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S O M E
A C C O U N T
O F T H E
D I S S E N T E R S
A N D T H E I R
M A N A G E M E N T

With regard to the
Corporation and Test Acts.

In a Letter to a F R I E N D.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. R O B E R T S, near the Ox-
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LONDON, *Dec.* 1732.

Dear SIR,

THE great Talk at present in this Place is about the Corporation and Test Acts. The Dissenters seem resolv'd to push for the Repeal of them this next Sessions; and they are consulting all the Measures, and making all the Friends they can for the effecting of it. Whether they will succeed or not, I find differently believ'd. What I hear said of the Matter, and my own Opinion about it, I send you in the following Sheets.

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It is said, and many specious Harangues have been made upon that Head, that the Test itself is a very improper one; as it may be, and often is, the Occasion of giving Scandal to our Holy Religion. It is true, the taking the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper merely for a Qualification to some secular Employment, is a great, and hardly to be pardon'd, Profanation of that holy Rite: because, as the Motives thereto are very unworthy, and consequently must render the Receiver unworthy; so the End of such receiving is quite foreign, and very different from that which our blessed Lord ordain'd when he instituted that holy Sacrament. So far is very certain, and agreed on all Sides. But then let us ask, and fairly fix the Charge where of right it belongs: Who it is that is properly guilty of that Profanation, the Legislator or the Receiver? The latter certainly; he whose own Act it is, he is highly guilty of it. And if the Dissenters any of them, notwithstanding the known Sacredness of that divine Institution, and the Danger of abusing it, will yet venture

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ture upon it, with no other View but that of a Qualification, they, of all Men, have the least Reason to charge others with the Prostitution, or the Profanation of it. The Design of the Legislator was not to *alter* or to *add* to the End for which Christ himself ordained that Sacrament; but only thereby to distinguish the true Friends of the Establish'd Church, and to be a Bar against any who were not of her Communion, and in her Interest. This was all that was intended by the Legislator in the Case. And if those very People, whom that Act was on purpose calculated to keep out from ever being able to hurt the Church; if those People will pervert the Intention of that Act, and from either wrong or wicked Motives demand, as it were, that holy Sacrament to be deliver'd to them; as nothing can be more impious, or give greater Scandal to our holy Religion, so the Sin thereof will be chiefly at their doors.

It is true, our blessed Lord charges his Disciples, *i. e.* the Ministers of his Word, that they *give not that which is*
holy

holy unto dogs, nor cast their pearls before swine; lest, as his Reason is, they turn again and rend you *. The Reason, I think, is not unworthy our Attention in the present Case; and as no Power ought to interpose, where those Directions are duly observ'd, so the due Observation of them might be a Means of preventing, in great measure, that horrid Prostitution of the Sacrament so much complain'd of, tho' often caus'd, by the Dissenters.

Upon the whole; I think the receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as our Law requires, and after the Manner of the Church of *England*, to be a very proper Test, and such which (as long as that Part of our Establishment lasts) ought to be given by all who have any publick Power or Trust committed to them. If for the sake of any such Power or Trust, any shall dare to profane it, let them look well to it: they are Volunteers in the Guilt, and their Condemnation must be certain.

* Matth. vii. 6.

Others of the Dissenters, whose Principle will not suffer them to give this Test, are angry with it, because without it they can have no Share in the Administration of Things, and the Places of Profit and Trust among us. Here they inveigh bitterly, and with great Indignation: For hereby, say they, we are persecuted for Conscience sake, and depriv'd of all those civil Rights, which, as Subjects in general, and as good Subjects in particular, naturally belong to us.

But this Complaint too is both groundless and unreasonable. As Subjects in general, they have all the Indulgence, and all the Enjoyment both in their Civil and Religious Rights, which in Wisdom ought to be allow'd them, and which in Justice and Reason they ought to claim.

As to their Religious Rights, they are fully tolerated both in the Profession, and in the Exercise of them. They are not only suffer'd to convene publickly, and to serve God in their own Way ;
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but the Law also has provided Remedies against any, who shall interrupt or disturb them therein. And if in modesty they would but consider, that theirs is not the establish'd Religion of the Country they live in, they ought surely to be well contented, if not very thankful for the Liberty and the Privilege which by the Favour of the Legislature is allow'd them.

In other Countries and where other Religions prevail, all the Indulgence which the Dissenters meet with here is not to be found: And since theirs *is not*, nor likely *to be*, they may be very thankful that the Religion establish'd is the establish'd Religion. As the Case at present stands, and with regard to their Religious Rights, I see no Difference between the Dissenters and us; but that ours is the Religion *established* by Law, theirs *tolerated* by Law.

Then again as to their Civil Rights, where is there any Difference between a Churchman and a Dissenter? What a Dissenter is born to, what is bequeath'd to him, or what he acquires himself,
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he has as good a Right to, and is as secure in, as any other Subject whatever : He has the same Access to the Laws of the Land, and he may defend himself by them in any just Claim which he has. Where then is the Greivance so mightily complain'd of? Why, as good and faithful Subjects to the Government, they say that they ought to have an equal Share in the publick Administration of Things, and that as such, they have a natural Right to it.

But this Claim of a natural Right, as they call it, I hope will never be allow'd them; because, as the Case now is, they can have no Pretence to it. They boast indeed not only that they are Subjects in common, but that they are the best and most faithful Subjects His Majesty has; in the same manner as their Forefathers boasted, that they were the only Righteous, the only Men of God. And as these would have engross'd all the Merit of Righteousness, and all the Favour of God to themselves; so our modern Presbyterians would fain extol and prefer their Loyalty into the greatest Merit from His

present Majesty, and the whole House of *Hanover*. Now *supposing* all this that they say, (not that I grant it by any means; because His Majesty has a great many, and those in all respects his Best Friends and his Best Subjects, in the Church of which he himself is the Head :) I say, supposing the Dissenters to be the good Subjects they boast! And what of all that? Or how do they derive from thence a natural Right to the same Share in all publick Distributions with those of the Establish'd Religion? Their being good Subjects is no more than what His Majesty, so indulgent as He is to them, *deserves* and *may claim* from them: And it is not only their Duty, but it is their Interest, as well as it is ours of the Church of *England*, to be in a particular manner so to His present Majesty; since in Him only it is, and in His Royal Family, that both they and we are secure from a Power, which if once it shou'd prevail, wou'd undo both them and us. What then have both they and we to do, but to be as loyal and as dutiful Subjects to Him as possibly we can? — But to say that upon that account, and
merely

merely as such, the Dissenters have a natural Right to the same Favour, and the same Trusts with those of the Establish'd Church; and in a manner so insolent and threatening as they have done, to demand it (as it were) of the Government; this, I think, is going a great way farther than either Decency or good Politicks can justify.

The Government, let them observe, is in such Hands, and so secure in those Hands, that they who hold it are *at least* not to be bully'd into any Measures, which may be detrimental to the present Constitution: and His Majesty is wise enough to distinguish between those who are of the whole Constitution, and those who comply with but a Part of it. And therefore, as there can be no Dispute who are his best Subjects, and consequently deserve best of him; those who go along with him in every Part of that Constitution over which He presides, and which He has engag'd to defend; and those who dissent wholly from it, or comply but in Part; so a Pretence to an equal Share in His Favour, and in the Administration

tion of things under Him, is altogether unreasonable to be ask'd, impolitic to be granted, and what they cannot have a Right to. For my own part, I think the Dissenters of all Denominations are pretty much upon a Level, as to this natural Right so much talk'd of; and the Man who has not taken the Oaths to the Civil Government, but is a profess'd Member of the Church, may, in like manner, put in his Claim to it, and has not much less to say for himself upon it. In short, the Laws in the present Case so much complain'd of, were made for the Security of the Church, as it now stands establish'd amongst us; well seeing that the Security of that Church would be the best Security to the State. But farther:

The Dissenters think themselves, or wou'd persuade us to think, that they are a numerous, a weighty, and a very powerful Body of Men in the Nation. Hence they wou'd have us believe, that they may have a great Stroke in our Elections; and because the present Parliament is drawing to an End, they think

think this a proper Time to declare what must be expected from them, if they are disappointed in their Attempt. But, alas! they are ill-advis'd; and while they suffer themselves, without consulting whether this be a proper Time for others, as well as for themselves, and disregarding all Consent of those Persons in Power, who are best able to judge for, to assist, or to oppose them: I say, while the Dissenters do thus suffer themselves to be hurried on, even in Opposition, as it appears, to those very Persons, (who, as they are principally concern'd, so they ought principally to be consulted in all publick Cases of this Nature:) They only become thereby the mere Tools of some discontented or ambitious Men, who have their own, not the Interest of the Dissenters to serve in it.

As to the Dissenters being so great and so powerful a Body as they pretend; that, I think, need not alter any of our Laws, nor will hurt us any thing in our Elections. Those who are Friends to the Church are known Friends to His Majesty; and there are Churchmen

men enough throughout the Kingdom to chuse a Church-Parliament, which will best preserve His, and the Rights of His People, both in Church and State. And I will venture to say, as to the Ministry, That if they had Reason to apprehend the disobliging any of their Friends, the disobliging their Friends of the Church Establish'd, wou'd be of worse Consequence than any that is threaten'd from what other Quarter soever. But the Ministry has not, nor needs to have any Apprehensions of this kind. Whilst the Ministry is a Friend to the Church, the Church will be a Friend to the Ministry; and so long as there is that Harmony between them, they will mutually and necessarily be the Support of each other. We have seen the Church in great Danger, when the Enemies of our Constitution in the State have been in Power: and the State has greatly suffer'd, when the Enemies of our Church have prevail'd. We want not Instances for either of these Proofs, and it is to be hop'd no new Experiment will be made in the one or the other.

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The Church of *England*, let it be consider'd, is not only one Part, and a principal Part of our Constitution ; but the Members of that Church are by much the Majority of the People. And therefore, as every repealing of those wholesome Acts and Laws, which at present subsist for the Preservation of that Church, must necessarily be suspected as so many Inlets upon, and be detrimental to Her ; so consequently a greater Number of the good People and good Subjects of the Land would be offended and disobliged thereby.

This is too plain to be insisted upon.
 ——— And thus have I given you some short Hints of the Case, as it stands at present, with regard to the Dissenters, and the Test Act. And I have great Hopes, that as the Members of the Church of *England* are both by Principle and Interest the truest and best Friends to the Government ; and likewise an overbalance in Number to any, I may say, to all the Dissenters from it ; and farther, as we have a King upon the Throne, who is Himself a true Member of that Church, and under Christ the

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Head over *it*, as well as *us*; so I cannot doubt, but that all those Laws which the Wisdom of our Legislator has provided for the Security of the Establish'd Religion, will continue in their full Force; that as his Majesty found us, so he will leave us; so his Royal Successors continue us; and so we shall remain till our Church Militant here on Earth is translated to the Church Triumphant above. Which as it ought to be the Prayer of every true Churchman and of every sincere Lover of Liberty, so in particular it is of,

Your Friend and Servant,

A. B.





