

A short ABSTRACT of the Behaviour of the *Occasional Communicants*, towards the Members of the Church of *England*, since the Revolution.

Humbly Dedicated to the Honourable the Commons in Parliament Assembled, Together with a Letter to the Author by way of Supplement.

There is certainly no Nation upon Earth, where boldly giving Nicknames, doth so Effectually do the business of *Beaufeaux*, as in *England*,

And nothing more Evidently proves this, than that the present Bill against *Occasional Conformity* hath been misrepresented, as an Attempt for *Persecution*.

On the contrary, it is in Reality (as a worthy Member of the *House of Commons* called it) merely a Bill to prevent *Hypocrite* in the *Presbyterians*, and to put it out of their Power to overthrow the *Establish'd Church*, and persecute all sorts of *Dissemblers*.

And the Preamble of the Bill now Depending, most exprefly, and from the *strongest Reasons*, confirms the *Toleration*.

How fit the *Presbyterians* are for Power, may be Read in the *Modern Histories of Great Britain*.

How modestly they will use it, may be inferr'd from what they did in both Kingdoms, in the Days of King *Charles* the First, and what they have more lately done, during the Reign of King *William*, in that of *Scotland*.

But without travelling beyond the Borders of our own Country, let us see how they, and their *Accomplices*, have, these last Fourteen Years, endeavour'd artificially to weaken and worm out the Church.

Let us see how tenderly they have behav'd themselves towards the *Confidences of the Episcopal Party*, and even towards the Civil Constitution of *England*.

Immediately upon the Revolution, though the Church of *England* had share enough in the making of it, these *Classical Enemies* of the *Episcopate*, and those that work for, and wish them, instantaneously put an Act to Force upon the *Clergy*, who had so long Preach'd Doctrines that seem'd contrary to the doing of it, to take an Oath, at the Peril of losing their Livings, not only to submit quietly under, but to pay Allegiance to a Government founded upon *Abdication*; for which Notion the generality of the Church of *England*, both *Laymen and Clergy*, had Express'd a great deal of *Scruple*, and *Dissatisfaction*.

And though some were allow'd to take that Oath in the *lower Sense*, as it was then call'd, yet the *Presbyterian Party* soon resolv'd, that that should not serve their turn; but that *Abjuration* should be cramm'd down, or all the Livings in *England* should be put into the Hands of those who favour'd their Party, and would join with them to make an end of the *Episcopal*, that is, the *Apostolical* Constitution of the Church.

So Early did they think of *Abjuration*, as a *Snare*, though they did not accomplish their Design till King *William* (who was bred up in their *Persuasion*) lay Expiring on his Death-Bed.

But of this more anon.

At present let us see how, for their own Purposes, they have mangled our *Civil Constitution*.

Did they not, by Lies and Stories of their own Invention, invade one of our most Fundamental Rights, thrice suspend the *Writ of Habeas Corpus*, and put into Prisons many Innocent, Inoffensive Men, against whom nothing was, to this Day, ever proved, but that some of them and only some of them, scrupled the Oaths, and were sincerely Members of the Church of *England*?

Did not this Divide and Weaken the Church Party?

Was not this one Natural Step to worm it out?

But further, Did not they, by false and groundless Calumnies, bespatter and slander out of all Employments, those few of the true Sons of the Church, who King *William* (by reason of their Abilities, their Fortunes, and the great Interest they had with the People) thought it necessary for him to make use of; and these were Men who entirely complied with the Government, and served him not only Faithfully, but likewise with great Reputation, unless when some of them were forced, contrary to their own innate Goodness, by the Clamours of these *Presbyterians*, and the false Insinuations they Industriously spread about, to be a little too Severe, to some very worthy, tho' scrupulous Men, who were Conscientiously of that Church; which those very *Ministers* themselves, thought the best; and, to their Honour be it spoken, were then, as they are now Resolved, at all Hazards to support.

For their being so resolv'd, they were turn'd out of their Places and Offices, and all Commissions of Trust and Profit were fill'd, either with *Whigs*, who had little or no Religion, or with *Occasional Communicants*.

Now let us see when these *Occasional Communicants* were in Plenitude of Power (which they have so much Mind to be in again) how they carried themselves to the *Oppress'd Church of England*.

That wicked Design of Assassinating the King, which, it is plain, was only the Contrivance of a few desperate and hot-headed Wretches, gave them an Advantage.

They made use of it with a Witness.

They again (though the Plot was discovered) suspended the *Habeas Corpus* *Vrit*, and they contriv'd an *Association*, which they hop'd, no Member of the Church of *England* would have ever Subscribed.

At first indeed it was left voluntary.

But that would only have brought Men under Suspicion, and though it might have wrung all *De bene placito* Places, out of the Hands of the Church-Men, yet it could not reach those who held by Patent

nor get the *Spiritual Preferments* (which was their deepest Project) out of the Hands of those that possess'd them.

For this Reason it was soon made *Compulsive*.

But this was not all,

They presently set up for *Legislative Bowstrings*.

Sir *John Fenwick*, who was then in their Hands, and under a *Legal Prosecution*, was the first Man, against whom they tried this Method.

He being Dead, I am unwilling to shew how inconsiderable, how much below such a Bill, (tho' Bills of *Attainder* should be more warrantable) that Gentleman was.

I will only say, That the *Ostracism* at *Athens* was laid aside, because that *Extream Remedy* was made use of against such another Man.

For my part, when I consider over that Matter, I can find no Reason why the *Whigs*, and *Occasional Communicants*, carried on that Bill, with such Fury, unless it was merely as a Trial of Skill, whether they could knock down whom they pleas'd, and so made the Experiment on his Person.

I believe they aimed at Men of greater Figure.

I know it was not long before that, they they intended to have Impeach'd the Earl of *Norringham*, because they thought it necessary to send him out of this World, before they, in a *bare-fac'd* manner, Attack'd the Church.

I believe they had greater Purposes than appear'd, in relation to that Bill; for I am not willing to believe that they are such *Banditti*, such *Sacrificers of Human Blood*, as that they would offer up the Life of any Fellow-Subject, merely to gratifie the Personal Revenments of King *William*.

No! They had a Mind to other Lives and Estates, whereof Sir *Charles Duncomb's* Estate was Evidently one.

It is a Mercy that those gloomy Days are over, upon which no Man can look back without Horror and Amazement, and yet when any Innocent Bill is brought in, to hinder the return of such Outrages, though it provides for every Man's Worshipping God in his own way, allows it to be a *Christian Right*, and the Genius of the Church of *England*, that Men should be allow'd to do, this is call'd *Persecution*.

These Men must not only have Liberty.

That they will not be contented with.

They must have a Power to *Slay and Plunder* whomsoever they are not pleas'd to like, whoever will not join Hands with them to pull down the Church, and set up their Party.

But let us proceed yet a little further.

Oaths and Associations would not serve their Turn.

What I said was their early and darling Measure must be brought into Play, and the *Abjuration* must be stamp'd by King *William*, when he lay Gasping for Life.

If they had any Consciences, besides a turbulent Spirit, and the Popish Principle of hating and persecuting all that differ from them, I would appeal even to their own Consciences, whether they did not believe, whether they did not know, That that Oath was likely to administer Scruples to many Members of the Church of *England*, who are as little for *France* and *Papery*, who care as little for the young Gentleman at *St. Germans* as themselves.

To keep him out.

To think him not fit to Govern these Kingdoms.

And to think that he has no Right, upon any pretence whatsoever, are very different Things.

And is it not good natur'd, *Christian* enough, to let Men, who will always (suitable to the *manners* they have now about 60 Years express'd that way) make others Swear and Forswear, as they think fit, have Liberty for their own Consciences, without giving them Power to ensnare and enthrall farther the Consciences of better Men?

Besides this Law reaches no other *Conscientious Dissenter*, nor even a *Presbyterian* that is truly Conscientious.

No *Conscientious Dissenter* of any other kind, can, as the *Law stands*, quarrel himself, and if you will read the Writings of the former *Presbyterians*, you will find that the *Presbyterians* themselves cannot, by their *Classical Principles*, partake of the Holy Mysteries of a Church which is under the superintendency of a Bishop, and Worship's God by set Forms or *Liturgies*.

But I am not willing to Invite any body to Read their Books, since in *Knox* and *Burbanan*, and other of their Writers, they will meet with such *King-Killing* Doctrines, as are a Scandal to the Reformation, and indeed to the *Christian* Name.

Against the Persons of the *Presbyterians*, I thank God I have no Animosity.

If they wanted their *Liberty of Conscience*, or any other good Offices in my Power, I would use what Interest I have for them.

But Power is dangerously lodged, when it is in their Hands, and I think the Church and State can scarce have worse Enemies than *Occasional Communicants*; and I also think that they are, of all others, the worst and most dangerous *Presbyterians*. From the Power of which *Self*, God deliver us; for they have in their Practice, *Time-Fervers*, *Occasional Men*, and have without doubt, secret Designs to overthrow the *Establish'd Church*, which I hope is built upon a *Rock* that cannot be moved.

The LETTER.

S I R,

Amongst others, return you Thanks for your Abstract as far as it went, but can't help a little Wondring that you did not carry your Subject farther.

Perhaps you might have your own Reasons for so doing. And therefore, left you should not, I beg leave to make a Supplement. I don't pretend to guess whether you have any Relation to the Priest-hood, and, upon that Account, inflicted mostly upon the hardships that that Order hath undergone.

But I think that neither you nor any body else can take it amiss, that I remind you and them of some uncharitable Expressions of the cruel and implacable Zeal of those Occasional Communicants, which have affected the Lay-Members of the Church of England.

When the House of Lords had been by a late Member of their House, who (though he never professed overmuch Religion) was the Captain Tom for the Occasional Communicants, threatened with the Mob if they would not close with Abdicacion instead of Regency, and they were at last menaced out of what they thought the Publick Good; A Man might have supposed, That the Occasional Communicants would have been content with a Temperate use of their Victory; a Man would have thought, that they who had so justly for so many Years last past, desired Liberty for their own Conscience, and who had so scandalously in the time of the Late King James, run in with the Offensive Measures of his Ministers, in order to get it, should not now, when the Church of England was so good-natur'd as to over-look their Regulations, and were come to that Temper, which the Seven Bishops in their Famous Petition, had so long before hinted at, to wit, to grant them a Free Toleration for their Religion. I say, a Man might have supposed that these Occasional Communicants would not immediately have set up for Persecuting any Members whatsoever of the Church of England.

But what did they do?

They, upon their first Accession to Power, took care to get a Clause into the Money-Bills, &c. (which the Lords are not allowed to amend, be the Clauses therein never so unreasonable) that all who would not take the Oaths, which they believ'd more than did, would scruple, should pay Double Taxes

Whether this was contrived to make Men enter into Plots and Conspiracies against the Establish'd Government, that the Occasional Communicants, and their Party might reap the Forfeitures, I will not pretend to Determine.

But certain it is, that this provok'd many quiet Men, and made the last Government have many Enemies amongst those, who otherwise would have sat entirely still. And it cannot be thought strange, that Men should be (when they saw, that as soon as these Occasional Communicants mounted the Saddle, they must either (according to their own Sense) be sworn, or undone) extremely Alarm'd. Every body, without the Spirits of Prophecy, could easily foresee that that was but the beginning of such Troubles, as would in all likelihood overwhelm, and destroy whomsoever scrupled the Oaths, and was too frail-laced as to the Old Fashion'd Doctrine of Passive Obedience.

What I now mentioned, all the scrupulous Men were concern'd in; but let us come to the Deprivation of a Lay-Order of Men.

The Occasional Communicants had got a Fancy, that some Lawyers, for the sake of Gratitude and Honour, and several others upon the score of Confidence, would scruple, what very few of that Robe did, the Oaths; and accordingly, the Occasional Presbyterians got an Act to restrain all from Practising in any of his Majesty's Courts, either as Council, Attorney, or Solicitor (unless they took the Oaths) though 'tis impossible that any Man can do Prejudice to any Government by Publick Practice, since the Court will be sure to take notice of what he saith and doth there. And this was a Deprivation of what sure is as much a Brightness, as Offices of Trust and Profit can be.

Perhaps in another Session, had they not found that this Peevish Law had had very little Effect, they would have procured one to Impose Oaths upon all other Professions and Trades.

Indeed they did not do it inexpressible Terms but they did what was more than tantamount to it, for they got a Law, That whoever being Personally Summon'd by two Justices, did either not appear, or appearing, refus'd the Oaths, should be liable to all the Pains and Penalties of Convict Peppils. And there were then but too many Occasional Communicants in the Commission of the Peace, who were Willing enough to Execute this Law.

But the Law was so barbarous, that even King William himself could not be prevail'd with to let it ever be Universally put in force.

It was indeed once put in Execution in Middlesex, and thereby the Occasional Communicants plainly discovered, that they more implacably hate the scrupulous Members of the Church of England, than they do the Papists; for whereas every Man was to take both the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, they satisfied themselves with letting the Papists (who have greater Latitude in their Notions of Loyalty than scrupulous Members of the Church of England) take only the Oath of Allegiance, and omit that of Supremacy.

It is no great Miracle that they had these Softnesses towards the Roman-Catholics: for it was not long before, that they had join'd with them in every offensive Measure, in order to pull down the Protestant Episcopacy of England; but, I thank God, I neither Envy the Papists, nor the Occasional Communicants their Kind Correspondence, if all true Lovers of our Church are so aware of them, as to prevent their Destroying it.

But to proceed to another Good Natur'd Law, which these Occasional Communicants, and their Partisans obtained, whilst they ruled the Reast, I mean the Banishing Act.

This Law, which was Enacted many years after the Revolution, made every Man, who had been in France from 11 December 1688, if he had not had a Pass under the Hand of either King William and Queen

Mary themselves; to be liable to all the Pains and Penalties of High Treason, if they did not Banish themselves by the 2d of February, which was about a Fortnight after the Act Pass'd, or obtain a Licence under the Privy Seal. Thus what was no Crime, when it was done, subjected Men, many Years afterwards, to Banishment or Death. From the 11th of December 1688 to the 23th of February following, we had a sort of Interregnum, and for about two Months afterwards, no War was Proclaimed with France, and consequently that Kingdom was our Ally. For a Year and a half after that, there was no Law in Being to make it Criminal either to go to, or to come from France; But several Years after this, these Occasional Communicants Procured this Retrospective Bill of Attainder, which they likewise would not suffer King William to Execute mercifully.

Instances would be Innumerable; I will Name but two.

A Scotch Gentleman, Capt. Mac Adams by Name, of the Episcopal Church of Scotland, who had for a great while before his Death lived most Religiously, and been an exemplary Penitent, was so far gone in a Consumption, that three Physicians Signed a Certificate, That he would Endanger his Life by the Voyage. yet he was upon this Act forced to be carried in his Bed on Ship-Board, that he might go into France, where, as the Physicians said he would, he Died within a very little time.

My Lord Montgomery's Case is sufficiently known, but you shall give me leave to put it down.

Soon after the Revolution, he had a Pass for going into France, from the Prince of Orange, who was then (upon the Address of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal Signed by them at Guild Hall,) Administrator of the Affairs of England. My Lord Montgomery's Return was very Notorious; for upon it he was Committed to the Tower of London, before King William was made King, and yet, because this Pass was Signed by the Prince of Orange, and not by King William, who was then no King, a Licence upon this Act was Refus'd to him, and the Letter of the Law construed to be against him.

My Lord Montgomery is a Roman Catholic, and therefore it is more than probable, the Occasional Communicants would not have let him been so free, had not my Lord Rochford, who was bred no Enemy to the Presbyterians of Holland, had a Grant of his Estate, and they thought that by the Banishment of my Lord Montgomery, their friend, my Lord Rochford, might likely have made a Penny, by way of Compensation.

I have once or twice heard a pleasant Account of this Act, which hapned at the Table of the late Lord Chief Justice Treby.

A Gentleman who Dined there, by his Lordship's Permission, Disputed the Act, and when the Gentleman had set it forth, as it Deserved, my Lord Declared, it ought to be Interpreted by the Bishop of Salisbury's Sermon; upon which, the Gentleman asked his Lordship what he meant. My Lord answer'd, That in a Sermon of the Bishop's which he then mentioned, the Bishop Reasoned up all the Objections that were against the late Reign, and made Answers to them, and amongst other Objections, said one was, That the Government was too Merciful, and the Bishop made it out, was, That those who made the Objection did not understand the Compass of Royal Clemency. Now, said my Lord, if this Law be not Interpreted by the Compass of Royal Clemency, it will be one of the most Wicked and Cruel Laws I ever heard of.

This Story, I believe, I have heard more than once repeated to my Lord Chief Justice Treby's Advantage, and it is due to him that I should in this Place say, That whereas only three Persons were ever Indicted on this Statute, and all three Try'd before his Lordship, my Lord gave the Prisoners all the Assistance that every Judge ought to do, and gave to each a Charge to the Jury, That every one of them was found not Guilty. He managed it indeed, as if he was (what was his Duty) Counsel for the Prisoner, and by that means discouraged future Prosecutions on that

Act.

I will mention but one more Instance of the Charity, Good Nature, and Christian Forbearance of these Occasional Communicants and their Party.

The Quakers, who had but lately learn'd to Swear as all, they would last Session have taught to Forswear, I mean to take the Abjuration in Affirmation Language, and accordingly they whistled some, who wear Cloathes like that Sect, but are farce of it, to offer it to the House of Lords, as an Amendment to the Bill sent up by the House of Commons, and when it came down with that Amendment to the Commons, the Friends of the Occasional Communicants divided the House for Agreeing with that Amendment, and the Point had been carried against the Quakers, had not the True Members of the Church of England (who are for Liberty of Conscience, tho' not for setting up a Edition, which will be contented with nothing less than having all our Parochial Churches) Out-Voted the Occasional Communicants, and Declared in their own House, and likewise at a Conference with the Lords, That it was not the Design of the Act to reach those poor Enthusiasts; upon which, the Lords were pleas'd to Recede without any Division in their House.

To Conclude, a Man might Write Volumes upon the Violence of these Occasional Communicants.

They can Love none but their own Party, though they can Befriend and take by the Hand even the Papists themselves, in Order to Root Episcopacy out of England.

But be they as Wicked and as Persecuting as they please, I agree with what I think is your Sense in that Matter, That we ought to make no Inroads upon their Spiritual Liberty: That they ought to be Convinced by Love and Reason, and not Compelled by Force; That, till they are Convinced of their Mistake, they have a Natural and a Christian Right, (which I am glad is now settled by Law) to Worship God according to the Dictates of their own Minds.

I will however, that all Men of Probity, who have Herded with them, would only Consider what a sort of Men the Generality of them are.

They are always making and taking Oaths Occasionally.

They can take the Holy Sacrament Occasionally, and they have Occasional Manners. They formerly laid it down as a Rule, That Dominion was founded in Grace, but now of late they hold, it only of Right appertains to Occasional Communicants, I will not say Hypocrites.

I am, Sir,

Your Humble Servant, &c.