

# OF A KING'S CHRISTIAN DUTY TOWARDS GOD

## THE FIRST BOOK

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As he cannot be thought worthy to rule and command others, that cannot rule and subdue his own proper affections and unreasonable appetites, so can he not be thought worthy to govern a Christian people, knowing and fearing God, that in his own person and heart, feareth not and loveth not the Divine Majesty. Neither can any thing in his government succeed well with him, (devise and labor as he list) as coming from a filthy spring, if his person be unsanctified: for (as that royal Prophet saith) *Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the City, the keepers watch it in vain;* in respect the blessing of God hath only power to give the success thereunto: and as *Paul* saith, he *planteth, Apollos watereth; but it is God only that giveth the increase.* Therefore (my Son) first of all things, learn to know and love that God, whom-to ye have a double obligation; first, for that he made you a man; and next, for that he made you a little GOD to sit on his Throne, and rule over other men. Remember, that as in dignity he hath erected you above others, so ought ye in thankfulness towards him, go as far beyond all others. A mote in another's eye, is a beam into yours: a blemish in another, is a leprous bile into you: and a venial sin (as the Papists call it) in another, is a great crime unto you. Think not therefore, that the highness of your dignity, diminisheth your faults (much less giveth you a licence to sin) but by the contrary your fault shall be aggravated, according to the height of your dignity; any sin that ye commit, not being a single sin procuring but the fall

of one; but being an exemplar sin, and therefore drawing with it the whole multitude to be guilty of the same. Remember then, that this glistering worldly glory of Kings, is given them by God, to teach them to press so to glister and shine before their people, in all works of sanctification and righteousness, that their persons as bright lamps of godliness and virtue, may, going in and out before their people, give light to all their steps. Remember also, that by the right knowledge, and fear of God (which is *the beginning of Wisdom*, as *Salomon* saith), ye shall know all the things necessary for the discharge of your duty, both as a Christian, and as a King; seeing in him, as in a mirror, the course of all earthly things, whereof he is the spring and only mover.

Now, the only way to bring you to this knowledge, is diligently to read his word, and earnestly to pray for the right understanding thereof. *Search the Scriptures*, saith Christ, *for they bear testimony of me*: and, *the whole Scripture*, saith Paul, *is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable to teach, to convince, to correct, and to instruct in righteousness; that the man of God may be absolute, being made perfect unto all good works*. And most properly of any other, belongeth the reading thereof unto Kings, since in that part of Scripture, where the godly Kings are first made mention of, that were ordained to rule over the people of God, there is an express and most notable exhortation and commandment given them, to read and meditate in the Law of God. I join to this, the careful hearing of the doctrine with attendance and reverence: for, *faith cometh by hearing*, saith the same Apostle. But above all, beware ye wrest not the word to your own appetite, as over many do, making it like a bell to sound as ye please to interpret: but by the contrary, frame all your affections, to follow precisely the rule there set down.

The whole Scripture chiefly containeth two things: a command, and a prohibition, to do such things, and to abstain from the

contrary. Obey in both; neither think it enough to abstain from evil, and do no good; nor think not that if ye do many good things, it may serve you for a cloak to mix evil turns therewith. And as in these two points, the whole Scripture principally consisteth, so in two degrees standeth the whole service of God by man: interior, or upward; exterior, or downward: the first, by prayer in faith towards God; the next, by works flowing therefrom before the world: which is nothing else, but the exercise of Religion towards God, and of equity towards your neighbor.

As for the particular points of Religion, I need not to dilate them; I am no hypocrite, follow my footsteps, and your own present education therein. I thank God, I was never ashamed to give account of my profession, howsoever the malicious lying tongues of some have traduced me: and if my conscience had not resolved me, that all my Religion presently professed by me and my kingdom, was grounded upon the plain words of the Scripture, without the which all points of Religion are superfluous, as any thing contrary to the same is abomination, I had never outwardly avowed it, for pleasure or awe of any flesh.

And as for the points of equity towards your neighbor (because that will fall in properly, upon the second part concerning a King's office) I leave it to the own room.

For the first part then of man's service to his God, which is Religion, that is, the worship of God according to his revealed will, it is wholly grounded upon the Scripture, as I have already said, quickened by faith, and conserved by conscience: For the Scripture, I have now spoken of it in general, but that ye may the more readily make choice of any part thereof, for your instruction or comfort, remember shortly this method.

The whole Scripture is dictated by God's Spirit, thereby, as by his lively word, to instruct and rule the whole Church

militant to the end of the world: It is composed of two parts, the Old and New Testament: The ground of the former is the Law, which sheweth our sin, and containeth justice: the ground of the other is Christ, who pardoning sin containeth grace. The sum of the Law is the ten Commandments, more largely related in the books of *Moses*, interpreted and applied by the Prophets; and by the histories, are the examples shewed of obedience or disobedience thereto, and with the history of the infancy and first progress of the Church is contained in their Acts.

Would ye then know your sin by the Law? Read the books of *Moses* containing it. Would ye have a commentary thereupon? Read the Prophets, and likewise the books of the *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*, written by that great pattern of wisdom *Solomon*, which will not only serve you for instruction, how to walk in the obedience of the Law of God, but is also so full of golden sentences, and moral precepts, in all things that can concern your conversation in the world, as among all the profane Philosophers and Poets, ye shall not find so rich a storehouse of precepts of natural wisdom, agreeing with the will and divine wisdom of God. Would ye see how good men are rewarded, and wicked punished? look the historical parts of these same books of *Moses*, together with the histories of *Joshua*, the *Judges*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Esther*, and *Job*: but especially the books of the *Kings* and *Chronicles*, wherewith ye ought to be familiarly acquainted: for there shall ye see your self, as in a mirror, in the catalogue either of the good or the evil Kings.

Would ye know the doctrine, life, and death of our Saviour Christ? Read the Evangelists. Would ye be more particularly trained up in his School? Meditate upon the Epistles of the Apostles. And would ye be acquainted with the practices of that doctrine in the persons of the primitive Church? Cast up the Apostles Acts. And as to the Apocrypha books, I omit them, because I am no Papist, as I said before; and indeed some of

them are no ways like the dictation of the Spirit of God.

But when ye read the Scripture, read it with a sanctified and chaste heart: Admire reverently such obscure places as ye understand not, blaming only your own capacity: read with delight the plain places, and study carefully to understand those that are somewhat difficult: press to be a good textualist; for the Scripture is ever the best interpreter of it self; but press not curiously to seek out farther than is contained therein; for that were over unmannerly a presumption, to strive to be further upon God's secrets, than he hath will ye be; for what he thought needful for us to know, that hath he revealed there: And delight most in reading such parts of the Scripture, as may best serve for your instruction in your calling; rejecting foolish curiosities upon genealogies and contentions, *which are but vain, and profit not, as Paul saith.*

Now, as to Faith, which is the nourisher and quickner of Religion, as I have already said, It is a sure persuasion and apprehension of the promises of God, applying them to your soul: and therefore may it justly be called, the golden chain that linketh the faithful soul to Christ: And because it groweth not in our garden, but *is the free gift of God*, as the same Apostle saith, it must be nourished by prayer, Which is nothing else, but a friendly talking with God.

As for teaching you the form of your prayers, the Psalms of *David* are the most proper school-master that ye can be acquainted with (next the prayer of our Saviour, which is the only rule of prayer) where out of, as of most rich and pure fountains, ye may learn all forms of prayer necessary for your comfort at all occasions: And so much the fitter are they for you, than for the common sort, in respect the composer thereof was a King: and therefore best behooved to know a King's wants, and what things were most proper to be required by a King at God's hand for remedy thereof.

Use often to pray when ye are quietest, especially forget it not in your bed how oft soever ye do it at other times: for public prayer serveth as much for example, as for any particular comfort to the supplicant.

In your prayer, be neither over strange with God, like the ignorant common sort, that prayeth nothing but out of books, nor yet over homely with him, like some of the vain Pharisaiical puritans, that think they rule him upon their fingers: The former way will breed an uncouth coldness in you towards him, the other will breed in you a contempt of him. But in your prayer to God speak with all reverence: for if a subject will not speak but reverently to a King, much less should any flesh presume to talk with God as with his companion.

Crave in your prayer, not only things spiritual, but also things temporal, sometimes of greater, and sometimes of less consequence; that ye may lay up in store his grant of these things, for confirmation of your faith, and to be an earnest unto you of his love. Pray, as ye find your heart moveth you, *pro re nata*: but see that ye ask no unlawful things, as revenge, lust, or such like: for that prayer can not come of faith: *and whatsoever is done without faith, is sin*, as the Apostle saith.

When ye obtain your prayer, thank him joyfully therefore: if otherwise, bear patiently, pressing to win him with importunity, as the widow did the unrighteous Judge: and if notwithstanding thereof ye be not heard, assure your self, God foreseeth that which ye ask is not for your good: and learn in time, so to interpret all the adversities that God shall send unto you; so shall ye in the midst of them, not only be armed with patience, but joyfully lift up your eyes from the present trouble, to the happy end that God will turn it to. And when ye find it once so fall out by proof, arm your self with the experience thereof against the next trouble, assuring your self, though ye cannot in time of the shower see through the

cloud, yet in the end shall ye find; God sent it for your good, as ye found in the former.

And as for conscience, which I called the conserver of Religion, It is nothing else, but the light of knowledge that God hath planted in man, which ever watching over all his actions, as it beareth him a joyful testimony when he does right, so choppeth it him with a feeling that he hath done wrong, when ever he committeth any sin. And surely, although this conscience be a great torture to the wicked, yet is it as great a comfort to the godly, if we will consider it rightly. For have we not a great advantage, that have within ourselves while we live here, a Count-book and Inventory of all the crimes that we shall be accused of, either at the hour of our death, or at the Great day of judgement; which when we please (yea though we forget) will strike, and remember us to look upon it; that while we have leisure and are here, we may remember to amend; and so at the day of our trial, compare with *new and white garments washed in the blood of the Lamb*, as *S. John* saith. Above all then, my Son, labor to keep sound this conscience, which many prattle of, but over few feel: especially be careful to keep it free from two diseases, wherewith it useth oft to be infected; to wit, Leprosy, and Superstition; the former is the mother of Atheism, the other of Heresies. By a leprous conscience, I mean a *cauterized conscience*, as *Paul* calleth it, being become senseless of sin, through sleeping in a careless security as King *David's* was after his murder and adultery, ever til he was wakened by the Prophet *Nathan's* similitude. And by superstition, I mean, when one restrains himself to any other rule in the service of God, than is warranted by the word, the only true square of God's service.

As for a preservative against this Leprosy, remember every once in the four and twenty hours, either in the night, or when ye are at greatest quiet, to call yourself to account of all your last day's actions, either wherein ye have committed

things ye should not, or omitted the things ye should do, either in your Christian or Kingly calling: and in that account, let not your self be smoothed over with that flattering ~tXcuyutcL, which is overkindly a sickness to all mankind: but censure your self as sharply, as if ye were your own enemy: *For if ye judge yourself, ye shall not be judged,* as the Apostle saith: and then according to your censure, reform your actions as far as ye may, eschewing ever wilfully and wittingly to contrary your conscience: For a small sin wilfully committed, with a deliberate resolution to break the bridle of conscience therein, is far more grievous before God, than a greater sin committed in a sudden passion, when conscience is asleep. Remember therefore in all your actions, of the great account that ye are one day to make: in all the days of your life, ever learning to die, and living every day as it were your last;

*Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum.*

And therefore, I would not have you to pray with the Papists, to be preserved from sudden death, but that God would give you grace so to hue, as ye may every hour of your life be ready for death: so shall ye attain to the virtue of true fortitude, never being afraid for the horror of death, come when he list: And especially, beware to offend your conscience with use of swearing or lying, suppose but in jest; for others are but a vice, and a sin clothed with no delight nor gain, and therefore the more inexcusable even in the sight of men: and lying cometh also much of a vile use, which will banish shame: Therefore beware even to deny the truth, which is a sort of lie, that may best be eschewed by a person of your rank. For if any thing be asked at you that ye think not meet to reveal, if ye say, that question is not pertinent for them to ask, who dare examine you further? and using sometimes this answer both in true and false things that shall be asked at you, such unmannerly people will never be the wiser thereof.

And for keeping your conscience sound from that sickness of

superstition, ye must neither lay the safety of your conscience upon the credit of your own conceits, nor yet of other men's humors, how great doctors of Divinity that ever they be; but ye must only ground it upon the express Scripture: for conscience not grounded upon sure knowledge, is either an ignorant fantasy, or an arrogant vanity. Beware therefore in this case with two extremities: the one, to believe with the Papists, the Churches authority, better than your own knowledge; the other, to lean with the Anabaptists, to your own conceits and dreamed revelations.

But learn wisely to discern betwixt points of salvation and indifferent things, betwixt substance and ceremonies; and betwixt the express commandment and will of God in his word, and the invention or ordinance of man; since all that is necessary for salvation is contained in the Scripture: For in any thing that is expressly commanded or prohibited in the book of God, ye cannot be over precise, even in the least thing; counting every sin, not according to the light estimation and common use of it in the world, but as the book of God counteth of it. But as for all other things not contained in the Scripture, spare not to use or alter them, as the necessity of the time shall require. And when any of the spiritual office-bearers in the Church, speak unto you any thing that is well warranted by the word, reverence and obey them as the heralds of the most high God: but, if passing that bounds, they urge you to embrace any of their fantasies in the place of God's word, or would color their particulars with a pretended zeal, acknowledge them for no other than vain men, exceeding the bounds of their calling; and according to your office, gravely and with authority redact them in order again.

To conclude then, both this purpose of conscience, and the first part of this book, keep God more sparingly in your mouth, but abundantly in your heart; be precise in effect, but social in show: declare more by your deeds than by your words, the love of virtue and hatred of vice: and delight more to be

godly and virtuous indeed, than to be thought and called so; expecting more for your praise and reward in heaven, than here: and apply to all your outward actions Christ's command, to pray and give your alms secretly: So shall ye on the one part be inwardly garnished with true Christian humility, not outwardly (with the proud Pharisee) glorying in your godliness; but saying, as Christ commandeth us all, when we have done all that we can, *Inutiles serui sumus*: And on the other part, ye shall eschew outwardly before the world, the suspicion of filthy proud hypocrisy, and deceitful dissimulation.

*End of the First Book*