

LETTER  
Samuel Dillingham  
to William Sancroft (1617–1693)

25 January 1652

From the ruins of Fotheringay Castle to the massacres of Petersburg Minster are the terms of my motion. In two hours' riding I see the destruction of church and state. Till now, I thought it safest living amongst the dead. And because I hated the sight of the present world, I had of late turned myself back two or three leaves of ages, endeavored to live with our forefathers, lived like an echo amongst rotten tombs, taking the confessions of monuments and grave-stones, which sometimes I found epitomized in a coat of arms. And while I might do this, I imagined myself with their happy souls, because out of sight of the unhappy times. But I find, upon a fortnight's search, a fate of graves too, a second and third edition of the same death, whilst the title of *edax rerum*<sup>1</sup> is emulously snatched from good old time by a set of sacrilegious and inhuman fingers. I would have wished Pharaoh for the eleventh plague, the plague of sectaries.

If the times go ten steps further, we shall have a brass nail upon a flat stone as a rare piece of antiquity; and the sight of a bit of red glass go for pence apiece: and, indeed, it concerns our new government to get the world into a belief that it was made but in 1640, at furthest. Some bits of brass that I had lately seen, with inscriptions, are, before a man could well say the eighth commandment,<sup>2</sup> pilfered away; which when I come with a full resolution to find and preserve, they are gone to mend some old kettle or other, and I like a fool sent home again.

Thus have I spent some days; and, for all this, should have done more, had not the strict order everywhere for voiding the Crown arms frightened me out of churches as one that misdoubted whether the fear of God were there, when I found not Honour the etc. follow.<sup>3</sup> I tell them they only white them over to the next and fairer edition. We must now keep them close in a book, if we'll have them at all.

I pray God bleed our Kingdom a little at the nose that the distemper may be cured. Besides the present means against some men, it is easy to draw an argument against them from everything they do; but it is as dangerous, too, if a piece of paper miscarry, and so I will spare myself.

The enclosed is a taste of Emanuel Thesaurus,<sup>4</sup> and the twentieth part of him; which I pray read over, and keep till I send for it.

Mr. Sarson has certainly a grace for the next master, the next rot that falls either in Cambridge or Oxford, and has promised his mistress, upon that confidence, her coach and four horses. He has the repute of a very independent, and had been with you last bout had he not come two or three days too late.

Sir, I take my leave and kiss your hands.

Henry Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England* (London: Henry Colburn, 1842), II:400–401.

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<sup>1</sup> *tempus edax rerum* — time devours all things

<sup>2</sup> Do not steal (Exodus 20:15, Deuteronomy 5:19). The Anglican and Reformed tradition number the commandments differently than do the Catholic and Lutheran traditions.

<sup>3</sup> I Peter 2:17 — Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King. (King James Version, 1611)

<sup>4</sup> Emanuele Tesauro (1592–1675), Italian poet, philosopher, and historian