

OBSERVATOR,

The Varieties, and Latitude of Dissent. The Quality, and Danger of it. Schism always Implies Sedition. Tenderness on the One side is Cruelty on the Other. Men are apt to Confound the Crime, and the Person.

Thursday, September 25. 1684.

TRIM- You were upon the Chapter of **Dissent**,
MER. You know: And if y'ave any thing more
to say upon *That Subject*, I'm ready to Hear it.

OBSERVATOR. There is a *Dissent*, by which is
Intended, a *Differing Perception* that *Severall Men* have
of the *Same Thing*: As when we say in *Common Speech*;
You are of One Opinion, and I am of Another: And
This Dissent, taken at *Large*, *Extends to All Matters*
that fall within the *Compass* of a *Deliberative Dis-*
course, or *Debate*. As *Divinity, Philosophy, State, Go-*
vernment; and *What not*? Now as to this *Diversity*
of *Thought*; (though *Erroneous*) if the *Persuasion* be
Insuperable; And if the *Person* under that *Mistake*,
keeps his *Judgment* to *Himself*, without *Exerting* the
Malignity, and the *Poyson* of it, in such manner as to
Shed Any Evil Influence upon the *Publique*: Thus
far, I say, such a *Dissent* is not to be *Imputed* as a *Crime*;
nor is there any *Danger* of *Propagating Mischief* in
the *Consequences* of it: I only tell you *This*, to *Obvi-*
ate the Common Objection, that *Dissenters* are *Punish'd*
for a *Diversity of Judgment* which they *Cannot Help*.
The *Law* can lay no more *hold* of a *False Principle*, or
Opinion, then the *Common Hangman* can do, of the
Soul of a *Malefactor*: The *Penalty* is *Political*, and
without *Practise*, or *Publication*, there's nothing for
the *Civil Magistrate* to *Work* upon. Now there are
some Opinions, that are *Evil* in the very *Conception* of
them: As *Heterodox*, or *Heretical*, for the *Purpose*;
Or such perhaps as *Tend* to the *Dissolving* of *Publique*
Order, or to the *Hazzard*, and *Dishonour* of either
Church, or *State*: And *These*, by *Communication*, come
to be as well *Criminal* as *Pernicious*: For when the
Malice, or the *Obliquity* of the *Thought*, shews it self
in *Action*, 'tis no longer a *Mistaken Notion*; But a
Practical, and a *Proveable Transgression*, against the
Rule of the *Government*: And men are *Punish'd* for
their *Contumacy*, or *Disobedience*, not for their *Judg-*
ment. But the *Dissent* that I speak of, is yet of a *Nar-*
rower Prospekt; And with a *Regard*, purely to the
Inconformity of the *Schism*; to the *People* that *Denom-*
inate themselves of the *Church-of-England*, accord-
ing to the *39 Articles*; And yet break *Communion*,
upon *Puntillo's* of *Rites*, and *Discipline*. It is not my
Bus'ness to *Expose* the *Doctrines* wherein they *Differ*,
both from the *Church*, and from *One Another*, among
Themselves: But to make *Good* what I have so often
Inculcated to you; That they do not *Separate* from *Us*,
upon *Any Colour* of *Consciencious Scruple*, but *Meerly*
for the *Advantage* (under *That Pretext*) of *Forming*
a *Confederacy* against the *State*. They *Cannot Com-*
ply with the *Orders* of the *Church*, Though the *Hon-*
our, and the *Security* of the *Government* depend in a
Great Measure upon *That Conformity*: Beside the
Tyes of *Law*, and *Duty*, Over and Above. And what's
the *Bus'ness*, more then *This*? They *Cannot Submit*
to the *Imposition* of Things *Indifferent*; for they be-
come *Unlawfull*, they say, by being *Commanded*.
These Cavills cost us *All the Miseries* of the *Late Re-*

bellion; And yet when *King, Church, and People, Reli-*
gion, Liberties, and Properties, are *All at Stake* upon't,
they *Cannot do Those Things*, under the *Command*,
and *Authority* of a *Law*, which *They Themselves Ac-*
knowledge, they *Could*, and *Would* have done, *without*
it. Pray will you *Observe* now, how their *Consci-*
ences Work, the *Other way*. They *cannot Joyn* with
the *Church*, though for the *Preservation* of the *Church*,
Even so much as in a *Ceremony*; but they can *Joyn*
One with Another, toward the *Destruction* of the *Church*;
A Hundred, and Fifty Sects of them: And under
the *Colour* of *Religion* too; Though of *Persuasions*
as *Opposite*, as the *East* is to the *West*; And *Every Di-*
stinct sort of them, *Passing an Anathema* upon his *Fel-*
low. So that they make a *Conscience* of doing *What*
they *Ought* to do, and *No Conscience* at all of doing
what they *Ought* not to do; And their *Scruples* have
Manifestly, no *Other End*, then the *Crossing* of the
Law, in *Things Commanded*, as well as in *Things*
Forbidden. The thing they *Quarrel* at in the *Com-*
mand, is the *making* of Things *Indifferent* to be *Ne-*
cessary; and their *Exception* to the *Prohibition*, is the
Barr that it puts upon *Christian-Liberty*. Now *Any*
Father would take it ill to be *Answer'd* thus by his
Children; Or *Any Master* of a *Family*, to be thus
Treated by his *Servants*. The *Centurion* in the *Gospel*
that had *Soldiers* under him, could say to *This Man*, *Go,*
and he Goeth; and to *Another* *Come, and he Cometh*;
and to his *Servant*, *Do This, and he Doth it*: But the
King is *Denied* *That Authority* over his *People*, which
One of his *Subjects* has over *Another*. Here's the *Con-*
science of *Obedience* directly *Inverted*, whers the very
Command *Discharges* the *Duty*. And then 'tis a *Hor-*
rible Abuse that's put upon the *World*, under the
Notion of *Christian Liberty*: Which is commonly
Understood; as if *Men* that call themselves *Christi-*
ans, had *some Particular Privileges* of *Exemption* from
the *Authority*, and *Jurisdiction* of the *Civil Power*.
Whereas the *Liberty* there *Intended*, has no *Respect* at
all to *That Matter*; and *Christianity* is, of *All Profes-*
sions, the *Religion* that *most Advances* the *Divine Right*
of *Kings*: And upon the *Severest Penalties*, *Enjoyns*,
and *Requires* *Subjects* to be *Dutifull* to their *Superiors*.

Trim. 'Tis a *Hard Matter* for a *Man* that *Talks*
much, to *Consist* allways with *Himself*. How often
have you given it as your *Opinion*, That there are
Many Consciencious Dissenters; Nay, That *Ten* for
One of 'em, have been *Mistaken* with very *Good In-*
tentions! And yet, now the *Peevish Humour* takes
ye, There's not *One Grain* of *Sincerity* or *Religion*,
in the *Whole Party*; But *That* which *They* call *Con-*
science, is no better then a *Flat Sedition*. Pray will
ye *make This hold together* if you can.

Obf. By the *Schism*, or *Separation*, that I speak of;
must be *Understood*, the *Number* of those, that either
withdraw from the *Communion* of the *Church*, into
Private, and *Unlawfull Societies*, and *Congregations*;
Or else bring their *Bodys* to *Church*, for the *Security*



of their Persons, and Estates, and leave their Hearts behind them, in the Conventicles; And these Semi-Conformists, while they talk of bringing-over the Dissenters to the Church, do all they can, to Incorporate the Church with the Schism; and instead of Their Catching a Tartar, the Tartar has Caught Them. But to the Bus'ness now; You are here to Distinguish, betwixt a Political Project, and the Scrupulous Pretext, of the Schism. The Republican Caball lays down this for a Certain Truth; and a Ground, that can never Deceive them. So many Defectors as they can Procure, So many Friends they are Sure of; and they have no Other way of Lifting, and Forming a Faction, then by Ranging the True-Protestant-Dissenters under a Forreign Allegiance: For they are no sooner off, from the Church, but they are Against it; and, Effectually, when they are once Enter'd into That Interest, they are no longer his Majesties Liege-People; but a sort of Humoursome, and Voluntary Slaves, to the Patrons of License, and Disobedience. By this Means, the Conspiracy moves Gently on, under the Countenance, and Cloke of Conscience, as the most Prudential Course they can Pitch upon, both for the Securing of the Principalls, and for the Engaging of the Multitude.

Trim. Suppose I should give ye your own Saying now; and Grant, That what you call the Schism, was in the Original Intent of it, an Artificial Contrivance, for the Preparing, and Disposing of the People to a Seditious. Will you have it to be a Malicious Design also in Those that are Misled; and that All Their Dissents are Seditious too? Or how does this Ramble help you out in your Contradictions, that the Dissenters are, Many of them, Men of Conscience, and yet Seditious, every Soul of 'em, at the same time?

Obs. There are many Opinions, and Apprehensions of things, that men are apt to take-up, upon Trust, and Hearsay, without Computing, or Examining, the Matter, whether it be Right, or Wrong; Good, or Evil; True, or False; now this is not properly Judging, but Believing: And such a man may be rather said to be of a Party, then of a Persuasion. The Less he Understands of the Subject, in Question, the Fiercer is he in the Defence of it, if he be in a Mistake: And where Temerity, and Zeal, are Joyn'd with Ignorance, the Case is still more Desperate. This does not yet hinder, but that there may be a very Good Intention, where there's little or no Knowledge: And many a Simple, Well-Meaning Man, makes as much a Conscience of a False Religion, or of a False Principle, as of a True: This is the very Point in hand. Religion and Liberty are the Pretext, while Rebellion, and Tyranny are the Design: Which Design is to be brought about, by Procuring a Schismatical Revolt from the Government. What needs there More now; for the Gaining of This End; then to beget such a Reverence in the Multitude, for the Cabal; that they shall Implicitly Relinquish themselves up, to the Pleasure, and Direction of their Leaders? The People, in such a State as This, have no Judgment of their Own: They Think, and Dissent, only by Dictate, and Example; They Imbibe False Notions of things, and then Throw 'em Out again. Now their Practices are never the Less Seditious, for their Well-Meaning Mistakes: And in One Word, they do the Work of the Faction, with a great many Good Morrows to his Majesty.

Trim. So that you'll put no Difference, I perceive, betwixt Errors of Ignorance, accompany'd with Piety, or Good Will; and those of Malice.

Obs. They may be more Venial in the Person of the Offender, but they are Equally Intolerable, with a Respect to the Church and State: And 'tis utterly Impossible, for any Government to Thrive, that Suffers the Canker of a Schism, to ly Sucking at the Root on't. The Poysson of it is Mortal. It breaks the Band of Unity: It makes the Government, as A House Divided against it Self. It Disincorporates the Body-Politique; And sets-up a Project of Confusion, to Subvert the very Order of Providence it self. The Expedients of Toleration, Comprehension, &c. are Remedies worse then the Disease; and only the Visions of False Reasoning: For nothing can more Authorize; or give more Reputation to a Schism, then to have a Government Swoop to't: As who should say; Really the Gentlemen-Dissenters are in the Right: Or [Indeed forsooth, They are a Mighty Powerful Party, and we must have a Care how we Provoke them.] Can you shew me a Third Colour now, for a Compliance with them: Or how 'tis Possible to Gratify them, without the Extreme Hazard of a Publique Ruine?

Trim. 'Tis an Act of Honour, and Charity, for the Strong to bear with the Weak.

Obs. 'Tis an Act of Phrenzy, to Plead for That Charity to a Part, which tends so manifestly to the Destruction of the Whole. 'Tis no longer Charity, but Facility, or Weakness; Nay 'tis Cruelty; to Indulge Offenders, to the Ruine of Honest Men. Where you can Separate the Dissenter, from the Dissent, be as kind to the Person as you please; but have a Care of Advocating for the Crime. Such a Man is a Healing Man, they say: [The Good Samaritan] is a Great Word with 'em. And what Is This Healing, at last; but a Playstring of the Faction, and a Wounding of the Government? Or what does this Good Samaritan pretend to do? why he Turns the Parable: The Government fell among Thieves, and was Stript, and Wounded. Now comes Our Phantastical Samaritan, and Pours Oyl into the Wounds of the Robbers, which is as much as if he Threw Lime into the Eyes of the Governors.

Trim. You'll have no Compassion then.

Obs. Yes Yes: But let the Compassion begin with the Government: And have a Care, that while you Pitty the Man, you do not plead for the Schism. Never call any thing Conscience, that strikes at the Foundations of Humane Society. Ignorance is no Excuse: And a Seditious Fool does as much hurt, as a Seditious Knave. This is a Thing, in fine, that you may reckon upon. So many Dissenters as there are, So many Weapons are there in the hands of Publique Enemies.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

The Account of the Manner of Executing a Writ of Enquiry of Damages: Between his Royal Highness James Duke of York, &c. and Titus Otes. Which was Executed at the Bar of the Court of Kings-Bench at Westminster, on Wednesday the 19th of June 1684. in the Presence of the High-Sheriff of Middlesex. Printed for Ben. Tooke at the Ship in St. Pauls Church-Yard. 1684.

Quarles's Emblems. Printed for John Williams at the Sign of the Crown in St. Pauls Church-Yard. 1684.

London, Printed for Charles Brome, at the Gun in St. Pauls Church-yard.