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*Reasons for enabling Protestant dissenters to bear publick offices.* London: Printed for John Clark, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry, near Cheapside, 1717.



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Ontario Theological Seminary

# R E A S O N S

For Enabling

*Protestant Dissenters*

T O B E A R

Publick Offices.

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*The Lords think that an Englishman can't be reduc'd to a more unhappy Condition, than to be put by Law under an incapacity to serve his Prince and Country; and therefore nothing but a Crime of the most detestable Nature ought to put him under such a disability: They who think the being present at a Meeting to be so high a Crime, can hardly think that a Toleration of such Meetings ought to continue long. And yet the Bill says, The Act of Toleration ought to be kept inviolably.*

Conference upon Occas. Bill. 1702. p. 20.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN CLARK, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry, near Cheap-side. 1717.

Price Six Pence.



# REASONS, &c.



**W**HOEVER considers how often this NATION has been upon the Brink of Ruin since the Reformation of Religion here, will be apt to ask; How it comes to pass, that *England*, which has always been esteem'd the Support of the Protestant Interest in the World, and has often with good Success lent her Assistance to the Foreign Churches, should herself be expos'd to more Dangers than others are? This is an Enquiry of the utmost Consequence, especially at a Time, when we are just deliver'd from a Rebellion, begun and carry'd on by Papists and their Adherents in favour of a Popish Pretender to the Crown; and threaten'd with a foreign Invasion on the same Account.

It may not be amiss therefore to shew any of the Causes whence the Danger of Popery has proceeded, that so by a prudent Conduct, we may prevent it for the future.

I CANNOT but think that Popery has kept its Footing in *England*, rather through a wrong Conduct on our Part, than the Strength or Policy

licy of its Votaries; I mean, that we have carry'd a stronger Byass to its Worship and Discipline, and upon that Account, have express'd a greater Aversion towards Protestants, who have not in all Respects come up to the establish'd Standard, than has been consistent either with our Safety or Reputation. To illustrate this, let us go a little back to the REFORMATION, and consider the Reasons on which it was grounded, and if it should appear, That as our Courts have been more or less Popishly inclin'd, Protestant Dissenters have met with milder or severer Treatment, One may easily conclude, that *Popery* has had the principal Hand in the Severities they have suffer'd.

WHOEVER considers the Bent of Queen *Elizabeth's* Counsels, which were to unite the Nation into one Profession, her first Impressions in her Father's Reign in favour of the Popish Rites and Ceremonies, and her Love of Pomp and Magnificence in Religion, will be tempted to believe, that our REFORMATION was carry'd on rather upon political than religious Views in her Reign; who seem'd rather inclin'd to secure herself from the Pope's Supremacy, than to free the Worship of GOD from those humane Additions, which by Virtue of that Supremacy alone were brought into it. From hence, perhaps, it came to pass, that our *Service-Book* was settled to the general Taste; so that the *Papists* almost to a Man conform'd to it, till the tenth Year of her Reign, and the Pope himself *Twice* \* offer'd to confirm it, if his Supremacy might be acknowledged here; nay, the popish Rites were retain'd, contrary to the Opinion and Remonstrances of most of the reformed

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\* Bishop *Burnet's* History of the Reformation. Vol. II. pag. 337.

reformed Divines \* both at Home and Abroad; And the frequent and pressing Instances of several successive Parliaments, which were rejected by the Queen with uncommon Disdain, and peculiar Marks of her Displeasure; as may be seen in several Instances in *Dewe's Journals*.

THIS Conduct gave Rise to a Party, who from their pressing for a further Reformation in Doctrine, Discipline and Worship, or professing a greater Purity of Life, were call'd *Puritans* †.

THESE Men, whose only Crime, was a more than ordinary Zeal against *Poperly*, were look'd upon as Enemies and were accordingly treated as such ||. I do not say, these Proceedings were entirely owing to popish Counsels, (tho' the Queen's Displeasure at the marry'd Clergy, and her refusing at first to be call'd the Head of the Church, gives room for Suspicion on that Head:) However, 'tis certain, that in succeeding Times, the *Nonconformists* have been treated just as the Popish Interest has risen or fallen in the Kingdom; which can't be very surprizing, if it be always true, what was observ'd of the Temper of our Party in King *Charles I's* Time, *viz.* † *That the Papists hated the Puritans more than they did the Establish'd Church; as on the other Hand, the Puritans hated the Papists more than they did the Establishment; but, which is indeed is a little surprizing, the Churchmen hated the Puritans more than they did the Papists. So that*  
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\* Their Letters in the Appendix to *Vol. III.*

The Declaration of the Doings of those Ministers of God's Word and Sacraments in the City of *London*, which have refus'd to wear the outward Apparel and ministring Garments of the Pope's Church. Printed in 1566.

† B<sup>p</sup>. *Hooper's Sermons on Jonas*, before the King and Council.

|| L<sup>d</sup>. Chief Justice *King's Speech at Sacheverell's Tryal.*

‡ The Account of Religion in *England*: Printed with *Steele's Account of the Roman-Catholick Religion.* p. 188, 189.

*the Churchmen and Papists would easily joyn in the Destruction of the Puritans.*

\* KING *James I.* at the Beginning of his Reign declar'd his Resolution to suppress the *Puritans*; and the better to favour such Designs, his Judges resolv'd, That the presenting a Petition to him, sign'd by a Thousand Ministers of the *Church of England*, desiring further Reformation in Discipline and Worship, was an Offence fineable at Discretion, and very near to Treason and Felony in the Punishment; nay he afterwards owns in Print, That *he had a better Opinion of the Papists than of the Puritans.* But if we consider, that in the same Discourse, † *he acknowledges the Pope's spiritual Supremacy here, and that his Holiness has a Power to excommunicate him*; or if we believe what his Son says of him, ‡ *That his Father is desirous of an Union with the Catholicks*, we shall not wonder at his Aversion towards the *Puritans*, or the Tenderness he express'd to the *Papists* in several Instances worth Reading in *Rushworth*; and particularly in the Treaties of Marriage, first between the Prince and the *Infanta*, and afterwards with the Daughter of *France* ††.

As for King *Charles I.* One can't believe that even He had an ill Opinion of *Popery*, when One sees him \*\* promising the Pope, *That he will, if Occasion be, sacrifice his Life and Crown, that there may be but one Religion, and one Faith, and protesting, that*

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\* His Premonition to all Christian Princes, p. 44, 45. his Apology for the Oath of Allegiance, 18, 19.

† Premonition, p. 9, 46.

‡ The Prince of Wales's Letter to the Pope, Cabale, 214: 215 and *Rushworth*, Vol. I. p. 82.

†† See the Treaties in *Rushworth*, Vol. I. p. 86, 172, 173.

\*\* See his Letter to the Pope.

that he had never been a Partisan of any Faction against the Catholick, Apostolick, Roman Religion; and expressing a Satisfaction upon the View of being reconciled to Rome upon easy Terms\*. These Things, with the Share he had in the two Treaties with France and Spain, the cruel and illegal Judgments of the Star-Chamber and High-Commission, &c. against Nonconformists, the Almost-Toleration granted to Papists, contrary to the Remonstrances of all his Parliaments, give a Man Reason to suspect that the Protestant Cause was not much at his Heart. Therefore if such a King, influenc'd by a popish Queen and an Archbishop, who † kept up a strict Correspondence at Rome, suffer'd the Puritans to be oppress'd, and even banish'd in great Numbers to our Plantations in the West-Indies, 'tis no more than might well be expected.

THIS was the Temper in the Reign of J. I. and Ch. I. but I think it shew'd itself more apparently after the Restoration.

IT has been lately said by a great Prelate, and not since deny'd, that I hear of, That K. Ch. II. liv'd a secret, and died a profess'd Papist ||. His Brother was openly so; and what Fate he met with on that Account, no Body is ignorant of. 'Tis no Wonder then, that the Dissenters suffer'd great Hardships while these Men were on the Throne. Accordingly, at the Beginning of K. Charles's Reign, Penal Laws were made against 'em almost without Number, and vigorously put in Execution †. Nay, if the Laws were order'd to be put

\* Account of Religion in England, cited before, p. 195.

† Gage's Travels, Chap. 22.

|| The B<sup>r</sup> of Ely in his Thanksgiving Sermon on the Suppression of the late Rebellion.

‡ Address of the House of Commons to the King, Nov. 13. 1680.



*in execution against Papists, even from thence, they gain'd an Advantage to their Party, while the Edge of those Laws was turn'd against Protestant Dissenters, and the Papists escap'd in a manner untouch'd: The Act of Parliament enjoying the Test to be taken by all that come into publick Employment, and intended as a Security against Papists coming into Offices, had so little effect, that either by Dispensations obtain'd from Rome, they submitted to those Tests and held the Offices themselves, or those put into Places were so favourable to their Interests, that the Commons conclude POPERY IT SELF HAS RATHER GAIN'D THAN LOST GROUND SINCE THAT ACT.*

AND so sensible were they, that the Severity towards Nonconformists proceeded from Popish influence, and tended to the bringing in of Popery; That they resolv'd, \* *Nemine contradicente, That the Acts of Parliament made in the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and K. James against Popish Recusants, ought not to be executed against Protestant Dissenters: And in pursuance of that Vote, and of an Opinion that was publickly declared in the House, That the only means to secure our selves from Popery was to unite Protestants, † they order'd a Bill for that End: And afterwards in January 1681 ||, Resolv'd, That the prosecution of the Protestant Dissenters upon the Penal Laws is grievous to the Subjects, a weakning to the Protestant Interest, an encouragement to Popery, and dangerous to the Peace of the Kingdom.*

THIS was the Sense of the Nation when it apprehended itself upon the brink of ruin; such Notions had they then of the Dissenters, that the  
Pensioner

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\* *Sabati 6. Nov. 1680.*

† *Debates of the Commons in 1680. p. 172, 181, 205,*

|| *The Votes of that time.*

Pensioner Parliament that made all or most of the Penal Laws of that Reign, when they saw the danger of Popery, order'd a Bill in *Febr. 1673.* for their relief: And what our best Men have since thought of 'em, and of their Treatment may appear, from the Lords Protest on the Schism Bill, in which they say, *In all Instances of making Laws, or of a rigid execution of 'em against Dissenters, it is very remarkable, that their Design was to weaken the Church, and to drive 'em into one common Interest with the Papists, to joyn in Measures tending to the Destruction of it. This was the Method suggested by Popish Counsellors to prepare 'em for two successive Declarations in the Time of King Charles II, and the following one issued out by K. James II. to ruin all our Civil and Religious Rights: And we can't think that the Acts and Contrivances of Papists to subvert our Church, are proper Means to preserve it. To the same Purpose, their Conferences with the Commons on the Occasional-Bill in 1702 \* That the Penal Laws proceeded from Popish Management, who after they had set the Church against the Dissenters, according to their wonted Arts, study'd to set the Dissenters as much against the Church: When by such Methods we were reduc'd to the last Extremity, the late King was invited, &c. Tho' these Things were plain enough, yet had the Dissenters no Relief (for the Declarations of Indulgence, were only scandalous Attempts to set up Arbitrary Power, and † as such, detested by all good Men, Dissenters as well as Church-Men,) till King William came to rescue us all from*

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Popish

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\* The Account of the Matter, publish'd by Order of the Lords, in 1702, 33, 34.

† Debates in 1680. 6. Dr. Calamy's Abridgment, 599. Alderman Love, a n ted Dissenter, argred in the House for Recalling that which issued in 1672.

Popish Power and Influence; to undo what the Brothers had been Thirty Years attempting by all manner of extraordinary Methods, and particularly by the *Penal Laws*: At that Time of common Joy, the *Act of Toleration* pass'd, by which they are protected in their peaceable Dissent from the Insults of the Rabble and the Fury of the Law. But as the Aversion toward 'em, was too deeply rooted in the Minds of the Populace (for the Court and the Clergy had been Blackening 'em for near Thirty Years) their Deliverance was not compleated in his Reign: The *Corporation* and *Test Acts*, notwithstanding the King recommended to his Parliament the Repeal of 'em, as far as related to Protestant Dissenters, stood in Force against 'em when Queen Anne came to the Throne. About the Beginning of her Reign, there were some Attempts made by the House of Commons, and rejected by the Lords, for passing a *Bill to prevent Occasional Conformity*. With what particular View this Affair was agitated at that Time, I will not determine; tho' as the Bishop of Bangor, in a Discourse then publish'd, observes, *It was very much to the Satisfaction of the Papists and Non-jurors, who, 'tis confess'd, are the ancient Enemies of Protestant Dissenters*: However, these Things ended in the Ruin of that Parliament and Ministry.

BUT when Things were running into Confusion, when a perfidious Peace was to be made with the great Enemy of the Protestant Name, when the HANNOVER SUCCESSION was to be set aside, and a Popish Pretender impos'd upon us, the Dissenters were so obnoxious to the then Ministry, that their own Friends thought themselves under a Necessity of forwarding the *Occasional-Bill*, to prevent a worse; or at least to take the Game out of the Treasurer's Hands, which they suspected

he design'd to play. But GOD blasted the Designs of our Enemies when they were upon the Point of Execution, and by a wonderful Turn of Providence, brought his Present MAJESTY to the Throne.

WHETHER the Dissenters will be Gainers by this SECOND REVOLUTION, any otherwise than in the common Protection of the GOVERNMENT; or whether that or any other of the Laws under which they suffer will be repeal'd, I know not: However, I'll endeavour to prove, That if we regard the common Principles of Policy or Justice, it will be done.

'T WAS a noble Saying, which was in the Mouths of most Men at His MAJESTY'S Accession, *Love your Friends, do Justice to your Enemies, and fear none but GOD.* Upon this Principle alone, the general Change which was made in the Administration at that Time was justify'd. There were many Objections which Cowardise or Self-Interest might have rais'd against it, but 'twas very rightly consider'd, That no Government can subsist without a due Distribution of Rewards and Punishments: And in Consequence of that Principle, the Tories, tho' numerous and popular, are almost universally put out of the greater Places. Indeed one need not insist on this Instance to shew the Wisdom of Governing by Rewards and Punishments, because all Ages and Nations acknowledge it the greatest Incouragement.

OUR Business is, to apply this to the present Case, and if it should appear, That the Protestant Dissenters are as good Subjects as any Body of Men among us, it will follow, that they ought in Prudence to be put, as to Civil Concerns, on a Level with the rest of the People.

Now if their Principles in Religious and Civil Matters, do not only keep 'em from being Enemies

mies to the Present Happy ESTABLISHMENT, but tend to make 'em the best of Friends to it ; it must be acknowledg'd, they will always be so, unless it can be shewn, that their Practises have been, and are likely to be, inconsistent with their Opinions.

I JOIN Religious and Civil Principles, because they have in all People a very great Influence one upon another ; for as *Popery* and *Slavery* always go together ; so Toryism in Church, which is but *English Popery*, constantly on proper Occasions ends in Toryism in the State ; as on the other Hand, Whigism in one (which is general Liberty) ends in Whigism in the other.

THE grand Principle upon which Protestants of all Denominations, justify their Separation from the Church of *Rome*, is, The absolute Sufficiency of Scripture for the Conduct of our Lives in order to Salvation, and the Necessity of reducing every Thing in Religion to that Standard. Upon this Foundation, we reject the Tradition of the Church, and deny the Infallibility the Pope pretends to. But tho' this, as I said, is the leading Principle of the REFORMATION, yet to our Shame be it spoken, it is not receiv'd with all its necessary Consequences, by any Body of Men among us, besides the Dissenters. They indeed think the natural Consequence of that Rule is, That no Body of Men have an authoritative Interpretation of Scripture ; because that would be to lodge a Power in fallible, corrupt Man to make a new one ; *That they are to call none Master but Christ, and to look on all Christians, of what Degree soever, as Brethren only.* From hence they argue, That as all Ecclesiastical Determinations, on whatever Reasons they were at first settled, are to be rejected, if not agreeable to GOD'S Word : So it is the indispensable Duty of Christians to read the Scrip-  
true

ture, and taking the best Helps for Information they can get to form their own Judgments, and then to profess and practice what seems to them most agreeable to it. For this Reason, as they press for a further Reformation of whatever is amiss in the Establishment, and deny all imposing Power in Matters of Faith or Worship on others, so they disclaim all Pretence to it for themselves; and as a Consequence of these Opinions, they protest against all manner of Force in Matters of Religion; since that not only supposes the Person that uses it to have a Right of Judging for others what is Truth, but tends to introduce the greatest of Heresies, Hypocrisy in Worship, and Immorality in Life.

BUT tho' they dissent from the *Church of England*, that they may bear the most publick Testimony they can, not only against such Defects which they apprehend to be in her Doctrine, Discipline and Worship; but against the Imposing Power which she claims\*; yet since they believe, she does not in all her Offices impose Terms of Communion absolutely and in their own Nature sinful, some of them think, that as the Practice of all the Primitive Churches, in like Cases, justifies 'em, so Christian Charity obliges 'em to testify this their Belief; which they do, when they communicate occasionally with her. The Dissenters religious Principles, in short are these:

WHATEVER is necessary to Salvation (of which the Scripture alone is the Rule, and every Man the Judge), all Christians must believe and practise; but as to indifferent and unessential Things, every One ought to have his Liberty; they should be left as GOD left 'em; tho' in all Cases we ought to have Charity one for another. Now

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\* See the first Clause of the Twentieth Article of the Church.

Now what Principles can more conduce to the Advancement of Truth, or of Purity of Heart and Life, or to the Honour of JESUS CHRIST, our sole King and Lawgiver, or indeed to the Peace of Society, than these? Religion under these Regulations, is *first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated.* The Crusades, Massacres and Inquisitions of the Romish Church, and indeed, the *wholesome Severities of others,* are owing to a Neglect of this great Rule, That as CHRIST has given a Law to his People, and therefore no humane Power can add a Tittle to it; so all his Subjects are to regulate themselves in Matters relating to his Kingdom, according to the best Notions they have of the Rule.

AND as the Religious Principles of the Dissenters are directly opposite to *Popery,* in whatever Shape it delights to appear, so their Civil Tenets will keep 'em firm to the true Interest of their Country, which now is the Title of King GEORGE.

THEY were formerly indeed represented as Men of Republican Principles and Enemies to Monarchy; but let it be remember'd to their Honour, that it was at a Time when all People, of what denomination soever, who shew'd a more than ordinary Zeal for English Liberty, went under the same odious Character: When the Court was making terrible advances to Popery and Arbitrary Power\*: 'Tis no wonder Dissenters were blackened, in order to excuse Severities towards them, which were to end in the ruin of our Excellent Constitution and the Protestant Religion: When our Affairs were under the Direction of a profess'd *Papist* †, season'd with the Maxims of *France,* the Dissenters,

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\* See the Debates of the Commons in 1680. — and the Growth of Popery in *England.*

† Duke of *York.*

Dissenters, indeed, had the Honour to be distinguish'd by the Rage and Malice of the Time. But if their Principles be attended to, it will appear, that they are Enemies to no Monarchy, but a *French* or a *Turkish* one, either of which is as inconsistent with ours, as Light is contrary to Darknes.

THEY believe that all limited Powers must in the Nature of the Thing be under a Trust; that the Liberties of the People are part of our Constitution, and consequently as Sacred as the Prerogative of the Prince; and that Cases may happen in which Subjects have a Right to defend their Priviledges against the Inroachments of their Princes: They believe the Case at the Revolution was such an one, and therefore heartily joyn'd in their several Stations in that Glorious Work; and have always stood for the Government establish'd at that time.

AND as they think a King in the wrong Exercise of Power may forfeit his Right to the Peoples Allegiance; so are they satisfy'd, that the Supreme Power of the Kingdom which here is King, Lords and Commons, may for proper Reasons settle the Succession without Regard to Proximity of Blood, upon which Foot they were true to the Succession as limited to his MAJESTY'S Family before it took Place; and since his Accession have stood firm to his Interest under all the Discouragements, of legal Incapacities, and popular Hatred.

'TIS sufficient just to have mention'd these Things, because their worst Enemies never charg'd 'em with want of Zeal here. No, Did not a Mob raised to intimidate a Parliament, which was bringing a Clergyman to Justice for opposing these Principles, demolish their Meeting-Houses? Did not another, which was to open a  
Rebellion



Rebellion against his MAJESTY, begin with the same Work? so that it will not admit of the least Doubt, whether *their* Leaders thought 'em Friends or Foes to *their* Cause.

AND as they are good Protestants, as well as good Englishmen, so are they zealously, constantly and universally such. We have the Experience of above Fifty Years to confirm us in this Opinion of 'em: 'Tis plain that nothing can keep a Body of Men in one Way for any considerable Time, but Interest or Principle. Let us consider then, Whether before the REVOLUTION, at least, their Interest lay this Way. The Brothers, as I said before, were both *Papists* and fond of Arbitrary Power, so that the only Course to have gain'd their Favour, was to have run into the Notion that most favour'd the Measures they were taking. It would have been easy for 'em to have cry'd up the divine Right and irresistible Authority of Kings, with the indefeasible Right of Succession in the next Heir, (as the Bishops and Clergy of the Church generally did) if they had believ'd those Doctrines, or could have sacrific'd their Consciences to their Interest. And if they had done so, can we imagine they would have suffer'd the Hardships they did, meerly for dissenting from a Protestant Church, from a Church which was to have been destroy'd too in its Turn? *Nay, so zealous were they for English Liberty, so jealous of Encroachments of Prerogative, that they declar'd their Detestation of an Indulgence granted in 1672 \* to themselves, because it tended to introduce Arbitrary Power.*

BUT if these Things are no Evidences of their Zeal and Constancy in the true Interest of their Country and the Protestant Religion; yet I hope  
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the Testimony of Parliaments and Bishops, no way prejudiced in their Favour, are sufficient Proofs of it. Not to repeat the Resolutions of Parliament I have already mention'd; The Bishops in their Petition to King *James II.* on their Refusal to publish his *Declarations of Indulgence*, say, *that it does not proceed from any want of due Tenderness to Dissenters, in relation to whom they are willing to come to such a Temper as shall be Thought fit, when that Matter shall be consider'd in Parliament.* At the same Time the Archbishop of *Canterbury* recommended it to his Bishops and Clergy, \* *That above all things, they have a very tender regard to Protestant Dissenters; persuading 'em to a full Compliance with our Church, or at least, that* WHERETO WE HAVE ALREADY ATTAIN'D, WE MAY ALL WALK BY THE SAME RULE, AND MIND THE SAME THINGS. *And lastly, That they would exhort 'em to join with us in daily and fervent Prayer to the God of Peace, for an universal blessed Union of all Reformed Churches both at Home and Abroad, against our common Enemy; and that they who confess the holy Name of our dear Lord, AND DO AGREE IN THE TRUTH OF HIS HOLY WORD, MAY ALSO MEET IN ONE HOLY COMMUNION AND LIVE IN UNITY AND PERFECT LOVE.* The House of Lords in their Conference with the Commons on the *Occasional-Bill*, 1702, declares, *That the most considerable Persons among the Dissenters are well affected to the present Constitution, and are hearty Enemies to the Queen and Kingdom's Enemies †.* And, *That the Dissenters in the last and greatest Danger the Church was expos'd to, joyn'd with her with all imaginable*

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Zeal

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\* Articles recommended by the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, to all the Bishops within his Metropolitcal Jurisdiction, July 16, 1688.

† pag. 27.

*Zeal and Sincerity, against the Papists, their common Enemies; shewing no Prejudice to the Church, but the utmost Respect to the Bishops when sent to the Tower; and ever since they have continu'd to shew all the Signs of Friendship and Submission to the Government of Church and State* \*.

THE Protesting Lords against the *Schism-Bill*, say, † *That 'tis the Interest of the main Body of Dissenters to support the Establish'd Church against any other Sect that shall attempt to destroy it: And speaking of the Danger with which the Nation was then threaten'd, Against which, they add, the Protestant Dissenters have join'd, and are still ready to join with us in our Defence. And a little further, It is not pretended, the Bill is design'd as a Punishment of any Crime of which the Dissenters have been guilty against the Civil Government, or that they are disaffected to the Protestant Succession, as by Law established; FOR IN THIS THEIR ZEAL IS VERY CONSPICUOUS. Now, if the Dissenters walk by the same Rule, mind the same Things, and agree in the Truths of GOD'S Word with the Church; if they have been always ready to join with her in the Day of her Distress; if their Zeal for the Hanover Succession when it was most in Danger, was conspicuous; it must be own'd, that they are good Protestants, and good Subjects, and that they have been constantly so.*

AND as they have always pursu'd the Interest of their Country, so have they universally done it; which indeed can't be said of any other Party among us. Look among the Assertors of indefeasible, hereditary Right, Are there any Dissenters of that Class? Was there one of that Denomination

\* Ibid. pag. 27.

† See the Protest.

tion in the last Rebellion? Nay, did they not all act in their several Stations against it? Have they one Malecontent at this Time? Indeed we know some Gentlemen who had their Education among 'em, who would have betray'd their Country to *Popery* and *Slavery*; but they first left their old Friends, and then to shew the Truth of their Conversion, went to the greatest Distance from 'em: Nor could the Dissenters be brought by Threats or Promises to join with 'em in their pernicious Designs, or so much as to present one Address during their Administration; as too many did out of a pretended Concern for the Church, which I dare say never gave their Leaders one uneasy Moment.

AND NOW I have mention'd the Church, let me add, That as the Dissenters have no Principles or Interest to divert 'em from the Service of their Country; so we may be sure that what has once or twice put the rest of the People under a wrong Byass, will never affect them, *which is, THE CRY OF THE CHURCH'S DANGER.* We remember about the Time the late Queen first employ'd the *Whigs*, there was a great Out-cry for the Church: The *Memorialist*, and all the Party improv'd the Notion of her Danger, in order to Blacken the New Ministry; and tho' the Queen, Lords and Commons, declar'd she was then in a safe Condition; yet the Parsons happening to have the greater Authority with the People, they would not think her so, till *Sacheverell's* Mobs had gutted half a Dozen Meeting Houses, and frighten'd the House of Commons to make Way for a Tory Ministry and Parliament. And then all was well, and would have continu'd so, if HIS MAJESTY had not come to the Throne.

BUT upon the Revolution, the Fit return'd, and profess'd *Papists* (so tender are they grown

of the Church) join'd with staunch Churchmen in the Cry, till the Mob were prepar'd for the late Rebellion. Now, tho' we found to our Cost, that there is this Witchcraft in the very Name of the Church; yet we may satisfy ourselves it will never affect the Dissenters. They are indeed Friends to the *Church of England*, as she is a great Branch of the REFORMATION, and has had some of the brightest Ornaments of that Cause in her Communion, and therefore have been always ready to assist her when she has been in real Danger \*; but they know when some Men pretend to a more than ordinary Concern for her, they mean Nothing but an Administration at Court to their own Minds, or the Power of the Clergy; and therefore will never be misled by any Noise they shall make about her. So that they must be as well dispos'd to serve their KING and COUNTRY as those who live in constant Communion with the Church; and therefore may one Time or other, (whatever Humour they are in at present) think her in Danger, when Measures are only taking either to vindicate the KING'S Honour, or otherwise to provide for the Publick Safety.

I DON'T know but it may be said, by some, that indeed the Dissenters are hearty Friends to the present Government, and have always acted handsomely with Regard to the Interest of the Kingdom, but yet there is no great Necessity of doing any Thing in their Favour, seeing they are an inconsiderable Body of Men and can do us no great Service; nor can they, if they would, any ways hurt us.

To these Men I would say, Is the Government so Strong that it may Neglect the good Inclinations of any Body of Men, be they never  
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\* Lords Protest on the *Schism-Bill*.

so inconsiderable? Have we not made our Parliaments Septennial in Order to Strengthen our selves? Are we under a Necessity of keeping up a standing Army (for nothing but that will justify it) and shall we deprive our selves of any manner of Assistance? I dare say there is not a Man in *England* who had not rather be Govern'd by the Civil than the Military Power; and if so, perhaps, when the Numbers of Dissenters are considered, their Influence in Elections of Parliament-Men, the Figure they make in the Body of good Subjects, or lastly, if the Number of good Subjects in Proportion to the disaffected be regarded, they will not appear so inconsiderable as they have been represented.

I WILL not take upon me to give an Account of their Numbers, but I think one may say that excluding the lowest and worst Part of the People, who are of no manner of Consequence to any Party, they are a very considerable Body of Men. But as the Importance of no Party is to be measur'd from its Numbers barely, but from the Influence it has on the Publick; And as the Choice of Members of Parliament, with a due Administration of Justice, are of the utmost Consequence to us; let us see how the Dissenters are concern'd here.

As for Elections, tho' they have but a smaller Part of the Gentry among 'em, yet a very great Number of 'em have Freeholds, which give 'em a Right of Voting for the Knights of the several Shires where their Freeholds lie; upon this Foot they are a Body of Men not to be despised. But I think their greatest Strength, considering 'em with Regard to the Body of the People (for we'll consider 'em with Respect to the Whigs presently) lyes in those Cities and Towns where the Elections are in a popular Way; the greatest Part of the Trade of the Kingdom is carry'd on in these  
Places,

Places, so that any Body of Men must have an Influence here in Proportion to the share they have of Trade; and then, tho' it should be granted that the Dissenters have not the Majority of the Inhabitants, yet if they have the greatest Share of the Trade, as 'tis generally Thought they have, it must be own'd that their Interest, if properly exerted, is greater than that of any other Body of Men amongst us. Now tho' this relates in a more particular manner to popular Citys and Boroughs, yet it deserves some Consideration with Regard to those Places where the Elections are in a Corporate Way; for tho' I as a Dissenter cannot Vote in my own Person, yet if in the Way of my Trade or otherwise, I Influence any Number of Men that do, I have to all Intents and Purposes that Number of Votes.

BUT let us consider how the Dissenters stand with Respect to the Body of the Whigs, and how the Party rises in Proportion to the Tories. This I think is the true Way of judging of their Importance, for the Question between us is not, who are Churchmen and who Dissenters, but who is for irresistible Power in our Princes, and the indefeasible Right of Succession in the next of Blood, or in other Words, who is for his MAJESTY and the Succession settl'd by Law on the Protestant BRANCHES of his House, or for the line of popish Princes in the hereditary Descent. For those that are for irresistible Power of Kings and indefeasible hereditary Right, if they act upon Principle, must be false to the King, and if they do not, one can't easily trust 'em in other Respects. But we see their Principle sticks by 'em, this led 'em to oppose the Settlement of the Crown on King *William*, and to Clog the Wheels of the Government during his Reign. 'Twas this  
favourite

favourite Principle that govern'd 'em when they opposed the entail of the Crown on the House of *Hanover*, so that the previous Question was carry'd in the House of Commons by a single Vote: And with a View to the Right Line as they call'd it, they went into all the destructive Measures of the late Ministry, threw Contempt on his MAJESTY in the Queen's Time, and upon her Death, fill'd the World with senseless Calumnys of him and the Royal Family; and at last either appear'd in open Rebellion against him, or in the midst of it shew'd a most surprizing coldness and indifference about the Event. These Things, with the present Disaffection that Reigns so generally among 'em, must convince any Man they are not fit to be trusted with Power: And consequently that our only Strength lyes among the Whigs, in which Body I here include the Dissenters, because in Civil concerns they have always acted together.

Now viewing the Dissenters in this Light, I will be bold to say, that their Interest is of as great Weight, as that of the Members of the Church. I believe indeed that the Low Churchmen may in some Places have the Majority; but what I aim at is, they have not such a Majority, as would carry their Point, without the Assistance of the Dissenters: Let any Whig Gentleman who met with Opposition, look over his own Poll, and say, whether he carry'd his Election by a Majority comparable to the Number of Dissenting Votes he had; and if not, as I believe, few, if any, will find they did, he must acknowledge that without those Dissenting Votes, he must have fail'd. This I fancy will hold in County-Elections, but much more strongly in Cities and Trading Towns, in some of which I know they are a great Majority of the Whigs, and I am apt to believe



lieve in few Places less than one half. And are they then of no Consequence to us? Are they our standing Force against *Popery and Slavery*? Have they been so under all Discouragements, and against all Temptations? And shall *They* only have reason to Complain in a Time of common Joy?

BUT perhaps it may be said, To what purpose are we put in mind of the Zeal or Strength of the Dissenters? We grant it, but at the same time don't doubt but we shall always have their Votes; Their Interest is too firmly link'd with ours for 'em to desert us.

WILL you therefore use 'em ill, because they are your Brethren, and engag'd in the same Cause with you? Is nothing due to Justice or Gratitude? But to come directly to the Objection: I hope they will never desert you, and while they see the Interest of your Country is involv'd with yours; I dare promise for 'em they will not: But if they should ever be tempted to believe, that the Fate of their Country is not concern'd in the Quarrels between the Men in Power, and those that are out, the Consequence is too plain to be now insisted on: For tho' the whole Body of 'em should not desert the Whiggish Interest, as the wisest of 'em will not, yet if they should ever come to be divided about it, such a Division may prove as fatal as a total Desertion. Especially considering, that those who do not desert, can't be supposed to act with their usual Spirit and Vigour, if they apprehend themselves ill-treated.

THUS far we have consider'd the Influence the Dissenters have, even in the low Estate they are, upon our publick Affairs, particularly on Elections, as an Argument for the easing them of the Hardships they suffer. Let us now see what they will have, if admitted to publick Offices.

IF any One considers the Power the Law has lodg'd in Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, the head Officers of Cities and Corporations, and in the Officers of the *Militia*, he must acknowledge 'tis of the utmost Consequence to have these Trusts in good Hands. The Law has given them an Opportunity of Suppressing all private Cabals, as well as publick Insults on the Government. But unhappy for *England*, either thro' want of Courage or Zeal for the publick Service, too many of 'em have sat still, while our Enemies have been attempting our Ruin. His MAJESTY was affronted in many of the most considerable Towns in the Kingdom on the very Day of his Coronation by hir'd Mobs; his Name has been treated with Contempt by the Dregs of the People; his peaceable Subjects have been insulted in their Persons and Habitations: Nay, it has been dangerous to express the least Degree of Zeal for Him; while many of these Officers, whose Business it was, (and who certainly knew their own Power) to have put a Stop to such Proceedings, with a surprizing Indifference, not to say worse, look'd on, and seem'd rather to abet, than discourage our Enemies, till at length they appear'd in open Rebellion. To give one Instance of many that might be produc'd; The first considerable Riot, which led the Way to those in the Northern Counties, and usher'd in the Rebellion, was committed at OXFORD: Now One would think it impossible, but that all, or most of the Persons concern'd in a Tumult, in so small a Town, and which lasted for Three Days, should have been discover'd and brought to Justice; and yet not one, that I hear of, suffer'd on that Account: Nay, the Convocation after a Week's Deliberation, and indeed after a List of the Rioters had been laid before the Vicechancellor, declares, That

\* *divers Persons to them unknown*, had been guilty of great Disturbances; and in order to deter others from Practises of the like Nature, (which, by the way, were in that Case High-Treason) and to testify their own Abhorrence of 'em, tell the World, That whoever shall offend in like Nature, shall be punish'd with the utmost Severity, and *even expell'd the University!*—— They had better have said, They shall stand two Hours in the Pig-Market in a frosty Morning.

THIS, with the Conduct of other Peace Officers, shews the Necessity of putting the Power in the Hands of Persons better affected; which I believe can't be done without qualifying the Dissenters. I do not take upon me to say, That they are the only Friends the KING has; but what I all along aim at is, That the Low-Churchmen are so Few in Comparison of the Dissaffected, that that Interest alone can't serve Him.

As for the Corporations, the late Ministry left Nothing unattempted to bring 'em into their Interest: *Scire facias's* issu'd against Charters, Informations in Nature of *Quo Warranto's*, and *Mandamus's* went against particular Members; in many of these they succeeded, and as to most of 'em, by bringing the Church into the Quarrel, they rais'd a Spirit among the Common People, which generally ended in Toryism. But Nothing did their Work so effectually as the *Occasional-Act*, by which Dissenters (who always Voted with the Whigs) were excluded, and Tories generally came into their Places. This, I say, was the Case of many Corporations in the Kingdom; but of none so visibly as of the City of London, by the  
Exclusion

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\* See their *Programma*, publish'd about that Time in the News-Papers.

Exclusion of Dissenters from the Magistracy ; so that I'm inform'd, 'tis impossible to get a good Common-Council, as the Law now stands ; If I am under a Mistake here, those Gentlemen who have solicited the Elections these two Years past, can easily set me right. And one may easily judge, how the Court of Aldermen would have been affected by that Law, if Sir *Thomas Abney* and Sir *John Fryer* had not, out of an honest Zeal to serve their Country (for they could have no Interest of their own to serve by it) kept their Places, tho' with no small Uneasiness to their Minds Since it has, *notwithstanding*, been a measuring Cast between the two Parties for these several Years. Now if we consider that the Bulk of the People live in Cities and Towns, and that most of 'em are govern'd by Head-Officers and Justices of the Peace of their own ; and what a Share the Court of Aldermen and Common-Council have, in the Government of the City of *London*, (which of itself gives a great Turn to the Affairs of the Nation) and especially that many Places send Members to Parliament in a Corporate Way ; it must be acknowledg'd that the Management of the Corporations alone is sufficient to turn the Scale in Favour of that Side which has it.

AND of what Consequence the Corporations are, will farther appear from the Conduct of the Leading Men at the Restoration ; when tho' the the King came in with the Appearance, at least, of an universal Consent, yet he was not thought safe on the Throne till the Corporations were garbl'd to the Humour of the Court ; and so sensible were they that the bare Exclusion of Dissenters would set these Places right, as the Phrase was, that tho' an Objection, like what we may perhaps hear at this Time, might have been then

made, namely, That it tended to create a Clamour, and to revive the old Uneasiness; yet I say, the King was not thought secure without the *Cooperation-Act*, and accordingly it was pass'd in about a Twelvemonth, with little Opposition.

— *Fac est vel ab hoste doceri.*

AND was that King made easy by the Exclusion of Dissenters? Consider then, what Designs were carrying on thro' that Reign, which the Dissenters were likely to oppose, and it will follow, That whatever Reasons were given then for Disabling them, are now is as strong for the taking off those Disabilities. This Difference arises from the different Views that Court had from the Present: 'Tis His MAJESTY'S Glory, and our Happiness, That as He is the Head of the Protestant Interest in the World, and not dispos'd to invade our Civil or Religious Rights; so He will protect us from the Insults of any Foreign Power, and effectually hold the Balance of *Europe*. But as these Measures cannot be pursu'd with Success, without the ready Concurrence of his People; it is as much for His Interest to strengthen the Protestant Cause among His Subjects, by uniting them all in Interest and Affection, as it was for the Brochers to weaken 'em by Divisions: The Dissenters will be serviceable to Him in promoting the Cause of RELIGION and LIBERTY, as much, and in the very same Proportion, as They would have obstructed *Them* in the Ruin of both.

As to the Officers of the Peace and Lieutenancy, and the Sheriffs of the Counties; I think 'tis plain, That without Dissenters, even their Places cannot be well fill'd.

*First*, BECAUSE several known Dissenters have been lately nam'd for Sheriffs : which certainly would not have been, if Churchmen as well qualified could have been found ; because it was forcing an Office upon 'em, under an high Fine, which they could not execute, without either leaving that Way of Worship, they think most agreeable to the Will of G O D, or incurring the Penalty of the *Test-Act*.

*Secondly*, BECAUSE Abundance of Tories are still in the Commissions of Peace and Lieutenancy, which can arise from no other but One of these Two Reasons, either, That the Ministry are willing to leave the Power in their Hands ; which no Body that sees with what Zeal they have acted for His MAJESTY's Interest, will say : Or, That they can't fill up the Commissions without 'em.

I HAVE instanc'd in these Officers, because, as I said, the Publick Peace, cannot be well maintain'd without 'em ; and generally whatever can be done in the legal, ordinary Way to make his MAJESTY's Government easy to himself, or happy to his People is their Business : But every Body must acknowledge, that these Men, besides the Authority their Commissions give 'em, have a very great Influence on the rest of Mankind : This is indeed an Advantage, which all, who enjoy Places of Power or Profit have in Common with 'em, and therefore may deserve a little to be consider'd with Regard to the Disposal of other Preferments ; since the meanest Servant the KING has, is by Means of his Office alone, the better enabled to serve or injure the Government, according as his Inclinations prompt him. Take but a common Excise-Man in a Country Town, 'tis Ten to One but he is the Top of his Company for Learning, and must be familiar at

all the Publick Houses in his Division; and is it, think you, a difficult Matter for this Man to set a necessary Lye a going, to insinuate Jealousies into ignorant People, or upon Occasion charge his Majesty Home with want of Title or Mal-administration? The last Ministry thought it worth their while to Plant a brisk Fellow or two in every Town in the Kingdom, who should be ready upon all Occasions to justify their Conduct or Harangue against their Adversaries: Nor were they Mistaken in their Choice, for I believe one may venture to say, that excepting the Parsons, no Body of Men have contributed so much to the spreading the present Disaffection over the Kingdom, especially among the Mob, as the Under Officers of the Revenue.

THERE is another Argument may be us'd to my purpose, which I think very nearly concerns the Whigs, that if they neglect any Opportunity of giving ease to the Dissenters, they forfeit their Character as Assertors of Publick Liberty; and if so, they will do well to consider whether 'tis possible for any Body of Men to preserve their Reputation with the more considerate Part of the World, if their Actions are inconsistent with their avow'd Principles.

I THINK a great Distinction between our Parties has been, that as One in Questions of a Civil Nature have been for resolving all into the Will of the Prince, and in spiritual Matters into the Judgment of the Church, or at least of the Magistrate; the Other have asserted the Liberty of the Subject in both Respects, and Consequently have oppos'd any Laws that so much as tend to oppress him in either. If I have given a wrong Account of the Whiggish Principles, they will readily pardon me; because all Men are fond enough of being Thought the greatest Friends to Mankind. But  
how

how can any Man claim that Character, who is content to see any of his Fellow Subjects depriv'd of their Birthrights? The Whigs, I'm sure, will not confess, that it was not a Benevolence to others, or a Concern for the Rights of Mankind; which engag'd 'em in that Cause, but only a Competition for Preferments, or that they have declaimed half an Age on the Topick of Liberty, with the View of getting into warm Places only; for if they should, they cannot Hope to maintain their Credit with those Men, who join'd 'em upon those Principles alone, which in such Case, they will be thought to desert. There never was a Party who have acted against their Character, which has not sooner or later come to ruin; because it not only in some Measure justifies the opposite Party, but necessarily alarms their Friends. Archbishop *Tillotson* somewhere says, that the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, being a plain Contradiction to the common Sense of Mankind, is a Millstone about the neck of *Popery*, which will some Time or other sink it; and it is as true, that a Tory Conduct under a Whiggish Character, which is as great an Absurdity, will infallibly ruin those who are so weak as to fall into it: For if People ever come to find that you are not the Patriots they took you for, they will as readily leave you, and indeed by the very same Principles, upon which they at first join'd you.

THE Whigs have always been sensible of this, which appears not only from the Votes and Resolutions pass'd from Time to Time in both Houses of Parliament, which I have mention'd before, but from several Attempts they made for the relief of Dissenters, and their opposing the Occasional-Bill in 1702, and the late Schism Act; so that the present Generation may see, that if they will Act consistent with the Character on which they  
 subsist,



subsist, or agreeable to the Conduct of their Ancestors, it lies upon 'em to ease the Dissenters whenever 'tis in their Power.

I HAVE now done with my first Point, that in Policy the Dissenters ought to be eas'd, which in short is this, That since they are heartily in his Majesty's Interest, and a very considerable Part of his Strength, they ought to be put into a Capacity to serve him, if his Interest be regarded; and if the Whiggish Interest be consider'd, they ought, because otherwise they may be tempted to desert it, in which Case it must fall; or tho' they should stand firm, yet it will not be possible to support it, if the Whigs act so inconsistently with their Character and the Conduct of their Ancestors, as the Neglecting this Opportunity will prove.

I COME now to my Second Point, That in common Justice it ought to be done.

AND here after what has been said of the Principles and Behaviour of the Dissenters, and particularly of their Attachment to his Majesty's Interest; One would hope it should be thought no great Presumption to conclude, that in civil Respects they ought to be put upon a Level with the rest of his good Subjects: But because I know this Point has been disputed, I will as briefly as possible, set down a few of the many Reasons for it, which may be drawn from the Principles of common Justice.

I BELIEVE it will be acknowledg'd on all Hands, that the disabilities the Dissenters at present lie under are founded on a Religious Dispute, *viz.* Whether they ought at all Times, and in all Respects, to comply with the Establish'd Church. Let it then be consider'd, whether the Prerogative of God and His Empire over Conscience, are not hereby infring'd. We are told in Scripture, That  
 GOD

*God is a Spirit, and that those who Worship him must do it in Spirit and Truth: In other places, we are forbid to call any one Master but Christ, and caution'd not to Judge our Brethren, since to their own Master they stand or fall. This Cauttion is inforc'd upon us from the Consideration of that unerring Judgment which the great Searcher of Hearts will exercise in the last Day: For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and there receive according to the things done in the Body. It follows, that whoever punishes another for Matters purely of a Religious Nature, as our Case is, either does it for that which God requires of all that come to him, Namely, for Worshipping in Spirit and Truth, or in other Words, in that way which he thinks most agreeable to his Maker's Will, or else takes upon him to Judge of the Sincerity of his Heart, and anticipate the Judgment of the last Day: In both which Cases he usurp's upon the Prerogative of God; and does dishonour to him; In the first, by mis-using his peculiar Favorites, and best Subjects; in the second, by claiming a Power which God has reserv'd to himself; for he alone is the Searcher of the Heart, and the Tryer of the Reins of the Children of Men.*

BESIDES, 'tis Self-evident, that the God of Truth must hate every false way, and that an Hypocrite is an Abomination to him. Now, what a Byass do we lay upon Men's minds in their Search after Truth, by this tacking of Temporal Advantages to the Profession of a Set of favourite Notions in Religion, or to the use of such or such Modes of Worship? Is it likely that People will examine impartially, at least that they will easily be brought to profess and practise agreeable to the Evidence they have, to the certain loss of their Temporal Interest? How few are there, that will think at

all, when perhaps they must either think themselves out of good Places, or do Violence to their Consciences in order to keep 'em? Upon which Account all Restraints of the Nature of those we are considering, tend either to introduce Ignorance or Immorality.

AND as the Honour of God is concern'd in this Matter, so are the Rights of the Dissenters as fellow Subjects. The first Principle of Justice, and what we are told comprehends the whole Law, is, that *We should do to others, as we would have them do to us.* I chuse to put the Argument this way, because, I think the most natural easy Rule of Examining the Equity of any Proceeding towards others, is to put our selves in the Circumstance we see them in; And whoever upon an impartial Examination of his own Heart, finds he should be tempted to resent any Sort of Treatment from others, is self condemn'd, if he gives it to them when it is in his power: Now since 'tis Evident, that all Parties have exclaim'd against using Force in Religion, when it has been their turn to Suffer under it; it follows, that such Conduct ought to be abhor'd on all Sides, and under all Circumstances.

BESIDES, the laying any manner of Civil Incapacity on others upon a Religious Account, is unjustifiable from this Reason, That it is a Matter quite out of the Compass of Civil Power; which arises from the Consent of the People devolving the right of self Defence, which every one in the State of Nature had, upon the Magistrate, and is to be exercis'd only to the general Good: so that the Magistrate cannot exercise any Power which private Persons in a State of Nature could not. And since no Man in that State had any sort of Pretence to force his Notions of God, or Way of Worship on others, the Magistrate having no more than

than the Collective Force of the Individuals, cannot use Force to Establish his own Religion, or that of the Majority of the Society.

THIS will be further Evident, if we consider that, no Man, when he enter'd into Society, can be suppos'd to do it on any other View than to secure himself in the Possession of some valuable Privileges or other ; from whence it unavoidably follows, that he never parted with that of providing in the best manner he could for the Salvation of his Soul, or, which is the same thing, of Worshiping God in that way he thinks most likely to please him ; because that is the most important Right any Man has, and in comparison of which, all others are meer trifles, as the concerns of 40 or 50 Years (even supposing those could be secur'd without the Favour of God) are inferiour to those of Eternity.

I AM sensible there are abundance of Reasons against using Force in Religion, besides those I have mention'd, but I purposely pass 'em over ; not only because the Argument has been manag'd by others, with (†) greater advantage ; but because it may be pretended that these things make nothing to my Purpose, the Incapacity I am speaking of not being in the nature of Punishment ; but only prudent Caution, which all States will exercise, that Persons who by their Principles are dangerous to the Publick, should not be trusted with Power. I will endeavour therefore to shew that those Restraints are in the nature of Punishments, and that the publick Safety does not require 'em.

(†) *Leck's Letters of Toleration : The Layman's Letter to the Bishop of ——— on the Schism-Bill : The Power of the Magistrate in Religion ; ——— Rights of the Protestant Dissenters : Part I.*

THE Notion I have of Punishment is, the depriving a Man of some Advantage, to which by the nature of Society he would be otherwise intitled. Now the Advantages the Dissenters would have in Common with the rest of his MAJESTY'S Subjects, if the Laws under consideration had not been made, are a Capacity for those Preferments in the State which their good Services may possibly merit; and their good Name. I own that no Man has by the Laws of Society a Right to this or that particular Office, or indeed a certain Claim to any at all; but still I argue that every Man has a Right to a Capacity for 'em, as much as every one who has not forfeited it, has a Right to be believ'd in Evidence, or to a Capacity of being Executor, Administrator or Guardian to a Child: And it may be as well argu'd, that no Man has a Right to be an Executor, Administrator or Guardian to a Child, when he is legally appointed to these Trusts, because no Man has a Right to 'em without such Appointment; as it may be said that no Man has a Right to an Office, when he shall be Nominated to it, because he has none without such Nomination: And that our Laws esteem such sort of Disabilitys as Punishments, is evident from several Acts of Parliament which inflict 'em for Crimes that are either in their own Nature infamous or of dangerous Consequence to the Publick. He that suborns to Perjury, or forswears himself in a Court of Record, shall never be receiv'd for a Witness again; a Popish Recusant convict shall not be Executor, Administrator, or Guardian to a Child, *or enjoy any Place or Preferment Civil or Military*: He that is Instrumental in sending Persons to foreign Prisons in breach of the *Habeas Corpus Act*, is disabled to bear any publick Office in the Kingdom; Now it would have been ridiculous to have laid People for these or other Offences

under,

under such Disabilities, if those Disabilities were not in the Nature of Punishments.

BUT what more nearly affects the Dissenters in this Case, and what all Men are sensible enough of, when 'tis their own Case, is, The Loss of their good Name. — They have learnt indeed to *account it a small Thing to be judged of Man's Judgment*, when they think the keeping their Reputation is inconsistent with the Duty they owe to GOD; but at the same Time, they cannot but look upon it as a great Hardship to be reduc'd to the unhappy *Dilemma*, either to forfeit the Favour of GOD, or the good Opinion of their Neighbours, and thereby their Usefulness in the World; one of which must be their Case, as the Law stands at present, if their Consciences will not suffer 'em to comply with the Establishment: For the generality of Mankind take their Notions of Right and Wrong from the Laws, and can hardly be brought to treat Men with common Decency, whom those have declar'd infamous. And do not the Statutes we are now considering speak of the whole Body of Dissenters, as of Men not fit to be trusted? Are they not in these Respects put upon the very same Foot with the worst of our Enemies, the *Papists* and *Non-jurors*? And why has the Law set this Mark of Disgrace upon 'em? Why is the Mob taught to treat 'em with Contempt? Is it because they are really Enemies to their Country, or dangerous to the Protestant Interest here? No; but because they happen to differ from the Establish'd Church, in some Points which she allows to be indifferent; that is, in which wise and good Men may disagree, and by which Difference likewise they come the nearer to all other Reformed Churches.

I KNOW it has been pretended, That the Dissenters

senters are a dangerous Body of Men, and therefore ought to be restrain'd upon the Principle of Self-Defence. But I can hardly think the Men who make this Excuse are really in earnest, or do believe themselves when they talk at this Rate; because they speak of 'em in a quite different Language upon all other Occasions. Nothing is so common as to hear these very Men treat the Dissenters with the utmost Contempt, diverting themselves in a Strain of low Wit, with the despicable Figure they make, either for their Numbers or Abilities: I believe I may appeal to every Man who has convers'd in the World, for the Truth of this; tho' I do not deny, but that once or twice in an Age the Tone has been alter'd. But surely, One can't with any Sort of Modesty say, that these despicable Creatures are any way dangerous; especially that they are dangerous to a Church, which has, not only in the Opinion of some of her loudest Champions all the good Sense in the Kingdom, but the KING and Lords, and most of the Gentry, and what is better than all, the Preferments of the Church, and the Revenues of two Universities on its Side.

BESIDES, were Dissenters never so considerable, I have shewn before, that they are Friends to CHURCH and STATE, and that they disclaim all manner of Force in Religious Matters, which effectually answers all the Pretence of Danger to the Church: *The Weapons of their Warfare are not carnal*; they have no Arms to encounter the Church but Reason and Argument, which seldom make Conquests, or Power, or Riches.

AND as the present Restraints are in the Nature of Punishments, and such as are not justify'd by any manner of Necessity; so the continuing of 'em will appear still the more Unreasonable, if we consider the Obligations the Whigs are under

to take 'em off; which are Gratitude, Promises and the Design and Occasion of making the Conformity Law.

THE Whigs must be sensible that the Dissenters have been always engag'd in the same Cause with 'em; that they have sav'd 'em many times at the hazard of their own Liberties, and particularly that they made such a Stand against the Earl of *Oxford*, that it was question'd, Whether he would attempt the Things he did. Nay, so careful were they to preserve an Union with the Whigs, which they always thought necessary to the publick Safety, and so cautious of giving the least Suspicion of a Breach with 'em, that they refus'd a considerable Sum of Money at his Hands, tho' as he protested, offer'd without any manner of Condition, express'd or imply'd; and upon the same Consideration, they could not be drawn to Address the Queen, so much as once, during his Administration. They must know likewise, that they would have made but a poor Figure in Parliament or elsewhere, without the Assistance of the Dissenters: And now, what do these Men expect, but to be put into a Capacity to be more serviceable? Or (if they may be allow'd to have any Eye to their own Interest) to share the Profits and Power with that Party, with which they have had Nothing yet, but an unequal Share of the Toil and Hazard. These Things too, they have the more Reason to expect, from the frequent Promises which have from Time to Time been made 'em, as well before, as since His MAJESTY's Accession, *That in proper Time their Case should be considered, and the Occasional-Act, in particular, should be taken off.* I need not be more particular here, because there are those who are conscious of the Truth of what I say, as there are among the Dissenters, who, upon proper Occasion, are able to justify



justify me on this Head; as well as in the following Account of the Design and Occasion of making the *Conformity-Act*.

WE may remember that upon the Dismission of My Lord *Sunderland*, and afterwards of My Ld. *Godolphin* and the rest of the Whig Ministry, the Honester Part of the Nation was mightily alarm'd at the Scituation of our Affairs: To prevent if possible the ill Consequences of that Change, or to gratify a Noble Peer, and to confirm him in an Interest he had lately espoused; or else to be before-hand with the New Ministers, and to Stop a severer Law against Dissenters, which was said to be upon the Anvil; the Conformity Bill was brought into, and carry'd thro' the House of Lords, by those who were never esteem'd Enemies to the Dissenters: Nay, most of those very Lords, who had been look'd upon in some Degree as the Patrons of their Cause, and opposed the Bill in 1702 either voted for this, or at least did not oppose it. One must imagine that this Proceeding alarm'd the whole Body of the Dissenters; but when they were told that it did not arise from any Want of Tenderness for them, but meerly from the Posture of our Affairs, that the noble Peer I just now hinted at would not be satisfy'd without it, but that Things should certainly be set Right whenever our Affairs would permit it; they quietly submitted, and depending on the Honour of their Friends, patiently waited for the promis'd Redress. The Tories in the mean Time were well enough pleas'd to see their Work taken out of their Hands; and I dare say did not in the least envy the other Side the Honour of sacrificing their Friends to any of the Views I have mention'd. But now since we have seen that the Event did not in any sort answer Expectation; and since the Dissenters were then taught

to believe it was only an Expedient for that Time, and a Force upon their Friends, but to be laid aside at a proper Opportunity ; One may reasonably expect, it will be repeal'd now that Opportunity offers it self.

To what I have been pressing, perhaps it may be objected, That the shewing Favour to the Dissenters will make a Clamour, which may be attended with ill Consequences. I answer that I am very willing to acknowledge it will make a Clamour. But by whom will that Clamour be raised ? By his MAJESTY's Friends or Enemies ? I dare say, none of the first Sort will oppose any Measures which are likely to be attended with so good Consequences as those I am arguing for will : And if the Latter should Clamour, as we know they did at the Septennial Bill, and certainly will at this or any other Proposal that tends to his MAJESTY's Service ; all the Noise and Opposition they make to it, should be so far from discouraging us, that it ought to be one of the strongest Arguments for it : They know that the putting Protestant Dissenters into a Capacity to serve their King and Country, will be the greatest Blow to their Interest that can be given ; they know that the uniting the Church and the Dissenting Whigs will be the greatest Security to that Cause, and therefore will most certainly oppose it : But shall we be stun'd or terrify'd by the Noise they make ? Let us but once think 'em, what they really are, *Enemies*, and then whatever Outcries they raise will make no Impressions upon us, unless it be to quicken our Zeal in such Measures as may effectually defeat their Hopes.

BUT say some, The People will be influenc'd by what they say, especially if the Church be brought into the Question. Yes, their own Creatures will, -but no Body else. Don't we know  
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they pretended a Zeal for the Church when they Mob'd the late Queen and Parliament? Have we forgot that they open'd the last Rebellion with the same Cry? And will any one that is not deep in Superstition and Bigottry, beyond the reach of Argument, be cheated again with it? No, Parson *Paul* and Mr. *Howell* have let us into the Secret, and honestly told what Church we are to understand, when Tories make Outcrys for it.

BUT say others, it will Exasperate the Disaffected and prevent their coming in.

I HEARTILY wish it may, for I can't but think, as my Lord of *Bangor* speaks with Regard to Church Communion, that they will do us more Service by keeping at a Distance than by coming in. Indeed if any of 'em will renounce the Independency of the Church, the irresistible Authority of Kings, and the indefeasible Right of Lineal Succession, which are their distinguishing Principles, and reconcile themselves in Truth and upon Principle to the present Establishment, I can't fear the employing those in the State who have equal Zeal for his Majesty with themselves, will put 'em out of Humour; but if they are to bring those Opinions, subversive as they are of all Society, and particularly of his Majesty's Title, along with 'em, I think they had much better stay away; I'm sure for his Majesty's Sake one could wish they would. However I think one need not be under a very great Concern about 'em in this Respect: Their Conduct has shewn that they are so far from designing to come in, that they don't so much as wish for Quarter: And depend upon it they'll never come in upon the Foot we now stand; they'll have, I mean, the whole Management all in their own Hands, or none at all. Their Leaders know  
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that while the present Ministry have the Power, *they* must have no Share of it, or at least, play but an Under-game and therefore press at nothing less than a Total Change of Hands.

THESE Objections might have been answer'd more fully ; but as I think they might all of 'em have been made with as much Justice against the total Change of Hands which was seen at the KING's Accession to the Throne ; I think that Change, is a full Answer in the present Case.

I'll conclude what I have to say at present, with observing, That the enlarging the Toleration of Protestant Dissenters, will be for the Honour of the KING, as He is the Head of the Protestant Interest in the World, and of two Establish'd Churches in this Kingdom : That it will strengthen the Protestant Interest here, by uniting Protestants of all Denominations in one common Defence against *Popery* and *Highb-Church*, or if you will *Romish* and *English Popery* ; And *Lastly*, That it will be for the Honour of the *Church of England* ; since 'twill be an Evidence of her disclaiming all Degrees of Persecution, which brings a Disgrace on any Church, as being contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel, and betraying a very great Distrust of our Cause.

Feb. the 20th.

1716.

F I N I S.