



The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.

NUMBER ONE IRON OAKS DRIVE • PARIS, ARKANSAS 72855

THE SERMONS OF JOHN BRINE

God: the Defense and Glory of His Church:

by John Brine

(London: Aaron Ward, 1734)

*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth
— Psa. 60: 4*



The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.
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SERMON 3

GOD THE DEFENCE AND GLORY OF HIS CHURCH.

A SERMON PREACH'D AT *DEVONSHIRE-SQUARE*
ON THE FIFTH OF *NOVEMBER*,

*TO THE SOCIETY, Who Support the Lord's Day Evening Lecture,
In that PLACE*

*Publish'd at the REQUEST of some who heard it. Printed for
AARON WARD at the King's-Arms in Little-Britain. LONDON:
1734.*

ZEC. 2: 5.

For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a Wall of Fire round about,
and will be the Glory in the Midst of her.

THIS Prophecy was delivered about the Time of the *Jews* Return from *Babylon*, where they were in a State of Captivity seventy Years: In which the Prophet excites them to a speedy Departure out of their Enemies' Country to their own Land, and encourages them to re-build the City of *Jerusalem*; assures them of Success in that Undertaking, although it was attended with Difficulties which, to them, might seem insuperable.

IN order to obviate an Objection to the Safety of the City, which this People might form from the large Number, great Power, and Nearness of their Adversaries; the Lord, in these Words, declares, that he would be its Protector: *For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a Wall of Fire round about*; that is to say, I will securely guard and defend it, and consume all those who attempt to destroy it; and adds, that he would fill it with Glory, *and will be the Glory in the Midst of her*. The great Privileges which are promised, not only refer to this People, for they concern the whole Church in every Age and Period of Time.

THE Text furnishes us with this Doctrine, that God is the Defence and Glory of his Church: This doctrinal Proposition consists of two Branches.

First, THAT the Church's Safety and Security is in her God.

Secondly, THAT she derives all her Glory from him.

First, I begin with the first Branch: The Church could not have subsisted in any Age, unless divine Power had been exerted to support and protect her. The People of God are not in a Capacity to defend themselves, or maintain their Interest, against the violent Attempts of indefatigable Enemies, which is evident from these Things:

1. THEY are much inferior in Number; the Church is but a small Collection of Persons out of the numerous Crowd in the World, hence Christ declares that his Followers are a little Flock; *fear not, little Flock, for it is your Father's good Pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* (Luk. 12:32.)

THE Enemies of real Religion are far more, than its true, hearty, and constant Friends; it is the Multitude that set themselves to oppose the Cause of God, and only an inconsiderable Few, who appear in its Defence.

2. THE Church in general, is composed of Persons mean and contemptible; there is but a small Number of the Wealthy and Powerful, that have Humility enough to espouse and defend the despised Interest of a Redeemer. The Apostle's Observation holds true to this Day, *that not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called* (1Co. 1:26.): Some indeed of a higher Rank are Instances of sovereign Grace, the Consideration of which should inflame their Zeal for the Honour of God, and quicken their Desires to contribute to the Spread of his Gospel: But the much greater Part of Believers are in low and obscure Life; therefore it is not to be expected that the Cause of Religion can be maintained by the Power and Influence of such as embrace it.

3. THE People of God are not equal in Wisdom and Policy to their Enemies: The Generality of those who profess the Name of Christ, are Persons of weak Understandings; therefore our Lord observes, *with Thankfulness to the Father, that he had hid the Mysteries of the Gospel from the wise and prudent, i.e. Men of Superior Knowledge and Abilities, and revealed them to Babes;* that is to say, *to such as are of mean Capacities* (Mat. 11:25.): Nor will the Circumstances of these Persons allow them to take the Methods for Improvement in Knowledge and

Experience, as those in the opposite Interest are capable of; therefore the Cause of Christ is destitute of such temporal Assistance for its Support and Propagation, which the contrary to it is furnished with. These Things being thus, it must necessarily be allowed, that the Churches Defence and Security arises not from within her self.

Secondly, HER Enemies are ready to improve every Opportunity and Advantage which offer to disturb and distress her. The carnal Mind of Man is filled with a fixed Aversion to God, and all spiritual Good, as the Apostle affirms, *the carnal Mind is Enmity against God, it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be* (Rom. 8: 7.): And therefore the nearer any Saint approaches to the Likeness of God, the greater is the Hatred of wicked Men to him. Thus *Cain* slew his Brother *Abel*, *because his own Works were evil, and his Brother's righteous* (1Jo. 3:12.). This settled Enmity in the Hearts of Men to powerful Godliness, pushes them on to treat the Professors of it with the greatest Severity. This Matter is capable of abundant Proof from the many Plots, and Conspiracies, which were formed against the old *Testament* Church before her Captivity in *Babylon*: But my Design is briefly to observe the Opposition which her Enemies made to obstruct and prevent the Re-building of the holy City and Temple; in which we shall discover Hypocrisy, Calumny, and inveterate Malice, *the common Principles upon which the Church's Opposers act*. It was predicted by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, that *Cyrus*, King of *Persia*, should enact a Decree to empower the *Jews* to return to their own Land, and re-build the Temple of the Lord, which Prediction had its exact Accomplishment at the Time prefixed, as *Ezra* informs us: *Now in the first Year of Cyrus King of Persia, (that the Word of the Lord, by the Mouth of Jeremiah, might be fulfilled) the Lord stirred up the Spirit of Cyrus King of Persia, that he made a Proclamation throughout all his Kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus King of Persia, the Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and he hath charged me to build him an House at Jerusalem, which is in Judah* (Ezr. 1: 1, 2.). Whereupon the Principal and Chief of the People joyfully departed from *Babylon* to execute the Royal Will of *Cyrus*, who ordered that they should be furnished with every Thing requisite thereto. As loon as this Work was begun, the *Samaritans* pretended Alliance, and Friendship, with the *Jews*, and offered to assist them therein; yet not with any real Design to advance it, but to hinder its Progress, as their future Conduct evidently proves: Such Dissimulation and Hypocrisy is not unusual with the Church's Adversaries, in order to

obtain the greater Advantage against her. These very Persons sent a Letter full of heavy and false Accusations to *Cambyses* (who in Scripture is called *Artaxerxes*, and *Ahasuerus*) the Son of *Cyrus*, against the People to whom they expressed so much Respect, representing them as full of seditious and rebellious Principles, which caused the King to give strict Order that a Stop should be put to the Work; and accordingly there was, with Expedition and great Force (Ezra 4): Nor was it revived until the second Year of the Reign of *Darius*, who succeeded *Cambyses* on the Throne; at which Time also, the Enemies of the Church sought how to prevent its farther Success: But Providence over-ruled the Methods they took to strengthen the Hands of those engaged therein (Ezra 5, 6.) *It is frequent with God, to turn the Measures of the Adversaries of his People to a far different Use, from what they design.*

THE City and Temple of God were rebuilt, notwithstanding the violent Opposition made against it by a large Number of implacable and malicious Adversaries, who stuck at *nothing* that might have obstructed the Work.

THUS *the Lord was a Wall of Fire round about it*; for this Undertaking was not effected by humane Force, or Policy, but by the miraculous Blessing of Providence, as we learn from these Words, “*Not by Might, nor by Power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts (Zec. 4: 6.)*”

As the Church, in the former Dispensation, was encompassed with Enemies, so under the present, she hath suffered many Afflictions from the Hands of powerful Adversaries.

WHEN Christianity was first planted, great Persecutions were raised against it by *Rome Pagan*, of which History informs us,

“Nevertheless, the Purity and Power of Religion exceedingly flourished; and large Numbers embraced the Christian Faith, being encouraged to it by the pious Lives and holy Triumphs of the Saints, when in the most *cruel Torments* that hellish Rage and Malice could invent”.

I AM of Opinion that the Interest of Christ never lost Ground by the strongest Oppositions its most inveterate Enemies have been able to make against it; Adversity has always proved more to the Advantage of the Church than Prosperity: This is evident in the different Turn which the Affairs of Religion took in the Reign of *Constantine*, the first Christian

Emperor; for under his Government, Corruptions in Doctrine, and superstition in Worship, were soon introduced by many *ambitious Clergy*, who valued the Christian Religion no farther than the Profession of it served to promote their temporal *Interests*.

AND to this Cause, I apprehend, are owing the abominable Errors, and detestable Idolatries, of the *Romish Church*.

WHEN it pleased God to set the Reformation on Foot, by *Wickliff* in *England*, *Huss* and *Hierom* of *Prague*; How did the Devil rage? What Troubles did he bring upon those, who embarked in this glorious Cause? But it being of God, it prospered in spite of all Opposition; and since the Establishment of the Reformed Religion here, What numerous Methods have been taken to reduce *England*, the Bulwark of the Protestant Interest, under the *Roman Yoke*?

THIS has been often attempted by open Violence, secret Intrigues, and devilish Projects: The cruel *Papists* designed to have given a fatal Blow to the Protestant Cause in *England*, by taking off the King, Lords and Commons, at once: If they had succeeded herein, What Rapine, and barbarous Murders, would have immediately followed throughout the Kingdom? But kind Providence discovered the execrable Plot, at the very Time, when it was to be executed (which was on this Day) to the great Confusion of its Authors, and the inexpressible Joy of the Nation: A memorable Deliverance indeed! Which ought never to be forgot by all true Lovers of Religion and Liberty^{f1}.

IN many other Instances since, God has eminently appeared for us. In King *James* the Second's Reign, a Scheme was laid to enslave the Nation, to introduce Popery and arbitrary Power; but the Design of the Church's Enemies was, at that Time, also miraculously frustrated by the Prince of ORANGE coming over, and ascending the abdicated Throne.

As this Prince was a Hero in the Field, so on the Seat of Government, he was remarkably mild and gentle, always steady in his Principles of Religion, and to the Cause of Liberty.

THROUGH the whole of his Reign, he discovered a fervent Zeal for securing the Protestant Interest; and in nothing did he give a clearer Proof thereof, than settling the Crown on the illustrious House of *Hanover*: A Family, which he was persuaded would pursue the same generous and noble Designs, that he had in View; nor was he mistaken in his Opinion,

as is evident, since the Accession of that House to the Throne. But let us not forget what Measures were taken in a late Reign to deprive us of the happy Prospect of so just and mild a Government; and how seasonably God disappointed the Designs of our Enemies, in making way for GEORGE the First of glorious Memory, to ascend the *British Throne, To which he had an indisputable Right.*

GOD grant that the same Principles which he always stood firm to may fill the Breaths of all the Branches of his noble Family, and that they may continue to wear the *English Crown* to the latest Posterity: Some useful Observations may be deduced from these Things.

1. THAT the Christian and Reformed Religion are true, or of God, what less than divine Power could have propagated the Christian Faith in the first Ages of the Church, when the whole World was set against it, and resolved to overthrow it; especially as a few ignorant and illiterate Men were employed to spread it: And yet, *the Word of the Lord had free Course, and was glorified* (2Th. 3: 2.). It obtained Conquests over almost all the Nations in the World, but not by *humane Force*, for of that it was destitute; as it is really *very foreign from its Nature*: And pretty much the same may be observed of the Reformed Religion. The Persons engaged in the Reformation were very few; their Enemies numerous and potent, who made the most fierce and cruel Oppositions against it: Nevertheless, it gained surprising Advances in a very short Time, which evidently discovers it to be the Cause of God.

2. THE great Folly of those, who seek the Ruin of the Church, one would imagine, that as they have often been defeated in their Designs against her, and in such a Manner, as plainly demonstrates that God is resolved upon her Defence.

THEY might easily collect, that it is in vain to attempt her Subversion; and that the Consequence will certainly be fatal to themselves.

THAT the Church hath sufficient Encouragement in the greatest Dangers to depend upon the Protection of Providence, *God is in the Midst of her, she shall not be moved, God shall help her, and that right early* (Psa. 46: 5.). That the Lord will be the Security of his People may be concluded from these Things:

(1) HIS Value for them above all others, the Church is most nearly interested in his Favour, he treats all others with Neglect in Comparison of

her: When Nations, or Kingdoms, stand in the Way of his gracious Purposes concerning his Saints, he gives them over to Ruin and Destruction; hence he thus lays unto the Church, *I gave Egypt for thy Ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee, I will give Men for thee, and People for thy Life* (Isa. 43: 3, 4.).

THERE are none in the World of which he makes any Account but his Children; and therefore he expresses himself after this Manner, *What have I here, that my People is taken away for nought* (Isa. 52: 5.). This Language clearly intimates, that all others are as nothing in his Esteem; his tender Concern for the Church he lets forth in the most moving Way in these Words, *He that toucheth you, toucheth the Apple of mine Eye* (Zec. 2: 8.).

THAT is, as a Man is industriously concerned to defend that valuable and useful Member from Injury; so I am thoroughly engaged in your Welfare and Safety from that infinite Love and Value I have for you.

(2.) HE has promised it, and his Word may be depended on; the holy Scriptures abound with Promises of this Kind. The Church may expect perpetual Protection from God, as we learn by those Words of his, *Sing ye unto her, a Vineyard of red Wine, I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every Moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it Night and Day* (Isa. 23: 3.). The sacred Oracles declare, that the *Saints shall dwell on high; and that the Place of their Defence shall be in the Munitions of Rocks*.

The Church though a small, is yet a *strong City, because God will appoint Salvation for Walls and Bullwarks*: Now the gracious Promises of God may be fully relied on; for *he is in one Mind, and who can turn him? And what his Soul desireth, even that he doth: God is not a Man, that he should lie; neither the Son of Man, that he should repent: Hath said it, and shall he not do it? Or, Hath be spoken, and shall he not make it good* (Job. 23:13; Num. 23:19.).

(3.) His own Glory is nearly interested in this Matter: The Welfare of the Church is interwoven with the Honour of her God; his Name is publicly professed by her, his Word is precious to her, and in his Institutions she delights: Her several Members are called *Trees of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified* (Isa. 56: 3.). The Lord allures us that they *are a People formed for himself, and that they shall show forth his Praise*. The Church is the proper Seat of divine Glory on Earth; hence the Apostle hath these Words, *To him be Glory in the Church*

by Christ Jesus throughout all Ages, World without end, Amen (Eph. 2:21.): Therefore a Regard in God to his own Honour will influence him to protect the Saints.

(4.) He will destroy those who seek the Ruin of his Church, none can afflict the Saints without the .greatest Injury to themselves; since God is as tender of them, as a Man is of the Apple of his Eye: The Church is *a burdensome Stone, and all that burden themselves with her shall be cut in Pieces, though all the People in the Earth be gathered together against her* (Zec. 12: 3.). God may for wise Reasons permit the Enemies of his People to harass and distress them, yea, he may use them as his Rod for the Correction of his Children; yet this will not excuse them from his most severe Resentment and Anger, which, I apprehend, to be the Import of these Words, *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I am jealous for Jerusalem, and for Zion with a great jealousy; and I am very sore displeased with the Heathen that are at ease, for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the Affliction.* To the Saints the Lord is *a Wall for their Security, and round about them*, so that they are not any way open to Invasion: As he is *a Wall of Fire*, it is most certain that he will consume and burn up those who attempt the Destruction of his Church, the City about which he is a Wall of Protection and Defence.

However. formidable her Enemies may be, and though they may imagine that it is an easy Thing to devour her, because she is weak and defenceless in her self, as was before observed; yet they will ever find it absolutely impossible, and will eternally sink under the intolerable Weight of divine Vengeance.

THEY are but as combustible Matter before devouring Flames, they are comparable to Briars and Thorns, not only on account of the Grief and Pain which they occasion to the Church; but also because they will be consumed in a Moment by the burning Wrath of a provoked God: For to them he will for ever be *a consuming Fire* (Heb. 12:28.), without any Intermission or Allay.

I proceed to consider the second Branch of the Doctrine.

Secondly, THE Church derives all her Glory from God: And will be the Glory in the Midst of her. These Words may be understood passively, or actively, as *Cornelius a Lapide* observes, though he prefers the latter Sense,

“This Glory may be taken in a two-fold Manner; first passively, *i.e.* in her I will be Glorious, that is, I will be glorified and revered with honorable Worship in *Jerusalem*: Thus several take it, as he tells us; secondly, and better actively; *i.e.* I will glorify *Jerusalem*, I will bring Glory to it^{f2}”;

in this Light others understand it, as he informs us.

I SHALL consider it in both Senses, God as glorified in the Church by what he works in her; and by that which he enables her to do with a direct View to his Honour.

1. GOD is greatly honored in the Church by what he works in her. And,

(1.) In the Conquests he makes upon the Hearts of rebellious Men.

BY his omnipotent Grace, he subdues the stubborn and perverse Will of Man, brings him to submit to Christ as King in *Zion*, or cheerfully to yield Obedience to him in that Capacity. It is true, the Language of every natural Person’s Heart is, *I will not have this Man to reign over me* (Luk. 19:14.); but God conquers the inflexible Will of the Sinner, according to his Promise in the everlasting Covenant, *thy People shall be willing in the Day of thy Power* (Psa. 110: 3.).

FROM this Work abundant Glory redounds to the Riches of God’s Grace, as is most evident from these Words, *But God, who is rich in Mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in Sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by Grace ye are saved: That in the Ages to come he might show the exceeding Riches of his Grace in his Kindness towards us through Christ Jesus* (Eph. 2: 4, 5, 7.).

(2.) IN upholding of his Saints; they are insufficient of themselves to perform any Thing that is spiritual, their corrupt Part strongly inclines them to back-slide from God; hence the Lord says of them, *My People are bent to Back-sliding from me.* (Hos. 11: 7.)

THEY are subject to many Temptations, and unable to resist the least; a great many Enticements to Evil frequently present to them, which entangle the Affections, and influence the Will: And therefore they cannot persevere in Holiness in their own Strength; but they shall be *kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation* (1Pe. 1: 5.). In their Support and Preservation the Wisdom of God is display’d; for the greatest Enemies are over-come, Sin, Satan, and the World, by such as are

impotent in themselves; and this is readily acknowledged to be all of free Grace by the Saints. Also the almighty Arm of God is most clearly discovered in enabling such weak and feeble Creatures to withstand and conquer potent, subtle, and unwearied Adversaries.

2. GOD is greatly glorified in the Church, by what he enables her to perform with a direct View to his Honour.

(1.) BY that Faith she exercises in him: The true Church is composed of Believers in Christ; she is a spiritual House made up of lively Stones, as saith the Apostle, *And ye also as lively Stones, are built up a spiritual House* (1Pe. 2: 5.).

THAT is to say, they were Persons endued with supernatural Life, which is the proper Principle of all spiritual Acts. Those who are in a State of Unregeneracy are destitute of such a Principle of Grace; and therefore the Apostle observes to the *Ephesians*, that they once were dead in Sin, *and you hath he quickened who were dead in Trespasses and Sins* (Eph. 2: 1.). Life must necessarily precede Motion as a Cause doth its Effect; all Acts flow from Life; spiritual Acts proceed from spiritual Life; such an Act is resting on God's Promise, which is Faith: By the Exercise of that Grace God is highly honored; hence it is said, that *Abraham staggered not at the Promise of God through Unbelief; but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God* (Rom. 4:20.)

THIS is an excellent Grace, it abases the Creature, and ascribes the Whole of our Salvation, and of every Mercy to God, it adores his incomprehensible Wisdom, admires his infinite and immense Favour, extols his Power, and cheerfully submits to his sovereign and absolute Dominion in all Things.

(2.) THE holy Obedience of the Church advances the Glory of her God, she hath a tender Regard to his Honour, and desires a perfect Conformity to his most righteous Will.

SIN is the greatest Burden of the Saints, and it gives them, when it is prevalent in their Souls, inexpressible Disquietude; under divine Influence their Language is really this to their heavenly Father, *Teach me to do thy Will, for thou art my God, thy Spirit is good, lead me into the Land of Uprightness* (Psa. 143:10.). The Spring of their Obedience is not Selfish and carnal, but evangelical and spiritual; it is not performed with an Expectation of procuring Favours from God, but to acknowledge with a

humble Gratitude his unmerited Regard and Love. This is a truly generous and noble Principle, which is formed in the Saints by the holy Ghost, and is cherished by all his Operations upon them.

(3.) GOD is honored by Ascriptions of Glory to him; this will be the delightful Service of the Church in Heaven, without any Interruption; and it is a Work which the Saints begin on Earth, when they have a lively Sense of their own Unworthiness, or view the Impurity of their Hearts, and the Imperfections that attend all their Duties, when they have a Prospect of their aggravated Guilt: And behold how God's super-abounding Grace rises over their Mounts of Sin and Rebellion, that it has secured to them the most valuable Blessings, they are struck with Wonder, and cannot but give him the Glory thereof in such low and humble Expressions as these, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give Glory* (Psa. 115: 1.) with the greatest Pleasure at such a Time they join with the Apostle in saying, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all Spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ* (Eph. 1: 3.): Thus God is glorified in the Church.

3. THE Words may be understood actively, I will fill her with Glory: The Church's Glory doth not consist in the Multitude of her Members, a Christian Community may be large and numerous, and yet dishonorable; the Riches and Grandeur of her Members are not her Glory, nor are beautiful Edifices for the public Exercise of religious Duties any Part of her Honour, neither doth it consist in a pompous and gay Mode of Worship; the Church may be truly Glorious, although all these Things are wanting: This must be granted if it be allowed that the purest Church which ever was upon Earth might lay claim to true Honour, which was composed of Christ and his Apostles; indeed, where these are not, the far greater Part of Mankind imagine that the Glory of Religion doth not attend.

THE Church's Beauty is not discoverable by a carnal Eye, for it is spiritual and invisible, she is truly Illustrious; but internally so, *The King's Daughter is all glorious within, her Clothing is of wrought Gold* (Psa. 45:13.). Her outward Appearance is mean and despicable, yet she possesses inwardly the greatest Glory, upon which Account she thus speaks of her self, *I am black, but comely as the Tents of Kedar, as the Curtains of Solomon* (Canticles 1: 5.); the outside of which were coarse

and rough, but within they were very beautiful and rich: Her real Beauty and Lustre consists in these Things:

(1.) THE Purity of the Principles she embraces and defends. The Gospel is an excellent System of Doctrines, which are calculated for the Honour of God, and that center in the Glory of the Mediator; hence it is called Glorious, *according to the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God* (1Ti. 1:11.). Now it is to the Advantage as well as Honour of the Saints to preserve the Gospel pure and free from the invented Schemes of Men. The Primitive Church is highly commended for a close Adherence to divine Truth; *and they continued stedfastly in the Apostle's Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers* (Act. 2:42.).

WHENEVER the Church becomes corrupt in her Opinion, she declines in her true Glory; and therefore let all the Saints, as the Apostle exhorts, *stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel* (Php. 1:27.). Such as never discerned the Excellency, felt the Power, nor tasted the Sweetness of Christian Doctrines, may conceive that it is of little or no Moment, what Reception and Entertainment they meet with: But Persons enlightened by divine Grace discover an excelling Glory in them, and pay the strictest Regard to all the Branches of heavenly Truth: For they are sensible that the Doctrines of the free Grace of God are the Source of all their present Consolation, and the Sum of their future Hopes; therefore they cannot but esteem them more than all Things else. They know that *they are more to be desired than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold; they are sweeter to them than the Honey, and the Honey-comb* (Psa. 19:10.) That which heightens the Glory of the Gospel-Revelation is, it contains the fuller Display of the divine Perfections, as they harmoniously agree in the Salvation of lost Man, through the Obedience, Crucifixion, and Death of Christ. If therefore it is to the Honour of the Church to receive and maintain a Set of Doctrines, wherein the Glory of God is most nearly concerned, it must be allowed that it is her peculiar Glory to stand fast in the Truth.

(2.) HER Honour lies much in Strictness of Discipline. Christ the Head of the Church hath prescribed the best of Rules to preserve Unity, Holiness of Life, and Uncorruptness of Opinion, among his Followers, which it is the Glory of every Christian Community strictly to observe.

A religious Society cannot countenance Persons of pernicious Principles and scandalous Lives, without Censure from Christ: Thus he reproves the

Church at *Pargamos*, because some of her Members entertained erroneous Doctrines, and were guilty of evil Practices, *I have a few Things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a Stumbling-block before the Children of Israel, to eat Things sacrificed to Idols, and to commit Fornication; so thou hast also them that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Thing I hate* (Rev. 2:14, 15.).

THE Enemies of Religion are very forward to improve every irregular Step of the Saints to the Disadvantage of those Truths which they profess, their sinful Actions they charge upon their Sentiments, and represent the Doctrines they embrace as licentious and loose, affirm that they have no good Influence upon the Hearts or Lives of Men; and therefore every particular Congregation of Christ is under an indispensible Obligation to eject all such, whose Conduct is not answerable to their Profession, in order to prevent open Reproach from the World.

(3.) ANOTHER Branch of her Glory is the Holiness of her Members. It is certainly her Honour to be conformable to her Lord, *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from Sinners* (Heb. 7:26.), free from all Blemish in Heart and Life; *he did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth* (1Pe. 2:22.); he is the perfect Pattern whom she ought to follow. This he recommends to his People, saying, *learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in Heart* (Mat. 11:29.); we are to imitate no others any farther than they tread in his Steps. The great Apostle proposes himself as an Example to the *Corinthians*, but with this Limitation, *Be ye Followers of me, even as I also am of Christ* (1Co. 11: 1.): Looseness and Immorality among Professors is a great Dishonor to the Christian Name; it causes the Gospel, and Ways of Christ, to be evil spoken of, as was before observed. On the contrary, a regular and holy Walk recommends Religion, and vindicates the Doctrine of Grace from the false Aspersions which are thrown upon it by Opposers; and is an evident Proof, that what is objected to it, as abating Men's Regard to Holiness, is mere Calumny and Falsehood; that it really influences such that have experienced its Power, to shun Vice, and practice Virtue. These were the happy Effects it produced in the Primitive Christians, as the Apostle affirms; *for the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, and hath appeared to all Men; teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World* (Tit. 2:11, 12.).

(4.) THE Church's Glory consists in Unity and Love. Jars and Contentions, Heats and Animosities among, the Saints, weaken their Hands, and give an Opportunity to the Enemies of the Gospel to prejudice their common Interest; not that all Contention is unlawful, for it is a Duty incumbent upon us to contend for the Faith, we are expressly exhorted to it, *it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints* (Jude 1: 3.); that is to say, for revealed Truth. When the Doctrine of Christ is opposed and Error is advanced, Providence calls upon his Servants to vindicate the one, and to expose the other, which ought to be done with Zeal and Fervor; but not with undue Heat, or personal Reflections on any: It very ill becomes those, who profess to have a Value for Revelation, to be luke-warm and indifferent about the Doctrines it contains, whatever may be the Opinion of the Generality concerning them. No Branch of sacred Truth ought to be sacrificed to Peace, although some may presume to pronounce it of little *Consequence* or *Weight*: If the latter is not to be maintained without giving up the former, Dissension is rather to be chosen: To purchase Peace at the Expence of Truth, is buying it at too dear a Rate; but where the Cause of Truth is not concerned, we are to *follow the Things that make for Peace, and the Things wherewith one may edify another* (Rom. 4:19.); which is beautiful and excellent, as the Words of the Psalmist plainly intimate, *Behold, how good and how pleasant a Thing it is, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity; it is like the precious Ointment upon the Head, that ran down upon the Beard, even Aaron's Beard, that went down to the Skirts of his Garments; as the Dew of Hermon, and as the Dew that descended upon the Mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the Blessing, even Life for evermore.* (Psa. 133: 1, 2, 3.)

(Lastly.) HER greatest Honour is the Enjoyment of the divine Presence. The Glory of the Christian Religion principally consists in the Influences of God upon his People, and in the Manifestations of his Love to them. The external Part, without these Blessings, is but like the Picture of a Man, In which, though there may be Likeness and Proportion, Life is wanting.

It is only a dead and lifeless Form, without Nearness to, and Fellowship with God, the Object of our Worship; Communion with God, elevates our Souls, strengthens our Graces, and gives Vigour to all our religious Acts.

UPON a serious Reflection on the general Disposition of our Minds, and the usual Manner in which we perform the Exercises of Religion, whether in the Closet, and in the Family, or in the House of God; I fear we shall find that we have but too great Reason to confess, that the spiritual and experimental Part of Religion is very much lost amongst us. Is there not in us an indifferency to Duty? Are we not dull, heavy, and wandering from God in the Discharge of it? But little of powerful Godliness is seen, or felt, by us; and therefore our Glory is greatly eclipsed: There is just Occasion for us to say, *How is the Gold become dim? How is the most fine Gold changed? The Stones of the Sanctuary are poured out in the Top of every Street; the precious Sons of Zion, comparable to fine Gold, how are they esteemed as earthen Pitchers, the Work of the Hands of the Potter* (Lam. 4: 1, 2.). May the happy Time be hastened, when the Church shall be *a Crown of Glory in the Hand of the Lord, and a royal Diadem in the Hand of her God* (Isa. 62: 3.). When he will say to *Zion, Arise, shine, for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*



FOOTNOTES

- ^{ft1} The horrid Gunpowder-Treason, which Plot was formed in the third Year of the Reign of King James the First, by Henry Garnet, a Jesuit, Robert Katesby, Thomas Peircey, Thomas Winter, Guy Faux, and other desperate Papists.
- ^{ft2} Gloria haec dupliciter accipi potest Primo passive. q.d. In Gloria ero, id est, glorificabor & colar in Jerusalem; per latriae Cultum, Secundo, & melius active, q.d. glorificabo Jerusalem, gloriam ei asseram. Vid. Loc.