

**A BRIEF AND IMPARTIAL ACCOUNT
OF THE PROTESTANT FAITH**

BY

JOHN OWEN

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A BRIEF AND IMPARTIAL ACCOUNT OF THE NATURE OF THE PROTESTANT FAITH

Its present state in the world; its strength and weakness;
with the ways and indications of the ruin or continuing
of its public national profession

EDITED AND PUT INTO SIMPLER ENGLISH

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE
BY THE ORIGINAL EDITOR,
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WHETHER we respect the deep wisdom pervading this treatise; the calm and nervous dignity of its reasonings; the statesman-like view it gives of the condition and prospects of the Protestant cause; or the noble strain with which it concludes, of confidence in God and the ultimate triumph of his cause, amid all the fears and forebodings which the author had been led to entertain — we are inclined to ascribe to it a pre-eminent value among the smaller productions of Dr. Owen. It is very far from being of merely ephemeral interest. It was reprinted in 1822, when the claims of the Roman Catholics to be admitted into Parliament were under discussion. To this edition, there was prefixed a letter, addressed to Mr William Wilberforce by Thomas Burgess, Bishop of Salisbury; and, from the following extract, it can be seen in what high estimation that accomplished prelate held this brief treatise —

“The extensive knowledge, the powerful intellect, the ardent piety of Dr. Owen, are too well known to you to require praise or recommendation. The little tract which I have reprinted, and which I am desirous of submitting to your perusal, is distinguished by all his talents, and is calculated to excite feelings superior to any considerations of partial and temporary policy.”

I. The first part of the tract is occupied with an account of the Protestant faith *generally*, in its origin and principles; and then more *particularly*, as it is opposed to Popery. He specifies the four essential elements in Protestantism from which the Reformation took its rise and character.

1. A great apostasy was foretold in Scripture.
2. The Church of Rome embodies this predicted apostasy.
3. All true Christians are bound to separate from this antichristian church.

And —

4. It is their duty not merely to separate from it, but to maintain a public protest against its errors and abominations.

II. Then follows an account of the way in which Protestantism arose; of the costly sacrifices made in order that it might be established, its martyrs exceeding in number those that had fallen under the Pagan persecutions; and, lastly, of the happy effects that followed from the Reformation, not merely to Protestant nations, but even in countries where, though Popery still reigned, it was held in check by the appearance of Protestant light and freedom, and the possibility that now existed a turning against it of “the balance of power”.

III. The political weakness of Protestantism, from its many divisions, is exhibited, and the importance is urged of establishing a great Protestant interest throughout Europe.

IV. Then follows a discussion of the probable way in which the Papacy may regain predominance — either by *defection*, or *force*, or *reconciliation*. The author dwells chiefly on the danger to be seen from the last source, inasmuch as some learned men now concede a *patriarchal primacy* to the Bishop of Rome; novel opinions have been widely spread, which, so far as they set aside the doctrines of grace, have narrowed the difference between Popery and Protestantism; it was now denied that the Pope was Antichrist; atheism prevailed; vital religion was at a low ebb; the clergy, losing confidence in the spiritual power of truth, sought to retain their influence over the people by appealing to superstitious expedients and appliances, such as Romish sanctions; and, lastly, forgetfulness of the persecuting spirit of Popery induced many to look for an “ecclesiastical coalition with the Church of Rome.”

V. The folly and wickedness of such a movement are exposed. The tract then closes by stating the grounds of hope amid prevailing discouragements, and the true way of preserving Protestantism — by prayer, union, and repentance.

The works of Owen are commonly more exhaustive than suggestive; but the following tract is an exception to the truth of that remark, and no analysis can do justice to the range of thought embraced in it. His views as to the danger of reconciliation being attempted with Rome may be thought extravagant, but accorded with a feeling entertained by many British Protestants at the time, and which there was much to justify in the notorious leanings of the Court. See “*Neal’s History*”, vol. 4, 458, 463. Louis Du Moulin, professor of History at Oxford, published in 1680, “*A Short and True Account of the Several Advances the Church of England hath made towards Rome; or, a model of the grounds upon which the Papists for these hundred years have built their hopes and expectations that England would, before long, return to Popery.*”

While no authors have done more effective service in the controversy with Rome than Tillotson, Tenison, Stillingfleet, and other theologians of the English Church, the necessity they felt to engage in a vigorous exposure of the errors of Popery, as well as the spirit and scope of their treatises in many instances, indicate that they too wrote with feelings of alarm lest, through the Romanising policy of the Court, the Anglican Establishment should revert back to the Papacy.

THE STATE AND FATE OF THE PROTESTANT FAITH

THE world is today filled with discourses about the Protestant faith and its profession; and that not without cause. The public opposition that is made to it, the designs that are managed with policy and power for its utter destruction, and the confidence of many that they will take effect, must need fill the minds of those whose main interest and concern lie in it with many thoughts about the event. Never was there a greater cause brought on to the stage for a trial — a cause in which the glory of God is concerned above anything today in the world; a cause in which the most eminent prevailing powers of the earth are visibly engaged as to its ruin, and in which all the diabolical arts of men are employed; a cause where those who embrace that religion judge that not only their lives, but their eternal welfare and their posterity, is inevitably concerned. This cannot but fill the minds of all men with various fears about the result of these things, as their interest works in them with hopes and fears.

Some of them, therefore, endeavour, by their counsels and other ways, to preserve and continue this Protestant faith among ourselves, according as they have an access to public affairs; and some, whose lot is cast into a private capacity, engage faith and prayer for the same purpose. Its enemies, in the meantime, are powerful, active, and restless; many among us being uncertain in their minds, as they are not resolved where to fix their interest; and a greater number, like Gallio (Acts 18:17), care for none of these things. This being a matter, then, in which all men, who have any sense of religion, are so deeply concerned, it may not be a waste of time to ask: What is this Protestant faith which is so much argued about? What is its present state in the world? What is its strength and weakness as to its public profession? And what is likely to be the outcome of the present contest?

This is what the following pages are designed for; and it is to be hoped they may be of use to some, to rescue their minds from involved, fruitless thoughts, to direct them in their duty, and to bring them to desire to do the will of God. The Protestant faith may be considered either as a religion in general — that is, the Christian religion — or as it is distinct from, and opposite to, another pretended profession of the same religion, which is also called Protestant.

In the first sense of it, it derives its origin from Christ and his apostles. What they taught to be believed, what they commanded to be observed in the worship of God, — all of it, and nothing but that — is the Protestant faith. Nothing else belongs unto it; in nothing else is it concerned.

These, then, are the principles of the faith of Protestants, into which their faith and obedience are resolved.

1. What was revealed to the church by the Lord Christ and his apostles is the whole of that sacred union which God will and does accept.

2. So far as is needed for the faith, obedience, and eternal salvation of the church, what they taught, revealed, and commanded is contained in the Scriptures of the New Testament, witnessed to and confirmed by those of the Old.

3. All that is required of us is that we should please God, be accepted by him, and come to an eternal enjoyment of him; that is, that we truly believe what is clearly revealed and taught, yielding sincere obedience to the commands of Scripture.

On these principles, Protestants confidently propose their faith to the trial of all mankind. If anything is found to deviate from them — if it exceeds, in any instance, what is so revealed, taught, and commanded — if it is defective in the faith or practice of anything that is revealed or commanded — they are ready to renounce it. Here they live and die; from this foundation they will not depart: this is their faith.

And if these principles do not secure us as to our present acceptance with God, and an eternal enjoyment of him, he has left all mankind in utter uncertainty, to make a blind venture for an invisible world; which is altogether inconsistent with his infinite wisdom, goodness, and loving-kindness.

Being in possession of these principles of truth and security from Christ and his apostles, it belongs to the Protestant faith not to change or set them aside, and not rest our confidence in the infallibility or authority of the pope of Rome, or of the church over which he is the head. For these principles of assurance are such as every way to reveal the wisdom and goodness of God; and such as our nature is not capable of in this life of those that are higher, or come with more illustrious evidence. Let the contrary to either of these be demonstrated, and we will renounce the Protestant faith. To let them go, thinking they are irreconcilable with divine wisdom and goodness, as also with the common reason of mankind, is an effect of the highest folly and of strong delusion.

For all mankind should be obliged to place all their confidence and assurance of pleasing God, of living for him, and coming to an enjoyment of him for eternity, and not on the pope of Rome and his infallibility, however qualified and circumstantial, considering what these popes are, and have been, is eternally irreconcilable with the greatness, wisdom, love, and kindness of God, as also to the whole revelation made of himself by Jesus Christ. The principles of the Protestant faith aforementioned in every way become, or are highly suited to, the nature and goodness of God — no one living shall ever be able to instance in one tittle of them that does not correspond with divine goodness and wisdom — but, on the first naming of this other way, no one who knows anything what the pope is, and what is his church, if he is not blinded with prejudice and interest, will be able to satisfy himself that it is consistent with infinite goodness and wisdom to commit the salvation of mankind, which he values above all things, to such a human security.

Neither has this latter way any better consistency with human wisdom or the common reason of mankind — namely, that those who are known, many of them, to be better and wiser than those popes, should resolve their religion, and in it gain their whole assurance of pleasing God, with all their hopes of a blessed eternity, with the authority and infallibility of the pope and his church, seeing many of them,

indeed, most of them, especially for some ages, have been people wicked, ignorant, proud, sensual, and brutish in their lives.

This, then, is the foundation of the Protestant faith, in that it is built on those principles which, in every way, are suited to the divine nature and goodness, as also satisfactory to human reason, with a refusal of them that are unworthy of infinite wisdom to give, and the ordinary reason for men to admit or receive.

Secondly, as the name “Protestant” is distinctive with regard to some other pretended profession of the Christian religion, so it derives this name from those who, in all ages, after the apostasy of the church of Rome came to be expressly antichristian, departed from communion with it, opposed it, reformed themselves, and set up the true worship of God according to the degrees and measures of gospel light they had received.

This was done successively over a long period of time, through several ages, until, by an accession of many princes and people to the same profession, they openly testified and protested against the papal apostasy and tyranny. That is how they became to be commonly called “Protestants”. And the principles upon which they all of them proceeded from first to last, which constitute their faith of a “Protestant” are these that follow —

1. That there are in the Scripture, prophecies, predictions, and warnings, especially in the book of the Revelation and the Second Epistle of Paul the apostle to the Thessalonians, that there should be a great apostasy or defection in the visible church from the faith, worship, and holiness of the gospel; and, in opposition unto what was appointed of Christ, the erection of a worldly, earthly, antichristian church-state, composed of tyranny, idolatry, and persecution, which should for a long time oppress the true worshippers of Christ with bloody cruelty, and at last be itself “consumed with the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of his coming.” (2 Thess. 2:8)

This defection was plainly foretold, as also the beginning of it, in a “mystery of iniquity” (verse 7), found even in the days of the apostles, that believers in all ages *expected* the *accomplishment* of it by the introduction of an antichristian state and power, though the manner of it was hidden from them until it was really fulfilled. I say, from the days of the apostles, and the giving out of those prophecies and predictions of the coming of antichrist, and an apostate church-state with him, all Christians in all ages believed and expected that it should come, until its real coming, in a way and manner unexpected, confounded their minds about it.

2. Their second principle as Protestants is that this defection and antichristian church-state, so plainly foretold by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, was openly and visibly accomplished in the Church of Rome, and with the nations that subjected themselves to its yoke.

There they found and saw all that tyranny and oppression, all that pride and self-exaltation above everything that has the name of God upon it, all that idolatry and false worship, all that departure from the faith of the gospel, all that contempt of

evangelical obedience, which was foretold to come, and constitute the fatal apostasy.

3. Here, their third principle was that, as they valued the glory of God, the honour of Christ and the gospel, their own salvation, and the good of the souls of others, they were obliged to forsake and renounce all communion with that apostate church, though they saw that their so doing would cost many of them their dearest blood or lives.

4. They were convinced at this, that it was their duty publicly to *protest* against all those abominations, to reform themselves as to faith, worship, and lifestyle, according to the rules before laid down, as those that are fundamental to the Christian faith.

These, then, were the principles on which the Christian faith, so far as it is Protestant, was re-introduced into the world, after it had been not only obscured, but almost excluded out of it, as to its public profession. And these principles are avowed by all true Protestants as those for which they are ready at all times to put their cause and profession on the trial.

The way in which the profession of this Protestant faith was introduced on these principles, and made public to the world, under the antichristian apostasy, was the same by which the Christian faith entered the world under Paganism — namely, by the prayers, preaching, writings, sufferings, and holiness of life of those that embraced it, and were called upon to promote it. And here, in their sufferings, for the number of them that suffered, and variety of all cruel preparations of death, they are inexpressible. It is capable of a full demonstration that, those who were slain by the sword, and otherwise destroyed for their testimony to Christ and the gospel, in opposition to the papal apostasy and idolatry, far exceeded the number of those that suffered for the Christian faith in all the pagan persecutions of old. A plant so soaked and watered with the blood of the martyrs will not be so easily plucked up as some imagine. No, it is probable it will not go out without more blood (of sufferers, I mean) than it was introduced by; which yet no one knows how to conceive or express.

But it had no sooner fixed its profession in some nations, but it was loaded with all kinds of reproaches, charged with all the evils that fell out in the world after its entrance, and, by all sorts of arts and pretences, rendered suspected and hateful to princes and potentates. Whatever is evil in or to mankind, especially to the interest of great men, was with great noise and clamour charged on it; just as it was in the first entrance of the Christian faith under Paganism. There was neither plague, nor famine, nor earthquake, nor inundation of water, nor war, nor invasion by enemies, but all was charged to this new religion. And the reason for it was not only the hatred of the truth through the love of sin and unrighteousness, and an engrafted power of superstition through blind devotion, but mainly because, for a long tract of time, the whole of the profession of religion had been suited to the secular interests of men, supplying them, under various pretences, with power, domination, territories, titles, revenues, wealth, ease, grandeur, and honour, with an insinuation into, and power over, the consciences of all kinds of people — a thing very desirable for men of corrupt minds, and easily turned into an engine for very bad and pernicious ends. That the whole complex and all its parts, in their various motions and operations, of

the Christian religion in the Papacy, is framed and fitted to these ends, so as to give satisfaction to all corrupt and ambitious desires in men, is obvious to all that are not wilfully blind.

But this Protestant faith, so introduced, stated the interest of Christianity in a way and purpose utterly inconsistent with this, and destructive of it; and this was to give all glory and honour to God and Christ alone, and teach the guides of the church to be humble, holy, zealous, examples of the flock, utterly renouncing all secular power and domination, with territories, titles, and great revenues on account of their office and the discharge of it. And was it any wonder that those who were in possession of three parts of the power and a third part of the revenue of most nations in Europe, should look on this principle as the worst of devils, and present it so as to frighten above half the monarchs of these nations from once looking steadily at it, in which they might have easily discovered the cheat that was planted on them? And thus was it with the first planters of Christianity with respect to the Pagans. (Acts 19:27)

But in this, many labour to make a difference between the introduction of Christianity under Paganism, and its reformation under Anti-christianism: for they say that the first professors of the Christian faith for three hundred years endured their persecutions with all patience, never once stirring up either wars or commotions in defence of their profession — but since, upon and after the introduction of the Protestant faith, there have been many tumults and disorders, many popular commotions and wars, which have been caused by it. For if all its professors had quietly allowed themselves to have been killed with the sword, or hanged, or burned, or tortured to death in the Inquisition, or starved in dungeons (and more was not required of them), there would have been no such wars about religion in the world; for their enemies intended nothing but to destroy them in peace and quietness, without the least disturbance to the civil rule among men.

I say, this difference did not arise from any difference in the religion of the one and the other, nor of the principles of those by whom they were professed; but it proceeded from external causes and circumstances that were greatly different between the early Christians and the Protestants in some places and nations. For the early Christians, whose story we have, were all of them placed in, and subject to, *one* empire. In that whole empire, and all the provinces of it, there was not one law, custom, or usage, giving the least countenance to the *right of protection of liberty*. There was not one prince, ruler, senate, governor that had the least pretence of legal right to protect or defend them in their profession against the will and law of the Emperor or Empire. The outward rights of religion were no way *allied* in anything to the civil rights of men.

However numerous, then, Christians were in those days, they were all absolutely private persons, without pretence of law or right to defend themselves: in which state of things, it was the undoubted principle of all Protestants that, where men are persecuted merely on account of religion, without relation to the civil rights and liberties of mankind, their duty is patiently to suffer without the least resistance. But it has been otherwise in the Reformation and since; for the protection and preservation of religion was taken up by several potentates, free princes, and cities, who had a legal right and power to protect themselves and their subjects in their profession of the faith. It has been, and is at this day, incorporated into the laws, rights, and

interests of several nations, which ought to be defended. And no instance can be given of any people defending themselves in the profession of the Protestant faith by arms, but where, together with their religion, their enemies designed and endeavoured to destroy those rights, liberties, and privileges, which not only the light of nature, but the laws and customs of their several countries, secured for them as part of their birth and right inheritance. And, in some places, though the name of religion has been much used on one side and the other, yet it has been neither the cause nor occasion of the wars and troubles that have been in them; and this makes their case utterly different from that of the early Christians.

This faith being thus re-instated in many nations, it produced fruit in them; even as the gospel did at its first preaching in the places where it was taken. (Col. 1:6)

It produced fruit in those by whom it was received, such as is the proper fruit of faith, — namely, it did so in light, knowledge, truth, and in holiness, in the real conversion of multitudes to God, in good works, in the spiritual comfort of believers in life and death, with all other fruits of righteousness which are to the praise of God. By this, also, was the worship of God kept from idolatry and superstition, and restored in many places to its primitive simplicity and purity.

It brought, also, no small advantage even to those nations, both princes and their subjects, by whom the Protestant profession was never received, as Christianity also found of old in the pagan world; for that is how and why the kings and potentates of Christendom, even those of the Roman profession, have greatly eased themselves of that intolerable yoke of bondage that was on them under the pope's pretended power and his impositions. For while all nations were in subjection to him, it was at their utmost risk that any one king or state should contend with him about any of his demands or assumptions: for he could stir up what nations he pleased, and give them sufficient encouragement to avenge his quarrels on rebellious princes; which he also did many, many times. But since so many nations fell away from all dependence on him and subjection to him, by the light and profession of the Protestant faith, there was a balance of power against him, and an awe towards him in his presumptions, lest he should be dealt with by others in the same way.

Had these western parts of the world continued under a superstitious sense of fealty and obedience in all things due to the pope, as they were before the Reformation, the king of France himself should not so easily have rejected his personal infallibility and jurisdiction as he seems to have done. But he has now no way left to avenge himself but by the way of assassinations; which at this time may bring very evil consequence upon himself. Therefore, the princes of Europe, as well those by whom the Protestant faith was not embraced, yes, was opposed and persecuted, as those by whom it was received, seem not so conscious of the benefit and advantage which accrued to them all as a result; for from this alone it is, with the interest and power which it has obtained in the world, that they are freed in their minds and in their rule from as base a servitude and bondage as ever people under their domination were subject to.

The common people, also, who yet continue in the communion of the papal church, have received no small advantage by that effective light which shines in the world

from the principles of that religion, even where it is not received; for, from the fear of the discoveries to be made by it, has a curb been put upon the notorious lives of the priests and friars, by which all places were defiled; shame, also, with necessity, having stirred them up to deliver themselves in some measure from their old stupid ignorance. Many retrenchments have been made, also, in some of the grossest effects of idolatry, that were for many ages in general practiced among them. And they are, also, in some good measure, freed from the terror of evil spirits with which they were continually haunted; for before the Reformation, possessions, apparitions, sprites, spirits, fiends, with silly miracles about them, filled all places, and were a great annoyance to the common people. Something there was, no doubt, of the juggling of priests in these things, and something of the agency of the devil; each of them making use of the other to further their own designs. But, upon the first preaching of the gospel, there was an abatement made of these things in many places; which has gone on until they have everywhere become a matter of scorn and contempt.

This faith being so planted, and producing these effects, the house of Austria, in both of its branches, the imperial and the regal, espoused the antichristian interest and quarrelled against it; and for eighty years or thereabouts endeavoured, by all ways of force and cruelty, its utter destruction. What immense treasures of wealth they spent and wasted, what an ocean of blood they shed, both of their own subjects and others, in pursuit of this end, can hardly be thought about! But what had been the issue of all their undertakings? They had so far broken themselves and their power in their obstinate pursuit of them that those who, not long since, thought of nothing less than a universal monarchy, were forced to seek out Protestant states and nations to preserve them from immediate ruin. So vain, foolish, and fruitless, for the most part, were the deep counsels and projections of men, so destructive and ruinous to themselves in the issue, when their desires and designs were enlarged beyond the bounds which right and equity have fixed upon them; especially when they found themselves fighting against God and his interest in the world. And if the same design be now taken up by another, it will, in time, come to the same catastrophe.

I shall not speak anything of the present state of this Protestant faith as to its political interests in the world. It is, in general, known to most, and has been particularly inquired into by many. I shall only briefly consider something of its weakness, its danger, and what is likely to be the issue of it as to its public profession in the world; which are the subjects of many men's daily discussion.

The political weakness of the Protestant faith arises solely from the *divisions* that exist among those by whom it is professed: and these are of two sorts — first, those that are of a civil nature, amongst princes and states; and, secondly, those that are religious among theologians and churches.

As to the first of these, some good men, who value religion above all their earthly concerns, measuring other men, even princes, who profess religion, by themselves, have been almost astonished that there is no such thing as a *Protestant interest* so prevalent amongst them as to subordinate all particular contests and designs to itself. But whereas there was formerly an appearance of some such thing, which had no small influence on public counsels, and produced some good, useful effects, at

present it seems to be beyond hopes of revival, and is of little consideration in the world. Could such a thing be expected, that the nations and the powers of those which publicly profess the Protestant faith should avow the preservation and protection of it to be their main interest, and regulate their counsels accordingly, giving this the pre-eminence in all things, their adversaries would be content to dwell quietly at home, without offering up much at their disturbance. But these things are not included in my present consideration. Nor do I think that any sort of men shall have the glory of preserving the interest of Christ in the world; he can do it himself.

Again, the religious differences that are amongst them as churches weaken the *political interest* of Protestants. They have done so from the very beginning of the Reformation. And when the first differences among them were in some measure digested and brought to some tolerable composure about sixty years ago, there was an inroad made on the doctrine that had been received among the Reformed churches by novel opinions, which has grown to this day, to the great weakening of the whole interest; and, as far as I can see, it is in vain to dissuade men from contending about their small allotments in the house, or, it may be, their supposed appurtenances, while others are visibly digging at the foundations, to oppress them all with the fall of the whole fabric. In these things lies the sole outward political weakness of the Protestant interest in the world, whose woeful effects God alone can prevent.

We may hereon inquire, what at present is like to be the issue and event of this Protestant faith, as unto its public profession in the world; for the adversaries of it do every day discover, not only their desires and endeavours for its extirpation, but their expectations also of its speedy ruin.

They suppose the time has come when that heresy, as they call it, which has so long infested the northern nations, shall, by their arts, contrivances, and power, be utterly rooted out. And it is known that those discoveries of their minds and hopes in it, which have occasionally come to light among us, are but indications of those counsels and combinations, in other places and among other persons, by which their hopes are to be accomplished. And if it were to our present purpose, much might be offered to show that those consultations and contrivances, which are constant in the managers of the papal interest, both at Rome and elsewhere, for the utter destruction of the Protestant faith, have been ordered, disposed, and cast into such methods, as not only to stir up all means of expedition, but also with regard to a speedy, immediate execution.

We shall, then, briefly inquire by what way and means this may be effected, or what is like to give this design an accomplishment, giving everything its due weight and consideration; for what will be the outcome, God only knows.

The ruin of the Protestant faith, as to its public profession, must be either by a general DEFECTION from it, or by a FORCE acting upon it, or by a RECONCILIATION and coalescence with the Roman church.

1. This DEFECTION must be either of the *princes*, or of the *clergy*, or of the *people*, or all of them together.

(1) As to the first, or the defection of princes to the Papacy, we have had some examples in the last age, but scarcely of any who have been absolutely sovereign or supreme; unless it be of one who, together with her religion, wisely and honestly left her crown. But I suppose there lies here no great danger or fear as to kings, or such as on whose authority the profession of religion in their dominions much depends; for they are too wise to be weary of their present state and liberty. Who can suppose that any of them would be willing to stand at the gates of the pope's palace barefoot, for a night and a day, and be disciplined to boot, as it was with one of the greatest kings of England? Or to hold the pope's stirrup while he mounted his horse, and be rebuked for lack of breeding in holding it on the wrong side? Or would they lie on the ground, and have their necks trodden upon by the pope, which a courageous emperor was forced to submit to? Or have their crowns kicked from their heads by the foot of a legate? Or be assassinated for not promoting the papal interest in the way and method of those concerned, as it was with two kings of France?

It may be said that these things are past and gone; the popes have now no such power as they did formerly; and the kings that are of the Roman church live as free from impositions on them by the pretensions of papal power as any kings on the earth. But supposing such a change, and that the king of France, as great as he is, finds in the issue that there is such a change, yet if we don't know the reasons for it, they do. Is it because the maintainers of the Papacy have changed their principles and opinions in this matter? Is it that they have disclaimed the power and authority which they exercised in former ages? Is it from any abatement of papal omnipotence in their judgement? Do they think that the popes had no right to do what they did in those days, or that they still have no right to do the same again? It is none of these, nor any reason of this sort that is the cause of the pretended change. The true and only reason for it is the balancing of their power by the Protestant interest. So many kings, princes, potentates, states, and nations, having not only fallen off from that blind obedience and subjection in which they were universally enthralled in those days, but, ready to oppose them in all their attempts to execute their pretended power, they are forced for a time to lower their sails, and pluck in those horns with which formerly they pushed kings and princes to their ruin. Should there be a restoration of their power and interest in the minds of men, which would follow on from the destruction of the Protestant faith, the greatest kings of Europe would quickly find themselves yoked and overmatched both in their own dominions, and by those that are ready to execute their designs.

And on this supposition, they will cross all experience of former ages if, having weathered their difficulties, and conquered their opposers, they are not more haughty and secure in the execution of their power and pretended office than ever they were before. Whatever delusion, then, may come over sovereign princes in their personal capacities, none of them can be so forsaken of common understanding as not to see that, by a defection to the Papacy, they bring a bondage on themselves and their subjects, from which God, by his providence, through the light and truth of the Protestant faith, had set them free. And it is certain enough that there is at this day so much rational light diffused in the world that even those who, on various inducements, may comply with any of them in the re-introduction of Popery into any of their territories, will quickly find what condition of slavery and contempt they have brought themselves into; and thereupon make the new state of affairs very uneasy to themselves and their rulers. Yes, no sort of men will be given up to more furious

reflections, first on themselves, and then on others, than they will be when they find themselves ensnared. Those who on such occasions have neither deceived themselves, nor suffered themselves to be deceived by others, may enjoy a sedate, tranquil mind in all that may come upon them; but these, when they have digested the shame of being deluded, would become restless in their minds, and intent on new occasions. I suppose, therefore, there is no great danger to be feared on this hand, and if there should, that the event of counsels mixed with so much madness and ingratitude will be a sudden catastrophe.

(2) And as to the clergy, there can be no defection among them, unless it be from a weariness of their present state on the principles of the Protestant faith; for they have most of them too much light to be corrupted in any way but by self-interest.

Now, the principles I mean are these **two** —

[1] That the reverence which they claim, and the revenues which they possess, are not due to them merely on account of their offices, and the titles which they bear, but on that of their faithful discharge of their office in diligent, laborious preaching of the gospel, and careful endeavours for the conversion and edification of the souls of men. This principle lay at the foundation of the Reformation, and was one of the greatest means of its promotion.

[2] That a distinction from the people by sacred office requires, indispensably, a distinction from them in gravity, usefulness, and holiness of life. If men should grow weary of their station in the clergy on these principles (and others, the Protestant faith will not afford them), it is to be feared that, on provocative occasions, they may veer off into that church-state where all things desirable to them in this world will be secured on easier terms. And the danger will be increased, if they are capable of envy and vexation from those principles of light and liberty, which have been communicated to the people by the Protestant faith, rendering an expectations of reverence and honour but what arises from, and is proportionate to, real worth and usefulness altogether vain. And if they are exposed to impressions from the wealth, ease, and power proposed to them in the papal church, it is to be feared that they may regulate themselves by opportunities. And, on these grounds, not a few ministers in France, being, at the same time, under the dread of trouble and persecution, have gone over to the opposite party. In the meantime, there is some relief here, that the generality of mankind is so far enlightened that no pleas or pretences of other reasons for such a change or defection will bear the least admittance, but it will be ascribed to corrupt affection and worldly interest. However, if it is contained, as many judge it is, in the prophecies of the Revelation, that the churches of the nations who were once of the communion, and in subjection to, the church of Rome shall be restored to her power and possession again, at least for a short time, these sort of men must be signally instrumental in it.

And if there are any nations where these two things agree — that all church or ecclesiastical power and jurisdiction is, by the law of the land, vested in the king, being as to its whole exercise derived from him alone, by which that which he is, the church is, as to power and jurisdiction, and nothing else, and where the clergy hold and derive their spiritual power, their power of order and office, by the influence and descent of it from the church of Rome and its authority — upon the accession of a Papist to supreme rule, it will prove very difficult, if not impossible, before long to

secure the public profession of the Protestant faith in such nations. I say, in this case, although the Protestant faith may be preserved in many, many individuals and their voluntary societies in the communion of it, yet, in such a church-state, its public profession cannot long be continued; for it will quickly be dissolved by its own internal differences, which every wise man can easily foresee. But the force of law, interest, and inclination is hard to withstand.

(3) The danger of defection from the profession of the Protestant faith in the people must be measured from the preparations for it that are found among them, and the means of their furtherance. Now, these are nothing but the vicious habits of the minds of men, inclining their feelings to take shelter in papal superstition. Such are ignorance, immorality of life, provocations from the power of religion in others, atheism, and interest from the hopes of advantage proposed to some of them who have an influence on others. There can be no defection to Popery in or among the people who have ever known anything of the Protestant faith but what proceeds from these causes, which wholly obliterate all sense of its power, all delight in its truth, and dispose men to anything in which they hope they may find a better compliance with their own inclinations, or at least free them from that of which they are weary, and in which they see no advantage. And the means by which these things are promoted in them are: lack of proper instruction, examples of sin and impunity around, public discontent with the power of religion, personal and family necessities through pride or sensuality, with a desire of revenge.

Where these things abound in any nation, among any people, there is no security of their stability in that profession of religion which yet they avow: for all these things will continually operate in their minds, and occasions will not be lacking, in the watchful diligence of the devil and his instruments, to excite and provoke their corrupt lusts to a decline in their profession; which with many of them will be carried on gradually and insensibly, until they find themselves ensnared in the papal interest beyond what they can extricate themselves from.

I make no conjectures concerning the ruin or total loss of the public profession of the Protestant faith from those ways and means of a general defection from it: for if there were more danger in them than there is, I know there is yet a way by which they may all be defeated; and this being in the hand of God alone, with him it is to be left, and to his care it is committed.

2. FORCE is the next way by which the same effect may be produced; and this is what those of the Roman interest place their main confidence in, and it is that which they judge they may lawfully make use of, whenever they are able to do so. If force is thought necessary for this end of whatever sort — be it by private assassinations, legal persecutions, national oppressions, foreign invasions — all are alike to them; they are all of them there to be made use of as their supposed opportunities require. That which at present most encourages their hopes and expectations, on this ground of them, is the power and inclinations of the French monarch, and the influence he has on the counsels and actions of other nations. But that whole business seems to me, on many counts, to be but *res unius aetatis* (an event that has its beginning and end within the space of one generation) at most; many countries may be ravaged and spoiled, and new work cut out for another age, but a stated interest for the papal advantage will scarcely be fixed by it. They must be a people of another temper and

complexion of mind than our neighbours are, of a more profound melancholy and superstition than they are subject to, of less vehement desires of their own, and less subject to alter in their designs on provocations and disappointments, who are fit definitely to pursue the advancement of the papal power and dominion, where, in themselves at length, shall come no sharers. But where there is an agreement in all these things — namely, an inclination in many of all sorts towards defection, preparations in the minds of more, the persecution of some so far as the laws will permit, and just fears of a greater outward force — relief and safety is to be expected only from divine power and goodness.

3. The third way in which a public profession of the Protestant faith may be undermined in any nation, or universally, is by a RECONCILIATION with the Church of Rome. For although this is really of the same nature and kind with that of defection I mentioned earlier, yet seeing it is to be effected by a pretended mutual condescension, it will be sure to say that is different from a total defection. What I mean is a coalition in the same church-state, faith, worship, and rule with the Church of Rome, on such concessions and reliefs from some present impositions that shall on both sides be agreed on. And this is the most plausible engine for attaining the fatal end designed that can be made use of, and possibly the most likely to take effect. The pretences of the peace of Christendom, and the union of Christians (though nothing less is intended than that peace and union which Christ has appointed, nor will the peace pretended be ever attained by it), are suited to cover and overwhelm men with reproaches who shall but try to discover their falsity and folly. But the present posture of counsels and affairs in the world calls for something of a more distinct consideration of these things, which yet shall be but preparatory to what I shall further discourse for the same purpose, if the process in the design further reveals itself.

From the very beginning of the Reformation, there have been various attempts for a composition of the differences between the Church of Rome and those who have departed from it. Councils of princes, conventions of theologians, imperial edicts, quiet consultations of learned men, have all been made use of to this end; but all in vain. And it was for a while the judgement of most wise men that the Council of Trent made all reconciliation, so much as by a pretence of any condescension on the part of Rome, utterly impossible; for it bound itself and all the world that owns its authority, under solemn curses, not to make any change or alteration in the present state of the papal church, though the salvation of all men living depends upon it.

Yet, despite the fixing of this impassable gulf between the two churches or religions, some people professing the Protestant faith, either angry at their state and disappointment in the world, or ambitious above their station in the Protestant church, though of the highest dignity attainable in it, or out of an itch or curiosity of venting their conciliatory notions, as they suppose them, and so to entitle themselves to the name of peace-makers, have, in the foregoing and present age, revived the same fruitless design; but up till now, without success.

But it must be confessed that at present things are more prepared for the plying of this engine, and making it effective to the ruination of the Protestant faith, than they were in former ages. Concerning this, I shall give some examples.

Several learned men, who have made a great name for themselves and their reputation, have, in their public writings, granted a patriarchal primacy in the west to the bishop of Rome, which is ripe for restoration; and in this they have relinquished the true grounds of the Reformation. For whereas the real causes and reasons for it were the idolatry, heresies, and tyranny of the church of Rome — which every private Christian can understand, and was bound to separate from personally, were there no other of his mind in the world but himself alone, and had right so to do — they have decided in the power of a national church in that patriarchate, with their supreme civil ruler, to reform itself from such things that they call abuses. Now, as this is a matter in which the consciences of the people or in private Christians are not concerned, so it is built on various arbitrary presumptions that have not the least countenance given to them from the Word of God. And as this effort tends directly to divert the minds of men from the true causes and reasons for the Reformation, for which cause all the martyrs died, so it leads directly, with relief against the pretended abuses, to a return to the pope as a head of unity and peace over all churches, at least in these western parts of the world; which is all that at present is pleaded for by many of the Papists themselves.

“As for the dispute”, they say, “about the pope, his power and infallibility, you need not trouble yourselves. Let the bishop of Rome in his succession from St. Peter be acknowledged as a head of unity and peace for all Christians, with a patriarchal power, and nothing more is required of you.”

That is, at present, let the pope be the pope while he is so — that is, until he is utterly cast out of the church. But by such concessions as these, the way is preparing for a composition as to the outward order and rule of the church.

As to the internal part of religion, in doctrines of faith, there is no small advance towards a reconciliation, with the introduction of novel opinions into the Protestant profession; for although, on their first entrance among us, they were publicly protested against by the House of Commons of England in parliament, as an introduction to Popery, yet their remaining since has been so great that their supporters are ready to avow them as the doctrine of the present church. Yet they are all of them opposite to the fundamental principles of the Reformation, which exalted the grace of God and debased the pride of men; from the contempt of which principles, all the abominations of the Papacy arose. And this progress towards a reconciliation is daily advanced by the endeavours of some to lessen all the doctrinal differences between the Papists and Protestants, and to make them appear as things not worth striving or contending about.

The same work is carried on by the labours and efforts of many in their public writings to divert the making application of Scripture prophecies and predictions of an apostate, antichristian church-state to the Church of Rome. This persuasion (as it is a most undoubted truth, where the souls of men are concerned) is the principal means of preserving the body of the people in opposing Popery. If you can once persuade them that the pope is not antichrist, and that the Church of Rome is not that idolatrous, tyrannical state foretold in Scripture, many would become very indifferent to how you deal with them, or what coalition you make for yourselves. But it is to be hoped that the broad light which arises from the evidence the pope and his church for many ages has given of themselves so to be, by their idolatries,

persecutions, murders, Lucifer's pride, trampling on the power and persons of kings and all sorts of people, in conjunction with the characteristic notes of times, places, rise, progress, nature, and actions of that church-state in Scripture, will not easily be extinguished.

There is no small evidence in the world of an atheistic principle lately advanced — namely, of resolving all public profession of religion away from the wills and laws of men in supreme power. It is supposed by this that men may make up their own minds as to what religion they please, and be as religious as they want to; but, for the preservation of society, it is right that the wills of lawgivers, in all nations, should be the sole rule of the outward profession of religion. Now, although this atheistic opinion is destructive of the Christian faith, condemning all those who profess it from its first entrance into the world, and being of the highest folly imaginable, yet, being suited to accommodate all the lusts and interests of men profane and ungodly, it is incredible what progress, in a short time, it has made in the world; and those who have imbibed it are ready for all such coalitions in religion as may be supposed in any way suitable to their inclinations and interests.

I shall only mention what, of all other things, is the worst fault — namely, the loss of the power of religion in all sorts of people. The Protestant faith will not anywhere long maintain its state in any way than by an experience of its power and efficacy on the souls of men. Where this is lost through the power of prevalent vicious habits of the minds of men, the whole will be lost at an easy rate; for there is another continually proposed unto them, with those entertainments for men's fancies and worldly desires, with those accommodations for their lusts, living and dying, with outward secular advantages, that our faith is not capable of, nor accompanied by.

This is what, directed with an eye to outward advancement, has in the last age lost great numbers of the nobility of France and Poland, and other places, from the profession of the gospel, whose ancestors were renowned champions for its truth. For to what end should men entertain a religion in which they gain no inward spiritual advantage, and are, for the profession of it, exposed to all sorts of outward disadvantages? And this sort of men will, at any time, greedily embrace any reconciliation with the Church of Rome as, by the terms of it, it may a little shelter their reputation, and make a pretence of satisfying some traditional convictions of the truth they had once professed.

Moreover, unless it is diligently watched, weariness is apt to grow with many of the clergy of that spiritual rule and conduct of the people which, according to the principles of the Protestant faith, is committed to them: for, by virtue of it, there has so much light and knowledge been diffused among the people, and such a valuation of their spiritual liberty, which formerly they knew nothing of, that there is an excellent virtue and piety, with continual care and watchfulness, required against their pride. And yet, when the best of men have done their utmost in this, they will meet with what shall exercise their wisdom and patience all their days. Neither has Christ granted any rule or office in his church on any other terms; nor will the state of his subjects, who are all volunteers, permit it to be otherwise.

No wonder, then, if some don't like those engines of an easy rule, namely, ignorance and blind devotion in the people, and so are ready to return to them again: for it is a monstrous wearisome thing for men of heroic, governing spirits to be obliged to put up conviction from the Scripture to those that they judge impertinent in what they do; much more to order their lifestyle with strictness, that no offence be taken at them. This posture concerning things men seem to be weary of, and therefore daily relinquish, so far as they can pretend any consistency between what they do and the faith they profess. But the utter shaking off of those bonds and manacles, unworthy of men of generous spirits, must seem more eligible for them; and if such terms of reconciliation are offered that shall not only secure for them their present possessions and dignity, but give them also a prospect of further advancement, it is to be feared that many of this sort will judge it better to embrace things so desirable than to die in a prison or at a stake.

Besides all these, there is at present a coincidence of two things that exceedingly incline the minds of many to an ecclesiastical coalition with the Church of Rome. And these are — first, an ignorance or forgetfulness of what the Papacy was, and will again be; and then a sense of some provocation given, or supposed to be given them, by the Protestant faith, or those that profess it. Alas! What harm has the Papacy ever done to them? It may be they can give instances where they have had gained advantage by it, or by those that belong to it. But everything that they suppose evil, and find inconvenient to their present inclinations, they suspect proceed from the principles of the Protestant faith, from where they have already received many provocations.

These are some of the reasons that make it evident that there may be no small danger to the public profession of the Protestant faith (the thing I am inquiring into), from the present design of not a few to make a reconciliation of the two religions, and to bring all men into a coalition in faith, worship, and rule with the Church of Rome. Now, as there is little hope of prevail with those who are under the power of these things and considerations, or are influenced by them, by arguments religious and rational, seeing that they have all of them a foundation with such corrupt desires, inclinations, and interests, that seem more deaf than an adder to such charms; yet, for the sake of others not as yet taken in by such prejudices, I shall show with a few examples the folly and wickedness of attempting, or complying with, any reconciliation with the Church of Rome. For, in the first place, be it on what terms it will, it is a renunciation of the fundamental principle of the Reformation — namely, that the Church of Rome is that idolatrous, antichristian state which is foretold in Scripture. For if this is so, anyone that belong to it may be converted, but the state itself will be destroyed. And to join ourselves to, or re-join, that church-state, on any terms whatever, something the Lord Christ has designed for destruction, is both foolish in itself, and will be ruinous in the end to our souls.

For it will then also follow that we interest ourselves in the guilt of all that innocent blood which has been shed by the power of that church-state for dissenting from it; for this guilt — which is next to that of the church of the Jews in murdering the Head of the church, and is in every way equal to that of the pagan world in the bloodshed of their persecutions, for which it was temporally and eternally destroyed — lies charged on this church-state, and will reach to all that shall choose an ecclesiastical conjunction thereby. And let such people flatter themselves while they please, and

slight these things as those in which they are not concerned, and they will find them true to their cost, here or hereafter.

Neither will men of any light or ingenuity easily renounce the whole work of God's grace and power in the Reformation, and cast the guilt of all the divisions that have been in the world on to the Protestants. For, seeing they have all been on account of the church-state of Rome, in opposition to which the martyrs laid down their lives, a coalition on any terms in and with that church-state includes a condemnation of all that has been done or suffered in opposition to it. "The preaching of the gospel has been but a fancy, the suffering of the martyrs was the highest folly, the glory given to God on these accounts little less than blasphemy", is the language of such a coalition.

The vanity, also, of *the terms of reconciliation* which are, or may be, proposed is obvious to all that are not wilfully blind; for the church of Rome, preserving its essentially constitutive principles and its being as such, can offer no such condescension that shall not keep safe and secure the whole malice of their faith and worship. When anything that has the show or appearance of a concession — as, suppose, priests' marriage, the cup offered to the laity, and the service of the church in a known tongue — is proposed, it is natural for all to commend and approve of what is done because it is a kind of relinquishment of things grievous and tyrannical. At the first proposal, few will judge these things to be sufficient, but will encourage themselves to expect even further condescension, and will be ready to assure others that they will follow; but yet, when they find themselves defeated, they will take up the management of the cause, and contend that this is enough at present for serious men, seeing no more can be attained.

But, in reality, this reconciliation will prove a total defection from the Protestant faith; for the Church of Rome neither will, nor can, part with anything that shall change its antichristian state and idolatrous worship. The whole of their pretension is but a decoy to get us into their power; where we shall be made to understand both where we are, and where we have been also. And those which are most inclinable to such a reconciliation as is proposed, unless they also become flagrant persecutors of those whom they have left, as is the manner of most apostates, will find their former faults called over to the purpose, and such base acknowledgments required of them as innocent people would rather choose to die than be dragged unto. But although universal experience confirms this to be the certain and undoubted issue of a return to their power, from which men are judged to have broken away unjustly, whatever salvos seem to be provided against it; yet those concerned cannot think it will be so with them, but rather that they shall be dearly embraced and highly promoted, if not for their return, yet for their being early and careful in it. But if they find this entertainment with them, who have everything that they think good, as conscience and religion, and everything that is really evil, as pride, ambition, and revenge, to oblige them to the opposite, I shall not be alone in being deceived.

But this one consideration is sufficient to cast out all thoughts of any reconciliation with the church of Rome; for although they should never so earnestly desire it, as something that would bring dominion, profit, advantage, and reputation to them, yet is it not in their power, continuing what they are, to make any such concessions as shall alter their state, or once touch the reasons for the Protestants' departure from

them? And seeing what they suppose they may grant will not be on a conviction of truth that such ought to be, as if before they had made a mistake, but only to comply with a present emerging of their advantage, it will be recalled whenever they judge it fit to take it away again.

Upon the whole matter, the reconciliation, designed on the most plausible terms that have ever yet been proposed, is nothing but a hoodwinked defection to Rome, accumulated with a charge, on the consciences of those who comply with it, of the guilt of all the miseries and blood of those by whom it will be refused.

But there are, on the other side, certain considerations that may be put in the balance against these dangers, or the fears of them as to the event; and I shall briefly mention them.

For —

1. The honour of Christ himself seems to be compromised for the preservation of the light and truth of the gospel where it has been professed. And so it is, undoubtedly, unless the sins and ingratitude of most of them by whom it is professed require that they be dealt with in his severity. In that case, the glory and honour of Christ are more engaged to remove and take away the blessing of it from any place or people, than to put forth his power for its preservation and continuance. Now, although it must be acknowledged that the sins of these and other Protestant nations have been of a high provocative nature to the eyes of his glory, yet it may be hoped that they have not exceeded the bounds of his patience and forbearance. And whether this be so or not, there will be a speedy discovery; for if, on the many hints which he has given them of his displeasure, his many calls to repentance mixed with threats, they will now at last return to him from the evil of their ways, and make their repentance evident by its fruits, he will undoubtedly continue his presence among them, with his care over them.

But if, despite all that they hear, and feel, and fear at present, and despite all divine warnings and indications of his displeasure, they will go on obstinately in their own ways, to the high dishonour of himself and his gospel, causing his name and ways to be blasphemed among the idolatrous nations, the event must be left, in the depths of infinite wisdom, with his sovereign grace and mercy.

2. Despite all that profaneness and wickedness of life in which so many are immersed, who outwardly profess the Protestant faith, there is a remnant in the nations where it is professed, who show the power of it in their lives, and glorify Christ by their profession and obedience to all his commands, walking worthy of the gospel in all holy living. Nor is this sort confined to any one party or a distinct way among them, but are found in the whole body or community of the Protestant profession. What influence these have, on many accounts, in the preservation of the light of the gospel in the places, times, and nations where their lot and portion is cast by divine Providence, is not here to be gone into. Scripture gives a sufficient account of it.

3. There is evidently at present a spirit of courage and Christian magnanimity come upon many, whose circumstances render them considerable in the world, to do and

suffer whatever they shall lawfully be called to for the defence of this Protestant faith. This also is from God; and if his purpose were utterly to ruin that interest, it is more suited to former dispensations of his providence in like cases to send weakness, faintness, cowardice, and despondency into the hearts of those concerned, than to give them a spirit of courage and resolution for their duty. And to this, also, belongs that revival of zeal for their faith and its concerns, which has lately been stirred up even in the body of the people, taking occasion from the opposition made to it, and the dangers to which it has been reduced. If these things are from God, as they seem to be, they will not be so easily run down as some imagine; for whatever means he will make use of, be they in themselves never so weak and contemptible, they shall be effective to the end for which they are designed. And therefore there is no small indication in them that it is in the counsel of the divine will as yet to preserve the profession of the Protestant faith, though it may be sorely shaken.

4. The strange discoveries that have been made of the plots and designs of the enemies of this faith, with the disappointment of many of them, are also a pledge of the care of God over it. Wise and considering men knew well enough that they were at work, with all diligence, craft, and industry, for the accomplishment of what they had longed for, and which, for some ages, they had been engaged with various contrivances to bring about; but what they saw of the effects of their counsels they could not remove, and all the specialties of their design were hidden from them. Men in general, in the meantime, were in the highest security — some enjoying themselves in the advantages which they hold by the profession of faith, and others altogether regardless of these things. But in this state of things, the providence of God, making use of the unparalleled confidence and outpouring of the enemies themselves, by strange and unexpected means, lay open their works of darkness, awakened the nation to a consideration of its danger, which variously disappointed their hellish plots, and puts the minds of multitudes, it may be millions, into a posture of taking care about those concerns of their faith which they had assuredly been surprised into the loss of had they continued in the security from which their enemies awakened them.

And it may be well supposed that nothing but sin and the highest ingratitude can divert or stop the progress of those streams of providence whose springs were undeserved mercy and bounty. For although the wisdom, justice, and honour of the nation, in the actions of the king as supreme, of both houses of parliament, in the judges and their legal administrations, with the piety of the church in the observation of a day of fasting and prayer with respect to this, be, every day, exposed to scorn and contempt in the papers and pamphlets of unknown writers, by decrying the plot and vilifying the discoveries of it (a practice never allowed, never tolerated in any other well-ordered government, but would tend to its dissolution), yet all serious men have sufficient evidence of the hand of God in these things to make them an argument for his watchful care over the Protestant faith. And, to all these things, we may add the fatal faults and miserable ends of such apostates from the true faith who have not been content to ruin their own souls alone, but have been active and instrumental, in their capacities, to draw or drive others into the same perdition. Examples of this kind might be multiplied sufficient to stop this sort of people in their career, if an open discovery of the pit into which they themselves will fall will have any influence upon them.

A few things may yet be added concerning the outward means of the preservation of the Protestant faith as to its public profession (for the thing itself will be preserved despite the opposition of the world), which those concerned in it may do well to apply themselves to; but I shall only name them at present.

And the first is fervent prayer to Almighty God that the princes and potentates of the earth may have enough light to discern that their main interest in this world lies in the profession and preservation of the Protestant faith. And although some reasons may induce them to give it up, as it may not seem of force to them, yet there is one that is uncontrollable; for where the Protestant faith is received, publicly professed, and established by law, it cannot be changed without producing extreme havoc and the ruination of the greatest and best part of their subjects in all their temporal concerns. And this, there is no doubt but that they are obliged, so far as in them lies, to prevent, as they will give an account to God of the trust reposed in them: for as things are stated in the world, as the designs and interests of the parties at variance are formed, it is madness to suppose that any alteration can be made without these woeful effects; and if they should be covered over for a time, they will break out afterwards with more rage and fury. But I refer this to the wisdom of those that are concerned.

It is also necessary that all those who sincerely own this Protestant faith, and make it the rule of their living for God, in the hope of an eternal enjoyment of him in another world, to dispose of a consideration of the lesser differences among themselves, and unite in one common design and interest in opposing the entrance and growth of Popery among us. And it is a hard thing to persuade rational men that they are in earnest for its opposition and exclusion who are not willing to do so.

But that on which among ourselves the event of this contest depends is the repentance and reformation of all those that profess this faith, upon the divine calls and warnings they have received.

To bring this discourse to a close, if we may suppose, and what we may justly fear, namely, that the holy God, to punish the horrible sins and ingratitude of the nations which profess the Protestant faith, should suffer the profession of it by any of these means, or any other that the Lord shall think fit to use by his holy permission, to be extinguished for a time, with the removal of the light of the gospel from these nations, we may conclude **two** things —

1. That it shall issue at last to the advantage of the church. Antichrist shall not be the final gainer in this contest; his success here will be the forerunner of his utter destruction. The healing of his deadly wound will preserve his life just for a little while. The true faith shall again be restored with a more pure profession. There shall follow no new revelations, no new doctrines, no new Scriptures, no new ordinances of worship. The substance of Protestant doctrine, faith, and worship shall be preserved, restored, beautified, in themselves and in their power, in those by whom they are professed. A demonstration of this must be given elsewhere.

2. In the meantime, to suffer for it, even to death, is the most glorious cause in which we can be engaged, and in which we shall be undoubtedly victorious. It is no less glorious in the sight of God, no less acceptable with him, to suffer in giving testimony

against the abominations of the apostate, antichristian church-state, than to suffer for the gospel itself in opposition to idolatrous Paganism.