



FREE
THOUGHTS
CONCERNING
Government.



L O N D O N:
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THE

THOUGHTS

CONCERNING

GOVERNMENT.



LONDON:

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S I R,

YOU are pleas'd to command my Thoughts upon Government, and it is my Duty not to disobey you. The Subject is so intricate, and so much perplexed by the Writers about it, that I cannot promise my self to give you more Satisfaction, than others have offered.

The absolute Necessity of Government, makes the Consideration of this Subject different from what it is in most others, where there is no such Necessity; which I think has not been enough attended to.

A 2. I know,

I know, Sir, that I write to a very Candid Judge, who will not be angry, if we are not of the same Opinion; and therefore I make no Scruple of communicating my Thoughts to you, and shall be under no Pain whether they please, or not.

One of the Disputes upon this Subject is concerning the first Original of Government; what it was in Fact, and upon what Principle Men first united in Polity.

It must not be expected that we can otherwise know the first Origin of Government than by Conjecture, there being no Memoirs left us of those Early Times. Human Nature was the same then as now; and we can only consider what would most likely happen, if the World was to begin now, in order to know how it did begin.

No doubt the Common Father of all Human Race had the Government of his own Family, whilst it remained in small Number, and a narrow Compass as to Place. If a Family removed to cultivate
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more Ground; 'tis most likely the Government was the same. Doubtless whoever had a mind to cultivate, placed himself where he pleased; and probably in many places there was no such thing as Government, *viz.* where some are under the Command of others. For whilst there was Possession enough for every body, they would rather live as Companions, and mutual Assisters to each other.

But when the Number of Men greatly increased, and were as much dispersed, and they began to have Disputes with one another, then Polity must of necessity begin; some would unite to oppress; others to defend: If the former prevailed, a Government was founded in Force; if the latter, a Polity began by Consent: How therefore Government began in Fact, is very uncertain; probably more ways than one: And as to the Principle it was begun upon, it seems that the mutual Love of some, and the Fear of others concurred.

But

But whatever Weight some lay upon the Original of Government, 'tis of no Moment in our Modern Disputes, as to any particular Government, or Form of Government, because they have all undergone numberless Changes; so that it signifies nothing what their first Original was.

All the Governments now in the World can have no other Foundation, but the general Law of Nature, *To submit to, and defend the Government we are born or live under, whatever the Origin of it was, or whatever Changes it has undergone.* Nature dictates this, because a settled Government is certainly necessary for Mankind; and there can never be a settled Government upon any other Supposition. The Christian Religion confirms this General Law, and commands it as a Duty binding the Conscience; and that very quickly after the great Change in the Government of *Rome*, and to the *Jews*, who had been so lately conquered.

To say that Mankind are all equal, and that Government depends upon their Consent, destroys all Government, unless they are obliged to give their Consent by some Law : If that be said, then 'tis the same thing, as to the Right of Government, whether they consent, or not ; because if they do not, it is just to force them. Besides, since all Governments have undergone Force, the Right of Government can't be derived from any other Consent, than a forced Consent, which is none at all : And such a Supposition leaves Men at Liberty to offer Violence to Government at any time ; which is against the general Law of Nature and Religion, and is destructive of all Government. I say therefore, that from the Necessity of Government in the World, Men are obliged to submit to whatever Government they are under, of whatever Form it be ; for in all Forms the Supreme Power is absolute. And whatever Changes are made, whatever Laws, by the Supreme Power, which are not contrary

trary to a plainer Law of Nature, than Submission to Government, bind the Subject. And I must confess I know none that is so, unless to make almost an impossible Supposition; we may put the Case that a Massacre was enacted, there Self-preservation, the first Principle of Human Nature, would take place; as to all Civil Rights, the Supreme Power must be Absolute.

The Christian Religion enforces this Law, and seems to have a particular Regard to Obedience to the Civil Power, when Men are persecuted by it upon the Account of Religion. Tho' we are not obliged to obey any Commands of a Government, contrary to the Commands of Christ; yet we are certainly obliged to suffer whatever is inflicted upon us upon that account, in all Cases whatever.

So that I am sure I can venture to say, that Christianity commands absolute
Non-

Non-Resistance in all Religious Matters,
and I think as certainly to the Supreme
Power in general.

In some Forms of Government the
Supreme Power is divided, and one Part
may encroach upon the other, to the
prejudice of their Civil Rights. What
then is to be done in this Case?

Here I can't but think, tho' the whole
Supreme Power is absolute; that so far
as one Part invades the other, it acts un-
justly; and consequently it must be just
for the injured Part to defend its Rights.
But then it is as plain that this is all that
can be justly done.

To say that this Resistance is not just,
makes all Princes in mixed Monarchies
absolute: To say that any further Re-
sistance is just, makes the People abso-
lute.

It will be asked, if all Governments have suffered so many Changes by Force, upon what Right they depend? To which I Answer, That whatever be the Consequence, the Fact is true; and all our Reasonings must be upon that Foundation. I say further, That both the Law of Nature, and the Christian Religion, command Obedience to these Governments. In this Law the Right of them is founded, and is consequently Divine, as the Law is.

It may be objected, that this is only true of the Supreme Power, not always of the Prince in a limited Monarchy. The Answer to which is, That tho' in this Form of Government 'tis just for the People to defend their Civil Rights, yet that is all that they can do. The Prince and his Rights are ever Sacred: He is accountable only to God, whose Vicegerent he is in the Administration of the Things of this World; They cannot justly

justly offer Violence to either, upon any Pretence whatsoever.

Another Dispute remains under this Head, not easily determined. Breaches upon the Form and Descents of Governments, ever did, and ever will happen. Which I think never can be just, because it cannot be supposed that they are made by the whole Supreme Power. It is therefore to be considered what is to be done during the Contest, and what afterwards when the Change is made.

As to the First; Certainly every one is obliged to defend the present Form and Descent; if those Endeavours fail, they come into another; which by the same Law, they are likewise obliged to submit to and defend, when it is fixed and settled. And 'tis impossible to fix any other Period, in which a Government can be said to be so, but when the Contest is over. Then it stands upon the same Foot it ever did since any former

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Change,

Change, and as all other Governments do.

I think it must be allowed for certain, that the Constitution in all Governments is to be maintain'd, else there could be no certain Government at all ; and this well observed, would make all Governments certain in themselves, and nothing but Foreign Force could affect them.

This being of so much Use to Government, I think it is Reason enough to make all think it a Common Duty. And if this Rule was always observ'd, there would be no Difficulties upon this Subject. But yet whatever there are, they can never be Solved but upon the same Principle. If we suppose then any Contest to arise in a Government, either within it self, or with any Foreign Power, either with regard to the Change of Form, or Descent, it is the Duty of every one to maintain the present ; but if that does not succeed, but a
Change

Change is made and settled, the same Law obliges every one to submit to it, and maintain it. If it be here objected, that this Principle establisheth any Usurpation, when settled; I say, that this Principle prevents all Usurpation as far as is possible, and as far as is consistent with Government at all.

For when any such are made and settled, 'tis very plain, that either there is no Government at all; or if there is, every one is obliged to submit to it, and maintain it by the general Law. And any other Supposition sets every Part of a Government at liberty to make Changes when they will, because all have before undergone Changes, which is inconsistent with any Government.

In fine; God has ordained Government, and commanded Obedience to it, both by the Law of Nature, and the Christian Religion. Wherever therefore there is Government, there is Submission
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and Obedience due by this Supreme Law. It is the Supreme Power in every Government that is to be obey'd by this Law: This Supreme Power is always to be defended; but if any Alterations are made in it by their own Consent, or any other way, which become settled; by the same Law, it is to be submitted to, and maintained.

This, I think, is the only Foundation upon which Government can stand in Peace and Security.

If it be objected here, that this does not enough secure the Rights of any Part of the Government, who lose them in the first Contest; because when any Change is settled, 'tis asserted, that this likewise by the same Law is to be maintained. I say in Answer, That 'tis the first Dictate of Reason as to this Dispute, that a settled Government is necessary, and as much as is possible in Peace and Security; and if the Period I have fixed does

does not settle a Government, no other can. It cannot be done by fixing any certain Time, because the Right of Things cannot be altered by the Time being more or less. And upon that Foot we may as well go back to any other Change as the last.

The Case of Government is particular: It is absolutely necessary for Mankind; There must be no Stop supposed longer than Civil Dissentions necessarily make one, which are all unnatural; and as all are obliged not to begin them, so are they likewise after they are ceased, as much as before they began. And consequently, in all reason, Governments must be supposed settled when there is none.

Nor can a Government be said not to be settled, till any Part which has lost its Rights, is extinct; for the same Reason, as it cannot be put upon any certain Time. Because this may not happen in
Ages,

Ages, and consequently is inconsistent with both the Peace and Security of Government, which both Natural and Revealed Religion establish.

It will be said, that this is not to be allowed ; because tho' a Part of the Government may have lost its Rights in the first Contest, and a Change may be settled, yet the Subjects may afterwards have it in their Power to recover them.

I say in Answer, That unless the Supreme Power does it, 'tis not the Subject's Duty to do it. God Almighty governs the World, and has told me what I am to do ; many Dispensations of Providence may appear difficult to give an account of, I am only to consider what Province it has allotted me. I am commanded to submit to Government, and to preserve it in Peace.

If the Supreme Power reduces the Government to its last State, it is very
just.

just. But Violence is what both Nature and our Religion abhor ; and to avoid it, command us to acquiesce in any settled Government. And without this Principle, Mankind must always be in a State of War ; which some being sensible of, would heal, by bringing in Compacts and Consent of People, and all Parts of a Government ; which is all false in Fact ; and such Governments are only in *Eutopia*, or in their own Fancies.

I hope most of the particular Cases in Government may be answered by this general Discourse, agreeably both to Reason and Religion.

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J. W. & C.





