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the arguments for our steady, loyal, and affectionate adherence to King George, are so evident from this single topic, that if every Briton, instead of aspiring after private wealth or power, would sincerely desire to make his country happy, his present Majesty would not have a single malecontent in his whole dominions.

N^o 6. Monday, January 9.

Fraus enim astringit, non dissolvit perjurium. Cic.

AT a time when so many of the King's subjects present themselves before their respective Magistrates to take the oaths required by law, it may not be improper to awaken in the minds of my Readers a due sense of the engagement under which they lay themselves. It is a melancholy consideration, that there should be several among us so hardened and deluded, as to think an oath a proper subject for a jest; and to make this, which is one of the most solemn acts of religion, an occasion of mirth. Yet such is the depravation of our manners at present, that nothing is more frequent than to hear profligate men ridiculing, to the best of their abilities, these sacred pledges of their duty and allegiance; and endeavouring to be witty upon themselves, for daring to prevaricate with God and man. A poor conceit of their own, or a quotation out of *Hudibras*, shall make them treat with levity an obligation wherein their safety and welfare are concerned both as to this world and the next. Rail- lery of this nature, is enough to make the hearer tremble. As these mis- creants seem to glory in the profession of their impiety, there is no man, who has any regard to his duty, or even to his reputation, that can appear in their defence. But if there are others of a more serious turn, who join with us deliberately in these religious professions of loyalty to our Sovereign, with any private salvo's or evasions, they would do well to consider those maxims, in which all casuists are agreed, who have gained any esteem for their learning, judgment, or morality. These have un- animously determined that an oath is always to be taken in the sense of that authority which imposes it: and that those, whose hearts do not con- cur

cur with their lips in the form of these publick protestations; or who have any mental reserves, or who take an oath against their consciences, upon any motive whatsoever; or with a design to break it, or repent of it, are guilty of perjury. Any of these, or the like circumstances, instead of alleviating the crime, make it more hainous, as they are premeditated frauds (which it is the chief design of an oath to prevent) and the most flagrant instances of insincerity to men, and irreverence to their Maker. For this reason, the perjury of a man, who takes an oath, with an intention to keep it, and is afterwards seduced to the violation of it, (though a crime not to be thought of, without the greatest horror) is yet, in some respects, not quite so black as the perjury abovementioned. It is indeed a very unhappy token of the great corruption of our manners, that there should be any so inconsiderate among us, as to sacrifice the standing and essential duties of morality, to the views of Politicks; and that, as in my last paper, it was not unseasonable to prove the love of our country to be a virtue, so in this there should be any occasion to shew that perjury is a sin. But it is our misfortune to live in an age when such wild and unnatural doctrines have prevailed among some of our fellow-subjects, that if one looks into their schemes of Government, they seem according as they are in the humour, to believe that a Sovereign is not to be restrained by his Coronation oath, or his people by their oaths of allegiance: or to represent them in a plainer light, in some reigns they are for a power and an obedience that is unlimited, and in others are for retrenching within the narrowest bounds, both the authority of the Prince, and the allegiance of the subject.

Now the guilt of perjury is so self-evident, that it was always reckoned among the greatest crimes, by those who were only governed by the light of reason: The inviolable observing of an oath, like the other practical duties of Christianity, is a part of natural religion. As reason is common to all mankind, the dictates of it are the same through the whole species: And since every man's own heart will tell him, that there can be no greater affront to the Deity, whom he worships, than to appeal to him with an intention to deceive; nor a greater injustice to men, than to betray them by false assurances; it is no wonder that pagans and christians, infidels and believers, should concur in a point wherein the honour of the supream Being, and the welfare of society, are so highly concerned. For this reason, *Pythagoras* to his first precept of honouring the immortal Gods, immediately subjoyns that of paying veneration to an oath. We may see the reverence which the Heathens

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shewed to these sacred and solemn engagements, from the inconveniences which they often suffered, rather than break through them. We have frequent instances of this kind in the *Roman Commonwealth*; which, as it has been observed by several eminent *Pagan* writers, very much excelled all other *Pagan* governments in the practice of virtue. How far they exceeded, in this particular, those great corrupters of Christianity, and indeed of natural religion, the Jesuits, may appear from their abhorrence of every thing that looked like a fraudulent or mental evasion. Of I shall only produce the following instance. Several *Romans* this who had been taken prisoners by *Hannibal*, were released, upon obliging themselves by an oath to return again to his camp. Among these there was one, who thinking to elude the oath, went the same day back to the camp on pretence of having forgot something. But this prevarication was so shocking to the *Roman Senate*, that they ordered him to be apprehended, and delivered up to *Hannibal*.

We may farther see the just sense the heathens had of the crime of perjury, from the penalties which they inflicted on the persons guilty of it. Perjury among the *Scythians* was a capital crime; and among the *Egyptians* also was punished with death, as *Diodorus Siculus* relates, who observes that an offender of this kind is guilty of those two crimes (wherein the malignity of perjury truly consists) a failing in his respect to the divinity, and in his faith towards men. 'Tis unnecessary to multiply instances of this nature, which may be found in almost every Author who has written on this subject.

If men, who had no other guide but their reason, considered an oath to be of such a tremendous nature, and the violation of it to be so great a crime; it ought to make a much deeper impresson upon minds enlightened by revealed religion, as they have more exalted notions of the divinity. A supposed heathen Deity might be so poor in his attributes, so flinted in his knowledge, goodness, or power, that a pagan might hope to conceal his perjury from his notice, or not to provoke him, should he be discovered; or should he provoke him, not to be punished by him. Nay, he might have produced examples of falshood and perjury in the Gods themselves, to whom he appealed. But as revealed Religion has given us a more just and clear idea of the divine nature, He, whom we appeal to, is Truth it self, the great searcher of hearts, who will not let fraud and falshood go unpunished, or *hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*. And as with regard to the Deity, so likewise with regard to man, the obligation of an oath is stronger upon Christians than upon any

any other part of mankind; and that because charity, truth, mutual confidence, and all other social duties are carried to greater heights, and enforced with stronger motives, by the principles of our Religion.

Perjury, with relation to the oaths which are at present required by us, has in it all the aggravating circumstances, which can attend that crime. We take them before the Magistrates of publick justice; are reminded by the ceremony, that it is a part of that obedience which we learn from the gospel; expressly disavow all evasions and mental reservations whatsoever; appeal to Almighty God for the integrity of our hearts, and only desire him to be our helper, as we fulfil the oath we there take in his presence. I mention these circumstances, to which several other might be added, because it is a received doctrine among those, who have treated of the nature of an oath, that the greater the solemnities are which attend it, the more they aggravate the violation of it. And here what must be the success that a man can hope for who turns a Rebel, after having disclaimed the divine assistance, but upon condition of being a faithful and loyal subject? He first of all desires that God may help him, as he shall keep his oath, and afterwards hopes to prosper in an enterprize which is the direct breach of it.

Since therefore perjury, by the common sense of mankind, the reason of the thing, and from the whole tenor of Christianity, is a crime of so flagitious a nature, we cannot be too careful in avoiding every approach towards it.

The virtue of the ancient *Athenians* is very remarkable in the case of *Euripides*. This great tragick Poet, tho' famous for the morality of his plays, had introduced a person, who, being reminded of an oath he had taken, reply'd, *I swore with my mouth, but not with my heart*. The impiety of this sentiment set the audience in an uproar; made *Socrates* (though an intimate friend of the Poet) go out of the Theatre with indignation; and gave so great offence, that he was publickly accused, and brought upon his tryal, as one who had suggested an evasion of what they thought the most holy and indissoluble bond of human society. So jealous were these virtuous Heathens of any the smallest hint, that might open a way to perjury.

And here it highly imports us to consider, that we do not only break our oath of allegiance by actual rebellion, but by all those other methods which have a natural and manifest tendency to it. The guilt may lie upon a man, where the penalty cannot take hold of him. Those who speak irreverently of the person to whom they have sworn allegiance; who endeavour

deavour to alienate from him the hearts of his subjects; or to inspire the people with disaffection to his government, cannot be thought to be true to the oath they have taken. And as for those, who by concerted falsehoods and defamations endeavour to blemish his character, or weaken his authority; they incur the complicated guilt both of slander and perjury. The moral crime is compleated in such offenders, and there are only accidental circumstances wanting, to work it up for the cognizance of the law.

Nor is it sufficient for a man, who has given these solemn assurances to his Prince, to forbear the doing him any evil, unless at the same time he do him all the good he can in his proper station of life.

Loyalty is of an active nature, and ought to discover it self in all the instances of zeal and affection to our Sovereign: And if we carefully examine the duty of that allegiance which we pledge to his Majesty, by the oaths that are tendred to us, we shall find that *We do not only renounce, refuse, and abjure any allegiance or obedience to the Pretender, but, Swear to defend King George to the utmost of our power, against all traiterous conspiracies and attempts whatsoever, and to disclose and make known to his Majesty, all treasons and traiterous conspiracies, which we shall know to be against him.*

To conclude, as among those who have bound themselves by these sacred obligations, the actual traytor or rebel is guilty of perjury in the eye of the law; the secret promoter, or well-wisher of the cause, is so before the Tribunal of conscience. And though I should be unwilling to pronounce the man who is indolent, or indifferent in the cause of his Prince, to be absolutely perjured; I may venture to affirm, that he falls very short of that allegiance to which he is obliged by oath. Upon the whole we may be assured, that in a nation which is tyed down by such religious and solemn engagements, the people's loyalty will keep pace with their morality; and that in proportion as they are sincere christians, they will be faithful subjects.



Friday,