

N^o 10

UNION, *the Strength of a People.*

Considered in a

S E R M O N,

Preach'd in

Bartholomew-Close,

On *MAY* the First, 1707.

Being the *DAY* appointed by Her Majesty, for a *General Thanksgiving* for the Happy *UNION* of the Two Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland*, in *Great Britain*.

By *Thomas Freke*.

L O N D O N,

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PSAL. LXVIII. ver. 28.

*Thy God hath commanded thy Strength:
Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast
wrought for us.*

THE Royal Prophet having fetch'd the Ark of the Lord from *Kirjah-Fearim*, and brought it to Mount *Zion*, where he had made a Tabernacle for its Entertainment, composes this Triumphant Song upon such a joyful Occasion. He Prefaces it in that very Form of Words, which *Moses* had directed the Priests to use, every time that they took up the Ark to set forward in their March to the Land of *Canaan*, Numb. 10. 35. *Let God arise, let his Enemies be scattered. Let them also that hate him, flee before him.* Then he proceeds to a brief Account of what Wonders God had done for that People, in leading them by the Ark of his Presence thro' the Wilderness into the good Land, where he hop'd he would establish and settle them, now that he had in so pompous a manner ascended into the High Hill of *Zion*, and already given them such eminent Success, and signal Victory over their Enemies. *Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with his Benefits, even the God of our Salvation. He that is our God, is the God of Salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the Issues from Death: But God shall wound the Head of his Enemies,*

mies, and the Hairy Scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his Trespases, ver. 19, 20.

Upon the Death of *Saul*, *David* was anointed King over the House of *Judah* at *Hebron*. But *Abner* the Son of *Ner*, Captain of *Saul's* Host, took *Ishboseth* the Son of *Saul*, and made him King over all *Israel*. This occasion'd a long and bloody War betwixt the two Houses, which was carried on with much Zeal by both Parties (as is usual in civil Discords) thro' the Artifice and Ambition of two aspiring Generals, *Abner* and *Joab*. But during this War, as the Sacred Text remarks, *David waxed stronger and stronger, and the House of Saul waxed weaker and weaker*; till at length *Abner* being displeas'd with his Prince, for charging him with a Fault in going into his Father's Concubine, revolts to *David*, after he had made a strong Party for him in the Army of *Israel*, where this Great General fell by the Hand of *Joab*, as a Sacrifice of Revenge for his Brother's Death. The News hereof, that *Abner* was dead in *Hebron*, being brought to *Ishboseth*, 'tis said, *his Hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled*.

The Loss of so brave a Commander soon dispirited the Army, and put the whole Nation into a Convulsion. The People now began to think of *Abner's* Communication with the Elders of *Israel*, when he told them, *Ye fought for David in times past to be King over you; Now then do it, for the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the Hand of my Servant David I will save my People Israel out of the Hand of the Philistines, and out of the Hand of all their Enemies*. In this general Uneasiness that was visible throughout the Kingdom, there wanted not Persons to remove out of the Way the only Hindrance left to the desired

desired Revolution; *Ishboseth* their King was immediately slain by two of the Captains of his Bands; and then came all the Tribes of *Israel* to *David* unto *Hebron*, and spake, saying, Behold we are thy Bone and thy Flesh; also in time past, when *Saul* was King over us, thou wast he that ledest out, and broughtest in *Israel*; and the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed my People *Israel*, and thou shalt be a Captain over *Israel*; so all the Elders of *Israel* came to the King to *Hebron*, and King *David* made a League with them in *Hebron* before the Lord: And they anointed *David* King over *Israel*. The History of this Affair you have in 2 *Sam.* Chapt. II, III, IV, V.;

This wonderful Union of the whole Body of the People, *Judah* and *Israel*, in one Nation, being thus happily concluded, *David* in the first place very piously gives God the Praise, and commences his New Reign with providing a Habitation for the Ark of his Presence, which, as you have heard, he brings out of the House of *Abinadab*, and sets in his own City. The Solemnity of the Procession on that occasion he describes very elegantly in a few Verses before the Text, beginning at *Ver.* 24. They have seen thy Goings, O God, even the Goings of my God, my King, in the Sanctuary, i. e. with what Pomp he was brought to Mount *Zion*. The Singers went before, the Players on Instruments followed after; among them were the Damsels playing with *Timbrels*. Yea, the King himself leap'd and danced before the Lord with all his Might, 2 *Sam.* 6. 14. And as they went along they sung this Song, Bless ye God in the Congregation, even the Lord from the Fountain of *Israel*. This Entire Union of the Two Kingdoms, was such a diffusive Benefit, that all the People were universally assembled upon so

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solemn an Occasion. 'Tis written, *David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the Ark of the Lord unto his Place which he had prepared for it, 1 Chro. 15. 3.* There is little Benjamin with their Ruler, the Princes of Judah and their Council, the Princes of Zebulon, and the Princes of Naphthali: Not only the nearest Tribes were there, Benjamin and Judah, but the Princes also of those which were most remote, Zebulon and Naphthali; These came to attend at the Solemnity, and added to the Triumph of that Day. Zebulon and Naphthali, tho they liv'd at a distance from the Court and Royal City, yet their Lords adorn'd the Procession, and a stout and brave People they were, they jeopard'd their Lives unto the Death in the High Places of the Field, in the Days of Deborah, when many of the other Tribes minded nothing but their own Profit and Ease: For the Divisions of Reuben there were great Searchings of Heart. Gilead abode beyond Jordan, Dan remain'd in Ships, Asher continued on the Sea Shore, and abode in his Breaches, Judg. 5. 16, 17, 18.

Thus did the King immortalize the Memory of this happy Turn of Affairs, in bringing the Ark into the Sanctuary in so Triumphant a manner, attended by the Heads and Deputies of both Kingdoms. And then he adds, *Thy God hath commanded thy Strength; strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us:* which the Bishop of Ely excellently well Paraphraseth, and very much to my purpose, in these Words: "This Happy Union, thy
 " God, O Israel, hath brought about, and thereby
 " made thee strong and formidable to thy Enemies.
 " May it please thee, O God, to continue and con-
 " firm it! for as it is begun, so it must be perfect-
 " ed by thee alone. Here

Here are Three General Heads that I shall briefly insist on from the Words:

First, That the Strength of a People consists in their Union.

Secondly, That God is to be own'd as the Principal Cause, and Author of such a Blessing.

Thirdly, 'Tis our Duty to engage his Powerful and Directing Influence, for the Confirming and Perfecting of it.

The two former are Doctrinal, the latter tends more especially to Improvement and Application.

I. The Strength of a People consists in their Union. *Solomon* hath taught us this long ago in a Proverbial Way, *Two are better than one, because they have a good Reward for their Labour: For if they fall, the one will lift up his Fellow; but wo to him that is alone, when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up again: If two lie together, then they have Heat; But how can one be warm alone; and if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold Cord is not quickly broken,* Eccles. 4. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Nay, it is such an evident Truth, that the Devils themselves not only believe it, but they do also with all the Zeal and Cunning imaginable promote its Credit, where-ever they have any Interest to serve in the World. 'Tis by acting according to this Maxim, that they maintain their vast Sovereignty and Empire over Mankind. This gives 'em the advantage of doing so much Mischief, and creating such Disturbances in the Earth. As they govern their own Body by this Principle, and thereby preserve Order among themselves, so likewise they take due Care that all their Instruments, of what Size and Judgment soever in other Particulars,

particulars, yet they shall unite in this, to propagate the Devil's Kingdom among Men. Our Saviour hath told us, *If Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an End.* And surely it is as true, *if a Kingdom be divided against it self, that Kingdom cannot stand: And if a House be divided against it self, that House cannot stand.* Mark 3: 24, 25. Where *Envy*, and *Strife* is, saith the Apostle, and that is always where there is not Union and Harmony, there must necessarily follow *Confusion; and every evil Work,* James 3. 16.

This Political Method of Government is not confin'd to the Diabolical Kind; all Nations and People in the World have readily embrac'd this Truth, and there are none so barbarous, but endeavour to fix on such Principles of Power, as every one shall be willing heartily to consent to, and agree in. Tho it must be acknowledg'd, that good Laws, and virtuous Precepts are the Honour and Safety of a Commonwealth, yet in some Cases the rigorous putting of them into Execution hath been wav'd, rather than divide the Body, and blow up the Fire of Contention: Such a Value in all Ages hath been set upon Union and Concord, that the true Lovers of their Country have sacrificed all that was dear unto them, yea their very Lives, for the preserving of it. They knew very well the dismal Effects of a Breach in this Particular, they could not be ignorant of the many fatal Consequences a Rupture of this Kind is attended withal. Therefore as they were indefatigably industrious to procure it, so as jealous of the least Thing that hath a Tendency to interrupt or dissolve it.

Certainly the Strength of a People consists in their Union, and that if you consider them both

as a religious and a civil Society: If as a religious Society; you will find Union in Affections, in Doctrine, and in the Form of Civil Government, necessary for its Maintenance and Support. Some little Differences in Opinion only, are well enough consistent with Union and Peace. If there be Uniformity in Doctrine, 'tis not absolutely necessary for Peace sake, that there should be always Uniformity in Discipline. Provided we believe in *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all*, 'tis possible to keep the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*; notwithstanding we may differ in some few Points of a lesser moment. But if we break in upon Fundamentals, and disagree in Articles of Faith, 'tis next to an Impossibility, that such a Religious Society should long continue. So likewise is it, if any Civil Broils happen to arise in the same State, as is sufficiently exemplified in the People of *Israel*, who no sooner Revolted from the House of *David*, and made *Jeroboam* King over them, but fell to Idolatry; for *Jeroboam* said in his Heart, *Now shall the Kingdom return to the House of David: If this People go up to do Sacrifice in the House of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the Heart of this People turn again unto their Lord, even unto Rehoboam King of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam King of Judah. Whereupon the King took Counsel, and made two Calves of Gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: Behold thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt! and he set the one in Bethel, and the other out he in Dan. And this Thing became a Sin, &c.*

1 Kings 12. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.

Then if we consider a People, as a Civil Society, 'tis

'tis evident their Strength very much lies in their Union. The Body natural is supported by the wise Disposition and regular Acting of all its Members, when the Eye and the Ear, the Hands and the Feet perform their proper Office ; but should any jarring Discord arise betwixt them, through the abounding of peccant Humours, every one knows the whole Body would suffer, and be in danger ; for *whether one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it ; or one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoice with it.* It is so in the Politick, whose Interest and Honour is secur'd ; as well that of the Natural, by a studious avoiding of Schism in the Body, and when all in their several Capacities and Callings contribute their joint Endeavours to promote the Advantage of the Community. This naturally creates a good Understanding betwixt one another, inspires Men with Generous Principles, takes them off from the little Designs of self and a private Interest, causes them to pursue things that make for Peace, and for the Peace of the whole. An United People is concern'd that such Magistrates be over them, as are *Men fearing God, loving the Truth, and hating Covetousness.* All Names and Distinctions of Parties, that were wont to bias and sway them in their divided State, are now laid aside, their Eye is upon the Faithful of the Land, and none is oppos'd by them, but such as are Men of turbulent, restless Spirits, Enemies both to their Prince and Country. Here-upon good and wholesome Laws are made, these duly executed, the Liberties and Properties of a People inviolably preserv'd, and whatever is necessary for their further Security and Defence provided. This makes both Church and State, like

Jerusalem of old, a City, that is compact together, yea like Mount Zion, which cannot be remov'd, but abideth for ever; 'tis hereby rend'ed an impregnable Fortrefs against all the Assaults of the Enemy.

But on the contrary, Where this Union and Harmony, in Interest and Affection, hath been wanting; what Mischiefs, what Inundations of Miseries have followed? The unhappy Dividing of *Israel* into two Kingdoms, in *Rehoboam's* Reign, which before was One and entire, so enfeebled that People, that they were scarce ever freed from Civil War and Distractions, and at length ended in their Ruin. This prov'd the Catastrophe, and Overturning of the Greatest Monarchies of the World; The *Assyrian*, *Persian*, and *Grecian*. Yea it destroy'd and pull'd up by the very Roots, the City and Polity of the *Jews*, as the Historian at large informs us. When *Cæsar* came first into *Britain*, the *Roman* Legions were repuls'd, and himself put to flight. But the *Britains* falling into Factions and Parties, they were soon overcome, and became a Prey to the victorious *Romans*. They could not agree among themselves to resist the Common Danger; So whilst they fought divided, they were jointly defeated. *Ita dum singuli pugnant, universi vincuntur. Tacit. in Vit. Agricola.*

Wherefore consider of it, Take Advice, and speak your Mind, which I am perswaded can be no other, than this, That the Strength of a People consists in their Union.

II. I come to the Second General Head, That God is to be own'd, as the Principal Cause and Author of such a Blessing. Upon the Occasion of the Union of *Israel*, and *Judah*, in the House of *David*, the Royal Psalmist expresses himself thus;
Thy

Thy God hath commanded thy Strength. Here are Two very Emphatical Words in this Proposition. *David*, in the first Place, doth not only ascribe this Great Work to God, as the sole Author of it, but with a Note of Peculiarity. 'Thy God, ' *g. d.* It is he alone that hath done it, who, ever ' since you have been a People, hath stiled him- ' self, Thy God. *He exalteth the Horn of his ' People, the Praise of all his Saints, even of the ' Children of Israel, a People near unto him.* Psal. ' 148. 14. Tho' you have wickedly forsaken ' him, and have not been stedfast in his Cove- ' nant, yet he hath not forgot his Heritage, nor ' cast off his Relation unto you. He is thy God, ' *The God of Israel is he, that giveth Strength and ' Power unto his People.* Then, Secondly, It is not said barely, Thy God hath made thee strong, or given thee strength; but thy God *hath commanded thy strength*; 'tis spoken in an authoritative Manner. *He commanded, and it stood fast,* Psal. 33. 9. *He commanded, and they were created,* Psal. 148. 5. It was the commanding Power of God, which is infinite, and never to be resisted, that brought about this Happy Union for his People.

God indeed, in his Providential Government of the Affairs of this World, is pleas'd to make use of Means and Instruments, and to give them Wisdom and Courage, Conduct and Resolution, for the bringing to pass those great Things, he hath in his Eye to accomplish; yet 'tis he that sits at the Helm, and steers the Ship, as pleaseth him. *Tho' there be many Devices in a Man's Heart, nevertheless the Counsel of the Lord that shall stand,* Prov. 19. 21. Therefore, as we ought to pay a great Respect unto the Hand, and honour the Instrument that

that conveys the Blessing; yet still God is to be acknowledged as the principal Cause and Author of all. Whatever Wisdom, Prudence, or good Management, is visible in the Undertakers of any great Design, 'tis the most High that gives them Skill and Judgment, and Understanding in the Times: Wisdom and Might are his, he *Turneth the Hearts of Kings and Queens, as the Rivers of Water, whithersoever he will.* He inclines, and disposes their Minds for great and brave Actions, and then gently touches the Hearts of their Subjects, so that they entirely concur, and joyn in with them. In fine, He that stilleth the Noise of the Seas, the Noise of their Waves, stilleth also the *Tumult of the People*: So that at length their laudable Purposes are accomplished; for there is no resisting his Will, but whatsoever he takes in Hand shall prosper; which is a Demonstration, That God is to be own'd, as the supreme Cause, and Author of the Blessing.

King *David* rightly understood this Matter, when the Church, by his Authority, being an inspired Person, is taught to make use of this Gratiatory Song, *The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy Salvation, how greatly shall he rejoice! Thou hast given him his Hearts Desire, and hast not withholden the Request of his Lips; for thou preventest him with the Blessing of Goodness, and hast set a Crown of pure Gold upon his Head,* Psal. 21. 1, 2, 3.

III. Now I am brought to the Third General Head. That it is our Duty to engage the powerful and directing Influence of God, for the confirming and perfecting of such a Blessing, as is here spoken of. *Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought*

wrought for us. The Union of the Two Kingdoms of *Judah* and *Israel*, was undoubtedly a very great Blessing to the whole Nation. It was God's commanding Power surmounted all the Difficulties that lay in the Way, and brought it to a happy Conclusion: But the same Hand that begun, must confirm, and strengthen it: He that was the Author, must give the finishing Stroke. Therefore 'tis here directed, that their Eyes should be lifted up, their Prayers incessant, that he would strengthen what he had wrought for them.

In Matters of a publick and national Concern, it hath been observed, that when Divine Providence hath in any Case interested it self in a remarkable Manner, for the fixing of the Laws and Constitutions of a People, vain have been the Attempts of Men to destroy it. *Israel* had many Enemies, even in the Days of *Moses*, *Joshua*, and the *Judges*; yet God all along delivered them, when they cried unto him for Help. And tho' they rejected the Almighty in desiring a King, yet he did not utterly forsake them for his *Names sake*, because of those *righteous Statutes, and Judgments, he had set before them*. However, Prayer and Intercession was not at any time neglected; but whoever reads their History, will find them importunate for the lasting Security of those Favours and Blessings God had begun to shew unto them.

'Tis Time now to look at Home, and bring these Matters most particularly to bear, with Respect to our present Case. Authority hath summon'd us to meet upon a very joyful Occasion, to solemnize the Union betwixt our once Two Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland*, in one entire Kingdom of *Great Britain*. A Name not unknown

known to the Ancient *Romans*, a Name that made a mighty Figure in former Annals. Why should this be thought a strange Name to us, when it makes us what we were from the Beginning, and greater than ever, since that Time to this?

I shall here offer these Three Things, as naturally inferr'd from what hath been said.

(1.) There is unquestionable Ground of Reason to believe, that this Union we are now Commencing, is an invaluable Blessing to the *British* Isle. Not to insist upon Matters of Trade and Commerce, which is foreign to my Province, I shall but mention this, that by Virtue hereof not only the Hopes and Expectations of our inveterate Enemies are disappointed, but we gain a lasting Security for our Holy Religion, and are in a Capacity to prevent all secret Attempts, as well as more open Invasions on our Liberties and Properties, from any Quarter whatever. By Virtue of it, the Protestant Succession more firmly rests in the most Serene and *Illustrious* House of *Hanover*: And that of *Bourbon*, with its *Popish* Pretender, must vail its Head, and confess, *Thou art more worthy than I*. Is it a small Thing, that we are delivered from the least Apprehension of Danger at Home? Or do you think the common Enemy, that is so enrag'd against us, wou'd not have been glad of a Backdoor to have invaded a People, that he had ever the greatest Desire to have sacrific'd to his ambitious Revenge? Shall not we then esteem it a most marvelous Blessing, that now such an Opportunity is for ever taken out of his Hands, and he render'd incapable (we hope) of doing us the least Mischiefs, unless it be by his Emissaries among our selves?

(2.) Let us give God the Praise of this wonderful Work. 'Tis the Lord's Doing, and therefore it ought to be Great in our Eyes, When we consider the *Difficulty* and *Nicety* thereof, as 'tis well worded in the Proclamation; and how many fruitless Attempts had been made towards it in former Reigns, for now above these Hundred Years, we cannot but acknowledge, that

that the Hand of God hath been in it; who, as *Daniel* saith, *Changes the Times, and the Seasons; removeth Kings, and setteth up Kings, giveth Wisdom unto the Wise, and Knowledge to them that know Understanding*, Chap. 2. 21.

The Accomplishment of this Work, seems by a particular Guidance of Providence, to be reserv'd for the Happy Reign of our present most Gracious Queen *A. N. N. E.*; whose Heart and Soul was so intent upon this Matter, that She thought nothing could be a greater Addition to the Honour of it. *Her Glory now is Great in thy Salvation, O God, Honour and Majesty hath thou laid upon Her; for thou hast made Her most Blessed for ever; thou hast made Her exceeding glad with thy Countenance.*

(3.) Implore that Being, who hath wrought out such a Salvation as this, that he would perfect and strengthen it. Do what in you lies to procure the happy Benefits, and Blessings thereof. Love as Brethren. Let not the Union be in Word only, but in Deed also. Suffer not your Differences in some lesser Matters of Religion, to hinder your Uniting in the Great and Common Concern of the Publick. Tho' the Ancient *Britains* were given to Factions, and making of Parties; yet let it not be said, that the same *Genius* yet possesses this Nation. But put away from you all *Bitterness and Wrath, and Anger and Clamour, and evil Speaking, with all Malice, and be ye kind one to another, and tender hearted, forgiving one another; even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Behold how Good and how Pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity!

Let it be then our Prayer and Endeavour, that the Envy of *Ephraim* may depart, and the Adversaries of *Judab* may be cut off, that *Ephraim* may not envy *Judab*, and *Judab* may not vex *Ephraim*; but in one Body we might all joyn against the *Philistine*, the common Enemy, 'till he be utterly destroy'd. Then Glory would dwell in our Land. God, even our own God, would bless us, and all the Ends of the Earth would fear him.

In Turbas & Discordias pessimo cuique plurima Vis; Pax & Quies bonis Artibus indigent. Tacit. Hist. Lib. 4.