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T H E  
SENSE of the COURT  
A N D  
Parliaments of ENGLAND,  
As to the  
DISSENTERS,  
Ever since the  
RESTORATION:  
W I T H

Reflections on the New Mode of abusing  
them in the Pulpit.

In a LETTER to the  
Right Honourable the E. of N.

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*By the Author of the Letter to Sr. T. H.*

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L O N D O N :

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*The Sense of the Court and Parliaments of England, as to the Dissenters, ever since the Restoration, &c.*

My Lord,

**T**HERE's not a Man in *England*, who wishes well to the Constitution in Church and State, but he is on all Occasions proud of an Opportunity to express his Veneration of your Lordship, who has so eminently deserv'd of both. Into what a Condition wou'd the *Furious Zeal* of some Men, the *Crafty Ambition* of others, and the *Insatiable Avarice* of not a few, have brought us, had not your Lordship, and other Noble Patriots, been at all Times ready to Defend our Civil and Religious Rights against the Invasions of *Schism* and *Faction*, the Boldest and most Dangerous of our Enemies. But the *Moderation* with which your Lordship has acted as often as you have had a just Call to it, encourages those who are Lovers of that *Temper*, and take it to be an Effect of the highest Prudence and Virtue, to look on your Lordship now as their surest Hope, that by the Wisdom and Justice of your Councils, the Rage and Cruelty of ill Men, will once more be confounded.

If there have been no Designs to Undermine our *Established Church*, there have certainly been the most open Endeavours to discredit her, and load her with the Infamy of a *Romish Spirit of Persecution*;

a Charge as unjust as it is ungrateful : There being no National Church in the World that has shewn such a Tenderness to those that differ from Her, such a Disposition to comply in all Indifferent Matters, and to part with many great Prerogatives in Complacency to the *Weakness* or *Squeamishness* of other Mens Judgments. For the True Church of *England* is no more to be charg'd with the *Rapine* and *Violence* in King *Charles* and King *James* the Second's Reigns, than with the *Cruelties* in the *West*, or the *Out-rage* and *Spoil* of a later Rebellion. The Humanity of the Professors of our *Reformed* Religion, wou'd doubtless long e'er this have reconcil'd all Unreasonable *Separatists* to so Pure and so Holy a Communion, if some Interested and Designing Men had not, ever since the *Restoration*, rather endeavour'd to make the Terms of *Conformity* more difficult, than been willing to weaken the *Separation* by *Charity* and *Indulgence*. 'Tis well known that this Severity extended it self in former Reigns so far, as to deny Foreign Protestants Liberty of Conscience in *Harwich*, *Canterbury*, *Maidstone*, *Sandwich*, &c. wherein some fiery Ecclesiasticks not only transgress'd the Laws of Nature, but of *Nations*, and the Sober and Religious Clergy always express'd their Abhorrence of such Unwarrantable Zeal. They have pity'd the Misfortune of Englishmen and Protestants to have Scruples against our Primitive and Orthodox *Church*; but never cou'd think of imitating that of *Rome* in Condemning all without Her *Pale* both in this World and the next; Nor for Matters purely indifferent have they been willing to deprive their Neighbours of their Birth-rights, or exclude them the Privileges of good Subjects Far be it from me to argue on the wild Topick of *Stipulations* and *Compacts* at the Revolution. Who were the Plenipotentiaries for the *Church*, and the *Dissenters*? Where are there the least

Footsteps



steps of a Treaty? But this is most certain, that in King *James's* Time the most Zealous of our Bishops, even those that suffer'd for their mistaken Loyalty, told that King in the Petition for which they were sent to the *Tower*, What they did against his Declaration for Liberty of Conscience, *was not from any Want of Tenderness to Dissenters, in relation to whom, they were willing to come to such a Temper as shou'd be thought fit, when the Matter shou'd be Consider'd and Settled in Parliament and Convocation.* Which Temper cou'd not be understood, to leave them under a new Disgrace nor farther to distinguish them from their Neighbours in the Injoyment of those Liberties and Privileges to which methinks all Loyal Subjects shou'd have an equal Pretence than was necessary for the Churches Security and Honour. But as my Opinion is of no weight in this Case, so I shall refer your Lordship to that of others, the Protestation of the Lords *Delamere, Stamford, North and Grey, Chester field, Wharton, Lovelace and Vaughan* against Limiting Offices, by the Sacramental Test. They dissented for these Reasons, 1. *That an hearty Union among Protestants, was a greater Security to the Church and State, than any Test that could be invented.* 2. *That an Obligation to receive the Sacrament in Churches was now a Test on the Protestants, rather than on the Papists: and as long as it was so there could not be that Hearty and Perfect Union among Protestants, as had always been wish'd, and was at this time indispensably necessary.* And when a Clause was afterwards Brought into the House, to qualifie the Dissenters, by receiving the Sacrament in any Protestant Congregation, upon it's being rejected, The Earl of Oxford, the Lords *Lovelace, Wharton, Mordant, Mountague, and Paget*, dissented for these Reasons, 1. *Because it gives a great Part of*  
*the*

*the Protestant Freemen of England, Reason to complain of Inequality and Hard Usage; When they are excluded from Publick Employments by Law. And also because it deprives the King and Kingdom of divers Men fit and capable to serve the Publick in several Stations, and that for a meer Scruple of Conscience, which can by no means render them suspected, much less disaffected to the Government, 2. Because his Majesty, as the Common and Indulgent Father of his People, having Express an Earnest desire of Liberty for Tender Consciencies to his Protestant Subjects, and my Lords the Bishops having divers of them professed an Inclination to, and own'd the Reasonableness of such a Christian Temper, we apprehend it will raise a Suspicion in some Mens minds of something else than the care of Religion or the Publick, and different from a Design to heal our Breaches, when they find that by confining secular Employments to Ecclesiastical Conformity, those are shut out from Civil Affairs, whose Doctrine and Worship may be Tolerated by Authority of Parliament; especially when without this Exclusive Rigour the Church is secur'd in all her Privileges and Preferments. 3. Because to set Marks of Distinction and Humiliation on any sort of Men, who have not render'd themselves justly Suspected by the Government, as it is at all Times to be avoided by the Makers of just and Equitable Laws, so may be particularly of ill Effect to the Reformed Interest at Home and Abroad, &c. 4. Because it carries the Edge of a Law (we know not by what Fate) upon Protestants and Friends to the Government, which was intended against Papists, to exclude them from Places of Trust, as Men avowedly dangerous to our Government and Religion, &c. 5. Because Mysteries of Religion and Divine Worship are of Divine Original, and of a Nature wholly distinct from the Secular Affairs of Politick Societies, that they cannot be apply'd to those Ends, &c. 6. Be-*

*cause*

*cause we cannot see how it can consist with the Law of God, common Equity, or the Right of any Free-born Subject, that any one be Punish'd without Crime. If it be a Crime not to take the Sacrament according to the Usage of the Church of England, every One ought to be Punished for it; which no Body affirms. If it be no Crime, those who are capable, and judged fit for Employments by the King, ought not to be punished with a Law of Exclusion for not doing that which is no Crime to forbear.* How far then Dissenters have since deserv'd to be roughly dealt with for their Incroachments on the Church, I am not to judge of, nor of the Force of the Reasons of the Protesting Lords. But it is doubtless the Opinion of this good Parliament, as it has been of all others, That every Thing shou'd be done to promote Union among us : Which being the Effect of Love, must be the Child of Persuasion, and not of Constraint.

God forbid, My Lord, that ever we should have occasion to use Arguments, or bring Authorities in vindication of *Liberty of Conscience*, which is confirm'd by the last Bill in Parliament. Your Lordship and all Men of Wisdom and Honour will allow, that such *Liberty* is the Gift of God, who will be worship'd with the *Will*, and accepts of nothing that comes by Compulsion : wherefore to force Conscience, and perhaps to tempt violently is to force it, seems to cut off Mankind from the greatest Blessing they can have in this World. or even in the next ; where the voluntary and grateful Worship of the Blest is one of their sublimest Joys. King *Charles II.* was pleas'd often to recommend to his Parliament, That *They would seriously think of some*  
*Cause*

*Course to beget a better Union and Composure in the Minds of his Protestant Subjects.* Now, my Lord, Is the way to that *Union and Composure* by Hard Words and ill Treatment, by Railing and Anathema's? How far those whowere for loading the last Bill with extravagant Penalties, and shutting out Dissenters from Elections as well as Corporations, wou'd have pusht their Severity is easy to guess. Nor is it a little remarkable that King *Charles*, who so often recommended Moderation towards Dissenters, did on the 10th of *February* do it in the very Words before mentioned, and on the 10th of *March* following, in the Year 1667, put out a Proclamation to prosecute them upon all the Penal Laws then in being against *Papists and Non-conformists*; this had no other Effect than to gratify the Pride of some surly Bigots, or the Extortion of vexatious Courts. For there is no Instance in Story, that any Severity ever produc'd the Ends for which it was design'd, except it went to extremity, by what was whole some and finishing as practis'd by the First Queen *Mary* and the present *French King*, His Majesty not long after declaring publickly, in a Proclamation, *It was evident by sad Experience, that there was very little Fruit of all forceable means, and the many and frequent ways of Coercion that he had used for composing the unhappy Differences in matters of Religion.*

It cannot be doubted but that the long Parliament, at the time Sir *Edward Seymour*, was chosen Speaker, were as jealous of the Safety and Power of the Church as ever any Representative can be: yet that very Assembly on *February* the  
14th.

14th. 1672, Resolved *Nemine Contradicente*, That a Bill be brought in for the Ease of his Majesties Subjects who are Dissenters in Matters of Religion from the Church of England: which having past the Lower House was thrown out by the Upper; Your Lordship knows for what Reason better than I can pretend to. Things miscarry frequently when they are ill Tim'd, and an Indulgence when Popery is to get by it is worse than a Persecution. It was this made Alderman *Love* a perfect Dissenter, and a City Member, declare upon King *Charles's* Dispensing with the Laws against Dissenters: he had rather be without Liberty of Conscience than have it in a way that would prove so detrimental to the Nation. It is probable their Lordships might be apprehensive, that such a Bill would encourage the Court to attempt one for the Papists. Tho' that most Honourable House have always been tender of the Liberty of the Subject in all Cases, yet they might suspend that Tenderness when the Common Enemy to that and our Religion, watch'd all opportunities to make their advantage by it. However the Commons in these times of Danger, cou'd not imagine any thing wou'd contribute more to the Preservation of the Protestant Religion, than that Dissenters be made *Easy*. I wish heartily the Late Act may be for their *Ease*, and that at the first View it may seem otherwise, I doubt not it will be so in the End, and to make them *Easy* was alway look'd upon as one of the Securities of our Church against that of *Rome*. What of this kind was done by a Parliament, that lay under very odious Imputations must proceed from very powerful Conviction, stronger than Affection and Interest, which is enough surely to convince us, that whenever we make

the Dissenters uneasy we take the wrong method to Secure our selves against Popery. The Noble Earl of *Orrery*, his Grace the Duke of *Leeds* then Sir *Thomas Osborn*, Bishop *Morley* of *Winchester*, Sir *Orlando Bridgman*, Sir *Matthew Hales*, and several other Great Men in K. *Charles* the II's. time, were earnest for an Union between Conformists and Non-conformists, *in order*, says a Reverend Dignitary of our Church, *to their joynt vigorous Opposing Popery*. How must that Vigour be abated, If Animosities are maintain'd, and Sermons are full of Bitterness and Invectives to make the Breach wider. For People that think themselves ill-us'd must have more Religion than we can allow them to throw off Nature, and return Friendship for Hatred and Contempt. Dr. *Stillington*, late Bishop of *Worcester*, whose known Zeal for our Ecclesiastical Constitution, makes his Authority unquestionable, was so well satisfy'd that the Differences with Dissenters shou'd be rather Accommodated than Aggravated, that he did his Endeavours to effect it, had several Meetings with the Chief Non-conformists to that Purpose, and with Dr. *Tillotson*, fix'd on a Draught of an Agreement in the Year 1674. But it was then discountenanc'd by the King, and so came to nothing. I mention this, my Lord, to shew how little the prevailing Humour among Clergy-Men in our Times, agrees with the Charity and Wisdom of that Reverend and Pious Prelate. For it cannot enter into my Thoughts, that to be always rayling at People, will ever forward a Reconciliation, or that Matters will be ever Accommodated by Lordliness and Strife. Is it not too plain, that those who are against gentle and passive Methods, are acted by narrow Principles unworthy their most Holy Profession, and the high

high Character they assume of a Celestial Embassy? Do not they exalt themselves much more on their Earthly Titles, and have not the Barnes and the Glebe been one of the most difficult *Remora's* in all Projects of Comprehension. I dare venture to engage, that if a Salve cou'd be found out for that Sore, the Wound wou'd soon be heal'd, and we shou'd all be of one Sound Body, The Protestant Church of *England*, It being ridiculous to imagine, that Differences about Nothing cou'd be long supported, was it not for the Interest of some to keep out of the Church, and of more that they shou'd be kept out. A Truth that reflects hard on the Priesthood on both Sides; but 'tis too evident, not to strike every one that is impartial. And this has always given me a mean Opinion of the Bigots of both. Men are never honestly Warm about Things that are Indifferent; there must be something in *the Matter*, that renders what is not so of itself, to be otherwise of the greatest Consequence, As are Power and Wealth, the Possession of which is so Charming, that they will still be too hard for the most valuable Reversion that can be promis'd them. I cou'd as soon reconcile the *Italian* War about the *Bucket* to Reason, as the Contention of some Men in Church Matters. And tho' it must be allow'd, that the greater Deference is to be paid to a National Opinion, yet certainly there is something due to that of Nature, to Charity and Liberty; Principles which never disserv'd any Cause; and we have liv'd to see them as Useful to our own Church, as to those that differ from us. How ill all Co-ercive and Unfriendly Methods have succeed-  
ed, will appear in the History of the Long Par-

liament since the Restauration : For they who pass'd the Act of Conformity, the Corporation Act, and other Bills that were intended to bring in the Dissenters by Constraint and Penalties, were the same Assembly that afterwards was so willing to have them *ea's'd*. The same House that *Thank'd his Majesty for Suppressing Conventicles*, and pass'd an Act to that purpose, were so soon convinc'd of the Necessity of preserving a good Correspondence with *Dissenters*, that Three or Four Years after they themselves pass'd a Bill in their Favour ; which I have before mention'd, and which the Lords did not then think Seasonable. Those very Commons, *Were*, to use the Words of a Learned Orthodox Divine, *for settling a mutual Forbearance, for the Foundation of a mutual Love, and at least for so far Reconciling the Members of the Church and Dissenters from it, that they shou'd always have been ready to unite against the Common Enemy of the Reformation.* The same Author, speaking of the Persecution of the Dissenters in the latter end of the Reign of King Charles II. when the Rage against them was at the height, observes, That the Party who acted most insolently in it, was set on and assisted by the Papists, *Who now, says he, encouraged the severe Persecution of Dissenters, thereby to take off the Edge of the Laws from themselves, and to divert the Zeal of the Members of the Church of England against their Brethren in Separation from them, and so to irritate and alienate the Hearts of all Protestants from one another.* It is true, my Lord, the Dissenters are secure against any such Persecution in our Time, as well by the Gracious Disposition of our Pious Queen, as the Indulgence of the Laws. But whether the Fury of some Men, both in the Pulpit and out of it,

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is likely to increase the *mutual Love* that he recommends to us towards our Protestant Brethren in Separation from us, Whether the Insolence they are treated With in Sermons, Pamphlets, and Weekly Libels, do not irritate and alienate the Hearts of all Protestants one from another, I leave to your Lordship's Wise, Solid, and Impartial Judgment to determine: And whether there is not as great necessity of putting an End to the odious Invectives of Bigotted Declaimers and Mercenary Scriblers, in order to promote the desir'd Union against the *Common Enemy of the Reformation*, as there was lately to prevent the Temporary Conformity of some Interested Dissenters to the Scandal of their own and the whole Protestant Religion. It is in our Memory, what Opinion the House of Commons had of severe Prosecutions, *That they were grievous to the Subject, a weakning of the Protestant Interest, an Encouragement to Popery, and dangerous to the Peace of the Kingdom.* The same Parliament in 80. pass'd a Toleration Bill, which being agreed to by both Houses was stolen away from the Lords Table, which no Man durst have done without the King's Command, or as the above-mention'd Reverend Authour Writes, *without at least his Privy and Connivance at it. The loss of this Bill was complain'd of in the next Parliament at Oxford, but without Satisfaction or Redress, and the Papists encourag'd by their Favour at Court were leagu'd closely with their Confederates, who pretended to be of our Church for a vigorous Prosecution of Protestant Dissenters,* which the worthy Author I have consulted on this occasion, his Character in it giving Weight to what he says, represents *as a Court Artifice to lapy the Church of England against the Dissenters,*  
and

and enrage the Dissenters against the Church of England, that they might not Unite and see their Common Danger, but rather by destroying one another, might make Room for a third Party that lay behind the Curtain. Your Lordship may very well admire, why I mention these Things, now that there can be no Danger of such Severities from the Temper both of Prince and Parliament. Why truly, My Lord, if there was no more from that of some Pretended Churchmen, these Reflections wou'd be the most Impertinent you ever met with. But whoever is the least conversant with the Preachings in the most Publick Places, with the common Talk of a certain Set of Men, who pretend to all the Merit of the Safety of our Church; cannot but wish that there was some means us'd to put a Stop to the Humour that prevails amongst the most forward of our Teachers, who think it the shortest way to Preferment, and seem willing enough at all hazards to play the Old Game, which brought us so near the brink of Destruction. Their Political Principles are form'd by those of their Predecessors in those times of Persecution, of whom this Account is given by the Author to whom I acknowledge my self so much in Debt. *The Churchmen were in great Reputation with the King and his Brother, not for the sake of the Purity of their Faith and Worship, nor indeed for their Legal Establishment, but purely for the Distinction of Loyalty, or of Adherence to the Interest of the Court; under the Impulse of their Zeal, they carried the Principles of Prerogative and Subjection to a much higher degree than their Forefathers had ever thought of, or than they themselves had ever Practiced. Sermons and Discourses were full of those flaming Notions, &c.* How Parallel

rallel runs this Discription with what might be justly made of their Successors at present, and since the former carry'd their Rage so far as Prisons, Plunderings, and Banishment, may we not reasonably conclude, that the Latter are only restrain'd by the Piety and Justice of our Queen and Her Parliament, and that the same Principles wou'd produce the same Practices were these Men once more let loose, which methinks should deter every Body from giving them the least Encouragement or Countenancing in anywise the Opinions that were then so mischeivous both to our Ecclesiastical and Civil Constitutions.

It cannot be suppos'd that K. *James's* Parliament had much Complacency for the *Dissenters*; however tho' King *Charles's* Long Parliament had pass'd several Acts against them which were still in Force; as also some made against the Papists, and turn'd upon them, yet when the Committee of Religion Voted an Address to the King to put the Laws in Execution, the House disagreed with the Committee, and that Vote pass'd there in the Negative. So far were they from being desirous of New Laws against our Protestant Brethren, that their Negative was a sort of Declaration for the Suspension of the Old ones. It is the Observation of an Eminent Historian, that if the House had fallen in with the Vote for persecuting Dissenters, the King wou'd have preferr'd that before his following Indulgence of them, which tho' I take to be Grimace, and intended only to affront the Laws and introduce Popery, yet I cannot for all that think that Prince's Arguments for Liberty of Conscience of less Force; Truth being the same,

same, let it come from whom, or on what account it will, Perhaps too a Confession from the Mouth of an Enemy weighs more than an Assertion from that of a Friend: *K. James*, therefore told his Privy Council; *He had observed, that although an Uniformity in Religious Worship had been endeavour'd to be established within this Kingdom in the Successive Reigns of four of his Predecessors assisted by their respective Parliaments, yet it had prov'd altogether ineffectual. That the Restraint upon the Consciences of Dissenters, in order thereunto had been very prejudicial to the Nation. That the many Penal Laws made against them, had rather increased than lessen'd the Number of them: And that nothing cou'd more conduce to the Peace and Quiet of this Kingdom, and the Increase of the Number as well as of the Trade of his Subjects, than an intire Liberty of Conscience, it having always been his Opinion as most suitable to the Principles of Christianity; That no Man should be persecuted for Conscience sake: for he thought Conscience cou'd not be forced, and that it never cou'd be the true Interest of a King of England to endeavour it.* This he explain'd further and Enlarg'd upon in his Declaration of Indulgence. What were the Effects of His Clemency is so well known, that it wou'd be superfluous to repeat it; only I cannot help taking notice of the Disposition it brought Churchmen to of Union with those they had persecuted. But whether the Marquess of *Hallifax* Prophecy'd well in an anonymous Letter publish'd by him may be easily determin'd from the Tendency of some Men now to act otherwise: and the Steps they take towards it. The Marquess speaking of the Church Party assures the World; *That all their former Haughtiness towards*  
*Dissenters*

*Dissenters was for ever extinguished. And pray, My Lord, observe how weak the Security is of the greatest Men, when they promise for Persons of a certain Profession; That the Spirit of Persecution was turn'd into a Spirit of Peace, Charity and Condescension; that the Church of England was convinced of its Error in being severe to them; that all thinking Men were come to a general Agreement, no more to cut our selves off from the Protestants abroad, but rather to enlarge the Foundations upon which we are to build our Defences against the Common Enemy. Where then is this Spirit of Peace, Charity and Condescension. How are the Foundations enlarged on which our Defences against Popery are to be built? That Excellent Peer who knew Mankind as well as Man ever did, had not enough study'd those that by virtue of their Function wou'd assume a Superiority over the rest, and an Independency on all Government but their own. Happy indeed are the Dissenters in Her Majesty's Justice and Goodness, and in the Laws, that are a Barrier against the haughty persecuting Spirit that has shewn itself lately with as much Insolence as ever, and flam'd most in those Places where Peace and Charity shou'd always be taught and practis'd. The Church at that Time wanted the Dissenters, and one wou'd not have thought any Party among us, wou'd have reviv'd the Style and Manners of those Reigns that are stain'd with the Blemish of Persecution. My Lord *Hallifax* addressing himself to the Dissenters, in his *Letter of Advice*, very differently from some of our Modern Preachers, tells them, *It would neither be Christianity nor Prudence to Hazard the Publick Safety either by Desire of Ease**

*or Revenge.* Let us do them the Justice to own that neither the Desire of Ease nor Revenge cou'd incite them to leave the Church at the Revolution! Who were more Hearty in that Good Cause? Who more ready to assist even their Persecutors, when they were persecuted in their Turn. Ease it is true they have; but as to the *Inlargement* of their *Foundations*, which my Lord Marquess promis'd, what View have they of that, from the Spirit of those Clergymen whose Frenzy is a Scandal to their Order? And to restrain such from Preaching Violence and Cruelty, is as much for the Glory of our Church, and the Tranquillity of the Nation, as confining the Privileges of Englishmen to the Pale. This, my Lord, is all I aim at by troubling your Lordship with this Address; for I know my Duty as a good Subject, and good Englishman, too well, not to submit intirely to all Laws when once they are made; and whatever I might think of them while they were in Debate when they have the last Sanction I shall never think of any thing but the most profound Obedience. However, I cannot help reflecting on the Prejudice of a Party, who suffer any thing in their Adherents, and cannot bear the least Offence in those that differ from them. If they really intend the Peace of the Kingdom and the Ease of Her Majesty's Subjects, surely the first step towards it, wou'd be to silence the Clamours of those that inflame the Minds of Men by their Spiritual Virulence, by their Misrepresentation of their Brethren, and stigmatizing them with odious Names and Characters. There's not a Thinking Man in *Britain*, who does not know what they mean by *Crying aloud, and sparing not.* The only Text now in fashion with them,

them. But the Multitude are deluded by their false Zeal, and impos'd on by their affected Warmth. Is not this to Pinion the Dissenters, and leave their Enemies with their Weapons in their Hands. If the Spirit of *Peace and Charity*, reign'd, there had perhaps been no need of Acts to compel Conformity in any Case. The Purity of our Church, the Excellence of her Constitution wou'd invite all Men to submit to her Doctrine and Discipline. But it is discouraging for Sober and Religious Men to be of the same Communion with such as call themselves her only *Sons*, and are apparently very little a-kin to Christianity either in their Morals or Charity. I take this, my Lord, to be the greatest Grievance to our Religion, and the greatest Impediment to Conformity, and if such Principles both in Actions or Politicks shou'd be countenanc'd the desirable Union among *British* Protestants, will be one of those Blessings for which we may pray for our latest Posterity, but despair to see in this Age, or to leave it to the next. The Church, my Lord, has given the Law to her Opponents, and commanded Obedience on the Pain of forfeiting all Right to the Profits and Honours of this World, which is not Hers. Let Her now give the Law to Her Children, and those that pretend to that Honour. Let Her Command them to set a bridle on their Tongues, and live with, and speak of, those that have the Misfortune not to Think as they do, as Friends Neighbours, and Christians. There's hardly a *Sunday* in the Year, but the *Isis* and the *Cam*, all the great Cities and Towns, and even the obscurer Villages, are entertain'd with Declamations against Faction and Fanaticism; as if the Dis-

were in a Damnable Heresy, and to be given over to the Civil Magistrate as Hereticks and Rebels. A Treatment they had little reason to expect from their Behaviour to the Church: *When*, as one of their Writers tells us, *they had a fair Opportunity for Revenge, yet cou'd they not think it a thing desirable either as Men, or as Christians.* As to the Practice of Occasional Conformity: If, I had been a Dissenter I shou'd not have wanted a Law to restrain me from it; if I cou'd not Conform for Conscience, I wou'd not have done it for Gain; and there is not an honest Dissenter in *Britain* that can justify it to his Principle of Separation; and to put it out of their Power to betray their own Cause, is no great sign of want of Friendship or Charity. But it is not this that will satisfy those that have been loudest in the Cry for it. If now the Law has gratify'd them in this Point, it does not leave them a liberty to Rail and Anathematize; to Blacken and Damn their Dissenting Neighbours, The Topicks they have been studying these Seven Years will be of no use to them, and they will be cut off of what they have been taught to deal in, as the shortest way to Preferment, for such as have not Virtue nor Patience enough to rise by Merit. I have only humbly to offer it to your Lordship, Whether this Licence is not as scandalous to Religion, and consequently as dangerous to our Church as ever *Occasional Conformity* was; and whether the Pulpits of such Preachers should not be Regulated, as well as the Practice of some Cold and Indifferent Dissenters? I wou'd not rake into so much Filth, as to mark out to your Lordship the many Examples of this Unchristian



christian Persecuting Spirit, that may be produc'd. The Charge will be presently consented to, for it is so far from being a Disgrace, that it is made the Glory of most of the New-comers from our Fountains of Learning; and is grown to such a height, that I know of no Grievance that wants so much to be Redress'd; tho' I doubt not, but any Attempt of this kind wou'd bring your Lordships of the Upper-House, and the Members of the Lower, under the Scandal of *Schism*. For they tell us, That they are accountable to no Court but Heaven; and it is to be fear'd many of them make their Appeal thither, not so much out of hope of Reward, as a doubt of Punishment. Of these Men, my Lord, one cannot speak too plain, nor will the Venerable Body of the Learned, Pious Clergy of the Church of *England*, take this to themselves, none of those intended by these Reflections being part of them; Piety and Learning never being the Companions of Rage and Nonsense, which make the Composition of the Furious Declamations we complain of; which tho' they can never have any Impression on Men of Thought and Reason; yet they always affect the Unthinking Multitude, which will always Form the Majority.

Need I enter into the Detail of this Spiritual Madness; the two *Irish* Incendiaries, are flagrant Instances of this Enormity. The Impunity of the one, and the Incouragement of the other, are not surely the best Methods to Confirm the Protestant Interest in that Kingdom. In this it wou'd be endless to give Particulars of the Offenders whose Insolence is increas'd by their Numbers, and are now worthy the Animadversion of the

*Legislature*

*Legislature.* How different, my Lord, is the Temper of these Preachers from the general Inclination of the Clergy when we were just deliver'd from King *James* and Popery: How like to that, which got them the Favour of King *Charles* and King *James*, when they were pursuing the Scent of Arbitrary Power; and that shou'd be enough to alarm all those who Love the present Establishment in Church and State, and make us beware in time of those Practices that once brought us so near the Brink of Ruin.

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F I N I S.

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