

*The Prudence of the Serpent,  
and Innocence of the Dove*

by

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The Prudence of the  
SERPENT,  
And Innocence of the  
D O V E.





*The Prudence of the and  
Innocence of the Dove.*

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A  
SERMON

Preach'd at

EXON,

*May the 6th. 1713.*

Before a Numerous Assembly of the  
Dissenting Ministers  
OF  
DEVON and CORNWAL.

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*Publisch'd at their Common Request.*

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MATTH. X. 16.

— *Be ye therefore. Wise as Serpents,  
and Harmless as Doves.*

**O**UR Blessed Lord JESUS, as we have an Account in this Chapter, sending forth his Twelve Apostles, gave them suitable Instructions for their Conduct and Management: Instructions that are applicable, and design'd to be of Use, to his sincere Followers, whether Ministers or People in all Ages.

The Words before us, contain a piece of Advice, that can be unsuitable to none, and is never out of season. It was occasion'd by our Lord's telling his Disciples, That He *sent them forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves*; and *therefore* He would have them be *wise* and *harmless*, or innocent: But for as much as this has been the common Case of their Successors in the Sacred Ministry from one Age to another; and in a measure the Case of Serious Christians too, Who have follow'd them in Faith and Patience, and an holy Conversation; both the One and the Other, ought to reckon themselves as much concern'd in this Advice, as if they had been the Persons to whom it was particularly address'd. And as it little becomes us, that are Ministers, to endeavour to exempt ourselves from any Duties which we urge with freedom on the People whom we Minister to, so neither can this Advice of being *wise* and *harmless*, reasonably be suppos'd to come with ever the less force upon us, for suiting our People joyntly with us. All are here concern'd; tho' none more than *Ministers*, who in this as well as other Matters ought to be Examples to their Flocks.

I move therefore that our Thoughts may fallen upon Three Things, which here offer themselves to our Consideration.

I. Let

I. Let us take particular notice what our Lord recommends to our Thoughts, Esteem and Practise.

II. Let us observe the Way He takes to insinuate his Advice, and impress it with the more advantage.

III. Let us mind the Connexion fix'd between the Things recommended; which are closely joyn'd together, and should never be put asunder.

Let us begin with some Remarks upon the *Wisdom* and *Harmlessness*, or Innocence here recommended. They are Things so excellent, that a due regard to our own Peace, Usefulness, or Safety, or to the Credit of our holy Profession, or to the approving ourselves to our Common LORD, may and ought to stir us up earnestly to endeavour after them.

Eccles. ii.  
13.

Prov. iii.  
13.

Eccles. ii.  
14.  
Rom. xvi.  
19.

1 Cor.  
xiv. 20.

The first Thing recommended is *Wisdom* which in Solomon's account, *excelleth Folly, as far as Light, excelleth Darkness*. 'Tis a most valuable, needful, and useful Ornament to us, as Men or as Christians: And to none more so, than *Ministers*. 'Tis often recommended both, in the *Old Testament* and in the *New*. We are told, That *Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom*: And, that *the Wise Man's Eyes are in his Head*, while the Fool *the Fool walketh in Darkness*. We are bid to be *Wise unto that which is Good*, tho' *Simple concerning Evil*. We are to be *Wise* to discern Truth from Errour, Duty from Sin, Helps from Hindrances, and Friends from Enemies, and act agreeably. We should be *Men in Understanding*, tho' *Children in Malice*. *Wisdom*, is what we should all aspire after, under a conviction of its Excellence. 'Tis what we should, endeavour to reach, in the use of all apt and proper Means. We should aim at a solid Knowledge of Things Spiritual, especially such as relate to practice. We should strive to act as Persons that duly distinguish between Things and Things, and between Times and Seasons, and that are careful to manage and secure our main Interest to the best Advantage. But none have more need than *Ministers* to excell in *Wisdom*. 'Tis necessary to their carrying it rightly between GOD and Men



Men; so as to Honour Him, and be truly Beneficial to them. 'Tis necessary in the discharge of their several Offices, that they may be apt to serve their proper Ends. Without it, there's no room to expect they should either be so useful as they were design'd to be to the Household of Faith, or able to guard against the Enemies of their Function; no likelihood of their keeping sacred Things from Contempt, or carrying it becomingly either towards those that are Strangers to Religion, or that differ from each other in their Religious Sentiments and Usages. We of all People are in Duty bound to take care to *Walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as Wise*. And to *walk in Wisdom towards them that are without, that with well-doing we may put to silence the Ignorance of Foolish Men: That whereas they speak evil of us, as of Evil-Doers they may be asham'd that falsely accuse our good Conversation in Christ*. There is no Case, Circumstance, or Exigence, no part of our Duty, Work, or Office, no part of our Lives, no Season we can be in, in which *Wisdom* is not requisite: And therefore it becomes us to Study it all our Days; and the more we improve in it, the greater will be our Happiness, Security, and Comfort.

Ephes. v.  
15.  
Col. iv. 5.  
1 Pet. ii.  
15. and  
Ch. iii. 16.

The Second Thing recommended is *Harmlessness* or *Innocence*. The Word ἀκέραιοι which we translate *harmless*, signifies simple, pure, unmix'd, untainted, inoffensive, or sincere. It intimates Purity, and Meekness, Mildness and Wrathlessness. One Copy has the Word ἀπλουρατοι \*, which is much of the same import, and signifies simple and inoffensive. The full Sense can hardly be express'd by one single word in our Language. That of *Innocence* comes nearest it; and it is agreed all, that that is of great Use, and an unspeakable Ornament. We are not however by *Innocence* to understand a Purity that is altogether unspotted, which is not to be attain'd in the Case of laps'd Creatures; but a freedom from any cherish'd Guilt and Impurity, without which Christianity proves insignificant, and cannot answer its End. We are to be simple and plain-hearted, and without folds or guile. We should follow after universal Holiness, and that with all our mighty knowing that the more we advance in it, the more like we become to GOD, the more Credit we shall bring to

Religion, and the nearer Approaches we may hope to make to Perfection. These are Things in which our Lord JESUS would have all his Followers (and especially his Ministers) to be careful to excell; never fixing themselves strait and narrow Limits, or fancying themselves arriv'd at such a Pitch as to be past Improvements.

II. Let us farther observe the Way our Lord takes to insinuate his Advice, and impress it with the more Advantage. He takes the Emblematical Way herein to give us Instruction, which has been much us'd by the Best Masters. He does not barely recommend *Prudence* and *Innocence*, but bids us be *Wise as Serpents*, and *Harmless as Doves*. An Illustration is drawn from inferior Creatures, to whom we are often in the Sacred Scriptures refer'd for Instruction. We are all in common, especially if we are apt to give way to Sloth, sent to that little contemptible Creature the *Ant*, to learn Diligence and Providence: And *Israel* of old was sent to the dull *Ox*, and stupid *Ass*, to learn Gratitude to their Great Benefactor. And at another time, the same People were bid to learn to be observant of Times and Seasons, of the *Stork*, the *Turtle*, the *Crane* and the *Swallow*, *who*, 'tis said, *observe the time of their coming*. After the same manner, we are here bid to learn *Wisdom* and *Innocence* or *Harmlessness*, of *Serpents* and *Doves*. I conceive therefore it may be worth our while to Consider,

Prov vi.  
6.  
Isa. i. 3.

Jer. viii.  
7.

1. The Standard that is fix'd; or the Creatures of whom we are to learn the Things recommended. And,

2. The Conformity that is requir'd to that Standard; or wherein, and how far we are in the Things that are mention'd, to receive Instruction from them. And,

(1.) I begin with the Standard that is here fix'd; or the Creatures of whom we are to learn the Things recommended. *Serpents* and *Doves* are propos'd for our Model: They are to be our Teachers. The one is fix'd as the Standard of *Wisdom* and *sagacity*, and the other of *harmlessness* and *Innocence*. By proposing them for our Instructors our Lord JESUS takes that for granted,

granted, which is own'd by all *Naturalists*, and is a Matter of common Observation; *viz.* That these Creatures are peculiarly remarkable and eminent upon these Accounts. And,

1. As for Serpents, they have ever been reckon'd eminent for Sagacity. 'Twas the peculiar Subtlety of this Creature, that was the grand Reason of the Devil's assuming its shape in order to the deceiving and ruining our first Parents. *The Serpent*, it is observ'd, *was more subtle*, or cunning, and crafty, wise and sagacious, *than any Beast of the Field*. The LXX Interpreters in that Place makes use of the Word ὀρόνιμος, which is the very same we meet with in the Text. This remark of Scripture is confirm'd by *Naturalists*, who have taken great notice of the *Serpent's* Subtlety, and recorded a great many Observations concerning it. \* Creatures of this Sort were common in the Countries that border'd upon *Palestine*. They were often met with in the Deserts of *Arabia*, and in *Africa*, tho' not in these Parts of the World. However, the Instruction drawn from them is the same, and ought to have the same force upon us, as if we were daily conversant with them.

Gen. iii.  
1.

\* *Vid.* Bocharti Hierozoic. Lib. I. Cap. iv.

2. The other Sort of Creatures propos'd to us is that of *Doves* or Pigeons, whom we may behold every Day. That we might not imagine our Lord recommended a fraudulent Craft, He adds, *Harmless as Doves*. These Creatures have by many been suppos'd to be without Gall; But erroneously, says the truly Honourable Mr. *Boyle*, who was a very curious Observer of the Works of Nature. However, all agree, That as among Beasts, none are more innocent than Sheep; so among Birds, none are more innocent than *Doves*; and they upon that Account are the fitter to be an Instructive Emblem, when Innocence is recommended joyn'tly with Prudence. And then,

(2) As to the Conformity that is requir'd to Standard fix'd; it is proper for us to observe, both how far it is to go, and where it is to stop.

(1) Let

(1.) Let us Consider how far the Conformity in this Case should go. Several of the Primitive Christian Fathers \* mention a variety of Particulars, in which we should imitate *Serpents* in *Wisdom* take notice of some of the chief of them.

\* St. *Basi-*  
*si; Theodo-*  
*ret,* and  
others.

1. *Serpents* are so Wise, that when they are expos'd to Danger, they still secure the Main, and save their Head, which is the Seat of their Life, and either hide it in the Earth, or cover it with the wreathed Circles of their Bodies, which they rather offer in any part, to the Blows of such as pursue them, than suffer their Heads to receive any damage: And so saving their Heads, tho' they may be sorely wounded, and have gash upon gash, they are yet easily cemented and heal'd again. This Way of theirs may and should teach us the laudable Prudence of taking Care under Assaults to make sure of the Main, and whatever we may be call'd to lose or to suffer, and be expos'd to, as to our Bodies, or Goods, or Name and Reputation, still to secure our Chief Interest, and keep a good Conscience; which being preserv'd, all other Losses we can sustain, may be born without Difficulty, because they may be easily made up again. Or we may take it thus As *Serpents* are so Wise as still to secure their Head, and keep joyn'd to that, so also whatever we suffer for adhering to our Religious Principles we should take care to adhere to our Head, which is CHRIST; *from whom the whole Body fitly joyn'd together, and compacted, according to the effectual working in the measure of every Part, maketh increase of the Body, unto the edifying of itself.* Being once united unto Him by Faith, we should take heed of being separated. Nay, being joyn'd to Him in a Bond: that is indissoluble, it should not be grievous to us for his Sake to lose what the World reckons most valuable, and to expose our Bodies; and pour forth our Blood when we are clearly call'd to it. We should stick at nothing, provided we may but be *found in CHRIST, not having our own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is the Faith of CHRIST.* Constantly thus adhering to Him by Faith, He that is our Head will heal all our Wounds, even that of Death among the rest, and make us *all to be One, that*

Eph. iv.  
10.

Phil. iii.  
9.

as

as *He is in the father, and the Father in Him, so we also may be One in Them*, as He himself has express'd it. Joh. xvii. 21.

2. The *Serpent* gathers together the Poyson of his whole Body into his Throat, and prudently by a natural Instinct endeavours to keep it there, that when there is occasion for it, he may have it ready for Self-defence; And yet he does not forcibly or openly avenge himself of his Enemies, but secretly, as an Opportunity offers. So we Christians ought to have the Word of Truth always in readiness, that we may pour it forth upon the Enemies of Truth, as a sort of Salutary Poyson, which seizing the Heart of Man, makes him to dye savingly, both to himself and to this World. But this is not to be done in a violent or clamorous way, but in the most proper Season; when it may be most, likely effectually to answer the End design'd.

3. Serpents are remarkably diligent: to avoid the Inticements of Charmers. *David* observes, that they will not *hearken to the Voice* of such, tho' they *charm never for so wisely*. They shut their Ears that they may not be drawn, out of their safe Caverns, and so expos'd. In like manner it becomes Christians, and none more than Ministers, to shut their Ears to all the vain Fables of the wise Men of this World; to all the perverse Persuasions of Men of ill Prinriples and Designs; to all the deceitful Promises of this. World, and all the Applauses of soothing Flatterers, and menaces of their insulting Enemies, that no Persuasions, Promises or Threatnings may be able to draw them off from the Faith, and the Doctrine of the Truth when they have once acknowledg'd it; or from those Religious Principles and Practises which they have fallen in with upon good Grounds, and which they have found GOD has own'd them in, by affording them his Presence and Blessing. Again, Psal. lvii. 5.

4. When the *Serpent* would get rid of his old Skin he winds himself thro' strait and narrow Passages in Caverns and Trees, and so drawing off his Coat from Head to Tail, he lays, down his Old-age and as it were, renews himself again. This observ'd by *Aristotle* \*, and many others after him. In like manner De Nat. Animal. L. VIII. C. xvii.

Serious

Serious Christians should put off the Old, and put on the New Man, and so be renew'd in the Spirit of their Minds, and that more and more; and not only enter at the strait Gate of the Kingdom of Heaven, but be entirely chang'd into the Divine Likeness.

5. The *Serpent* being sensible what an aversion Mankind, and other Creatures have to him, prudently Creeps out of the way and hides himself, and does not rashly expose himself to Danger, by being forward to provoke and fight. So neither should the Servants of CHRIST affect to expose themselves needlessly; or any further than Faithfulness in their Duty obliges them. If others out of Ill-will and Contempt, will separate themselves from them, they should be content to keep by themselves; being thankful if under any Disadvantages that attend them, they can but have the Prefence of their GOD, and the Peace of their Consciences. They should not run into Dangers needlessly, but avoid the insults of their Enemies, as far as they can without exposing Religion; Nor should they throw away their Lives or their Liberty, if they are able to preserve them without Sin.

Some among the Primitive Christians appear to have been utter Strangers, it must be confess'd, to this sort of Management. Often would they with great Boldness appear before the Civil Tribunals, and own themselves the Followers of a Crucify'd JESUS, when it was present Death to make such an Acknowledgment.- And many threw their Lives away, like Persons that were weary of them, when they had none that gave any Informations against them; and they might easily have been safe, if they had but kept silence. But I must freely own, that more of the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, would not have been any Discredit to them or their Religion, in my Apprehension: And yet I question not but an Infinitely Wise GOD did often overrule their too forward Zeal to some good Purposes. Herein to imitate them, can be none of our Duty. Our Lord JESUS gave no such Direction. He order'd his Disciples when they were persecuted in one City to flee to another. Had all done like a few of those

these Primitive Zealots, Christianity had been soon extirpated. 'Tis abundantly sufficient, if they that are devoted to the Service of CHRIST, be but ready to shew their Fidelity, by patiently enduring what they are call'd to suffer for his Name's sake. It is no more our Duty needlessly to expose ourselves to suffering, than it is confident with our Duty to endeavour to avoid it, When we cannot wave it without being Unfaithful. In this respect we are allow'd, nay, requir'd, to learn *Wisdom of Serpents*. They don't use to run into Danger when they can fairly avoid it: No more should we. We should endeavour to imitate them in Wariness and Fore sight, in order to Self-preservation, while plain Duty does not call us forth to Action. We should carry it inoffensively and cautelously, keeping ourselves out of Danger by all Lawful Means; endeavouring to give no Advantage against ourselves, to such as wait for it, and would be forward to improve it. We should not needlessly provoke Dangers; but avoid Violence by all the Arts of *Prudence* and *Innocence*.

And finally; The Serpent defends himself by Art, rather than Strength; and so should we. We should watch for Advantages that offer in order to Self-defence, or the wiping off Aspersions that are unjustly cast upon us, or the recovering Rights of which we are depriv'd, or securing our selves from the Malice of such as are set against us, for the future; and as far as may be, we should improve them; This, instead of being justly blameable, would be real *Wisdom*.

It may perhaps be objected, That it is not a Thing supposable, that all should be. We are so, if GOD makes us so, and not otherwise. Prudence is a Gift of GOD, not bestow'd on all alike: But it depends much upon Natural Capacity, Observation, and Experience, which are Things in which several Persons widely differ. It hath therefore surpris'd some, that the Admonition in the Text should be so general; and been a Temptation to them to question, Whether or no it is a Command \*? But as far as I can judge, without any great occasion. For Prudence in such Things as those mention'd above, is so inforc'd by attending Cir-

See Dr.  
*Hammond,*  
in *Locum.*

Jam. i. 5. cumstances, chat not to endeavour after it, is really Criminal, and what GOD is justly displeas'd with. Tho' it is not to be expected, that all should reach it alike, yet all should, as St. *James* directs, *ask it of God who giveth liberally and upbraideth not*: All are in Duty bound diligently to use proper Means in order to the reaching it; which sufficiently justifies the making the Exhortation in the Text, to be *Wise as Serpents*, generally extensive.

I go on then, to Consider the other Branch, that we may see how far we are to learn *Harmkessness* of *Doves*. It is an Observation of Cicero †, That there are *many, that admiring Subtle and Crafty Men, take Malice to be Wisdom*. Our Lord JESUS therefore feparating the *Wisdom* that He recommends from all Fraud and Guile, joyns to it *Innocence* or *Simplicity*, as a very fit Companion. He bids us be *Harmless as Doves*. The original Word ἀκέραιος is deriv'd from the Word κεραΐζειν which signifies to butt or strike, or wound with the Horns: And it has the signification of simple, and mildly dispos'd, not butting or using Horns. And this agrees to the *Dove*, which is a Creature that hurts no Body. 'Tis naturally White, and its, Disposition is a lively Emblem of *Simplicity*. It neither Deceives nor lays Snares for any; it opposes no One, and does not so much as pursue those who are injurious, and take away its Young Ones. Its Strength wholly lies in the swiftness of its Wings, by which it escapes the Fury of Kites, and other Voracious Birds. If any thing happens that is grievous to it, it neither sharpens its Bill, nor puts forth its Claws to hurt; but with a sorrowful groaning and murmur it signifies its Grief, and bears with Patience what it cannot help. And this also should be the Disposition of Serious Christians, and especially of Gospel *Ministers*; who in their pursuit of the most prudential Methods they can use in the discharge of their Duty, ought always carefully to keep their Integrity, and maintain their *Innocence*. They should do nothing deceitfully. They ought not to cherish a desire of Revenge. If such Voracious Creatures as Kites and Hawks lay Snares for them, they should take the Wing of Prayer, and fly to their GOD, and  
beg

† De Officiis, Lib. II.

See Dr. Hammond.



beg of Him, as *David*, That He would *save them from all them that persecute them, and deliver them*. If they are injuriously dealt with, without *rendring Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing*, they should *commit themselves and their Cause to Him that judgeth Righteously*. If they are brought into threatenng Circumstances, without attempting to fill the World with Lamentations and Complaints, or seeking to throw all Things upside down by *avenging themselves*, they should *rather give place unto Wrath, remembring that Vengeance is GOD's*, and that *He will repay*. They should not be like devouring Vultures, or rapacious Hawkes, or proud Peacocks, or croaking Crows; but should look upon the Natural Mildness of *Doves*, as their most becoming Ornament. And because this is apt to go against the Grain, and is what none of themselves can compass, but what must be the Gift of GOD, therefore are they earnestly to beg of Him, That He would instruct and form them by his Holy Spirit, who descended upon their Lord and Master as a *Dove*: That so being mindful to whom they belong, they may help to make his *Dove-like*, Meekness and Modesty known unto all Men.

Psal. vii.  
1.

1 Pet. iii.  
9. and ii.  
23.

Rom. xii.  
19.

Not to multiply Words in a plain Case: That we might not apprehend that our Lord recommends, or would allow a fraudulent Craft, He adds, that we should be *Harmless as Doves*, who are a Sort of Creatures that live peaceably and quietly under the Care of Divine Providence, even when they are on all hands expos'd. In imitation of them, if we would approve ourselves the faithful Followers of the Meek and Holy JESUS, tho' we have many Enemies, yet should we go on in the Way of our Duty: And whatever Marks of their Ill-will we may be under, or whatever we may have reason farther to expect, we should with Meekness and Tranquility commit ourselves to the Care of Heaven in a Way of Well-doing. *As far as in us lies, should live peaceably with all Men*. In the midst of our Prudence, we should take care to maintain Mildness and Meekness. We should not needlesly offend any, either by our Words or Carriage. And we should not only be like in Innoffensiveness, but we should take care that our way of escaping Dangers may be as inoffensive as theirs,

Rom. xii.  
18.

especially when the Dangers are Personal. They owe their Safety to their Wings; and when they are pursu'd by Birds of Prey, endeavour to save themselves by flight, and not by sight. So also should we, unless where a due regard to the Common Safety, that is manifestly in extreme Danger, makes such Methods necessary, as are not in themselves so eligible.

Having thus seen how far the Conformity to the Standard my Text mentions is to go, and how far we are to learn *Wisdom of Serpents*, and *Harmlessness of Doves*; let us proceed,

2. To Consider, Where this Conformity is to stop, and what we are to avoid in the Imitation propos'd, for fear of over-straining, and running too far. It is the Intention of this Admonition, to put us upon studying and aiming at a *simple Prudence*, and a *prudent Simplicity* One of the Qualifications recommended, is design'd to bound the other: And whenever we suffer either of them to over-run the other, we over-do. We are to avoid Extreams in this Imitation on both Hands. We are to be *Wise as Serpents*; and yet should beware of imitating the *Serpent* in deceitful Subtlety, The Apostle warns against this, saying; *I fear least any Means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your Minds should be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Christ.* 'Tis unhappy to be beguil'd by others thro' Serpentine Subtlety; but to be the Beguilers of others thro' Crast and Deceit, is a Thousand-fold worse. If our Prudence degenerates into Subtlety, we shall be but Devils in disguise. And on the other-hand, we must also take heed, that our *Innocence* does not degenerate into Inactivity. Tho' we are to be *Harmless as Doves*; yet it does not follow, we are not to be zealous in a Good Cause, Nay, St. *Paul* declares *That it is good co be zealously affected always in a good Thing.* But then, that our Zeal may not become Wild-fire, it must be govern'd by Knowledge: That it may not do more hurt than good, it must be temper'd with *Wisdom* and Prudence. We are to be *Harmless as Doves*, and not stir till we are call'd forth to Action: And *Wise as Serpents*, that we may be no further active, than our Cause, and our Calls,  
and

<sup>2</sup> Cor. xi.  
3.

Gal. iv. 18.

and our Motives will justify. We are to be *Harmless as Doves*, and not go out of our Sphere: And *Wise as Serpents*, that we may move rightly, and to the best Advantage, within our proper Sphere of Activity. We must not be altogether like *Doves*, lest we fall into Extremities which by Fore-sight and timely Care might have been avoided; and become Useless to the Publick in a. Time of Common Calamity and Distress, when all Hands ought to be diligently at Work, to keep the Ship we sail in from being cast-away in a Storm: Nor should we be altogether like *Serpents*, lest we endanger others, and become Instruments of their Seduction, and Midchief, and Ruin. Our Prudence should not make, us Timorous, nor our Innocence Rash: We should endeavour so to manage our *Harmlessness*, as that it may not expose us where our Call is not clear, and in that respect *Wisdom* may help us; And we should endeavour so to manage our *Wisdom*, as that it may not draw forth either our own or our Neighbours Corruption; in which respect our maintaining *Innocence* would be a considerable Guard to us. And this naturally leads me to the Third Head of Discourse propos'd, *viz.*

III. The Connexion that is fix'd between the Two Things here recommended; which are closely joyn'd together, and should never be put asunder. We are not to be satisfy'd with being barely *Wise*, or barely *Harmless*; but we should be both *Wise* and *Harmless*, according to the Model that is specify'd. They are both to be the joynt Objects of our Care and Endeavours. And upon Occasion of the Connexion here fix'd between them, I think it not improper to make such Remarks as these:

1. There's not the least real Inconsistency between the Two Things here connected, and joyntly recommended. The *Wisdom* of the *Serpent* and *Innocence* of the *Dove*, may consist very well together in the same Persons without any interfering; or else our Lord had not so closely joyn'd them in this Admonition. We have all the Reason in the Worlds to acquiesce in his Judgment, who made the minding both of them a part of his Charge. There are Cases that offer, in which  
there's

Matt. vii.  
18.  
Luke xvi.  
13.

there's no Conjunction; and an attempt of it tends to Confusion. Thus, *A good Tree cannot bring forth evil Fruit*. There's such an Inconsistency in it, that we may safely say, it cannot be. And, *We cannot serve Two Masters*. They draw different Ways. What One requires and insists upon, the other forbids. There's an Inconsistency in being sway'd by both at once, they are so directly opposite. But nothing of that Nature can be pretended as to the Two Excellencies recommended in this Text. A Man may reach, and be eminent for both, without being at all inconsistent with himself, or varying from the Rule he should walk by, or eroding the End he should aim at. There's no Inconsistence between Piety and *Wisdom*. True *Wisdom* is rather promoted than hindered by a Regular Piety. Nor is there any Inconsistency between *Wisdom* and *Innocence*. Should any One be that Way expos'd, yet is he not unwise. Should his Reputation as to *Wisdom* be on that account impair'd, he may yet have inward Peace and Satisfaction; the keeping which, is the truest *Wisdom*. Should a Man be applauded as *Wise*, upon sacrificing his Innocence to his Interest; yet will the most competent Judges pass a different Censure, and he would expose himself to the Lashes of his own guilty Mind, which true *Wisdom* would lead any One to avoid with the utmost Care: If *Wisdom* and *Innocence* seem to clash at any time, it must be owing to wrong Notions that are entertain'd either of the one or the other of them: But if they are rightly understood, the more they are consider'd, the more evident will it be how well they consist together.

2. The Two Excellencies that are here joyntly recommended, not only consist well together, but they may mutually help each other to appear with the greater Lustre. Tho' Piety without Prudence is too simple to be safe, and Prudence without Piety is too subtle to be good; yet Piety and Prudence joyn'd together, will considerably promote each other. When such as are noted for the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, are at the same time remarkable for the *Harmlessness* of the *Dove*, 'tis a plain Evidence that their Inoffensiveness is not from Incapacity or Stupidity, but from Principle: And when they that are known to be *Harmless as Doves*, are at the same time

time *Wise as Serpents*, 'tis an Evidence that their Conscientiousness, is not from Timorousness or Weakness, but from an hearty Concern to secure their main Interest. *Wisdom* is the more commendable for being joyn'd with Innocence: And Innocence the more conspicuous, and the more safe too, for being joyn'd with Both more effectually reach their proper Ends, when they are joyn'd together, than they could do when separated from each other.

3. Both the Qualifications here recommended, are very needful for all Christians, and peculiarly so for *Ministers*. An Eminence in both, is not absolutely needful; nor are both needful alike: But there are none but what upon strict Observation in the Course of their Lives, will find great need both of the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, and the *Innocence* of the *Dove*. A Man may indeed approve himself to God as sincere, if he keeps his *Innocence*, tho' he fails in *Wisdom*; or if while in the main he is prudent in his Conduct, he at some particular Seasons is less inoffensive in his Carriage than he should be, he does not presently forfeit the Character of an Upright Man: But no Man can so well avoid Snares and Dangers, nor so advantageously discharge his Duty, while there is a remarkable failure in either of them, as he might if both were duly minded; which is enough to prove both of them to be highly needsul. If *Wisdom* and *Innocence* be not joyn'd together, Prudence commonly turns into Craft and Guile; and Simplicity degenerates into Folly and Weakness: But an harmless *Prudence*, and a wary and cautious *Innocence*, are both so necessary, that we can't be defective in either, without being expos'd; nor without exposing in many Cases our Profession and Character too, if the failure be remarkable. However,

4. 'Tis easy to be observ'd, That 'tis no very common Thing, for these Two Endowments to be joyn'd together. Tho' they are connected in my Text, yet they don't often meet in the same Persons, in any considerable degree. 'Tis but rarely that any Man is both eminent for *Wisdom*, and exactly *Innocent*. Neither now nor in Ages past, have many been remarkable for the

*Wisdom*

*Wisdom of the Serpent, and the Harmlessness of the Dove* at once. Some such indeed there have been, and I hope these still are some such; but they have been, and are but few, if compar'd wih those with whom 'tis otherwise. Some have hereupon been free in their Censures. But still, *Wisdom is justify'd of her Children.*

Matth. xi.  
19.

It hath been common in this Case to enquire, What is the Hindrance? What the Occasion, that God's upright Servants, that are hearty in his Interest, should not more frequently be eminent both for *Wisdom* and *Innocence* too? And if a strict Search be made, I conceive, it will be found to a rise from several concurring Causes. For Men may truly have the Grace of GOD, and yet not be very strong in their Intellectuals, and so not be capable of any great eminence in *Wisdom*. And they may be very innocent, *harmless* and inoffensive, and yet not be aware how much *Wisdom* in their Conduct would recommend Religion, nor what other happy Consequences might and would attend it. Sometimes it may unhappily fall out that such as want not for Capacity, may unwarily have taken up Prejudices against the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, as if it were mere Carnal Policy, a very dangerous Attainment, and to be avoided rather than pursu'd. And what wonder can it be, that there should appear a remarkable failure, in a Qualification, to be eminent in which, is apprehended a Sin rather than a Duty; which is a Thing not inconsistent with Integrity? But for the most part it's plain enough that Failures here arise from a want of due Application. For tho' 'tis not to be expected, that all should be alike, or equally earnest in their Endeavours, yet it is hard to fix upon any, but what upon suitable Application, with the help of the Divine Blessing, that would not be wanting, might reach such a Measure of *Wisdom* for their Conduct in the Stations which the Providence of GOD puts them into, as would keep them from any such Failures is would be remarkable, or of pernicious Consequence.

However, it is not unworthy our Observation, That Almighty GOD serves very considerable Purpofses, by permitting his Faithful Servants to labour under Defects  
in

in such Respects as these. They themselves have herein a sensible Conviction of their own Dependence, and yet no Cause of Complaint, since there is a way of Relief always at hand. *For, says the Apostle, if any of you lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* Jam. i. 5 Withal; the Continuance, the Success, and the Credit of Christianity in the World, is this Way evidently and convincingly manifested to be from GOD, and his Power and Influence upon the Minds of Men. Had Wise Men generally fallen in with the Gospel of CHRIST, or heartily embrac'd the Interest of Real Religion in the World, and adher'd to and supported it, or been the Ministers of Spreading and recommending it, there might have been room left for a Jealousy and Suspicion, as if our Religion had had something of Human Artifice in it, or belonging to it: But when, as St. Paul observes, there are *not many wise Men after the Flesh*, any more than *many mighty or noble that are called*; but *GOD hath chosen the foolish Things of this World to confound the Wise; as no Flesh can glory in his Presence, but he that glories, upon any just Grounds, must glory in the Lord*: So 'tis plain, as he also himself there argues, That the Faith of the hearty Compliers with the Gospel, *does not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of GOD*. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 29, 31. And withal, GOD this Way puts others also to the Tryal, Whether or no they will heartily fall in with Religion, under a Conviction of its Intrinsic Worth, and the Evidence which it has to support it; or will be diverted from it, by Offence taken at those defects in *Wisdom*, which are sometimes discernable in Pious Persons, both Ministers and People; while it is plain enough that the Cause of Religion is not in reality in the least affected with it, or the Evidence by which it is supported at all abated. Some few Stumbling-blocks of this nature, an Infinitely Wise GOD has thought fit to leave, which He could easily have remov'd: But his not removing them, is no ground of just Impeachment; no solid Objection against Religion. For if Men would be faithful, fair, and impartial, in searching and comparing, they might without much difficulty get over them; they would have no influence.

And if such Things as these, be but sedately Consider'd, they may help to abate our wonder, that it should not be so common as it were to be desir'd it might be, for the same Persons, at the same time, to be remarkable for that *Wisdom* and *Innocence*, which are in the Text joyntly recommended. But,

5. We may farther observe, That when they are both joyn'd together in the same Persons, 'tis very Happy. It is a Security to themselves, and it much recommends Religion, when Ministers and People are at once eminent for the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, and the *Innocence* of the *Dove*. It is not indeed an easy matter to arrive at an eminence in both: 'Tis hard for such as are intent on the *Prudent* Part, always to maintain their *Innocence*, without at all intrenching upon it: nor is it an easy Thing for such as are habitually *Harmless* and *Inoffensive*, to forbear at some times breaking in upon the Rules of *Prudence*: But the Difficulty in this Case, is abundantly compensated by the happy Consequences arising from such a Conjunction. This is the Way to the truest and most lasting inward Serenity and Peace; and this renders Men Ornaments to their Profession and Character, and Useful in their Places and Stations, beyond what could otherwise be expected. One that is merely *Innocent* and *Inoffensive*, is liable to a great many Snares, which a Man of *Prudence* easily avoids. He may be stunn'd and puzzled with a great many Difficulties, which the other makes nothing of. And on the other hand, a Prudent Man is capable of bringing much more Glory to GOD, and doing much more Good to others, than One that is merely *Harmless* and *Innocent*. But let a Man be both *Prudent* and *Innocent*, and he needs fear no Enemies; nothing need surprize him; he's prepar'd for all Events, and never at a loss; He has Ease in all Changes, and Comfort in the greatest Troubles; he may stand his Ground in the most threatning Circumstances to which he can at any time be reduc'd; and many will have Cause to bless GOD upon his Account.

Lastly,



Lastly; a Conjunction of *Wisdom* and *Innocence*, may be peculiarly needful at some certain Seasons. Both are indeed needful at all Times; but at some certain Times they may be peculiarly so. For there are certain Seasons, that may easily enough be observ'd, when it may in an especial manner be the Duty of such as would approve themselves to the Blessed JESUS, to take care joyntly to maintain, both the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, and the *Innocence* of the *Dove*, in themselves, and in others too, as far as they are capable of contributing to it. And upon a little Consideration, I apprehend it will easily appear, That the Admonition in the Text, was particularly needful and proper, in the Time and Case of the Apostles of our Blessed Saviour, to whom it was peculiarly given; and also in the Times in which we now live, and the Circumstances in which we at present are.

This Admonition in the Text, was (I say) particularly needful and seasonable in the Case of the Apostles, to whom it was peculiarly given. There was then great need of the *Wisdom* of the *Serpent*, and the *Innocence* of the *Dove*. It cannot be conceiv'd what could have been done to any Purpose without it, in their Circumstances. The Work they were call'd to, the Difficulties and Opposition they were to meet with, the Tempers, the Spite, the Malice, the Vigilance, of those they were to deal with, who were generally set against them to the last degree, and the Dangers to which they were on all hands expos'd, made it highly needful for them to be both *Wise at Serpents*, and *Harmless at Doves*. They were to go about the World, and publish the Faith of a Crucify'd JESUS, and gain Converts for their Master; in which they could reasonably expect no other, than that both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, *Priests* and *Philosophers*, *Princes* and *Common People*, would make all possible Opposition against them, and give them all the Disturbance they were able. Our Lord here gives them a very lively Description or Representation of the Treatment they were to expect; telling them, That He *sent them forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves*. He lets them know, That instead of being kindly entertain'd, they were to expect to be

torn and devour'd, worry'd and harrass'd. Sheep are very feeble, and Wolves most rapacious Creatures: And they were as helpless, with respect to the Malice of their Enemies, as Sheep are with respect to the faults of Wolves. In such a Case as this, what could they have done without *Wisdom* and *Innocence*? Had they not maintain'd their *Innocence*, their Enemies would have had wherewith to charge them, without reproaching them, and would have run them down effectually, and there had been no room for Defence. And if they had not been *Wise as Serpents*, as well as *Harmless as Doves*, the Cause they were engag'd in would have suffer'd at every Turn, and they'd have been miserably ensnar'd, and could not have maintain'd their Ground. The Blessed JESUS therefore, who employ'd them as his Agents, herein undertook to supply and assist them. He promises them his Spirit to embolden them, and to direct and encourage them, upon all Occasions. Within a Verse or two of my Text, He gives them a Promise, That when they were *delivered up* to suffer for his Sake, He would be with them. He bids them, *take no thought how or what they should speak, for, that, it should be given them in that same Hour, what they should speak.* And He elsewhere engag'd, to *give them a Mouth and Wisdom, which all their Adversaries should not be able to gain-say, nor resist.* He was herein very faithful to his Promise, and perform'd it punctually. And therefore we may observe that when St. *Stephen* was call'd to argue with the Enemies of Christianity, about their Aversion and Opposition to so Divine an Institution, 'tis declar'd, That *they were not able to resist the Wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.* And it was the like also in the Cafe of others.

Luke xxi.  
15.

Acts xvi.  
10.

Matt. xvi.  
3.

But it must not be imagin'd, That the peculiar need of the *Wisdom* and *Innocence* here recommended, is to be confin'd to the Apostles: Such a Conjunction is as truly needful in our own Times, Never was there more need of a Conjunction of the of the *Serpent*, with the *Innocence* of the *Dove*, than there is now. Our Lord JESUS, represents the *discerning the Signs of the Times*, as the common Duty of his Faithful Servants. We are all bound to study the Times in which

our

our Lot is cast: That is, to compare the Circumstances we are in with the Word of GOD, and the revealed Measures of his Government, that so we may be directed in Duty, and preserv'd from Danger; enabled to take Aim right, and prepared for all Events. We are told of the Children of *Issachar*, That they were Men that had Understanding of the Times to know what Israel ought to do. They knew the Times, with reference to their Duty; and so study'd the Signs of them, as to make sufficient Discoveries, and understand the Moment and Exigence of Affairs, and what Conduct, Resentments, and Expectations, were becoming. They were then in a very Critical Time. Some were for adhering to the House of Saul, and others were for *David*, and others for standing Neuter, hoping to make their Game of the Publick Confusions. These Men of *Issachar*, in the mean time, tho' they were comparatively but a poor Handful of People, (and perhaps some despis'd them the more for their Singularity too) Studying the Mind of GOD, and the Notices of his Will, and the Circumstances of Affairs, clearly discover'd not only what was desirable and becoming, but what was Matter of plain Duty; yea, what all their Friends, brethren and Neighbours, what all the Kindom ought to do, in order to the approving themselves to Almighty GOD, and securing the Common Safety, in an hazardous Juncture, And being fix'd by Principle, no little Intrigues of Self-designing Men, no petty Interest of their own, no Artifices of such as aim'd at Confounding, by Dividing them, were able to pervert or warp them, or prevail with them to alter their Measures: And they are hereupon deservedly commended for their *Wisdom*. And really if it ever was requisite, for such as were heartily engag'd in GOD's Interest, to endeavour to discern the Signs of the Times, and understand them, so as to know what Israel ought to do, it is so now. If we do but with any suitable Application, endeavour to discern the Signs of our Times, we shall find, that as Circumstances stand at present with us, no Admonition can be more Seasonable, nothing can be more Necessary, than that both Ministers and People, should now stir up themselves, and endeavour to be *Wise as Serpents and Harmless as Doves*.

<sup>1</sup> Chron.  
xii. 32.

And

And this is what I hope to make you sensible of, in a few Words, presently, when I have added some general Reflections upon Occasion of the Premises: And they are such as these that follow.

1. It deserves Observation, That they who either formerly, or more lately, have given themselves a Liberty to Ridicule Christianity upon account of such Precepts as this in the Text, act Unreasonably, and are much to blame. Some upon observing, that our Lord requir'd his Followers, when they were smitten on one Cheek, to turn the other; and when they were su'd for a Coat, to give their Cloak into the bargain; and when they were in the midst of Wolves, to be *Wise as Serpents, and Harmless as Doves*, have with great freedom broke their profane Jest on such Injunctions, as if they were monstrously absurd, and not reconcileable to Common Sense. But if Men would but give themselves leave a little calmly to Consider, they'd soon see that they acted in a Senseless manner in so doing, and that it was they that were guilty of a great Absurdity. There are none of these Precepts of our Saviour, but what may be fairly accounted for. What has now been laid, upon Occasion of the Admonition in my Text, makes it appear reasonable and needful; and a compliance with it Ornamental, Safe, and Comfortable, as odd as it may seem when first propos'd. 'Tis an Emblematical Instruction. The Emblems are very Natural. They may indeed be overstrain'd; but they are sufficiently limited and guarded by their Conjunction. And what Matters of Oratory, ever excluded Figures and Allusions! They that cavil and carp at such Things, would, if they should make Tryal, find it hard to pitch upon a Way of Instructing the Bulk of Mankind, that would answer the End, that was not liable to as great or greater Objections.

2. Upon the Account that has now been given, I dare appeal to all, Whether it would not be a most happy Thing, if this Admonition were but duly follow'd. What happy Families should we have, what happy Towns and Cities, what happy Churches, yea, what an happy Kingdom would this be, if made up of Per-

sons

sons who took care to be *Wise as Serpents, and Harmless as Doves!* Our Heats and Quarrels, would then soon vanish, and a general Love would succeed in their room. Our Fears would abate, and Grudges and Heart-burnings would cease. We should have no Thwarting, Undermining and Circumventing one another; no secret Designs of Mischief, cover'd over with Pretences of great Good. We should then know how to understand one another, and where to have one another, and be ready to help one another, and the Publick would be the better for all its Members, and none would ever make a Prey of it. All would then keep their proper Places, and all would be general Blessings: And he that was the Wisest and Best, would have the most Respedct; and this Earth would become like to Heaven itself.

3. It should not be forgotten, That if we look to the Carriage of our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles, we shall find my Text exemplify'd, which may at once both instruct and quicken us. If we take a considerate View, of our Blessed Saviour's Life, from the Beginning to the End of it, we shall find *Wisdom* and *Innocence* very conspicuous in it, and plainly running thro' it in every Part. How *Wise* and *Harmless* was He in the whole of his Conduct? Where can we find the least failure? The Apostles also were very Exemplary, tho' they were not altogether free from Defects. Consulting their Conduct, as we have an Account of it in the Book of their *Acts*, and in their several *Epistles*, we may plainly see that a Compliance with the Rule in the Text, is a thing that is very possible, and that it makes the Lives of Men exceeding amiable: Tho' at the same time, from their Experience, 'tis easy also to observe, That even the most exquisite Wisdom, and the compleatest *Innocence*, will not preserve from the bitterest Censures, and the vehement Rage and Cruelty of a Malicious World.

4. Considering the Premises, 'tis difficult to forbear crying out, Oh what pity is it, that *Prudence* and *Honesty* should ever be separate! Their Conjunction is so amiable, and answers so many good Ends, that it is justly to be lamented they should not be always joyn'd. Nothing can excuse the attempting to divide them. What a  
strange

strange thing is Subtlety and Craft without Honesty! Does it not make Men common Pests, according to the extent of their Influence, and occasion strange Confusion? And what a weak thing is Honesty, if it be separated from Prudence? Is it not on all hands expos'd? Does it not make Men contemptible, and render their Character and Profession as well as their Persons ridiculous? The more we consider the Nature of Things, the State of the World, or the Temper of Mankind, the greater will our Regret be, that *Wisdom* and *Innocence*, should not generally meet in the same Persons, and should ever be asunder.

Luke xvi.  
8.

5. It ought also to trouble us, That as our Lord himself observes, *the Children of this World*, should be *wiser in their Generation, than the Children of Light*. Tho' the Truth of the Observation is not to be call'd in question; yet there is good Reason for our being heartily, concern'd that there should be so much Truth in it. For it is in reality very shameful, to see the Men of the World wiser in their Way, and more mindful of their Interests, more earnest in their Application, and more careful in watching the fittest Seasons and Circumstances of Action, than we that pretend to be the Servants of GOD are in the great Business of Religion, where the Things depending, are so incomparably more, momentous, and the Motives that should sway us, are infinitely stronger and more weighty. 'Tis shameful to find them Provident, Resolute, Industrious, Unwearied and Regular, while we are comparatively, Careless, Slothful, Cowardly, Impatient and Disorderly. This is no way fitting. 'Tis a most uncomely fight. We are in Duty bound, as far as in us lies, to take the utmost Care that it may be otherwise. But,

6. Should any with whom we have a Concern either in publick or private Matters, out-wit us, and go beyond us in the *Subtlety* of the *Serpent*, yet it should be our Endeavour that they may never out-do us in *Innocence* and *Honesty*. If they are more like *Serpents* than we, let us be more like *Doves* than they. If this be our Care, it will be our Comfort under all Events. We may then have Peace in our own Minds, whatever marks of their  
ill-will

Ill-will we may be expos'd to: And shall certainly have the Advantage over them in the final Issue, tho' they may seem to triumph over us at the present.

7. What Has been offer'd on this Subject, very naturally administers a Reproof both to such as aim at more *Wisdom* than can be temper'd with *Innocence*; and also to those who take care to be *Innocent*, but study not to approve themselves *Wise* in their Conduct; Both are real faults, tho' they are far from being equally great or dangerous. Both sorts are plainly reprov'd by what has been suggested, and may add should be excited to take Care of an Amendment, least if they don't, one of these two Things follow: Either that their unguarded *Innocence* should needlessly expose their Persons, their Characters, and Cause, and even their Religion too; or that their Graft and Cunning, which they call *Wisdom*, and applaud as such, should make them common Pests, send them the sooner to Hell, and make their place there seven times hotter than it would otherwise be. And then,

Lastly; Whatever others do, let us make this Text our Rule, and square out Practice by it. Let us endeavour to be *Wise as Serpent's*, and *Harmless as Doves*: And let us beg of GOD that our Endeavours may be successful. Let us not look upon this Admonition with indifference, but act as Persons that reckon ourselves deeply concern'd in it. Let us not run ourselves into Danger, if we can avoid it with safety to our Consciences: And yet let no prospect of Danger tempt us to desert our Principles, or do any thing that is mean or base, or unbecoming our Holy Profession.

The very Consideration of the Times we live in should herein quicken us to the greater Care. For there are Four Things easily discernable in the present Times, that make it peculiarly needful; and they are these: Horrid Wickedness, Great Divisions, Strange Security, and a Visible (and I hope the last) Struggle, for the Re-ving the Papal Interest, and the extinguishing the Reformation, in these Parts. of the World; And if these Things are evident; to such as give way to calm and

sober Consideration then I think you cannot wonder if I say, Now if ever, it Becomes us to be *Wise as Serpents, and Harmless as Doves*: And if I thence draw an Argument for the inforcing the Admonition given us. And indeed it is an Argument that I think has no small force in it, and that ought, to have a Weight upon our Consciences in the present Juncture.

I. There's Horrid Wickedness among us, and it is extensive and complicated, and has been lasting. All those Sins, which GOD hath intimated in his Word are peculiarly provoking to Him, abound among us: And they have been continu'd in, after GOD hath us'd various Methods both of Mercy and Judgment to, Amend us. The Apostle tells us, That *in the last Days perilous Times shall come*; that is hard, and difficult, and troublesome Times. And he tells us how we might know them when they come. *Men*, says he, *shall be Lovers of their own selves, Covetous, Boasters, Proud, Blasphemers, &c.* 'Tis such Wickedness as he there mentions, that makes the *Times Perilous*. He seems to give a natural Description of our very Times. For was their ever more Atheism Irreligion and Profaneness? It is the Observation of *Bede*, That the Ancient *Britons* a little before their Destruction by the *Saxons*, were arriv'd at such a pitch of Profaneness, as to hate the very Professors of Religion, as if they had been their declar'd Enemies. And is it not so with us now? Have we not trifled with Religion till we are grown Strangers to it? And have we not continually murmur'd, against GOD and his Providence, and his Ministers, and those that have been Instruments in his Hands of the greatest Good to us? Is not Malignity very rampant in the midst of us? Have not Lying and Falshood, Treachery and Baseness over-run us? And are not Hatred and Malice, grown such common Things, as to be scarce taken notice of? Have we not strange Injustice, Cruelty and Oppression among us? And have not such Sins as these often pull'd down Destruction? Does not the Body of the People of this Land appear Incorrigible? And can there be a more affecting Sign of approaching Judgments? Certainly then, Now if euer, we should be *Wise as Serpents, and Harmless as Doves*, that we may  
not

2 Tim iii.  
1.



not inflame the common Reckoning; but may demean our selves so, as that if it may be, we may be hid in the Day of the LORD's Anger.

2. Our Divisions also are very Great. *Ephraim* is against *Manasseh*, and *Manasseh* against *Ephraim*, and both against *Judah*. We are sadly divided both in Church and State. There are Divisions in the Great City, and all over the Country. Divisions among our Religious People, Divisions in our Counsels, and among our Great Ones, and Divisions between two Parties all through the Land. There is such a Ferment among us, and it shews it self with such Animosity and Rancour, that we seem to be pulling down our House with our own Hands, and saving our Enemies the labour. Our Lord himself plainly tells us, That a Kingdom divided against it cannot stand: And the reason of the thing seems to declare that it cannot stand long. Divisions, in a Nation are like a Breach, in the Banks, that lets in the Sea: or like a Breach in the Walls of a Besieged City, that gives the Enemy possession. The Factions of *Jerusalem* betray'd it to the *Romans*. And the miserable Divisions heretofore in *Constantinople*, that was the Metropolis of the Eastern Empire, lost that City and Empire to the *Turks*. This very Island itself (to go no farther) has had most woful experience of the ill Consequences of raging Divisions, which have been the Cause of most of the Mischiefs and Desolations we have met with, from one Age to another. The Divisions, of the *Britons* first brought the *Romans* hither. Like Divisions afterwards brought in the *Saxons*. And it was by Factions at home that Way was also pay'd for the *Normans*, who could not otherwise have had any pretence of a *Conquest*. They were our Divisions that kindled the Civil War, and set us all together by the Ears. And is there not us great a Spirit of Division gone forth among us now as ever? Certainly then, Now is our time to be *Wise as Serpents and Harmless as Doves*, that we may neither inflame our Wounds, nor betray our Liberty and Religion; and that we may neither expose ourselves, nor a good Cause needlesly.

Isai. ix.  
21.

Matt. xii.  
25.

3. There is a General Security. Most of us are asleep, and as unconcern'd as if the Bitterness of Death was  
past,

past, and there were no Danger remaining. We have been comparatively unmov'd, at the Calamities of our Brethren and Neighbours, and have not laid their Distresses to Heart. Nay, we are not affected with many threatning Symptoms, which we for some time have born upon ourselves. And what can look worse? Let us then remember, That the Old World was over-run with Security, and soon after it was cover'd with the Deluge. *Sodom* was secure, and then was reduc'd to Ashes by a Shower of Fire and Brimstone. A common Security is very often follow'd with desolating Judgments. Now therefore if ever, let us be *Wise as serpents, and Harmless as Doves*, that so we may be prepar'd for what is coming upon us.

And Lastly, There is, and is like to be, a Visible Struggle for the Revival of the *Papal Interest*, where it was thought to be as good as extirpated and for the extinguishing the *Reformation* in these Parts of the World. Nothing can be more manifest than this is Abroad: And it is too visible also at Home. There are many Engines at Work; Our Enemies have many Advantages; and they are not backward to improve them. Our Dread of Popery is in a great measure worn off. We begin to entertain more favourable Thoughts of it. There's a great hankering after the Garlick and Onions of *Egypt*; an appearing fondness, of coming once more under a Yoke of Bondage, &c. Now therefore if ever, should we be *Wise as Serpents, and Harmless as Doves*, that we may not add to the Common Danger, nor give advantage to those that seek it against us: That we may be fitted for Trials before they come, and Faithful in them when they come.

*Now the Good LORD of his Infinite Mercy grant, that we may all take the Admonition given; which will be much to his Glory, and much to the Credit of Religion, and much also for our own Happiness, Peace and Comfort. Amen.*

*FINIS.*