

OBSERVATOR.

Of a Catholique, and a Protestant. Of a Popish Catholique, and a Phanatical Protestant. Of Schism, and Sedition. Of Dissents, Curable, and Incurable: Private and Publique. Enthusiasm is a Disease, and fitter for Physick, then Council. Dissenters not Punish'd for Opinion.

Wednesday, September 24. 1684.

TRIM. You are [A Catholique (you say) according to the Doctrine of the Church of England Establish'd by Law:] And This is your Answer to the Penny-Post-Letter of Friday Last, that charges ye with [a Frequent Wincing of your Faith] Now if you had a mind to be Franck, and Clear: Why could not you as well have sayd a [PROTESTANT] as a [CATHOLIQUE?]

OBSERVATOR. Because the One Imports the True, and Apostolical Religion: The Tother (in Propriety of Speaking) denotes only a Particular Sect, or Faction: Or if you take it at Large; It breaks Christian Unity into a Thousand Pieces. In short; We are Not Protestants; According to the very Intent of the Appellation: Beside that I had rather Own my self a Disciple of Jesus Christ, then of Martin Luther.

Trim. This is only a little Popery about the Brimms. Prethee don't the Papists call themselves CATHOLIQUES?

Obs. Yes. And don't the Phanatiques call themselves PROTESTANTS? But I am neither a Popish Catholique all this while, nor a Phanatical Protestant. Shall I tell you how it is now, betwixt You and Me? You take My Catholiques, to be All, Papists: And I take Your Protestants, to be All, Schismatiques: So that the Church of England is quite Lost betwixt us. 'Tis a hard Case, for a man to be Call'd upon at every Turn thus; to Show himself Naked, and make a Publique Confession of his Faith, in an Observator. And the Pleasure is; to see Those People that don't so much as Believe in God, Themselves; how Mightily Concern'd they are to know whether I'm a Protestant or a Papist. The Point is Sedition; not Religion. The Schismatiques are in a Conspiracy against the Kings Person, and Government; And All this is long of the Damn'd Papists Praying to Saints. The Question is Buggery, Perjury, Subornation. &c. And the Answer is; The Popes Infalibility: Purgatory; Justification by Works, &c. Why what Stuff is here!

Trim. Methinks you should Cobble-up your Own Blunders, before you fall upon Other Peoples. The Point is not Religion, you Cry; And yet you lay the Stress of it upon the Schism, as if Schism were not a Question of Religion.

Obs. The Schism is only a Religious Cover for a Project of State; And a Denial of the Kings Authority in Matters of Civil Cognisance: That is to say; In Certain Changeable Circumstances, relating Externally, to the Order, and Decency of Gods Worship; but wholly Abstracted from Religion it Self; which is an Obligation, and Duty, of a Sacred, a Perpetual, and an Unchangeable Quality.

Trim. The Circumstances that you speak of, are never the less Matter of Religion, to Those that Account them so; for Not being so, perhaps, to You: Unless you will Oblige men to Act according to Other Peoples Consciences, in Contradiction to their Own.

Obs. If Men will Swallow Crosses, as they do Lies; And take down False, & Groundless Opinions concerning Religion, as they do Shams and Frivolous Stories in Matter of Fact, without Chewing them; the Mistake does no more make the One Error to be Conscience, then the Other to be Truth: And so far is the very Pretext of Conscience, from Excusing the Fault, that it Doubles it; Where the Judgment is Mistled for want of Care, and Due Consideration.

Trim. To Shorten the Dispute; We'll Suppose the Case as Clear as You Imagine it. Some People are Mistled, perhaps, by Credulity; Others by Weakness; One Man is Overborn by his Passions; Another, Transported by his Interest; Prepossession goes a Great way too; And in fine; 'Tis a Large Step toward the Believing of Any thing, when we are Desirous to Have it so: And that we have a Good Will toward the Maintaining of a Paradox: But These Instances Apart; What will you say to Those Incurable Dissents; Those Insuperable Impressions, and Persuasions, that Divide us in Our Opinions, One from Another, by an Indivisible Necessity, that's Founded in the very Frame, and Elements of our Composition; And as Impossible ever to be Remov'd, as to turn the Course of Nature into Another Channel? Disagreements, so Connatural to us, that you may as well Propose to Kneade the Whole Race of Mankind, into One Body; as to bring the Individualls to be of One Mind. If This be True; One, and the Same Rule can never Oblige All those people, that by reason of so Inconciliable a Diversity of Thoughts, are bound to Govern themselves by Differing Measures.

Obs. I will Allow ye, that there are Curable, and Incurable Disagreements. The Errors of the Former are not to be Excus'd; And I have really a Great Compassion for the Misfortunes of the Latter: But I cannot see any Reason yet, why These Personal Infelicities should Operate upon the Fundamentals of Society, and Government; for if All those Complexional Dissents should be Indulg'd, the very Ordinance of Power falls to the Ground: And 'tis only an Indeterminable Liberty, that can Obviate All those Cases. Beside, that it were Derogatory to the Dignity of a Law, as well as Inconsistent with the Use, and Intent of it, to Accommodate Those Provisions, to Private, and Particular Cases, which are Designed purely for the Regiment, and Tranquillity of the Publique; And Effectually; A Law so Restrain'd, as to Answer Your Imagination of a Law to reach All These Difficulties, would be the Erecting of One Law to the Subverting of All Others; Nay, and to the Destruction of it self too: For it would be No Other, then the Enacting of a Law, to Provide, that there may be No Law at all: So that upon the Upsbor, Here's the Bus'ness. Either Some People must Remain Unsatisfy'd, Or there must be No Government: But over and above the Ruinous, and the Irreparable Consequences of Gratifying here and there a Man, to the Confusion of the Whole: Do

but look Narrowly into the Reason of the Thing ; And you will find it a Case so Rare, and so Extravagant, that it looks liker a Disease, then a Scruple. And by my troth, I believe it a Thing more Advisable, to Ply the Patient with Hellebore, then with Good Counsel: For he has not the Least Colour to Support himself upon, which is not Utterly Destructive of the very Frame of the Polity. And the Authority of the Law it self, Stands, or Falls with his Argument. In One Word, The Man must be Sick-Headed, that can but Entertain, the very Fancy of it; And a body might, with as Good a Grace, Plead for Liberty of Conscience to Fools, and Mad-Men: Briefly; where neither Law, Conscience, nor Reason will do any Good, e'en put 'em into a Course of Physick.

Trim. Truly the Dissenters are Beholden to ye for your Recommendations.

Obs. The Hypochondriacs, you mean; for there is a kind of a *Lasa Principia* in the Case: And truly if you take the matter a-right, they are Beholden to Me: For [Mad-Man] is the Best thing you can say in the World, for one of These Dark Enthusiasts.

Trim. Well! And I hope you'd have 'em in Chains too.

Obs. Why 'faith, when they are in their Fits, 'tis good keeping 'em out of Harms-way. And there's no Trusting of 'em with Guns, or Edg-Tools neither. Nay, and they must be kept by Themselves too: For of all Pests, That of Schism, is Certainly, the most Contagious.

Trim. This is not Argument, but Animosity, and pure Spite. Would you have men Punish'd for what they cannot help?

Obs. Why people cannot help being Sick, or Furious; Must not Lepers therefore be kept out of Publick Assemblies? Or must not Men in a Raging Phrenzy, be Bound; and kept from Fire, or Weapons; Because they cannot help it? We can no more help such and such Thoughts, then we can such and such Distempers. Now in All These Particular Instances we are to Consult the Good, and Safety of the Whole: And it is not the Question, whether This, or That Private man's Humour, or Fancy, (for That's the English of These Consciences) will bear such a Law; but whether Government it self will bear such a Liberty. And to say the Truth on't, most People take their View of This Case, by a Wrong Light. Alas! They Cry, the Thing's Indifferent to the Government; but 'tis Not so to the Dissenter: And then they lay the Stress of the Salvation of Souls upon the Stiffness of their Governours, rather then part with a Habit, or a Ceremony: As who should say, You see, Gentlemen, What Harms we are fall'n into; that had rather Poor People should be Damn'd, then Part but One Hair of an Arbitrary Imposition: Which is an Appeal, of the Greatest Reproach, and a Charge of the Extremest Rigour, and Cruelty Imaginable. Now the Less This Indifferent Thing is, in it self, the Greater is the Importance, in the Consequence, and the Constructive Value of it: For it is not a Small Thing Deny'd to the Subject: But it is a Great Thing Deny'd to the Magistrat: That is to say, the Power of Imposing, even in Any Case whatsoever: So that instead of Saying, that the Law is Hard upon the People, the Cause of Complaint lies on the Other hand; That the People will not Endure the Law. And Then, you have the Reason of the Matter fairly before ye, in This Result. The Wisdom of the Government will not Endure the Dissenters; The

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Singularity, or Stomach of the Dissenters, Opposes its self, to the Authority of the Law; Nay, to the Power of Magistracy it self: For (as I have sayd elsewhere) Things Indifferent are the Subject of Humane Power; And if Authority cannot Impose in Those Cases, neither can it Operate in Any Other Whatsoever: So that All our Laws against Dissenters, are Only Provisions for the Securing This Government against the Common Enemies of All Governments whatsoever: And now whether This Precaution, and Strictness be Reasonable, or Not, do you Judge.

Trim. If You'l pretend to bring the Dissent under the Penalty, (barely as a Dissent) 'tis a taking upon ye to Punish a man for a Thought; And in short, for Thinking That, which he cannot But Think.

Obs. No, there must be Some Overt Act, to Declare, and Notify That Thought; And Witnesses, to the putting of the Malignity of it, in Execution: So that the Offender is Not Punish'd for his Opinion (which he Cannot Avoid) but for his Actions; which he May and Ought to Avoid; Unless he Believes that his Judgment Discharges him of his Allegiance. In fine; If an Invincible Error (as you put it) shall pretend to a Priviledge, it Opens a Door to the Toleration of All Persuasions, and Practices, without Exception; And 'tis but for Every Delirquent, to say, I am Indiscreetly of This or That Judgment; and who shall Disprove him?

Trim. Now y'are upon This Subject, Nobs; My thinks a Popish Dissenter should ly as Fair for your Hand, as a Protestant Dissenter.

Obs. If I had been upon the Doctrine of the Schism, as I am upon the Sedition of it; Popery should have come in for a Share: But for Mee to run so many hundred Mile out of my Way, to get a Lash at his Holyness; when I have as much Work at Home, as I can turn my hand to, would have been a very Impertinent Excursion. I am upon the Text, you see, of Utter Obedience; And a Practical Conformity to the Laws of the Land, in Matters whereof the Secular Power has properly the Cognizance: So that Pope, Turk, Jew, Pagan, are All a-Cafe to Mee, upon This Topique.

Trim. Why That's it now! 'T would be an Impertinent Excursion, you say. It lies out of your Way, it seems; And 'tis a Subject quite Besides your Business; 'Faith, to give thee thy Due, Nobs, It has Ever been so. 'Tis so at Present: And My Life for Thine, thou'lt take a Care that it shall Never be Otherwise. Why will ye not deal Equally, betwixt the Papists, and the Dissenters: And Deliver your self from the Censure of a Popish Bias?

Obs. First, I make Account that I have dealt Equally betwixt them; where I have had any Fair Occasion to Meddle with the One as well as the Other. I never pretended to be a Stickler in Any Theological Points, in difference, betwixt the Church of England, and the Church of Rome; and I have as Little Concern'd my self with the Erroneous Doctrines of the Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, and the Other Tribes of the Schism, as I have done with the Tenents of the Papists. 2ly, How shall I Deliver my self from the Censure of a Popish Bias, so long as I am a True Son of the Church of England: Which, by Our Common Adversaries passes for Popish too?

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at the Gun in St. Pauls Church-yard.

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