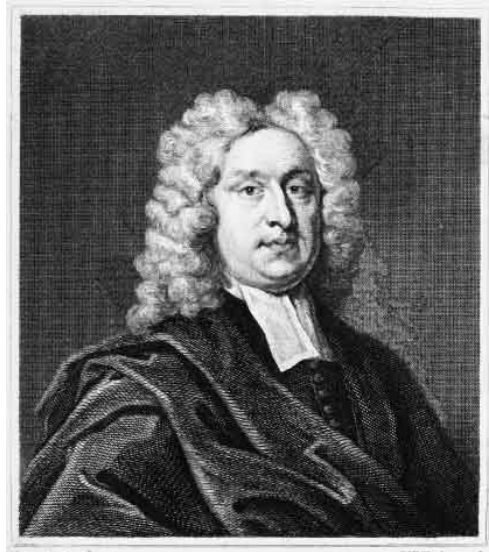


*Discontented Complaints of the
Present Times prov'd Unreasonable*

by

Edmund Calamy



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Discontented Complaints of the Present
TIMES *prov'd Unreasonable:*

IN A
SERMON
Preach'd at
ROTHERHITH,
On the ANNIVERSARY of
King GEORGE's
CORONATION,
October 20. 1720.

By EDMUND CALAMY, *D.D.*

LONDON,
Printed for JOHN CLARK, *at the Bible*
and Crown in the Poultry, near Cheapside,
M. DCC. XX.

Price Four-Pence.

To the Right Honourable
Sir *JOHN FRYER*, Bar^t.
Lord-Mayor of the City of *London*.

My LORD,



WAS Seasonableness of the Subject, that was my main Inducement, both to gratify those who desir'd to have this Discourse printed, and to take the Liberty of prefixing Your LORDSHIP's Name. This may perhaps tempt some to give it the Heading, who have of late been the more free in their Complaints, as thinking that in Circumstances like ours, (in describing which they will hardly allow they can over do) nothing that deserv'd any regard could be said against 'em: But if they are free to listen either to Scripture or Reason, I hope I have here offer'd what may convince them of a Mistake.

YOUR LORDSHIP's Private Life has not discover'd that complaining Spirit, for which many others have been remarkable, to the needless disturbing themselves, the adding to the Cares of their Superiors, and the making their inferiors and Equals uneasy; Which encourages those that have the Honour to know you, to expect, that Your Power and Authority now You are publicity advanc'd, will be employ'd in discouraging such a Temper in others. And therefore I could not think, an Essay to checks such as preading Evil, could be unacceptable. to such a Lover of what is honestly aim'd at the Publicly Good, as Your LORDSHIP,

I make a Present of it to Your LORDSHIP, with most hearty Congratulations, upon Your Entrance on so honourable a Station, in such a Juncture as this. I take Part in the com-

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mon Joy, that the Great City will this Year have a chief Magistrate, who will make it his earnest endeavour to put discontented Complainers, as well as other Offenders to shame; leaving those only uneasy whom nothing will Satisfy, without Scope to be dissolute, and to disturb at pleasure, either those at Helm, or their quiet Neighbours.

YOUR LORDSHIP is not like to be free of such Difficulties as without great Wisdom and Steadiness, Courage and Patience, will make the Chair uneasy; But You have the noble Example of Your Great Master King GEORGE, at once to encourage and direct You. 'Tis his main Study to make those happy, that seem neither willing to be so, nor sensible when they are so. Your LORDSHIP by resembling him will serve his Government, as You have before deny'd Yourself to secure his Interest: And both will be much to Your Honour.

YOUR LORDSHIP is better acquainted with Mankind than to expect after the utmost Pains, that Your Fellow-Citizens will all be pleas'd: And yet I hope You will find a Number of them will know how to be grateful. But whatever Your Returns may be from Men, if You do but approve Yourself to the Most High, to whom Your Advancement is owing, (whose Approbation is infinitely beyond human Applause) You may depend upon his Gracious Promise of honouring those that honour Him.

MAY He that has all Hearts and Events within his read I make the Service of this Year far to surpass the Fatigues of it, and carry You comfortably through it. May He multiply his Blessings on Your LORDSHIP, Your vertuous Comfort, and Your whole Family. May You be a Pattern to the Magistrates of this City, in Your Prudent Zeal for the Reformation of Manners, and Activity in supporting our Credit, our Trade, our Civil Government, and the true Protestant interest: Thus heartily prays,

My LORD,

Your LORDSHIP'S

Most Obedient Servant,

EDM. CALAMY.

Nov. 5.
 1720.

ECCLES. VII. 10.

Say not thou, What is the Cause that the former Days were better than these? For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.



PR O V E R B I A L Sayings and Speeches, for which the Writer of this Book was deservedly famous, are ever to be construed and understood with a Latitude, and not taken according to the strictness of the Letter, for fear of our running into Mistakes, and gathering Things from them that were never intended to be thereby insinuated or convey'd. I need go no farther for an Instance than this Text, taking which rigorously, we might run ourselves into strange Confusion about Sin and
 B Duty,

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 Duty, about Good and Evil. For if we must in all Cases count the present Days as good as the former, we might fancy ourselves forbidden to complain altho' Things were ever so much amiss; or to take any Pains, in our several Places, and within our proper Spheres, to find out suitable Remedies for Relief; We might imagine it to be quite wrong at all to lament or bewail the most fatal Disorders, or the most spreading Corruptions, or the greatest Prevalence of such Sins, as naturally tend to pull down the most dreadful Judgments, or are the Fore-runners of them; and might come at length to look upon it as matter of Duty, to let Things go just as they will, without Care or Concern about the Issue.

WHEREAS the true Intention of the Preacher in this his Saying, plainly appears to have been, to censure such Complaints against the Times in which Men severally live, as are levelled against the great God, as if he dealt hardly with them, either in calling their Lot at such a particular Season, or in suffering them to meet with such Treatment, as they think is not to be indur'd: His aim was freely to reflect on such Complaints, as would discover Impatience, or discourage and hinder Men in the proper Duties of their respective Places, in humble Dependence on the Wise Providence of the most High, to which the Issues of all Things, even those that appear the most deplorable, may be left with all imaginable Safety.

THERE is no question to be made on't, but that it is the common Duty of all to study the Times they severally live in. The *discerning the* respective *Signs* and Characters by which they are distinguished, is press'd upon all in the Holy Scrip-

⁷ Scripture; the Want of it is justly complain'd of as a great Fault; and the *understanding the Times*, so as to *know what Israel ought to do*, is brought in as a mighty Commendation. We may compare former and later Days together, with Modesty and Humility very allowably: But to give ourselves Scope to run out in a way of Complaint and Murmuring, so as to contend with the Great Governour of the World, or arraign the Dispensations of his Providence; to oppose our Desires or Inclinations to his Purposes, or our Weakness to his unsearchable Wisdom, is a Thing so faulty as to be inexcusable. To be sure we never can *inquire wisely* concerning Things, if we impeach God and his Providence: For Wisdom in *striving against* him that is infinitely above us, and who *giveth not Account of any of his Matters?* nor is bound so to do, there can be none. We may compare Times with Times, and Seasons with Seasons, it we'll be content to keep within any tolerable Bounds: But if forgetting that Deference and Submission which becomes such dim-sighted and obnoxious Creatures as we are, we run into and encourage Boisterousness and Petulance of Spirit, we are so far from being wise, or taking the way to improve in Wisdom, that we are guilty of most egregious Folly, as will be evident to any Man that considers Things closely, and impartially.

I Chron.
xii. 2.

Job xxxiii.
13.

ITS a common Observation of *Pagan Writers*, That Men are very apt to conceit former Times better than their own. The old Man in *Horace* * would freely commend the Times while he was a Child,
B 2 and

* — — — Querulus, Iaudator temporis acti
 Se puero. Horat de arte Poeticâ.

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and represent them as exceeding happy, compar'd with what they were in his declining Age, not considering that he himself was more chang'd than the Times. And it was a prevailing Opinion amongst them, that every Age grew worse and worse, and that the World itself universally and perpetually declin'd, and all Things in it decay'd. Being fix'd in this Notion, they were very inquisitive into the Cause, of the Alteration. Some ascrib'd it to the Decay of the Strength and Goodness of Nature in the World in general, and the several Ranks and Orders of Creatures in it; and others to the growing Strength of a malignant Spirit, who delights in nothing so much, as in marring the Beauty, and as far as in him lies, disturbing the Harmony of the Works of the great Creator and Ruler of the World; and others to other Causes; but with very little Reason, as has been shewn by a Writer of our own Nation, who has elaborately pursu'd that Argument *. And as for the Inclination to applaud antient Times and Things, and despise and inveigh against the Present, a celebrated *Roman* Author tho' he owns it common, he yet represents it as an Instance of human Malignity, as it is most certainly †. And *Solomon*, with whom none of them could compare for Wisdom, represerns this Conduct as trifling, and worse than trifling.

HOWEVER it did not confine itself to the *Pagan* World, but reach'd *Judea*, which God had refer-
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* *Dr. George Hakewill's Apology, or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World.* † *Vitio autem malignitatis humanæ vetera semper in laude, præsentia in fastidio esse:* F. Quintilian, de Oratoribus Dialog.

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ved to himself as his own Inclosure, and favour'd above other Countries. And if any Land was happy, that must be it, which we are told was *a Land that the God of Heaven cared for, and had his Eyes always upon, from the Beginning of the Year, even unto the End of the Year.* And if ever that which was the promised Land was peculiarly happy, it must most certainly be in the Days of King *Solomon*, who was a wise Prince, and had a large Dominion, and a peaceful Reign, and. was much respected. His Subjects had Plenty of all Things needful, and every Man might have sate under his own Vine and Figg-tree without Molestation. We are told that *he exceeded all the Kings of the Earth, for Riches and for Wisdom;* and that *he made Silver to be in Jerusalem as Stones, and Cedars made he to be as the Sycomore Trees that are in the vale for Abundance:* So happy were those Days, than he himself observed, that there was *rest on every side, so that there was neither Adversary, nor evil Occurrent:* And yet even then was there such a Temper as this at work, and People were inclin'd to magnify the Times foregoing, which were past and gone, at the Expence and to the Diminution of their own, tho' as happy as Heart could wish. And this Disposition which at that Time appear'd, (when there was so little of a Temptation that could be pretended, and which there may at other Times be greater Temptations to, which ought to be carefully resisted,) does the Preacher in the Text set himself to oppose and check: And the more sensible we are what such a Disposition carries in it, and what it draws after it, the more shall we be convinc'd that he had good Reason for it, and that it will become us to concur and fall in with him.

IT

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IT cannot indeed, it must not be deriv'd, but that some Ages are in several Respects worse than others. All Times are neither alike prosperous, nor alike knowing, nor alike wicked: And it is very evident that there are certain Seasons that may be peculiarly remarkable for the Disorders and Difficulties with which they are attended: And this holds both in Sacred and. Civil-Matters. It is evident from Scripture that the Church of God has been some Times in a State of greater Purity, and at other Times in more Darkness and Declension. The Earth was remarkably corrupt, before the General Deluge. We are told, that *all Flesh had corrupted his way upon Earth*, And we also read of *an evil Time*, that is, a Time peculiarly Evil; a Time in which it is declared *the Prudent shall keep Silence*; and the Reason is given why 'tis such an Time, 'tis because of *manifold Transgressions*, and *mighty Sins*, which therefore are particularly taken Notice of. Elsewhere also we are told. That *the Days are Evil*; they are evidently and remarkably so; and that is urg'd as a weighty Reason to inforce a plain Duty, and engage to *walk circumspectly*. And we are also told of *perilous Times* that should come, and have such Characters given of the Men that should live in them, as mud necessarily make them perilous. We are also told in this very Book of the Preacher, That *to every Thing there is a Season and a Time to every Purpose under the Heaven*: And accordingly we should accommodate ourselves our Carriage, remembring that every Thing is beautiful in its Season. We should study the Times we pass through, that we may the better suit their different Circumstances in our Carriage respectively: And yet still we may lay it down for a certain

Truth

Gen. vi.
12.Amos v.
13.

Ver. 12.

Ephes. v. 16.

2 Tim. iii.
1.Eccl. iii.
1.

II

Truth, and it is the very Truth which this Text is designed to impress upon us, and which I shalt from thence gather for our common Instruction, That

DISCONTENTEDLY or impatiently to complain of the present, compar'd with former Times, is foolish, unreasonable, and unaccountable.

IN order to the clearing of this, I have a Variety of Considerations to propose, and if they cannot be said to amount to a strict and proper Demonstration, yet I apprehend when they are put together, they will afford such Proof as will be abundantly sufficient to convince and satisfy. And here let it be consider'd,

1. THAT the Times present are ordered by the same GOD, and under the Conduct of the same lover-ruling Providence, as former Times were: And therefore it cannot be, that there should be any difference between the one and the other, and he not have a Concern in it: And if he has, there can be no just Ground for Complaint. Did Things fall out or happen by chance, we might have some excuse: But we have the best of Evidence that it is far otherwise. We are assur'd, that 'tis the great GOD whose *Kingdom ruleth over all, that hath determined the Times before appointed.* He keepeth the Reins in his own Hands in one Age as well as a another. All *Times are in his Hands*, with Reference both to publick and private Matters: And he *changeth Times and Seasons at his Pleasure.* To complain therefore of the present Times compared with the former, is in effect to question whether he sits

Psal. ciii.
19.
Acts xvii.
26.
Ps. xxxi.
15.
Dan. ii,
21.

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sits at Helm now as much as formerly or whether he is nor out in his Management. When we observe what may justly be grievous, or matter of Uneasiness, or Exercise, or Trial to us, to make Tragical Exclamations, as if human Affairs were nor balanced with so equal and indifferent a Distribution of Blessings as they ought to be, and as might reasonably be expected, Is to impeach the Great and Supreme Governor of the World, and call his Wisdom and Righteousness in Question; forgetting that *he is the Rock, and his Work is perfect: For all his Ways are Judgment; a God of Truth, and without Iniquity, Just and Right is he.*

Deuter.
xxxii. 4.

Isai. xlv.
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Job xxi.
22.

Job
xxxviii. 2.

Heb. xiii.

5.

Phil. iv.

11.

It most undoubtedly properly belongs to the Great LORD of Heaven and Earth, to temper and order the several Ages of the World, and the Occurrences of all Times, In what manner pleaseth him; and let him take whatever Methods he will, *His Counsel shall stand, And he will do all his Pleasure.* He pursues his Purposes in a steady Course, and every Age brings but a Part of his Counsel to light? according to his foregoing Determinations. And *shall any teach him Knowledge?* Or can any one mend his Settlements, which are all connected together with most exquisite Wisdom? To arraign him at any Time is to *darken Counsel, by Words without Knowledge.* All Things that fall out, whatever Face they appear with, being of his ordering, it most certainly becomes those that would approve themselves to him, fand is an essential part of true Piety,) quietly to submit to his Allotments, and to *I be content with such Things as they have;* and *whatsoever state they are in, therewith to be content,* as St. Paul was. And this is therefore the more becoming

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becoming, because whatever *former Days* may have been, or whatever *these Days* in which we live may be, if we do but put Things together, we shall find good Evidence, that he manages all Things for the Good and Benefit of his devoted Servants; and that *his Eyes run to and fro, throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose Heart is perfect towards him.* And this is a Thought that if it be but duly pursu'd and improved, may relieve us at any Season, even when the Times have the most discouraging Aspect that can be imagin'd.

² Chron.
xvi. 9.

2. DISCONTENTED Complaints of the present, compar'd with former Times are therefore unreasonable, because no former Times can be fix'd on, that have been without cause and matter of Complaint, any more than the present. When we are bent upon comparing former and latter Times together, we must have recourse to History, if we would not be led by meer Conjectures, without any Foundation: And this is a Method liable to a Variety of Exceptions, and there are many Things to hinder Exactness in such a Companion.

'Tis hard to know particularly how Things Were in *former Days*. For many Things are omitted and overlook'd even by the nicest Historians, which ought to come in, if we pretend to form a just comparative Judgment between them and the present Times: And for want of being acquainted with these, we in many Respects are inevitably at a Loss. It is nor by any means to be supposed, we should be so distinctly acquainted with the grounds of Mens Complaints in former Days as in our own, which yet would be necessary in order to a positive

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Certainty,

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 Certainty, that the latter are greater or heavier than the former. The Account we have of some Ages that are past, is but very indistinct and confus'd, if compar'd with what we have of others: And no other can be expected than that this should leave us in great Uncertainty. And yet we know in the general, that where the Cause is the same, the Effects may very rationally be expected to be much the same. Now the Passions of Mankind with which the Times are much affected and influenc'd, their Selfishness, Ambition and Covetousness, Pride and Petulance, Distrust and Jealousy, Deceitfulness and Treachery, are generally the same in all Times, and differ little, any farther than as Opportunities and Occasions for the venting them may vary at different Seasons: And since these are generally the Sources of Mens most bitter and heavy Complaints, I cannot perceive it has any thing in it at all surprizing, if the Streams in the Main run pretty near alike, any farther than want of Opportunity may in some Cases, prove an Hindrance, and create a Difference. There may indeed at some certain Seasons be new Appearances, arising from a Combination of different Circumstances: But the very same Temper of Spirit as is peculiarly discover'd at any one particular Juncture, we should find upon strict search has appear'd before in other Forms and Shapes, according to the Posture Things then were in; and therefore it is no wonder at all for it to appear again, in a way suited to the different Posture we find Things in at present.

THO' it must be own'd that we are not any Thing near so well acquainted with former Times as with our own; and that History is one Thing, and Experience another; and that Things com-
 plained

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plained of a: a Distance are apt to shew much less, and seem more light, than such as are near, just at Hand, and actually felt; yet have we I conceive Knowledge enough of Ages past, to be able with a Satisfactory Certainty to gather this that no Age can be mention'd that has been without its Inconveniences, Disorders, and Complaints, any more than the present. And as we have Reason enough to believe that there never yet was an Age in which there were not many Things to be complain'd of, that were grievous, and tended to create Uneasiness; so is it very evident that that Man must bear unreasonably hard on the present Age, that will say we have little or nothing that is commendable, or matter of Rejoicing to be found, among us.

'Tis true, we have a very feeling Sense of present Difficulties, whereas we have the Knowledge of what was felt heretofore, only by Report, which being distant, is not so apt to impress and strike us: But still nothing can be more sure, than that some way or other, all Times have had their Fatigues and Troubles. We must suppose the World, and all Things in it, and Man in particular, to have chang'd their Nature, if we imagine it otherwise: And it has in all Ages been the study and endeavour of wise Men to bear their Share in the common Lot with Constancy of Mind and Composedness, rather than let their Spirits be roil'd or sunk, or their Endeavours discourag'd, with Respect to proper Methods for Relief.

THERE is indeed so vast a Variety of Complaints that have been, and may be made by the busy and restless Minds of Men, that it is no easy Thing to reckon them up: And yet in the General,

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ral, this is what we may very safely stand by, that there are none that any can make in the Days we live in, that either were not, or might not have been made in the Days of our Forefathers. There were (it is well known) heretofore Disorders in the Natural, the Moral, the Civil World, as well as more lately. In former Ages at certain Seasons, there were excessive Droughts, and as excessive Rains, Pestilential Diseases, violent stormy Winds, Earthquakes, and Inundations as well as in Modern Times: And Men too were ignorant, and weak, and vicious, foolish and base, deceitful and treacherous, ungrateful and boisterous, formerly, as well as at the present. Oppression. Wrong, Injustice and other Wickedness hath been as notorious in former as latter Ages: And the best Princes, and the wisest Ministry, have had their Failings, and been impos'd on, by designing Agents, and disappointed in some of the most promising Schemes, before they could be brought to bear, heretofore, as well as now. If we complain, either of the reneral Wickednefs of the Times, or of their Infidelity, or of their Uncertainty and Unsettledness, or of the infatiable Greediness and Covetousness of the Age we live in, or of the Hardships we may any of us have met with through Mismanagements, we may find like Complaints, as well as like Grounds, in the Times that were before us. In this Respect, we may very safely say with *Solomon* and stand to it, *The Thing that hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no new Thing under the Sun.* And then it follows. *Is there any Thing whereof it may be said, see this is new? It hath been already of old Time which was before us.*

Eccl. i. 9.

Ver. 10.

Which

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Which latter Passage is thus ingemously Paraphras-
 ed on by Bishop *Patrick*. “Is any Man able to
 “contradict this, and point us to the Thing which
 “is altogether new, and hath never been seen or
 “heard before? It may appear perhaps so to him;
 “but that is to be imputed meerly to the short-
 “ness of humane Life: Which makes us ignorant
 “of what hath passed in former Ages (save only
 “in a few Things, transmitted down to us by
 “observing Men.) For had we continu’d many
 “Generations, that which now seems new and un-
 “usual to us, would have appear’d familiar, and
 “of great Antiquity, as really it is.” * Were
 we better acquainted with former Ages, we should
 not fail to find, that they had either like Evils to
 complain of with us, or other Evils from which
 live are freed. For any to suppose or Imagine that
 they that liv’d before us were all Giants, while we
 are all Dwarfs; to represent them always in the
 Sunshine, and our selves perpetually in stormy or
 gloomy Weather; to imagine that they had no-
 thing among them but what was good, and we
 nothing in these Days but what is naught; to
 fancy they were always easy, while we are often
 and many Ways disturb’d; or that they were all
 honest, while we are over-run with Design and
 Intrigue, is very weak and foolish, and a shew-
 ing ourselves to be great Strangers to Mankind,
 and to have little consulted, or little improv’d
 by

* Eadem fabula semper in mundo agitur mutatis
 duntaxat personis: Sicut &c Thucydides Lib. 3. in-
 quit similia accidere, donec maneat eadem hominum
 natura, Victor: Strigelius.

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by consulting, the History of Ages past. But farther,

3. DISCONTENTED Complaints of the present Times, compar'd with the former, are there, fore unreasonab, because as bad as the Times now are, (or will appear if we make the worst of Things) we still have as many Comforts and Blessings to rejoice in and be thankful for, as those that liv'd in any former Times could pretend to. It is easy to be observ'd, that they that are addicted to complaining of the present Times compar'd with the foregoing, overlook the many good Things of their own Times, and strangely lessen them, that they may have the more Scope for magnifying former Ages by way of Opposition: But I appeal to any that have the Understanding of Men, whether this be a wise Method. Is this a Thing that can be justify'd? What Sense is therein it, what good can it tend to, for any of us to be so taken up in admiring the Blessings with which they were favour'd who liv'd before us, as not to mind the Mercies we enjoy at present, which perhaps if all Things were consider'd fairly, and laid in the Ballance together, would be found to exceed and out-weigh them? Why should we view the apprehended Advantages of former Times thro' a magnifying Glass, and in the mean while take Pains to make the Blessings of our own Days appear as inconsiderable as is possible? This will never bear scanning.

IT is evidently a great Weakness, in any Respect to run into an excessive Veneration of Antiquity. One Proof of the Weakness of this Method is this, that such a Disposition is generally accom-

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accompany'd with a low and disparaging Conceit of whatever the present Age affords, which is unbecoming, unjust, and unaccountably fordid. But let Men pretend what they will, we can run no Hazard in averting, that all the Wisdom, Learning, and Goodness, that is attainable by the Blessing of Heaven upon Diligence, Industry and Care, was not ingross'd by former Ages. All the Riches of Nature were not so fully discover'd to the Men that liv'd before us, as that there is little or nothing left for the Benefit or Gratification of after Enquirers. Even in latter Times, many prevailing Errors have been rectify'd, many Abuses reformed, many Arts perfected, many very profitable Inventions discover'd, and many very great and noble, and generous Acts perform'd. And why should such Things as these be forgotten by us, if we desire or aim at a just Companion? And why should we be more sensible of the Difficulties than of the Blessings of the present Times? How ungrateful are we herein to GOD, who in many Respects has singularly favour'd us! How unkind to ourselves, to continue poring upon what is discouraging, when we have a much brighter Scene to entertain us, if we would but behold and consider it! This is neither like Men that are wise, or that desire to be so.

If we in this Land should be at the Pains to look back to any past Age or Time on which we could fasten, I cannot perceive we could fix on any, that had either more or more valuable Blessings afforded it, or less Cause of Complaint, than we have had since the Glorious Revolution in 1688. We never had more Light among us in Divine Things, more Plenty or a greater Abundance
of

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of Spiritual Helps, more Liberty to be as Good as we will, or a better Prospect of the Increase and Continuance of our present Mercies, than through the wonderful Goodness of GOD we enjoy at this Day. We never had a better Prince upon the Throne, or one whole joint Interest and Inclination it more was to consult our true Happiness and Welfare, than his present Majesty King GEORGE, of whose Coronation this Day reminds us in its yearly Returns; and at the same Time I think we should be much to blame, if it did not also remind us of the unspeakable Difficulties we were in some Time before, which we were this Way carry'd through, and the terrifying Fears which were this Way dispell'd. We never had the Royal Line so strengthen'd by a Race of Princes to succeed, all in the same Interest and Measures, as in the Illustrious House of *HANOVER* at this Day. True and Right Notions of Liberty never prevail'd more than now, notwithstanding all the Art and Sophistry that has been us'd to ridicule and explode them: Nor had we ever a fairer Prospect of being deliver'd from the Spirit of Infatuation that came in with the Testauration, which has bid so fair for ruining us over and over, than we have under the mild, and wise, and steady Management of our present Sovereign, whose Sagacity and consummate Experience give us growing Hopes whatever Pains designing Men may take, and what ever Arts they may use to baffle or to abate them. And shall we not then be thankful to Almighty GOD, instead of running on to Perpetuity in the complaining Strain?

ALL this indeed is no Argument, but that some thing farther might yet be done for the strengthening

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ning of our common Security, and the encouraging of those that are heartily embarqu'd in the publick Interest, and the weakning such as upon all Occasions are discovering their Enmity against it, if there were but a Disposition for it. Nor can it be pretended but that the Weakness of some and the Baseness of others, has of late given such a Shock to Publick Credit, as that it will require Time, and Care, and Pains, and Application to settle it upon such a Basis as we can reasonably hope and expect will be firm and lasting. And yet I shan't stick to say. That that Man, be he who he will, that under Pretence of commending any former Times, does nor acknowledge with Thankfulness, the great and singular Blessings of Almighty GOD bestow'd upon these BRITISH Islands in the present Age, is a Monster of Ingratitude: And he cannot but appear so, to any one that duly observes, how many and how remarkable the Mercies are that we enjoy, in the midst of all our Complaints and Murmurs, I add farther,

4. THAT discontented Complaints of the present Times compar'd with the former, are therefore unreasonable, becauie 'tis we ourselves that help to make the Times so bad as they are. For the Times are, what the Men are that live in them: And therefore in order to the mending of the Times, Men must mend themselves. There are many that make it a Part of their daily Employment to run down the Times, and pass heavy Censures on the Age they live in, who by their ill Tempers and Practices help to make it so bad as it is; and might easily discern it too, would

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they

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they but lay their Hands upon their Hearts, and enquire into themselves, with a real Desire to know the worst. Now what can we make of this? Where can be the Wisdom on't, for any of us to transfer to the Times, the blame which we ought to lay upon our selves? We may be assur'd that our taking this Method, will neither help to Remedy what is amiss, nor in the least lessen our Guilt: It will neither recommend us to GOD's Favour, nor help to screen us from his Resentment. Let the Difficulties and Troubles, the Exercises and Trials which we any of us meet with be what they will, 'twould be wiser in itself, more for GOD's Honour, more advantageous to us, and more happy in the Issue, for us to ascribe them to our own Sins, than to throw the blame upon the Times. This way, instead of bemoaning ourselves, as treated with over much Rigor and Severity, we should be bro't to humble ourselves under the Hand of GOD, and lie low before him; we should repent of our Sins, and amend our Ways: And would but a Number do so, we might hope that the Times would mend upon our Hands, and our Complaints sensibly abate, and in Time quite disappear and vanish. It is a wise Observation of Solomon, That the Foolishness of Man perverteth his Way, and his Heart fretteth against the Lord: Which is a Text that was hardly ever more sensibly or more remarkably verify'd, than in our late unhappy Misconduct, which partly occasion'd, and partly accompany'd that sinking of our Publick Credit, which is so much the Ground of our present general Uneasiness. This actually was our Case. We first through our Foolishness perverted our Way; neglected GOD, and our Duty, to him, and the Rules

Prov. xix.
7.

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Rules which he had given; and broke in upon the Bounds that he had fix'd, and gave our Corruption Scope; and instead of driving against Temptations, freely yielded to them as they came in our Way, or even took Pains to seek out for them, and twist Scourges for our own Correction; and then when we had ensnar'd ourselves, instead of blaming ourselves for our Folly, as soon as a common Terror made the sad Effects visible, we were too apt to fall to *fretting against the Lord*, and blaming Providence for differing such unexpected Disasters to come upon us. And indeed it is but too common with us, when we have forfeited our Mercies, and contracted Guilt, and brought ourselves into pressing Straits, to be backward to take the blame to ourselves, owning that it is our Sins that keep good Things from us, and bring those Troubles upon us which create us the greatest Uneasiness. When our Folly has expos'd us several Ways at once, we often commit this grand Error after all the rest, that we imagine GOD is unkind to us, and murmur at his Providence as rigorous in its Dispensations: But this is downright Stupidity.

WHATSOEVER the Times have in 'em that is afflictive or discouraging, in the midst of our manifold Mercies, we should do well to charge upon our Sins, and for them should we be humbled: And while this is neglected, to cry out upon the Times, as if we had any Reason to expect or hope that they'd grow remarkably better, while we cherish'd the Temper that had expos'd us, is just as if a Man that had a threading Distemper, should think of growing better, upon his being barely remov'd into another Room in

Matthew
xxiii. 30.

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the same House, or lying in another Bed, while his disorder all the while was inward, and so deeply riveted, as that no change of Place, till that was corrected, could produce any considerable Alteration. The *Pharisees* fancy'd that if they *had been in the Days of their Fathers, they would not have been Partakers in the Blood of the Prophets*: Whereas in Reality, they by their Sins outdid their Fathers. I doubt they that are loose and vicious and wicked in such Times as those in which our Lot is cast, would have been, or would remain Wicked in any Times. A Briar would be but a Briar if it should grow in Paradise: And a Lilly would be a Lilly, tho' it should grow in a Wilderness. But yet farther,

5. DISCONTENTED Complaints of the present Times compar'd with the former are therefore manifestly unrealizable, because let the Times in which we are, afford ever so much ground of Complaint, we may be assur'd they would have been a great deal worse, had we had our just Desert. We have had a Spirit of Malignity among us, that has storm'd, and rag'd, and threaten'd to break all Bounds, but hitherto Thanks be to GOD it has been restrain'd and curb'd, or else we had been long 'ere this in an Universal Confusion; and it had been but just, if we had been left involv'd in it. We that are now complaining how much and how sensibly Property has been of late affected, by the Methods in which the Schemes that have been on Foot have been pursued, and bow strangely Credit is sunk on a hidden, and how many Families are by these Means straiten'd and empoverish'd, may easily perceive
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how we might have been in a Thousandfold worse Circumstances, than we yet are in, after all our Murmurs and Clamours. We might have been in as bad a Condition as some of our Neighbours, who once had Money without Paper, then Money and Paper, then Paper and no Money, and at length are like to have neither Paper nor Money, and indeed nothing left, that they can call their own, but Poverty and Slavery. We might have had our happy Settlement, quite over-turn'd, and a Popish Prince ruling over us, back'd with a Foreign Force, seizing all our Properties at once as his own, by a general Plunder, and trampling our Laws, Liberty, and Religion too under his Feet, without Controul or Check. Thus it would have been with us could our Enemies have had their Wills: And this most certainly had been our Case, had we been visited as our Iniquities have deferred. Wherefore then should we go on complaining as if GOD dealt hardly with us? *Wherefore do living Men complain*, especially when they have so many valuable Blessings remaining? *Men for the Punishment of their Sins*; Especially when the Punishment inflicted falls so far short of what has been deserv'd by the Sins committed. It would much more become us to cry out, with Hearts suitably affected, *It is of the Lord's Mercies we are not consum'd, because his Compassions fail not.* Again,

Lam. iii.
39.

Ver. 22.

6. DISCONTENTED Complaints of the present Times compar'd with the former, and therefore unreasonable, because the giving way to them has a Tendency to continue them still as bad

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bad as they are, if not to render them yet worse. They tend this Way, as they unfit us for our Duty, by dishearning our Prayers, and making our Hands hang down, and our Knees feeble; and by enervating regular Endeavours in order to Relief, from which pursu'd with Vigor we might hope for a very good Effect. This is a Way that will strangely cramp Industry, and discourage Activity and Application, and breed Sloth and Laziness, by affording a Plea and an Excuse, a Cover and a Defence for it. The Conclusion to which this would naturally lead us is this, that the Case is desperate and remediless, and that therefore any Attempts are vain, we must let Things take their Course, and all of us shift for ourselves as well as we can, without any concern for the Publick. But had our Fathers before us, in several Cases given into such Thoughts as these, I Appeal to you yourselves, and your own Reason, whether Things had not been much worse with us their Descendants than they now are. Let us therefore be ashamed of giving into such Complaints with Respect to the Times, as to be diverted from and discourag'd in our present Duty, as ever we would not have our Posterity that come after us sit down and curse us.

To this it may be added. That discontented Complaints of the Nature before specify'd when persisted in, argue such Stiffness and Sullenness tinder Divine Rebukes, as seldom fails of drawing down GOD's Indignation, in some Way that is peculiarly remarkable. So that if Persons instead of bearing the Indignation of the Lord because they have tinned against him, and endeavouring

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vouring to improve by it, continue to run on in a complaining Strain, murmuring against GOD and his Vice-gerents,. they may provoke him to that Degree, as rhat he shall blast the Counsels and Endeavours of those, who with the Divine Blessing it might have been hop'd, would have prov'd Healers of Breaches, and Restorers of Paths to dwell in. And then, what besides utter Ruin could be the Consequence!

7. DISCONTENTED Complaints of the Times present, compar'd with former Times, are therefore plainly unreasonable, because such a complaining Spirit if it be not check'd, is never to be satisfy'd, let the Times be ever so much altered for the better. If we once freely give ourselves vent this Way, and take delight in so doing, there's no knowing where we shall stop, or what will ever satisfy us. Let us suppose the Matter of our present Uneasiness intirely remov'd, and Things strangely involv'd and disjointed set to rights to a Degree beyond what could reasonably be expected, and any such farther Additions made to our happy Settlement, as appear most likely to add to the Ease and Comfort of the hearty disinterested Lovers of their Country; yet still if we are possess'd of a complaining Spirit, we may say after all, that such and such *former Days were better than these*, and this or that or t'other Thing *is the Cause*: And so we are but where we were. It is hardly possible that all Things should so harmonize at once, as that there should be nothing left remaining for such a Spirit to fasten on, that should support and feed it. And so we shall hold on murmuring and complaining to the World's End:
And

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And let Things be ever so much alter'd and mended, we shall find somewhat still wanting that shall keep us always uneasy. But this is a Temper that as it is highly displeasing to GOD, so must it necessarily be very uncomfortable to those that give Way to it, and make them burdensome to all that are about them, whether they are above them, or below them, or upon a Level with them. We have a memorable Instance of this kind in the *Israelites* of old, who had GOD going before them, and many Tokens of his special Presence with them, and Manna rain'd down from Heaven upon them in the Wilderness, but they did not value it, and were uneasy, and free in their Complaints, because they miss'd the Garlick and Onions they had in *Egypt*: And when they once gave way to such Comparative Complaints, we hardly find they ever ceas'd, till GOD at last was so provok'd, that he sware in his Wrath they should never enter into his Rest. Once more,

8. DISCONTENTED Complaints of the Times present, compar'd with the foregoing, are therefore unreasonable, because these very Times that we complain of, may for any Thing we know, usher in much better Times than any that this Land has seen hitherto, and than we can at a Distance be able to imagine. The *Israelites* complain'd of their Fatigues, and yet they brought the next Generation at last to a most happy Settlement in the Land of *Canaan*. The *Jews* reckon'd themselves an undone People, when once the *Romans* gat footing among them: And yet soon after there appear'd the *Messiah*, who had been so
long

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long expected, in whom all Nations were to be blessed: And their having *Judea* in their Power, was the Means of making him the sooner and the better known all over the World.

ALL Parts of *Europe* complain'd most miserably at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century, of a Deluge of Impurity, an intolerable Tyranny, such Ignorance as was little short of Barbarity, and most abominable Corruptions, that were more than could well be numbred: And yet soon after, was GOD pleas'd to bring about a wonderful Reformation, which gave Things in all these *Western* Parts a quite different Face and Aspect from what they had before; several Nations one after another being spirited to cast off the *Romish* Yoke. And in this Land of ours, how rais'd were our Fears, and how low our Hopes, and how full were we of Complaints, in the Reign of King *James II*, when God was pleas'd to make use of the very Greatness of our pressing Danger, as a Means to open the Eyes of a drowsy Nation, and rouze them to that Degree, as to make them willing to receive and welcome a Deliverer whom he was pleas'd to send us; whom if we ever forger or mention without Honour, we are the most ungrateful People under Heaven.

So tho' we now are full of our Complaints, of Frauds and Abuses, the Decay of Credit, the Shipwreck that many Families that were in flourishing Circumstances have made of their Fortunes, and the shaking of a great Multitude of others, together with the Consequences likely hereupon to ensue, yet who knows, when these come to lie before *British* Parliament, what Discoveries may arise from their Inquiries, and what an happy Settlement of

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Liberty

³⁰Liberty and Property jointly, may be the Result of their Consultations, if we take but Care to do our Duty, in recommending these Matters from Time to Time to GOD in serious Prayer, which has been the Way of our obtaining great Blessings formerly and may be so still. As apt as we now are to complain, the Great and Blessed GOD whose Kingdom ruleth over all, may for any Thing we know, have great and glorious Purposes to serve among us, by the very Way in which he carries us thro' these Difficulties, by the Light that shall by this Means break in upon us with Respect to our most valuable Interests, and by the Determinations that shall effectually bring Things into the proper Order, that have been oddly inverted. Tho' GOD may have so much Mercy in Store for us, as thar our Complaints may not herein prevent him, they may yet lay a Foundation for that Regret and Shame upon a Review, as may be very cutting: And for that Reason among others it will become us to be cautious, and submissive, and to study what the Times call us to, without murmuring against GOD, or disheartning ourselves.

THE Motion therefore which I have to make, in the Conclusion of the whole, and which the several Considerations I have propos'd very strongly inforce, is this; that we take Care to cherish an humble and thankful, rather than a complaining Spirit, and earnestly endeavour as much as in us lies to correct that petulant Humour, which is highly displeasing to GOD, justly offensive to our Governors, and altogether unprofitable to ourselves; which can do no Good of any Sort, but tends directly to a great deal of Mischief.

LET

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LET us leave it to the Great, the infinitely Wise GOD who knoweth the End from the Beginning, to take his own Time and Way to serve his own purposes, either with Respect to the Publick, or our own Concernments. Whatever Grounds we at any Time may apprehend we have to resent Things as far as they are under human Management, let us yet submit to them with Quietness as they are of GOD's ordering, concluding that he has wise Reasons for all his Procedures, and all his Permissions. Let us still rely upon his good Providence, in the Way of our Duty, and never suffer ourselves to call in question his Wisdom, Goodness, or justice.

WITH Respect to the general Governor of the World, let us not only be contented but Thanful, even in the Condition in which we now are: Thankful at least that Things are no worse with us, and that we have so many valuable Blessings remaining. As to our Sovereign, let us endeavour to make his Return Home which we so earnestly expect in a little Time, as comfortable as is possible, without adding to his Toils and Cares which are already sufficiently heavy, by giving way to a peevish Uneasiness. Let us do our Duty to GOD in the first Place, and bow down under his Mighty Hand; and to our King and Country in the next Place, upon all Occasions. Let us not leave our proper Station, or quit our Rank, because Things have gone against us: Or afflict ourselves endlessly at such Things as cannot possibly be help'd. Let us rather look forward than backward, which becomes wise Men. Let us walk uprightly with GOD, as Just *Noah* did, at a Time when all Flesh had corrupted their Way. Tho' it must be own'd, the Age is bad enough, to what might have been expected

³² after all our Warnings, Calls and Helps, yet let us, like Fire that burns with the greatest Vehemence in the coldest Weather, endeavour to be so much the more wise and watchful, and circumspect, and humble, and religious. Let us remember that there is no Age so bad as that it can hinder us from being Good, if we are but fixedly dispos'd that Way; as well as none so Good; as not to have Ground of Complaint against Defects and Disorders remaining. And since God had the Management of all former Days, and will have of all that are future, let us freely leave him the Management of the present too: And take but Care in a continu'd Course to do the Things that are right in his Sight, and becoming our Holy Profession, and then be the Days we live in better or worse, we may have Peace; and may hope that our last Day and the closing part of Life will be comfortable; and that when we quit this lower World, which is a mutable Scene, in which we have multiply'd Evidence there is nothing certain, we shall enter upon a State of Blessedness, that will admit of no Mixtures or Imbitterments, no Changes or Alterations, through Everlasting Ages.

FINIS.