

to furnish concise and plausible reasons for a course which we have already determined to pursue. Lord Bacon has drawn up a series of proverbs on both sides of political questions. Thus—against innovation—“the confusion which follows upon a change in what is established outweighs any benefit which may result from a change.” For innovation “since things alter spontaneously for the worse if they were not altered designedly for the better, there would be no end of evil.” Neither of these proverbs furnishes a practical rule for a particular case. It will be found in general, that the quotation of a proverb simply indicates the standpoint from which the speaker contemplates the question at issue. Now in like manner the maxim referred to affords no guide for the mind in determining how King Charles should have been dealt with. It was intended for ordinary cases and has no application where the King is altering the whole system of government. To take an illustration, the duty of telling the truth may be said to be of general obligation. The exceptions are so rare that for practical purposes they may be passed over. But is it of universal obligation? Those to whom casuistry is a word of ill-omen say that it is. Others may consider that when truth and justice lead to different results the duty of doing justice has a paramount claim upon our conscience. The legal doctrine of estoppel is founded upon the principle that justice sometimes demands the suppression of the truth. The usual interpretation of the maxim which forces the responsibility for royal misconduct upon the agents of the crown is a necessary development in order that the shadow of royalty might exist together with the reality of government by the people. But it is probable that our ancestors really believed that “there's a divinity doth hedge a king.”

In order to understand the king's view of his own position we must remember that feudalism was dying out, while popular rights had not been yet accurately defined. Charles was the lineal descendant of Egbert and the Conqueror, thus uniting in himself the Saxon and Norman dynasties. The royal line had remained unbroken during the wars of the Roses when so many of the ancient families of the nobility became extinct. The hand of Providence, it seemed, had directed the course of events. It appeared that the House of Stuart was the special favourite of Heaven.

Another argument appealed with persuasive power to the mind of the King. It was the argument from Scripture. The following is an extract from a speech which the King had prepared for delivery before the Court which tried him upon a charge of high treason. “I am most confident that this day's proceedings cannot be warranted by God's laws, for on the contrary obedience unto kings is clearly warranted and strictly commanded both in the Old and New Testament, which I denied I am ready instantly to prove, Eccl. viii, 4. “Where the word of a king is, there is power, and who may say what doest thou?” Both king and people appealed to the Scriptures, each with unwavering confidence in the justice of their cause. They all seem to have believed that the Bible fell from heaven in the reign of James I bound together as we now possess it. It is in truth a melancholy retrospect when we consider what crimes have been committed

by those who found an express sanction for their actions in the inspired volume. While they may have deceived themselves into the belief that they were promoting the glory of God they were really gratifying their own passions. Nor is this appeal to scripture a device of modern times. Saint Basil says of heretics in his day “These people appeal to the scriptures and if they find there what suits them they accept it as the inspired word of God, but if they find there what does not suit them they reject it as inconsistent with that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” How then shall we ascertain the meaning of this infallible guide? Professor Jowett, one of the brightest ornaments of Oxford University, furnishes us with the true rule in his contribution to “Essays and Reviews” entitled “The Interpretation of Scripture.” Like many other discoveries it seems so obvious as to excite surprise that it never occurred to anyone before. “Scripture,” he says, “means now precisely what it meant to those to whom it was first addressed.” This carries us back to an historical investigation into the circumstances under which the inspired volume was written. In the case of the Epistles we inquire what was the particular evil to which a remedy was to be applied.

When Saint Peter said “Honor the King” he did not profess to be writing a treatise on Constitutional Law. The propagation of the New Religion was the grand object he had in view. The arbitrary but beneficent rule of Rome had put an end to the jealousies of the petty republics who were unable to guarantee security and liberty to their citizens. Under their sway property was held by no certain tenure and commerce was impossible. Obey the *de facto* government, says the Apostle. We feel the benefit of the order which it preserves. We know the chaos which preceded it. Do not let your attention be distracted from the Religion we preach to the political constitution of a world which is passing away. The immediately impending Second Advent of the Founder to the mind of the Apostle caused all political questions to sink into insignificance. When the end of all things was at hand why should he draw up schemes for the distribution of power between the prince and the people? Besides it must be borne in mind that he was writing to orientals who can conceive of no other government than that of a despot. If the seat of religion is in the sacred region of the heart and not in the hollow of the brain, we must not apply language which was intended to teach moral and spiritual truths to the solution of questions of politics. Hereditary right, and Scripture as he understood it supported the claims of the king. His power came from above not from the people below. Bearing this in mind it is not difficult to understand the insincerity of Charles which in the ultimate analysis was the cause of his death. No contract could bind him because a contract supposes two persons capable of contracting and uninfluenced by duress. When we contemplate the idea of kingly power which had grown up in his mind we are not surprised to find that he did not feel bound to perform those promises which were extorted from him by rebellious subjects. When a capture is effected by Grecian or Turkish brigands the payment of a ransom in advance is always made the condition of the release of the captive. But would anyone suppose that if the