

*Rest from R. E. B. E. L. S.:*  
Or, The  
*Blessing and Duty of Churches.*

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Consider'd in a  
**S E R M O N**

Most of which was Preach'd at a  
Provincial Assembly of Ministers,  
HELD AT  
*M A N C H E S T E R.*

*May the 8th. 1716.*

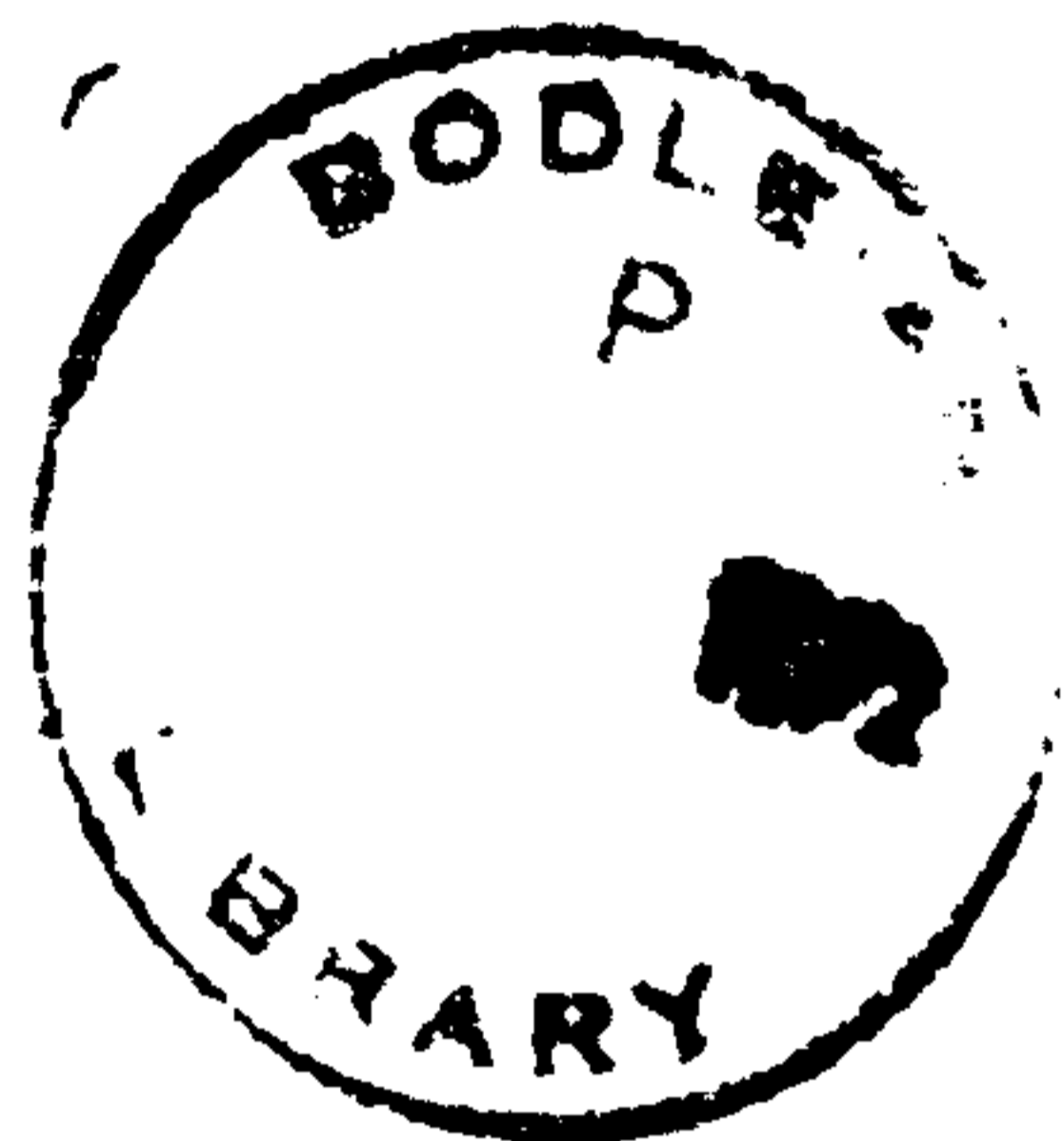
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By **J A M E S G R I M S H A W,**  
Minister of the Gospel in *Lancaster.*

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**L O N D O N,**  
Printed in the Year, 1716.





ACTS IX. 31.

*Then had the Churches Rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edify'd; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the holy Ghost were multiply'd.*



**I**N this Chapter we have an Account of *Saul's Cruelty and Conversion*: His Cruelty is set forth in strange terrifying Colours, *ver. 1. 2. And Saul yet breathing out Threatnings and Slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord, went unto the high Priest, and desired of him Letters to Damascus to the Synagogues, that if he found any of this Way, whether they were Men or Women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

WE see here the lively Picture of a bloody Persecutor; he breathes out Threatnings and Slaughter against the Members of Christ. His very Breath smells of Fire. Threatnings and Slaughter, like Lightning and Thunder, proceed out of his Mouth. Whilst a Persecutor has in him the Breath of his own Life, he breathes Nothing but Death against others. Nothing will satisfy him but the Death and Destruction of the Members of JESUS CHRIST.

AN indiscreet and ungovernable Zeal, soon degenerates into Fury and Madness. We see farther, how restless and unwearied he was, and all Persecutors are, in the Prosecution of their bloody Designs and Purposes. *Saul* was now (as some observe) *Inquisitor Hæreticæ pravitatis*. Away he goes to the high Priest for a Commission to bind Hereticks, who believed on *JESUS*, and opposed the Tradition of the Fathers, and having, as he thought, swept *Jerusalem* of Saints, he resolv'd next to ransack *Damascus*, tho' it was five or six Days Journey from *Jerusalem*.

PERSECUTORS will spare neither Purse nor Pains, they will stick at Nothing, tho' never so toilsome and hazardous, so they may glut their Malice, and satiate their Revenge on the poor Disciples of *JESUS CHRIST*. The high Priest needed not to hire *Saul* to this black Work, he both offers himself, and sues for the Office. No doubt, the high Priest and Council highly applauded his Zeal and Forwardness for extirpating Hereticks, commending the Gallantry of his Resolution, and the Bravery of his Mind, as being one of the Church's Champions: Thus having seal'd his Commission, they sent him away with Wishes of Success.

AND as he journeyed, he came near to *Damascus*, and suddenly there shined round about him a Light from Heaven. This Journey was the worst that ever he intended, and yet the best that ever he undertook. A Journey most maliciously purposed by him, but most mercifully disposed by *God*: Heaven had designed him for better Service, and Work of another Nature; and accordingly, he is stop'd in his Way, knock'd off his Horse, a sudden Beam of Light, beyond the Brightness of the Sun, darts upon him, dazzles him, and he hears a Voice, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* that is, me in my Members.

IN short, a miraculous and extraordinary Conversion is wrought upon him. His Commission to apprehend, disturb, and bind all that call'd on the Name of *CHRIST*, was spoil'd, as well as his Inclination to execute

execute it, chang'd. A new one is given him from the Head and King of the Church; and he was not disobedient to the heavenly Vision, but straightway he preached Christ in the Synagogues, That he was the Son of God, ver. 20. Of a fierce Persecutor, he becomes a powerful Preacher; yea, the great Doctor of the Gentiles. This wonderful Change, was not only an Act of Mercy to him, but a great Favour to all the Churches in those Parts. For by his Conversion a total Period was put to all his persecuting Work. The Churches were freed from a troublesome and dangerous Enemy, and not only so, but had him for a fast and powerful Friend.

THUS we see the wonderful Method which the infinitely Wise GOD took for his Peoples Deliverance from the Fury of Persecution: Namely, by the Conversion, not Confusion of Saul, the principal Persecutor; whereby the Churches had Rest and Peace. God has many Ways of restoring the Peace of his Church, as by the Conversion or Confusion of its Enemies.

WE have an Account, in this History of the Acts of the Apostles, of two violent Persecutors, and of the different Methods GOD took to rid his People of them. The one was Herod, the other Saul; one a Jew, the other a Gentile. About that Time, Herod the King stretched forth his Hands to vex certain of the Church. Not long after the Hand of the LORD was stretched out against him; for the Angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten of Worms, and gave up the Ghost, Ch. xii. 23. He was taken out of the Way in Judgment to himself, tho' in great Kindness to the Christian Interest. For we read, that upon his Death the Word of God grew and multiplied, ver, 24. The Tyrant and Persecutor being dead, the Gospel prosper'd, and was preach'd up and down with great Success. This is one Way GOD has of dealing with the implacable Adversaries of his Truth and Interest. There have been of late some awful Instances of this Kind, exhibited by Providence to the World. Thus One observes,

serves, \* “ When Schemes were laid by Men not ha-  
 “ ving the Fear of GOD before their Eyes, to set  
 “ aside the Succession in the Protestant-Line, and to  
 “ bring in a Popish, abjur’d Pretender by Form of  
 “ Law, then it pleased GOD in his infinite Wisdom,  
 “ to break their Measures by a sudden Removal of  
 “ the Sovereign, whose Power was endeavour’d to  
 “ be abus’d to that End. Again, when Projects were  
 “ form’d to entail a popish Succession upon us by a  
 “ powerful Invasion, which was at the very Point of  
 “ Execution, then it pleased GOD to free us from  
 “ those Fears, by the seasonable Death of the old  
 “ Tyrant and Scourge of Europe.”

THE other Persecutor *Saul*, was more mercifully  
 treated; and for this Cause obtained Mercy, that in  
 him first Christ Jesus might shew forth all Long-suffering  
 for a Pattern to them, which should hereafter believe  
 on him to Life everlasting, 1. Tim. 1. 16. It pleased  
 GOD to convince him of the Evil of his Ways, and by  
 his Grace to turn him from Darkness to Light, and  
 from the Power of Satan unto GOD. And thus a new  
 Spirit being put within him, and his Temper and  
 Course of Life wholly chang’d, there was a great  
 Calm in the Church. Then had the Churches Rest, that is,  
 after *Saul’s* miraculous Conversion, after that roaring  
 Lyon was turn’d into a Lamb, a Wolf into a Sheep, a  
 Messenger of Darkness into an Angel of Light: Then  
 the Churches planted by *Philip* and others, throughout  
*Judea*, *Samaria*, and *Galilee*, had much Rest, and  
 Peace, and were greatly edify’d in Knowledge and  
 Faith, in Holiness and Love, and the Grace and Com-  
 forts of the Holy Spirit daily increasing in them, the  
 Number of Believers daily multiply’d.

IN the Words we have three Things observable:

I. THE calm and peaceable Condition of the  
 Churches: *They had Rest.* This comfortable State is  
 further described,

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\* See Mr. Shaw’s Sermon upon the Pretender’s landing in Scot-  
 land, p. 15.

1. BY the Time when ; then, after *Saul's* miraculous Conversion ; about Forty Years after our Saviour, according to Dr. *Lightfoot's* Computation.

2. BY the Extent, it reached to all the Churches throughout all *Judea*, and *Galilee*, and *Samaria* ; Places where our Lord himself had often preach'd and wrought Miracles, and Where the Offers of Grace and Salvation were to be first made ; all the Churches in those Parts, we say, had Rest, hence the Word *πᾶσαι* is added by some Copies after *ἐκκλησίαι*, *Then had all the Churches Rest*. And perhaps at that Time there were no other Churches form'd in any other Parts of the World, excepting those mention'd in the Text : Not but that there might be Christians dispersed up and down in many other Parts, but as yet they were not associated into Churches.

II. WE have the gracious Improvement these Churches made of this Time of Tranquillity allow'd them by the merciful Providence of GOD, *They walked in the Fear of the Lord, and in the Comfort of the Holy Ghost* : As soon as they were freed and delivered from the Fear of Men, they walked more than ever in the Fear of the LORD.

III. THE happy Consequence of their holy walking, and of the *Rest* vouchsaf't them ; to wit, Edification and Increase : Two desirable Blessings. They who were already converted, were edify'd in their most holy Faith, and others added unto the Church dayly. They were both edify'd and multiply'd. Conversion and Edification-work mightily prosper'd.

FROM the Words I observe,

(I.) THAT GOD is sometimes pleased to order a State of *Rest* and Quiet to his People in this World. *The Churches have Rest*.

(II.) IT

(II.) IT is the Duty, and should be the Concern of Churches in such a Day not to walk vainly and loosely, but in the Fear of God, and in the Comforts of the holy Ghost.

(III.) IN so doing the Churches may expect (through the Grace of God) the Blessings of Edification and Increase: to be both edify'd and multiply'd.

(I.) SOMETIMES GOD is pleased to order a Time of Rest and Quiet for his People in this World. *The Churches have Rest.*

HERE I shall endeavour to shew,

1.) WHAT is meant by the Churches.

2.) CONSIDER the nature of that Rest, they are said to enjoy.

3.) APPLY it.

1.) WHAT are we to understand by the Churches here spoken of?

To this I answer, The Word Church in our modern Acceptation (as some have justly observed) is equivocal, having different Significations according to the different Subjects to which it is apply'd.

(1.) IT is sometimes to be understood of the Church universal; that is, of all those who throughout the Face of the whole Earth, profess Faith in CHRIST, and acknowledge Him to be the Saviour of the World. In this Sense we are to understand it, when the Apostle tells us that *Christ is the Head of the Body the Church*, Colos. 1. 18. and again, *to him be Glory in the Church*, that is, in the universal Church, Ephes. 3. 21. This the Ancients call the Church dispersed thro' the whole World, to the Ends of the Earth, and the Church scatter'd in the whole World, and the Church of God under Heaven. As the learned Author of *an Enquiry*



into the Constitution of the Primitive Church for the first three hundred Years, has observ'd. This is that which they call the Catholick Church.

2.) THE Word Church, is frequently to be understood of a particular Church, or single Congregation, consisting of a Company of Believers, who, at one Time, in one and the same Place, did associate themselves together, and in the Participation of all the Institutions and Ordinances of JESUS CHRIST with their proper Pastor. In this Sense we must understand the Church of *Rome*, the Church of *Corinth*, the Church of *Antioch*, or the Church in any other such Place whatsoever, that is a Congregation of Christians assembling altogether for religious Exercises at *Rome*, *Corinth*, *Antioch*, or such Places. So that we do not find it ever us'd for a Collection of many particular Churches, either in Scripture, or in the first Ages. Whenever they speak of the Christians in any Kingdom or Province, they always express the Churches thereof in the plural Number: As here it is not said, the Church of *Judea*, the Church of *Galilee*, and the Church of *Samaria*, but the Churches in those Provinces had *Rest*. So that the usual and common Acceptation of the Word in Scripture, and in the first Ages was that of a particular Church; that is, a Society of Christians meeting together in one Place under their proper Pastor for the Performance of Religious Worship, and the Exercise of Christian Discipline. But in all the *New Testament* the Word Church is never us'd for a material Building consisting of Wood, and Stone, or for any Place where a Congregation met for the Service of God.

2. I AM to consider the Nature of that *Rest*, the Churches are said to enjoy. The Word we translate *Rest* signifies Peace, εἰρήνην. Then had the Churches *Peace* or *Rest*, there being no great Difference whether Word we take.

THIS *Peace* or *Rest* is to be consider'd as agreeing with the common State of this Life, and is by no means to be understood of a perfect Freedom from all Sorrow and Affliction, Trouble and Suffering. That State of *Rest* yet remains to the People of God; and is not to be expected under the most favourable Dispensations of Providence in this World. The *Rest* we are to enquire after is that of the Church Militant, not of the Church Triumphant. It is not a perfect, compleat, absolute *Rest*, that is here spoken of, but rather a comparative *Rest*, in Regard of that Trouble and Persecution they had been long harass'd with. More particularly.

It is not to be understood of a total Cessation from Sin. No Churches on Earth ever did, or can obtain this *Rest*. Those planted by the Apostles were still liable to many Errors in Judgment, Irregularities in Will and Affections, and many Miscarriages in Life and Conversation. It is true, they who are converted have a *Rest* from the Drudgery and Dominion of Sin; It does not reign in their Mortal Bodies, or Immortal Souls, that they should obey it in the Lusts thereof, but still they are liable to many Infirmities and Weaknesses; and Sin will be molesting them, whilst a Principle of indwelling Corruption remains in them. The purest Churches on Earth have many Spots and Blemishes, and it is only in the other World, that the Church shall be presented by Christ, to the Father, *not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*; but perfectly holy without Blemish, *Ephes. 5. 27.*— Again, The Churches had not *Rest* from the Temptations of Satan, the Allurements of the World and Flesh. Satan was not bound up, nor his Time of tempting concluded. Tho' they did not suffer from the Hands of Men, yet they were daily assaulted by Satan. And when he could not cast them into Prison, he ceased not to throw his fiery Darts at them. Tho' they had *Rest* from Persecution, yet they had a daily Warfare to manage against their spiritual Enemies, against Principalities, against Powers, a-  
gainst

gainst the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against Spiritual Wickedness in high Places, *Ephes.* 6. 12. They had no Truce with the Enemy for a Year, a Month, or a Day. There was no *Rest* from a Conflict with Satan's Temptations. no *Rest* from mortifying the Flesh with it's Affections and Lusts; no *Rest* from watching and fighting against our Spiritual Enemies.

2.) THERE was no Rest from the Calumny, and Reproaches of an evil World. Both Jew and Gentile ceased not to reproach the Gospel and the Professors of it. The Jews were of all other the most bitter and inveterate Enemies to the Christians, and the Chief of them at *Rome* plainly tell the Apostle *Paul*, that Christianity was a Sect, and not only so, but every where spoken against, *Acts*, 28. 22. Now if the Way was so odious, the Churches that walkt in that Way could not 'scape the Lashes of a virulent Tongue: And then for the Gentiles they were almost as mad and raving as the Jews, they look'd upon them as the Pests of human Society, counted and called them the common Enemies of Mankind, as Dr. *Cave* shews in his *Primitive Christianity* by some Quotations out of *Tertullian*, he says, † ' They were lookt on as the  
 " Causes of all publick Calamities, and that for their  
 " Sakes it was, that Vengeance did so often remar-  
 " kably haunt the Roman Empire; this was the  
 " common Outcry: If the City be besieg'd, if any  
 " Thing happen ill in the Fields, in the Garrisons,  
 " in the Islands, presently they cry out, it's because  
 " of the Christians: They conspire the Ruin of good  
 " Men, and thirst after the Blood of the Innocent,  
 " patronizing their Hatred with this vain Pretence,  
 " that the Christians are the Cause of all publick Mis-  
 " fortunes and Calamities. If *Tiber* overflow the  
 " Walls, if the Nile do not (as 'tis wont) overflow  
 " the Fields, if the Heavens do not keep their accu-

“ from'd Course, perhaps if any Eclipses or Meteors hap-  
 “ pen'd, if there was an Earthquake, Famine or  
 “ Plague, presently the Cry was, away with the  
 “ Christians to the Lions; nay so hot and common  
 “ was this Charge among the Pagans, that when the  
 “ Goths and Vandals broke in upon the Roman Em-  
 “ pire, Saint Augustine was forc'd to write purposely  
 “ to stop the Mouth of that Objection. ”

THESE, and a Thousand hard Things besides, were  
 spoken every Day against the Primitive Christians and  
 Churches. Now whether we may not say with the  
 Apostle Paul, as it was then, so it is now, I leave to your  
 serious Consideration. However, these Taunts and Re-  
 proaches were of so small Account with the Christians  
 of that Time, that they were not consider'd as any Vio-  
 lation of the Churches Peace. Tho' the Tongue is  
 as a Fire, a World of Iniquity being kindled by it,  
 inflaming or setting on Fire the Course of Nature,  
 or the Succession of Men in the World, being set on  
 Fire by Hell, as the Apostle James speaks, Chapter, 3. 6.  
 Yet this Fire, this malignant Member was so impo-  
 tent as not to be able to disturb the Tranquillity of  
 the Churches; tho' it set on Fire the Course of Na-  
 ture, yet Grace set the Churches out of the Reach of  
 it's Malignity. Once indeed we find that the Jews  
 by their subtle Management and spiteful Insinuations  
 had rais'd a Mob against the Apostles, and Christians,  
*Acts, 17. 5.* But the Jews which believed not moved  
 with Envy, took unto them certain lewd Fellows of  
 the baser Sort, of the Dregs of the People, and gather'd  
 a Company, and set all the City on an Uprore, and  
 assaulted the House of Jason; but when they mist of  
 their Prey, they fell foul upon Jason, dragging him  
 before the Rulers and Magistrates, charging him as  
 an Abettor of Treason. Whereas all his Crime was,  
 that he had entertain'd the Apostles in his House.  
 But this Tumult was happily quell'd; however not  
 without binding Jason, and some others to their good  
 Behaviour, who had not in the least broken the Peace;  
 so when they had taken Security of Jason, and the  
 other

other, they let them go. Notwithstanding these popular Tumults, the Churches had Peace, which brings me to shew positively, what this Peace included in it.

1.) A FREEDOM from open Persecution.

2.) A FREEDOM from intestine Divisions, and Quarrels among themselves.

1.) A FREEDOM from open violence and Persecution. Tho' the Christian Religion had many powerful and malicious Enemies in the World, both among Jew and Gentile, yet the Providence of God at that Time laid a wonderful Restraint upon them. The Emperor *Claudius* gave them little or no Disturbance, tho' he banish'd the Jews (as some tell us) out of *Rome* for their Tumults. \* "They could not be content with their own Immunities, unless they seek also the Suppression of the Christian Church; Tho' *Claudius* his Proclamation had this special Clause and Caveat in it, *That they should not go about to infringe the Liberty of other Men's Religion.* This unbounded Incroaching of theirs did within a little Time cause the Emperor, who had made a Decree for them to make another against them."

THE Christian Churches had Liberty and Rest by a publick Edict and Authority, and not meerly by some kind Indulgence and favourable Aspect of the Court. So secure were they, that they do not seem to be possess'd with any uneasy Apprehensions and Fears. Now herein was a marvellous Thing, that all on a sudden, the Spirit of Persecution should cease to rage, and instead of it a mighty Calm succeed in the Churches. They who had been lately harras'd and oppress'd, imprison'd, banish'd, and tortur'd, had now some Respite, a little breathing Time granted to

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\* See Dr. Lightfoot's *Harmony*, p. 93.

them. They who had been dispers'd by the Storm of Persecution were now united again, and without Fear did assemble themselves in an open publick Manner for the solemn Worship of God, thro' one Mediator.

2.) THEY had Peace among themselves.

1.) EACH particular Church had Peace within it self.

2.) WITH other Neighbouring Churches.

1.) THESE particular Churches had Peace within themselves.

No Variance between Pastor and People, nor Strife and Clashing among the Members : No Uneasiness, or Complaint on the People's Part, for Want of Instruction ; no Uneasiness on the Minister's Part for Want of Maintenance. This indeed was a rare Thing, for the Churches not only to have *Rest* from external Trouble, but Union and Peace among themselves. For if Christians have no Enemies abroad, they are apt enough to become such towards one another. If the World do not hate them, they can soon learn to hate one another. But so happy was the State of these Churches, that they liv'd in entire Fellowship and Peace, maintaining the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace ; they walked in the Fear of the Lord, and in the Comforts of the Holy Ghost. Yea, so notorious was the Love of Christians in the Primitive Times, that the very Heathens would point at them and say, see how they love one another, they lov'd and liv'd, as became Societies of Believers walking together in Gospel Order.

2.) ONE Church had Peace with another. They were not like so many little Armies, drawn up in Array against one another, disciplin'd and instructed to sheath the Sword in each others Bowels. Tho' they had

had their different Usages and Customs, yet they maintain'd mutual Charity and Love, and liv'd in Peace. One Church was not oblig'd to observe the Rites of another, but every one follow'd it's own peculiar Custom; and still they retain'd Peace and Love, and for the Diversity of such Customs, none were ever cast out of the Communion of the Church. So that the Unity of these Churches did not consist in an Uniformity of Rites and Usages; but here was Unity in all the Essentials of Religion, and Peace without Uniformity. The true Cause of this (I humbly conceive) was their happy Freedom from Impositions. One Church did nor pretend to a Power of imposing it's unnecessary Customs upon another. Tho' it must be confess'd, that this Spirit did discover it self very early in the Church, for we read in *Acts*, 15. 1. *That certain Men which came down from Judea, taught the Brethren and said, except ye be circumcised after the Manner of Moses ye cannot be saved.* This was a plain sinful Imposition upon their Consciences. Now these Men are called Troublers of the Church, and were indeed Breakers and Disturbers of it's Peace. See the 24. v. *Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with Words, subverting your Souls, saying you must be circumcised, and keep the Law; to whom we gave no such Commandment.* So that you see great Imposers are great Troublers of the Church; and whoever impos'd upon particular Churches unnecessary Things, they were esteem'd not as Preservers and Maintainers, but as Violators and Breakers of the Churches Unity and Concord. This might cause some Disturbance for a Time, and afterwards the Churches recover their Liberty and Peace, perhaps by the Help of that Famous Decree of the Apostles, that was made on Purpose to curb that imposing troublesome Spirit.

Thus I have endeavour'd to set before you as well as I am able, the Nature of that Peace these Churches were said to enjoy. I'm now in the Third Place to assist

assist you in making some Improvement of what has been spoken.

I.) WE learn that after the Disturbances and wearisome Troubles of the Churches, God has his Time for their *Rest* and Peace: after a Storm comes a Calm; he sends his Church Sunshine after Showers: A *Canaan's Rest* after the fatiguing Journey of a Wilderness. Now the Goodness of God herein is exceeding great, and to us in these Nations, in some Respects, more peculiar and distinguishing than to the Primitive Churches.

I.) IF we consider how ineffectual all the Contrivances, and Attempts of our Enemies have been in any great Degree to destroy the Churches Peace; many a deep Project has there been form'd to involve us in Blood and Misery, which thro' the great Mercy of our God, has been as often and wonderfully prevented.

NOT a Reign has pass'd since the Reformation, and as I take it, we are now in the Eleventh since that Time, including that in which it was begun; yet in all these successive Reigns not one has pass'd without some notorious Attempt, one or more, to subvert our Constitution, and destroy the Peace of the Protestant Churches in these Nations, but of all others, this last open and flagrant Attempt may in many Respects claim the horrible Precedence. Never was any publick Commotion carry'd on with more Impiety and Treason, more Profaneness and Villany, more solemn and deliberate Perjury, than it was. No History I think can produce a Parallel of it in all its Circumstances. I meet with an Account of a Persecution set on Foot by *Dioclesian*, and his Son in Law *Maximian*, in a small Treatise call'd a Relation of the Death of the Primitive Persecutors, suppos'd to be written by *Lactantius*; the Design was to destroy the Christians because they wou'd not assist at an idolatrous Festival



stival Entertainment ; and the Account of it is as follows. \*

“ **DIOCLESIAN** and his Son in Law *Maximian*, Col-  
 “ league with him in the Empire, had many se-  
 “ cret Consultations during a whole Winter, to  
 “ which as no Body was admitted, so it was ge-  
 “ nerally thought, that they were treating about  
 “ Matters of the greatest Consequence. The old  
 “ Man (*Dioclesian*) withstood *Maximian's* Fury long ;  
 “ and shewed him how pernicious the Counsel  
 “ wou'd prove ; and how great a Disturbance it  
 “ wou'd bring upon the Empire : Much Blood wou'd  
 “ be shed ; for the Christians were observ'd to be  
 “ very willing to dye. Therefore he propos'd this  
 “ Expedient, that none of that Religion shou'd be  
 “ suffer'd to continue in the Court or in the Ar-  
 “ my : But all this cou'd not divert the Rage of  
 “ that furious Man. Therefore he propos'd the  
 “ asking the Opinion of those in whom they con-  
 “ fided ; who all unanimously agreed, that the Chri-  
 “ stians were Enemies to the Gods, and to the  
 “ Establish'd Worship, and therefore ought to be  
 “ destroy'd : yet all this did not prevail on *Diocle-*  
 “ *sian* ; so he resolv'd to consult the Gods them-  
 “ selves, and sent a Diviner to consult with *Apollo* ;  
 “ who answer'd, as might have been expected from  
 “ an Enemy of the Christian Religion. Upon this,  
 “ *Dioclesian* yielded ; and as he wou'd not oppose  
 “ himself to that, which not only his Friends, and  
 “ *Maximian*, but even *Apollo* had advis'd ; yet he en-  
 “ deavour'd to maintain this Moderation, that the  
 “ Design might be accomplish'd without the shedding  
 “ of Blood : Whereas *Maximian* moved, that all  
 “ those that refused to partake in the Sacrifices,  
 “ should be burnt alive. A proper and auspicious  
 “ Day for beginning this Work was next sought  
 “ after ; and Choice was made of the Festivity of

\* See that Treatise as translated by Dr. Burnet, p. 76.

“ the God *Terminus*, which was within Five Days  
 “ of the End of *February*, being the Conclusion of  
 “ their Year: Implying by this, that an End was to  
 “ be put to this Religion. In the Morning of that  
 “ fatal Day, in the Seventh and Eighth Consulate  
 “ of the Two Ancient Emperors, the Prefect ac-  
 “ company’d with some Officers, and some of the  
 “ Receivers, went to the Church, and having forc’d  
 “ open the Door, they searched for the Image of  
 “ God: (not that the Christians had any Images  
 “ in their Temples, or *Places of Worship*, as *Lactantius*  
 “ himself testifies; but the Heathens having Images  
 “ in all their Temples, were ready to conceive the  
 “ like of them) all the Books of the Scriptures, that  
 “ were there found, were burnt, and the Spoil that  
 “ was made, was divided among all that were pre-  
 “ sent. This struck a Terror into many, and many  
 “ withdrew themselves from the Storm. The Two  
 “ Princes, who from convenient Places viewed all  
 “ that was done (for that Church stood upon a  
 “ Height, so that it was within the Prospect of the  
 “ Palace) were long in Debate, whether they shou’d  
 “ order Fire to be set to it or no: But in this *Dio-*  
 “ *clesian’s* Opinion prevail’d; for he was afraid, lest  
 “ if the Church had been set on Fire, the Burning  
 “ might have spread it self into the other Parts of  
 “ the City; for it was environ’d on all Hands by  
 “ a great many noble Buildings, so that instead of  
 “ setting Fire to it, there was a considerable Body  
 “ of the Guards, sent with Axes and Mattocks,  
 “ who in a few Hours Time levell’d that lofty Build-  
 “ ing with the Ground. The Day after this, an Edict  
 “ was publish’d, by which the Christians were de-  
 “ clar’d incapable of all Honours and Employments;  
 “ and that they should be liable to Torture, what-  
 “ ever might be their Rank and Dignity: Nor was  
 “ this all, Letters were sent to *Constance* afterwards  
 “ Emperor, inviting him to concur in this Matter:  
 “ But he, tho’ better inclin’d, yet that he might not  
 “ seem to dissent from those that were in Rank

above him, did indeed give Order for the pulling down the Walls of the Houses, where the Christians held their Assemblies. For these could be easily rebuilt: But he took Care to preserve those true Temples of God, I mean the Christians themselves. — Now all this was done by a Form of Law, and Shew of Authority, but the late Disturbance was rais'd in open Defiance of all Law, all Order and Government: and you'll farther observe according to this Relation, that a *Dioclesian* himself wou'd not agree to set Fire to a Meeting-house, lest by that Means the whole City had been laid in Ashes.

2.) If we consider, what a Foundation is laid for the future Preservation and Security of the Churches Peace. The Peace granted by *Claudius* was but of a short Continuance; for a *Nero* soon after came to the Purple, and the first grand Persecution is agreed to be set on Foot by him; but blessed be God for the present Peace we enjoy under the benign Government of his Majesty King GEORGE, and the Prospect we have of its being continu'd for many Generations. We have all imaginable Reason to bless God for the good Government he has set over us, and for the Protection of good Laws. You'll give me Leave to repeat Part of an Edict in Favour of the Christians, publish'd by *Constantine* and *Licinius*, Two Colleagues of the Empire, and which I find set down in the foremention'd Treatise of *Lactantius*. \* The Occasion of it seems to be some Advantage obtain'd against their Enemies by the Christians Prayers.

“ I *Constantine* the Emperor, and I *Licinius* the Emperor, judge it meet to allow to all Christians free Liberty to follow their Religion: That by

“ this means that Supreme Deity that dwells on  
 “ high, might be gracious and favourable to us,  
 “ and to all our Subjects. Therefore we will have  
 “ you to know, that we have thought fit to annul  
 “ all those Restrictions, that might seem to be in  
 “ our former Edict, relating to the Christians. We  
 “ have thought fit likewise to add this Particular ; that  
 “ the Places in which they us'd to hold their As-  
 “ semblies, and concerning which there were some  
 “ Rules set in a former Edict, that have been pur-  
 “ chas'd either from our Exchequer, or from some  
 “ particular Persons, shall be restored to them with-  
 “ out any Excuses or Delays ; and without asking  
 “ or taking any Money from them upon that Ac-  
 “ count. — We order likewise Restitution to be made  
 “ by all that have obtained Grants of them, and  
 “ that all such as may have either purchas'd  
 “ them, or obtained Grants of them, shall in Or-  
 “ der to their being repaired by us for their Loss,  
 “ go to some Magistrate, that so we according to  
 “ our Clemency may relieve them. In the mean  
 “ While we order you to take Care without any  
 “ further Delay, that Restitution be made to the  
 “ Christians. And whereas the Christians had be-  
 “ sides those Places in which they us'd to hold  
 “ their Assemblies, others likewise that belong'd to  
 “ them as a Body corporate, that is to say, to their  
 “ Churches in common, and not to any particular  
 “ Persons among them, we comprehend all these  
 “ under the same Law ; and order them also to  
 “ be restored to the Corporations or Assemblies of  
 “ the Christians, and that without any Fraud or  
 “ Dispute upon the foremention'd Terms ; that those  
 “ who restore them freely, may hope to be recom-  
 “ pens'd by us according to our Bounty. In all  
 “ which Matters you are required to give your  
 “ most effectual Assistance to the Bodies corporate  
 “ of the Christians, that so our Pleasure may be the  
 “ more speedily executed ; and by which we shall  
 “ the more effectually secure the publick Peace.

PERHAPS

PERHAPS I may fall under Censure for this tedious Recital, which is not entirely in all Respects conform to our Case; but my only Design was to shew, and so far it may serve, that it is no new Thing for good Princes to provide for the Reparation of any Damage sustain'd by Churches for the Sake of their Religion and Loyalty.

2.) LET us acknowledge the Peace we enjoy together with other Churches, with all Thankfulness to God, and becoming Respect to our Superiors. Let us attribute it wholly to the Goodness and Mercy of God, that we have Rest and Peace, when we might have been under all the Terrors and Miseries of a raging Persecution; nay, perhaps of a bloody Massacre. Now as God sends Trouble to evidence his Power and Wisdom, his Sovereignty and Justice; so he sends Peace to manifest his Compassion and Goodness; and the Tribute that he most justly expects for the same, is but easy and reasonable, *Psalms 50. 15. Call upon me in the Day of Trouble; and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* What a signal Mercy is it, that the Churches throughout *Great-Britain* and *Ireland* have any tolerable Rest and Quiet! And oh! that we could say the same of all the Reformed Churches abroad; but so far, alas! are we from that, that our Fellow Christians in a Neighbour Nation are likely to fall under fresh Trouble and Persecution, as if the old Tyrant was risen from the Dead.—It also becomes us to make an honourable Mention of our Superiors, and other Instruments employed by Providence for our Safety and Good. Blessed be God for the Firmness and Intrepidity of our King and Prince, in so threatening a Juncture; for the Wisdom, Resolution, and Unanimity of our Two Houses of Parliament, for the Penetration, Foresight, and Fidelity of our Counsellors; for the Conduct and Valour of our Generals, and the Courage and Bravery of our Officers, and Soldiers; and blessed be God for exciting any others

to go out to the Help of the Lord against the Mighty ; and especially for inclining and helping others to appear in the Mount of Prayer, which is truly said, to be more glorious and excellent than all the Mountains of Prey : *For there it is, that God breaks the Arrows of the Bow, the Shield, the Sword, and the Battle,* Ps. lxxvi. 3, 4. The War between Israel and Amalek was decided in the Mount of Prayer.

3.) LET us not forget the Prospect of Trouble we lately had, and the Promises and Engagements we then made to serve and glorify God more, if once he gave us Rest. That Caution so often inculcated upon the *Israelites*, may be exceeding useful to us ; *When the Lord thy God has given thee Rest round about ; then beware that thou do not forget him.* Beware you do not forget him, nor the solemn Engagements then made, to live to better Purposes, if once you were deliver'd. Do not look on those serious Resolutions as the weak Results of your Infirmary, useful indeed for that Time, but now antiquated and grown unseasonable ; and do not only call to Mind the Promises then made, but call them to Mind with a Resolution to observe and perform them. Alas ! the Time was, when we had but a rueful discouraging Prospect of Things, and then we resolv'd, if God wou'd change the Scene (which he wonderfully did) and avert the impending Evil, we wou'd walk more strictly with him, we wou'd pray more frequently, more fervently, and more constantly, and that we wou'd behave our selves wisely in a perfect Way, and walk in our Houses and Churches with a perfect Heart, was not this the Resolution of Ministers and People, of Families and Churches ?

GOD has now heard our Prayers, and given us Rest, not only above our Merit, but even beyond our Expectation ; and shall we deal falsely in our Covenant, and continue ungrateful and disobedient to Him who has delivered us ? No, let us be up and doing, and perform our Vows to Him, who has done such  
great

great Things for us. There is one Thing in which we have been exceeding faulty for a long Time, and which if it be not amended, we must be for ever inexcusable. It's what you have been often told of, and that is, Want of Love and Peace among ourselves. The external Peace of the Church is a valuable Privilege ; but the internal Peace (as I may call it) is certainly the greater Blessing of the two. For, *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity : For there the Lord commands the Blessing. even Life for evermore ;* Psal. cxxxiii. But how great an Alienation of Affection is there among us ! What Variance and Strife, nay, what positive Aversion and Hatred ! Now, if after such a strong, malicious Conspiracy, and open Attempt of our Enemies entirely to accomplish all our Ruin ; we do not more closely unite among ourselves, lay aside our little Differences, forget our former Animosities, and live in fervent Love and Charity, what shall we say, but that our Case is incurable ? If therefore we have any Regard to the Preservation of our Religion and Liberty, to our common Interest and Safety, let us not be so far wanting in our Duty to God, and Interest to our selves. We little know what Encouragement our Intestine Divisions and Quarrels might give to the Enemy to break in upon us. *If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies ; fullfil ye this Request, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind,* Phil. ii. 1, 2, 3. *Let all your Things be done with Charity,* 1 Cor. xvi. 14. is an Excellent Apostolick Canon ; *And let nothing be done thro' Strife or vain Glory, but in Lowliness of Mind let each esteem others better than themselves,* and there will be no Contest about Precedence. Let me likewise put you in Mind, that there is not that Union and Communication between Churches which seems to be highly necessary, both for our Safety, and Edification. It was easy to observe, in what a disjointed Condition we were, when

when the late Trouble came upon us. What a Rope of Sand; how uncapable of affording Succour or Intelligence, and all for Want of a settled Communication.

IN all Bodies corporate that have one Interest, an entire Communication is usually establish'd; and how far such a Method might contribute to our publick Safety, Edification and Advantage, I leave to the Consideration of better Judgments. 'Tis plain we are weak, unacquainted one with another, and lie very much expos'd without it.

4.) LET a Sense of the past Misery, and present Mercy, engage us to keep up our Interest and Friendship with the most high God, who rules in the Kingdoms of Men. Remember, he was our Support under a Prospect of Trouble, and our Deliverer from it. Let Gratitude bind you to continue in his Favour; and let Prudence and Policy bind you to it, since you know not how soon, you may have the like Necessity again; and where can you find such a Friend? The Truth is, when we are in Extremity, and have no whither else to fly; O then we run to God, and we pray unto him, and promise him fair; but when our Turn is serv'd, and we have gotten our Ends, and begin to think our selves out of Gun-shot, we are like Mariners after a Storm; and God hears little if any more from us. — But this is, as extream Ingratitude, so extream Folly. O keep thy God thy Friend! For most certain it is, thou wilt have Occasion to have Recourse to him again, and thou know'st not how soon: Keep therefore thine Interest in him, and estrange not thy self from him in the Day of thy Prosperity, whom thou canst not be without, in the Time of thy Affliction and Trouble.

5.) BEWARE of Security under this present Calm; be not high-minded, but fear: Think not with *Agag*, surely the Bitterness of Death is past. Now you have escaped this Brunt, all is safe, and the Danger at an End.



End. Remember that Popery is a restless Thing, and the Enemies of our Peace are unwearied Workers. Some Men may cease to be, as soon as cease to be mischievous; and *the Ethiopian may as soon change his Skin, and the Leopard his Spots, as some that are accustomed to do Evil, learn to do well.* \* “ Tho’ the Rebellion be  
 “ in a great Measure quell’d, yet the Spirit of it is so  
 “ far from being laid asleep, that it walks about still  
 “ even at Noon-day in Defiance of all Authority.”

GOD has now mercifully rebuked the *Company of Spear-Men, the Multitude of the Bulls, with the Calves of the People*: That is, a Company of Spear-men without Order and Discipline, a war-like Rabble, head strong and furious like Bulls, gross and stupid, fat and kicking like Calves: These GOD has rebuk’d and forc’d them to submit themselves with Pieces of Silver, that is, to make their Peace with the Church upon any Terms, *Pf. lxxviii. 30.* Others more obstinate, that will not submit to Mercy, but take a Pleasure in publick Mischief and Disturbances, these GOD will scatter; yea, is actually doing that Work at this Time: But notwithstanding this Rebuke, and this Dispersion, give me Leave to tell you, GOD has them, or others, yet within Call: They are still at his Beck; and He can easily suffer them to re-assemble, and bring an Army of Natives or Foreigners, or both, much more terrible than the former.

THIS Place †, together with some others, by the good Hand of GOD has been happily repair’d, or others rebuilt: And I wish the Glory of it may exceed that of the former; which does not consist in a fine curious Piece of Work, but in the Beauty of Holiness, the Holiness of those that worship GOD therein; the Want of which will be the Ruin of both City and Temple. As that Man of GOD, old Mr. *Talents*, told his Hearers upon their fitting up a very

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\* See *The Arguments for an Alteration of the Triennial Bill.*

† *The Meeting-House in Manchester.*

decent Place for the publick Worship of G O D ; “ If  
 “ you come (says he) to be a People only differing  
 “ from others in some Opinions ; but grow proud  
 “ and carnal, and worldly and sensual, G O D will  
 “ pull your Place down ; and let Him pull it down. ”  
 Was it not our Sins that arm'd the Subjects of the Peo-  
 ple with so much Fury and Violence ? And was it not  
 G O D that suffered them to break in upon us ? Tho'  
 Men were the Instruments ; yet it was the Work of  
 G O D : For *is there Evil in a City, and the Lord has not  
 done it ? Who gave Jacob to the Spoil, and Israel to the  
 Robbers ? Did not the L O R D ? 'Tis the L O R D that  
 has cover'd the Daughter of Zion with a Cloud. Take  
 heed therefore of Security under this present Calm.*

1.) Y O U have Sins and Corruptions within you,  
 that if you are not watchful, may easily surprize you,  
 and raise a new Storm. However reigning, unmor-  
 tify'd Lusts, will raise a Storm within, and that is far  
 worse than Tumult and Fightings without.

2.) Y O U have active vigilant Enemies without  
 you, evil Men, and evil Angels, that envy us the  
 more, because we have escaped.

3.) As long as we live in this World, our Condi-  
 tion is uncertain and unstable in Externals : We cannot  
 say at any Time, *our Mountain stands strong, and we  
 shall not be moved* : For tho' one Wave be past, yet ano-  
 ther Wave quickly follows : Nay, tho' we had the  
 highest Assurance of the Continuance of this Calm,  
 and if there were nothing else to make us watchful,  
 yet an evil Day is approaching, and which we  
 cannot escape, the Day of Sicknes, and the Day of  
 Death, which we ought always to prepare for, lest it  
 take us unawares.

II.) T H E next Thing observable in the Words, is,  
 The gracious Improvement the Churches made of this  
 Time of Rest and Peace. Their Behaviour was tru-  
 ly

ly religious, and exemplary to us; such as became the Redeemed of the LORD: *They walked in the Fear of the Lord, and in the Comforts of the Holy Ghost.* They walked under an awful, pleasant and powerful Sense of Religion. The Sum of practical Religion can scarce be more significantly described than by walking in the Fear of the LORD, and in the Comforts of the Holy Ghost.

FROM whence we observed.

THAT it is the Duty of Churches, and should be their Concern in a Day of Peace and Tranquillity, not to walk vainly and loosely, but in the Fear of the LORD, and in the Comforts of the holy Ghost.

THESE are two great Branches of a religious Conversation.

1.) To walk or live in the Fear of the LORD, this Behaviour in a particular Person, is truly amiable and excellent; but to see Churches, and whole Societies of Men and Women under the Influence of such a noble Principle, is a happy Thing.

HERE I shall endeavour to shew.

1.) WHAT it is for a Church or People to walk in the Fear of the LORD.

2.) THE Tendency such a religious Behaviour has to spiritual Joy and Comfort.

3.) APPLY it.

1.) WHAT it is for a Church or People to walk in the Fear of the LORD?

1.) IT denotes their being guided by the external Rule of GOD's Word.

2.) THEIR being influenc'd by an internal Principle of his Fear.

1.) It denotes a People's being guided and directed by the external Rule of GOD's Word. None can walk in the Fear of the LORD, that have not his Law before their Eyes. It is the great Rule of all our Religion and Obedience, and there can be no true Fear of GOD where his Word is neglected. These Churches are said to walk in the Fear of the LORD; but what regular Walking can there be among those that have not the Word of GOD for a Rule? That can be no regular Walking, but a Living at random, which is not according to Rule.

THE Word of the LORD teaches his Fear; and it is one Character of a false Church, to *teach for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*, Matth. xv. 9. The Prophet *Isaiab*, from whence this Text is a Quotation, has it, according to the *Septuagint* Version, *Their Fear towards me, is taught by the Precepts of Men*, Isa. xxix. 13. That is, their Religion is founded upon humane Authority and Invention. Some Churches are guided by the Precepts of Men, and others by the Doctrines and Commandments of GOD; but that Fear, that Worship, that Religion is in vain which is taught by the Precepts of Men, is founded upon, and very much influenc'd by the Precepts and Commandments of Men. It is the Word of GOD, which is the great Rule of his Fear and Worship: Yea, the Word is sometimes call'd, the Fear of the LORD, *Psal. xix. 9, The Fear of the Lord is clean*; that is, the Word of the LORD is pure, his Word teaches his Fear; it is a special Means to work his Fear in us, it is the Rule to guide and order our Fear of Him; and that is a superstitious Fear, a spurious Fear, not a true, genuine Fear of GOD, which is not agreeable to the Word of GOD; and those Churches which are not guided and govern'd by this Rule, but by the Precepts of Men, may rather be said to walk in the Fear of Men, than in the Fear of the LORD; so far as they regard not the Word as a perfect Rule of Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Conversation, but count it as a strange Thing, so far are they Strangers

to the Fear of God, *To the Law, then, and to the Testimony: If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them, Isa. viii. 20.*

THE Church is a Society built upon the sacred Scripture; particularly upon the Doctrine of the *New Testament or Covenant*, as the Apostle tells the *Colossians*, and all other Christian Societies, That they are built upon the *Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles*, that is, the Doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles, *Jesus himself being the chief Corner-stone*: And as Churches are thus founded; if they would walk in the Fear of the LORD, and the Comforts of the Holy Ghost, they must carefully conform themselves to this Rule For as 'tis an Argument of an irreligious Temper to neglect this, so there can be no solid Peace and Comfort without it; For Peace, is only, *to them who walk according to this Rule, Gal. vi. 16.*

2. IT denotes a Peoples being influenc'd by an internal Principle of his Fear; not only guided by the external Rule of GOD'S Word, but influenc'd by an internal Principle of his Fear. This Temper and Affection is highly agreeable to Gospel-Times, and that which GOD has promis'd to work in his People under that Dispensation, *Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. I will give them one Heart, and one Way, that they may fear me for ever, for the Good of them, and of their Children after them; and I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, That I will not turn away from them to do them Good; but I will put my Fear in their Hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* The Behaviour of the primitive Churches, was an exact Accomplishment of this Prediction and Promise: *They were all of one Heart, and one Way, and walked in the Fear of the Lord, and in the Comforts of the Holy Ghost.*

BUT this Principle being planted in the hidden Man of the Heart, the best View we can have of it, will be by considering its Effects. The most genuine, and principal of which, is a Flight from Sin, and all Appearances. No Principle more powerful to promote the Purity of Churches, and set them at a Distance from

all Vice and Corruption, as the wise Man observes; it is *by the Fear of the Lord, that Men depart from Evil*; Prov. xvi. 6. The Fear of Punishment from Men, may deter from some Vices; but it is only by the Influence of the Fear of the LORD, that Men depart from evil to purpose. They that fear God, fear to sin against Him. Those Churches that walk in the Fear of the LORD, will flee from the Vices of the Times, from Sins that are most in Fashion. Let Drunkenness, Lewdness and Debauchery, be never so generally practis'd, yet we shall keep at a Distance from those Vices, if we fear GOD. Let Swearing, and For-swearing, be never so much in Fashion, yet we shall fear an Oath, if we fear GOD: If all the World should wander after, and agree to worship the Beast, yet so would not we; because of the Fear of GOD. No, tho' we might seem to be left alone, as *Elijah* thought he was. Let a Sin be never so much pleaded for, countenanc'd, and generally practis'd; yet these Things will not take with those that walk in the Fear of God. This Principle will cause a Difference and Separation between the World and the Church, between the Religious and Profane.

2.) ANOTHER Effect of true Fear is Subjection to the Will of GOD, Obedience to his Commands. Where there is a Walking in the Fear of the LORD, there will be a Walking in his Commands. *Fear God and keep his Commandments*, Eccles. xii. 13. A People walking in the Fear of the LORD will reverence and obey the Commands relating to his Worship. There will be a reverencing the Command for keeping holy to GOD one whole Day in Seven to be a holy Sabbath to himself. For how can any People be said to walk in the Fear of the LORD, if they don't reverence the Sabbath; This was the universal Practice of the primitive Churches; they walked in the Fear and Love of this Command: And we may still affirm, That a Contempt of the Sabbath is a Contempt of God, and they are not of God, who keep not the Sabbath Day.

Again

Again, a People walking in the Fear of the LORD, will reverence and obey his Command of Hearing his Word, of joyning in publick Prayer, of singing his Praise. They will observe all Things which CHRIST has appointed them ; the positive Institutions of *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*. They will reverence and obey the spiritual Guides, GOD has set over them to watch for their Souls: And entirely subject themselves to those Rules of Discipline which CHRIST has instituted in his Church. And where pastoral Instructions and Government are despised and refused, the Fear of the LORD is sadly wanting. They will confer together about divine and religious Matters, as the Prophet *Malachy*, declares it was the Practice of good People in his Time, *Mal. iii. 16. Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another ;* and therefore they did so because they feared the LORD. The Time of this holy Fervour was after the rebuilding the Temple, and after the Expiration of the Babylonish Captivity. Thus the Fear of the LORD will not only discover itself in the Matter, but in the Manner of our Worship. *In thy fear will I Worship, Ps. v. 7.* There is no Worship acceptable without Reverence : An inward Reverence, is as the Soul of divine Worship. Now in all Acts of publick Worship the Fear and Reverence of GOD should be in their highest Elevation. Churches that walk in the Fear of the LORD, should exercise the greatest Reverence in his Worship : And when we see an Air of Indifferency, and Unconcernedness not to say of Levity, appear upon a worshipping Assembly, a By-stander may be tempted to think that the Fear of GOD is not in that Place. The publick Worship of GOD is the most solemn Act of a Church, and if that be not manag'd with the greatest Decorum and Gravity, there can be no Pretence of walking in the Fear of the LORD ; who is greatly to be fear'd in the Assembly of the Saints ; and to be had in Reverence of all them that are about him. *Pf. lxxxix. 7.* We should address ourselves to the Worship of GOD with a solemn Pause, and continue in a serious Frame, while in his Presence.

But if ordinarily we care not, how unpreparedly we rush into his Presence, take no Heed to our Feet, our Thoughts and Affections, when we are to go to God in Prayer, or to receive the Law from his Mouth, or to attend on Him in any other holy Ordinance and Duty; What would this shew but a prophane Spirit; and that we know not our Distance, nor have any due Fear of GOD? such Persons, and such Churches, can by no means be said to walk in the Fear of the LORD.

3.) CHURCHES are made up of Families, and the Fear of GOD will shew itself in a Family as well as in a publick Assembly; because GOD is present in one Place as well as another. Now till the Fear and Worship of GOD be set up, and maintain'd in your Houses and Families, you'll never constitute a Society of Christians walking in the Fear of the LORD.

'Tis easy to keep up an outward Form and Profession in publick; but the Life and Power of Religion will not be maintain'd, if it does not take Place in your Hearts and Houses. Would you then have your Families, and all under your Care, Members of a Church, walking in the Fear of GOD; then pray in your Families, and maintain the constant Worship of GOD there, and see that it be done with Reverence and Seriousness. Would you promote Religion in the World, and spread and propagate it every where? Why, Family-worship would have a mighty Influence upon the State of Religion in the World. If larger Societies were collected out of religious Families, how greatly would it improve the Church and the World? And if ever we hope to see a greater Progress in national Reformation, or Advancement of Religion among us, it must first begin in private Families. We are now in Peace, and under no Apprehension of Disturbance either in our publick or private Worship of GOD: the Use that we ought to make of it is, *To serve God in Holiness and Righteousness without any, inordinate, Fear all the days of our Life.*



4.) A Walking in the Fear of the Lord wou'd teach us to carry as in his Presence in our ordinary Course. It will cause us to walk circumspectly, and to study, *to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing.* We shall carry in some Measure suitably to our Relation unto such an Holy God, and agreeably to the Profession of his Name. This exact Walking, the Fear of God teaches, as the *Psalmist* professes; *I have set the Lord always before me,* Pf. xvi. 8. I still consider'd and look'd upon GOD as present with me, and an Observer and Judge of all my Thoughts, Words and Actions. The Fear of GOD will thus set us in his Presence, and keep us there. It will not only keep us awake, and intent in holy Duties, wherein we draw nigh to GOD in a special Manner, but will also make us circumspect, watchful, and conscientious in our whole Course. Thus the Fear of the LORD wou'd ordinarily regulate us in our natural Actions, cause us to eat and drink in Fear contrary to those we have read of, *Jude 17. who feed themselves without Fear.* It wou'd also make Men conscientious and honest in their Dealings, faithful in their Places, Relations and several Employments in the World.

II.) I AM next to consider the Tendency of serious Religion (or walking in the Fear of the LORD) to a Spiritual Joy and Comfort.

It was the dying Testimony of Excellent Mr. Henry, that a Life spent in the Service of God, and Communion with him, is the most pleasant Life any Man can live in this World. The Design of Religion is to rectify the Disorders, and perfect the Felicity of human Nature, to introduce the Kingdom of God into the Soul, the Constitution of which is Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. \* " To live, " in the Fear of the Lord is not without its Pleasure. " It composes the Soul, represses exorbitant Motions,

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\* See Mr. How of delighting in God, p. 56.

“ checks unruly Passions, keeps all within in a pleasant,  
 “ peaceful Calm; is Health to the Navel, and Marrow  
 “ to the Bones.” The like may be said of all the vital  
 noble Principles of the divine Life. They make the  
 Soul to be the very Region of Life and Peace; great  
 Peace have all such, and nothing shall offend them.  
 There is a strong Connexion between serious, vital  
 Religion, and solid Joy and Comfort. These are in  
 most ordinary Cases inseparable. Indeed some mista-  
 ken melancholy Christians, who truly fear God, may  
 want that Comfort they ought to take in the Ways  
 of Religion, and which by the Tenor of the Cove-  
 nant justly belongs to them: But this is not the true  
 Effect of Religion, but the Fault or Unhappiness of  
 those who profess it. There is undoubtedly a strict  
 Connexion between true Piety and Pleasure, between  
 Walking in the Fear of the Lord, and in the Comforts  
 of the Holy Ghost. Wisdom’s Ways are Ways of  
 Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace, *Prov. 3. 17.*  
 Moreover the Holy Spirit is expressly promis’d in the  
 Scripture to the People of God, *as a Comforter, Joh. 16. 7.*  
*Nevertheless I tell you the Truth, it is expedient for*  
*you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter*  
*will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him*  
*unto you.* This gracious Purpose and Promise of  
 Christ is mention’d over and over in the 14th, 15th,  
 and 16th Chapters of St. *John’s* Gospel: Being a Mat-  
 ter of the greatest Concern, in Regard of the Life  
 and Comfort of every Believer, it is for that Reason  
 spoken of with a great Variety of plain Expressions.  
 Let me only observe to you, that he is a Spirit of  
 Consolation to none, but to whom he has been a  
 Spirit of Sanctification. He comforts none, but those  
 who are sanctify’d by him; so that they who walk  
 not in the Fear of the Lord, and under an awful com-  
 manding Sense of Religion, have none of the Com-  
 forts of the Holy Spirit, whatever their Pretence and  
 Perswasion may be. — But I hasten to the Ap-  
 plication.

1.) THIS Doctrine reproves those Churches, or particular Members, who walk not in the Fear of the Lord. Sometimes a particular Church may be so corrupted both in its Doctrine and Manners, as to have quite lost the true Life and Sense of Religion. It may so far degenerate as to cast off all serious Regard to God, his Worship, and Institutions. The Seven Churches of *Asia* are but too plain and sad an Instance of this, and therefore Christ gives them very severe Reprehensions. But however the Case may be with some particular Christian Societies, many particular Church Members are so loose and vicious in their walking, as cannot consist with the true Fear of God. Many in common Christian Communion, and even some in special Communion are very irregular and faulty in their Conversation: So that we may take up the Apostles pathetick Complaint, there being but too much Reason for it, Philip. 3. 18, 19. *For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping (weeping as he wrote) that they are the Enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose End is Destruction, whose God is their Belly, whose Glory is in their Shame, who mind earthly Things.* But how unbecoming is it for Church Members, for such as profess Religion and Relation to God, to live in this Manner? Ought not Churches to walk in the Fear of the Lord? For what is a Church but a Society of Persons called out of the World, separated from the Vices and Corruptions of it, and devoted to the Fear and Worship of God? As *Nehemiah* therefore pleads with the *Jews*, so would I with professing Christians, who neglect to walk according to the Rule of the Gospel, *Neh. v. 9. It is not good that you do, ought ye not to walk in the Fear of our God?* Certainly you ought; for you profess Religion and Relation to him. The very Consideration of being related to God as his Church and People, ought to be a Check and Rebuke for any Thing committed unworthy of that Relation.

2.) IT reproves such as look for the Comforts of the holy Spirit, who yet take no heed to walk in the Fear of the LORD? But how foolish and unreasonable is it to expect Comfort in a Way of evil doing? Just as if a Man should expect a Crop of good Corn, from a field sown with Tares, *Light, indeed, is sown, but it is for the righteous, and Gladness for the upright in heart, Ps. lvi. 11.* It is the Order GOD has fixt in the moral, as well as in the natural World, *That what a Man sows that shall he also reap.* Many may steal a Spark of small Comfort from their worldly Recreations and Delights; or they may have it from some false Opinions, or the Delusions of Satan; but from GOD the holy Spirit they will have no more Comfort, than they make conscience of their Duty. They may go on in a sinful Course, and promise themselves all imaginable Safety, Peace, and Protection, *Deut. xxix. 19, 20.* saying; *I shall have Peace, tho' I walk after the Imagination of my Heart, to add Drunkenness to Thirst, that is, one Sin to another: The Lord will not spare him, but then the Anger of the Lord, and his Jealousie shall smoke against that Man, and all the Curses that are written in this Book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his Name from under Heaven.*

3.) THEY are to be blam'd, who tho' they walk in the Fear of the LORD, yet will not admit the Comforts of the holy Spirit. Tho' they have Cause to be cheerful, and should have Hearts to be so; yet we often find them dejected and mourning under many Perplexities and Fears. They think they do well in refusing to be comforted. There are many precious Promises in the Word of GOD, but these (say they) belong not to them. The holy Spirit is promis'd and given as a Comforter, but he has forsaken them, and thus they indulge themselves in that which is sadning and disquieting to the Spirit. But if a Sense of Religion has diffus'd itself into their Souls, Joy and Comfort should be diffus'd into all their Converse. If they have the Holy Spirit for a Sanctifyer, they may put in their Claim to him as a Comforter.

2.) I PROCEED to an Use of Exhortation, which is to excite and perswade you to an Imitation of those Churches; that the Character here given of them may be transcrib'd into our Lives; that as now we have Rest round about, we may improve it to such wise and holy Ends as they did, *walking in the Fear of the Lord, and in the Comforts of the Holy Ghost*. I will only add two Motives to inforce the Practice of this, and so conclude.

I.) THE late astonishing Hand of GOD upon the Disturbers of our Peace, is a loud Call to all the Churches to walk in his Fear. These primitive Churches (it may be) had their Fear awaken'd by the sudden Judgment that fell upon *Ananias and Saphira*, for their Hypocrisy and Sacrilege, *Acts, v. 12*. You there read; *how great Fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things*. This tremendous Judgment had an apt Tendency to produce and excite an holy Fear of GOD.

So when the LORD created a new Thing, and the Earth open'd her Mouth, and swallow'd up *Korah, Dathan and Abiram*, with all that appertain'd unto them, *Numb. xvi. 30*. in the 34th verse, you read how all *Israel* was alarm'd at the Judgment, *They fled at the Cry of them: For they said, lest the Earth swallow us up also*. In the 20th Chapter of that Book, and the last Clause of the 10th verse, we are told, *they became a Sign*; that is, a Monument of GOD's just Vengeance: They were set up for a Warning to all others in all Ages, to take heed of treading in the Steps of their Pride and Rebellion. This Opening of the Earth to swallow up the Rebels (we think) was a dismal Calamity, and so it was; yet it seems to be no less a Judgment for so many hundreds to be taken alive, and ingulph'd in Misery all at once\*. He that runs, may read the

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\* *As they were at Preston.*

Strokes of terrible Majesty in their Overthrow. GOD is known by the Judgments he executes, when the wicked are snared in the Work of their own Hands. How were they crouded into a narrow Compass, *As Fishes that are taken in an evil Net, so were they snared in in an evil Time*, falling suddenly upon them. *Eccles. ix. 12.* How did GOD scatter the Bones of them that encamp'd against us. *Pf. liii. 5.* Tho' not literally ; yet their Strength was broken ; they were all dead Men in the Eye of the Law, their Lives being forfeited to the Justice of the Nation, and now they are actually dispers'd in several Parts of the World.

Now if we would answer the Design of this Providence, there must be a deep universal Impression of an holy Fear of GOD. *Let all Israel hear and fear.* This Temper you find upon a like Occasion, *Isai. xli. 2. 5.* *Who rais'd up the righteous Man from the East, called him to his Foot, gave the Nations before him, and made him rule over Kings? He gave them as Dust to his Sword, and as driven Stubble to his Bow.* And what was the Consequence and Effect of this Victory obtain'd by the righteous Man rais'd up from the East ? *The Isles saw it, and feared, the Ends of the Earth were afraid, drew near and came.* How should great Fear fall upon the Churches, and upon as many as shall hear these Things ?

2.) THIS religious Behaviour has the surest Tendency to Edification and Increase. *They that Fear God shall grow up as Calves in the Stall, Mal. iv. 1.* daily increasing with the Increases of GOD. They shall be built up in Faith, and Love, in Holiness and Comfort unto Salvation. *The righteous shall flourish like the Palm-tree: He shall grow like a Cedar in Lebanon, Pf. xcii. 12.*

THE Habits and Principles of the divine Life shall be daily invigorated in their Souls, till they shall arrive to an eminent Degree of Holiness, to a confirm'd State in Christianity, *unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ, Eph. iv. 13.* As their serious Walking tends to Edification, so to Increase ; not of the Number of a Party, unless it

it be of the Religious Party, who are on the Lord's Side, in Contradistinction to the wicked and prophane. I don't mean the multiplying of the Number of Dissenters, the bringing Persons over to a Party, unless they be delivered into the Mould of the Gospel, and become sincerely Religious. 'Tis true, I cannot be sincere in the Way I now walk, but I must think my self in the Right, and others in the Wrong, that differ from me; yet I'm to look on this Difference, but as a small minute Thing, in Comparison of the great and weighrier Things of Religion, such as doing Justice, loving Mercy, and walking humbly with God; which Men of every Denomination have a Capacity for, and profess an Obligation to. So that I am not so vain and uncharitable, as to think, that none truly fear God, but they who have learnt the *Shiboleth* of a Party. In every Nation (or Body of Men) he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him. I can't possibly express my Sense of this Matter, better, than in the Words of that great Man, Mr. *How*, now with God. \*

“ When our Confidences, and vain Boasts cease, the  
 “ Temple of the Lord! the Temple of the Lord!  
 “ lo here is Christ, and there is Christ, and one  
 “ Sort ceases to magnify this Church, and another  
 “ that, — then is to be expected a glorious Resur-  
 “ rection, not of this or that Party: For living,  
 “ powerful Religion, when it recovers, will disdain  
 “ the Limits of a Party. Nor is it to be thought,  
 “ that Religion modify'd by the devised Distinctions  
 “ of this, or that Party, will ever be the Religion  
 “ of the World. — Then will all the scandalous  
 “ Marks, and Means of Division among Christians  
 “ vanish, and nothing remain as a Test, or Boun-  
 “ dary of Christian Communion, but what hath it's  
 “ Foundation, as such, in plain Reason, with ex-  
 “ press Revelation. — — — Then as there is one

\* See Dr. Bates's Funeral Sermon, p. 115.

“ Body and one Spirit, will that Almighty Spirit so  
“ animate, and form this Body, as to make it every  
“ where amiable, self-recommending, and capable  
“ of spreading and propagating it self, and to increase  
“ with the Increase of God. Then shall the LORD  
“ be one, and his Name one in all the Earth.”

LET us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter,  
*Fear God, honour the King, love the Brotherhood,* 1 Pet.  
ii. 17. Finally, Brethren farewell: Be perfect, be  
of good Comfort, be of one Mind, live in Peace,  
and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you,  
*Amen.*

*F I N I S.*

