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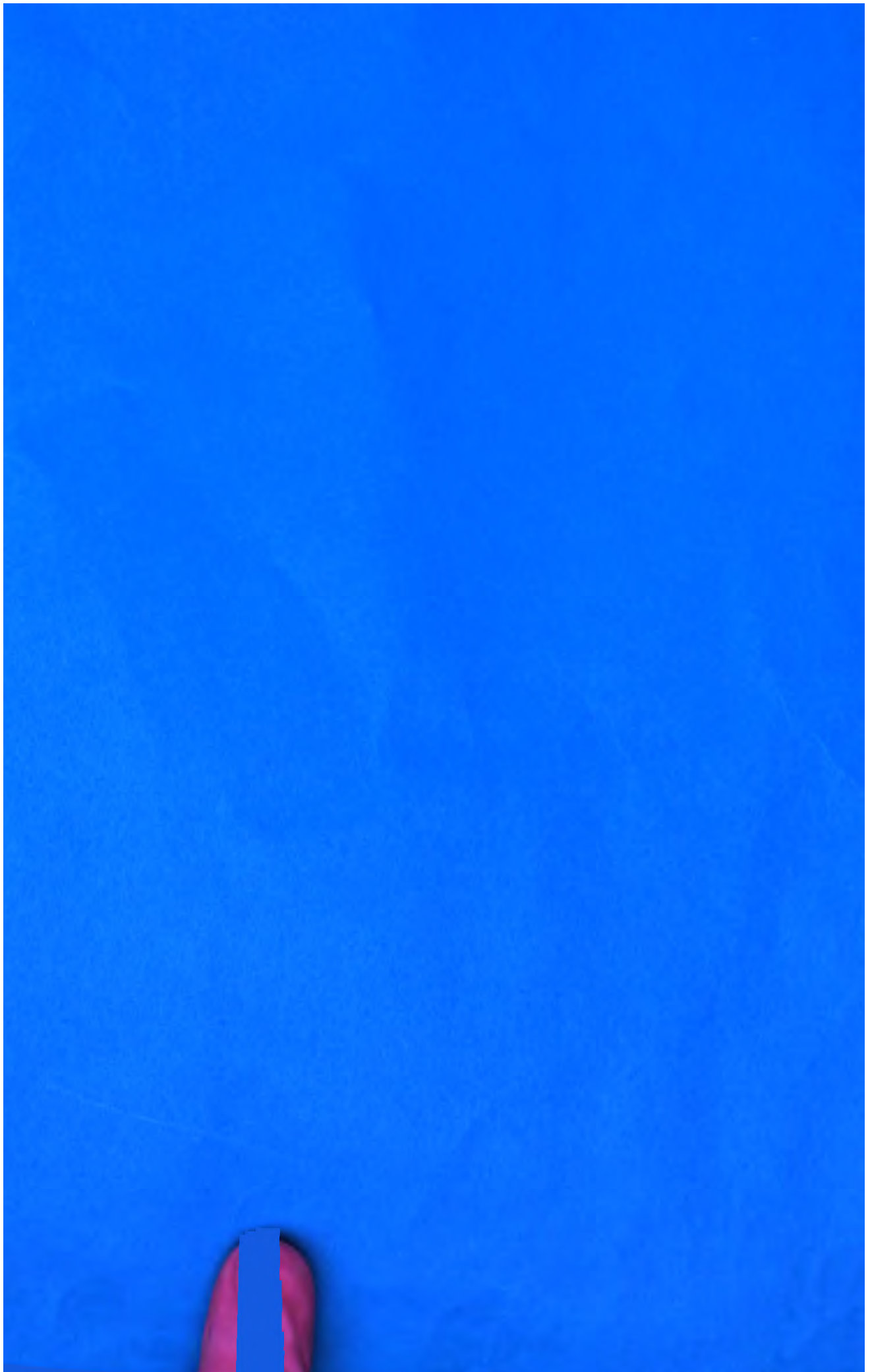
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The Reasonableness and Uses of commemorating King CHARLES'S Martyrdom.

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

Univerfity of OXFORD,

At St. MART's,

On Tuesday, January 30. 1753.

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Fellow of *Queen's* College.

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2 CHRON. XXXV. 25.

And Jeremiah lamented for Jofiah, and all the Singing-men and all the Singing-women ſpoke of Jofiah in their Lamentations to this Day, and made them an Ordinance in Iſrael: —

THERE is no Perſon We read of in ſacred Hiſtory, whoſe Death occaſion'd ſo univerſal and laſting a Sorrow, as that of the Prince, whoſe funeral Obſequies are here recorded. The great Prophet *Jeremiah* was ſo affected with it, that we find he made it, not leſs than the Captivity, the particular Subject of his Lamentation. And though he beſt knew the Value of this Prince, and what Times of Confuſion, to true Religion and his Country, were now likely to enſue, yet was he by no Means ſingular in his Grief on this Occaſion. The whole Houſe of *Iſrael* is repreſented as ſharing with him therein; and to a Degree ſo great and uncommon, that it was u-

fual afterwards to describe any grievous Mourning by comparing it to this in the Valley of *Megiddon*,^a where *Jofiah* was flain. Nor was this any short transient Gust of Passion, such as often arifes when Men are fuddenly cut off in the Vigour of Life and Height of their Purfuits: His Fall impreffed a deep and lafting Concern on the Minds of His People; and was judged of fuch fatal Confequence to their Happinefs, that it ever afterwards became the Subject of annual Commemoration.

It is to folemnize an Event of this Kind, that We are now, in the Prefence of Almighty God, affembled. How far our Cafe may refemble this of the chofen People, will beft appear from a Confideration of the Perfons and Circumftances, which occafion'd the refpective Obfervances. Now the Endowments, for which *Jofiah* feems to have been more particularly eminent, were, a *Heart tender*^b and well difpofed; a Mind deeply imprinted with an awful Senfe of the Divine Being; an unwearied Zeal to reftore, throughout his Dominions, the eftablifhed Religion of his Country, which was then miferably defaced; and an exact Conformity to the Duties of it in his own Perfon, according to that which was written in the Law of *Mofes*. Thefe were the diftin-

^a Zechariah 12. 11. ^b 2 Chron. 24. 27.

guishing Virtues of this excellent Prince: In which he seems to have been so nearly resembled by the Person We this Day commemorate, allowing for the different Dispensations of Religion under which they lived, that I am persuaded You are before-hand with me in drawing the Comparifon. Instead therefore of attempting his Character, which wou'd only be repeating the above-mention'd Virtues, fuffer me only farther to add, that the Similitude, in some Meafure, reached even to the Deaths of these two Worthies: Both of them being cut off in the Vigour of their Age; both brought to violent and untimely Ends; with this Difference only, that the Firft was flain in Battel with a foreign Enemy, the Laft was murder'd by the Hands of his own Subjects: A Circumftance which renders the Duty of an annual Lamentation on our Part the more incumbent. The fucceeding Times to both these Events were fo full of Diftraction and Mifery, that it is not eafy to determine which of the two Nations fustain'd the greater Lofs.

Since then We have the Example of GOD's People for our Guide, in a Cafe, at leaft, equally worthy of our devout Humiliation, it may feem ftange that it fhould not always have met with a proportionable Regard. We fay Nothing
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of those mighty Alleviations and Softnings wherewith the Sin of this Day has been frequently represented. These may be owing to Length of Time, which is apt to cool our justest Resentments. But then with what Mockery and Rudeness has this Solemnity been treated by some? How has the total Discontinuance of it been insisted on by others? And by how many the pious Prince, whose Sufferings gave Birth to it, through the most unaccountable Policy, been basely traduced and vilify'd? Such fashionable Clamours are, not only impious in themselves, but Insults on that Government, which from the Fitness of this Solemnity, wisely calls us to the annual Performance of it.

In Order therefore to silence these licentious Tongues; and to beget in us a due Seriousness and Contrition of Heart on this Occasion; and above all, to remind us of the great Duty of Subjection to Government; let us consider,

- I. *First*, the Reasons We have to distinguish this Day with public Fastings and Humiliation.
- II. *Secondly*, the Advantages which may accrue to us from appropriating it to these sacred Purposes.

With

With Regard then to the Reasons We have to distinguish this Day with public Fastings and Humiliation: These are of three Kinds, as they respect the Person suffering; the Loss sustained by the Community in His Death; and the Guilt which this, and the Crimes relative to it, brought upon the Nation.

And first in Respect to the Person suffering: Whether indeed the Honours, instituted to the Memories of good Men, ever come within the Reach of their Knowledge in a future State, is a Point which Revelation hath no where determined. Doubtless Heaven is sufficiently provided with Joys to render their Happiness compleat, without referring them for any Part of it to a Review of what passes here. Otherwise one might imagine, in Regard more especially to Persons who had met with cruel Treatment in the World, that to see Prejudices removed, Men's Judgements rectified, their own Characters cleared, and their Memories now held in public Veneration and Esteem, might not improperly constitute some Part of the Reward allotted to them for their former Sufferings. And if any Thing of this Kind cou'd be supposed to administer to the Felicity of departed Souls, surely our late unhappy Sovereign, from the Hardships he underwent in his stormy Passage thro' the

the World, is intitled, above all others, to whatever Amends in this Way Posterity can make him.

But be this as it will, mere Sentiments of Humanity should incline us to pay this Tribute of Tears to his Memory. History itself does not set before us an Object more deserving of our Pity and Commiseration, Him only excepted, who was emphatically stiled *a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*. The Personal Hardships he endured, though such as rarely fall to the Lot of Kings, were the least Part of his Sufferings. The cruel Opposition of Enemies, the Desertion of Friends, the perpetual Strifes among his Adherents, without any Reverence for His Authority or Presence, and the Shame to find himself every where so ill obeyed, were Misfortunes that sat much heavier upon his Mind. At the same Time, how grievously were his best Actions misrepresented? What heavy Loads of Obloquy were thrown upon Him? How industriously was He render'd the Object of public Hatred and Contempt? Besides the Anguish he daily felt for the Miseries of his de-luded People. What a strange Falling short was this of his just Expectations? He had begun his Reign with great Advantages of Nature and Learning, and with the noblest Intentions to
render

render his Kingdoms flourishing and happy, beyond the Example of former Times. With what bitter Affliction then must it have pierced him to find, that with the honestest Heart and kindest Affections for his People, He should yet, by an unaccountable Fatality, be less depended on, less revered, and less obeyed, than the worst and weakest of his Predecessors ?

As to His being driven from his Throne ; bereft of his domestic Comforts, in which no Man took greater Satisfaction ; the continual Decline of His Affairs ; and the ignominious Sufferings he was reduced to at last ; they are Circumstances too melancholy to bear a particular Consideration.

Let us therefore only farther observe, that as his Distresses were great in themselves, so they wanted Nothing in their Cause to render them affecting ? When Sufferings, though unjust, are submitted to only as a Means to procure to *ourselves* some private Advantage, Standers-by can look on them with the greater Indifference. But when they are undergone with a generous Design to promote the Good of the Public, or to prevent its Ruin, they have every imaginable Claim to our unfeigned Commiseration. It is in this Light We ought to view the Sufferings of the royal Martyr ; whose own Times, notwith-

standing the unreasonable Men He had to deal with, might perhaps have been made tolerably easy by a Compliance with their exorbitant Demands. But to guard the Constitution, in Church and State, was esteem'd a Trust of too great Importance to the Public, to the Peace of his own Mind, and to the Interests of those who shou'd inherit after Him, to be bartered away for the trifling Consideration of a little private Ease.

The Truth is, He considered his People as in a temporary State of Infatuation and Madness, out of which they would e're long recover and return to a sounder Mind; and that though He himself might perish by not giving Way to their Fury, Posterity however would reap the Benefit of his Steadiness, and at length find their Way out of the present Confusion. It must ever therefore be acknowledged as a signal Instance of God's Goodness, that, when He saw fit to punish the Nation with a Spirit of Frenzy and Distraction, he should yet in his merciful Severity let it loose at so seasonable Time. Under any Monarch less provident for the Welfare of his People, it must, after ruining the Constitution, have procured perpetual Establishment by Law to such other Scheme of Government, as Men of the most libertine Principles should have thought fit to impose. Instead then of representing this Prince as
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an Enemy to his Country, We should esteem his unshaken Firmness and Patience in Adversity, as the chief Means, under Providence, of its Laws not being finally destroy'd. Such Sufferings therefore, and in such a Cause, will ever merit our deepest Concern, as well as most grateful Remembrance.

But however, though persecuted Innocence be always a fit Object of Pity, yet our Sorrow on this Occasion, were We to look no farther than the Sufferings of the Martyr, might admit of great Alleviations. The lasting Honour done to himself and to Christianity by the heroic Manner in which he endured them, and the Way they opened Him to a more early and glorious Immortality, would, in the midst of Trouble, be Matter of Comfort and joyful Remembrance to us. But the Misfortune was, His Gains in this Respect were the Publick's Loss; and prevented much probable Good to the Nation as well as introduced much real Evil. In which View the cool Suggestions of *Reason*, no less than the tender Workings of *Nature*, will justify our Grief on this Occasion.

Let us therefore consider, in the *next* Place, what apparent Damage the Community sustained by the untimely Death of this Monarch. We cannot indeed engage for the future good Dispo-

fitions of any Man ; much less warrant the Success of his Designs. But in Regard to the Prince now under Consideration, if We may judge from his Maturity of Years, and settled Habits of Virtue ; from the admirable Abilities, and extensive Views, of Persons in highest Trust under Him ; or from the noble Beginnings which had already been made ; the Nation would have owed great Improvements to His Reign, had it been protracted to its natural Length and subject only to ordinary Occurrences.

A Consideration of Particulars will best enable us to judge concerning the Reasonableness of these Expectations. With Respect therefore to, what will always be uppermost in the Thoughts of a good Man, the Advancement of true Religion. There were many Ingredients in the Character of this Prince, which might render him particularly to be depended on for His kindest Assistance in this Affair. He had, by the natural Bent of his Genius, the Conversation of the Times, and the Importance of the Subject, been led into an early and familiar Acquaintance with the Doctrines of our Church. Time and long Experience of Her Excellency had ripen'd this into an habitual Fondness and Veneration for Her, and produced in him Sentiments of the most filial Tenderness and Affection. This made
him

him truly desirous of extending Her Interests, and of winning over All to a Profession of the wholsom Doctrines which She prescribed. And though We cannot hope that He could ever have brought his People, in so obstinate and refractory an Age, to that Uniformity of Worship, which is always so greatly to be wished; yet surely much Good might have been done in this Respect, had not his Authority been diminished and at Length wholly taken away. At least, the Church would have been kept safe from Annoyance, and those Swarms of Sectaries repressed, which afterwards arose in such Numbers to destroy it, and have ever since hung over it, like a Cloud, ready at the least Encouragement to settle upon it and devour it.

But however He might have succeeded here, We may pronounce with greater Certainty concerning the good Effects of His Reign on the practical Religion and Morals of his People. The bare Example of a good King will spread its Influence no inconsiderable Way. But when he takes the farther Care to countenance only the Pretensions of worthy Men, his Sphere of doing Good will be greatly enlarged, and reach through them to their remotest Dependents in a long Subordination. This Rule was visibly attended to in the Conduct of this excellent Prince.

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He did not readily admit any into Places of Trust or nearer Access to His Person, that were not Men of sober and unblemished Lives. To appear frequently and join with Him in the public Offices of the Church, was known to be agreeable to Him, and understood as a previous Step to his Favour. And the affectionate Regard he paid to Her ablest Professors, making them his ever welcome Companions and truly spiritual Guides, brought Religion into great Credit and Esteem. Not to mention the strict Inquiry he caused to be made into Men's Lives, or the Punishment which was sure to be inflicted on scandalous Wickedness wherever it was found. In short the Promotion of Piety and Virtue seems to have been always uppermost in his Thoughts; towards which no reasonable Inducements were wanting, that could be suggested by a vigilant and wise King.

The Success of these Endeavours were visibly seen in the trying Times that followed. For to them, We have Reason to believe, were in a good Measure owing those many excellent and brave Men, who out of mere Motives of Duty to their Prince, and Love of the established Religion and Laws, underwent the last Extremities. At least, Few, I am persuaded, of equal Fortune and Birth, would have hazarded their *All*,
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in any Times wherein such worthy Principles were less fashionable. Their Sufferings may be considered therefore, as so many Testimonies of the Benefit they had reaped, from the pious Labours and Example of their Sovereign. And if the Influence was not general, it was because the Nation at that Time was far gone in Vice, and, from the Mists of Prejudice industriously raised, beheld the King and his Court through the grossest Medium. What then might have been expected, had Providence, in Mercy to our Land, suffered him thus to go on through a long Course of Years, exhibiting in himself a Pattern of every Christian Virtue; making the Qualifications of Probity and Religion the great Recommendations to Favour; and laying Vice and Intemperance under manifest Disgrace? It must at Length have overcome every Prejudice, and have given such Establishment to Piety, as Time, with all our Proneness to Sin, could not readily have destroy'd. What a Loss therefore his Death was to us as a People, every one will judge, who considers how closely the Blessings of Providence are connected with a national Piety.

To these weighty Considerations I may here add, what would be esteemed no small Misfortune, if it stood alone, namely, the Interruption given by this Event to the useful and ornamental

mental Arts of a Nation. We read of no Times wherein these were in a fairer Way of being brought to Perfection, than during the quiet Part of this Reign, under a Prince who was admirably skilled in Affairs of this kind, and distinguished for his Patronage and Encouragement of Arts, above all his Predecessors in the Throne. This Circumstance, though not unworthy the Remembrance of a Nation jealous of its Glory in this Respect, will however always be reflected on, with peculiar Regret, by Societies of Men set apart for the Study and Improvement of liberal Knowledge. And with Regard to ourselves; that intire Confidence He reposed in these Seats of Learning; that safe Retreat they afforded him in Times of Danger; and that generous Assistance He received from them in his utmost Need, besides endearing his Memory, render us still deeper Sharers in the general Loss; as Places so eminently loyal and serviceable could not, upon a Recovery of His former Estate, but have received distinguished Marks of His Favour.

These are some of the Advantages lost to our Country by the Murder of this Prince. To which if We should add the immediate Judgments it brought upon the Kingdom during the Usurpation that followed, or trace the more distant Evils proceeding naturally from it, the Account would be greatly inflamed. But

But I rather hasten to what was *last* to be considered under this Head, and *most* deserves our unfeigned Contrition, to wit, the Guilt which this foul Act, with the other Crimes relative thereto, brought upon the Nation.

This will appear if We consider that in the New Testament, which ought to be the Rule of our Conduct civil as well as religious, there is no Duty enjoined more strongly or with fewer Limitations, than that of Submission to Governours. The Texts to this Purpose are so interwoven into the Offices of the Day, and withal so well known from the frequent Disputes which have arisen about the Doctrine of Obedience, that it would be needless here to repeat them. Let it therefore suffice to observe, that not a Precept was laid down touching this Duty, to which the Lives of its Authors were not strictly conformable. Thus it is remarked of our Blessed LORD, that He did many Things, to which he was not otherwise bound, purely to express his Regard for the civil Magistrate. His Disciples too, where they met with Opposition from the Great, did not, under a Pretence that their's was the Cause of GOD, endeavour to taint the Fidelity or alienate the Affections of the People from their lawful Governours. Their Practice, on the contrary, was to teach their Followers

C Obedience

Obedience in general, and leave *them*, from the Laws and Constitution of their Country, to determine, to whom, and in what Measure, that Obedience was due: Notwithstanding they lived under the most lawless and bloody Set of Tyrants We read of in History.

But the Guilt of this Day will appear in Colours more glaring and offensive, if We set forth, in Opposition to Obedience, the Heinousness of Rebellion in *general*, and the Aggravations with which *this in particular* was attended. Now the Crime of Rebellion, taken in all its Circumstances, is perhaps one of the blackest that it is possible for Man to commit. Other Sins consist in violating God's Commands; but this carries with it the additional heightening Circumstance of insulting His Person. For Kings He declares to be his Vice-gerents and Representatives on Earth. They stand in the same kind of Subordination to Him, as Ambassadors do to their respective Sovereigns; and therefore any Attacks made upon them will be considered as equally offered to Himself.

And if We consider this Act in a moral View, and as it relates only to the Persons that are guilty of it, Nothing can be more ungrateful and infamous. It is flying in the Face of public Authority; an open Assault upon what yields the
surest

surest Protection to ourselves, and to every other dear and valuable Property. It is violating the Engagements We have made to a Government for our quiet and dutiful Behaviour; the more solemn and binding these are, the baser the Example of Treachery and Perfidiousness.

The Effects of this Crime on the Public do moreover greatly heighten its Malignity. Government was instituted for the Benefit, the Protection, and the Support of the whole Community. But Rebellion utterly defeats these Ends. For what Designs can be set on Foot for the Honour or Advantage of a Nation, when itself is ready to be devoured by intestine Flames? What Protection can a Government afford its Subjects against a foreign Enemy, whilst it has a powerful Faction up in Arms to contend with at Home? Or what Succour to Men in their private Capacity, in Case of any potent Oppressor, when the Course of Justice is stopped, or the Force of it naturally turned another Way? Nay when probably the very Notions of Right and Wrong are lost in the Madness of Party; and every Man is rated, not according to his Virtues or Vices, but the political Principles he hath espoused. This is the very Season for the artful Villain to perpetrate his Crimes in with Impunity: For then, like a Man situated on

the Borders of two contending States, if he has committed any Frauds or Depredations on one Side, he has the other ready at Hand to betake himself to for Refuge.

But Rebellion never wears so terrifying an Aspect, as when it appears in all the Horrors and Confusion of a civil War. Its Progress through a Kingdom is then marked with Nothing but Rapine and Desolation, Sacrilege and Blood: not to mention the thousand Fears and Apprehensions of a People at such a Time; nor the Tears of good Men shed over their bleeding Country. In short, War under any Form is dreadful; but most particularly so when it rages among Fellow-citizens. In other Contests of this Kind there is something of Generosity and mutual Compassion shewn, as the Parties are not set on by Malice. But civil Wars, like Enmities between Friends or Relations, have in them a deep Mixture of personal Spite, and are therefore generally carried on with the most determined Rancour and Cruelty.

Such then is the heinous Nature of Rebellion in general. And if We descend to that in particular, which gave Occasion to the present Solemnity, we shall find, that besides the Guilt which naturally adheres to this Crime, it was loaded with many additional and aggravating Circumstances, Whe-

Whether an Infurrection against a Prince can on *any* Account be lawful, is a Question that hath been greatly disputed. Though possibly Cases might be put, of Oppression, of Cruelty, and of absolute Tyranny over the Properties, the Religion, and the Lives of Subjects, which human Nature could not endure, but would be roused, by a Kind of natural Instinct, to shake off the present Incumbrance. To say Men are bound to sit still under such a Load, would be establishing an unequal Law against themselves, and rendering free Subjects ever liable to change their Condition for that of Slavery, without leaving them any Means to prevent it. At such Junctures therefore if some bolder Steps should be taken to rescue themselves, the Necessity of the Times might seem to excuse them. But then, as on one Hand Liberty might be lost, if to resist was in no Case allowable; so on the other, Government could not subsist, if Men might rebel as oft as they were dissatisfied. Nothing therefore less than the greatest Evils felt, or reasonably apprehended, can afford any Plea to justify a forcible Opposition.

Taking the Matter then no higher than the Principles of mere human Policy, what must we think of those Men who kindled the Rebellion of which We are speaking? What Provocations had
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had they to introduce an Evil, which, in most possible Cases, must create greater Mischiefs, than any it can pretend to rectify or prevent? The only Motives we know of that can give Colour to such desperate Undertakings, are the Ruin of Religion, the Subversion of the Laws, or the general Sufferings of a People. But was the Wickedness of their Attempts so much as *alleviated* by all or by one of these Considerations? With Regard to *Religion*, the King gave the last Proofs of his being zealously attached to it, as by Law established in the Church of *England*: Which I doubt not, with his Enemies, was his greatest Crime. It may be indeed He did not give that Discouragement to those of the *Romish* Communion, which some might desire. But a well-natured Man would be inclined to pity his Situation, rather than blame his Conduct in this particular. The nearest and dearest Relation he had in the World was unhappily of this Persuasion, whose Importunities in their Favour could not therefore be wholly neglected. The Papists saw and compassionated his Distress; and the Straits his Enemies reduced him to, at once provoked and obliged him to accept of their Service: which he might surely make use of with as little Offence as his rebellious Subjects were known to do. But that He favoured
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their Tenets, or designed to make the Religion bend to them, which he had been bred up in and sworn to defend, is as little true, as it is at this Day, by the Generality, little believed. However His Enemies knew, that an Opinion of this would set the Nation on a Flame; which was Foundation enough for them to spread it with Industry.

The Charge against him on the Head of *civil Affairs*, was not perhaps so altogether groundless. That here some undue Stretches of Power were attempted, impartial Men will not be forward to deny. Yet *they* will be inclined to judge of these, not by the regal Authority under subsequent Limitations; which would be like trying a Man by the Laws of one Kingdom, who was only subject to those of another: but by the Prerogative as it then stood, when the supposed Excesses were committed. In this View of Things his Conduct will appear less worthy of Reproach. Some of those Steps which occasioned the loudest Complaints, were such, as Persons best skilled in the Laws assured him were, not only allowable from the Necessity of his Affairs, but legal; they were in Fact such as the most admired of his Predecessors had taken; and such as would have been little regarded in a less factious and turbulent Age. But be this as
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it will, his Enemies had no Occasion to proceed farther than to the known and ordinary Methods of Opposition. For not a Grievance was complained of but what the King was most ready and willing to redress, upon a proper Representation, and, with all the Tenderness of a Father, to content his People, even beyond their reasonable Desires; which is well known to have been his Ruin. So much Goodness, on their own Principles, left them not even a specious Pretence for continuing the Troubles. But it was one great Mystery of those Times, and added not a little to their Iniquity, that Grievances, though redressed and owned to be so, were yet never suffered to be forgotten. Artful Men still kept poisoning the Minds of the People with a Remembrance of them, and by that Means rendered them as serviceable to the Purposes of Faction and Rage, as if really Nothing had been done by Way of Reparation for them.

It was a farther Aggravation of this Crime, that the *Condition of the State* afforded no Provocations to it. Sometimes it has happened that the Distresses brought upon a People by Famine, by War, or other Providential Evils, have caused sudden Insurrections against a Prince, notwithstanding they were Calamities, which he had no Power either to prevent or remedy. Thus *Moses*
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complains, that when the People were perishing with Thirst, *They were almost ready to stone him.*^a And though such desperate Efforts are not to be excused, yet from the violent Workings of human Nature under exquisite Distress, we are inclined to make favourable Allowances for them. But were these Disturbers of our Quiet provided with the least Plea of this Kind to offer in behalf of their Outrages? The Nation, as We learn from the most authentic Accounts, had never enjoy'd greater Peace or Plenty, or been in all Points more flourishing, than before this fatal Period. Besides, what might have added a Relish to these Blessings, and certainly made the Folly of parting with them greater, was, that they were vouchsafed to us at a Time, when all the neighbouring Kingdoms were involved in War, and our own, by large Accessions of Commerce, reaped the Benefit of their Dissensions. Every secular Interest therefore, as well as Duty, did then more particularly recommend the Cultivation of Peace among ourselves.

Accordingly, we may observe, this was not a Rebellion of the People's own choosing. The Defection at first took its Rise from a Few: and so intirely satisfied were the Generality with their King and ancient Constitution, that it could ne-

^a Exodus 17. 4.

ver have been brought to any Head, but by Use of the basest Means. To this End therefore bold Scandals, imaginary Fears, and false Hopes were every where plentifully sown. Some were allured by Flattery, some over-awed by Threatenings, many over-reached by Forgeries, and almost all imposed on by the prevailing Sin of those Times, deep Diffimulation. The Truth is, every Villany was necessary, and therefore no one left unpractised, to seduce an innocent Multitude into Rebellion: which gave great additional Horrors to a Crime in itself sufficiently black and detestable.

As to the crying Sins which followed, after the Defection by these Artifices became universal, I have no Inclination here to display them. This would only be disclosing such Scenes of Slaughter and Blood, as ought, for the Honour of our Country, to be for ever hid from human View. Let it therefore suffice in general to observe, that no Cruelty was omitted, during the Course of a long civil War, which either sullen Revenge, or obstinate, religious, Sourness could inspire.

It is well known what all this terminated in at last; the Ruin of our Church, the Subversion of the State, and the public Murder of a Prince in cold Blood, who for Piety, Temperance, Humility,

mility, and whatever other Virtues do best adorn a Christian, had no Superior.

And now, when these Men, by the most iniquitous Steps, had ascended to the Height of Power, did they employ it more to the Subject's Advantage, than those had done from whom it was wrested? this, though it could not have sanctified their Methods of attaining that Eminence, might however have yielded some Satisfaction. But alas! it happen'd here, as it ever will in Cases of the like Nature, that Power ill gotten was worse used. Those very Men, who had been so long calling out for Liberty, became now the most violent Oppressors; exacting a slavish Obedience from others in Points, where they had refused to pay only a dutiful Submission themselves. Thus every Grievance that had been complain'd of under a lawful Monarch, such as Want of Toleration in Religion, Taxes on the Subject, Courts unknown to the Constitution, and the like, was imposed with double Weight and Rigour under a base Usurpation. Not to mention numberless Hardships now laid upon the People, for which the late Reign had not afforded the least Shadow of Complaint. In a Word, the Nation was never more cruelly dealt with, than under its new Masters. A Judgement it too well deserved! But which it

had least of all Reason to expect from the Hands of those permitted to inflict it.

What shall We say then of a Rebellion, in itself the greatest of Crimes, begun without Provocation, proceeding through every Act of Violence and Injustice, ending in the most daring Act of Wickedness, and afterwards erecting itself into the most bloody and oppressive Tyranny? *Shall I not visit for these Things saith the LORD? Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?*^a If it be argued that *We* had no personal Share in the above-mentioned Crimes, and therefore ought not to be involved in the Punishment: Let it be remember'd that We have many Instances of GOD's judicial Dealings with the *Israelites*, from whence may best be learned His judicial Dealings with all other Nations, wherein this Plea was totally over-ruled. Thus in Cases of uncertain Murder, the People, nearest whom it was committed, were obliged to make a formal Expiation, notwithstanding themselves were innocent of the Crime; that so it might not be laid either to their or to the People of *Israel's* Charge.^b In like Manner the Blood of the *Gibeonites*, which *Saul* shed soon after his Exaltation to the Kingdom, was not punished, till the long Reign of *David* was nearly expired.^c

^a Jer. 5. 29. ^b Deut. 21. 1, &c. ^c 2 Sam. 21. 1. &c.

To which We may add, that Vengeance against *Judah*, for *Manasseh's* wicked Reign, was threaten'd so late as under that of *Josiah*,^a and only received its final Execution in the great Captivity. But our Saviour carries this Point still higher, and declares in his last compassionate Farewel to *Jerusalem*, that all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous *Abel*, to the Blood of *Zacharias*, should be required of that Generation.^b It is well known, how minutely this Prophecy was fulfilled in the Destruction of their City; and what heavy Vengeance even to this Day pursues that forlorn and despised People. Such Examples therefore are sufficient still to make us tremble; as they convince us that latest Posterity is not placed out of the Reach of the Punishment due to their Forefathers: especially if they continue adding to the original Guilt a fresh Load of their own Sins. For which Reason let us proceed in the

II. *Second* and *last* Place to consider the Advantages, which may accrue to us from appropriating this Day to publick Fastings and Humiliation.

And here the *first* and greatest Advantage we can propose to ourselves, from a due Use of

a 2 Kings 23. 26, 27. b Matt. 23. 35, 36.

these

these Means, is Restoration to the Divine Favour. That national Sins may remain a long Time not cancelled in the Books of Heaven, the above-cited Instances, out of inspired Writ, do abundantly testify. How our Accounts stand there, touching those heavy Articles of Guilt we have now been enumerating, GOD only knows, It is true, the Nation paid dearly for the Murder of their King and Banishment of his Children, under the Usurpation that followed. But nevertheless we have since had strong Intimations given us, from Time to Time, that the whole Debt is not yet fully discharged. Witness that unbounded Licentiousness which prevailed in one Reign; the near Approaches that were made to the Introduction of Popery and Slavery in another; the frequent Rebellions with which We have since been alarmed; and the Divisions still subsisting among us, which have all, by the divine Appointment, sprung from the same Root of Bitterness. What future Calamities, on this Account, Providence may yet have in Store, are only known to the secret Councils of Heaven. In the mean while it behoves us to use our best Endeavours to avert them, and appease the divine Wrath, that so no Remains of his Displeasure may hereafter discover themselves in our future Dangers. Towards which Nothing can be
so

fo effectual, as the Duties in which we are now engaged. They are the Methods wherein God himself hath signified his Pleasure of being addressed for Pardon and Reconciliation. They are the Methods which Nature suggests to us, as best fitted to excite in the Deity the Affections of Pity and good Will towards us; and have therefore been applied by all Nations, how different soever in their other Parts of Worship, to assuage the divine Wrath, and to procure a Restoration to Favour. Accordingly many Instances might be produced, out of both sacred and profane History, to shew the great Success attending such national Humiliations. As we hope indeed that, with regard to ourselves, these have proved a main Reason why, after the Rod has been so often held over us, the full Stroke of it has hitherto been never inflicted.

But the Service of this Day, is not only best suited to obtain Remission of Sins past, but to prevent our running into the like for the future. Without some stated Commemoration of this Kind, the Facts above-mention'd must have slept in History, been only Matter of Speculation to the Curious, and never have come to the Knowledge of Thousands. But this annual Solemnity brings the Multitude acquainted with them; and what is more, inspires them, from their Childhood,

hood, with the blackest Notions of Rebellion, and of the Crime of all those, who could dip their Hands in the Blood of Kings. The Truth is, such Observances operate by a Kind of mechanick Influence on the Minds of the Vulgar, and tend more to keep them steady in their Duty, than perhaps the strongest Reasonings would do. They can never therefore be in the true Interest of Government, who would lay aside the best Means of preserving alive these useful Abhorrences among the People, who must ever be the chief Strength of a Rebellion when or wherever it prevails.

Add to which, that the public Commemoration of this Murder affords the best Opportunity of enforcing the Duty of Submission to Kings. Indeed Obedience to these is so essential to the Happiness of a State, and withal an Office so incumbent on us as Christians, that methinks a Day set apart for the Inculcation of it might not be improper, though no particular Occasion invited us thereto. Because Duties, which may be taught at all Times, are apt to be wholly neglected, unless some Time more than another be fixed and determin'd for the Inforcement of them. It is therefore a Point of the highest Prudence to take Advantage, as it were, of this Occurrence to admonish Subjects of the Obedience
due

due to their Sovereign. This is like uttering Exhortations over the Dead, when the Object of Mortality is before our Eyes, and at once suggests the strongest Arguments for a good Life, and best disposes us to give them a serious and attentive Hearing.

And if this be a Remedy, in its own Nature adapted to do us Service, it could in no Age perhaps be more seasonably applied. The dissolute Principles in Religion, propagated for many Years with great Industry and Success amongst us, have produced, as they ever will, Notions equally loose in Point of Government; and thereby added Numbers to the ancient Enemies of our Constitution. The Truth of this Observation is but too well evinced by constant Experience. We see the Bent of the Nation is towards Licentiousness, and the Balance of Power daily inclining to the popular Side. Books of a republican Cast find more Readers and a kinder Reception in the World than heretofore. Men's Opinions of Things are new-moulded, as it were, and the grave, wholesom, and orderly Doctrines of our Fathers quite out of Fashion and Date amongst us. Hence that strange and unhappy Forwardness in the present Age to break through all those Fences and Inclosures, by which proper Subordinations are maintained,

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Hence we see Men getting every Day nearer to a Level with one another, and growing more familiar and bold with sacred Characters. So that the present Tranquillity is perhaps rather owing, under Providence, to the temperate Use of Power in our Superiors, than to any religious Principle of Obedience in the People themselves.

Whilst therefore the turbulent Spirit of former Times remains, or rather gains ground, it will behove us to keep in Remembrance the Sin of this Day, as the best Means to allay and repress it, by teaching us, from Example, where all republican Schemes, all Attempts to new model our Government would probably end. This indeed was dear-bought Experience at first; but from which later Times have reaped no trivial Advantage. It has furnished them with a ready Argument, on all Occasions, against Innovators in Church or State; and taught us in what Hands alone Power may safely be trusted: a Point of Knowledge which perhaps hath many Times since been the Saving of our Constitution.

Furthermore, this Solemnity may be of Use to us, not only as Subjects, but as Citizens and Members of the same Community. We cannot but observe, in the Course of our Meditations on this Day, what amazing Revolutions a few artful

ful Men could bring about, when once Parties were formed, and the Hearts of Fellow-citizens thoroughly enraged against one another. The Multitude then was at the Devotion of their Leaders, to engage in their most bloody Enterprises, to conquer or die for them, without having one real Interest at Stake of their own. An excellent Lesson this, to warn us of the Danger of fomenting Divisions! And therefore a Lesson above all others, in which it behoves the People of this Land to be well instructed: since not a War hath been carried on in our Nation for near seven hundred Years, but what arose out of its own Bowels. A Remark that perhaps can hardly be made of any other Kingdom. And yet, during that Space, as many bloody Battles have been fought in this Island, as in Countries most exposed to the Invasions and Insults of Enemies. Which is but too shameful a Proof of that bold and factious Disposition, for which we have been described, by our Neighbours, as all along famous. And were we to consider our present Divisions, and the little Good Will Men seem to bear one another, I fear, there would be little Reason to boast of our Tempers being changed. Yet at the same Time, to our Honour be it spoken, in other Respects, where Party is out of the Case, a Want of Charity and

kind Dispositions is by no Means the Fault of this Nation. How nearly then does it concern us to practise every Method to correct this our Proneness to civil Rage; it being evidently *the Sin, which, considered as a People, doth most easily beset us?*

Lastly, this Day will fall short of its proper Effect, unless it teach the great Movers and Heads of Sedition to be cautious, for their *own* Sakes, how they throw Affairs into Confusion. When once the Bands of Government are dissolved, and Men are all as it were let loose together, Leaders themselves can be little secure of maintaining their Stations. At such Times Men of more violent Designs are continually springing up and advancing forward in the Croud; who make no Conscience of thrusting aside those, that before had taught themselves to rebel. One cannot without admiring the just Dispensations of Providence observe, how fully this was exemplified in the chief Actors in the great Rebellion. Not a Set of Men engaged in this bloody Design, but what in Time was overtopped by others who had sprung up under them; and owed all their Growth to the Shelter and Protection which those had afforded them. Thus the Nobility, who had given Dignity and Weight to the Commons in their Attempts against their
Sove-

Sovereign, were at Length deposed by those Commons, and by them reduced to the ordinary Level. These again were insulted, and thrust out of Power, by the Officers they had hired to fight their Battles. And in the End the Officers themselves were menaced and over-awed by those Dregs of the People, their own Armies. So little can Conductors themselves hope still to keep foremost, through all the Windings and Perplexities of a civil War!

These are some of the Lessons, that may be learned, by Men of all Tempers and Degrees, from the instructive Folly of our Forefathers. — It therefore only now remains that we observe this reasonable and useful Solemnity in such Manner, as may best answer the Ends, for which it was instituted; the supplicating Pardon for Sins past, and the promoting in us all dutiful Obedience to our present Governours. Far be it from us then *to fast for Envy and Strife*. This would be only inhancing the Guilt, of which we are now met to implore the Forgiveness. Rather let us, upon every Return of this Season, join in our humble Addresses before the Throne of Grace, with all the Unanimity, and cordial Affection, which is natural to Men justly apprehensive of the same impending
Dangers:

Dangers: So shall this at once stay the Divine Wrath; and ever keep us from being ^a *as our Fathers, a stubborn and rebellious Generation; a Generation that set not their Heart aright, and whose Spirit was not steadfast with GOD.*

a Psalm 78. 8.

F I N I S.

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