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THE OCCASIONAL PAPER.

VOL. III. NUMB. I.

OF RETRACTATIONS.

Recognoiſtre ſa faute, Confeſſer ſon doubte ou Ignorance, Ceder quand il faut ſont tours de Jugement de Candeur & Sincerité, qui ſont les principales Qualites d'un honneſte & ſage homme, l'opiniaſtreté accuſe l'homme de plusieurs vices & defauts.

Charron *de la* Sageſſe. L. ii. c. ix. §. 13.

LONDON:

Printed for J. KNAPTON, at the *Crown* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard; EM. MATTHEWS, at the *Bible* in *Pater-Noſter-Row*; J. ROBERTS, in *Warwick-Lane*; J. HARRISON, under the *Royal Exchange*; and A. DODD, without *Temple-Bar*. MDCCXVIII.

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Houses of the Oireachtas

OF RETRACTATIONS.

LOVE of Truth and Goodneſs is not more Eſſential to an honeſt Man, than a readineſs to change his Mind and Practice upon Conviction that he is in the wrong. Indeed theſe Two are inſeparably connected in our preſent fallible Condition. Poſſibly thoſe, who are arrived at a better State, may get clear of all their Miſtakes, as well as their ill Habits, immediately; and yet be capable of an endleſs Improvement in Knowledge, by having their Minds extended ſtill to diſcover farther Objects, and new Relations of Things, which they had no Notions of before: Upon this Suppoſition, they may receive continual Additions to their Store, and yet have no occaſions to change their former Sentiments; becauſe they were right, as far as they went. But I am ſure in this Life we find frequent

reaſon to give up miſtaken Opinions, as well as to take in additional Light.

We cannot but perceive ourſelves liable to innumerable Errors, even when we are moſt careful to avoid them, from our Ignorance in the Nature of Things, or in the Uſe and Meaning of Words. We take up Opinions or engage in Practices, thro' the Influence of Education, Friendſhips and Alliances, or in the heat of Oppoſition and Prejudice, which cannot be maintain'd upon more exact Enquiries, or in cool and impartial Thoughts. Prevailing Opinions inſenſibly gain the Poſſeſſion of our Minds, and have commonly the Advantage of being the firſt Comers; and yet are very often no better than prevailing Falſhoods, directly the Reverſe of Truth. We are all too apt to be miſled, where the Safety of our valuable Intereſts, or Peace with our Neighbours, appear to depend upon a particular Sett of Principles, or upon falling in with a Party: A Man can hardly forbear wiſhing thoſe Things to be true and right, which he apprehends it would be for his Convenience to find ſo: And many Perſuaſions, when they are narrowly look'd into, plainly appear to have had no better a Foundation.

It muſt therefore be highly reaſonable to examine our Sentiments; and always to lie open to Conviction and farther Light upon better Conſideration of a Caſe, and to be willing to profit by the Diligence and Enquiries of other Men. Without this, Reaſon would be given us in vain; Study and Converſe would be uſeleſs and unprofitable Things. It would be much happier for us to have no Advantages

tages for better Inſtruction, or no Capacity to improve by them; if we muſt neceſſarily be ſtak'd down to thoſe Apprehenſions of Things, either in Religion or otherwiſe, which we have happen'd to light upon. That Man only, who is ready to change his Mind upon proper Conviction, is in the Way to come at the Knowledge of Truth. He, who is neither aſhamed of his own Ignorance, nor unwilling to receive help from any quarter towards the better Information of his Mind, or afraid to diſcard an old and favoured Opinion upon better Evidence; he, I ſay, will find Truth kindly open before him, and freely offer it ſelf to him; he will be ſurprized with the noble Pleaſure of a new Diſcovery, and his Knowledge will be always progreſſive as long as he lives. But a Man tenacious of his firſt Thoughts, is neceſſarily concluded in Error, if ever he happens to miſtake; and he is much more like to have Miſtakes thick ſown in his Mind, than another who is jealous of them, and has long endeavour'd to diſcern and ſhake them off. When People once arrive to an Opinion of Infallibility, and have made their *Laſt Underſtanding*, they can never grow Wiſer than they are already.

'Tis an Argument indeed of Levity and Weakneſs of Mind, to change our Opinion upon every ſlight Appearance, or to give it up to the Authority of Others. But it argues a real Greatneſs of Soul, to have always a Regard to Truth ſuperiour to every other Conſideration, and to feel an undiſſembled Pleaſure upon the diſcovery of it. If Truth is *Divine* and Eternal, 'tis the natural *Homage* of

of a Reaſonable Mind to yield to its powerful Light, and embrace its lovely Form, where-ever it appears: 'Tis *Superſtition*, to be fond of an old Opinion not ſupported by it; *Idolatry*, to adore the Image and falſe Appearance of it; but open *Profaneneſs*, to neglect and contemn it. The only acceptable *Sacrifice* here, is that of our darling Prejudice; and the offering of an upright Mind, like the Perfume of Incenſe.

But a hearty Lover of Truth will not content himſelf with a meer Change of his Sentiments upon Conviction, concealed within his own Breaſt; but will ingenuouſly acknowledge his Miſtake as freely and as publickly as he had avowed it: Which is the Thing I Mean by *Retractation*; and is a Subject, which I think it well worth my while to ſpend a Paper upon.

I pretend not to affirm, that a Man is obliged in every Caſe to acquaint the World with the Alteration of his Judgment. In trivial Matters certainly it is needleſs to trouble other People with our Apprehenſions one way or another: Or if the Change of Sentiments ends, in its Influence, within our private Thoughts, and does not neceſſarily lead to a viſible Alteration in our Practice. And where Prejudices are ſo ſtrong and general againſt that which I am convinced to be true, that I can have no rational Proſpect of any better Succeſs, if I ſhould let my Mind be publickly known, than to inflame others and do myſelf a Prejudice; it may, for ought I know, be no blameable Policy to enjoy ſilently my own Perſuaſion, if I can be allowed to do ſo with-

without any Profeſſion contrary to it, either in Word or Practice. And yet even in that Caſe, a Man, who is perſuaded he has Truth on his Side, will think it a Reflection upon the Age or the Place he lives in, that he cannot be allowed a fair Hearing without Offence: Every Man thinks ſo in his own Caſe at leaſt, whether he be ſo juſt, or not, to eſteem it an equal Hardſhip, that other People ſhould be confined.

But an honeſt Man is not at Liberty, even in the minuteſt Point, to profeſs or act inconſiſtent with his Sentiments of Truth or Right: And therefore, as far as he muſt declare himſelf one way or another upon ſuch Things, he muſt diſclaim what he takes to be wrong. Where Miſtakes are apprehended to be of conſiderable Importance to the Honour of Almighty God, or the Good of Mankind, 'tis a noble and generous Conduct to bear a publick Teſtimony againſt them. Eſpecially when a Man has any way publiſhed his Opinion to others and ſpread a Miſtake, it becomes a Piece of natural Juſtice to endeavour to ſet them Right, where he hath led them Wrong; and to let them know the Evidence upon which he hath received Conviction. It would be cruel to leave others under a Deluſion, into which we were the Occaſion of bringing them.

The ſame Frankneſs and Sincerity, which makes me declare my ſelf of one Opinion at one Time, will oblige me to declare my ſelf of Another afterwards, if my Sentiments are really alter'd.

We

We owe this Juſtice to Truth, as well as to Mankind; if by a plauſible Repreſentation, or a falſe Colouring, we have made an Error to wear its Aſpect, to ſtrip that Error of its Diſguiſe, and ſhew the Thing in that better Light in which it now appears to us. 'Tis a noble Paſſage of the Great Mr. *Locke*, when, upon a cloſer Inſpection of the working of the Mind, and upon a ſtricter Examination of the Motives and Views by which Men are ſway'd, he found Reaſon to alter his Thoughts concerning that which gives the laſt Determination to the Will in all Voluntary Actions. Theſe are his Expreſſions *, 'I cannot forbear to acknowledge This 'to the World, with as much Freedom and 'Readineſs as I at firſt publiſhed what then 'ſeemed to me to be right: Thinking my ſelf 'more concerned to quit and renounce any 'Opinion of my own, than to oppoſe That 'of another, when Truth appears againſt it: 'for it is Truth alone I ſeek, and That will 'always be welcome to me, when or from 'whence ſoever it comes.' And in the ſame Book I find the following admirable Lines. '† In the former Edition of this Treatiſe, 'I gave an Account of my Thoughts con-'cerning them (*the Idea's of Will, Volition, Li-'berty and Neceſſity,*) 'according to the Light 'I then had: And now, as a Lover of 'Truth, and not a Worſhipper of my own Do-'ctrines, I own ſome Change of my Opini-

* *Pref.* to *Eſſay on Hum. Underſt.* 5th Edit.

† *Eſſay*, p. 181.

'on,

'on, which I think I have discovered Ground
'for. In what I first writ, I with an un-
'biassed Indifferency followed Truth, whi-
'ther I thought she led me: But neither be-
'ing so vain, as to fancy Infallibility, nor so
'disingenuous as to dissemble my Mistakes
'for fear of blemishing my Reputation, I have
'with the same sincere Design for Truth
'only, not been ashamed to publish what a
'severe Enquiry has suggested.'

Certainly, were this Temper generally prevailing, it would above all things befriend free Enquiries after Truth, and be of the greatest Benefit to the World. It would dispose to a generous Largeness of Mind, to make all due Allowance to Others, as well as to claim a just Liberty to Our selves, without any Insinuation of Jealousy or Reproach. Men would not be ashamed to acknowledge a Mistake, or injure their Consciences by Dissimulation, or submit to the Meanness of being content to be thought of another Mind than they really are. 'Tis indeed low *Servitude*, not to dare to own the Truth, whether thro' inordinate Love of Our selves, or Fear of other Men.

And indeed from the Wise and the Good, it may be hoped that a Man can have little to fear for such a steady Regard to the Dictates of Truth. It must rather conciliate to a Man an honourable Regard from all, whose Esteem is worth desiring. For such a Person appears disinterestedly honest, as well as he feels in himself the Satisfaction of being so. He shews, that his own Interest and Credit are of little Weight with him, in Compari-

ſon of the Honour of Truth. Shall not ſuch a Man be thought worthy to be heard in any thing he has to offer? When the ſtrict Adherer to his own Opinion once taken up, tho' perhaps only upon the Credit and Authority of others, without any Examination for himſelf, is very apt to be tranſported with indecent Zeal and uncharitable Suſpicion, and plainly appears more deſirous that *his* Opinion ſhould be *true*, than that *Truth* itſelf ſhould prevail.

Converſation with a Man of an ingenuous Temper is much more eaſy and agreeable, when he is willing to hear the Reaſons of others, as well as to offer his own; and appears indifferent whether his Arguments ſhall convince me, or mine ſhall prevail with him, according to Evidence; and is readier to receive it as a favour if he can profit by me, than to triumph upon a ſuppoſed Conqueſt. This Man treats me upon the Square: Debates upon theſe Terms would be carried on with equal Pleaſure and Advantage, and Society be one of the moſt improving and entertaining Things in the World. But a Man, that is determined to maintain every Principle he has in Poſſeſſion, and tho' he be ſilenced in Argument, will ſtill hold the Concluſion, and never own a Conviction, deſerves to be baniſh'd the Society of all modeſt and ingenuous People, as an aſſuming Dictator to his Neighbours.

To be always ready to retract an Error, is as neceſſary from *Religion*, as from *Reaſon*. That indeed is wholly grounded upon ſuch a Temper and Diſpoſition. He, who is proud

proud enough to think himſelf altogether free from Faults and Miſtakes, is void of all Truth, and muſt be abhorred of that Being who ſees and knows all things. And he who is conſcious that he has been miſled, and yet too ſtout to own it, or to change his Courſe of Practice, ſtands excluded from the very Pretenſions to Chriſtianity; the firſt and leading Doctrine of that being *Repentance*: And indeed every true Penitent is an Inſtance of Retractation, of a Change of Mind and Practice: And by Conſequence every Man, who has propagated an Error, can no more hope for the Divine Favour, without endeavouring to ſet Men right, when he ſees he had led them wrong; than a Thief can expect Divine Mercy, without making all the Reſtitution in his Power.

And indeed in ſuch a candid Management we ſhall find our ſelves countenanced by the greateſt and beſt Examples. Wiſe Men in reality own themſelves fallible every Day of their Lives, by ſome Change or other in their Actions and Behaviour, even when they may not chuſe to have every retracting Step in their Conduct put into Words.

Queen *Elizabeth*, in the laſt Year but one of Her Reign, ſet forth a Proclamation againſt Monopolies, of Her own Granting; as ſoon as She was made ſenſible by the Enquiries of Parliament, that She had been miſled. Whereupon the Commons ordered their Speaker, attended by 80 Members, to return Her Majeſty Thanks. She gladly took this Occaſion to heighten Her own

Character, as well as gratify Her People, by uſing theſe gracious Expreſſions among others; 'I owe you hearty Thanks and Commendations for your ſingular Good-Will towards Me; not only in your Heart and Thoughts, but which you openly expreſſed and declared; whereby You have recovered Me from an Error proceeding from my Ignorance, not my Will.' How different an Impreſſion muſt this generous Acknowledgment of that Great Queen make on the Breaſt of every good Subject, from the falſe Grandeur, which one of Her unhappy Succeſſors was deſperately reſolved to maintain? When He had aſſumed a Power to diſpenſe with the Laws by admitting Papiſts into Offices of Truſt, and his Parliament humbly remonſtrated againſt it, He had no other Language for Them, than *I reſolve to be obeyed.*

What is a Repeal or Explication of an Act of Parliament, but in effect a Retractation made by the whole State, when they ſee Reaſon for it, and the Matter amended appears upon farther Light not to have been for the Publick Good, or prejudicial to it?

The main Body of the Beneficed Clergy at the Revolution were a famous Inſtance of the neceſſity of Retractations; when by ſwearing to the Succeſſive Governments of King WILLIAM, Queen ANNE, and now of King GEORGE, they have ſo clearly deſerted the Doctrines, which ſeemed to be their greateſt Favorites and the moſt uſual Themes for employing their Eloquence and Zeal half an Age ago.

And

And may we not hope, that that venerable Body, as well as the Laity, will be ready to ſhew the ſame Ingenuity, in diſcarding any other Principles, which have ſtill the the Honour of ſuch learned Advocates, and continue to be ſet off in the beſt Colours they are capable of, as ſoon as the growing Light of this inquiſitive Age ſhall convince them that they are miſtaken?

They know, that Chriſtianity itſelf came in upon this Foot; and that every Man who who embraced it, either *Jew* or *Gentile*, retracted a great number of Opinions and Practices, which he had received by Education. Tho' there is one *Dawſon* among our Clergy, who has thought fit to quote with Approbation that Advice of a Heathen Stateſman to *Auguſtus*, *That he ſhould follow conſtantly the eſtabliſhed Religion of his Country; becauſe all Innovations would foment Sedition in the State, and be a means to Subvert his Government*; I will never allow myſelf to believe of any other Chriſtian Clergyman, that he will ſecond *this Doctor* in recommending that Advice, till he ſhall declare himſelf as openly as he has done againſt the only way, by which Chriſtianity could have obtained Admiſſion into the World.

Nothing brightens the Character of the Great Apoſtle St. *Paul*, more than that entire Change of his Principles, to the full Aſſertion of Chriſtian Liberty, from the moſt outragious Bigotry of a blind Perſecutor. He generouſly owns all his former Deluſions, and aggravates them ſo as hardly any Chriſtian would chuſe to do after his full Acknowledg-

ledgment. And, with all the juſt Pretenſion he had afterwards to Infallibility as an Apoſtle; yet where he had not a proper Claim to that, no Man was more ready to acknowledge himſelf miſtaken upon Conviction. Whatever he preciſely meant, when he ſaid, *I wiſt not, Brethren, that he was the High-Prieſt; for it is written, that thou ſhalt not ſpeak Evil of the Ruler of thy People:* It plainly ſhews a Readineſs in that Great Man to retract any Thing that was amiſs, and to correct himſelf even upon the Spot. Immediately in their Preſence, who made him ſenſible of it, and that with the moſt unfriendly Mind, without any Regard to the Advantage his Enemies might make of his Conceſſion, he quotes againſt himſelf a Place of Scripture, upon Suppoſition that he had offended againſt it.

None are recorded with more Honour in the Hiſtory of the Church, than ſuch as retracted their former Opinions upon Evidence. *Beryllus*, Biſhop of *Boſtra*, when he was convinced by *Origen*, that he had fallen into ſome Errors about the Perſon of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, frankly acknowledg'd it, and wrote *Origen* a Letter of Thanks, as the Ancients tell us. This Declaration of his honeſt Mind, conveys his Character to all future Ages much more to his Honour, than his coming to be Orthodox conſider'd in itſelf could do, how bad ſoever his Errors before were. St. *Auſtin*'s Retractations are never to be forgotten upon this Subject. He wrote two Books of them, and reviſed them a little before his Death, whereby he has gained as

juſt

juſt a Reputation, as by any of his Works. The great Mr. *Chillingworth*, upon a double Change of his Sentiments, was equally illuſtrious for Integrity. He was firſt a Proteſtant; but the Jeſuit *Fiſher* taking advantage of ſome Scruples he had, brought him over to the Church of *Rome*. Afterwards he thought himſelf out of thoſe Entanglements, retracted the Popiſh Errors, forſook that Church; and when he was converted, endeavour'd to ſtrengthen his Brethren by his incomparable Book in Defence of the Proteſtant Religion; which, as long as Reaſon, Scripture, Modeſty and Conſcience have place in the World, muſt be in high Regard with all that underſtand it. The Name of a fickle Turn-Coat might be applyed to him by deſigning Leaders on either Side, and it might ſerve ſome Party Purpoſes: But I never met with any Man, who gave fuller Evidence of the Sincerity of his Conduct in all the Changes of his Sentiments.

The *Reformation* from *Popery*, (which is nothing elſe but a Renunciation of the Corruptions brought into the Church by the Papacy under the Chriſtian Name, and a Return to the *Bible* as the only Rule and Meaſure of Chriſtian Faith and Practice;) whereever it was admitted, was an undeniable Inſtance of *Retractation* in every one that was engaged in it. *Luther* and *Calvin*, *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, and all, who firſt embraced the *Proteſtant* Religion, had been *Papiſts* before, but upon Conviction retracted what they eſteemed the Errors of *Popery*. The Reformation was founded upon every Man's Right

to

to enquire into the Senſe and Meaning of his Bible, and to judge for himſelf by that Rule what was the Religion of Jeſus Chriſt; and then his Obligation thereupon to profeſs according to his Sentiments, *i. e.* to retract and diſavow all that in Religion, which he thought not to conſiſt with the Mind of God revealed in Scripture.

This makes it peculiarly ſuitable in all Countries, where the Proteſtant Profeſſion is embraced, that a free Retractation of all Sentiments in Religion, which are thought by any Perſon not to have Chriſt's Authority, ſhould not only be tolerated, but countenanced and encouraged; becauſe this is the very Baſis of the Proteſtant Religion. Nothing more contributed to the ſudden ſpreading of the Reformation among the moſt judicious Obſervers of it, than the plain Marks of Honeſty which appeared in thoſe who were firſt engaged in it, that they gave credible Evidence that they were honeſt Enquirers after Truth, and then were frank and open Men to ſpeak their Minds and alter their Practices in Religion, as they thought they found Chriſt's Mind in his Goſpel, without and againſt the Biaſs of their ſecular Intereſt.

And this being the Principle of the Reformation, it is not to be thought ſtrange that there ſhould appear more frequent Inſtances of People's changing their Opinions in Proteſtant Countries than in Popiſh. In Popiſh Countries, the main thing inculcated is a blind Obedience to the Church, which naturally fixes Men in a ſtupid Adherence to old

old Opinions and Cuſtoms right or wrong. But the Proteſtant Doctrine, as well as the Bible itſelf, leads all to ſearch the Scriptures; and no wonder if that produce an Increaſe of Light, and new Diſcoveries of old Errors, from time to time. The Advantages of being better inform'd, which We have above thoſe under the tyrannical Power of *Rome*, carry honeſt Minds, of Courſe, to diſcern remaining Corruptions, one after another. It was a wonder, that Matters were carried ſo far upon the firſt dawn of Light, after a long and groſs *Egyptian* Darkneſs. But to ſay, that nothing muſt be retracted beyond what was done by the firſt Reformers, is in Truth to make Apoſtles of them; when certainly they were, and always profeſſed themſelves to be, as fallible Men as our ſelves.

They ſet out upon that Foot, which without doubt, if it had been adhered to and purſued, would have carried Light and Knowledge to a much greater Perfection than it is arrived at. But we ſeem, in the preſent Age, to be returning to the ſame free Sentiments, upon which the Reformers acted. The Revolution has gone a great way to ſet us right in Politicks; the Writings of my Lord of *Bangor* are curing us of many Popular Prejudices about Church-Power; and we hope from the inquiſitive Genius of the Times, that Light will be ſtruck out in many other Points of Importance, of which the riſing Age at leaſt will reap the Advantage. In ſuch a State of Things as this, to be unwilling to retract a Miſtake in Reli-

gion, meerly becauſe it pretends to long Preſcription, or numerous Adherents, or great Names to ſupport it, is in truth to deny our ſelves the Benefit of the Reformation; and to remain in fuller Slavery to old Prejudices than the Papiſts themſelves, becauſe we do ſo in the midſt of clearer Light.

But however virtuous and commendable it is for a Man, upon Conviction, to make open Acknowledgment of his Errors; few have Reſolution enough to merit this Commendation, in the Face of thoſe Diſcouragements which every where appear in their way, and which have been a check upon Ingenuity in all Ages. The nobleſt Attempt that ever was made to reſcue Mankind from the Bondage of Error, was the Publication of the Goſpel; but 'tis well known, with what extreme Hazard to all who were engaged in the Deſign, this Light was uſhered into the World; tho' by Degrees it made *Pagan* Darkneſs and Deluſion to fly before it, and came at length to be countenanced by the greateſt Princes in the World. Chriſtianity was no ſooner advanced into Power, but the Truth and Purity of it was miſerably corrupted; and thoſe very Weapons, which had been imploy'd by the common Enemy againſt Chriſtianity itſelf, were uſed by Chriſtians againſt one another. They, who had upbraided the Heathens with Injury and Outrage to them all, exerciſed the very ſame Violences upon their Brethren, who happened a litle to vary from the *Eſtabliſhed Faith*. By theſe Methods

thods the Church was reduced to the moſt intolerable Slavery, till about two Centuries ago it began to recover its Liberty. And yet to this very Day, almoſt in all Chriſtian Societies, a Man cannot be allowed to profeſs his Diſſent from the prevailing Opinions, tho' with the greateſt Modeſty and Reſpect, without expoſing himſelf to a thouſand Mortifications.

In Popiſh Countries, this Tyranny reigns Triumphant. To profeſs a Doubt of the Truth of what they call Infallible Determinations, is the high Road to Impriſonment, and Confiſcation, Baniſhment and Torture, and the moſt cruel Death. The Court of *Inquiſition* ſeizes a Man upon Suſpicion, tortures him into a Confeſſion even of his ſecret Thoughts, condemns him for an obſtinate Heretick, and then conſigns him over to the ſecular Power; which muſt unmercifully butcher the poor unfortunate Creature, at the pleaſure of thoſe vile Hypocrites, who would be believed too tender to ſtain their own Hands with Blood. Few can be ſuppos'd hardy enough, with ſuch a Train of Miſeries in view, to dare publickly to enter their Diſſent from Opinions thus ſupported. And in truth, were it a proper Method to maintain any Set of Principles in Religion by worldly Motives, their Policy would be very right to make uſe of the ſtrongeſt that can occur to Human Nature.

Other Places, which have obtained a Taſte of Liberty, and ſome Acquaintance with their Bibles, will not bear theſe enormous

Cruelties; and there Perſecution, conſequently, muſt wear a Diſguiſe. You ſhall only hear of *moderate Penalties*, or at ſome Seaſons of no more than *Negative Diſcouragements*. Which indeed are but worldly Motives ſtill; and often ſuch as are abundantly ſufficient to give a very wrong Biaſs to People, and to reſtrain them from the Ingenuity of acting according to their Conviction. Theſe Negative Diſcouragements ſhut out a Man from every Poſt of Honour, or Advantage, which he might be capable of in his Country, by the Favour of his Prince, or the good Affection of his Countrymen, if he thinks himſelf obliged peaceably to diſſent from the Publick Faith, or Practice, in Religion. Let him be ever ſo Pious and Learned and Charitable, ever ſo well qualified for his Station, and entirely in the Intereſts of his Prince and Country; yet if he ſhould retract what he thinks an Error, he muſt along with it renounce perhaps all the Subſiſtence of himſelf and his Family, and be ſtigmatized by the Publick Voice as a Man unfit to receive the leaſt Regards or Confidence from the Society: While Another, who has neither Honour nor Conſcience, neither Senſe nor Generoſity, but has this ſole Merit of being clamorous for Orthodox Opinion, ſtands entitled to all the Priviledges and Favours of his Country. 'Tis true, a Principle of entire and ſteady Vertue will carry a Man thro' this, and far greater Diſcouragements. But certainly a Lover of Truth and Honeſty, muſt heartily wiſh there were

were no ſuch powerful Temptations to injure a fair Enquiry and free Profeſſion.

There is yet another Bar in the Way of ingenuous Retractations, which I doubt too much prevails among all ſorts of People, whether in or out of Eſtabliſhments, and which to ſome generous Minds may be more formidable than the other. A Man may endure Poverty without repining, and yet not eaſily bear the Neglect and Contempt of thoſe around him; to be run down with Noiſe and Clamour, mark'd out for a Monſter, and carefully ſhunn'd by his Fellow-Chriſtians. If a Man cannot be ruin'd by Law, or diſpoſſeſs'd of his Eſtate, or his Station in the Community; yet his Character ſhall ſuffer all the cruel Indignities that angry Zealots can throw upon it, if he dares to profeſs any thing contrary to their Scheme of Orthodoxy. He muſt be immediately diſtinguiſh'd, for popular Odium, with ſome Name of Reproach. Among the *Papiſts*, it is enough to ſay, that he is a *Heretick*: That One Word fix'd upon a Man by Church-Authority, conveys the moſt frightful Idea of him to the People, and inſpires them with Rage; which fully anſwers the Purpoſe of their Leaders; they are juſtify'd and commended after this, however cruelly they uſe him. Among Proteſtants, a baſe Character is to ſupply the Place of more cruel Treatment: And almoſt every Party has a particular Name of Reproach to faſten upon their Adverſaries. If the common People know

know not the preciſe Meaning of it, 'tis enough that they are taught to think it an ill Name: And if they make it to ſignify far worſe in their confuſed Imaginations, than it imports in itſelf; or even in the Opinion of thoſe who give it out; it will the more effectually ſerve the Purpoſe of fixing an Odium. Now the Man is ſingled out, he is conſider'd as an infected Perſon, his very Breath is tainted, and his Converſation dangerous. And whoever uſes him with more Humanity than the reſt, is preſently made an Accomplice in his Crimes, a Confederate with him againſt Religion and the Church. However honourable his Character was before, however fair he ſtood in the Opinion of the World, all his Reputation is loſt at once: His plauſible Behaviour only covered a falſe Heart; or, Pride and Self-Eſteem induced him to prefer his own Judgment to the Sentiments of ſo many wiſe and learned Men; poſſibly you may hear, that a little Learning has made him mad. And now 'tis no Matter, how he is treated, what Turns are given to his Actions, what forced Conſtructions are put upon his Words, what Prejudice he receives in his Circumſtances, or whether he ſhall be of any farther Uſe to the World, or enjoy any comfortable Days in it: The Badneſs of the Man is thought an Excuſe for all. I ſhould be glad there were no Occaſion for Complaint of ſuch Inhuman, not to ſay Unchriſtian Conduct among Proteſtants. And how few have the Bravery to bear

up

up againſt ſuch a Torrent of Defamation?

I am ſure the Man, who has Reſolution to avow what he thinks Truth, in the midſt of ſuch diſheartning Views, tho' he ſhould be miſtaken in his Judgment, deſerves a higher Encomium from every impartial Chriſtian, than any lazy Believer in the Church, who takes his Faith upon content without a competent Enquiry whether it be well founded. He will have, in all his Sufferings, the Approbation of God, the Pleaſure of a peaceful Mind, and the Applauſes of all diſintereſted and conſiderate People.

But after all, it is of great Conſequence, that a prudent Manner ſhould be obſerved, as well as a frank Ingenuity, in Retractations. And that Method of acting muſt be moſt proper in the Caſe, which will moſt effectually reach the Ends propoſed in it. Now a Man, in retracting, would willingly be thought to be in earneſt himſelf; and at the ſame time would deſire to have his Conduct as uſeful, as he can make it, to others; that is, he would be glad to confirm thoſe who think as he does, and convince others who are of a different Sentiment.

To obtain theſe Ends therefore, ſuch a Profeſſion of Change ſhould be made coolly and upon deliberation. It ſhould not have the leaſt Appearance of Reſentment, or be managed with any Heat and Paſſion; but plainly carry the Marks of Thought, and impartial Conſideration. His preſent Appre-

prehenſions ſhould be deliver'd with the modeſt Air of a Man, who is made the more ſenſible, by his late Conviction, that he is liable to Miſtake. It muſt be with a very ill Grace, that he pours out uncharitable Cenſures upon a Party he has relinquiſhed, or allows himſelf to ſay all the ill Things he can of them. He may be conſcious to himſelf, that he was really as honeſt and meant as well, while he entertained the Error he has now ſeen reaſon to recant, as ſince he came to diſcern his Miſtake: And that certainly obliges him to maintain as good an Opinion of the Integrity of thoſe who cannot yet ſee with his Eyes, as of his own. Therefore there ought to be no uncharitable Reflections upon them, as he eſteems it a Hardſhip to have any caſt out upon himſelf. If he expoſes the Principles which now he thinks falſe by their ſuppoſed Conſequences, he ſhould be very careful that he impute not thoſe invidious Conſequences to all who own the Principles, any more than he diſcovered them formerly himſelf. It lies upon him to ſhew, by the fulleſt Evidence he is capable of giving, that his whole Conduct is free from Guile and Diſſimulation; that there may be the leſs Ground to ſuſpect it in the Part he now acts, which People are ſo apt to blacken with that Imputation.

A wiſe Man would not willingly chuſe ſuch a Seaſon to make his Retractation, when the Principles he diſclaims would interfere with his Temporal Intereſt, and the

the new Sentiments he eſpouſes would be likely to promote it. Or, when any mean End is viſibly ſerved by it, the Sincerity of the Retractation will not fail to be call'd in Queſtion; and one cannot tell how to ſay, it is a Breach of Charity. If Dean *Sherlock* ſhould at this time renounce the Principles of his 5th of *November* Sermon, after the glaring Evidence that had been given of its utter Inconſiſtency with his preſent Notions and Conduct, I doubt he would find few credulous enough to imagine that he has changed his Sentiments. The World would rather take it to proceed from a Reſolution to purſue his Pique againſt my Lord of *Bangor*, and Complaiſance to his new Allies.

The Thoughts of this Eſſay will neceſſarily bring Mr. *Pillonniere*'s Caſe into the Reader's View. The natural Simplicity of his Relation ſets the Mind at reſt for the Evidence of Fact. A Man feels himſelf moſt ſenſibly entertained with the gradual Entrance of Light, as his Eyes were opening out of the Blindneſs of Popiſh Bigotry. His frank and ready Purſuit of Truth, as it led him on to diſcover one Miſtake after another, is an illuſtrious Inſtance of unbiaſs'd Sincerity. The ſtrong Prejudices that reign in Popiſh Countries can never be repreſented in a more ſtriking Manner, than in the Power they had upon a ſenſible and indulgent Father to lay aſide all Tenderneſſes for a Son, meerly for a Difference of Opinion. It revives the Idea of

a Primitive Confeſſor, to ſee this young Gentleman bravely executing the Reſolution to forſake Relations and native Land, the Conveniencies of a Plentiful Condition, and the Proſpects of an advancing Fortune; to run the riſque of a Seizure by his Enemies, and to put himſelf upon the doubtful Generoſity of Strangers; becaue he could no longer bear to ſuppreſs the Light of important Truth within his own Breaſt. We have a Recantation full and hearty, not of the more innocent Errors of Popery only; but of the very Spirit and Temper, wherever it appears; abſtracted from which its very Idolatry and Superſtition would be infinitely more harmleſs, becauſe theſe would hurt no Body but themſelves. I am heartily ſorry that this Generous Stranger ſhould have met with ſo much of this among our ſelves; and ſtill be poſted for a Jeſuit by the empty Noiſe and Din of a few Bigots; meerly becauſe that Name is fitted to ſerve the ſame Purpoſes with our Populace, as that of Heretick in his own Country. The ſelf denying Evidences he has given of the Sincerity of his Change, are worth a thouſand formal Recantations: The Doctor, who was loudeſt in the Clamour for want of that Form, has been made appear * to have ſo much miſtaken both the Demands and the Practice of the Church of *England*; that I cannot help thinking that his Silence upon that Head pro-

* *Dr.* Snape *inſtructed.*

ceeds

ceeds from Conviction; tho', according to his uſual Manner, with great Peace, he bids Defiance to Retractation. Mr. *Pillonniere's* Modeſty and Candour in ſaying no more ill even of the Jeſuits than was neceſſary to his Argument, appears to me in quite another Light than to that Learned Doctor, when he blames him for not ſaying worſe things of them. I ſhould rather ſuſpect a new Convert, if he came with open Mouth, to throw all the Odium he could faſten upon the Party he has forſaken. But there need no Colourings to recommend to wiſe and good Men the native Beauty of an upright Mind. I congratulate this worthy Confeſſor and my Country, upon the more becoming Reception He has met with from many true Proteſtants among us, and eſpecially from our *Britiſh Noailles*. May his Lordſhip, and the Gentleman, to whom he has afforded ſo hoſpitable a Retreat, live to ſee Bigotry in its dying Agonies, and the Retractation of Errors one of the moſt reputable Things among Mankind.

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