

THE  
N A T U R E  
O F

*Justice and Moral Honesty.*

S H E W N I N

Two S E R M O N S

P R E A C H E D A T

WARE in HERTFORDSHIRE ;

Wherein are some

G E N E R A L R U L E S

Laid down, that may easily be applied to

P A R T I C U L A R C A S E S,

As they may happen to arise in

C O M M O N L I F E ;

And the Doctrine applied, *particularly*, to the

C A S E of TITHES and OFFERINGS.

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By the Rev. *W. WEBSTER*, D. D.

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L O N D O N :

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T  
T O T H E  
P U B L I C K.

W H E N I determined to *print* these Papers I had no Thoughts of *publishing* them, but only to circulate them among my Parishioners of *this Town*, to the State and Condition of which they were *particularly* adapted. But, when I revised them in Order for the *Press*, I could not help thinking that there are several Things that may be of more *general* Use. I wish, I may not be mistaken in my Opinion, or disappointed in my Hopes of doing my *Brethren* of the *Clergy*, as well as others, some little Service; but, disappointed I must be, in some Measure, unless they'll give me the Assistance of their Recommendation. The Want of *Union* and *Zeal* in promoting Things intended for *publick Good* has been a great Discouragement to laudable Attempts, and has hindered the Success of them when made.





*To the Inhabitants of WARE.*

DEAR BRETHREN,

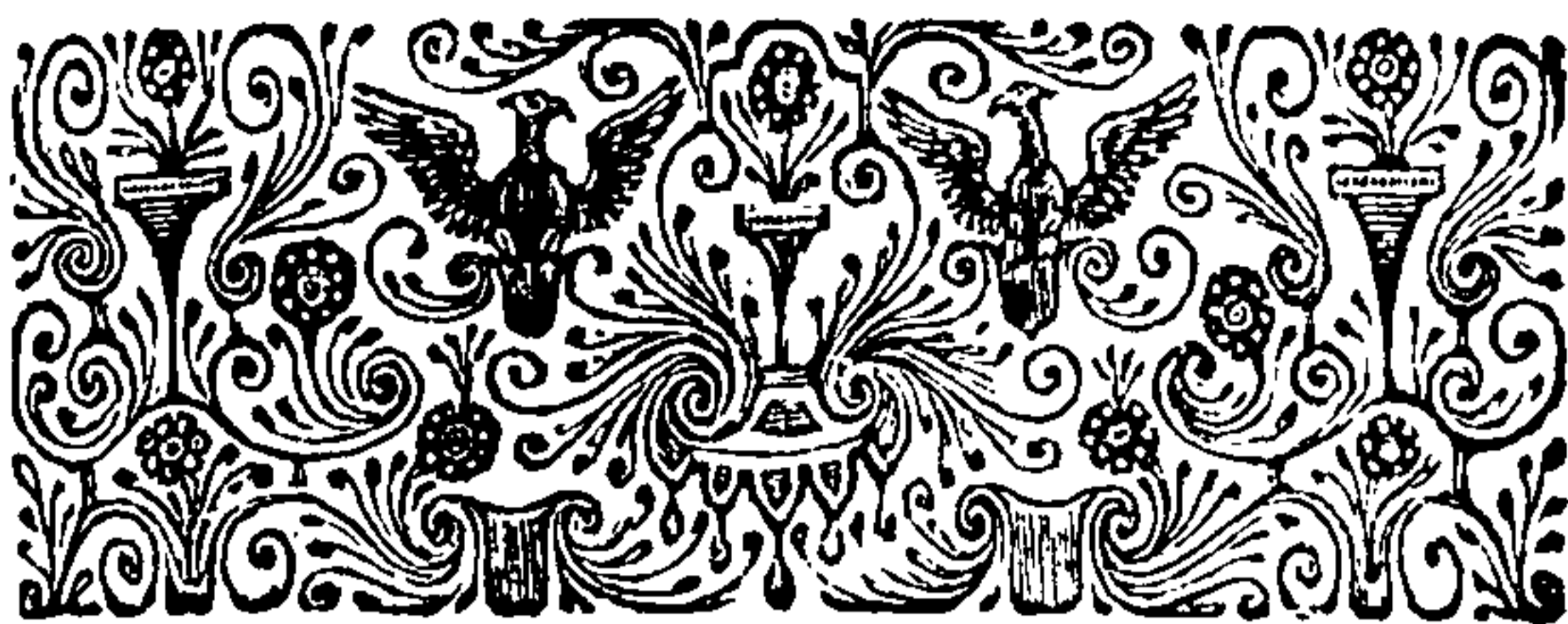
**T**HE *main Substance* of what I here recommend to your serious Perusal was delivered to you from the *Pulpit*, about five Years ago, though I have since made some *Alterations* and *Additions*; I wish, I could send it with more Hopes of Success than your former Behaviour gives me Room to entertain. I have been at the Trouble of *Writing*, and at the Expence of *Printing*, and *Circulating* among you, several Discourses upon useful Subjects; written with all the Force of my small Ability, and with a very sincere and affectionate Concern for your Happiness; but, I cannot say that I have seen so good an Effect from them as I intended, and expected. However, discouraging as this has been, I have made one Attempt more; and may the Blessing of *God* make it more successful than the others have been. I am sure, what I put into your Hands is greatly seasonable, and of great Concern; and you'll be very much wanting to yourselves if you do not read it with *Attention* and *Impartiality*. Let not my Freedom  
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*To the Inhabitants of WARE.*

of Speech give you any Offence. It may be *disagreeable*, but it was *necessary*. Oil may be proper in some Cases, but an *old Sore* must be probed to the Bottom, the corrupted Flesh must be cut out, and *Causticks* applied, or there can be no Cure. If you have no *Feeling*, it is a certain Sign of a *Mortification*; and, therefore, I shall not be sorry if I put you to *some Pain*. To *me*, indeed, it is not *pleasant*, but for *you* it is *safe*. Whatever may be the *Event*, it is not in your Power to deprive me of the *Pleasure*, or disappoint me of the *Reward*, of a *good Intention*. Though many of you have treated me as if you *counted* me for an *Enemy*, I ever was, and ever will be, with my best Wishes, and daily Prayers, for you all,

*Your faithful Friend,*

W. WEBSTER.



## The Nature of Justice.

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St. MATTH. v. 6.

*Blessed are they who do Hunger and Thirst  
after Righteousness.*



IN discoursing upon these Words I  
purpose to do three Things.

I. Settle the *Duty* to which a particular Blessing is here promised.

II. Open and explain the several Parts of it, that you may the better know when you put it in Practice.

III. Apply the *general Doctrine* to the *particular Case of Tithes and Offerings.*

I. I am to state and settle the *Duty* here enjoined.

The Word, *Righteousness*, has various Acceptations in the *New Testament*, which has occasioned Interpreters to put very different Senses upon the Use of it in this Place. It is sometimes used in a borrowed, *Law Sense*; not for *real*, but *imputed* Righteousness, when a Man is cleared in *Judgment*, by standing upon his *Vindication* of himself, or plead-

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ing his *Pardon*. This last Sense the *New Testament* calls the Righteousness of Faith in *Christ*, by which we are *justified*, or *acquitted*, before God : And, this being a proper Object of our *spiritual Hunger* and *Thirst*, several Interpreters have understood it in this Sense *here*, tho' it is not so used in any other Place in the four *Gospels*, nor any where else, but in *St. Paul's Epistles*. But, for several Reasons, this Interpretation cannot be the true one. For,

1<sup>st</sup>, It is observable, that whenever the Word, *Righteousness*, is used in this *borrowed, Law* Sense, it has always some *previous*, or *concomitant* Description added to it, from which we may know that it is determined to that Sense ; such as these, the Righteousness of *Faith*, the Righteousness of *God*, or Righteousness *imputed*. Without something of this kind, added, by way of Explanation, the Word is never used in this Sense.

2<sup>dly</sup>, The Doctrine of *Justification* had not, as yet, been preached, and therefore it is quite absurd to suppose that our Blessed Saviour should use the Word in a Sense that must, *then*, have been altogether *unintelligible* to his *Hearers*. Besides,

3<sup>dly</sup>, This Interpretation is manifestly inconsistent with the *whole Scope* of the Place, it being the Drift of all the other Beatitudes to inculcate the Doctrine of *Sanctification*, or a *new Life*, as a necessary Disposition for the *evangelical* State. If, therefore, all the other Beatitudes are plainly to be taken in a *moral* Sense, why should this, differently from all the rest, be thought to relate to Matters of *Faith* ? Is it not infinitely more reasonable to interpret this Beatitude in such a Sense as will correspond with the other seven, in correcting the erroneous Notions of his Disciples concerning the *Nature* of *Christ's Kingdom*, and the Dispositions of Mind that were  
necessary

necessary in order to qualify them to be Members of it?

Having shewn that the Word, *Righteousness*, is used in this Place in a *moral* Sense, the next Enquiry that offers itself, is, Whether it signifies a *particular* Virtue, or the *Whole of our Duty*? That it is used in several other Places of Scripture in a *limited* Sense, signifying a *particular* Virtue, is certain. I shall cite only two Places; 1 *Ep. to Tim.* ch. vi. ver. 11. *But thou, O Man of God, follow after Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Patience, Love, Meekness.* Again, 2 *Ep.* ch. ii. ver. 22. *Follow after Righteousness, Charity, Peace, &c.* That it is used in this *limited* Sense here is as evident, because, as in the *former* Instances now cited, it stands in the List of several other *particular* Virtues, and therefore cannot, without the utmost Absurdity, be understood to comprehend *all* the Virtues of the *whole moral Law*, much less the *whole* of our *Duty to God*. The very learned Dr. *Whitby*, with many others, contend for this *unlimited* Sense, but in so doing I must think that they contend against the clearest Evidence. The more acute Mr. *Blair*, in his Exposition of our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount, has not only confuted this Opinion, but by one Argument, drawn from the *Drift* and *Scope* of the Beatitudes, has plainly proved, not only that *Righteousness* here must signify a *particular* Virtue, but that *Justice* is the Virtue which our Saviour means. Having very justly observed that the *main Intent* of the *Beatitudes* was, to correct the bad Dispositions of his Hearers in relation to the *evangelical State*, he takes Notice that one of their most notoriously bad Dispositions was, that they expected, by the *Way of Conquest*, to invade other Men's Possessions. This Temper our Saviour had corrected in another Beatitude,

#### 4      *The* NATURE of JUSTICE.

he recommends *Poverty of Spirit*; and the *Injustice* of it he here blames.

This grand, *evangelical* Duty of *Justice*, the *very first* of all *Christian* Virtues, shall be the Subject of my present Discourse, because it seems, by the general Practice of the World, to be little understood, and less regarded.

If we were to consider the Duty of *Justice* in the most *extensive* Sense of it we should include all those Virtues by which our Neighbour has any sort of Right to claim from us, or not to be injured by us, but it is more agreeable to the Drift of our Blessed Saviour's Discourse to restrain it to *Money* and *Goods*. In this *limited* Sense I purpose at present, *principally*, to consider it.

Having thus ascertained the *Duty* which I apprehend to be *particularly* meant in my Text, I shall proceed, according to the Method which I proposed to follow,

II. To open and explain the several Parts of it, or, in other Words, the several Ways by which you may be guilty of *Injustice*.—And here, again, they are so various that I can only lay down *general* Heads, under which the *Particulars* may be reduced and judged of by Persons of the most ordinary Understanding, if they do but bring with them an *unbiassed* Mind.

The first of these Heads is, *Robbery*, either by getting forceable Entrance into our Neighbour's *House*, and carrying away *Goods* or *Money*, or openly demanding them in the *Road*, or in the *Street*. This I mention for the Sake of Method; not suspecting, that any of you are profligate and bold enough to be guilty of so infamous and dangerous a Vice: Supposing that a Sense of *Justice* would not  
restrain



restrain you, *Shame* and *Fear* will be a sufficient Restraint in this Case.

But there are other Ways of *doing Injustice* which partake of the *Nature* and *Guilt* of Robbery, tho' not of its *Infamy* and *Danger*, and which have usually one *aggravating* Circumstance attending it, in that the Persons who practice them have not the Plea of *Necessity* to mitigate their Guilt, nor any other Temptation besides an *avaricious* and *greedy* Disposition. These Persons shew a little more *Modesty*, and a great deal more *Caution*, but not a Grain more of *Honesty*, than abandoned *Robbers*.

The first of these *subordinate* Robbers are *Extortioners*. The Word, *Extortion*, comes from an Original that signifies to *pillage* or *plunder*. The *former* make use of *direct Violence*, at the Peril of their *own* Lives, while the latter only *compel* by taking Advantage of the *Necessities* of Mankind, and demanding more for a Thing than it is really worth, because the Person can't well do without it. Of this sort, *Pawn-Brokers*, and *common Usurers* are the most infamous. To use that strong Expression of the *royal Prophet*, *the tender Mercies of these Harpies are cruel*. Under the Notion of taking Compassion of the unfortunate, they *gradually devour* them.

In a *lower Degree*, People in the Way of *Trade* are frequently guilty of this Vice. As for Instance. If a Set of Men in the same Way of Business agree amongst themselves to keep up the Price of any Commodity beyond what is reasonable, or what it is sold for, in other Markets, because they know that the People *must, or will*, buy, either to supply their *Necessity*, or to gratify their *Palate*, this is *Extortion*; this is a Sort of *Pillage* or *Plunder*. To convince them of the Iniquity of this Practice, I will only put another plain Case, by Way of *Contrast*.

*traft.* Suppose a Person, or Persons, had been at a great Expence to supply a Neighbourhood with some of the *Necessaries* and *Conveniencies* of Life, and must be great Sufferers if they have no Demand for their Goods, but the Town, taking Advantage of their Necessity to *sell*, enter into a *Confederacy* not to *buy*, any of that Commodity, because they can make shift without it, longer than it will keep good; I say, suppose they thus agree not to *buy* any of it, unless the Sellers will take less than a *living* Profit, the Sellers would soon be convinced, and loudly complain of such an *unjust* and *cruel* Agreement; and if they have any *Conscience*, this short Argument will persuade them to Act more fairly, *themselves*. And, therefore, in all such Cases the *Buyer* should put himself into the Place of the *Seller*, and the *Seller* into the Place of the *Buyer*, and the Golden Rule, of *doing as we would be done by*, would then prevent abundance of these *Exorbitances* in *Trade* and *Commerce*.

*Monopolizers*, who by the Help of early Intelligence, an overgrown Fortune, or by any other Means, *engross* a necessary Commodity, and sell it out upon their own *extravagant* Terms, such *Tradesmen*, whatever their Characters may be in other Respects, are no better than *Pillagers* and *Plunderers* of the Publick, and Enemies to *Trade*. I call that an *extravagant* Price which is more than the *Market* Price would have been had that Commodity been sold by the Merchants and Tradesmen in COMMON.

I shall mention three Sorts of *Plunderers* more.

I. If I had not, myself, seen Instances of the first of them, I could not have believed that there are Persons, professing some Regard to *Justice*, who can be guilty of such *shameful Injustice*. They look upon all those as *Enemies* with whom they are *angry*; and,

and, considering them as in a State of *Hostility*, they fancy, they have a Right to use them as *injuriously* as they please. It is in their Opinion a State of *War*, that will justify all the military Art.

2. These *Plunderers* are bad enough in all Conscience, but there is another Set, if possible, worse than even these; I mean those who take Advantage of *Good Nature* and *Generosity*, and add *Ingratitude* to *Injustice*, by plundering their *Friends*

3. The last Sort are those (and many such there are) who by *Force*, or *Stratagem*, DETAIN from any one his *just Dues*. The *Nature* of the *Action*, the *Manner* of committing *Injustice*, is *different*, but the *Sin* is of the *same Kind*. For, if I take Advantage of a Person's *Weakness* and *Incapacity* to *recover* his Right, and refuse to *give* it him, I do him as much *open Injustice*, as if I *forceably* took so much *Money*, or *Goods* FROM him. This I take to be so clear a Case, that I need not inlarge upon it, and so frequently practis'd, that I need not stay to give *Instances* of it.

The next Head of *Injustice*, that I shall mention, is *Theft*, which consists in taking another Person's *Goods*, or *Money*, CLANDESTINELY. Like *direct Robbery*, this is so infamous a Crime that all, but the most abandon'd, will be *asham'd*, and so dangerous to the Life of the Committer of it, that all, but the most daring Offender, will be *afraid* to commit it. But, there are Sorts of *Injustice* which low and ignorant people are often guilty of, without any *seeming* Sense of the *Nature* and *Guilt* of the *Action*, and which the Injur'd seldom think worth a publick Prosecution. Such as poor People's stealing Fruit out of Gardens; Turnips, Beans, Pease, &c. out of Fields; Fish out of Ponds; and Poultry; and Servants stealing Victuals and Drink, without the  
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*Knowledge*, and contrary to the *Orders* of the Master, or Mistress. If they have not a sufficient Quantity of *wholesome, necessary* Food, the Law is open, there lies an Appeal to the *Magistrate* for Redress. If they want to live *better*, they are at Liberty to leave that Service and take their Chance in another. But it is not fit that *Servants* should *judge* and *carve* for themselves. *Meat* and *Drink* are as much the *Property* of the Possessors as *Money*, or any other *Goods*, and taking them *clandestinely*, without *Leave*, is downright *Theft*. It has the *Nature* and *Guilt* of that Crime, tho' thro' Lenity it may escape the *Punishment* due to it by the Law of the *Land*.

Under this Head I shall mention but one more Instance, which is often practised; I mean, the *Concealment* of a *just Debt* from the *Creditor*. Whoever will deliberately do this, can have no Sense of *moral Honesty*, and would as readily be guilty of any other kind of *Theft*, if he could do it with equal Safety to his Person and Credit.

*Money* and *Goods* are Things in which we have a *Property* by the Laws of our *Country*, and therefore the several Instances of *Injustice* which I have already mentioned, are Offences against *human Authority*, but there are many others of which we may be guilty, without the Intervention of *Civil Laws*, or even in *Opposition* to them. This may sound strangely to some of you, but the Doctrine is absolutely true, and easily prov'd. — *Justice* has a Foundation in the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things, which are *antecedent* to *human Laws*, and *unalterable* by any *human Authority*. HUMAN Laws may create a Right where there was none *before*, but they cannot cancel *antecedent* Claims, founded upon the *eternal Law* of *Natural Equity*, or discharge our Conscience from the Observance of them. One  
Instance

Instance will be sufficient to illustrate the Truth of this Doctrine, and the Application of it to other particular Instances will be easy. The *Labourer*, says St. Paul, is *worthy of his Hire*. Every Man's *Reason* must say the same Thing. No Man in his Senses ever had the Impudence to deny this plain Truth; so that if there were no *positive* Law to oblige in this Case, *natural* Equity would bind us *without* any, or (as I said before) in *Opposition* to any *human Authority*. For, if the *Legislature* should enact a Law *requiring* People to work for us for nothing, or without *reasonable* Wages, this would not discharge our *Conscience* from the *natural* Duty of rewarding every one *suitably* to his *Labour*, his *Skill*, and the Advantages accruing *from* his Labour to the Person *for* whom he works.

And, as no *honest* Man will take Advantage of the *Silence*, or *Unreasonableness*, of *human Laws*, to discharge himself from the *Duty* of *natural Justice*, or *Equity* (for, in the *Court of Conscience*, tho' not at *Westminster Hall*, *Justice* and *Equity* mean the same Thing) so neither will he take Shelter under the *bare Letter* of the Law to screen himself from the *original Intent* and *Meaning* of it, *plainly appearing*; which will always bind the *private Conscience* of the Subject (in *Opposition* to any *Custom* that may have obtained to its *Prejudice*) and ought to guide those whose Office it is to *explain* the Laws. I repeat it, because it is a Matter of *Consequence*, tho' not always regarded; I do say, that the *plain Intention* of any Law, appearing from the *Law itself*, however defectively worded, is binding in *Opposition* to the *bare Letter*, or any subsequent *Customs*, because it is the *plain Intention* and *Meaning* of the *Legislature*, and not the *strict Letter* of the Law, which carries the *binding* Force. Indeed, where the

C *original*

*original Intention* of the Legislature, and consequently, the *genuine Meaning* of the Law, is *doubtful*, the Judgment of the *proper Expositors* may be a safe Rule of *Conscience*; but it cannot be, in *all Cases*, a *sufficient* and *unerring* one, because if it appears evidently to *my Understanding* that it was the *original Design* of the Law to bind me to pay *Money* (for Instance) which the *authoritative Construction* does not require, I do not see how *That* can discharge my *private Conscience*, tho', for the Peace and Order of Society, it may bind to my *Prejudice*; as, suppose, the Determination of the Courts of Law should require me to pay Money, *contrary* to the *plain Intention* of the Law and *common Sense*, Submission to *legal Authority* is absolutely necessary in Point of *Conscience*; but, where my *private Judgment* happens to be *contrary* to the Sentiments of the *Courts of Justice*, in all such Cases, *my own Opinion*, i. e. *my own Conscience*, requires the Payment of it, because no *human Authority* can cancel a *superior, antecedent* one.

I shall now consider the *Injustice* of violating *Contracts* and *Promises*, tho' they should be of such a Nature that the Law cannot, or will not, compel to a Performance of them. This is a Point of very great Consequence to *private Happiness*, and a Point wherein I have always found Men extremely loose, as if they imagined *Contracts* to be binding only on *one Side*, and *Promises* to be binding no longer than it suits their *Conveniency*, or *Humour*, to keep them.

*Contracts* and *Promises* are of the *same Nature*, with only this Difference, that in all *Contracts* there is a *double Promise*, both Parties promising something; and they are, both of them, binding on the *same Principle*, in that both of them convey a *Right* to the Thing *promised*, or *contracted for*, by *Virtue*  
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of the Promise. Suppose I *contract* with a Person for such a Piece of Work to be done at such a Price, by Virtue of this *Contract*, or *Promise*, I have an *absolute Right* (tho' not a *legal* one) to the Performance of the *Work*, and he has, for the *very same Reason*, the *same Right* to be employed, upon the Terms agreed upon; and neither of us can be *discharged*, without the *Consent* of the other.

So it is with regard to *Goods*, if I *agree* with a Person for any Thing at a *fixed Price*, the Seller is not at Liberty to sell it to a *better Customer*, because he has actually sold it to *me*, and given me a *Right* to it at the Price *agreed* upon. If he disappoints me, he does me *Injustice*. So, likewise, it is in respect to *Promises*. If I promise a *good Office*, or a Sum of *Money*, by Way of Present, BEFORE the Promise they were Matters of *mere Favour*, and I was at Liberty whether I would grant them, but *after* the Promise, *Justice* is concerned, because, as I said before, a *Promise* conveys a *Right*, and the Breach of it is a *real Injury*. For which Reason, all *prudent* Persons are cautious how they lay themselves under such *Ties*, and all Persons of *Honour* are as careful, when they *have* done it, to discharge the *Obligation*, tho' it should be *to their own Hindrance*, or *Dissatisfaction*. This was *David's* Notion of an *honest Man*, but many of you seem, by your *Practice*, to be very little acquainted with that holy Man, or to have but a slender Opinion of his Judgment.

In what I have said, concerning the *Right* which *Covenants* and *Promises* convey, I take it for granted, that the *Matter* of them is *lawful*, for, otherwise, they are void in course; and so are *Oaths*; but, wherever an *Oath* would bind to a Performance, a *Promise* will do the same, tho' not *so strongly*.

But, Persons may bring themselves under the Olligation of a Promise, without making one in *direct* Terms. *Words* are the Instruments of conveying our *Thoughts*; and, if we only give *Hints*, or use *any other Means*, whereby we give any one *Reason* to *believe*, that we *intend* to do a Thing, it is the same Thing, to all *Intents* and *Purposes*, as if we made the most *absolute Promise*, because the same *Expectations* are raised, the same *Uneasiness* arises from the *Disappointment*, and consequently the same *Injury* is done. This *insincere Trafick* is not confined to COURTS; for, the *lowest bred* People can *imitate*, if not *equal*, the *highest*, in their *Hypocrisy*, tho' not in their *Politeness*. This I mention because I have often observed that your SHREWD ones, when they have a Design to serve a Turn upon any one, by Way of *Inducement* will give *Hopes* of great Services in *Return*, but, afterwards make a Jest of him for his *Credulity* and *Folly*, and express great Surprize that he should entertain any such Expectations.

All *Trusts* partake of the *Nature* of *Contracts* and *Promises*. Suppose, I desire a Person, of whom I entertain a good Opinion, to undertake the Management of an Affair of mine, and he *accepts* of the Commission, the very *Acceptance* implies a *Promise* to discharge it punctually and faithfully, whatever Trouble it may give him. *Before* the *Acceptance* of the Trust he was at Liberty to refuse, but *afterwards*, by *Virtue* of his *Acceptance*, I acquire a *Right* to his best Skill and Care in the Discharge of it, and he cannot honestly *free* himself without my *Consent*.

There are *Trusts* of a *subordinate* Kind in the Way of *Trade*. Suppose, I *bespeak* Goods of any Kind, or buy them when made, leaving it intirely to the *Honour* and *Honesty* of the Tradesman to supply me with what would answer my Purpose, if, after  
such



such a *Confidence*, he imposes upon me, sends me what he knew would not suit, or please me, and take the Price of a *good* Commodity for a *bad* one, he is not only a *Knave* in *cheating* me, but his *Knavery* is aggravated by the most dishonourable *Treachery* in betraying a *Trust*! I shall say no more upon this Head, than to desire you to *recollect* your Dealings, and judge of them by the Rule which I have laid down. If any of you *must* be condemned, I chuse that your *own Hearts* should condemn you, and make you *blush* in *secret*. If you be past *Blushing*, you are past *Reforming*.

This leads me to consider a very wicked Notion, which, to my Knowledge, is too current among you. Whatever your *Practice* may be, you scruple not to *own*, that when a Person *confides* in your *Honour*, it is most shameful to *deceive* him; but, that if he trusts to his *own Judgment*, this leaves you at Liberty to make as good a Bargain as ever you can; that is, to *cheat* him as much as ever you can. Where you met with this Doctrine, I am at a loss to imagine, unless it were in the Dictates of a *corrupt Heart*. *Christianity*, and *natural Justice* teach you better Things; *They* teach you to deal *fairly* with every Body; to take no Advantage of the *Ignorance* of others; and a Man is not one Jot the *less ignorant* for being *conceited*, or the less intitled to *common Honesty*. I'll put a Case that, I think, will clear the Matter beyond Dispute. A Person comes to take a Sum of Money, owns frankly that he does not know *good* Money from *bad*, and depends intirely upon your *Honour* for not *imposing* upon him. This Point is already settled and agreed between us. But, next comes a *conceited Coxcomb*, who knows as little of the Matter as the other, but affects the *Critic*, examines all the Pieces, himself,

self, with wondrous Accuracy. Notwithstanding his great Opinion of himself, you find out his Ignorance, and slip some bad Guineas into the Payment, which he accepts. In this Case you may fancy yourself to be very *shrewd* and *cunning*, but all *honest* Men will judge you to be a *very* great *Knave*, at the Expence of but a small Share of *Understanding*.

This Case will help to settle all the Variety of Cases that occur in *Trade*, relating to the *Concealment* of the *Defects* of any Commodity, where the Buyer has not Skill enough to discover them, and to sell it for a Thing perfectly good in its kind.—Reduce all such Goods to *Coin*. Suppose them to be so many Pieces of *Money*, so many *Guineas*, which you are going to dispose of in *Payment*. You know some of them to be very *defective* in *Weight* or *Metal*. The *Question* (if such a Point can ever be brought into Question) is, Whether it be lawful to *conceal* this Defect, and pay them away for *good Money*? A Person that should be known to practise such *Frauds*, **DESIGNEDLY**, would be liable to a *publick Prosecution*. Now, let any Man, if he can, shew me the Difference, in Point of *Honesty*, between imposing upon a Customer, by concealing from him the Defects of *Coin*, and the Defects of any *other* Goods, whatsoever.

This brings to my Memory a *sophistical* Distinction by which a Tradesman made his Conscience quite easy in cheating me.—I bought some Goods of him which were very good. In a little Time I sent for some more of the same Sort, for which he took the *same Price* as I paid him for the former. When I came to examine my Bargain, I found he had sent me a very *defective* Commodity, not worth half the Money. Upon this I went and expostulated with him, but could have no Remedy. He said, that if  
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it were not so good as what I had before, it *cost him as much*, and he would not make any Abatement. This is the *old Story*. If I take a Piece of *bad Money*, I may, if I can, pay it away for *good*, because I took it as *such*.

I ask any indifferent Person whether it would not have been more agreeable to *Reason* to have *returned* those *defective* Goods, or to have demanded a proper Abatement from his *Correspondent*, than to put them off upon his *Customer*. A *Tradesman* might as reasonably expect a *Customer* to pay all his *bad Debts*, as to make good all his *bad Bargains*.

What I have said concerning the *Dishonesty* of *concealing* from a *Customer* any *Defects* in his Goods I apprehend to be so plain, that it needs not the Sanction of any *Authority*, but I shall cite the Opinion of the greatest *Christian Preacher*, and the greatest *Heathen Moralist*, that ever lived. The first of them is Archbishop *Tillotson*, who delivers his Opinion in the following Words.

*Impose upon no Man's* IGNORANCE, or UNSKILFULNESS.

The Roman Orator, *Tully*, says the same Thing.

The BUYER should not be left ignorant of any Thing that the SELLER knows, i. e. concerning the *Faults* of his Goods \*. I must here relate one Fact (which I had from one who knew the Truth of it.) A Person not much acquainted with Things of that Nature, went to *Market*, and was so infamously cheated that some of his Neighbours expostulated with the *Tradesman* for imposing upon him in so shameful a Manner. To which he very HONEST-

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\* See the Life of Archbishop *Tillotson* by Dr. *Birch*, p. 460, 461.

LY replied, in the *Sincerity of his Heart*, *Why did they send a FOOL to Market?* Why, truly, it might have been *better* if the Person had been a little *wiser*; however, the *Fool* might have fared very well if he had not fallen into the Hands of a *Knave*. But, I fear, this *honest* Man spoke the real Sentiments of many of his *Brethren*.

To make *slight* and *defective* Goods for *publick* Sale, because they can make them cheap, and get so much the more by them, this cannot properly be called a *Fraud*, like the *Concealment* of Defects, but it is an *Imposition* upon the *Publick*, and a Piece of *open Injustice*.

It is impossible for me, or any one else, to settle the Price of Goods, or the Profits of every Man's *Trade*, but there are some *general* Rules which will guide the Conscience of any *honest* Man. *Variation of Circumstances* will alter the *real Value*, and the *reasonable Price* of Goods; but, whether in a Time of *Plenty*, or *Scarcity*, there is *usually* such a Thing as a *Market Price*: By which I do not mean the Price which any Commodity may happen to bear in a *particular* Town (because that may be raised, or *kept up*, by a *knavish Confederacy* of the *Trade*) but, the *general* Price which it bears in the *Neighbouring Towns*, of which no Tradesman, of any Dealings, can plead Ignorance. Thus with Regard to the *Profits* which a Tradesman may lawfully get in any Commodity that he makes, provided he makes it *good*, I can only say that there is such a Thing as a *living Profit*, which is *reasonable*. If any one asks me, *What is a living Profit?* I can only answer, in *general*, I do not mean such a Profit as will enable an *ordinary* Tradesman to live like a *Gentleman*, and grow *rich*, but such as will answer the *necessary Expences* of his *Trade*, and support the Family in  
such

such a *decent* Manner as is suitable to their Station in the World.

But, besides *Defects* in the *Nature*, or *Quality*, of Goods, there are *Defects* in *Quantity*, too. These are the *divers Weights* and *divers Measures*, which *Solomon* pronounces to be an *Abomination to the Lord*; and great Reason have we to think them to be so, as they are manifest *Frauds*, and *Impositions*. If a Person sells a *bad* Commodity for a *good* one, this is an *Imposition* and a *Fraud*; so, likewise, if he sells a Commodity that is ever so good, if he sells it for *more* than it *contains*, so much as it falls short of its due *Weight*, or *Measure*, the *ignorant* Customer is *defrauded* of so much *Money*; and the *Crime* is the very same as if the *Seller* had taken it *clandestinely*, out of a *Scrutore*, or a *Pocket*. It is not only *as much* an Act of *Injustice*, but it is a Piece of *Injustice* of the *same Sort*. I wish the Practice were as uncommon as the *Sinfulness* of it is apparent.

I have told you a great many disagreeable Truths, but I hope to make you some Amends by the Acceptableness of the next Article. For, tho' many of you like well enough to cheat your *ignorant*, or impose upon your *necessitous*, Neighbour in the Sale of your Goods, you would take it very much amiss if your *Customers* should get into your Debt, and never pay you, or not without putting you to great *Expence* and *Trouble*. This, no Doubt, is a *capital* Act of *Injustice*, and as destructive of all *Trade* and *Commerce*, as *Trade* and *Commerce* are necessary to the Support and Happiness of Society.

Concerning *Debts*, I shall lay down two *general* Rules. The *first* relates to the *contracting* of *Debts*, the *second*, to the Payment of them.

As to the *contracting* of *Debts*, I lay down this general Rule — No Man can *Honestly* contract a

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Debt

Debt without *some* reasonable Ground of Hope that he shall be able, by his Industry, and the Blessing of God upon his Endeavours, to pay it. It is upon this Presumption, *only*, that a Man gets Credit for *Goods*, or *Money*; and if he offers to get it *without* any such Hope, he is guilty of a *Fraud* by imposing upon the *Credulity* of his Neighbour.

When a Debt is contracted, *Justice* requires that he discharges it in a reasonable Time, if he be able. If by any unforeseen Accidents and Disappointments he be rendered incapable (which may happen to the honestest Man, *especially to those who engage largely in Trade and Merchandize, or in expensive Undertakings for the Service of the Publick*) he must use his best Endeavours to put himself into a Capacity of doing it, either by an *Improvement* of his *Income*, or a *Reduction* of his *Expences*. But, this *general* Rule is subject to some *Limitations*. Justice cannot oblige any Man to abridge himself of *NECESSARIES*, neither will any Creditor, of *COMMON Humanity*, desire it; unless he should be in the same *Necessity, himself*. But *NECESSARIES* vary, according to the *different Circumstances* of the Persons. What is *sufficient* to support a vigorous *young* Man in *Health*, will not be sufficient for the Support of a Man labouring under the *Decays* and *Infirmities* of *Age*. What is *necessary* for a *sickly, infirm* Person, is not so to a Person enjoying a *sound and strong Constitution*. What is *necessary* to a Person, who has long been *habituated* to a *generous Way of Living*, is not so to one who has always been accustomed to a *spare and low Diet*. What is *necessary* to a Man in one *Station of Life*, is not so in *another*. But the lowest *Degree of Luxury, Elegancy, and pleasurable Amusements* can never be considered as *Necessaries* in any *Condition, or Station, whatever*; and, therefore

fore all such *unnecessary* Branches of *Expence* should immediately be lopp'd off for the Sake of doing Justice by the Payment of *Debts*.

These general Rules, if honestly applied to *particular* Cases, as they shall happen to occur in the Course of your Trade and Business, or in the *common Intercourse* of Life, may, I hope, be found sufficient to direct your *Consciences*.

III. According to my proposed Method, I must now, in the third Place, beg your patient and candid Attention, while I apply what has been said in *general* to the *particular* Case of *Tithes* and *Offerings*. I know not how it has happened, but, among many other Hardships, *peculiar* to the *Clergy*, this is one, that, while all other People are allowed the Liberty of defending their *Rights* and *Privileges*, it is thought *indecent* in the *Clergy* to assert *theirs*. But, SELF-DEFENCE is not only a Right which belongs to *them* in common with all the rest of Mankind, but in *this* Case it is a *necessary Duty*. Their Silence is not only a *false*, but *criminal* Modesty. They are not only meanly wanting to their own Interests, but, in *my* Opinion, negligent in the Discharge of their *ministerial Function*, as *Teachers* and *Guides*. They are as much wanting to their *People*, as they are to *Themselves*. They suffer them to be guilty of a more complicated Piece of *Injustice* than any other can be (because it is *Injustice* done to *God* as well as *Man*) without explaining the *Nature*, and setting forth the *Danger* of it.

I shall first consider the Case of *Tithes*. This Part of the *Clergy's Maintenance* is converted into *Property* by *civil Authority*. The *Tithes* belonging to any Living are the *real Estate* of the *Incumbent* for the time being; and he has as incontestable a

Title to them as any other Man *can* have to an Estate which he *purchases*, or *inherits*. His Title is more *antient*. It was at first settled with more circumstances of *Solemnity*; not only by the Authority of the *King, Lords, and Commons*, but with the *formal Consent* of the *next Heirs* of the Possessors of the Estates, the *Tithes*, or *tenth Part* of the Product of which were then settled upon the *Church*. How is it possible for any Title to an Estate to be clearer, and fuller? It is possible for any Person to have a more absolute and indisputable *Property* in any Thing than the *Clergy* have in their *Tithes*? How then comes it to pass, that it should be thought such a *trifling Matter* to deprive a *Clergyman* of his *Tithe*, either by *Force*, or *Fraud*, while they think it so criminal to be guilty of any other *Robbery*, or *Theft*. If it be **ROBBERY**, *forceably* to dispossess any *Layman* of any Part of his *Property*, it is equally a **ROBBERY** in a *Layman* to dispossess a *Clergyman* of his *Tithe*. If it be **THEFT**, *clandestinely* to *take*, or *keep*, a Sum of *Money*, or *Goods*, belonging to a *Layman*, it must be equally *Theft* in any *Layman* to *conceal*, and *clandestinely* keep back, *Tithe*, which the Person knows to be the *Property* of the *Incumbent*. I am now putting it, not on the *Foot* of *Religion*, but **COMMON HONESTY**, and the *established Principles* of *civil Society*, to which all of you will readily subscribe, when you are to reap any *Benefit* from them. But, what Title have you to the *Protection* of the *Laws* of your *Country*, unless you submit to them, yourselves, as well as expect *Submission* from others in the same *Cases*. If you deny the *Obligation* to be *mutual*, you declare yourselves *Out-Laws*, disqualified for *Society*. Here I venture to rest this *Matter*, it being, I think, too plain to be made plainer by any farther *Enlargement*. But,

There



There is another Point relating to *Tithes*, considered as the Clergy's *Property*, that is very clear to my Apprehension, but will not so readily be agreed to. However, I shall State the Case fairly, and assign my Reasons with great Deference to better Judges.

*Tithes* are not only the *Property* of the Clergy, as much as any Gentleman's Estate is his Property, but it is a Property *unalienable*, by any other Authority than that of the *Legislature*. A Gentleman, with the Consent of the next Heir, can cut off an *Entail*, and give his Estate to *whom*, and in *what Manner* he pleases; but a Clergyman can have no such Consent from his *Successors*, and therefore can have no such Power to *give away* any Part of his *Tithe*. I shall easily be understood to mean those *Exemptions* and *Modusses*, which owed their Rise to the *wicked*, or *weak*, Consent of the then *Incumbents*, and have, now, obtained all the *Sanction* that *Custom* and the *Authority* of the *Courts* can give them; but, I humbly hope for Forgiveness, if I observe that what is *absolutely wrong in itself* can never be made *right* by *Custom*, or any Determinations of a *Court*: Tho' the Determinations of those who are appointed to *interpret* the Law may bind to a *Submission*, they can never *destroy* the plain *Intent* and *Meaning* of a Law, or the *Obligation* arising from it. There can be no Dispute whether it be the *plain Intent* and *Meaning* of the Law relating to *Tithes*, that all Land, and whatever else is specified in the Law, should be *Titheable*; and therefore as long as that *original Law* stands *unrepealed* by the *same Authority* which *enacted* it, and the *Intent* and *Meaning* of it continues to be *plain*, it is not in the Power of *Interpreters* to discharge the *Consciences* of the People from their *Obligation* to *observe* it. If *Interpreters*  
of

of a Law have a Power by their *Interpretations*, to destroy the plain *Intent* and *Meaning*, and to alter the VERY NATURE, of it, they *cease* to be *Interpreters*, and are become *Legislators*. This is not *explaining* a Law, but *making* a new one *destructive* of the *old*, which they have *no Authority* to do. I shall illustrate this Matter by a similar Case.—The *Clergy* are the *appointed*, but not *infallible*, *Interpreters* of *God's Word*. Suppose, then, that any of their *Interpretations* should explain away the *plain Intent* and *Meaning* of any Part of the *moral Law*, and allow the *People Liberties* that *God* never intended to allow them, I ask any one, whether such *Interpretations*, tho' they should have obtained all the *Sanction* that all the *Councils* and *Convocations* that ever were held since the *Beginning of Christianity*, would *destroy* the *Force* of the Law, and justify the *Consciences* of *Christians* in taking those *prohibited Liberties*, allowed them by the *Clergy*. The Case of *Exemptions* and *Modusses* is exactly *parallel*. The *Law of Tithe* is *plain* and *full*, without any *Exceptions* whatsoever. By *Virtue* of this *universal, unlimited, Law*, the *Clergy* have an *absolute Right* to whatever is *plainly* made *Titheable* by the Law; what *Authority*, therefore, less than that which *enacted* the Law, *i. e.* the *Legislature*, can *destroy* that *Right*, and discharge the *People* from their *Obligation* to *pay* the *Clergy* what the *Law* has *plainly* given them? The Case is so much the clearer from the *Nature* of the Law, inasmuch as *Length* of *Time* can make no *Alteration* in it, or make the *Clergy's Right* any way *disputable* like other *litigated Titles*. The *same Reasons* upon which the Law was *originally* founded still *subsist*, and *ever will* *subsist*. It is as reasonable *now*, as it was a hundred *Years* ago, that whatever the Law at *first* made *Titheable* should *continue*

to

to be so, without any *Exceptions*. And, with regard to the Person intitled to the *Tithe*, it is the plainest Law that ever was made, and the least liable to *Litigation*. In order to prove his *Title*, a Clergyman has in *Reason* nothing else to do than to shew that such a Thing is made *Titheable* by the *original Law of Tithe*, and that he is the *rightful Incumbent*, and his *Title* follows *in course*. For which Reason, I was very much surprized, some Time ago, when I heard of an *Intention* to bring a Bill into *Parliament* that should oblige the *Incumbent* to prove, that *such a Piece of Land, or such a Thing, had actually paid Tithe* within a certain *limited Time*. The *Intent* of which Bill could be no other than to establish *Injustice by a Law*. The *Incumbent* had been deprived of his Right for *many Years*, and therefore he ought to be deprived of it *for ever*. But, the House of Commons was too Honourable to give Countenance to such an *iniquitous Scheme*.

Perhaps, it may be urged, that, tho' the *Legislature* has not actually *repealed* the Law of *Tithe*, some Parts of it are become *obsolete*. I can have no Conception of an *Act of Parliament's* being taken with a *dead Palsy* on one Side, or in a *particular Limb*. It must all live or die *together*. Neither do I conceive how a Law, granting *Rights and Privileges* to a *Succession* of Men, can grow obsolete. I can easily conceive, that a *Charter* may be *forfeited* by a *Non-observance* of the *Conditions* upon which it was granted; and I can as easily conceive, that had the *Tithes* been granted *conditionally*, whenever those *Conditions* are *violated*, the Right of *Tithes* would be *forfeited* like a *Charter*; but, I never heard of any such *Conditions*, and should be thankful for the Sight of so great a *Curiosity*.

It

It may be farther urged, that if what I advance be true, the Consequence will be, that *personal* Tithe is still due, tho' never paid. I have spoken largely to this Argument in my Book upon *Tithe*; at present, I shall only say, that I have nothing to do with *Consequences*. Is what I advance just, or is it not? This is the only pertinent Question. If it be just, let those look to the *Consequence* who enjoy such large Incomes out of *Trades* and *Professions*, and perhaps pay no Tithe at all. If they think themselves indebted to God (as most certainly they are) they have Opportunities of paying Part of their Debt, by relieving necessitous *Clergymen*, and doing many other Acts of *Piety* and *Charity*.

What the Gentlemen of the *long Robe* will think of my Sentiments, I know not. This I promise them, that if any one of them will enter into the *Rationale* of the Law, and the *Source of our Obligation*, to obey it, and *from thence* prove, that I am in an *Error*, I will most heartily thank him for *undeceiving* me, and most readily take Shame to myself by a *publick Acknowledgement* of it. But, I am so *very sincere*, and so *well assured*, in this Matter, that I should be under no Fear. if I were obliged to defend my Doctrine at the peril of my Life.

While I am talking with so much Freedom of the *Power* and *Authority* of our Courts of *Judicature*, (for which no Man has an higher *Esteem*) it would be great *Injustice* to those venerable Persons who preside in the Court where the *Clergy's* Rights are generally determined, if I did not congratulate my *Brethren* upon their Felicity in seeing that *honourable Bench* so *honourably fill'd*; by Gentlemen, who have a true Sense of *Religion*, and who, from *Principle*, and *Inclination*, will always be *Friends* to the *Clergy*, as far as shall be consistent with *Justice* to the *Laity*.  
This

This I speak in a great Measure, from a *personal Knowledge* of them.

There is another Part of the Clergy's Maintenance besides *Tithe*, in which they have a *Property*, tho', through Ignorance, you look upon it to be a *voluntary Contribution*. So much a *Head* for every Person in a *Family*, of the Age of Sixteen, is due to the *Minister* of the Parish, in *common Right*, from the Master of the Family; and is recoverable by a *Bill* in the *Exchequer*. In so large a Parish as this is, the Payment of *Easter Offerings* (for I speak not now of the Contribution for the *Afternoon Sermon*) would amount to a considerable Sum. From those who contribute more, towards the Support of the *Lecture*, than their *Easter Offerings* would amount to, I ought not to expect any Thing, having voluntarily given my Due to that Use; but, there are several Families that have never paid me any Thing during the fourteen Years that I have been here. Should I (and why should I not, unless they will pay it *of their own Accord*) file a *Bill* in the *Exchequer* to recover all my Arrears, and oblige them to pay regularly for the future, or contribute to the *Afternoon Sermon*, a most violent Clamour would be raised against me, as there lately was, only for employing an *Attorney* to write to some *Delinquents* for the Payment of *Tithe* that had been due several Years, tho' I had applied to them very civilly, to no Purpose. But, what an *unreasonable, cruel Hardship* is this upon the *Clergy*, they must either give up their *Rights* and their *Bread*, or lose the *good Opinion*, and *good Will* of their *People*! And where is the *common Honesty* of those, who put them under this Difficulty! In the same Circumstances the *Laitie* are not abused for doing themselves *Justice*. I must tell you a remarkable Case that happened last Year, and shews monstrous *Ig-*

*norance and Partiality against the Clergy.* I got a *Justice's Warrant* (with the Approbation of the Person) to *distrain* upon a *Quaker* for *Tithe*, that I might not put him to the *Charge* of a *Bill* in the *Exchequer*, and some mighty good Sort of People made a *Conscience* of buying those Goods of me, because they were *taken* from the poor *Quaker*, as if they were *stolen* from him. This Method is not an *Hardship* upon the *Quakers*, but an *Act of Indulgence*, and good *Nature* in the *Clergy*, for, they can recover their *Right* in a *shorter Way*, without giving themselves, or any Body else, *Trouble*; and the *Service* is done, not to the *Clergy*, but to the *Quakers*.

I have hitherto considered the *Injustice* of depriving the *Clergy* of their *Property*. But in the former Part of these Discourses, I observed, that there may be *Rights* where there is no *Property*. For, *Property* is the Creature of *civil Authority*, whereas there are *Rights* founded upon the *eternal and immutable Laws of Reason*, which all *reasonable Beings* are obliged to obey. I instanced, in the Case cited by *St. Paul*, *The Labourer is worthy of his Hire*. If, then, a *Clergyman* does *Duty* for which the *Laws* of the Land have provided no *Maintenance*, and the *People* receive the *Benefit* of his *Labour*, they are bound in *Conscience* to give him a proper *Reward*. This is due by the *Law of Nature*. This is so obvious to *common Sense*, and would be so readily allowed if applied to any other *Business*, that it seems unaccountable how *Persons*, who would be very angry if their *Honesty* were called in *Question*, can reconcile it to any *Principles of Justice and Equity*, to attend upon the *Services* of the *Church*, either in *Person*, or by their *Families*, and, yet, refuse to contribute towards its *Support*.

But,

But, if we consider the People as *Christians*, there is a *positive* Law of God enjoining it; and surely the Laws of God are as binding upon all *Christians*, as the Law of Nature is upon all Men, or the Law of the Land upon all Subjects.

You must have heard that the *Jewish* Clergy had a Maintenance appointed them by God; that these *Tithes* and *Offerings* he looked upon as belonging to himself, and that he, not the People, gave them to the *Priests*, his *immediate Servants* who waited at his *Altar*, and that the *Non-payment* of them he considered as *robbing* him. To refresh your Memories, I shall cite you a Passage out of the Prophet, *Malachi*, ch. iii. ver. 8. &c. “Will a Man rob God? “Yet ye have robbed me: But ye say, *wherein* “have we robbed thee? in *Tithes* and *Offerings*. “Ye are *curst* with a *Curse* (a very strong Expression) for ye have robbed me, even this whole “Nation. Bring ye all the *Tithes* into the Store- “house, and prove me now herewith, saith the “LORD of Hosts, if I will not open you the “Windows of Heaven, and pour you out a *Blessing* “that there shall not be Room enough to receive “it.” This is another Expression as strong as can be conceived\*.

How

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\* There being a great deal of *Duty* in this Parish (and a considerable Part of it *extraordinary* Duty, introduced by myself, without any Consideration, desired, expected, or ever received) the *great Tithes* alienated, and the *Surplice Fees* much lower than in any other Place in the Neighbourhood, about eight Years ago I proposed to get a *new Table of Fees*, which would have been a great Help to the *Minister*, and no Burden upon the *Parish*. I applied to some *warm Advocates* for the *Church*; their  
Answer

How it stands under the Gospel, *St. Paul* will inform you. 1 Ep. to the *Cor.* ch. ix. ver. 13, 14. “Do you not know that they who minister about holy Things, live of the Sacrifice, and they who wait at the Altar are Partakers with the Altar; even so hath the *Lord* also ordained, that they who Preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel.” An *honourable* Maintenance is as much the Appointment of God under the *Christian*, as it was under the *Jewish* Dispensation, and the *Tithes* and *Offerings* do as peculiarly belong to GOD now, as they did then, and therefore to withhold them, is as much robbing of him; and the *Christian Priesthood* being much more honourable than the *Jewish*, and the Administration of the *Word* and *Sacraments* of *Christ* more advantageous to the *People*, the Sin must, at least, be equal. The *Robbery* of God, and the *Injustice* done to the *Christian* Clergy by depriving them of their *Hire* appointed by God, are the same.

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Answer was, they would not bring upon themselves the Curses of the People. These *Sticklers* for the Church were very unfortunate in never having seen, or heard of this Passage of the *Prophet*; for, if they had, it might have given them a more CHRISTIAN Way of Thinking, and better Notions of *common Justice*. I had the more Reason to expect a chearful Compliance with my Request, as I had not only given them *Monthly Sacraments*, and *Daily Prayers*, but contributed largely (for the Parish is obliged to pay me *Easter Offerings*, whether there be any *Lecture* or not) towards the Support of the *Afternoon Sermon*, which the *Law* does not require from me. I intend to make a *second* Attempt, and take this Opportunity to declare, that I do not mean it as any Benefit to myself, but only as an *Augmentation* to my *Curate's* Income, that it may always be an Encouragement to a Gentleman of *Character* to do Justice to my Parishioners.

Does



Does *God* forfeit his Right to a *decent* Support of his Worship? Do the *Clergy* forfeit their Right to an *honourable Maintenance*, whenever the *People* shall take it into their Heads to *dislike* their *Minister*, or to disapprove of his *political Principles*, or of any Part of his Behaviour towards them. Let a *Gentleman* tell me whether he forfeits his *Rent* whenever his Behaviour does not please his *Tenant*. Upon a Subject so disagreeable to *myself* as well as to *you*, I shall add no more than this.

It is an Insult upon *common Sense* to pretend sincerely to believe *Christianity*, and yet entertain a mean Opinion of the *ministerial Function*, and the Benefits of our *Administrations*. Is it an *Honour* to be employed by an earthly Prince in any Office of Importance to his *Government*, and the Welfare of his Subjects? And shall it be deemed a *disreputable* Employment to officiate under the *Creator* and *Saviour* of the World, in Matters relating to his *Spiritual Kingdom*, and the *eternal Salvation* of Mankind? To be employed with *Angels* and *Archangels* in *ministering* to those who shall be *Heirs* with *Christ* in his *Heavenly Kingdom*? Are ye so *respectful* and *thankful* to those who are the *Instruments* of any *temporal Advantages*? And is there *no Respect*, *no Gratitude* due to those, whom the *blessed Jesus* uses as the *Instruments* of conveying to Mankind the greatest Blessings that human Nature is capable of receiving? This is the Argument (and an unanswerable one it is) of St. Paul, *If we have sown into you spiritual Things, it is a great Matter if we should reap your worldly Things?* Our Saviour has assured us, that all the *Disrespect* and *Ingratitude* shewn to the *Ministers* of his *Word* and *Sacraments* he takes to *himself*, forasmuch as it is *he* that has *commissioned* us. In Justice therefore, to your own *Understandings*,

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as well as in *Honour* of your *Redeemer*, the Author of your Religion, either do not *pretend* to believe *Christianity*, and gravely attend upon its *Ordinances*, or else behave more suitably to your *Faith*; or you will but aggravate your *Sin*, and your *Condemnation*, by adding *Hypocrisy* to *Irreligion*.

I shall conclude with a pertinent Passage out of a learned and good Man, Mr. *Bragge*, the immediate Predecessor of the present worthy Incumbent of *Hitchen*, in this County. It is in the first Volume of his excellent *Practical Discourses* on the *Miracles* of our Blessed Saviour\*, (published in 1702.) p. 56. “It is the Custom, now, to advance every other Profession to the Height, and reward their Services with the greatest Bounty, and at the same Time to sink the *Clergy* to the very Bottom of *Contempt* and *Poverty*, to lay on all the Weight they can to keep them down, and *sacrilegiously* to keep from them what the Laws both of *God* and *Man*, have made their *Due*.

“No doubt, great *Indifference*, at least, to *Religion* is the Cause of this, and *no* Religion would in a little Time be the Consequence, were not our Church supported, as we trust it is, by the Arm of *God*; and 'tis, indeed, his Providence alone that can uphold it.

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\* These Discourses are not only full of useful Instruction, but extremely entertaining. They are as ingenious as they are pious. And at a Time when there is such a general *Disrelish* of every Thing that is *serious*, nothing is so likely to captivate Attention as Books that will give Pleasure to the *Imagination*, while they inform the *Judgment*. For which Reason, I should be glad to see these Discourses reprinted.

“But,

“ But, those that are, in *earnest*, concerned for  
“ the *Honour* of *Religion*, and think themselves  
“ obliged, as far as in them lies, to support its sink-  
“ ing Interests, can take no better Course to do it  
“ than to keep up the Spirits of the *Clergy* in these  
“ *discouraging* Times, by shewing them such Coun-  
“ tenance, and contributing in such a Manner to  
“ their Wants, as may raise them above *Need* and  
“ *Scorn*, and enable them to do their Duty effec-  
“ tually, to God’s Honour, and the People’s great  
“ Advantage.”

Happy those *People* who are blessed with such able  
and pious *Pastors*. Happy those *Pastors*, who have  
been settled amongst *People* who know how to value  
and reward their Merit. *Amen.*

*P. S.* Having made a *publick* Complaint of *In-*  
*justice* in respect to my *Dues*, I must do myself the  
Justice to tell the World what little Reason I have  
given for such Treatment. As to my *Tithe*, I have  
always appointed two *Farmers* for *Ware*, and two  
for *Thundridge*; who determine for their *Bretheren*,  
what every Farm shall pay as a *reasonable Equivalent*  
for the *Tithe*; always making it my *Request* to these  
*Assessors*, that they would give the Turn of the Scale  
in Favour of the *Farmer*. In this *amicable* Way we  
have gone on for fourteen Years, without ever having  
had the least *Difference*.

As to those *People* in the *Town* who have any  
Thing that is *titheable*, I have always trusted to  
their *Honour* for giving me a *true Account*. The  
Consequence of which *Confidence* has been frequent  
discoveries of *Concealments*; and I expect to discover  
more.

There are many *Poultry* bred in this *Town* for  
*Sale*, and, tho’ I have an acknowledged Title to  
the

the *Tithe* of them, I have never made any Demand, because most of the People, who sell them, are *poor*; and I am tender of depriving them of any Part of a *little* Income. It would be natural to expect that they should now and then make me an *Offer* of a Fowl, by Way of Acknowledgment of my Right, but I never received any such Thing from above *one* of them, and not so much as *Thanks* from any of the rest. Such has been my generous Behaviour; such their ungrateful Return. Nay, I have lately been told by them, that they do not think themselves at all *obliged* to me, because I did no more than what I ought to do. If a *Landlord* should forgive a *poor* Tenant his Rent every Year, and should meet with such an insolent Return for his good Nature, I fancy, he would soon convince him, that it was Matter of *meer Favour*, and if I should take the same Course with these unthankful Wretches, nobody could wonder, or blame me.

F I N I S.

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B O O K S *published by the same* AUTHOR.

**A** S E R M O N against Popery, and a Defence of his *Majesty's Title to the Crown*; both published at the Time of the late *Rebellion*, and sold by DEPUTY CLARKE.

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