

REASONS

For Passing a BILL in PARLIAMENT, to Erect

Three Courts of Conscience

In the Three Divisions hereafter Named, being within the Weekly Bills of Mortality, and without the City of *London*, and the Liberties thereof, for Relief of poor Debtors and Creditors, under the Value of *Forty Shillings*, to prevent Vexatious and Chargeable Arrests and Suits at Law.

First, The Division of the City and Liberties of *Westminster*, and all Parishes and Places thereunto belonging:

Secondly, The Division of the *Tower-Hamlets*, with the Parishes within the Bills of Mortality contained within the *Hamlets* of the *Tower-Liberty*.

Thirdly, The Division called *Holbourn-Division*, and all those Parishes and Liberties comprehended, or so reputed within the same.

The *Court of Conscience* for the City of *London* was first Erected by an *Act of Common-Council* of the said City, in the 19th Year of King *Henry VIII*.

The said *Court* being found to be Good and Charitable, of great Ease and Benefit both to the poor Debtors and Creditors, as also much tending to the Quiet and Welfare of the City, and Encouragement of Trade, was in the First and Third Year of King *James I*. established by Parliament, still limiting and confining the Jurisdiction of the said *Court* to the Citizens and Freemen of the said City, and other Persons that Inhabit, or shall Inhabit within the said City, or Liberties thereof, being a Tradesman, Victualler, Labourer, or otherwise; nor did the Jurisdiction of the said *Court of Conscience* ever yet Extend further than the City of *London*, and Liberties thereof.

That the City and Liberties of *Westminster*, and the other Out-Parishes in *Middlesex* within the weekly Bills of Mortality, are, of late Years, vastly increased in Buildings, and, consequently, of Inhabitants; and abound in poor Tradesmen, Artificers, Labourers, Victuallers, and others, far exceeding *London*, and the Liberties thereof, who, for want of the like good Establishment of a *Court*, or *Courts of Conscience* therein, are Exposed to many and great Inconveniences, tending to the Impoverishment and Ruin of themselves and Families, as by the many Vexatious Suits, which are daily commenced for inconsiderable Sums, may appear, when by the extreme Poverty of the Parties prosecuted, by the Implacability of their Adversaries, and by great Costs of Suits, frequent Imprisonments, and thereupon the Extravagant Exactions of the Gaolers, their Original Debt is near a sixth part increased, whereby many Families are left to their Parish, the Prison filled with poor helpless Men and Women, Sicknesses contracted, and Trade, in a great measure, hindred.

All which, a salutary *Act of Court of Conscience*, or *Request*, for the Divisions abovementioned, might, in a good part, prevent; as hath been Experienced in the City of *London*, and the Liberties thereof, during the long time the like *Court* hath been there holden, and the Benefit whereof some other Places, where the like *Courts* have been Established by the late Parliament, are able to give good Testimony; which, however, is humbly submitted to the Prudence of this present Parliament.

