may not subscribe? In the *Mahometan* Countries we may receive the *Alcoran*; in those of *India*, the Doctrine of the *Brabmans*; and profess all other Schemes of Superstition

stitution or Idolatry, which are found in any part of the World. Neither must we stop here; there being no just Reason, why the same Arts and Evasions which are lawful in the most solemn Affirmations, should not be permitted in Oaths also. He therefore, who renounceth upon Oath all foreign Jurisdiction in Spiritual Affairs, must be allowed a Reservation for the Papal Authority, as far, as he thinks this, to be agreeable to God's Word: He that sweareth Allegiance to his Prince, may do it with a Salvo to the Duty he owes to any other Pretender, whom he thinks to have a better Right: And, tho' this Right should be expressly abjured, yet among Christians, and those Protestants too, no Abjuration whatever must be farther extended, than is consistent with the Holy Scriptures. Here then is an end of all mutual Trust and Confidence: And I might now appeal to the Conscience of every one who hears me, whether
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whether there was ever a more daring and barefaced insult; on the Christian Religion, shall I say, or rather on the common Sense, and common Honesty of Mankind? But having laid these things before you, I shall forbear all farther Exaggeration; not doubting of your hearty and zealous Concurrence with me to *banish and drive away all erroneous and strange Doctrine, contrary to God's Word*; as all of us, at our respective Ordinations, have solemnly vowed to do.

What farther Practices or Opinions may hereafter be introduced by these Methods, cannot certainly be known: Since from what hath been said it appears, that there is no Heresy whatsoever, which may not thus be reconcil'd, as well with the Subscriptions and Declarations we have made, as with any others, which can be devised. But I am in hopes that, in the opinion of every true Son of

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this Church, it will be a sufficient Confutation of all Innovations, which have been, or hereafter shall be, advanc'd, to say with St. Paul, *We have no such Custom, neither the Churches of God*; or, in the Words of our Blessed Lord; *From the Beginning it was not so.* To become the Author of new Hypotheses in Religion, or to call those Doctrines into question, which have always been firmly believed in the Church, even from the most early Ages to our Times, favours more of the Pride and Arrogance of some vain-glorious Philosopher, who by making strange Discoveries, and contradicting the rest of the World, seeks to raise in others a great Esteem of himself, than of the Humility of a good Christian; whose chief Glory consists in the entire Resignation of his Understanding, and the stedfast Belief of all the Truths, which God hath revealed to
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him, whether he doth, or doth not, clearly comprehend them. I speak not of Improvements in the liberal Arts, and Sciences; which had their Rise from Study and Observation, and therefore must be advanc'd, and perfected in the same Method: Whereas the Christian Religion having been completely publish'd to the World by our Blessed Lord, and his Apostles, no Addition can be made to it without a new Revelation. Here then is no room for Invention or Discovery: But, on the contrary, if any Doctrine be new; if it be not truly Primitive and Apostolical; we may, safely, without farther Examination, reject it as false and spurious, and no part of *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*. Whence our best Writers, as well in their Controversies with the Papists, as with other Sectaries and Hereticks, constantly appeal to the Judgment and Practice of the Church in the

next Centuries after the Apostles ; which, as she had better Means of Information, than can be pretended to in any succeeding Age, so cannot reasonably be suppos'd, either through Negligence or Design, and this, in all Parts of the World, at once, to have depriv'd it, whilst her Pastors and other chief Members, were daily suffering Martyrdom in its defence. But few there are, or rather none at all, as far as I have been able to observe, who refuse to allow the Testimony of the Primitive Writers its due Weight and Authority, such only excepted, as have not read them, or are afraid of their Evidence ; and, therefore, in order to divert us from the true Sense of the Holy Scriptures, in discovering which, those Interpreters have commonly the best Success, who most carefully compare them, with other Books of the same, or the next Ages, as the best Criticks al-
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ways do in explaining other Authors, would strictly confine us to the mere Words, because these alone, and unsupported, may more easily be forc'd to countenance their Innovations.

II. But, since 'tis in vain to believe well without living well, and the Defects in our Practice are as great and as many, to say no more, as those in our Faith and Doctrine; I must not conclude this Discourse, wherein so much has been said of the latter, without a due regard paid to the former.

Some indeed have describ'd Theology as a Science rather speculative than practical, and design'd more for the Information of our Understandings, than for the Regulation of our Lives and Behaviour: As, on the contrary, others seem to think, that provided our Lives be agreeable to God's Word, 'tis of no Consequence to our Salvation, what Notions we entertain

entertain concerning any Point, which relates to Speculation or Belief. But, if we have recourse to the Holy Scriptures, our best and only safe Guide, we shall there find, that, as on the one side, *We are justified by Faith, and He that believeth and is baptiz'd, shall be sav'd; but he, that believeth not, shall be damn'd:* so, on the other, *Faith without Works is dead; and, Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* There seems, indeed to me, to be no Article of Christian Doctrine, which doth not some way or other tend to Practice: But however, the time will shortly overtake all of us, wherein we shall experimentally find, how fruitless it will be to those Men to have thought rightly of the Divine Nature, Persons, and Attributes, with other Mysteries of Religion; or to have comprehended the whole Scheme of moral Duties; and to have been able in all Cases and Occurrences

currences, to determine exactly what was fit both for themselves and others to do; who *Held the Truth in Unrighteousness*. Some, who bear no good will to our sacred Function, have reproach'd us for shewing too much Zeal for the speculative or doctrinal, and too little or none at all for the practical Parts of Religion; for pursuing with great heat and violence those, who dissent from us in some Points of mere Opinion; whilst we connive at the very worst of Crimes in others, and even encourage them by our own bad Examples. Now should these, or any other false Imputations prevail with us to remit any part of that just Zeal and Concern for the great Truths of the Christian Religion, which becomes the *Stewards of the Mysteries of Christ*; this would be a manifest Breach of our Trust, and our Enemies would boast of their Success; but hence we
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may learn, what severe Censures would fall upon us, should it not appear from our publick Discourses, our private Admonitions, and from the whole Course of our Behaviour, that our Zeal is uniform and impartial; that we have the same Aversion and Hatred to all Sorts of Vice and Immorality, which we justly express against Heresies and Schisms; and make it our sincere and constant Endeavour, that in the great Day of Accounts, the People, whom God hath committed to our Charge, may be found as well unblameable in their Lives, as orthodox in their Faith. *Fas est & ab hoste doceri.*

As to our own Lives, it will perhaps be needless to put you in mind, that many Eyes are upon us; that our Words and Actions are narrowly watch'd and observ'd; that our Frailties and Imperfections are for the most part highly aggravated; and
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even our most innocent Behaviour often very much traduc'd and misrepresented; so that in order to preserve in others such an Opinion and Esteem of us, as is necessary to the successful Discharge of our holy Office, there is need of great Prudence and Circumspection, and we must *abstain* not only *from* all *Evil*, but from the most remote *Appearance* of it. I am afraid there are every where too many, who commit many things, which they would highly condemn in us; and seem to think several great Duties incumbent on us, from which they are wont to excuse themselves. Which dangerous Mistake might easily be corrected by looking into the Holy Scriptures: where they would soon find, that all of us, the People, as well as the Priests, are to be judg'd by the same Law; that the same Duties, those excepted which belong to our Sacerdotal Office, are enjoin'd,

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and the same Sins forbidden to both; and that, in order to Salvation, both are to be possess'd of the same Graces and Virtues. But this may inform us, how great the Offence would be, should any remarkable Defect appear in our Conversation; and, how impossible it would prove for us to excite in others that unaffected and hearty Zeal for true Religion and Virtue, that Contempt of the World, and those heavenly Dispositions, which are essential to the Christian Life, should we our selves be addicted to any sort of Vice, or immers'd in worldly Cares and Business; and behave our selves, not *as Strangers and Pilgrims*, but like those who have taken up their Rest, and enjoy their full Portion in the present Life. And we must farther remember, that being plac'd in our respective Cures, as the Guides of others, we ought not to content our selves to live after the manner

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ner of common Christians, but should strive to excel in all sorts of Virtue; that all the People whom divine Providence hath committed to our charge, may in our Practice daily behold an exact Pattern of their own Duty; and that the same thing, which St. *Paul* speaks of himself, may, in some good degree and proportion, be apply'd to every one of us; *Be ye Followers of me, as I also am of Christ.* This the same Apostle requires of *Timothy*, whom he left at *Ephesus* to govern the Church in his absence; *Be thou an Example of the Believers, says he, in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity:* And it is no more, than what we undertook at our Admission into holy Orders; when in the presence of God and the Church, we solemnly vow'd, *To be diligent to frame and fashion our own selves, and our Families, according to the Doctrine*

of Christ; and to make both our selves and them, as much as in us lieth, wholesome Examples and Patterns to the Flock of Christ.

I have already too far trespass'd on your Patience; and, therefore, shall detain you no longer, than to put you in mind of one thing farther, which always highly becomes the Ministers of the Gospel, and seems now after so many Rebellions, and so many Preparations for Rebellion, especially necessary; that you promote, as far as in you lieth, in all those who are under your Care, a Spirit of true Peace and Love towards one another, and of hearty Affection and Loyalty to that great and good Prince, whom it hath pleas'd the divine Providence to set over us. His Majesty's Arms, thro' the Blessing of God, have often conquer'd the Enemies of our happy Establishment: But, 'tis still left to your Persuasion
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and good Example, thro' the same Blessing to convert their Hearts: tho' it seems very strange and surprising, there should be any difficulty in prevailing with Men, where both Interest and Duty draw the same way, and no Temptation lies on the other side. For, were all the Grievances put together, which such Men complain of, as are most discontented and out of humour with the present State of Affairs; how inconsiderable would they be found, when put in the balance with those unavoidable Calamities, which a few Days spent in Civil Wars would bring upon us? We have the same Religion (thanks be to God) the same Civil Properties, and for both these the same (not to say much greater) Security, for which we, with our Fathers, have long been envied by other Nations: And should we, without the least Necessity, and thro' mere

mere Wantonness deliver up all these into the Hands of One, who, as far as yet appears, hath never given the least Assurance, that he hath any Intention to continue them to us, and by the constant and well known Maxims of his Religion is oblig'd to do the contrary; this would be such an Infatuation as hath no Example in any former Age, and would scarce be credited by Posterity. I shall therefore sum up this whole Discourse in the short, but most wise and seasonable, Advice of King Solomon: *My Son, fear thou the Lord, and the King, and meddle not with them, that are given to change: For their Calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the Ruin of them both?* Prov. xxiv. 21, 22.

And now, Brethren, I commend you to God; and to the Word of his Grace;

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Grace; which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among all them, which are sanctified.

Acts xx. 32.

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