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L E T T E R
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L A Y - M A N,

In Communion with the
C H U R C H of E N G L A N D,
Tho' Dissenting from her in some Points.

T O T H E
Right Rev^d, the Lord Bishop of _____



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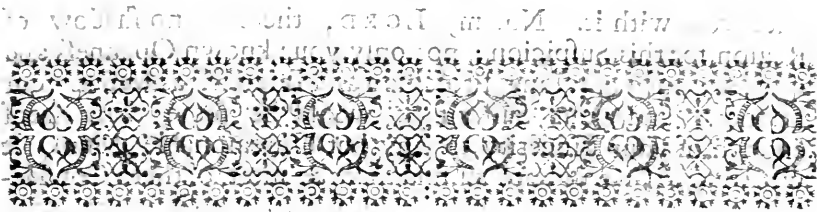
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A

L E T T E R

F R O M A

L A Y - M A N ,

In Communion with the Church of ENGLAND,
tho' Dissenting from her in some Points.

T O T H E

Right Rev^d. the Lord Bishop of _____

My LORD,



WHEN I took up my Pen to Address myself to Your LORDSHIP in behalf of the PROTESTANT DISSENTERS, it was not because, I had the least Imagination that Your LORDSHIP is *in keur arm*, much less *false* to the Interest of that Church, in which you deservedly hold so high a station, and which you so brightly adorn. This would have been a Thought that would have given me a lower Opinion of Your LORDSHIP, than those perhaps have of you, who unjustly tra-

duce you with it. No, my LORD, there is no shadow of Reason for this Suspicion; not only your known Openness and Candor, but your long Profession and Interest, as well as your Labours, and your Sufferings, would be more than Proof enough of your Sincerity to any but Unreasonable Men. It were well, if we did not all find that the most of these Considerations did not chain us down too fast to our Opinions, considering the natural Bent and Turn of our Minds, and keep us from quitting them, or at least from quitting the Profession of them even for the Truth it self.

IF my Writing to your LORDSHIP on this Occasion requires any Apology, when you allow me the Honour to do it so freely on any other, I must beg you will give me leave to tell you, It is because I have the Happiness to know the *true Greatness of your Mind*; which leads you to a peculiar Love of the Truth, and of Mankind. Your LORDSHIP knows how much more we owe to Truth, than to every Thing in the World besides; and that the love of it is the Seed-plot of all Knowledge and Vertue, as well as of all Happiness in this Life or another. Your LORDSHIP too, is perfectly well acquainted with the Rights of Men and Christians, and has a Soul fill'd with Benevolence to all that are made Partakers of Humane Nature, but especially to all the Vertuous and Christian Part of Mankind; and is fully appriz'd that whilst their differing from Your LORDSHIP does not divest them of their Humanity, Vertue, and Religion, it must never lessen or abate your Love and Good-will towards them. You teach us with an Energy peculiar to your Self, That loving Men for their agreeing with us, is but a Fondness for ourselves, and being pleas'd with our own Image in our Fellow-Creatures, instead of loving the Image of our Maker, or of our Blessed Lord and Master in them. Your LORDSHIP knows too, better than any can inform you, that there were much such sort of Disputes and Differences between the first Christians, *Jews and Gentiles*, as there are now amongst us: And that St. Paul's Method for the quieting of them, and healing the Minds of those that were unhappily troubled with them, was, That every Man should practise according to what he was fully persuaded in his own Mind, without Judging or Censuring his Brother
that

that differ'd from him, because he was his Brother, *i. e.* his Equal, and because He that only had a right to Judge him was the LORD. And that therefore they should receive one another in Love, notwithstanding all their Differences, and not to doubtful Disputations. These are Reflections to which your Natural Propensions have led you, together with your Sufferings, your great Reading, your deep Thought, your general Knowledge, and long Experience of Mankind; and above all, your True Religion and Vertue. Allow me my LORD only just to Remark, That if an Inspir'd Governour of the Church did not think fit to establish an Uniformity of Sentiments or Practice between the Believing *Jews* and *Gentiles* in Matters, where he knew the Believing *Gentiles* to be in the right, and the Believing *Jews* in the wrong, but had such a Regard to the Prejudices and false Notions of the Believing *Jews*, as to enjoin a Toleration and Forbearance in these Matters; how much less will it become any Governours of the Church in our Days to Impose Things of much less Consequence, and more doubtful Disputation, and to deprive Men of their Natural, Civil and Religious Liberties to obtain a stricter Uniformity for the sake of any fancy'd Submission, Peace or Order, or any other Reason whatever.

WHILST I am led by these Reasons to give Your LORDSHIP this trouble, I hope you will have the Patience to peruse what I think the PROTESTANT DISSENTERS have to offer for themselves against the Bill now before You. And that I may take up as little of your LORDSHIP's Time as may be, allow me to argue their Cause in the best Manner I can, and agreeably to the Principles of the far greater and better Part of them, without the little Interruptions which would be necessarily occasion'd by continuing it in an Epistolary Stile.

THERE is scarce any Thing at the first Sight more evident, than that One of the first Obligations a reasonable Creature is under, is, To *enquire* after the Will of his Maker; and to *profess and practice* agreeably to that, which after his best Enquiries he apprehends it to be. If Almighty GOD has given me Reason, it is to guide me in my Search after Him, or why has He made it mine? And if He has given another Reason, what is it
for

for, but to direct him, or why is it his? But another Man's Reason can no more be given him to direct me, than my Reason can be given to direct him. Besides, fallible Men are equal; and a fallible Man can't pretend to govern me in a search, in which he is as liable to mistake as myself, and who may for ought I know have been remiss in his Enquiries, and have a By-end to serve by the Directions he would pretend to give me; whereas I may be sure, that I have been diligent and impartial in my own Enquiries. This shews plainly that there is no such Thing as a Judge of Truth for another among Mortal Men, but that we have all the Honour put upon us by our Maker, of being Judges of Truth and Error for our selves.

AND as it is the most obvious Thing in the World, that no Man can possibly judge for another, so it is likewise very clear upon a little Reflection, that no Government ought to *restrain* a Man in *any Profession or Practice*, that does not injure the Life, Liberty, Property, or Reputation of his Neighbour, or the just Rights of the Community in which he lives; Or in other Words, That no Government ought to restrain a Man in any Profession or Practice that relates only to himself, and more particularly in those Matters that relate only to GOD, and his own Mind; because no Man could have Power over another in a State of Nature or Freedom, in Matters of this Kind; nor any Government consequently over it's Subjects; Government deriving its Power under GOD, from private Mens departing from the Rights they had in a State of Nature, and conferring them on the Government they set up. So that for Instance, a Government can't rightfully restrain a Man's professing the Belief of a *Vacuum*, or a *Plenum*, or order him in the Time of his rising or going to Bed, eating rost Meat, or boild, or in any other Sentiment or Action of Life, which only relates to himself, and is no ways injurious to another. These are confessedly Points exempted from Government, and in which a Man has his Right to an entire Liberty as fully reserv'd to him as he could enjoy it in a State of Nature or Freedom. And of this kind are Mens Sentiments and Practices in Points of Religion, that are either speculative, or don't injure our Neighbour, such as, Whether a Man shall Pray by a prescrib'd

scrib'd Form, or not? Whether he shall Pray in a White Garment, or not? Whether he shall Bow at the Name of J E S U S? In what Sense he shall understand the Sacraments, or with which of the different Usages about Administring them, he shall comply? Whether there shall be a Superiority, or Equality among the Pastors of the Church, or among the Christian Congregations themselves? &c. Because a Man can't by believing, or practising either Way in these Points do hurt to any but himself.

BUT there is this Difference between these latter Instances, and the former; That the former are Cases exempted from Government, and *reserv'd to a Man's own Determination*, they being entirely Indifferent: But the latter are not only exempted from Humane Government, but are immediately *reserv'd to the Divine*; it being an Indignity to the Almighty, not to profess those Sentiments, and practise those Things in Religion, which we think upon our Enquiries are the most agreeable to his Mind. From whence it will follow, That as to break in upon a Man's Liberty in the indifferent Things of Life, is an Encroachment on the Rights of Humane Nature; so to break in upon it in Religious Matters that are not injurious to another, is not only an Encroachment, which is called Persecution: for Conscience sake, but is an Usurpation of the Divine Prerogative over the Minds of Men.

BESIDES, it will appear very plainly, That Government can have no rightfull Power over Mens Professions or Practices in Points of this Nature; because Governments can't in any wise *affect Mens Sentiments*: For Penalties, which is all the Force that Government can exert over its Subjects, have not the least tendency to alter Mens Opinions: All that a Government can do, is to restrain Mens Professions or Practices: But to restrain their Professions or Practices in Points that are not injurious to others, when they can't alter their Belief, tends only to make Men Hypocrites, and to believe One Thing, and profess and practise another, which as it by Consequence tends to *Damn* the Man that is thus tempted to Hypocrisy; so it tends to destroy all Government, by loosing Men from the
tyes.

eyes of their Consciences, the best Security a Government can possibly have, for the truest Obedience of its Subjects.

A N D that G O D never ordain'd, that a Government should have any Power over Mens Professions and Practices in Matters of Religion, that do not injure another, is farther clear from hence, That if a Government could acquire such a Power, and could execute it, without those real Injuries to any of their Subjects, or to Government itself, which we have just now mention'd ; yet it could not be suppos'd, that Almighty G O D would have Governments vested with any such Power ; Because the vesting Governments with such a Power would do *a great deal more hurt* in the World than good. For if they were vested with any Power to this purpose, it must be with a Power to restrain the Professions and Practices of all Men, that they apprehended to be in the wrong. Now there are perhaps a Hundred Governments in the World in the wrong, to One that is in the right, and therefore by this Power there might be One hundred Times more hurt done in the World than good : And it can never be suppos'd that Almighty G O D would order it so, that Governments should be vested with a Power which inevitably (as Things would stand in the World) do an Hundred Times more hurt than good in it : It is prophesy'd indeed that " Kings shall be their Nursing Fathers, and Queens their " Nursing Mothers." *i. e.* to G O D's Church and People. But that they will best be by suppressing Immorality, and by encouraging free and impartial Enquiries after Truth, and the open Profession of a Man's Belief upon his Enquiries. By such Methods Truth is to be sure most likely to gain Profelytes, because that will always appear clearest where the fairest, freest Enquiries are most countenanc'd. Or by these Methods, at least, Men are most like to become sincere in their Enquiries and Professions ; which is the only Thing that can render them acceptable to their Maker, for He having made them fallible, will never condemn them for not being Orthodox, which it may not be perhaps in the power of a fallible Man to be ; but for their not being honest and sincere in their Enquiries, Professions and Practices, which they might have been if they had pleas'd.

AND as Things stand thus by the Light of Nature, so *Christianity* has made *no Alteration* in this Respect, having left Governments and Subjects as well as other Humane Relations, as it found them, and neither given any new Power to Governments, or any new Degrees of Liberty to Subjects which they had not before. But *Christianity supposes* that Governments ought not to restrain Mens Profession or Practices in Matters of Religion that are not injurious to others; because it was upon this Supposition alone that *Christianity* could have been brought into the World. Our Saviour declar'd his Kingdom was not of this World, but was born as much a Subject as any other of his Countrymen; and therefore could never have invited Men to a new Profession contrary to all the Professions then in the World, if it had not been lawful to profess what a Man, upon Enquiry, findsto be Right, tho' it be contrary to the Sentiments that are entertain'd by Men in Power.

HE that will be a Christian must take Christ for his *only Prophet and King*, and must become his Disciple and Subject, and be only taught and govern'd by him in Matters of Religion. To us Christians, there is no other *Rabbi*, or Lord, Master, Teacher or Law-giver, as there is no other at last to be our Judge. If we give up our selves to the Dictates or Rules of any other, we are the Disciples of Men, and our Faith stands in the Word of Man, and not in the Word of God; and we say that we will not have Him to rule over us. If therefore we yield Implicitly to the Instructions or Government of any other in Matters of Religion, we so far renounce *Christianity*, and become as too generally Men do, either Papists by giving up our selves blindly to be governed by the Church, or Hobbists, by delivering our selves up to the Conduct of those Secular Powers of the World, under which we happen to live.

AND agreeable to the Nature of *Christianity*, and the Way in which it came into the World, are its *Commands*, which suppose all Men to be Judges of Truth and Error for themselves against all Power Civil and Ecclesiastical, or else it could never have oblig'd every Man to " search the Scriptures, to try the

" Spirits, to take heed what they hear, to try all Things and hold

“ fast what which is Good, and not only to render to *Cæsar* the
 “ Things that are *Cæsar’s* but to God the Things that are God’s,
 and recomended the Christian Religion to Mankind against all
 the Methods that the Heathen and Jewish Powers, and the
 only Church God had then in the World, could take, to prevent
 its being receiv’d by Mankind, or to extirpate it afterwards.

AND as this is the Nature and Foundation of Christianity, and
 these the Commands that were given in order to make or keep
 Men Christians; so whilst they *continue such*, nothing is so
 often, or so strongly enjoyn’d as Love, Meekness, Humility,
 Condescension and Forbearance in all Points where it might be
 possible for Christians to differ. This is recommended as the
 most distinguishing Badge of our Religion, and as the highest
 and most exalted Instance of our Obedience to God, and Imita-
 tion of our blessed Lord and Master.

HE indeed *foretells* “ That the Time wou’d come, when Men
 “ should destroy the sincere Enquirers after Truth, as thinking
 “ they did God good Service,” and that a Power should arise in
 the World that shou’d take upon him to be an infallible Judge of
 Truth and Error, and should under that Character impose My-
 steries on Mens Belief and force Mankind to submit to them by
 Persecution, which is the Power the most opposite to the Spirit
 and Interest of our Lord and Saviour, and is therefore fitly called
 Antichrist; but then we are commanded to oppose him with our
 Lives, tho’ he should go about to deceive us with Miracles and ly-
 ing Wonders, as being the most specious, and dangerous Enemy
 of the Christian Religion that should ever arise in the World.

THE Judging for our selves in Matters of Religion, or in o-
 ther Words, in Matters of Faith, Discipline and Worship, in op-
 position to this Antichristian Claim, appear’d so plainly to be our
 Right as Men and Christians at the *Reformation*, that People
 assum’d this Privilege to themselves in all Parts of *Christendom*,
 and openly declar’d against the Corruptions which the Church of
Rome had introduc’d into every part of the Christian Church,
 and seperated from her, notwithstanding her Pretences to In-
 fallibility; Avowing openly the Right every Man had to a
 Judgment of Discretion, or Discernment between Truth and Er-
 ror

ror, and that our Faith was to stand in CHRIST or in the Scriptures, and not in any Church whatsoever, because all Churches had Err'd. And tho' in some Places this Reformation was Enjoin'd by the State under severe Penalties before it was publickly embrac'd, yet it was not embrac'd purely in Obedience to such publick Establishments, but to Mens Opinions, that the Things establish'd were right: Or else if the Government had establish'd *Paganism*, *Mahometanism*, or *Popery*, People had not had a Right to Dissent from it, but must have continu'd profess *Pagans*, *Turks*, or *Papists* to their Lives Ends; than which nothing can be more absurd.

WHAT was so evidently the Right of every Man in all Communities, has upon its being allow'd by some Governments, as evidently appear'd to be the *Interest of those Communities*. For the more full, absolute, and unlimited a Toleration has been given by Governments to *Dissenters*, the more prosperous and flourishing have those Countries been. This is the true Secret of the Fertility of the barren Mountains of *Switzerland*, and of *Holland's* becoming the Garden of the World, (which is but the Sink and Drain of *Germany*, and was but the Nest of a few poor Fishermen) and of the thriving Condition of *Pennsylvania* beyond any other of our Colonies on the Continent of *America*; whilst Persecution has turn'd *Italy*, the Paradise of this Part of the World into ruinous Cities, and into a sort of a barren and unwholesome Wilderness: Nor can it possibly be otherwise; for Uneasiness and Oppression of any Kind, even in the lowest Interests of this Life, but more particularly in the high Concerns of another, manifestly tend to depopulate and impoverish a Country: Whereas making Men easy in their Possessions and Prospects in this World, but especially in their Hopes of a better, tends to make them become Rich and Healthful, to encrease and multiply, and as we see in Fact it does, where this Liberty obtains, to make all Arts, Knowledge, good Literature, Trade, Husbandry, Credit and Manufactures, together with good Neighbourhood, and every other good Word and Work flourish and abound: Whereas the want of it introduces nothing but deep Ignorance, Immorality, all kinds of Oppression, and at last the greatest Decay in the Vigour

and Riches of a Nation, if not its utter Ruin and Destruction.

IT seems to be so much the Obligation and Interest of all Governments to give this Toleration to all their Subjects, that were it not for the *Lust of Power*, one would think it were impossible for any Government to mistake it; but especially for Protestant Governments which have taken the Liberty to Dissent and Separate from the Church of *Rome*. Is it not monstrous for any of them, not to allow others to separate and dissent from their separated and dissenting Communion? It seems strangely absurd, that those that have renounc'd the Doctrine of any infallible Judge of Truth and Error upon Earth, should pretend to prescribe to others what they shall believe: Or that those that protest against the Prevarications of the Church of *Rome* should oblige Men to profess and practise what may be contrary to their Belief, in Things that cannot be injurious to any but their own Souls.

IT is no Wonder, if we find Christianity gain no Ground in the World, when most Christians seem oblig'd to build their Religion on Human Authority, and do it accordingly; which must appear to a considering Infidel to be robbing the Almighty of His Prerogative, and Mankind of the greatest Right they have a Claim to. Bigots will do well to consider, what tempted *Julian* to Apostatize to Heathenism, and what is that Stone of Stumbling, and Rock of Offence on which all the sober and considering Atheists and Deists of our Day split. But woe be to Them by whom this Offence comes. Let them remember that our Saviour in such a Case says, *That it had been better for them to have had a Millstone hang about their Necks: and they themselves cast into the Sea.* Nor can it be any Surprise, that Protestants in such great Numbers Apostatize to the Church of *Rome* in any Countries in *Europe*, instead of Papists becoming Protestants, when there is so little of the Protestant Doctrine taught or practis'd in the World. Protestantism, as our Enemies of the Church of *Rome* reproach us, is become but a Name, the Thing in a manner lost. Protestant Fallible Churches and States Judge as much for their Members and Subjects

Subjects in pure Matters of Religion, as the pretended Infallible Church of *Rome*, tho' they do not perhaps enforce their Creeds and Rituals by such severe Penalties. It is absurd for any fallible Man to judge for another in Matters of Religion: It is more absurd for a Protestant to do it, because by it he must become inconsistent with himself, and be Self-condemn'd if he reflects at all; whilst he cannot but see, that he builds again those Things he has destroy'd. But for any Member of the Church of *England* to be for the Persecution of peaceable Dissenters, seems more absurd than for any other Protestant whatsoever; Because, the Church of *England* has assum'd the Right of Judging for herself farther than any other Church in the World; having dissented in Polity, Discipline and Worship from all other Churches in *Christendom*, both Popish and Reform'd.

IT will well become us in *England* to consider what is that National Crime, for which Almighty GOD threatens to contend with us. Let every Man after he has laid aside all Heat, Party and Prejudice, and set himself as in the Presence of the All-searching Impartial, and Dreadful Judge of all the Earth, think with himself upon the best Recollection he is capable of, whether there be any Crime of so high a Nature against GOD and Man, as judging for others in Religious Matters, and Persecuting them if they will not Conform to our Opinions? And Whether there is any Crime among us that so much deserves the Character of a National one, on many Accounts as this? If Persecution be one of the distinguishing Characters of Spiritual *Babylon*, "The Voice from Heaven, is to come out of her, and not to be Partakers of her Sins, that you receive not of her Plagues."

NAY, It will well become all Protestants in every Part of *Europe*, at this time of Day, seriously to reflect, Whether, if they will not suffer Dissenters in their several Countries to judge for themselves, they will not provoke Almighty GOD, to take from them the Power of judging for Themselves, and the Power they unjustly Usurp of judging for Others, and suffer them all once more to come under the Power of the pretended

pretended infallible Judge of *Rome*. And if they will neither allow GOD ALMIGHTY His Undoubted Prerogative over the Consciences of Men, nor their Fellow-Creatures their undoubted Rights and Privileges, whether they have not the greatest Reason to apprehend, that He will in His Just Vengeance suffer all their Prerogatives and Privileges to be swallowed up in the Universal Monarchy of an enterprizing haughty Neighbouring Power.

BUT notwithstanding the clear Evidence there is for the Toleration of all Religions that are not injurious to others, yet indeed it happened soon after the *Restoration* of King CHARLES II. by the Presbyterians, that several very severe Laws were made against PROTESTANT DISSENTERS, to the great Scandal of a Protestant Country. But it is to be observ'd, that they were made under the Influence of a Popish King, and a much more Bigotted Popish Successor, in the views of introducing Popish and Arbitrary Power, and under the fresh and violent Resentments of the Nobility, Gentry and Clergy of *England*, for the change of the Constitution in Church and State, which had been brought about by some that dissented from the Church, from whence it became a very common, tho' a very false Maxim, That all Dissenters aim'd at nothing less than the Subversion of the Monarchy, and the Church: Whereas it is most certain, as my Lord *Clarendon* very justly observes, That it was straining Things too far in Church and State, that made the Dissenters, and not Original Dissenters, that brought in Presbytery or the Commonwealth. But if it had, and the Dissenters after the *Restoration* had been apprehended to have entertain'd the like Designs against Church and State; proper Laws should have been fram'd against Men of such unpeaceable Factious Principles, but not against a peaceable Dissent from the Church, as all the Penal Laws against PROTESTANT DISSENTERS in that Reign were: And yet as soon as this first Heat abated, that very Parliament that made all those Penal Laws voted, That the putting them in Execution at that Time, was *grievous to the Subject, a weakning the Protestant Interest, an encouragement to Popery, and dangerous to the Peace of the Kingdom*. And that and several Succeeding Parliaments

liaments would have given them Ease, if the Practices of that Court and Ministry had not prevented them : It being evident that these Measures, as they came from Papiſts, tended to nothing but to divide, and weaken the Proteſtant, and to unite and ſtrengthen the Popiſh Intereſt both at Home and Abroad.

THIS it had like to have done in a very extraordinary Manner, by the Uſe that King *James II.* made of it after he came to the Throne ; which was to court the Diſſenters to fall in with his Popiſh and Arbitrary Measures, by giving them an Indulgence, and other Marks of his Royal Favour ; thereby repreſenting the Church of *England* as the Mercileſs Church, and the Church of *Rome* as a Pattern of Clemency and Tenderneſs. *Discite Juſtitiam Moniti!* — But the Church-men then confeſs'd their Folly and Iniquity, own'd they had been but the Tools of Papiſts in Perſecuting their Proteſtant Diſſenting-Brethren, entreated them not to fall in with the King's Measures to the Common Ruin of the Nation, and that if they would not, they themſelves wou'd, whenever it was in their Power, come to a juſt Temper with them, both as to a Toleration, and a Comprehension ; and confeſs'd, That if ever the Church of *England*, after ſhe got out of this Storm, ſhould hearken again to the Counſel of any Sour Peeviſh Men amongſt them, ſhe would be abandon'd by GOD and Man, and bring down the juſt Diſpleaſure of Heaven againſt her. May GOD Almighty in his Infinite Mercy grant, that our Sins may be broken off by Repentance, that ſo the Guilt of broken Vows and Promiſes, may never fall on a Proteſtant Church and Nation !

INDEED, at the *Revolution*, the Obligation and Intereſt of the Government to give Ease to ſcrupulous Conſciences appear'd ſo plain, that with the Reſtoration of our other Liberties, this moſt Invaluable One of our Conſciences, was in ſome measure recover'd to us, by an Act for Exempting Proteſtant Diſſenters from the Penalties of ſeveral Laws in force againſt them. The Right Proteſtant Diſſenters had to it, and the Advantages it brought to the Kingdom, has ſhone

out

out in so full a Lustre since, that a Toleration has become as it were a Fundamental Principle and Maxim of our Government. Infomuch, that it has been thought necessary on every Attempt that has been made against it, particularly when an *Occasional-Bill* was brought into Parliament in the first Year of Her MAJESTY'S Reign, to have a Declaration made by every Part of the Legislature, That it ought, and should be inviolably maintain'd. And the Last Parliament, a Parliament than which none sure has been thought more devoted to the Interest of the Crown and the Church, were pleas'd to assure Her MAJESTY in their Address, *An. 1710.* That *as they were Fellow-Christians, and Fellow-Subjects with the Protestant Dissenters, who were so unhappy as to entertain Scruples against Conformity with the Church, they were desirous and determin'd, to let them quietly enjoy that Indulgence which the Law had allow'd them.* And in the Preamble to the *Occasional-Conformity-Act*, the Nation has receiv'd fresh Assurances, that the TOLERATION shall be inviolably maintain'd.

WHAT has no doubt, tended very much to procure these gracious Assurances in their Favour, was, That it had been plain in a Course of near Thirty Years Experience, that the Protestant DISSENTERS are *not of those Principles* they had been perhaps thought, and represented. They have given the fullest Proofs by their Conduct, that they are Enemies to no Monarchy, but a *Turkish* or a *French* one; nor to any Church in *England*, but a *Popish* one, that is, one which, tho' it may retain the Name of a Protestant Church, is for high Degrees of Uncharitableness and Persecution, and for uniting with the Church of *Rome*. They have made it as plain too, that they are true Friends to an *English* Monarchy, and hearty well-wishers to the Protestant Church of *England*. They take Her to be a True Christian Church, and by far the greater Part of them, especially the Ministers, and the more Considering Part of the People, think themselves bound to treat Her and all Her Members under that Consideration. They wish Her indeed farther Reform'd from many Things, which, as in their Opinion came from *Rome*, seem manifestly to lead Her thither again; and therefore think it their Duty, according to
the

the Command of their Blessed LORD and MASTER, with all humility to bear their Testimony against them by a publick and open Profession, but without breaking Love, Charity and Communion with her, which they desire to maintain on all proper Occasions; They pray for the Blessing of GOD upon her, and preach up Moderation, Charity, Love and Communion with her in their Publick Assemblies. I can't better express the worst they wish her, than in the Words of a very worthy Person, in a Sermon to a Dissenting Congregation: "That GOD would in much Goodness support and defend Her against all attempts of Popery, and in His due Time, and in the gentlest Manner, purge her from any Errors or Corruptions which may lessen the Perfection of her Beauty or Holiness." And indeed the Principles that are generally taught by the Dissenters in respect to Government, are, That the *English* Constitution is the best of any this Day in the World; and the Sentiments they at this time propagate in Matters of Religion, amount to the Principles of an Universal Toleration, Catholick Communion, and a farther Reformation of whatever they take to be amiss in Doctrine, Discipline, or Worship, as far as they can bring it about by the Means of Persuasion and Example, and by no other whatsoever; than which no Principles can be devised, more friendly to Mankind, or on all Accounts more agreeable to the Light of Nature or Revelation.

As I have thus endeavour'd faithfully to represent their Principles, so I would now beg leave to represent *their Case*, as it stands since the late Occasional Conformity Act. Those among the *Dissenters* that had Offices during Her Majesty's Pleasure are depriv'd of them, if they go but once to a Meeting, made liable to a considerable Fine, and incapable of the Honour and Advantage of serving Her Majesty, or their Country for the future. Those which had Offices that were consider'd as Free-holds, are depriv'd of such their Free-holds, as much as if it was during pleasure; tho' it be of never so considerable a Value, and be the whole they possess in the World: Whereas *Magna Charta* enacts, That no Man shall be fin'd without *Salvo Contentimento*. And the severest Act against the **DISSENTERS** in King **CHARLES II.** Reign went no farther

ther than to fine a Man 20 *l.* *per* Month, if in all that Time he absented himself from the Church. And what is I believe peculiar to our own Country, They are yet liable to all Offices of Burthen, tho' they are made incapable of any of Profit; and notwithstanding some of those Offices of Burthen are of the Highest Trust in our Country. Those of them particularly that are possess'd of Land in any of the Counties, or of Freedoms in any of the Cities in *England*, are liable to be made Sheriffs: by which they must either absent themselves from their publick Assemblies against their Consciences if they execute that Office; or else be liable to such Fines, and Actions for Damages, if they don't, as may ruin a Man of the best Estate in *England*. By these Means all of them, tho' they have no Lands or Freedoms, no Offices, or would not accept them, are put under a Mark of great Infamy and Reproach, and are posted as Men not fit to execute any Office of Honour or Trust in their Country: whereby they are expos'd to the Ill-will and Contempt of their Neighbours, and a Way is Pav'd to farther Marks of the Government's Displeasure against them.

Of this last unhappy Tendency of the *Occasional Conformity Act*, They have receiv'd a surprizing and mortifying Instance in the Bill for the *Preventing the farther Growth of Schism*: Whereby they will be prevented in the most unprecedented and effectual manner from having their Children Educated by any of their own Persuasion, or in their own Opinions, even by Persons Conforming to the Establish'd Church. This they think would be a *Severe Persecution* of them for these three Reasons, (1.) That it deprives many School-masters, and School-mistresses, and all other Instructors of Youth of a Maintenance for the sake of their Consciences, and some of them of a Calling which they have as legal a right to exercise, as any Dissenter can have to exercise any other Trade whatsoever; as in the Case of those who have a Freedom to teach Writing, Arithmetick, Accompts, and some parts of the Mathematicks, upon serving an Apprentiship Seven Years in the City of *London*, and many other Cities and Towns of *England*. (2.) That it renders the Toleration but a Temporary Thing,

Thing, and provides that it shall not outlive those that are already Educated. Now to Tolerate but for a Time, is certainly to Persecute afterwards. Besides, that it seems altogether inconsistent to make a new Law, in order to make a Law already in Being (I mean the *Act of Exemption*) a Temporary Act, which is in its own Nature a perpetual One. (3.) That it destroys the *Toleration* in a most Essential Part of it at present. If a Man enjoys any Toleration it is for himself, but if Protestant Dissenters are not allow'd to Educate their Children in their own Way, they can never be said to be Tolerated, since their Children are a Part of themselves, and to be govern'd intirely by them till they attain the use of their Reason. All young Creatures are under the Care of their Dams, till they are able to shift for themselves: But Infants are brought into the World in a more helpless State than any others, and are longer before they arrive at their Vigour and Perfection, because their Parents are endued with Reason, in order to the well governing their Off-spring, by the Great Author of Nature, who does nothing that is redundant or in vain. Their Parents moreover are endued with a natural Tendernefs towards them, which lasts longer in Men and Women than in any Brute Creatures, in order to stimulate them to a due Care over the tender Years of their Children, without which Instinct, the Toil would become intollerable, and universally neglected: So that to Restrain Parents from Educating their Children in such Sentiments as they think best, whilst they are not Injurious to others, is to pervert the Order of Nature, and the settled Course of Things.

AND that which makes this the *more Grievous* is, That the obliging Parents to Educate their Children under such as they should not choose, has a natural Tendency to alienate the Children from their Parents, and Parents from their Children, and to rob their Families of the Peace and Order they might otherwise enjoy, and themselves of the Satisfaction they ought naturally to take in one another. For what can Protestant Dissenters expect, but that the utmost Endeavours shou'd be us'd to breed up their Children in the strongest Prejudices against them; and that their tender Minds must be

overborn by the Attacks that will be made upon them. It were perhaps more Merciful to render Protestant Dissenters incapable of Marriage, and oblige them to conflict with all the Temptations and Hardships of a single State, rather than to leave them capable of Marriage, and deny them the great End and Blessing of it, in the Education and Comfort of their Children.

THE Severity of this Bill is so much *the greater* on the Account (1.) of *its Extent*, which is to all School-masters and Mistresses, all private Tutors, Governours and Governesses of all Kinds. (tho' they were only to Teach the *Bible* and the *Liturgy* of the Church) perhaps to Masters of Ships, and GOD only knows how much farther. By this Means, Persecution that has never extended it self beyond publick Assemblies, is now to enter the private Families, not only of Dissenters, but as it may happen of the best Conformists in *England*. (2.) *Of the Test*, which is to be put upon all Teachers of Youth, which is, not only to conform in some Instances, and at some Times to the Church, the only Test in former Persecutions, but never to go afterwards to a Meeting; which is not only inconsistent with a Dissenter's Principles, but with a good Christian's; in as much as it makes him renounce Two Articles of our *Creed*, that of the *Catholick-Church*, and the *Communion of Saints*, Articles brought into it in opposition to confining Christianity, or our Communion to any one Sect or Party of Saints or Christians whatsoever. (3.) *Of the Manner in which it is to be executed*, whereby they are to be subjected not only to a severe Law, but to the Piques and Passions of those that are to be their Judges, to the Oppressions peculiar to the *Spiritual-Courts*, and yet to be cut off from the Justice of *Westminster-Hall*.

ANOTHER Hardship in this Bill, is, That it may prevent the Children of Protestant Dissenters from *being educated* in the Principles of the *Christian Religion*, by forbidding any Conforming School-matter or School Mistress, or any private Family Tutor or Teacher, from teaching any *Catechisms*

chism but that of the Church; which the Children of Dissenters can't only not answer with Truth, not having Godfathers and Godmothers (as is very well observ'd in the Letter to a Member of Parliament relating to the Bill for *preventing the farther Growth of Schism, &c.*) but which will make the *Christian Religion* of no Force with them: Our Obligation to the Belief and Duties of the *Christian Religion* being laid down in that *Catechism*, as deriving all its Force from the Vow and Promise that our Godfathers and Godmothers made in our Name at our Baptism, *That we shou'd renounce the Devil, &c.* But then certainly, the Children of Dissenters can't learn that they are under any Obligations to take upon them the Profession or Practice of the *Christian Religion* from that *Catechism*, since they had not the Benefit of Gossips vowing these Things for them, and in their Name, at that Solemnity.

ITS Severity is likewise very much enhanc'd, if we either *compare* it, with the severe Treatment the Protestant Dissenters met with in the Reign of King *Charles II.* (in which, how much soever they were persecuted on other Penal Laws, they were always conniv'd at in this.) Or, if we consider the Tenderness Her Majesty has been pleas'd to express for the Presbyterians of *Hungary, Silesia, and France*, or the unusual Favour that has been shewn to the Dissenters of *Scotland*; tho' their Scruples are of such a Nature as make them refuse to submit to the Government of their Country, as well as to conform to the Church. It seems particularly severe that there shou'd be no *Calvinists*, no *Presbyterians*, no *Dissenters* which shou'd not deserve great Marks of Favour and Countenance, except those of our own Growth.

THE Severity of this Bill seems, in the last Place, carried to the greatest Height, in as much as this Crime of any Teachers of Youth going to a Meeting is never to be *purge'd away*; no not by performing a *Quarantine* for a Twelve-month in the Church; which yet will do in a Case of a like Nature: So that this seems to be treated as 'the only unpardonable

donable Sin of this Kind in our Country, for which there is not any room left for Repentance.

THESE are some of the Severities of this Bill, and what can the *Effect* of it be, if ever it should pass into a Law, but to reduce many of these Teachers of Youth to starve, or to become a Burthen upon the Parish; many of which are not only Men of a liberal Education and great Worth, but Confessors for their Religion; and as to those that are to be taught, (unless Dissenters will suffer their Children to be bred up in the utmost Prejudices against them) either they must be bred up without Learning, which cannot but have very ill Effects on Church and State; or else they must be sent Abroad to get it; which, as it will carry out a great deal of the Cash of the Kingdom, so it will return them Home to us with Principles less dispos'd to the Constitution in Church and State, than what they wou'd learn from Protestant Dissenters at Home. This is the least of the ill Effects it will produce: Perhaps, it may make great Numbers of Persons transplant themselves, with their Estates, Trades, Arts, Mysteries, and Manufactures into some more Hospitable Region, where they may not be deny'd this inestimable Privilege and Comfort, to the unspeakable Detriment of the landed and trading Interest of our Country. The Bill it self has a natural Tendency to these melancholy Consequences; and what will give it greater Tendency this Way will be, that Protestant Dissenters will be apt to think that no Place will in a little time be allow'd them in a Nation, which tho' it gave them Breath, has not only reduc'd them to be Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water, but declares their Principles to be such as are not fit to be transmitted to the succeeding Generation.

And what, for GOD'S Sake, is *all this for*? Is it to gain an *entire Uniformity*? Is that obtain'd among Conformists themselves? Or can it be even by an Inquisition? If it could, What Advantage will redound from it? Can Conformity render the Dissenters more peaceable Subjects, more ready to own Her Majesty's Title, or Her Protestant Successors, more willing to pay Taxes towards the Support of the Government,

ment, more sober, frugal, industrious than they are already? Will fewer suffer among them as Evil Doers? Will the Balance of Parties be better preserv'd, on which the Balance of Power in *England* and *Europe* does in a good Measure depend? Will there be more Learning and strictness of Life, more Humility and Pastoral Care among the Clergy? Or will there be more Peace and good Neighbourhood in the Kingdom, more Love and Charity in the Church? If there would, How come we to find Conformists reproaching each other daily with want of all these Things, notwithstanding the most rigorous Conformity? If Men have a Disposition to Peace and Love, there will be ne'er the less of that happy Temper for lesser Differences in Religion; Charity and Forbearance will unite us all, notwithstanding different Opinions, and be the Bond of Perfection under all our mutual Weaknesses and Infirmities, and teach Men to agree to differ, as amicably as to agree; and if Men han't it, the strictest Uniformity in the World will be very far from producing it. It can't be thought, that the only Design of this Bill is to *secure the Church and State*; since the Dissenters have given all the Securities to the Government for their good Behaviour that any other Body of Men have done; at the same time that there is not so much as a single Man amongst them suspected of entertaining the least Scruple about Her Majesty's undoubted Title to the Crown, and of that of the Princess *Sophia*, and the Heirs of Her Body, being Protestants, according to the Limitations of the Act of Succession. And if the Church had been thought in Danger from Youth's being educated in the Principles differing from those that are settled by the Act of Uniformity, why should not Clauses to restrain Popish and Jacobite Schools have been readily embrac'd? since there can be no Protestants but must think those Schismatics and Dissenters more dangerous to Church and State, than other Dissenters who are Protestants and Well-affected to Both? But if without Foundation, and contrary to all Appearance, there could be any suspicion that Principles are taught by Dissenting School-masters, School-mistresses, or other Tutors and Instructors of Youth dangerous to Church and State, let all the State Oaths be required

of them to render them capable of Teaching; together with a solemn Declaration, "That they think it absolutely unlawful to endeavour to instill any Principles into the Youth that shall be committed to their Care, which may tend to make them take any other Way to alter the present Establishment of the Church of *England*, than by Persuasion, and their own profest Dissent." If it had been the only Design of this Bill to give a farther Security to Church and State, some such Tests as These wou'd have been requir'd from Dissenting Instructors of Youth; but it wou'd never have been propos'd, that they should not at any Time afterwards go to a Meeting. That indeed may be fitly calculated to produce a stricter Uniformity, and to extirpate Dissenters; but can never be fram'd for the bare Security of the Church or State.

In the mean while, to what *Melancholy Thoughts* will these unhappy Measures bring us! Measures concerted only to compass a Thing that seems altogether usefess, if not hurtful and pernicious. What Idea will this Bill give us of the *Constitution, and the Clemency of the British Government!* Has not an Union between the Two Kingdoms been happily accomplish'd in Her Majesty's Reign? By which a Presbyterian Church Government, and a Simplicity of Christian Worship, is as much established on t'other Side of the *Tweed*, and declar'd to be a Part of G O D's Worship, as Episcopacy and Ceremonies are on this? And has not Her Majesty often declar'd this happy Union the greatest Felicity and Glory of her Reign? And shall it be stain'd by declaring the self-same Thing in a good Measure on the *North* Side, a little River, the true Christian Religion, and the Purity of G O D's Worship? And intolerable, and unfit to be allow'd on any Consideration whatsoever, on the *South*? Has not Her Majesty given Peace to Mankind? Peace to our Enemies? A Peace that they themselves acknowledge to be Glorious, and to have receiv'd from Her Majesty's Bounty? And re the poor *English* Dissenting Protestants the only Men, That instead of being allowed to taste the mighty Blessings it brings along with it, are to be Sacrific'd as a
Thank-

Thank-offering for it? But does the Saviour of the World delight in Human Sacrifices, or in the Uncasiness and Distresses of Mankind? Or the Destroyer of it? And yet has not Her Majesty been in a good Measure put into Circumstances to acquire the Glory of giving this merciful Peace to Her Enemies, by the Taxes and Loans these Men have cheerfully contributed to the War? It may be, by their Fervent and Incessant Prayers for its Success. And what is the Use Her Majesty continually recommends to Her Parliament and Her People, as the fittest to be made of Peace Abroad; but Peace at Home? But are we perversely by Peace, to understand Persecution? Unfortunate Men! that shall be destin'd to such Severities; not only whilst Innocence, and some Degree of Merit is found amongst them, but under the Protection of the Constitution, and the perpetual Recommendations to Peace and Union from the Throne.

WHAT Idea will this give Men of a Church, that tho' she be arm'd with all the Laws the Wit of Man contrive, with Numbers, with the People of Consideration for Learning and Quality among us, with the far greater Part of the Lands, and Riches, and all the Power and Honour of the Kingdom, and with a Revenue of perhaps Two Hundred Thousand Pounds *per Annum*, to Breed and Maintain Learned Advocates for her Cause, yet can't be satisfied, or think herself safe, unless her poor Dissenting Brethren be depriv'd of all Means of Learning and Education. But does not this seem to be a Conduct better Calculated to promote the Cause of a *Julian*, or a *Lewis XIV.* Persons perhaps suspecting the Side they had taken; than of Protestants that think they have so much to alledge in their own Behalf, as to justify them in the utmost Contempt of all that differ from? them. If the Dissenters must be thought Enemies to the Church, is this yet the Way to treat contemptible Enemies? Or is it not rather the ready one to render them Considerable in the Opinion of all By-standers? And what Hurt have these Men done? Let their worst Enemies

stand forth and charge them; what Evil is found in them, saving in the Matter of their G O D? Can Protestant Dissenters do the Church any Harm by publickly declaring, That in their Opinion she is in some lesser Points mistaken, to her own Hurt, which though they believe her Conscientious in the Profession or Practice of, yet have in their poor Opinion an unhappy Tendency, and that to herself, to the Cause of Truth, and to the Nation. On the contrary, is not this what they are oblig'd to by Truth, by the G O D of Truth, and by that Law of Charity which we are all under towards Brethren that we think (no matter with how little Reason, whilst we think it) under a Mistake, and a Mistake of Consequence? *Gamaliel's* Advice is in this Case unanswerable. If the Dissenters are mistaken, 'tis impossible they can gain Ground against a Church so well fortified and defended: If they are not, vain are all Laws against them, *Magna est veritas, & prævalebbit.*

AND must the Dissenters be the most unkindly treated, *after they have worn out the old Prejudices* against them? Must they be more hardly us'd, now that it is plain there is not a Republican amongst them, than when they were all thought Commonwealth-Men? Are new Severities to be us'd in cool Blood, and unprovok'd, when an Exemption from them has brought the Dissenters nearer to the Church in Love and Charity, than ever, and to profess more friendly Principles to Mankind, than any Body of Men in the World? Is persecuting the only Number of Men, who have not a Real or Suspected Jacobite among them, the Way to keep out the Pretender? Or is the distressing those who are entirely, and to a Man, for the Succession in the Illustrious House of *Hannover*, the Way to strengthen that Succession to the Throne of these Realms?

AND in the last Place, If Persecution be the greatest Crime against G O D and Man, that Human Nature can be guilty of: If there be no Instance in History, where Persecution

cution has not drawn down the exemplary Vengeance of Heaven ; If there be no Party among us, that having persecuted, has not been persecuted again ; and by Persecution been for some Time at least brought to Repentance ; If, after all, instead of keeping at the greatest Distance from this Crime, we shall become guilty of it in the most aggravated Manner, what can we expect, but that with the Measure we mete, It shall be meted to us again ? And that He, whose Right alone our Consciences are, will overturn every Thing that is his Rival, and that becomes the Object of his Jealousy, by standing in Competition with him in his Rule and Government of the World ? “ Be wise now therefore, “ O ye Kings, be instructed ye Judges of the Earth ; serve “ the Lord with Fear, rejoyce with Trembling, for “ when his Anger is kindled but a little, blessed Psal. ii. 10. “ [and only blessed] are they that put their Trust 11, 12. “ in Him. ”

I HOPE, Your Lordship will overlook the many Faults, which the Hurry, in which this has been writ, has in some Measure occasion'd. Something more, as well as a great deal better, might have been said, if the unusual Expedition with which this Bill has mov'd, would have permitted it. I know Your Lordship's Goodness will impute the Faults that are in this Letter to the Cause, no farther than you think that answerable for them ; and your own sure Judgment will suggest many Things to you where I have been wanting. If Your Lordship thinks any Thing that I have offer'd here, has any Weight in it, I know I need not beg You to oppose this Bill with Your Vote and Interest, or with that Strength of Reason, and Force of Eloquence, in which You are admir'd and envy'd by Mankind, and by which You have so often, and so inimitably, set out Persecution in its most black and odious Colours, both from the Pulpit and the Bishop's Bench. Every honest Cause has You for its Advocate. But if this Cause appears to Your Lordship, what it does the most evidently to me, the Cause of Truth, of Religion, and of Liberty, I know
 You

You will distinguish it by peculiar Marks of Your Zeal, and thereby render all Good Men more devoted to You, than they are at present, if that be possible, and particularly,

My LORD,

Your LORDSHIP'S

most Faithful

and most Obedient Servant.



