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THE  
SHORTEST WAY  
To Peace and Union, &c.  
INTRODUCTION.



IT was always my Opinion, that whoever should go about to widen the Difference, or encrease the Misunderstandings between the Church of England and the Dissenters, were the real Enemies of both.

'Tis an Unhappiness that the sober, thinking Men on both sides are sensible of, that there should be any Difference at all; and I am of the Opinion that would either side incline a little, the Breach might be easily lessend, tho' perhaps not quite clos'd.

And if ever a temper of Charity and Love should chance to prevail in this contentious unhappy Nation, I am fully perswaded, even a Capacity as weak as mine, might be able to propose Methods which might bring the Two Parties much nearer together.

But while there is a breach of Charity, there can never be a union of Principles; and till the railing Spirit on either side is suppress'd, the breach widens rather than heals, and all tends to the confusion of the General Protestant Interest both at Home and Abroad.

That there are Persons on both sides, who either from Passion or Prejudice, Interest, or other worse Reasons, continue to encrease the unhappy strife, by rendring both sides suspected, and odious to one another, is a Truth too plain to be question'd, and 'twould be an Impertinence I cannot dispence with, to spend time in the proof of it.

Nor is it so much my design to examine who they are, which in my opinion would be marking Men out for the General hatred, and exposing them to be ston'd in the Streets. If I could prevail with both sides to cease and discourage the practice, the Persons would see their Errors, and might be forgiven by God and the Nation.

You are very much in the right of it, says a Gentleman, that in defence of some angry People, resents a late unhappy Book of mine, call'd, *The Shortest Way*, You are in the right of it to conceal Names, lest your own should stand first in the Catalogue.

Truly I cannot deny but I am very sorry I publish'd that Book, because the ill Management of it, has prevented my further Explaining of it; and now, because I unwarily let some things slip, at which the Government have too much cause to be Offended; and tho' to them who judge by out-sides, my Design is Condemn'd, yet I cannot but protest to the World, that neither in that Book, nor in any thing I ever wrote, did I ever de-

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## INTRODUCTION.



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a River which receives the Tides from the Sea, are ever a Float, and drive this way or that, as they are hurried on by the General Current: 'tis true also that their Force is irresistibly Violent, and nothing can withstand them: but still like the Raft of Timber, when the force of the Tide is spent, and the Stream turns, they are as certain to Drive back again with the same Violence of Motion as ever they were to move at all: so that there is no more advantage from this Crowd to one party than there is to another. The same Mob will Huzza a King to his Throne, and Halloo him out of the Nation.

The strength therefore of any party in this Nation consists in the power of its real Interest: for let the best King that ever Reign'd in *England*, be invaded by the worst, if he beat him in the Field but one Battail, he is gone, the Nation is all his own.

This is too plain from History: *William the Conqueror* fought but one Battail for the whole Nation; and I know not one Instance in all our History, of any Prince that fought two, except King *John*. *Maud* the Empress Invaded King *Stephen*, and in one Battail the whole Quarrel run over to her. In the Case of *Henry the Sixth*, and *Edward the Fourth*, one single Battail, at a time, shifted the Crown of *England* Five or Six times; the like in the Case of *Henry the Seventh*. In the Duke of *Monmouth's* Case one Fight ended the Dispute: And in our late Revolution, no Fight at all, but the appearance of an Army, gain'd the General Concurrence of the people.

In Case therefore of the Government being to be tendred to the Dissenters, they would never agree among themselves who should have it; and if any one party obtain'd it without the consent of the other, he would never be able to hold it: and the Nation would be expos'd to inevitable Confusions and Distractions.

Possibly the Dissenters may take it ill, if I should say they are not qualified with a Governing Temper: and since they are not like to be tryed, 'tis needless to enquire whether they are or no: but I am apt to think the most sensible Men among them will acknowledge it, *these Brethren would fall out by the way*: they want some qualifications which are very necessary to Government, as Charity, Patience, but particularly penetration and Generosity.

I allow this may be from the Accidents of their Circumstances, and the paucity of their Numbers: the Men of Conscience being, by the Scripture, Direction, not to be look'd for among the Wise or Noble, that is, not among the politicians nor the Gentry.

But God Almighty can qualifie, *says a Dissenter now*, and give a Spirit of Government where he pleases to give a Call to Governing.

I confess that freely, and therefore it seems to me very plain, that where he has not bestow'd the Spirit of Government, he has not design'd to entrust the power of it: and therefore I would advise the Dissenters in *England* not to concern themselves about it, at least while they are not ill Treated, Oppress'd or persecuted by those who have the power of Governing.

Upon these Considerations, and more I could name, if I thought these were not sufficient, I verily believe, that were the Four sorts of people which I have nam'd as constituting the Body of the Dissenters, enquir'd of separately, they would all Vote the Government into the hands of the Church of *England*.

What would the *Anabaptist* say, if 'twere enquir'd of them by themselves, *Who will you have to be your King, a Presbyterian or a Church of England Man?* They would most certainly answer, if their General Answers in like Cases may be regarded, the Church of *England*: For under them we shall have a  
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Toleration; but th' other will persecute us in particular from all the rest of the Dissenters, and from the old principle of *Fure Divino*, will say of all that are not of their own Opinion, *Compell them to come in*.

What will the *Presbyterian* say, if the Church or *Independant* were proposed? They'd all cry out the Church of *England*: for these *Independants* will be for Levelling us all to their own narrow principles, till we shall have no Government left at all, and at last no poverty, but run all into Fifth Monarchy Men, and make us sell our Estates for the use of the Saints.

If the *Anabaptists* and the Church were in Competition, they'd Cry out again, give us the Church of *England* Government, for these have no Government at all; we know not what to say of them, and hardly know whether some of them are Christians or no.

As to the *Quakers*: neither would they brook any of the Three, nor any of the Three them: so that natural Consequences, the Reason of the Thing, the Temper of the separate parties, and in general, the Interest of the whole, would make all the Dissenters Unanimous, in desiring to be govern'd by the Church of *England* Magistracy.

I can yet see no Tolerable Objection against this Doctrine: and I do not think it betters an Argument at all, to form trifling Objections, on purpose to answer them.

But if this Doctrine be true, then some Consequences are to be drawn from it, which would, if well improv'd, lay the Foundation of an intire peace, a firm Union and Confidence between the most opposite parties in this Nation: so that speaking of publick Interest, there should never be any Contention, any Strife, Jealousies, or Animosities more: the Government should for ever esteem the Dissenter, tho' differing in Opinion, yet as Loyal and Affectionate to their Interest as any of the rest of its Subjects, since having devolv'd all their Thoughts into this one Resolution, That 'tis best for the Nation, and best for their Interest, that the Church of *England* party should be the governing, ruling party, and be intrusted with the Civil power: they could not imagine any Danger from them, because no people ever willingly Act against their own Interest as such: and the Dissenters not knowing where better to fix the Government, than where it is, could never be so bewitch'd, or forsaken of their Reason, to endeavour to alter it.

On the other Hand, the Dissenters having no Desire to alter, could have no Advantage to disturb the Government, and consequently could have no Reason to struggle to wind themselves into any part of the Magistracy, especially being fully satisfy'd, that it was already in the best Hands it could be for the Benefit of the Whole.

All these little Dissatisfactions, and Strife of parties for Elections, would die as Effects, the Original Strife about the Center of the Government, being once remov'd as the Cause.

Occasional Conformity would be casual and indifferent, neither worth one parties straining their principles to comply with, nor the other parties their Wits to explode: there would be no need of it on one Hand, nor it would be of no ill Consequence on the other Hand.

The General Consequences I draw from what I have alleag'd, are such as these.

First, Those warm Gentlemen of the Church of *England*, who think they do G O D good Service in railing at the Dissenters, as Subverters of the Church and of the Monarchy, and show their Wit in first painting the Robe of Rebellion in all its bloody Colours, and then dressing up the Dissenter

in it, as if the Coat fitted none but him, are very much to blame; my Charity disposes me to hope they are unwilling so; but certainly they are effectually and eventually Enemies to the Peace of the Church, and the Prosperity of the Crown; all the Aversion of Parties is owing to them; all the ill blood which is to be found among the Dissenters, is owing to the Menaces of these furious People, who in Print and in Pulpit, Entitle the whole Church and Government to the Extasies of their Passions, and speak in the plural Number, as if they were then commanded to Curse *Jacob*.

These were the proper Authors of the *Shortest Way*, tho' some Body else may suffer for it; and these Gentlemen, with humble Submission to the Government, unless of their own accord they Disist, will, whenever our Rulers see their own Interest, be ordered to do it.

'Tis farther manifest, that this Way of treating the Dissenters can have no present Signification, for the Government, and Her Majesty in particular, having sufficiently testify'd their Abhorrance of destroying, hanging, or banishing all the Dissenters; To what purpose then can be the Treating them with so much indecent Contempt, and keeping them in constant Alarms from the perpetual menaces of the Pulpit? No Indignation of the Clergy, or any Body else can hurt them, while Her Majesty thinks Her Self oblig'd to promise them Liberty and protection.

Besides, it seems indecent, that when the Crown indulges them, the pulpit shou'd threaten them; that the Clergy should persecute them from the press, when the Government tolerates them from the Law; this Way of these Gentlemen treating the Dissenters, can have no Signification but what looks disloyal and disrespectful to the Queen, and manifestly turns to their own Disadvantage, as to Character, and to the Disadvantage of the Government, whose undoubted Interest it is, to have a free and intire Love, and uninterrupted Confidence in all its Subjects.

Secondly, If this Doctrine be true, then the Dissenters have been Ill manag'd, and it is in the power of the Government to make them all Zealous, Hearty and Loyal to the present Establishment, in every part of it, to make the Dissenters easie, and themselves easie with them; and the Governing power, yet remain, not only by a Right, but by a voluntary, true Concession of parties; That the Dissenters shall not only obey the present Authority, but choose it, love it, and believe it to be the best, and the best for them; and that if it were dissolv'd to Morrow, would be the first Men in the Nation to restore it to the very single, undivided posture it now flourishes in, and to maintain it there.

The Queen would be serv'd with an undivided Loyalty, without concerning themselves who shall come next; all parties will earnestly pray, that Her Majesty may continue long, and the Glory she will obtain by bringing about so happy, so unexpected a Union of divided parties, shall be greater in Ages yet to come, than all the Conquests of Her Armies, or the Success of this doubtful War.

If any shou'd be so weak, as to say Her Majesty does not desire any such Union, tho' the Notion is too absurd to merit any Remark, yet it leads me to take Notice, that really, whatever Her Majesty desires, there are some people who certainly do not desire it.

There can be no Body in the Nation but must desire this Union, but such as are for *The Shortest Way*. 'Tis manifest, the Government understands the General Interest of the Nation too well, not to desire such a Union: 'Tis plain, Her Majesty has express'd Her Resentment at the Suggestion of any thing Cruel to any of Her Subjects; and Her often expressing Her Royal Tenderness for all Her Subjects, puts it out of doubt, She would be glad to see them all in the same path to Heaven with her self; but while She cannot Hope for that, She cannot but desire to see them shaking Hands, and united in Hearts in the Journey, tho' the Steps they take are in different parallels.

And her Majesty cannot but be pleas'd to see that all Her Subjects, of whatsoever Opinion in Matters of Religion, should joyn in a more than ordinary Zeal and Affection for both Her person and Government.

Another Inference from the premises, is this; Those Dissenters who covet places and preferment in the Government, and encrease the Scandal of their principles, on Account of Occasional Conformity for that End, are also to blame, especially at such a time as this.

If it be the True Interest of the Dissenters to be under the Government of the Church of *England* Magistracy, let those to whom places, Salaries, and Honours are of more than common Necessity, and that can conform to qualify themselves for them, continue in the Church; and so not only help to promote the Government they espouse, but also carry on the Interest of peace, General Charity, Loyalty, and Affection to the Queen, and to the Subject of every side.

The Dissenters, as Dissenters, can have no Reason to covet places; the pretence of keeping out Men that would disserve the publick would be over; for where there is but one undivided Interest in Government, there can be no subsistence for Factions and parties.

What then can a Dissenter, as a Dissenter, covet a publick Employment for! 'Tis plain, 'tis his Interest the Church party should have the Government, and that if 'twas in his Hands, or offer'd to him, he could not tell what to do with it, but would petition the Church party to take it again; he can have nothing to ask, but to be sure of his Liberty and property his Toleration and Estate.

In order to this, being effectually secur'd, there wants nothing, but that the Church party be fully satisfy'd that he never can encroach on the Government, alter or disturb it, which without damage to his own Interest must be impossible; and the Church-Man being assur'd of this; can have no manner of Ground to wish the Toleration repeal'd, or the property of the Dissenter weaken'd, because he is a willing Subject, and always will be a Friend to the Government, from the irrefragable Reasons of his own Safety and Interest.

After this mutual Confidence settl'd, a Dissenter can never desire a place in the Government, but for the profit or Honour; and if he cannot dispose with himself about that, he must bring his Conscience and the Salary, or his  
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Conscience and the Title together, and let them make the Bargain as well as they can, the State is no way concern'd in it.

I see no difficulty remains, but how to procure this mutual Confidence of parties, which tho' it be remote, is far from impossible; but I am in so fair a Way to be ruin'd, for Describing the *Shortest Way* to undo us, that I shall be very wary how I prescribe more *Short Ways*, without the Direction of my Superiors, and that Concurring, I doubt not it might easily be brought to pass.

But Two imediate Circumstances would contribute a great deal towards it, and both these I have often driven at; and while any thing I shall write will be read, shall continue to aim at it, and this is a Communion of Charity and Civility between the parties; this would make Way for a right Understanding; and tho' there are differences in Religion, there need be none in Affection, in Society, in Neighbourhood; people may be good Neighbours, good Friends, and united in Interest, tho' one goes to the Church and tother to the Meeting-House; let the Strife be who lives best, and the Contention of the Clergy who shall preach Best, and by this make as many parties and Factions as they please; let them preach one another's Hearers away, and Increase and Decrease according to the Genuine, Honest Lives and Doctrines of the party, then the best Church will be the biggest Church: they who preach Best, and practice Best, will have the most of their side: and that Church which has the most of its side, will soon have the upper Hand, for Number always prevails.

Nay, it seems a Reflection on both sides in my Opinion, that here should be such striving, such pushing at power, and making Interest by parties about Religion: let them leave Religion to Her own Methods: The *Coffee-House* and the *Clubs* need not be concern'd about Her, let which side soever have the Choice of Sheriffs, Mayors and Parliament Men: if it must be Religion that is in Dispute, let the Dispute be managed as a religious One, and no otherwise: let the Lives and Doctrines of the parties alone to Fight it out: they who have the best principles, and live best up to them, will certainly get the better of it at last; and if Governments and Interest of parties stood but Neuter, it would quickly appear who are the people.

But to touch a little the particulars: If this Union of Interest be ever attempted, there must be first a Union of Charity.

First, The Dissenters, in whose Name I have pretended to say, that they are willing to live peaceably and quietly under the establish'd Government, should Evidence it by practice: they, who among the Dissenters, are disturb'd at the profits and Trust of the Government being taken from them and given to the Churchmen, are to blame, are obstructors of their General peace, if not Enemies to it; for as Dissenters, First, 'Tis not a Farthing Advantage to your General Interest, if it be your Interest the Church party should have the Government: and if you would all Vote for a Church of *England* Magistracy if it were in your Choice, Who shou'd have the places and profits of the Government, but those to whom you commit the Government? To desire it otherwise would be unreasonable ——— But the main Case lies here, you would not be excluded, as unquallify'd and dangerous people.

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Without Offence, let me say one Thing : this proceeds from the Jealousies infus'd in the Church party, that you covet all, and that you would throw them out of the Saddle, to set your selves in : and this Jealousie proceeds from the eagerness to get into places, and the Dissatisfaction you express for being shut out.

Convince them that 'tis a Mistake, as indeed it must be if you are in your Senses : and let them know, by the Effects, that they are in the Wrong, and you will then never be excluded from places as dangerous people, but, in time, be admitted equally with all the Loyal Subjects of the Nation.

I know no Reason a Dissenter has to desire any Concern in the Government but the Gain of it ; for if since 'twas in his power to remove the Government, he would place it just where it is, he can have no design to do it any Injury : if then the profits of places and Trust be the Case, my Advice to the Dissenters, is to convince the Church Men by a General Quietness, and Unanimous Concurrence with the Government, that however they are divided in principles, they are one Body of *English* Men, under that very Government both of them like, and which both of them would, if it were dissolv'd, voluntarily choose to Erect again : that they have but one Interest one End, one Design, and can never be separated without an Injury to both have one Crown, one parliament, and are but one people, and never desire to be otherwise : and if both sides came to a satisfaction of this point, there would be no more excluding of parties for Religion : Tests Sacraments and occasional Conformities, which are now the Scandal of both sides, would sink of themselves, the Causes of them would die, and the Effects could not survive ; 'twould be every Man's Interest to support what was every Man's Choice to set up ; every Man would desire to maintain that Government which every Man would endeavour to restore ; and he that injur'd it, would equally be abhor'd by all sides.

But all the Work does not lie on the Dissenters side neither ; and since I have once anger'd both sides, by speaking under a disguise, I can but run the same Fate in speaking plainly

The Church of *England* Men must put their Hand to this Work, or it will never be brought to pass.

Some have started an unkind Objection in the World, That there is no real desire in the Church Party ever to come to an Accomodation with the Dissenters.

This may be true of some People in the Church, but it cannot be true of the General Body of the *English* Church, of whom, as I before made a Provisional Caution, I am Treating ; nor can it be true of any that call themselves Church Men, unless one of those two Cases are in it : First, That they are only Incendiaries and Disturbers of the Nation, who Act under the Mask of the Church Profession, but are really Enemies of both ; Or, Secondly, That they are Mad men, bereav'd both of their Religious and Politick Senses.

We have had it Printed, with an Assurance I have wondred at, that the moderate Members of the Church of *England*, call'd *Low Church Men*, are worse than the Dissenters ; are Fanaticks in Masquerade ; and possibly such Men as are of that Opinion, would be as much disturb'd if all the Dissenters should conform, as if all the Moderate Church Men should turn Dissenters ; because

then their own Principles would be exploded immediately by all good Men, and their Persons mark'd as the General Incendiaries of the Nation ; all the Sin of Politick Schism would plainly lye at their Doors ; and not only so, but the moderate Gentlemen of the Church of *England*, are the Men of Temper, and of Charity, Men of Liberty, of Candor, and of Principles, and this makes them averſe to Oppreſſion and Perſecution.

The Church of *England* is particularly denominated from theſe Men ; I call all that Part of the Church, moderate Men, who are true Genuine Conformiſts to the Church, in Doctrine and Discipline, but neither bigotted to their Opinions, nor tainted with Tyranny and Oppreſſion, who are of the Church, becauſe they think it's the trueſt Way of Worſhip ; who ſpeaking of Religion, are Proteſtants, and good Chriſtians ; ſpeaking of Politicks, are Loyal Subjects to the Crown : but withall, are *Engliſh* Men, and fill'd with Charity to thoſe who differ from them, cautious of *Engliſh* Liberty, and forward not to oppreſs their Neighbours.

Nay, even Men of higher and ſtraighter Principles, who think hard of thoſe who Diſſent from them, yet are not for oppreſſing them, and to make Pretences where they cannot find them, to ruine Families for Opinion in Religion.

If the Church has the Government, and the Diſſenters are pleas'd with its being ſo, what have they to deſire ? If they have all the Profits of it, and the Diſſenters, with Confidence, commit themſelves to their Protection, what can they aſk more ? What other Reason can thoſe Gentlemen, who are ſo hot againſt the Diſſenters, give, why they ſhou'd be oppreſs'd, but their Fear of them as a Party ? This fear is thus prov'd to be abſur'd and groundleſs, and therefore I think the Conſequence is plain.

Thoſe People who drive at the ſuppreſſing the Diſſenters, cannot be Friends to the Church, nor to the Government : 'tis true, it would be better for the Church there was no Schiſm, no Breach on Account of Opinion : but ſince there is, and they cannot pretend to bring all the Diſſenters back again, unleſs they will ſet up the *Shorteſt Way*, it cannot agee with Policy, or Publick Intreſt, to make them uneaſie.

If they won't Conform to the Church, 'tis impoſſible to make them : but if they will Conform to the Government, if they are not Diſſenters in Politicks, if they Aſſent and Conſent in Publick Matters, if they acquieſce with a Church of *England* Government, and if it were in their Power would choſe it from all others, as is I think fairly prov'd, then it cannot be the Intereſt of the Government to diſturb them, and they who would cruſh them, expoſe them, or widen the Breach between them and the Church, cannot be Friends to the Church, or to the Government, and ought to be treated accordingly.