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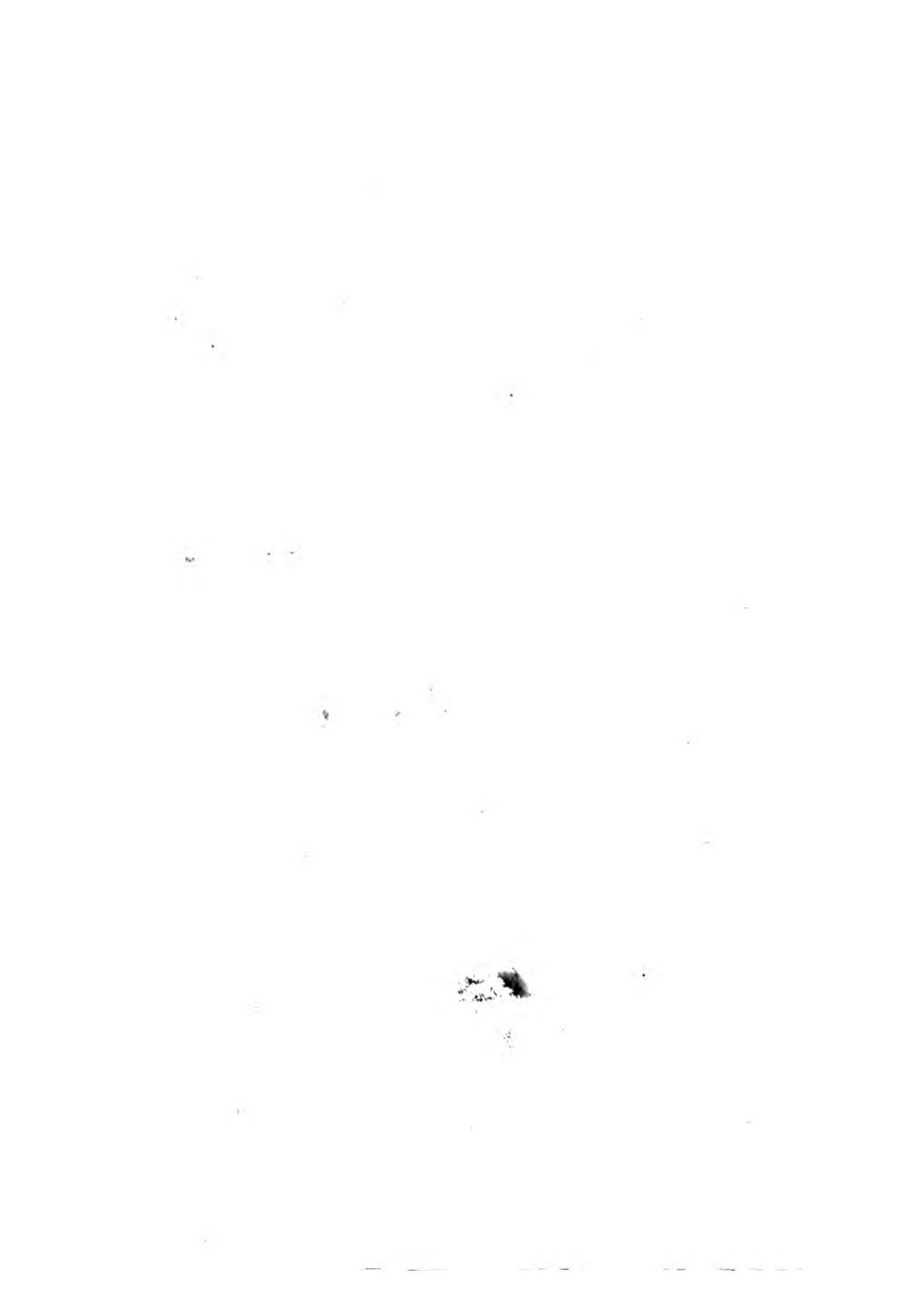
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A
SERMON

Preach'd before the
UNIVERSITY
OF
OXFORD,

At St. *MARY's*,

On *Thursday, January 30. 1752.*

Being the Anniverfary of the *Martyr-*
dom of K. CHARLES I.

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Publish'd at the Request of the VICE-CHAN-
CELLOR and the Heads of Houses.

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J. BROWNE,

Vice-Can. Oxon.

Febr. 15. 1752.



JEREM. xii. 1.

Righteous art thou O Lord, when I plead with thee; Yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments; Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy, that deal very treacherously?

THE most popular Argument against Providence, has always been taken from the consideration of the unequal distribution of the good and evil things of this Life: The promiscuous allotment of these to the righteous and to the wicked, seeming irreconcilable with the belief of a Divine Superintendency. This was especially the case in the dark ages of the World, when Mens notions were influenc'd by present appearances, and temporal blessings were the only known motives to Piety, and Goodness. It was probably owing to this obvious inequality, that some of the Philosophers, instead of accounting for the difficulty, refin'd it away, by declaiming upon the intrinsic excellence and independency of virtue, and maintaining it to be its own reward under

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all Circumstances whatsoever. And we have the less reason to be surpris'd either at the ignorance and misapprehension of the Vulgar, or the Chimerical sentiments of the wisest upon this subject, as we find many even of the best Men under the Law frequently complaining upon the very same Principle, and expressing themselves in some measure dissatisfied with the divine Dispensations. It is needless to refer to any other Proof of this than the expostulation of the Prophet in my Text. The Truth is, nothing but the Doctrine of Christ, *who brought Life and Immortality to light by his Gospel*, can effectually remove the doubts and scruples that naturally arise in the human Mind from the Observation of certain occurrences, or teach us to acknowledge the most perplexing of them to be consistent with that Goodness, Wisdom, and Justice, which are inseparably connected with the rational idea of God. And if the holy Prophet notwithstanding his anxiety, was yet possess'd with so thorough a sense of the Rectitude of the Divine Nature, that he confess'd the Lord to be *Righteous even when he presum'd to plead with him*, with what comfort and satisfaction may they who *have learnt Christ* endeavour in a spirit of humble curiosity to ascertain the purposes of Providence in the most affecting events, and trace as it were the Divinity through all present irregularities, fortified, as they are with the certainty of a life to come when *God will render to every man according to his Deeds?*

Reflec-

Reflections of this nature are never unreasonable, as there are not wanting even under the light of the Gospel, Men indefatigable in their search after pretences to call the Divine Attributes in question; and they are particularly suitable to the Solemnity of this day; When we are assembled to commemorate as amazing an instance of suffering Virtue as History can supply us with, whether we consider the high Rank or the innocence of the Party distressed, or the quarter from whence by Divine permission his afflictions came. The cruel, premeditated, publick Murder of a brave and pious Prince, whose greatest crimes were, (at that time at least) his hearty and conscientious zeal for the Constitution of a Church in whose bosom he was nursed, which he was sworn to defend, and which he chose rather to fall with, than survive; His magnanimous resolution in asserting those Rights and Prerogatives, which he could not in justice to himself, or his Posterity relinquish; His open, and princely concern for the execution of the laws, which had never been so notoriously invaded and trampled upon, as they were to his prejudice: (An invasion that rendered the Life and Property of every man precarious) His tender regard for the Liberties of the People whom God had committed to his charge, in their true and proper extent. A Murder like this committed by a set of desperate Men, so absolutely destitute of the least appearance of right, the least shadow of pretence either in point of common propriety, or legal autho-

authority to colour such an unparallel'd proceeding with, that the very names of most of them were scarce heard of, till their iniquities proclaim'd them. A murder, I say, attended with so many melancholy, so many odious circumstances of aggravation, carries with it upon a superficial survey so horrid an aspect, that it may seem to furnish Scepticism and Ridicule with the most plausible objections against the Government of the World by Divine Providence, and give the fairest occasion to the Enemy to insult and blaspheme in the language of the Heathen, *Where is now their God?*

It will not therefore ('tis presum'd) be unuseful to obviate all cavils of this sort, by inquiring into the grounds and reasons of such events as are most astonishing in the course of this world, with a particular view to the Catastrophe of this day.

It will not, secondly, be improper to exhibit such a sketch of the character of the Royal Martyr as shall justify the Application of the foregoing observations.

A few practical doctrines will lastly be deducible from the whole.

I am first then to inquire into the grounds and reasons of such events as are most astonishing in the course of this world, with a particular view to the Catastrophe of this day.

Now the mistakes we are all too apt to fall into upon the observation of such events as these, are to be ascrib'd to a certain narrow and selfish way

way of thinking, which prevents us from examining the divine proceedings in that general and extensive light in which they ought always to be considered. The many scriptural promises of temporal prosperity to the righteous, and repeated denunciations of woe to the wicked, must admit of their several exceptions: Nor can God be suppos'd not to have reserv'd to himself that liberty of deviating from such declarations, which is essential to him as Sovereign of the World. Indeed, when these promises were the principal inducements to Virtue, and these threats the strongest dissuatives from Vice (as they confessedly were, before the clear and explicit revelation of a future state) we cannot wonder at the complaints and uneasiness of those, who found them not punctually and literally fulfill'd; But, that under the Gospel Dispensation we are not to lay so great a stress upon them, is evident from numberless passages in holy writ of a contrary tendency, which encourage us to the performance of our duty by motives drawn wholly from the consideration of an Hereafter; and frequently assure us in express and positive terms to this effect, *that we must thro' much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* And as it would be absurd to infer from this Text that all good men are *born to trouble* and persecution *as the sparks fly upwards*, so would it be equally unreasonable to conclude from any words of an opposite import, that they may plead a right of absolute exemption from such persecution; because general expressions

pressions are not to be applied to extraordinary cases. This World is not the state of final retribution, and therefore the most extraordinary instances of the triumphs of the ungodly, and the distresses of the just, however preposterous upon any other hypothesis, are yet to be accounted for upon rational principles, if we consider them as instrumental to some particular purposes of the Deity ; As design'd for instance, either occasionally to display his glory, to manifest his justice and vengeance, or to illustrate, (what they at first seem to be objections against) the interposition and government of his Providence.

In the first place then, this truth deserves to be deeply imprinted upon our minds, that God under what notion soever we regard him, acts primarily and originally with a view to his own honour. This is the great end of all his Dispensations to mankind, whether they be universal, or of a more especial and personal kind. Agreeably to this rule, the blessings and afflictions of life are sent from one hand, and with one intention. The due application of the former of these plainly promotes the glory of God, and a true Christian spirit under the pressures of the latter still more directly and effectually tends to the advancement of the same. But no afflictions have so visible and immediate a relation hereunto, as the sufferings of those who are persecuted for righteousness sake : These sufferings do publick honour to God and Religion ; They are undeniable proofs of that sincerity and disinterestedness

restedness in which the chief merit of our obedience consists. And the glory of God is advanced thereby in proportion to such circumstances of dignity and integrity on the one hand, or of violence and unreasonableness on the other, as render the case more or less affecting and illustrious. The best men therefore are so far from being the least liable to persecution, that they are the proper objects of it; They are the only persons duly qualified to answer this end of Providence. The World has seen but one example of perfect innocence, which was in the person of Jesus Christ, who though he knew no sin, was yet emphatically *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*: And we are not less exhorted to imitate him in our sufferings than in our practice and conversations. *If when ye do well, and suffer for it, (says St. Peter,) ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps.* And accordingly we find the Apostles and first Professors of Christianity always acting upon this noble principle: Zealous to serve God in their lives, and even forward to glorify him by their deaths; As if it had been an opinion universally receiv'd, that Martyrdom was necessary to make the Christian Character compleat. In this view the Catastrophe of the day does not bear a shocking, but an amiable appearance. The Royal Martyr on the scaffold is a figure more glorious and attractive than that of a Monarch directing the coun-

councils of a Senate, or commanding Armies in the Field! Kings have been the *nursing-fathers* of the Church, and *Queens her nursing-mothers*; But to be reduc'd to the lowest state of wretchedness in her cause, to become the prey of avarice, rapine, and inhumanity, to be expos'd to the vilest insults and the grossest indignities, and at length to fall a sacrifice to the *madness of the People*; These are circumstances which eminently distinguish the Annals of *Charles* the first from those of all other Princes since the foundation of Christianity: And that he travell'd through this vale of tears with Heroic Fortitude, that he sustain'd this load of calamities with Christian Magnanimity, could only be owing to that abundant grace by which he was enabled so cheerfully to follow the steps of his blessed Master and Saviour, to the honour and glory of Almighty God, to the lasting credit of the church of *England*, and to his own immortal renown.

But secondly such events as these will furnish us with matter of reflection, as they are manifestations of God's justice, and vengeance.

In this sense all the powers and qualities of nature are but so many instruments in the hand of their great Author. Nor is it very material, whether the Divine Visitations be of a physical or a moral kind: Whether mankind be chastis'd with plague or pestilence, sword or famine, the oppression of tyranny, the confusion of anarchy, or the outrage of rebellion. These judgments are respectively dispens'd in a manner, and to a de-

degree proportionable to the measure of their provocations. And if we apply such considerations to the case before us, 'tis certain no Nation has been more grievously visited with the displeasure of Heaven than this: The wickedness of that People must be great, to whom the Lord in his anger gives a bad King; but theirs must be much greater, from whom in his wrath he takes away a good one. 'Tis not to be denied, that the miseries consequent upon the reigns of cruel and unjust Princes, are very painful corrections; but it is the surest mark of utter desolation and misery, when there is *no King in Israel, and every man doth that which is right in his own eyes*. We have to day "in the behalf of all
 "the people of this land confessed, that they were
 "the crying sins of this nation which brought
 "down this heavy judgment upon us." These sins are too odious, too numerous for repetition: It is sufficient to say, that they were become in a manner general, that they were distinguishable by the most consummate hypocrisy, the infamous characteristic of the iniquity of those times, when every one said unto Christ, *Lord, Lord*, and scarce any did *the will of his Father which is in heaven*.

'Tis further, too plain an indication that a people have incurred the heaviest indignation of the Almighty, and are grown ripe for destruction, when they bring down upon themselves such judgments as they were least aware of, such as they could have no probable grounds to apprehend they should be visited with. There was,

it may be supposed a time, when, if it had been suggested to the Jews, God's favourite and peculiar people, that their temple should be pillag'd and destroyed by sacrilegious and idolatrous hands, and themselves brought under the subjection of a foreign government, they would have derided the intimation; so little obvious to their understandings were the methods of divine justice, so insensible were they, that Idolaters and Infidels are the most proper scourges in the hand of an angry God. As unforeseen, as inconceivable, once was the bloody transaction of this day: The encroachments of rebellion were gradual and imperceptible: It spread its first poison with the breath of slander, and the mean arts of secret machination: It next exalted its voice in open declarations both against Ecclesiastical, and Regal Authority: In time it broke out into acts of publick violence, supported by the cry of the rabble, and the riots of popular sedition: It soon advanced with Gigantic strides into the field in battle array against the Lord's Anointed: It fought, it conquered, it triumphed, in the ruin of this Church and Monarchy. Surely the hand of God is visible in the infliction of these memorable Judgments. --- The cruel miscreants who were the actors of these tragedies, mistook the permission for the approbation of the most High, and while they boasted themselves to be his favourites, were but the dreadful Executioners of his wrath: Their wonderful successes were no more the effects of their own valour, prudence, or skill, than

than they were the fruits of their meekness, loyalty, or righteousness: To these sons of *Belial*, our Saviour's words to *Pilate* are in some measure applicable, *They could have had no power at all against their Sovereign, except it had been given them from above.* Which naturally brings me in the third place, to take a view of events like this, as signal illustrations of what they seem to be objections against, the interposition and government of Divine Providence.

It is wholly to be accounted for from our unwillingness to consider God under any other character than that of an able Protector, or a mighty Deliverer, that the different dispensations of his Providence do not produce in us sentiments equally religious; His publick Mercies, if they cannot excite our gratitude, at least seldom escape our observation; But his judgments are apt to fill us with distrust, to incline us to doubt whether the affairs of this World come at all under his cognisance, and almost to exclaim, *Is there knowledge in the most High?* Whereas did we but appropriate to God the titles of Governour, Judge, and Avenger, which are as much his due as those of Benefactor, and Preserver, we should alike acknowledge him in all his administrations. His several dealings and visitations would all meet with a suitable reception from us; the most gracious of them would not appear to demand our thankfulness, more than the most severe our acquiescence and resignation. For the Divine Providence is as conspicuous in general
cala-

calamities, as in the most universal blessings, and we ought in all reason to form the same conclusions in one case which we never fail to do in the other. It was for instance, Gods miraculous Providence that delivered us out of our miserable confusions “by restoring to us, and to his own “just and undoubted Rights, King *Charles* the “second;” nor is the interposition of permissive Providence less discernible in the misfortunes and death of his Royal Father. In the former example, we ascribe that wonderful deliverance to the hand of God, because it could not possibly have been effected by the unassisted power, or unguided wisdom of man; And the latter example refers us to the same, since it was morally impossible that the pride, the ambition, the malice, and the very folly of a fanatick Faction should either have made so astonishing a progress in direct violation, and utter contempt of all laws human and divine, and also of the very notion of right and wrong, had it not pleased God to suffer their wickedness to prosper, and to harden their hearts to the utmost degree of obduracy, as well perhaps for some secret purposes of his will, as that the measure of their iniquities being full, the misery of a guilty land might be compleated. *This the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.* Events therefore of this nature, instead of affording matter of objection against Providence, are so many standing arguments of its reality. Was nothing unexpected or amazing to fall out in the course of this world, were all causes to
 pro-

produce without exception their similar and correspondent effects, this regularity might be urged in support of the doctrine of an absolute fatality; But every interruption of this order is a manifest interposition of a superior Being, to whose Wisdom and Power all things are subservient. It is true, there are a set of men in the world absurd and bold enough entirely to exclude the Divine Providence from the government of it: These affect to ascribe the most surprising events to the operation and concurrence of natural causes; If they are press'd with such instances as the above-mention'd, they will tell us, that nothing happened in either case but what might be expected in the course of things; that a general settlement was the plain and ordinary consequence of a general fermentation, and that cruelty and murder were no more than usual effects of hatred and revenge. Nor indeed are we to wonder that those, who disavow the very notion of all miraculous interpositions in the natural world, upon pretence that we are ignorant how far the powers of mere nature extend, should upon such slender principles presume to account for the contingencies of the moral. But blessed be God, I am not speaking to such. Our Religion furnishes us with better instructions, and teaches us to look upon second causes as always operating under the direction of the first. All events accordingly are to be deem'd providential and miraculous, which are either produc'd by a cause with which they have no natural connection,

tion, or by one which notwithstanding such connection, is yet in itself utterly inadequate to the production; And therefore the Providence of God is as really, though not so visibly, concern'd in the preservation or destruction of Kings and States, as in the cure of a disease with a touch, or the raising the dead by a word. We are told that not a *sparrow shall fall on the ground without our heavenly Father*, and that *the very hairs of our head are all number'd*: And as this doctrine clearly informs us that the minutest circumstances are not overlook'd by God's Providence, or beneath his Superintendency, and that he is the Disposer of all events which happen according to the general and standing laws of his Government, so much more consequently does it point out to us this great Author and Mover in matters more immediately relative to his publick administration of the World. And indeed the sense of God's over-ruling and directing Providence cannot be too much cultivated and improv'd in us, as it is our only consolatory reflection under the burthen of evils, which would be insupportable upon another supposition. For what solid motive either to patience under them, or the hope of deliverance from them could be found, if they were scattered by chance, or fixed by Necessity?

Thus then we have considered the general designs of God in events that claim our more extraordinary attention, and endeavoured to reconcile them to our ideas of the Divine Attributes, by shewing them to be either the means of advancing

vancing God's glory, or plain tokens of his Vengeance, or signal illustrations of his Providence. And it may be made appear that he is equally justifiable in his ways, if we inquire a little further into his more especial intention in permitting the temporal sufferings of his best and most faithful servants; with a particular view likewise to the afflictions of the Royal Martyr.

God's Intention herein then, may be either,

- I. To make trial of their Integrity.
- II. To punish their Sins. Or
- III. To take off their affections from this World.

I. Then, we are all here in a State of probation, and Candidates for a *Crown of Glory which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him*. As God therefore hath propos'd to us so inestimable a reward, it is but reasonable he should have all possible proofs of the respective merits of those who lay claim to it: And accordingly it is very fit that he should put the Sincerity of their Affections to the test, by so varying their circumstances in this Life, as shall most effectually answer that purpose. A stedfast Faith, and unblameable Life are indeed often attended with worldly prosperity: But this is not appropriated to the Righteous; And he may consistently with equity reserve the recompence due to them as seemeth him good, since we are well assured that every inequality shall be adjusted hereafter.

Nor

II. Nor again are present Sufferings sufficient ground of complaint, if they are consider'd as Punishments of Sin. *No man can tell how oft he offendeth*; the best *fall seven times a day*; To suffer therefore for transgressions in this Life, is in effect to be forgiven; Because no present punishment bears an equal Proportion to the malignity of Sin in the Sight of God *who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*. Our imperfect notion of another's Virtue, as well as our partiality to ourselves, is indeed sometimes apt to lead us into error; and in particular cases we are inclin'd to imagine that the chastisement exceeds the offence. But it is in general to be remember'd, that though many are comparatively good, none are absolutely so; and that our inability to discover the heart of Man or the counsel of God, renders us very incompetent Judges of the propriety of his proceedings. However even in those instances where God's severity is most apparent, there may be found perhaps upon examination an equal mixture of loving-kindness; For if the troubles and calamities of this Life cannot fairly and properly be said to be the punishments of Sin, they are yet not to be repined at or despis'd, if consider'd as preservatives against it. Because they

Lastly, take off the Affections from this World: That our *Affections* are not to be *set on things on Earth*, is a rule of right reason, as well as of religion; A rule founded on the incapacity of this World to afford real Happiness. And yet we may be convinc'd by daily Observation that its
Charms

charms are often irresistible; for they are exquisitely adapted to the weakness of our Nature, how much soever they run counter to the dictates of our understandings. Every age, every temper, every condition, is liable to its peculiar temptations; none know how far they are proof against them: The wisest discover their indiscretions, nor is there any Vigilance but his, that *keepeth Israel, that neither slumbers nor sleeps*. The State of Prosperity is a most critical one; and while there is appetite there is danger; for the World has gratifications for all but those who have no relish for them, and these are the Sons of Affliction. Calamity produces this happy insensibility, and they are most easily convinced that they cannot be happy in this World, who experimentally feel that they are not: This experience directs their thoughts to other objects: Happiness, if it is not to be found here, is yet attainable somewhere; and in this case the transition from Earth to Heaven is easy and natural. Religion, in short, may upon many accounts, be our delight and our counsellor, but afflictions only make it our refuge.

If these truths are applied to the circumstances of the Blessed Martyr, they will take off much from the horror and amazement with which we usually reflect upon them: If we are justly shocked to see him as it were struggling through a long course of misfortunes, harrassed with endless vexations and disappointments, persecuted by his Enemies, betray'd by his Friends, a Fugitive,

gitive, a Captive in his own Dominions, arraigned, condemned, murdered by frantick Enthusiasts flushed with conquest and pamper'd with blood: Let us next view him in another light, and the prospect will wonderfully relieve us: Let us behold him out of the reach of almost all the temptations with which the station he was in is naturally beset; abstracted in a manner from the World, though one of the first Personages in it; a stranger alike to the vanity and the pleasures of Life; smitten, but not forsaken by God; afflicted, but not cast down; trusting in the Lord when he could put no Confidence in Man; supported by his Integrity, and retaining it irreproachable to the last; *Punished in the Sight of Men, while his Hope was full of Immortality*; a little chastised here that he might be greatly rewarded hereafter; "For God prov'd him and found him
 "worthy for himself; as Gold in the furnace
 "hath he tried him, and receiv'd him as a Burnt-
 "offering."

I come therefore as propos'd in the second place, to exhibit such a sketch of the character of the Royal Martyr, as shall justify the application of the foregoing observations.

And it will, I conceive, be abundantly sufficient for this purpose, to vindicate him from the principal charge brought against him, which is, that he had form'd a design of enslaving this Nation. If this be proved to be a false charge, all inferior and dependent accusations must fall to the ground of course. What then is advanced in support

port of it? Are the slips, the mismanagements, or, (not to decline the use of a more popular Word) the grievances of the former part of his Reign to be industriously recapitulated, and still remonstrated against him? They cannot in justice, as they were publicly acknowledged, and effectually redrest. They cannot even in prudence, as they reflect upon his Adversaries themselves: For the greatest of these grievances were the effect of pure necessity, a necessity to which the restlessness and the obstinacy of the Faction drove him.

Is it further affirmed, to make good the accusation, that he insisted upon his Prerogative and asserted the regal Power in stronger terms than any of his Predecessors had done? The affirmation might be disproved; but granting it to be true; was he not bound in point of Discretion, of Safety, of Honour, and of Conscience, if he had any regard for the Rights of himself and his Posterity, for the Constitution both of Church and State, or for the Peace and Welfare of succeeding Generations; to be particularly jealous of his Authority and open in maintaining it, at a time when the Engines of Sedition were every where at work in order to sap and undermine it? Indeed almost every charge alledged against the King confutes itself, and is with double infamy to be retorted upon the Enemy. Was he upbraided with insincerity? This charge surely comes with an ill grace from those, who while they took up arms in rebellious opposition to
him,

him, publickly difavowed the least intention to injure his Honour or his Person. Was he accused of a design to introduce an Arbitrary Government? These accusers themselves usurped the supreme Power by violence, and exercised it with licentiousness. Scarce any King has more *chastised* his People *with Rods*, than these Patriots out of Power, and Tyrants in it, *chastised* their Fellow Subjects *with Scorpions*.

But let us inquire a little into such circumstances of this pious Prince's character, as may be produced in the justification of it, from the accounts and concessions of those, who do not seem inclined to put the most favourable construction upon his actions. The graces of sobriety and temperance were eminently his; It is agreed on all hands, that he was an excellent pattern in the several relations of life: A foreign Historian expressly says, that he was "a good Husband, a good Father, and a good Master; he was so great a lover of justice, that no temptation could dispose him to a wrongful action, except it was so disguised to him that he believed it to be just." These words of the Lord *Clarendon*, (the same Author allows,) "may be very true, if applied to the concerns of particular persons. "Never was any King perhaps, (says he likewise) so punctual and regular in his devotions, both publick and private." Now one would think, a Prince, who so well knew, and practised his duty to God, could not be ignorant or unmindful of what he owed

owed to his People: Or upon what principle is it to be accounted for, that a Person who appears to have been scrupulously attentive to every other obligation, should be as notoriously defective in the discharge of this? The character above given, and universally bestowed on him, includes in it a most singular humanity, which, if any, is a virtue absolutely incompatible with the very idea of Tyranny: In short, they must be very expert at reconciling contrarieties, who can conceive such a compound of Man and Monster, as these scandalous calumnies and ridiculous aspersions make him. Let us however, for ample satisfaction's sake, attend him on to the last stage of his life, and see whether the black charge of Tyranny will not meet with a confutation there. His majestick, but humble Department, his Spirit resign'd, though unconquered, his exemplary Patience, Meekness, and Charity, before the face of his cruel enemies, might all be alledged as clear testimonies of a conscience *innocent of this great offence*. The dying words of the most notorious Malefactors are apt to leave strong impressions upon our minds: And sure the declarations of our Sovereign at the hour of death demand a more than ordinary regard. --- "That he
 " was a sincere member of the Church of *Eng-*
 " *land*, (says the Historian just now cited,) can
 " hardly be doubted; since he affirmed so much
 " on the scaffold, at a time, when it could be of
 " no service to him to dissemble his belief: And
 what service at the same time could it be to him

to dissemble his Politics any more than his Religion? He had then nothing to hope from the clemency of his Enemies, or farther; to fear from their malice: And why are we not to take his royal word in one case, as well as another? But the matter will be entirely put out of all doubt, if we recollect a circumstance well worthy our observation, by which he appears to have been so little disposed to hide or even extenuate his sins and infirmities, that he discovered a tenderness and delicacy of conscience almost peculiar to himself: That truly Christian acknowledgment, “that God’s judgments were just upon him, and that an unjust sentence, that he suffered to take effect, was punished then, by an unjust sentence upon himself;” is a most glorious, a most memorable proof of this: Indeed this confession of human frailty was but agreeable to that unwillingness and reluctance, with which he passed that unjust sentence upon the Earl of *Strafford*: Or rather with which he suffered the violence of the Times, the rage of the Parliamentary Leaders, the tumults of the Populace, the advice of his Counsellors, and even the consent of the unfortunate Lord himself to extort it from him. It must therefore be supposed, that a Prince, who retained so keen a sense to the last of an act of injustice to which he was urged by so great a variety of temptations, and such pressing necessities, that Men even of a sacred character (unrelatively as the noble Historian says) made it a point of casuistry
 whe,

whether it was a sinful act or no: We must I say take it for granted that he, whose sentiments were so nicely fitted to his Religion, did not fail with his parting breath fully and explicitly to discharge his conscience to God and the World. And now; Whether the blood shed as on this day, was not as innocent, as it was sacred, may I trust, be safely left to the determination of those, who judge of men and their actions by the rules of common Sense, Justice, and Charity.

It remains now, that I briefly suggest a few practical doctrines deducible from what has been said.

We are first then naturally led to reflect upon the vanity and instability of all things here below; and taught by the barbarous murder committed on the Person of the Lord's Anointed, not to place our confidence in any advantages we may be possessed of; or under any circumstances to flatter ourselves with an imagination that we are safe from the pressures of Calamity, or the assaults of Violence: Preeminence of station, Integrity of life, and Supremacy of authority, though the most probable, are yet we find no certain securities: And as every condition of life is at best but precarious, it is our interest as much as our duty, to have neither too strong inclinations for this world nor our main dependencies upon it. If our hearts be *there only fixed, where true joys are to be found*, we need not dread Affliction, nor Death itself; either may come upon us unawares, but neither can attack us unprepared.

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We may secondly learn to be sparing of our reproaches and censures upon those, who labour under distress: *It is the hand of the Lord that presseth them sore*; nor generally speaking can we with any certainty assign the reason: Compassion is due to misery whatever may have been the occasion of it, and if it be inhuman to insult even the wicked in their troubles, what name shall we give them, who upon the account of the misfortunes they see them oppressed with, *cruelly, disdainfully, and despightfully speak against the Righteous? God hath forsaken him, persecute him and take him*, was the language of the Rebels, as if they thought the tribulations of their Sovereign were, as such, a discredit to his cause, or a sufficient sanction for their own enormities.

We are thirdly warn'd by the fatal event of this day, to avoid and detest the principles that led to it. We are commanded to be subject to the Supreme Authority, *not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake*: a doctrine that forbids all artifices, and evil intentions against our Sovereign: If we deviate from this rule, the consequence is too obvious: It is certain, that many of those, who sided with the enemies of the Government in the reign we have been speaking of, were not at first apprehensive of the ruin that ensued; and it is certain that many others, who were more deeply engaged in the design against Church and State, and interested in the success of it, did yet express their abhorrence of
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this last act, and had no immediate hand in the death of the King. But surely, in the latter case, it cannot be considered as a sufficient excuse for those, who drove him into the toils, that they withdrew themselves from the company of the hunters that slew him. As to the former case, it would have been well for these Male-contents duly to have considered the danger, not only of all actual sins, but also of all criminal Tendencies: A lustful eye is in the sight of God Adultery, and covetousness Theft; both cases however and the mitigations they may bear, must be left to God's final judgment; and therefore, I speak not this to insult the memory of the dead, but as matter of caution to ourselves.

And fourthly, nothing will be so likely to keep us upon our guard, as the religious observation of this solemn Anniversary: This will preserve in our minds a constant aversion to those iniquities, which drew down in so wonderful a manner upon this nation the vengeance of Heaven: And our humiliation is the more necessary, as too many industriously countermines the design of it, and consider this day, rather as a Festival, than a Season of Mourning. But surely, it is as decent and reasonable in us to commemorate the ruin of this Church, and the fall of the Monarchy that supported it, with pious concern and godly sorrow, as it is becoming in any persons whatever to exult in the review of the total extirpation of both.

Lastly, and to conclude; the memory of the Royal Martyr should be ever blessed among us,

if it be only upon account of the universal life of his pious Example. Maxims of policy, and rules of state, are generally the only, (at least the best) lessons to be learnt in Courts, and even these are merely local; indeed would be useless out of the verge of them: But we have now before us a Pattern of Religion and Virtue, suited to almost every case and relation of life. Those, who are most forward to traduce the memory of their Sovereign, and misrepresent him upon all occasions, may find more in his character worthy to be imitated, than reviled. That he was not the greatest of Kings, was perhaps the fault of the age he lived in: That he was the best of Men, may be an advantage to future generations: We may learn from him to be just in our Dealings, faithful in our Friendships, chaste in our Conversations, punctual in our Devotions! We may learn from his amazing Meekness under the most aggravating provocations, and his readiness to forgive his most implacable enemies; to be patient under indignities, and charitable in our very differences; in a word, his Life and Death are full of instructions. Upon the whole then; if we consider either the general designs of Providence in the Catastrophe of this day, or what may seem God's more especial intention in the same, or the publick utility to be reap'd from so illustrious an Example, we may justly conclude in the words of Holy Writ: *Great, and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, O King of Saints.*