

**White Kennett**

***Christian Honesty Recommended,***

**in a Sermon preach'd at the Assizes,  
Held at Chelmsford, for the County of Essex,  
on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, 1703/4,  
Before the Right Honourable the Lord Chief Justice  
Holt, and Mr Justice Nevil,  
Her Majesties Judges; and Sir Thomas  
Webster, Bar. High Sheriff of the County  
by White Kennet, D.D.**

**In 8<sup>o</sup>**

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**Advertisement**

There is in the Press, and will be shortly Published, *The Case of Impropriations, and of the Augmentation of Vicarages, and other small Benefices*; stated by History and Law; from the first Usurpation of the Popes and Monks, down to her *Majesties* Royal Bounty, lately shewn unto the Poorer Clergy, with an *Appendix* of Records and Memorials, relating to that Subject.

By White Kennett, D.D., *Archdeacon of Huntingdon.*

[1]

**Christian  
Honesty  
Recommended**

1. Thess. IV. 6.

*That no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother in any matter, because that the Lord is the Avenger of all such, as we have forewarned you and Testified.*

However the Learned differ about the Original meaning of these words, I think our Translation bears up the true and proper Sense of them: a strict Prohibition of all manner of Fraud and Dishonesty, that will be punished by a just God.

A doctrine of Christianity, that after all is the surest Test of Christianity. Disputes in [2] Religion are infinite and Divisions (God knows) are too abounding. But in this one Principle we may all agree, this one comprehensive universal Principle, That Honesty must be the Foundation of our Faith; That we cannot pretend to be Godly, unless we are found Just and Righteous; That none but the Sincere and Faithful Man can be the good Christian. That Falsehood and Fraud, Deceit and double Dealing, prove any sort of People to be no better than Publicans and Sinners, rather prove them to be worse than Infidels and Heathens.

The World could not be disposed to receive a Messiah, without this Doctrine first Preached to prepare the way before him. For the forerunner *John* the Baptist (s. Luke 3) preach'd up Justice and Righteousness, Content and Charity; and inveigh'd severely against Exaction, Fraud and Violence: so to dispose and qualifie Mens honest Minds for the more easie reception of the Gospel; as well knowing that simplicity and sincerity would not fail to receive and hold fast the Christian Faith. For if People have an open Breast, and a true Heart, a disposition to Candour, and a habit of Integrity; then at least they are capable of being admitted into the *School of Christ*; then at least they are [3] not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. A little Perswasion will finish the good Work: a little trouble makes the very honest Man to be *almost* a Christian, to be *altogether* so. (S. Luc. 19)

There is a plain Instance of this Truth in the Example of *Zaccheus*, a *Publican*, and so proverbially a *Sinner*. This Man had no profess'd Religion, but he had sound Notions of Good and Evil; he could make a Conscience between Right and Wrong. This brought him to reflect upon his griping and extorting course of Life: this turn'd him to the Resolution of being now very Charitable and very Just. So he comes before *Jesus*, and makes his Protestation: *Behold, my Lord, the half of my Goods I give to the Poor, and if I have taken anything from any Man by false Accusation, I restore him four-fold.*

Our Saviour knew, that a Man of good Conscience would easily be a Man of true Faith; being so far advanced in the ways of Righteousness, *Jesus* found him a step or two of the Doors of Heaven. He says to him: *This Day is Salvation come to this House*, i.e. Thou O *Zaccheus* by the Profession of Honesty art fit and worthy to be my Disciple: the restitution of ill gotten Goods, is the way that leads to me and Heaven. [4] This necessity of Justice and Righteousness to open a way unto true Holiness: This made our Saviour seek for Converts among the true *Israelites*, i.e. among the *Men without Guile*. While he turned away from the Scribes and Pharisees, as if he despaired to bring them over to Salvation, who were subtle and designing Men, all upon the ways and means of stealing *Orphans Bread*, and devouring *Widows Houses*.

This again made the Apostles decline those Wolves in Sheeps Cloathing, as utterly incapable of being Christians, while they were addicted to the Cheats and Robbers.

I say, this made the first Preachers of the Gospel turn aside from the deceitful Jews, and apply themselves rather to the honest Heathens; who upon natural Principles of Equity and Right, were more likely to become true Believers; more likely than the Jewish Hypocrites, whose Prayers were a Pretence, and whose Gain were their only Godliness.

In short, this made the Evangelick Writers to press Truth and Sincerity, Plainness and Integrity upon the Consciences of all their Brethren, and earnestly to dissuade them and convert them from all Artifice and guile, from all *Cunning Craftiness*, and *Lying in wait to deceive*. [5]

Particularly the Apostle in the Text, *That no man go beyond, etc.*

The text does contain these three things:

1. The Prohibition of Fraud and False-dealing in these Words, *Let no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother in any matter*;
2. The Divine Vengeance, that will overtake all those indirect Workers of Iniquity in this Reason: *Because that the Lord is the Avenger of all such*;
3. The great Pains and Care the Apostles took to instill the Principle of Honesty and

Justice into the Hearts and Practice of all Christians; St Paul declares this to have been a frequent Office of his Ministry; Says he, *As we also have forewarned you and testified.*

1. Where is the Prohibition of all falsehood and Foul Dealing, *Let no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother in any matter.* There seems to be a force and emphatical reach in every single Word.

*Let no Man:* No Man whether Jew, Gentile, Greek or Barbarian, Bond or Free. The Obligation to Honesty does extend to all Mankind; there is no Religion or Profession in the World, that can possibly excuse Men from the grounds of all Morality, of Humanity [6] itself; which is to be True and Just, to be Sincere and Upright in all Mutual Conversation.

Not any Man excusable for dealing deceitfully with his Neighbour. Not the *Heathen*, for the light of Nature will instruct him *to do as he would be done by*, i.e. fairly and faithfully. So as the *Heathen*, if he be true to the Laws of Nature, and will be under the Conduct of his own Reason; he would be, he must be a moral honest Man.

Not the *Jew!* for all his Law and Prophets depended on the old established Principles of Justice and Righteousness, of Equity and Truth: he would be no true *Israelite*, that was not a *Nathanael*, a Man *without Guile.*

But especially not the *Christian.* He has the least temptation, and will have the least excuse. The poor *Pagans* may be ignorant of the Devil's Devices, and the more easily drawn into delusion or deceit. And the *Jews* may be under such a veil of obstinacy, as to narrow and sordid, treacherous and imposing in their ways.

But the *Christian* Souls! 't is Impossible they should have so *learn'd Christ*, as not to discern Light from Darkness; as not to avoid the Evil [7] and chuse the Good; as not to keep Innocence, and to take heed unto the thing that is Right.

To be a Christian takes up a great many Articles of Faith, and a great many Rules of Practice: but the foundation of all, and the One thing Necessary, is to *walk honestly in the sight of all Men.* Every one who is nameth (or is named by) the name of Christ must first depart from *Iniquity*, i.e. from injustice, and all manner of doing wrong.

*Let no Man*, or no manner of person whatsoever, *go beyond or defraud his Brother.*

*Go beyond or defraud*, Words that restrain the Heart as well as the Hand of Men. Words, that do not only forbid perfect Robbery, and open Theft, and very apparent Wrong: the forbearance of such notorious Evil does not suffice to make the Honest Man, much less the good Christian. No! the Honest Man, the good Christian, must be somewhat more than not a Thief, and not a Villain. He must not only abstain from the abominable Crime, but from the *small Offence*, and avoid, if possible, all *appearance* of this *Evil.*

Therefore it is not said here, let no Man Rob or Spoil, let no man Ruine or Destroy, but let no Man so much as *go beyond or defraud* [8] his Brother: no sly intriguing; no subtle ensnaring; no artfulness in getting; no private mysteries of guile, no imposing upon the ignorance of some; no abusing the good nature of others; no surprising, over-reaching, betraying; no base and vile ways of doing injury unseen. *Let no Man* in any wise *go beyond or defraud his Brother.*

His Brother, i.e. his Fellow Christian,; and that is his Neighbour; nay, and that is the Stranger, the every part of mankind.

For Mankind are Brethren, and that relation requires a mutual Trust and Confidence in one another. The Alien, the Infidel, the Jew, the Barbarian, have all Title to

our Just and Righteous dealing with them. All Society of Mankind are one Brotherhood by original Compact, by Nature's Charter; and no one can be Outlaw'd from this *Claim* of having Equity and Right done unto him.

And therefore, if there has ever been such a wild Doctrine, as that Grace gives the Dominion, and civil Property depends upon the *Godliness* of a Party: so as those who call themselves *Godly*, may take any thing from those who they call *Profane*: if there has been this Opinion in the World; (I confess I never met [9] with those who dared to own it; why then Heresie is too soft a Word for that Opinion: it is a Rebellion against Nature, and a Blasphemy against the God of Order: it is to turn the World into a Wilderness, and Man into worse than Wolves.

Our Brother is our Fellow-Creature, every Man. It is probable indeed the Apostle here meant our *Christian Brother*; who has a more near relation to us, a more peculiar Interest in us; and therefore the more heinous and odious to defraud our *Christian Brother*; our fellow-Member of the same body; our joint partaker in the same Covenant; one of our Household of Faith, one of us Children of God, of us Coheirs of Salvation. From the Mahometan, or from the Jew, one might expect no great Mercy or justice: they have another Messiah already sent, or about to come: They have another notion of Paradise for Sinners, and even for Fools. They must be loose in their very notions of right and wrong; but Christians have another Law, and must have another manner of Spirit, must be known by the Simplicity of Sheep, and the innocence of Doves; must *not hurt or destroy in the holy Mountain* of Christ's church. [10]

*Let no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother, especially his Christian Brother, in any matter.*

No!, not in any matter; i.e. upon no occasion of mutual dealing, in no part of Commerce or Conversation with one another; upon no opportunity, and for no pretence whatever. Christian Honesty is a very strict virtue that keeps punctually to its Rules, and seeks for no evasion here, no dispensation there. It ties up our Hands and our Feet, nay, it ties up the thoughts and intentions of our Heart, to make us perfectly sincere, and altogether Righteous.

The Gospel Law of Honesty, being in the way to Heaven, is straight and narrow, is not to go beyond or defraud our Brother in *any matter*, the greatest and the least matter. A necessary Caution, for there be deceitful Persons in each extreme.

There be some of the Pretenders to be Men of Honour, who scorn to cheat in little matters; No, in all the ordinary concerns of common Business they keep up their Word and Credit: for they have a Soul too great, or rather a Spirit too big, to be Knaves for a Trifle. But perhaps these Men reserve [11] themselves only, till 't is worth their while to deceive; till they have a valuable consideration, and a Prize that turneth to *Account*. And then their Honesty in little things goes off into scandalous Falshood in matters of greater moment. Like the Eagles, that will not stoop to a sorry Insect, but yet are swift to seize a more noble Prey. These are the Men who get the Reputation of being Just, for the better advantage perhaps of being Unjust. Who are nice in paying *Anise* and *Cumin*, till they get into a weightier Course; till some greater Trust is committed to them, the Widow, the Orphan, the Government, and then they shamefully break that greater Trust.

2. There be others of just contrary practice of Deceit; they dare not venture upon gross Acts of Knavery, any visible Theft, or evident Oppression: for why, they are afraid of the rebuke of the People; or of the reach of the Law; they are yet Cowards in Sin. But

then for any low and sordid Arts of gain, for any sly or secret Business, for a concealing of their Dues, and a shuffling of their Accounts; for the advantages of catching, and the devices of coming off: in these they are laboriously Wicked. Not considering that the Law of [12] Christian Honesty must have an universal obedience to it; and he that is *Guilty in any one point, breaketh that whole Law.*

*Let no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother in any matter, great or little.*

For *Secondly*, there is a Divine Vengeance that will overtake all those indirect workers of iniquity, *because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.*

Of all, whether the profest Robbers, or the reserved Knaves; whether those that take the High-road, or these who seek the By-Paths to Hell.

As to the *first*, the open and profest *Robbers*, who insult us in our Travels, and in our very Houses. These Men have a *vengeance* even before they feel it; For it is itself a *vengeance* to be given up to a Reprobate Mind; to mark out themselves for Fugitives and Vagabonds upon the Face of Earth. A *vengeance* upon them, not maintain a Family; not to know their own Abode; to live without a Conscience or God; to lose all natural Modesty, and very Humane Nature; to set up for the common Enemies of Mankind; and to be always running along the Precipices of Death and Damnation. [13] For some such vengeance waits for them, that will make the hardest Heart to be sensible of the Divine vengeance.

How should they long escape in their villainous Practices? Can they trust to a Combination of themselves? when there is no tie of *Conscience*; and *Honour*, among such Creatures, must be the Rope of Sand.

Can they always depend on Secrecy and Safety? When a little accident betrays, when as it were a *Bird of the Air does carry the Voice, and tell the matter.*

Can they strike silence into all injur'd Parties? Can they terrifie all from coming to Evidence against them? If any are so Cowardly, they are Consecutive with them. But sure all that have suffered, or have not yet suffered by them, will be industrious in the Prosecution of them; it is their own Cause; it is the Cause of the Country; and their Nation. If there be an *Ishmael*, One whose Hand *has been against every Man*, it is Just, it is Necessary, that every *Man's Hand should be against him.*

If they should create Darkness, and conceal the Deeds opt it from mortal Men; yet can they flatter themselves that the abominable things will never be found out? Can they [14] believe that God does not perceive them, does not pursue them? How many unaccountable discoveries are made of Theft and Murder, that can be nothing but a finger of God, and a miracle of Providence?

Where is the Estate got by such violence? Where is the Sinner himself, the old living Sinner? Alas! Deceit and Thirst of Blood, can allow few to *live out half of their Days*. They are called forth to speedy Judgment in this World, and without great measures of Repentance, they go away to a more dreadful Judgment in the World to come.

*Secondly*, as to the Reserved Knaves, who act under a Shew of Prudence, and a veil of Hypocrisy. Let them not glory in their Sham! A Divine Vengeance may be their Portion, due and deserved, however unexpected.

For they are false to the very Profession of Falshood: they have a meanness of Spirit in Knavery, that will not permit them to live up to the Principles of Knavery. By those Principles they would do their Business at some one unjust Blow; but that they dare not trust the Eyes of the World, they dare not stand the Terrors of the Law. They apprehend

not the Evil of Sin, but of Punishment; there [15] may be an Inconvenience in Discovery, Shame and Suffering: their appearances of Conscience are but a want of Courage.

I confess these Men are often more destructive to Humane Society, than the other bolder Villains: we have a Ward and Guard against the one, but we lie open to the other. We can see the Pit, but there is no escaping the Ambush and the Snare.

And then again, we have an easie Method of Satisfaction against the Thief and the Robber; the Courts are open, and, what is a great Blessing, the Trials are short. But if we sue for Redress from the Oppressor, from the crafty deceiver; Oh! the vexation of Justice perhaps exceeds the Injury; the Engines of Wit and Wealth are set to work out our slow Destruction: nor is it in the power of the best Judges; or of the best Constitution, to give us full Satisfaction.

The only comfort is, that where humane Justice fails, Divine Vengeance ought the rather to interpose. God's Arm must reach, where the Sword of the Magistrate is too short. God is jealous of his Honour, will be the *Avenger of all such*. [16] We cannot here enquire into the various sorts of Divine Vengeance, falling on the Heads of Deceitful Men. God's Justice and Wisdom are manifold, and some of his Methods are out of our Sight.

There be notwithstanding some visible ways of God's dealing with perfidious Men. *First*, God in his providence maketh Fraud and Deceit to bring a natural punishment upon wrong doers.

A natural Punishment: for the little Plots of deceiving, and the continual Projects of gain, they fill the Head and Heart with doubts and difficulties, with perplexity of Thought and vexation of Mind. To invent a Stratagem, and perhaps it fails; to lay a Snare, and stand still to see the breaking of it; to be put upon new Devices, and yet succeed no better in them; to lurk privily to catch our Neighbours, and to lie in wait to deceive; and yet to be ashamed often with discovery, and fretted often with disappointment: to come off with the reproach of Fools as well as Knaves, *i.e.* of devising wicked Imaginations, and yet not having Wit enough to bring them to pass. This is all a tumult in their Souls, and a trial of their Patience, and a loss of Temper. [17] So as while the Honest Upright Man is fixed and steady, calm and easie in a sence of his own Integrity, with a composed Breast and an even Spirit. Among the Men of Guile is not so: they are forward to invent, and yet afraid to execute, they are *double minded, and unstable in all their ways*: They impose upon others, and in the very Act betray themselves. They watch, they dream, they start; *there is no Peace saith my God to those wicked wretches*.

*Secondly*, As the imagining and attempting such wicked Devices does perplex and confound the deceitful Dealer: So the melancholy reflections that must afterwards arise in their Heart, they are made by God for another grievous Scourge and Plague to those deceitful Men.

To see their Plots well laid, and yet miserably defeated; their Nets spread out of sight en yet spread in vain: this raises an Indignation in the wicked Soul, to lose the *wages of unrighteousness*, almost when he was sure of them.

But the gripes and stings of Conscience, are they put away for ever? No! these wicked doers may go on long without remorse, without thinking; in a stupid mind and a habit of [18] deadness: but yet Conscience may in time awake, and set Terrors in Array before them.

Perhaps, under the stroke of some grievous calamity, they may call to mind how much they provoked God and abused their fellow creatures. Perhaps, when reduced to Poverty

by a lingering Curse, or by a sudden Judgment; they may then remember, how basely they got their Wealth, and therefore how justly it is all blasted with the breach of God's Displeasure. Perhaps, in time of Sickness the inward Man rises from the dead, and the Soul is made sensible of Health en Strength fatally misemployed in Rapine and Extortion, and lading itself with thick Clay: when now an Anguish of Mind makes the body more incurable; when now a *wounded Spirit who can bear?*

And if Death approach, it is hideous, it is the King of Terrors. In haste they look over their Accounts: So much here wilfully omitted; So much there fraudulently inserted; So much in arrears to this Friend and Confident; so much remaining to that injured Neighbour; so much in Debt and Trespass to a thousand more. How shall they *give up* their unjust *Stewardship*? How can they think of being *no longer Stewards*? Oh what is the Gain of the [19] whole World to the Loss of a Soul? Oh what shall they *give*, what would they not give, in *exchange for their Souls*?

But *Thirdly*, God is often the Avenger of such as privily defraud their Brethren by exposing then to the same cheats and delusions, which they labour upon others. This is often the just reward of such ill Men, they are deceived in their own Deceits, and caught by their own Guile. They dig a Pit, and fall into the midst of it themselves. The Mischief they prepared for others, turneth and falleth back upon their own Heads. They prey'd upon the Weak, and like other ravenous Creatures, are at last met with in their own kind, and fall a Prey to some other Beasts that are subtiler and stronger than they. And then they fall without *Mercy*; for little of it is due to them who shew'd no Mercy. Nay and they lie without *Pity*; for that good natured Passion is due to Innocent Sufferers; to the Poor and the Helpless. But Men that have worked out their own Ruin, and built up confusion to themselves; it is a wonder, if instead of pity and compassion there be not Joy and Triumph in their unhappy end. *When it goeth well with the Righteous, the City Rejoiceth, and when the Wicked Perish there is Shouting.* (Pro. 11:10) [20] Nor can they much commiserate their own Condition, while Knavery was all their wretched Folly, while Fraud and Falshood brought them to that sad condition. How deep and despairing were the Murmurs of *Adonibezek* when he said, *As I have done, so hath God requited me!*

IV. For in the *Fourth* Place, Poverty and Want are often the Curse of Dishonesty and deceitful Dealings. For indeed those worldly Men who make haste to be Rich; it frequently happens that they do not only lose their innocence, but their design too of being Rich; they fall short by over-reaching, and might have got more, if they had grasped at somewhat less.

But suppose there is Possession and Entail. Why yet the ill gotten Estate has a Curse for the Appurtenance of it, that can rarely be reserv'd from it; there is a Worm in the Root; there is a Viper in the Bowels; there is a Moth and a Canker, that frets and consumes the Substance by degrees: the present owner Enjoys it not; or the next Generation loses sight of it. It is a Prey to the Extortioner, or a Portion to the Stranger; or perhaps it returneth round to the right Heirs, if they are Sober and Industrious Men. [21] This is an expectation that the holy Scriptures raise in us; and the expectation is answered by our daily experience of the World. *He that oppresseth the Poor to encrease his Riches, shall surely come to Want.* (Pro. 22:16)

Examples are infinite in this Age and Nation  
The prophet *Habakkuk* is Elegant in this cause. *Wo to him that increaseth that which is not his! How long? And he that ladeth himself with thick clay, shall they not Rise up*

*suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee? And thou shall be for booties to them.* (Hab. 2:6) As if some time or other, a swift destruction or a Signal of calamity would come unawares upon every false Man.

And the Prophet *Zechary* is very express in denouncing this doom of temporal Afflictions on the Unrighteous dealer; in his *5<sup>th</sup> Chap.* where under the sign of a *Flying Roll*, is signified the Curse that hunteth after evil doers. *I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts; and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my Name; and it shall consume it with the timber thereof and the Stones thereof.* (Zec. 5:4)

We see the Instances of many an Estate Melted, and many a Family Blasted; and that we see not a thousand more, is the forbearance [22] and long suffering of God, that should lead Men unto Repentance.

V. For *Lastly*, If the perverse unrighteous Dealers should by the infinite mercy of God, escape all temporal Vengeance; yet they are but then reserved for the greater Portion of eternal Wrath.

No vain words! the Judge of all the Earth will do Right. A day of Balance and of exact Retribution. A rendering into every Man according to his Works; and as they were good or evil, so to be comforted or so tormented.

And this indeed is the new Spring given to *Christian Honesty*, that moves it and guides it, beyond any other Honesty in the World. What Arguments for Honesty has the Moral Man? He has indeed the good Arguments of Humanity, of Reason, of Honour, of Interest, of a Wise Man, and a Happy Liver. But what are all these to the obligation of Conscience, to the fear of God that govern the good Christian, and restrain his Deeds, his Words, his Thoughts! It was some wonder to have found an honest *Heathen*, but it must be amazement to find a dishonest *Christian*. They are not Christians (however falsely so called) who can be willfully Dishonest.[23]

Let us now conclude with the *Third* and last Particular. The great Pains and Care the Apostles took to install the principles of Honesty and Justice into the Hearts and Practice of all Christians. *St. Paul* declares this to have been a frequent office of his Ministry, says he, *As we also have forewarned you and testified.*

As if the Apostle had said, upon Honesty and Justice and Faithful Dealing, upon Veracity and Integrity, upon these hang all the Law and the Prophets and the Gospel. Our Religion begins with Righteousness, and goes on to confirm and to fulfill that Law of Righteousness, *To provide things Honest in the sight of all Men. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, pure, Lovely, of good report; to think on these things and to do them.*

This is the sound wholesome Doctrine, that ye have not by vain tradition only; nor only in the older Oracles of God; but our Gospel is built on the same foundation. And therefore in our Preaching we often insist upon it.

In our Writings again we press it on your Consciences. *These are the things which ye had both learned, and received, and heard, and seen, and are to do.* (Phil 4:9) [24] And therefore if any Deceivers shall arise who would make you believe, that Morality is an Enemy to Grace, and that Godliness is above the Law of good Morals: Mark them and avoid them for the falsest Teachers. Grace is to exalt Vertue, not to exclude it. Christianity must have good Morals, though the Christian will be far better than the merely Moral Man.

Again if there come to be any part of the Christian Church, that sets up the Principles of deceiving People with Frauds, that they shall dare to call *Pious*; and with imposing upon the Faith, upon the Reason, upon the Senses of Mankind. Let that church call itself *Catholick* or what it please, there is a wrong Constitution in that Church, and there must be an infinite Danger in the Communion of it.

Farther, if there be any Set of Men who would be more Pure and Holy than their Brethren; separating from them to be distinguished for a more Godly Tribe; If under that pretence of Sanctity, they are really more Deceitfull, and turn their Religion into any Art and Mystery of Gain. Oh they are abominable to God, and must be odious to the World!  
[25]

There is one Trial of Religion that can seldom fail; where the Principles are ingenious and rational, Plain and Scriptural; and where the Professors (if they have any Sense of those Principles) must be fair and open, and undissembling; there most likely is Truth, and the God of Truth. Such I am sure are our Church and our Communion, if we rightly understand them and live up to them; but alas we are a reproach and scandal, to whatever we profess, if any of us are found with double Tongues, or with deceitful Hearts, or with insincere Practice. Such Persons, whatever Name they boast of, are strangers to our Church, and very Aliens from Christianity it self.

As Honesty is the Test of Religion, and the way of *trying all the Spirits of it*, whether they be of God: so is Honesty the Soul of all Civil Justice, without which there can be no keeping up the Peace and Property of Mankind.

When Civil Justice was administred in the Heathen World, it did even then depend upon a natural *Conscience* of Equity and Truth; upon the *Faith* of a Witness, and the *Honour* of a Judge; upon all that Nature and Reason could make to be Morality and Religion. So as there had been (what there really never was) any one Nation possessing *Atheism*, that [26] Nation must have been without Laws, as well as without God in the World. For Laws had been to no Purpose at all, if there had not been the Principle of a Conscience within, upon the Notion of a greater Judge above.

The Heathens had their Faith of a Divine Being, and upon that Faith was grounded the whole administration of their Laws and Government. An Oath was then Sacred, or else a Court of Justice had been then in vain. Perjury, Bribery, and all Corruption, were even then Sins to Heaven, as well as against the State; or else, impossible to have govern'd the Wit and Malice of Men.

Christianity therefore did not bring Civil Justice to be supported upon a new Principle; (For it stood always on the Principle of Conscience) but Christianity enforced and raised that Principle of Conscience, making it to hold faster, and to reach farther, than it could before do.

Conscience had now a sounder bottom upon *Life and Immortality brought to light thro' the Gospel*; had a quicker sense of Guilt and Punishment, from better apprehending the *Sinfulness* of Sin, and better knowing the *Terrors of the Lord*. Christian Conscience must needs have been more Tender and more Faithful, than that of the devoutest Heathen.  
[27]

This alone might be a Reason why the Apostle made it *utterly a Fault* among Corinthian Converts, to *go to law* before *the Unbelievers*; which he likewise calls *before the Unjust*; because their Ignorance of Revelation could not possibly reach up to that strict and impartial Justice, which might now be found among the Christian Brethren.

Oh! How excellent, how admirable, will Christian Justice be, while the true Christian Conscience governs all the dispensations of it! While the *Parties* stand sensible that all Quirks and Evasions are a lying unto *God*, and not *unto Men*; unto a God, who cannot be deceived.

While the *Witnesses* have a like fear of God upon them, and a Conscience of Accusing, and of Condemning or Acquitting, their own Souls for ever.

While the *Council* speak for nothing but discovery of Truth, to open the plain Fact, and to apply the express Law; knowing, that to hunt down the innocent, and to cover the Guilty, are contrary tot the ends of their Profession, and a very denial of their Christian Faith.

While Honourable *Judges* know, they represent the Judge of all the Earth, they enquire and decide in the Name of God, and for the sake of God. They can therefore have no partiality for Causes, nor respect for Persons. [28]

For they themselves must give account to their Superior Judge, who will administer true Judgment, *With Righteousness shall he judge the World, and the People with Equity.*

In short, the true administration of Justice does so much depend upon the true sense of Christianity; that no sort of Men are more bound to love and honour our Religion, then are the professors of the Law; their very Profession depends upon keeping up the Truth and the Dignity of our Religion. Take away but the Conscience of an Oath, and you take away all the ways and means of distinguishing between Right and Wrong. If Men of that honourable Profession should turn Prophane, should encourage Atheism; why alas instead of Religion, they make their own Profession to be a Jest; for I appeal tot the Oracles of the Law, there can be no Justice done to Mankind, if there is no Conscience shewn among them.

As Christians, we claim a Reverence from the Gentlemen of that Robe; and We Ministers of this established Church, we humbly plead our title to a singular Love and Respect from them.

For certainly, no constitution in the World is more adapted to maintain the laws, and to facilitate the execution of `em: None more [29] than our Established Church of England. We do not exempt our own Order from the cognisance of the Civil Magistrate, as in that Church, which sets up for an Empire within the State. We do not make *Confession* to be an Engine to discover the Intrigues of Sin, and yet to skreen the Committers of it. We do not recommend the Arts of *Equivocation* and *Mental Reservation*, to impose upon the Jury, and to insult the Court. We grant no *Indulgence* for breaking of the Laws, to serve any Interest whatever. We make no *Martyrs* of any kind of Legal Criminals. We renounce and abhor all the stratagems of evading or obstructing the Justice of a Nation.

May we hope the rather to be protected in our Rights and lawful Dues, and to be defended from the oppression and the frauds of unreasonable Men. Alas! the remaining Patrimony of our Church needs not to be envied, and ought not to be invaded. I will not say, such is the Perverseness of some People; but such indeed is the nature of our smaller Tithes and Offerings; that the least Benefices are most exposed to further Diminution and Spoil.

The more Thanks and Praise we owe to God, for having put it into the Heart of our Gracious Queen, to consider the Insufficient [30] Maintenance of our poorer Clergy and to dedicate a part of her own Revenues to the Pious Uses of providing a better competency for them: a devout Royal Bounty, that has been generously approv'd and conform'd by the great Council now assembled in Parliament, and is now ready to pass

into a perpetual Law.

After which, the Words of the great and wise Chancellour of this Kingdom, the Lord Bacon, need be no longer objected. His Words were these, *But in my own opinion and sense, I must confess (let me speak it with Reverence) that all the Parliaments since the 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of Hen VIII (who gave away the Impropriations from the Church) seem to me to stand in a sort of obnoxious to do somewhat for the Church, to reduce the Patrimony thereof to a competency.*

This Objection, I say, is now in a great measure taken off, and some noble Satisfaction is at last made to God and his Church. The more grateful Duty we owe unto her excellent Majesty, and to her Honourable High Court of Parliament, the more Reverence to her Magistrates; the more Obedience to her Laws.

We make our *Prayers* and *Supplications* for the QUEEN, and all that are Commission'd by her Authority: God of his Mercy grant, that under them *we may lead quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty.*

**FINIS.**