

Steadfastness in Religion and Loyalty

RECOMMENDED, IN A

S E R M O N

Preached before the

LEGISLATURE

OF

His Majesty's Province of Nova-Scotia;

IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF

ST. PAUL, AT HALIFAX,

On SUNDAY, *April 7, 1793.*

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

CHARLES, BISHOP OF NOVA-SCOTIA.

HALIFAX, PRINTED:

LONDON,

Re-printed for JOHN STOCKDALE, Piccadilly.

1793.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

In the House of Assembly, Saturday the 13th
JUN 21 1944 *April, 1793.*

RESOLVED, That Mr. *Howe*, Mr. *McMonagle*, and Mr. *Wallace*, do wait on the Right Reverend the Bishop of *Nova-Scotia*, with a request, that he will furnish this House with a copy of the Sermon, preached by him, before this House, on Sunday last, for the purpose of printing the same.

JAMES B. FRANCKLIN,
Clerk, H. A.

N. B. The Thanks of the House had been previously returned to the Bishop for the above Sermon.

TO
THOMAS BARCLAY, ESQUIRE,
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY,
AND
To the other MEMBERS of that respectable Body,
The following SERMON,
PREACHED and PUBLISHED at their REQUEST,
IS
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
BY
THE AUTHOR.

HALIFAX, *April 16, 1793.*

PROVERBS XXIV. 21.

*My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King ; and meddle not
with them that are given to change.*

WHOEVER reflects on the social affections and instincts that are implanted in our nature, will be inclined to think that Man was designed by his Creator for a state of society. This opinion will be confirmed still more, by considering, that the portion of happiness allotted to us here, can only be attained in a state of society ; and that the human race, from the condition of our nature, cannot be continued and preserved but in the social state ; so that if society were to cease, the race of mankind would soon be extinguished.

THESE reflections must remove every doubt that a state of society is the natural state of man--the state for which he was originally intended and fitted. They also evince how visionary that scheme is, which supposes mankind to have once lived in what some are pleased to call a *state of nature* ; that is, lived separate, independent, and without any social connection between individuals. Such a state is wholly fabulous ; it never had an existence.

BUT Society, like all other things here, has its defects and imperfections. From hence, and from the depraved appetites of human nature, it is liable to many disasters, and its ends may be defeated. To guard against these inconveniences, Government and Laws are necessary. Even these

again have their defects ; and those defects can only be supplied by the principles of Religion.

GOVERNMENT and Religion are therefore the pillars, as it were, on which society rests, and by which it is upheld ; remove these, and the fabric sinks into ruin. In all this, we see a display of the Creator's wisdom and goodness ; for these may be considered as so many links of a chain, which binds us to each other, and to himself ; and connects our duty and welfare together. We discover his provident care for the happiness of man in that social state for which he was formed. And we also perceive, that Government and Religion were the Institutions of God, who is the fountain of all power and truth ; that they were designed to secure our happiness, the ultimate end of our creation, and to obviate the evils to which we are exposed in our present state of imperfection.

AGREEABLY to these interesting and important truths, the inspired author of the book of Proverbs, and wisest of men, delivers the exhortation in my text—" My Son, fear thou " the Lord and the King ; and meddle not with them that " are given to change ;" which is an exhortation to Religion and Loyalty, and to a steadfast perseverance in them.

To fear the Lord is the same as to reverence, worship, and obey the Almighty, from a principle of unfeigned faith and conscience. To fear the King is to pay due respect and honour to his person, office, and dignity, as well as obedience to his laws ; and the former principle naturally leads to this. For in the language of St. Paul, " he is the minister of God " unto us for good ; there being no power but of God ; the " powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever there- " fore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."*

* Rom. xiii. 1---4.

As a farther security for the benefits accruing to society from fearing the Lord and the King, we are exhorted in my text, “not to meddle with them that are given to change,”—that is, not to hold a familiar intercourse with, not to enter into the councils, nor countenance the proceedings, nor be influenced by the example of those who, either from bad principles, ambition, a restless temper, or discontent, are given to change—would disturb the public tranquillity, promote sedition, and subvert the order of society.

FROM this view of the text, you see its aim is twofold—to inculcate the fear of God and the King, and to dissuade us from countenancing those who are fond of innovations. According to this division, I shall frame my present discourse—

I. By shewing, that to fear God and the King ; or in other words, that Religion and Loyalty are essential to the welfare of society,

II. By pointing out the evils that turbulent persons, given to change, bring upon society ; with whom therefore we should not meddle.

III. And I shall, in this last place, conclude with some practical inferences, and observations on the whole.—If in discoursing on this copious and interesting subject, I should somewhat exceed the limits of time usually prescribed for discourses from the pulpit, I trust the nature of the subject, and the circumstances of the times, will be my apology to this respectable audience.

I. I proceed then to my first head, which is to shew, that fearing the Lord and the King—that Religion and Loyalty, are essential to the welfare of society.

It

It is worthy of observation, that our duty to God and the King are frequently joined together in the same sentence of Holy Scripture. My text is an instance of this. In answering the captious question of the Pharisees to our Saviour, he desires them “to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s; † and to God, the things that are God’s.”* And St. Peter enjoins Christians—“to fear God, and honour the King.”†

WE learn from hence how close a connection there is between Religion and Loyalty—between our religious and civil duties. He that sincerely serves God, will be loyal to his earthly Sovereign, from a principle of Conscience. Religion indeed has a much more important object in view than the temporal benefit of society—its great object is eternal Salvation. Yet it affords the most powerful aid to society, whilst actually accomplishing the main purpose it aims at; and that purpose is again promoted by the peace and order of society. For they lend mutual assistance to each other.

THE connection between Religion and Loyalty will be more apparent still, when we reflect on the origin assigned to Government by St. Paul. He tells us that it is “the ordinance of God. There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.” So that the religious principle naturally leads us to obey the Civil Magistrate, as exercising an authority which has been committed to him by the Almighty. In obeying him we act agreeably to the express and declared will of God.

To illustrate this point farther, it may be proper to observe, that when the Gospel was first published, various forms of Government subsisted, as at present. The Roman arms had triumphed over a great part of the then known world;

* Mark xii. 17. † I. Peter ii. 17.

and Rome itself, after a series of violent convulsions and intestine wars, became an absolute Monarchy under Augustus and his successors. There were also other forms of Government of the popular, aristocratic, regal, and mixed kind. For it was the policy of Rome to indulge the conquered nations in the use of their religious and civil institutions, where it did not interfere with the views of dominion; the Romans even adopted those institutions, especially such as related to Religion.

Now, the Gospel did not meddle with the internal state or form of these Governments: it let them remain just as it found them. It neither enlarged nor diminished the prerogative of the Magistrate; it neither added to, nor abridged, the civil rights and privileges of the subject. Every matter of this kind was left to the established laws, usages, and constitution of each particular state. The reason was—the Kingdom of Christ was not of this world.* He came not to erect a temporal kingdom, as the Jews falsely supposed of the Messiah, and it was the fatal rock on which they made shipwreck of their faith. Our Saviour came to establish a spiritual Kingdom, the reign of God in the hearts of men; to deliver them from the power of sin and Satan, and raise them to everlasting happiness; whatever form of Civil Government they might lie under in the present stage of existence.

BUT although the Gospel does not interfere with the internal structure of any government; yet it uniformly and strictly enjoins obedience to the authority established in every government; whatever its form or structure may be. One form indeed may be, and unquestionably is, preferable to another. But the Gospel has made no decision on this point,

* John xviii. 36.

being foreign to its design ; and commands its professors to be subject and obedient to the higher powers, in whatever state or country the providence of God has placed them. And the reason is twofold ; first, because without obedience in the subject, government could not attain its end, nor even exist ; and any form is preferable to anarchy. Secondly, because government is essential to the welfare of society ; and therefore is the ordinance of God, to promote the happiness of mankind, both temporal and spiritual.

WERE there no government, no laws to regulate and restrain the actions of men, this earth would become a scene of the wildest disorder. Anarchy and oppression, rapine and murder, would desolate the globe. The weak would become a prey to the strong ; justice, order, peace, and all the blessings that follow in their train, would be wholly banished ; violence and wrong would succeed them. Every man's hand would be against his brother ; and mutual slaughter, perhaps a total extermination of the human race, would be the consequence.

WE find in fact, that notwithstanding the restraints of education, religion, and penal laws ; yet multitudes rush to the perpetration of horrid crimes—crimes so destructive to society, that those who commit them are judged no longer fit or worthy to live in it ; and they are therefore cut off by the sword of justice. Judge then what would be the consequence, were all those restraints entirely removed ?

You may perceive from hence how great a blessing government is to mankind : it is the Institution of God ; the remedy which his infinite goodness and wisdom have provided against those evils, to which we must otherwise be exposed. For when he wills any end, he also wills the means that are necessary for the attainment of that end. He created man

to communicate happiness to him ; and government is one of the principal means which he appointed for securing it, and averting the calamities that would defeat his benevolent design.

To the Government or Legislature of a State, it belongs to make suitable Laws. These are the common standard or rule, to which all, in their civil capacity, should conform. The magistrate should enforce, the subject obey them. All subjects are intitled to equal justice and protection from government, unless forfeited by their crimes ; all are therefore interested and bound to support government. It is a common concern, in which the welfare of every individual is involved. For unless the magistrate is obeyed and supported in the discharge of his duty, he cannot afford that protection and justice to the subject which he stands in need of. The Laws apply alike to all ; they would restrain the most powerful from oppressing the weak and helpless ; they would redress the injured, and distribute justice with an equal scale. It is therefore evident, that every member of the community is deeply interested in the obedience that is paid to the Laws ; each should not only obey them himself, but exert his influence that they may be obeyed by all others ; so that their efficacy may universally prevail. For if the laws are violated or evaded, with impunity, their salutary effects are lost ; the community is injured, and each individual must eventually share in the injury.

AND here, the necessity of Religion for the support of government, and obedience to the Laws, is apparent ; by which our religious and civil duties unite, and run in one channel. Human laws, government and society, are imperfect, as I hinted before, and cannot attain their end, without the aid of Religion. It may not be improper briefly to ex-

plain the reasons ; as the subject is very interesting to society, and nothing should be omitted that may serve to throw light upon it, and give just ideas of it to people in general. I may add, there are few points in which the notions of mankind require more to be rectified. Many separate Religion from Government entirely, and suppose there is no connection between them. Hence, they conceive themselves at liberty, for the gratification of private ambition, and if they can by any means form a party sufficiently strong, not only to obstruct the most salutary measures for the public welfare, but to subvert government, and rise to eminence on its ruins ; although attended with the misery and destruction of thousands !

HUMAN laws can only take cognizance of outward actions. They reach not the heart or conscience, which are the source and spring of our actions, and are known to God only. By artifice and fraud, the laws may be evaded, notwithstanding the magistrate's utmost vigilance. Hereby individuals are injured, the peace and order of society interrupted, and the benefits expected from laws destroyed.

THERE are many duties essential to the welfare of society, which the laws of man cannot interfere with ; such as gratitude, hospitality, charity, and many others ; without which, a state of society would be miserable, and its dissolution endangered. These are commonly called duties of imperfect obligation ; not because we are under no obligation to perform them, or that they are useless to society ; for the reverse of both is unquestionably true, and the neglect of them would be fatal to society : but because human laws cannot reach them—they proceed from a higher principle.

EQUALLY defective are human laws with regard to rewards and punishments, which are the hinges of all government ;

ment ; and which only can give vigour and efficacy to laws. For although government can punish those who openly violate its laws ; it has no general reward for its subjects but protection—the security of life, liberty, and property. Yet the welfare and preservation of society requires virtues and exertions in its several members, which are intitled to greater rewards than mere protection ; and as we must look to a higher principle than human laws for the existence, so also for the reward, of those virtues. This defect, like others, must be supplied from another source.*

To these particulars may be added another of great moment, though seldom considered. Whilst society multiplies the comforts of life, and holds out protection to individuals ; it also inflames the depraved appetites of mankind, and affords opportunities for their gratification. Hence we find that crimes increase, both in number and enormity, in proportion to the size of cities and communities—indeed I might say, in a much greater proportion. Hence, a more powerful restraint on the actions of men is required, than can be found in human laws.

It would be easy to enlarge on these heads, and place them in a stronger light. I just hint at them to shew, that from the very nature of things, there are unavoidable defects in human laws and government—that a superior principle is necessary to supply those defects, and obtain the benefits which they aim at : That principle is Religion. For it

* Emoluments arising from offices in a state, are rewards for personal services to individuals ; and are confined to a very small number. They are not therefore an exception to what is advanced above. The well known maxim---*that allegiance and protection are mutual*---illustrates this point. From the nature and original design of Civil Government, protection is the only reward that it offers, or can confer, in return for obedience to its laws in the general mass of subjects.

affords a sufficient remedy in these, and all other cases of the kind, that can possibly occur.*

RELIGION teaches the existence of an infinitely holy, just, and righteous God, who is ever present, a constant witness of our thoughts and actions ; who presides over, and governs, the affairs of this world ; who will finally call his rational creatures to judgement ; and consign them to endless happiness or misery, according to their conduct in this state of probation. Religion also teaches that government is the ordinance of this Almighty Being ; the means which he hath appointed to promote the happiness of mankind, and avert the evils that would defeat his most gracious design. From these momentous truths, human laws derive an energy ; government, an authority ; and society, innumerable benefits, which otherwise they could not possibly have.

FOR in vain do men strive to conceal their crimes from the eyes of their fellow mortals—in vain do they attempt by fraud to evade, or by violence to trample on the laws of their country, and then hope to escape punishment : All these things are perfectly known to the Almighty ; who, even in this life, frequently asserts his sovereignty, by arresting wickedness in its course, and inflicting punishment on transgressors ; and who will assuredly bring every action into judgement hereafter ; when every crime, whether secret or open, whether public or private, will receive a just retribution. The meek virtues of humility, probity, mutual benevolence, and others so essential to the welfare of society, though they neither are, nor can be rewarded by society, yet being enjoined by Religion, are sure of a higher reward than

* See this point copiously handled, and with great ability, by Bishop WARBURTON in his *Alliance between Church and State* ; and in his *Divine Legation of Moses*.

this earth can bestow. And to the seducing temptations that would draw men into enormous crimes, Religion opposes the avenging terrors of Almighty God ; whose honour, justice, and veracity are engaged not to let them go unpunished.

WERE it necessary, I could adduce the sentiments of the wisest men in every age, who attest the truth of what is here advanced. I could also adduce not only the sentiments, but the practice of the most celebrated Legislators, who made Religion the basis of their civil Institutions ; and who were indebted to that circumstance for their success. But I pass them over as needless ; and shall not pay so ill a compliment to your understanding as to suppose that you require farther testimonies to confirm your belief of truths that are so evident.*

WE may then take it for an unfailing maxim, that Religion, the fear of God, is the surest foundation of virtue ; the best security for the rectitude of human actions : That it is the best support of Government ; of that honour and respect which we owe to the King, and others in authority ; and of that obedience which is due to the Laws : On all which, the welfare of Society entirely depends.

* Although omitted in the text, it may not be improper to add one testimony here on the subject. It is that of CICERO, one of the greatest men that Rome, or any other State, ever produced. Speaking of the Romans, and the causes of their grandeur, he says--“ We neither exceeded the Spaniards in number, nor did we excel the Gauls in bodily strength, nor the Carthaginians in subtilty, nor the Greeks in liberal arts. But we unquestionably excelled all people and nations in piety and attention to religion ; and in that point which can only be deemed true wisdom---a firm belief that all human affairs are directed by divine Providence.” *Orat. xxx. De Haruspicum Responsis.* To this principle, and to the care of Providence, he attributes the origin, increase, and stability of the mighty empire of Rome. The Religion of Heathens was disfigured, it is true, by the grossest errors and idolatry ; but it taught the doctrines of a superintending Providence, and future state of rewards and punishments, which answered the purposes of Civil Society ; nor did any regular state ever subsist without those doctrines.

WHEN

WHEN I assert the necessity of Religion for the welfare of society and Government, you will do me the justice to believe, that I mean the pure, peaceable, and rational Religion of JESUS CHRIST ; which requires holiness and benevolence in its professors, and strongly inculcates order and subordination ; at the same time that it teaches the knowledge of the true God, a Providence, and future state of rewards and punishments. I do not mean the fallies of enthusiasm, the reveries of a disordered head, or heated imagination. The history of mankind bears ample testimony how turbulent these are ; how often they have disturbed the peace of society, and filled the world with war, bloodshed, and desolation. It therefore behoves the rational, conscientious Christian and Loyal Subject to be on his guard against these, as well as against the opposite extreme of Infidelity and Atheism. For however strange it may appear, yet it is a certain fact, that these extremes, like many others, meet and unite in producing the very same effects. I shall give an instance of each.

IN the seventh century, the disciples of Mahomet, actuated by the wildest enthusiasm for that Impostor, sallied out of their parched and sandy deserts. With that sanguinary spirit, that impetuosity which fanaticism usually inspires, they invaded their peaceable neighbours, and spread ruin, desolation, and despotism, over many extensive countries ; trampling on Christianity, and destroying all the monuments of learning, with every thing else that embellishes life, wherever they came.*

IT was reserved for the eighteenth century, to see the same spirit of enthusiasm and conquest attached to a levelling system of Atheism. It was reserved for the present century, I

* See OCKLEY's *History of the Saracens*.

say, to see this singular phenomenon—a nation of Atheists! At least a party of that description, sufficiently numerous and strong to overturn the Religion and Civil Constitution of their country, and who have the presumption to attempt the same in every other country. For after manifesting the most hostile designs against every established government in the world, and slaughtering thousands of their fellow citizens—among whom were many helpless women, priests, and children—after the perpetration of these and other crimes, at which human nature shudders, they rushed out, reeking with civil blood, to invade their inoffending neighbours; utterly regardless of those treaties, and that public faith, by which nations are bound: Subverting all order and government, to make way for their own detestable system; whilst oppression, slaughter, and despotism every where marked their progress! And to fill up the measure of their wickedness, they have lately, with peculiar circumstances of inhumanity, embued their hands in the blood of their lawful Sovereign.*

THUS

* Lest the above picture might be deemed too strongly coloured, I shall here subjoin an account of the principles and proceedings of the French Philosophic Reformers, drawn by the elegant pen of Lord AUCKLAND, Ambassador Extraordinary in Holland; whose amiable character is well known to many in America---he (when Mr. EDEN) was one of the Commissioners sent to New-York, in the year 1778, for restoring peace. The account is taken from an official paper, delivered to the States General, January 25, 1793, signed with his name, and circulated through Europe---“ Four years,” says his Lordship, “ have not yet elapsed, since some misguided men, (in France) qualifying themselves with the title of *Philosophers*, had the presumption to think themselves capable of establishing a new system of Civil Society. In order to realize this dream of vanity, it was necessary to overthrow and destroy all the received notions of subordination, morality, and religion, which have hitherto been the bulwark, happiness, and consolation of mankind. Their projects of destruction have been but too successful; but the effects of the new system, which they have endeavoured to introduce, have only tended to demonstrate the rashness and impiety of its authors. The events which have so rapidly succeeded, during this interval, surpass in atrocity every one which has yet sullied the page of history. Pro-

“ party,

THUS you see that fanaticism is not confined to the professors of religion. Infidelity has also its enthusiasts and bigots; and the enthusiasm of both is equally malignant to government, and subversive of the peace and welfare of society.—Little then do those imagine what mischief they are promoting, who countenance and encourage fanaticism of any kind; who either by disseminating bad principles, or by their neglect of religious duties, or evil example, diminish the influence of true and rational Religion. In reality, they are unchaining the unruly appetites and affections of men to prey upon one another. For the human mind, when set loose from the restraints of sober reason, conscience, and religion, ever has, and ever will break out into those destructive extremes.

II. BUT I proceed to the second head of my discourse, which was to point out the evils which persons given to change, bring on society; with whom, therefore, we should not meddle.

RELIGION and Loyalty are founded on steady, permanent principles. The conduct of such as are guided by those principles, will always be steady and uniform. The word of God is the rule by which their sentiments are formed; and as that rule is ever consistent and the same, the sentiments and practice which are regulated by it, will partake of the

“ perty, liberty, personal safety, and even life itself, have been the
 “ sports of the unbridled fury of the passions, of the spirit of rapine,
 “ of hatred, of the most cruel and unnatural ambition. The annals
 “ of mankind do not afford an instance where, in so short a space of
 “ time, so many crimes have been committed, so many misfortunes oc-
 “ casioned, and so many tears shed.—These horrors, now seem to have
 “ arrived at their highest pitch.”---Thus far his Lordship; and these
 are the philosophic reformers who have rejected the Bible and its divine
 Author; and have chosen *Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, D’Alembert, &c.*
 &c. &c. for their instructors and Apostles! The world sees the effects!

fame

same character. But ambition, self-interest, and humour are variable. They change with changing scenes and circumstances; and those who are guided and influenced by them, will be given to change.

WHETHER it be owing to the inherent activity of our minds, or to inordinate self-love, or to something in the original texture of our frame, or to some other cause, there is a certain restlessness which seems to be annexed, in a greater or less degree, to our nature. Unsatisfied with what we have, we grasp at something which we have not, and perhaps cannot attain; and by regrets and uneasiness on that account, are apt to destroy our tranquillity and peace of mind. To subdue this restlessness and discontent, to be resigned to the will of God, and thankful for his allotment in the state of life where his providence hath placed us, is a duty imposed on us by Religion. It is a part of that discipline to which we are subjected by the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and, like every other duty which he enjoins, it is highly conducive to our happiness.

CERTAIN it is, however, that some persons are naturally of a more restless and turbulent cast than others. They are fond of innovation and change, for the sake of innovation. The calm shade of peace and quiet pleases them not; their delight is in a storm. Now, if such a disposition be cherished, instead of being checked; if instead of being restrained by good principles, it is inflamed by those of an opposite kind; and especially, if it is pushed forward by an intercourse with unprincipled men who are given to change; it then becomes a prolific source, not only of personal disquietude, which embitters private life; but also of popular discontents,

which, in every age, have thrown states and governments into violent convulsions.

THERE have been times, unquestionably, when changes in Religion and Government were necessary. Our own history furnishes several instances. When successive ages of ignorance and barbarity had debased Christianity with error, and disfigured it with superstition, a reformation of those errors became expedient. When those who were given to change, in the last century, had subverted our Monarchy and Constitution, the Restoration of them was a matter both of duty and necessity. But, blessed be God, those times are now past. We enjoy the benefits resulting from those changes; we should be thankful to heaven for them; and look back with reverence to the fortitude and virtues of our ancestors, who were instruments, in the hand of Providence, of conferring those signal blessings upon us. For we live in a period, when the Religion of Jesus Christ is professed and taught in its native purity, as contained in holy Scripture. We live under the best of Civil Constitutions; where we enjoy as much Liberty as is consistent with a state of Civil Society; and where that Liberty, with the protection of life and property, have all the security that human wisdom can give them.

IN these circumstances, to think the business of changing should still go on, and never stop, must surely proceed from that spirit of innovation, against which we are cautioned in my text, or from something worse. We are expressly commanded not to meddle with them that are actuated by that spirit. We are not to enter into their counsels, nor countenance their proceedings. For doing either of these, would be contrary to the duty which we owe to God and the King—to the peace and welfare of society.

BUT

BUT those who are given to change, are seldom at a loss for specious pretexts to gloss over innovations in Religion and Government, and to gain the populace on their side.

IN Religion, a mighty zeal for truth, for great purity, and other good purposes, is displayed; and it is observable, that this zeal generally rises in proportion as the peculiar tenets of the innovators deviate from scripture and common sense; zeal being the substitute to make up the deficiency. Claims are often made to extraordinary revelations, to higher degrees of grace, and divine illumination; and this at the very time that the regular institutions of Christianity are disregarded—perhaps trampled on. Bitter invectives are thrown out against others—against their persons, their principles, and mode of worship; as if all who did not think with the innovating leaders, were in the direct way to perdition. A rigid, external sanctity is assumed, and a glowing ardour to make profelytes is exerted; so that sea and land will be compassed for the purpose.

THESE devices have been usually practised by such as are given to change in religious matters. The list of those who have disturbed the peace of the Christian Church at different periods, is very long; and there is scarcely one of them who has not fallen upon the practices I have now mentioned. They have had a wonderful effect on the ignorant and undesigning; indeed on all who look no deeper than the surface of things. But the cause of Christianity has ever suffered, and has been greatly injured by such proceedings.

FOR they promote strife, division, and contention, and alienate the hearts of Christians from each other. They engender pride, envy, ill-will, mutual contempt and hatred; all which are as opposite to the mild and loving

spirit of the Gospel, as midnight darkness is to the glare of noon-day.

NOR is this all. When the effusions of ignorance and a distempered imagination are impiously attributed to the Spirit of God; when under this mask, many and crying irregularities are committed, and divisions without end are multiplied: it brings great reproach and scandal on Christianity. The minds of many, who are not drawn into the vortex of enthusiasm, will be unsettled, and set afloat. The lukewarmness of some will be increased, and their indifference to all Religion strengthened, seeing such disorders sanctioned by that venerable name. Those who wish to get rid of the restraints of Religion, and to indulge their lusts without any controul, will be inclined to think that all religion is nothing but enthusiasm and mere farce. For the experience of our own nation, and of others, has uniformly proved, that frequent innovations and divisions in Religion have led to Infidelity; and never failed to produce Infidels and Atheists.*

FROM hence you may perceive how wise and prudent it is, not to meddle with them that are thus given to change in matters of Religion. A well-poised judgement, informed by the word of God, will guide us in the middle way between both extremes—that of disgusting fanaticism, on the one

* This was the case in the time of Cromwell's usurpation, when enthusiasm had full scope, and furious sectaries were struggling for superiority. Mr. Edwards, in his *Gangrena*, sets down the heresies that were then broached—their number and grossness are astonishing. Bishop Burnet informs us—"that many of the Republicans began to profess Deism; and almost all of them were for destroying all Clergy-men, for breaking every thing that looked like the union of a national Church. They were for pulling down the Churches," &c. "Cromwell was obliged—" to set the Fifth Monarchy Men and Enthusiasts against such as pretended to little or no religion, viz. Sidney, Nevill, Harrington, &c." See the *Summary of Affairs before the Restoration*, prefixed to the *History of his own Times*.

hand;

hand ; and the no less disgusting and pernicious extreme of lukewarmness and infidelity, on the other. Such a judgement will also lead us to consider eternal salvation as the most momentous concern of man ; and to pursue it with a diligent and steady earnestness proportioned to its importance.

THOSE who are given to change in affairs of Government, have also their ways and means of proceeding, no less exceptionable than the former. A redress of grievances is generally held out ; and every thing is a grievance which they happen to dislike. No Government is, or can be, without its inconveniencies and burdens. These should certainly be removed or lightened as far as prudence and the state of things will admit ; and by those who are vested with due authority for the purpose. But these inconveniencies are aggravated far beyond the truth, by turbulent innovators ; and the character, as well as proceedings of all in authority, are misrepresented and blackened.

PATRIOTISM, Liberty, and the public Welfare—those abused words—so often used on these occasions, and so little understood—so frequently pretended, and so seldom pursued or practised—are made the pretexts for measures that directly tend to destroy them. Clubs perhaps are formed, to concert the properest modes for success. Inflammatory publications are circulated ; gross falsehoods are invented and disseminated, to excite jealousy and discontent, poison the minds of people, and expose them to sedition.

THESE and other artifices, suggested by faction, are employed to disturb society, and carry on the business of innovation. Hereby multitudes are worked up to a degree of enthusiasm, not less than is sometimes seen in matters of Religion ; whilst the leaders are only gratifying a turbulent
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temper,

temper, and aiming at their own interest. And it frequently happens, that the innovators, in both cases, secretly laugh at those who are the dupes of their artifices.

THE calamities that have been brought on States and Nations by those means are innumerable. History records the desolation, misery, and ruin of the most powerful empires, whose liberties, constitution, and interests have been sacrificed by the deluded people, to aggrandize, and gratify the ambition of their factious leaders. The very same effects would flow from the same causes at this day; and therefore you must be sensible of the wisdom of the prohibition in my text—not to meddle with them that are given to change.*

III. I come now, in the last place, to make some practical reflections and observations on this subject.

i. It

* Some, perhaps, may be displeased that I dwell so much on the effects of infidelity, sedition, and enthusiasm. But I beseech them to reflect, whether the facts adduced above, or alluded to, are not true? And to those many more might be added. Should any, therefore, be displeased with me, or count me their enemy, because I tell them the truth? Were a person infected with the plague to come among us, who would not think it right to take every precaution that might prevent the infection from spreading? And is it not right to state, in order to prevent the effects of infidelity, sedition, and enthusiasm, which are as ruinous to society as any plague or pestilence? That they are so, we have the clearest evidence of reason, and the experience of past ages. Can a more frightful picture of human depravity, let loose by infidel principles, be imagined, than is at this day exhibited by France? Where a nation, lately deemed one of the most civilized and polished in Europe, has been hereby suddenly transformed into a race of sanguinary barbarians and ruffians! And are there not some so lost to all principles, to all sense of duty and humanity, as to wish the same scenes may be acted on the theatre of the British empire? Can we therefore be too much on our guard? And as to enthusiasm, be it remembered, that very lately *three persons* have been driven to actual madness, to the most deplorable state of insanity, and become maniac, in the conventicles at Halifax. A transaction still more shocking, if possible, and which decency forbids me to set down, has, within a few months, taken place

1. IT appears then that the first and greatest duty of man is what he owes to his Maker. To fear God and obey him is the truest wisdom. The benefits of serving our Creator faithfully extend to every state and condition, in which we are, or can be placed ; they extend to every period of our existence. The happiness of individuals here, the welfare of society, and our salvation through eternity, are all suspended on the attention we pay to his service.

THIS shews how careful we should be to discharge our duty to God with punctual and scrupulous exactness. Nothing should ever be permitted to interfere with that duty. To neglect it, or prefer any other before it, would be inconsistent with the nature of things ; with the relation in which we stand to the Almighty, and with the obligations we are under. It would therefore be irrational and unwise, as well as impious.

AND this holds equally true, whether we consider ourselves separately, as individuals ; or collectively, as united in society. Religion is the surest, firmest support of society and government. Without it, they cannot exist. There never was a sounder maxim of policy than that of Solomon—"That righteousness exalteth a nation ; but sin is a reproach to any people."* The regular, devout, and conscientious practice of religion engages the Almighty's protection, and

place among some enthusiasts in the Province of New-Brunswick. That the friends of infidelity, sedition, and enthusiasm, should be displeased to see their principles and proceedings exposed, may be easily conceived ; but it is impossible that any rational, conscientious, Christian and loyal subject can be thereby offended. We may, and indeed ought to lament and pity all who are under any delusion ; but duty to God, to the King, and to Society, calls on us loudly to prevent, as far as we are able, the baneful effects of delusion.

* Prov. xiv. 34.

draws down his blessing upon a people; whilst it disposes individuals to reverence legal authority, as the ordinance of God; to pay respect and obedience to the laws; to love and promote peace and order, and to discharge every other social duty. For they are conscious that so is the will of God; and that he is the avenger of all who transgress his will.

INDEED the inward state and movements of the heart can only be known to God; and to him only are men accountable for them. Not so the external and social parts of religion. With them the general influence of religion is connected. Such for instance, among others are—*attendance on God's public worship, and observation of the Lord's Day*. These are enjoined by divine and human laws; the neglect of them is cognizable by the latter, because that neglect would be very injurious to society.

A good citizen and member of society will therefore be punctual in the observation of those duties, not only in obedience to divine and human authority; but also because his example will have very interesting effects on others—to strengthen or destroy the influence of religion. He will cautiously avoid a breach of divine and human laws, which has a direct tendency to hasten that fatal crisis—a crisis which has ever been dreaded by the wisest men, as the certain forerunner of public ruin—when Religion has lost its hold on the minds of the people.

FOR I beseech you to reflect—what but ruin could ensue in such a case? When the depraved appetites of men are set loose from all the restraints which divine and human wisdom has placed round them, must not disorder, and the perpetration of every crime be the consequence? Supposing such a character

rafter as is mentioned by the Psalmist, to exist among us—
 “ A fool who hath said in his heart, there is no God.”*
 What tie can you have on such a person? What security for
 the rectitude of his conduct?—An oath is the strongest bond
 of society. It is a solemn appeal to God for the truth of
 what we declare; and for our sincerity in what we promise.
 But what force or efficacy can such an appeal have with a
 person who thinks there is no God?

THE experiment has been lately made—and, blessed be
 God, not at our expence—the experiment, I say, has been
 actually made, what effects are produced by atheistic princi-
 ples, when they assume the reins of Government, dictate
 public measures, and are diffused among the mass of the
 people. We see, and shudder at those effects. History in-
 deed, in its extensive range, presents us with a solitary, spe-
 culative atheist here and there, who was a disgrace to our
 common nature. The number however was so small, that
 no material injury was done to society; especially as the
 popular belief was always against them, and they were uni-
 versally detested.† But France has proved by practice,
 what was before demonstrable in theory, that Atheism, when
 it infects the mass of people, and influences public councils,
 is totally subversive of society, of human happiness, and all
 the comforts of life. And with such an example before us,
 for any one to desire a repetition of the experiment, would
 be just as wise and rational as to fling a man down a preci-
 pice, or discharge a loaded cannon at him, by way of experi-

* Psalm liii. 1.

† When Diagoras, the Atheist, fled from Athens to avoid a trial
 on account of his principles, the Athenians offered a talent, about
 193l. 15s. sterling, to any one that would kill him. The charge of
 Atheism against Socrates, though false, was the cause of his being put
 to death.

ment, and to try whether either would kill him ; although we are already apprized of the certain consequences.

But although I trust, and firmly believe, that those impious principles are not prevalent among us, nor any desire to try so dreadful an experiment ; yet it may not be improper to remind you, that there is such a thing as *practical atheism* ; when by our actions we deny, or disregard the authority of God, in whom we profess to believe. Even this will have very pernicious effects on society ; and the effects will be more general and aggravated, as the religious principle is weak, and this practical atheism prevails. The imputation and guilt of being Christians without Christianity, should therefore be cautiously avoided. We should really fear God, so as not to offend him ; and be mindful of him in every part of our conduct. We should consider ourselves as ever in his presence ; and conscientiously endeavour to express the native purity of our holy faith in our daily conversations and actions.

2. I would in the next place observe, that there is a close connection between that duty which we owe to God, and the duty we owe to the King, and to others in authority under him. So intimate is this connection, that they can scarcely be separated. Whoever is sincerely religious towards God from principle and conscience, will also, from principle and conscience, be loyal to his earthly Sovereign, obedient to the laws, and faithful to the government which God hath placed over him.

It is our peculiar felicity that love, gratitude, and esteem unite with Religion in attaching us to the King ; and that every consideration of our own welfare, and that of our brethren, serves to confirm our attachment to the excellent Civil Constitution under which we live.

WE

WE should deem it a singular mercy, that so amiable a Sovereign fills the throne in these turbulent times; when the bands of society are torn asunder in so many places; and the miseries of mankind are thereby multiplied: and that his counsels are directed by men eminent for wisdom, uprightness, and the most shining abilities; when the talents of others, sadly misapplied, are exerted in behalf of measures that would be destructive. Few people were ever blessed with such a Prince; and his subjects seem to be sensible of it. The universal gloom that overspread them, and the deep sorrow they discovered not long since, when his life was in danger; clearly proved that he reigned in their hearts; and how valuable his life was in their estimation.

How could it be otherwise? To promote the happiness and prosperity of his subjects has been the uniform object of his reign; and greatly have they been promoted and increased. Instead of abridging, he is rather inclined to enlarge their privileges, where practicable; and to confirm them by every possible security. The eminent virtues that adorn him, command respect and esteem. His piety and benevolence; his temperance, chastity, and domestic virtues; his devout attention to the duties of Religion, with which neither business nor pleasure is permitted to interfere: these exhibit a most edifying example for his subjects to imitate; and they are the admiration of mankind.

I mention these particulars for no other reason than to shew—how thankful we should be to God for such a King—what reason we have to love and obey him—and how inexcusable those are, if there be any such, who might be disposed to change, or revolt from him.

Of the British Constitution it may be affirmed,—that it is the best calculated to procure political happiness, of any that

was ever framed by human wisdom. Indeed we might be deemed partial to our Civil Constitution, and too much prejudiced in its favour, to form a just estimate of its value; were it not that foreigners---and those the most enlightened, and best qualified to decide on the point, who could be under no other bias than that of truth---have spoken of it as highly as any British subject.* They saw, and acknowledged the superior advantages it possessed above any ancient or modern form of government.---Its spirit is mild and generous. It guards, as far as human wisdom can, against every species of oppression and wrong; it affords equal justice and redress to all; no one is too powerful to be above the controul of its laws, nor too low or mean to be out of their protection; it effectually secures the subject's life and property; with the amplest liberty, both civil and religious, that is consistent with the social state, and under no other restraint, than what the welfare of society indispensably requires.

To resist innovations in such a Constitution, is an evident duty. For if any are discontented under it; if they are restless and given to change, the cause must be sought in their own bosom, and not in the Constitution. Instead of its bending to them, and changing to suit their interested or wanton purposes; they ought in reason and conscience to conform to it, and live peaceably under it.

3. LASTLY. From the present aspect and state of public affairs in Europe, it is probable that we shall soon be at war with a nation which has been long the rival of our prosperity and power; and which has often interrupted our peace, and that of Christendom. War is certainly a very great calamity, and to be avoided, if possible. But there are times and

* See particularly MONTESQUIEU'S *Spirit of Laws*, and DE LOLME on the *English Constitution*.

occasions when war may be necessary to avert even greater calamities. It may be necessary, not only to procure peace, and support our public character; but also to secure our Religion, Rights, and Liberties from destruction.

It was the wish of an eminent writer, about the middle of this century, that as we were then at war with the *power*, we might also be at war with the *manners*, of France,* Atheism, it seems, fostered by the characteristic levity of that nation, made considerable advances at this period. But the monster, which then skulked only in secret, has since thrown off all disguise, and now stalks forth into open day. It is therefore to be wished, much more now than ever, that we may always be at variance with the manners and principles of France, whilst they continue what they are. And should we be involved in the war alluded to,† we can reflect--that it is a war, not of choice, but of necessity; not of ambition, for the extension of commerce or territory, but to preserve our most holy Religion, the best gift of heaven, and our Civil Constitution, the greatest of earthly blessings, from a total subversion by the enemies of Christianity, order, and subordination. And we can farther reflect, that this war will be with a people who have already declared war against every thing held most sacred and estimable by man.

A levelling system of Atheism carries within itself the certain seeds and principles of its own destruction. Yet, whether it may please God, in his wisdom and justice, to cut short in its career such a system, or to permit its continuance a certain time, either for the punishment of guilty nations, or for other purposes of his providence, is not known

* Dr. Young; *preface to Night the Seventh, of his Night Thoughts.*

† Since this Sermon was preached, War has taken place between England and France.

to any mortal. It therefore behoves us at this eventful period, to prepare for whatever may await us.*

WE should in this, as in all cases of difficulty and danger, apply to the great Ruler of the Universe, and Arbiter of nations. We should turn to him with unfeigned repentance and amendment; earnestly beseeching him that he would pardon, protect and spare us; not dealing with us according to our iniquities; but according to the riches of his mercy in

* It was the conjecture of Sir ISAAC NEWTON, (no less celebrated for his accurate investigation of the prophecies of Scripture, than for his profound knowledge in sound philosophy) that the overbearing power of Popery, which had so long enslaved the Christian world, must be broken by the prevalence of Infidelity for some time, before that glorious state of the Gospel which we are taught to expect, when righteousness and truth shall overspread the earth, and "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and "his Christ," can arise. See WHISTON'S *Essay on the Revelations*, p. 321. 2d Edit. 1744.

Time only in its silent lapse can fully unfold the divine prophecies, and whenever we attempt to explain or apply them, it should be done with the utmost reverence and caution. It would really seem as if the affairs of Europe, under the guidance of a steady Providence, were going on gradually to some such great event as is mentioned above. It is devoutly to be wished, that not only the Church of Rome, but all other Churches in Christendom, may finally profit by the horrid scenes now exhibited by the enemies of Christianity. Were the atheistic system of France to prevail, there can be little doubt that the *Age of Martyrs* would be renewed. Great numbers of the French Clergy have already been massacred. Some thousands of them have fled from the assassin's poinard, and taken sanctuary in England, and other parts of the British dominions, where they are hospitably received and supported. It appears that their adherence to Christianity, is the principal cause of this persecution, and not their Loyalty only; and that no Heathen persecution of Christians, in the ancient Church, was more cruel or unrelenting. The effects attending so long a continuance of this impious system are deplorable, and much to be lamented. Yet one benefit arises from it—the character and designs of those atheistic levellers, with the pernicious tendency of their principles, which otherwise might be problematic with some, are now fully developed and ascertained to the conviction of all mankind.

JESUS CHRIST, who died for us, and redeemed us, whilst we were yet dead in trespasses and sins.* It is thus that we may expect his blessing ; and a renewal of those mercies and deliverances that he hath so often granted to our Church and Nation. From the aspiring, ambitious power of France, infligated by religious bigotry, he hath frequently delivered them : From the same ambitious and aspiring power, now goaded on by the vengeful spirit and rage of frantic, levelling Atheism, I trust in his mercy, he will again deliver them.

FEW wishes are nearer my heart, than to see this country prosper ; and as there are in this audience several respectable persons from various districts of the province, permit me to suggest how necessary it is for all, in their respective districts, to exert themselves in promoting the fear of God, and the King ; that is, true, rational Religion and Loyalty. Nor should their endeavours be omitted to promote harmony, brotherly love, and unanimity ; discouraging all falshoods that would excite jealousy, discontent, or sedition ; and repelling every attempt of those who are given to change.

AMONG the various benefits which call for our gratitude to heaven, one is, that our lot is cast in a most healthy and fertile land, possessed of as many natural advantages as any colony or province on this continent---a land, where nothing is wanted to make it flourishing and prosperous, but that industry, and those sober, frugal, upright manners, which are essential to the welfare of all countries and communities. Its improvements and prosperity are indeed rapidly advancing ; nor can there be a doubt that their progress will be accelerated by the vigilance, activity, and well-directed exertions of Him who now presides over it ; as well as by the

* Ephes. ii. 1.

prudent and vigorous measures of the whole Legislature. The light of useful Science has dawned upon it from those excellent Seminaries that have been established;* a brighter day is fast approaching; and a noontide splendor, with its attendant benefits, cannot be far distant.---These things should be made known; as it may animate our brethren and fellow subjects to earnest and persevering efforts in so good a cause.

LET us all heartily unite in the same cause; faithfully discharging the duties of our respective stations. Let us fervently pray, and use our best endeavours, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, Religion and Loyalty, may be established, and flourish among us.

MAY our prayers be heard, and our endeavours for these desirable purposes be crowned with success. Grant this, most merciful Father, for the sake of thy blessed Son, Jesus Christ; to whom, with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, three persons, but ONE ETERNAL GOD, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and evermore. AMEN.

* At Windsor and Halifax.

F I N I S.

