

deemed Indecency, and strong Expressions Insolence, in which a Claim of Right may not, perhaps, be explained, or even insinuated, if to impugn, or glants their Authority whose Relief is supplicated. To soften and deprecate must be the Hope and Endeavour, tho' a guiltless Freeman would, probably, be awkward in ringing all the Changes of Parce, Precor.

Under these Circumstances, the Liberty of the Press is of the most momentous Consequence, for if Truth is not allowed to speak thence in it's genuine Language of Plainness and Simplicity, nor Freedom to vindicate it's Privileges with decent Firmness, we shall have too much Reason to acknowledge his Foresight who predicted, that "the Constitution of the British Government was too excellent to be permanent. The Train for the Accomplishment of that Prophecy hath not yet caught in America nor, I trust, been laid.

That there have been Laws extremely unjust and oppressive, the Declarations of subsequent Parliaments, fixing this Stigma upon them, evince; but whilst the Power which introduced them prevailed, it was not prudent to give them their deserved Characters. The Parliament of Henry III, or that of Henry VI, need not be cited; there are many other Instances, tho' not branded with Epithets so remarkably opprobrious.

In the Opinion of a great Lawyer, an Act of Parliament may be void, and of a great Divine, "all Men have natural, and Freeman legal Rights, which they may justly maintain, and no legislative Authority can deprive them of."

Cases may be imagined in which the Truth of these Positions might, in Theory, be admitted; but in Practice, unless there should be very peculiar Circumstances, such as can't be supposed to exist during the Prevalence of the Power that introduced it, who would rely upon the Authority of Opinions, or the Principles of them, for his Protection against the Penalties of any positive Law?

When the Judges were ask'd by Henry VIII, Whether a Man might be attainted of High Treason by Parliament, tho' not called to answer, they declared that it was a dangerous Question, and gave the evasive Answer that, "the High Court of Parliament ought to give Examples of Justice to the inferior Courts, none of which could do the like." But tho' it might be dangerous to declare against the Authority of Parliament, we are not bound to acknowledge it's Inerrability, nor precluded from examining the Principles and Consequences of Laws, or from pointing out their Improperities, and Defects. Upon this Ground I have proceeded in the following Considerations, and shall not be disappointed if they should appear to be too free, or too reserved, to Readers of different Complexions.

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