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**Original Poems And Translations, By John Dryden, Esq;
Now First Collected and Publish'd together, In Two
Volumes**

Containing Poems on several Occasions

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Preface.

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T H E

P R E F A C E.



Poem with so bold a Title, and a Name prefix'd, from which the handling of so serious a Subject wou'd not be expected, may reasonably oblige the Author to say somewhat, in defence both of himself, and of his undertaking.

In the first place, if it be objected to me, that, being a *Layman*, I ought not to have concern'd my self with Speculations, which belong to the Profession of *Divinity*; I cou'd Answer, that, perhaps, Laymen, with equal Advantages of Parts and Knowledge, are not the most incompetent Judges of Sacred things. But in the due Sense of my own Weakness and want of Learning, I plead not this: I pretend not to make my self a Judge of Faith in others, but only to make a Confession of my own. I lay no unhallowed Hand upon the Ark; but wait on it, with the Reverence that becomes me, at a distance.

distance. In the next place, I will ingenuously confess, that the helps I have used in this Treatise were many of them taken from the Works of our own Reverend Divines of the Church of England: so that the Weapons, with which I combat Irreligion, are already consecrated; though, I suppose, they may be taken down as lawfully as the Sword of *Goliath* was by *David*, when they are to be employed for the common Cause, against the Enemies of Piety. I intend not by this to intitle them to any of my Errors; which yet, I hope, are only those of Charity to Mankind; and such as my own Charity has caus'd me to commit, that of *other* may more easily excuse. Being naturally inclined to Scepticism in Philofophy, I have no Reason to impose my Opinions, in a Subject which is above it. But whatever they are, I submit them with all Reverence to my Mother Church, accounting them no farther mine, than as they are authoriz'd, or at least uncondemn'd by her. And, indeed, to secure myself on this side, I have us'd the necessary Precaution, of shewing this Paper, before it was publish'd, to a judicious and learned Friend; a Man indefatigably zealous in the Service of the Church and State; and whose Writings have highly deserved of both. He was pleas'd to approve the Body of the Discourse, and I hope he is more my Friend, than to do it out of Complaisance. 'Tis true, he had too good a Taste to like it all; and, amongst some other Faults, recommended to my second View, what I have written, perhaps too boldly, on *St. Athanasius*; which he advis'd me wholly to omit. I am sensible enough, that I had done more prudently to have follow'd his Opinion: But then I could not have satisfied myself, that I had done honestly, not to have written what was my own. It has always been my Thought,

that Heathens, who never did, nor, without Mira-
 cle, cou'd hear of the Name of Christ, were yet in
 possibility of Salvation. Neither will it enter ea-
 sily into my Belief, that, before the coming of
 our Saviour, the whole World, excepting only the
 Jewish Nation, should lie under the inevitable Ne-
 cessity of everlasting Punishment, for want of that
 Revelation, which was confin'd to so small a spot
 of Ground as that of *Palestine*. Among the Sons
 of *Noah*, we read of one only, who was accus'd ;
 and if a Blessing in the Ripeness of Time was re-
 serv'd for *Japhet* (of whose Progeny we are) it seems
 unaccountable to me, why so many Generations of
 the same Offspring, as preceded our Saviour in the
 World, shou'd be all involv'd in one common Con-
 demnation, and yet that their Posterity should be
 admitted to the hopes of Salvation : As if a Bill of Ex-
 emption had pass'd only on the Fathers, which de-
 termin'd not the Sons from their Succession : Or that so
 many Ages had been *deliver'd over* to Hell, and so
 many *reserv'd* for Heaven ; and that the Devil had
 the first choice, and God the next. Truly I am
 not to think, that the revealed Religion, which was
 brought by *Noah* to all his Sons, might continue for
 some Ages in the whole Posterity. That afterwards
 it was included wholly in the Family of *Shem*, is
 manifest : but when the Progenies of *Cham* and
Japhet swarm'd into Colonies, and those Colonies
 were subdivided into many others ; in process of
 time their Descendants lost, by little and little, the
 primitive and Purer Rights of Divine Worship, re-
 taining only the Notion of one Deity ; to which
 succeeding Generations added others : for Men took
 their Degrees in those Ages from Conquerors to
 Gods. Revelation being thus eclipsed to almost all
 Mankind, the Light of Nature, as the next in
 Dignity,

Dignity, was substituted; and that is it, which *St Paul* concludes to be the Rule of the Heathens; and by which they are hereafter to be judg'd. If my Supposition be true, then the Consequence, which I have assum'd in my Poem, may be also true; namely, that Deism, or the Principles of Natural Worship, are only the faint Remnants or dying Flames of Reveal'd Religion in the Posterity of *Noah*. And that our Modern Philosophers, nay and some of our Philosophising Divines, have too much exalted the Faculties of our Souls, when they have maintain'd, that by their Force Mankind has been able to find out, that there is one Supreme Agent or Intellectual Being, which we call God; that Praise and Prayer are his due Worship; and the rest of those Deducements, which I am confident are the remote Effects of Revelation, and unattainable by our Discourse, I mean as simply consider'd, and without the Benefit of Divine Illumination. So that we have not lifted up our selves to God by the weak Pinions of our Reason; but he has been pleas'd to descend to us; and what *Socrates* said of him, what *Plato* writ, and the rest of the Heathen Philosophers of several Nations, is all no more than the Twilight of Revelation, after the Sun of it was set in the Race of *Noah*. That there is something above us, some Principle of *Motion*, our Reason can apprehend, though it cannot discover what it is, by its own Virtue. And indeed 'tis very improbable that we, who by the Strength of our Faculties cannot enter into the Knowledge of any *Being*, not so much as of our *own*, should be able to find out by them, that Supreme Nature, which we cannot otherwise define than by saying it is Infinite; as if Infinite were definable, or Infinity a Subject for our narrow Understanding. They, who would prove

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Religion by Reason, do but weaken the Cause, which they endeavour to support: 'tis to take away the Pillar from our Faith, and to prop it only with a twig: 'tis to design a Tower like that of *Babel*, which, if it were possible (as it is not) to reach Heaven, would come to nothing by the Confusion of the Workmen. For every Man is building a several way, impotently conceited of his own Model, and his own Materials: Reason is always striving, and always at a loss; and of necessity it must so come to pass, while 'tis exercis'd about that which is not its proper Object. Let us be content at last, to know God by his own Methods; at least so much of him, as he is pleas'd to reveal to us in the Sacred Scriptures: to apprehend them to be the Word of God, is all our Reason has to do; for all beyond it is the Work of Faith, which is the Seal of Heaven impress'd upon our human Understanding.

And now for what concerns the Holy Bishop *Chanasus*; the Preface of whose Creed seems inconsistent with my Opinion, which is, that Heavens may possibly be sav'd: in the first place, I desire it may be consider'd, that it is the Preface only, not the Creed it self, which ('till I am better inform'd) is of too hard a Digestion for my Charity. 'Tis not that I am ignorant how many several Texts of Scripture seemingly support that Cause; but neither am I ignorant how all those Texts may receive a kinder and more mollified Interpretation. Every Man, who is read in Church History, knows, that our Belief was drawn up after long Contestation with *Arius*, concerning the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, and his being one Substance with the Father; and that, thus compil'd, it was sent abroad among the Christian Churches, as a kind of Test, which whosoever took, was look'd on as an Orthodox

dox Believer. 'Tis manifest from hence, that the Heathen part of the Empire was not concerned in it: for its Business was not to distinguish between Pagans and Christians, but betwixt Hereticks and true Believers. This, well consider'd, takes off the heavy Weight of Censure, which I wou'd willingly avoid, from so venerable a Man; for if this Proposition, *Whosoever will be sav'd*, be restrained only to those, to whom it was intended, and for whom it was compos'd, I mean the Christians; then the *Anathema* reaches not the Heathens, who had never heard of Christ, and were nothing interested in that Dispute. After all, I am far from blaming even that Prefatory Addition to the Creed, and as far from cavilling at the Continuation of it in the Liturgy of the Church; where, on the Days appointed, 'tis publickly read: For, I suppose, there is the same Reason for it now, in Opposition to the *Socinians*, as there was then against the *Arians*; the one being a Heresy, which seems to have been refin'd out of the other; and with how much more plausibility of Reason it combats our Religion, with so much more Caution to be avoided: and therefore the Prudence of our Church is to be commended, which has interpos'd her Authority for the Recommendation of this Creed. Yet to such as are grounded in the true Belief, those explanatory Creeds, the *Nicene* and this of *Athanasius*, might perhaps be spar'd: for what is supernatural will always be a Mystery in spite of Exposition: and for my own part the plain *Apostles Creed* is most suitable to my weak Understanding; as the simplest Diet is the most easy of Digestion.

I have dwelt longer on this Subject than I intended; and longer than, perhaps, I ought; for having laid down, as my Foundation, that the

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Scripture is a Rule; that, in all things needful to Salvation, it is clear, sufficient, and ordain'd by God Almighty for that purpose, I have left my self no Right to interpret obscure places, such as concern the possibility of eternal Happiness to Heathens: because whatsoever is obscure is concluded not necessary to be known.

But, by asserting the Scripture to be the Canon of our Faith, I have unavoidably created to my self two sorts of Enemies: The Papists, indeed, more directly; because they have kept the Scripture from us, what they cou'd; and have reserv'd to themselves a right of interpreting what they have deliver'd, under the Pretence of Infallibility: and the Fanaticks more collaterally, because they have assum'd what amounts to an Infallibility, in the private Spirit; and have detorted those Texts of Scripture, which are not necessary to Salvation, to the damnable Uses of Sedition, Disturbance, and Destruction of the Civil Government. To begin with the Papists, and to speak freely, I think them the less dangerous (at least in Appearance) to our present State; for not only the Penal Laws are in Force against them, and their Number is contemptible; but also their Peerage and Commons are excluded from Parliaments, and consequently those Laws in no probability of being Repeal'd. A general and uninterrupted Plot of their Clergy, ever since the Reformation, I suppose all Protestants believe. For 'tis not reasonable to think but that so many of their Orders, as were outed from their Possessions, wou'd endeavour a re-entrance against those whom they account Hereticks. As for the late Design, Mr. Coleman's Letters, for ought I know, are the best Evidence; and what they discover, without wire-drawing their Sense, or malicious



licious Glosses, all Men of Reason conclude credible. If there be any thing more than this requir'd of me, I must believe it as well as I am able, in spite of the Witnesses, and out of a decent Conformity to the Votes of Parliament: For I suppose the Fanaticks will not allow the private Spirit in this Case. Here the Infallibility is at least in one part of the Government; and our Understandings as well as our Wills are represented. But to return to the Roman Catholicks, how can we be secure from the Practice of Jesuited Papists in that Religion? For not two or three of that Order, as some of them would impose upon us, but almost the whole Body of them are of Opinion, that their infallible Master has a Right over Kings, not only in Spirituals but Temporals. Not to name *Mariano*, *Belarmine*, *Emanuel Sa*, *Molina*, *Santaret*, *Simanca*, and at least twenty others of Foreign Countries; we can produce of our own Nation, *Campion*, and *Doleman*, or *Parsons*, besides many are nam'd whom I have not read, who all of them attest this Doctrine, that the Pope can depose and give away the Right of any Sovereign Prince, *si vel paulum deflexerit*, if he shall never so little Warp: but if he once comes to be excommunicated, then the Bond of Obedience is taken off from Subjects; and they may and ought to drive him like another *Nebuchadnezzar*, *ex hominum Christianorum Dominatu*, from exercising Dominion over Christians: and to this they are bound by Virtue of Divine Precept, and by all the Ties of Conscience under no less Penalty than Damnation. If they answer me (as a Learned Priest has lately written) that this Doctrine of the Jesuits is not *de fide*, and that consequently they are not oblig'd by it, they must Pardon me, if I think they have said nothing to the Purpose; for

'tis a Maxim in their Church, where Points of Faith are not decided, and that Doctors are of contrary Opinions, they may follow which part they please; but more safely the most receiv'd and most authoriz'd. And their Champion *Bellarmino* has told the World, in his Apology, that the King of *England* is a Vassal to the Pope, *ratione directi Dominii*, and that he holds in Villanage of his Roman Landlord: Which is no new Claim put in for *England*. Our Chronicles are his Authentick Witnesses, that King *John* was depos'd by the same Plea, and *Philip Augustus* admitted Tenant. And (which makes the more for *Bellarmino*) the *French* King was again ejected, when our King submitted to the Church, and the Crown received under the sordid Condition of Vassalage.

'Tis not sufficient for the more moderate and well-meaning Papists (of which I doubt not there are many) to produce the Evidences of their Loyalty to the late King, and to declare their Innocency in this Plot. I will grant their Behaviour, in the first, to have been as Loyal and as Brave as they desire; and will be willing to hold them excus'd as to the second; I mean, when it comes to my turn, and after my Betters; for 'tis a Madness to be sober alone, while the Nation continues drunk. But that Saying of their Father *Cres.* is still running in my Head, that they may be dispens'd with in their Obedience to an Heretick Prince, while the Necessity of the times shall oblige them to it: for that (as another of them tells us) is only the Effect of Christian Prudence: but when once they shall get Power to shake him off, an Heretick is no lawful King, and consequently to rise against him is no Rebellion. I should be glad therefore, that they wou'd follow the Advice, which was charitably given them



by a Reverend Prelate of our Church; namely, that they wou'd join in a publick Act of disowning and detesting those Jesuitick Principles; and subscribe to all Doctrines, which deny the Pope's Authority of Deposing Kings, and releasing Subjects from their Oath of Allegiance: to which I shou'd think they might easily be induc'd, if it be true that this present Pope has condemn'd the Doctrine of King-killing (a Thesis of the Jesuits) amongst others, *ex Cathedra* (as they call it) or in open Consistory.

Leaving them, therefore, in so fair a way (if they please themselves) of satisfying all reasonable Men of their Sincerity and good meaning to the Government, I shall make bold to consider that other Extreme of our Religion, I mean the Fanaticks, or Schismaticks of the *English* Church. Since the Bible has been translated into our Tongue, they have us'd it so, as if their Business was not to be sav'd, but to be damn'd, by its Contents. If we consider only them, better had it been for the *English* Nation, that it had still remain'd in the original *Greek* and *Hebrew*, or at least in the honest *Latin* of *St. Jerome*, than that several Texts in it should have been prevaricated to the Destruction of that Government, which put it into so ungrateful Hands.

How many Heresies the first Translation of *Tyndal* produced in few Years, let my Lord *Herbert's* History of *Henry* the Eighth inform you; Infomuch that for the gross Errors in it, and the great Mischiefs it occasion'd, a Sentence pass'd on the first Edition of the Bible, too shameful almost to be repeated. After the short Reign of *Edward* the Sixth (who had continued to carry on the Reformation, on other Principles than it was begun) every

every one knows, that not only the chief Promoters of that Work, but many others, whose Consciences wou'd not dispense with Popery, were forc'd, for fear of Persecution, to change Climates; from whence returning at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's Reign, many of them, who had been in France, and at Geneva, brought back the rigid Opinions and imperious Discipline of Calvin, to graft upon our Reformation. Which though they cunningly conceal'd at first (as well knowing how nauseously that Drug wou'd go down in a lawful Monarchy, which was prescrib'd for a rebellious Commonwealth) yet they always kept it in reserve; and were never wanting to themselves either in Court or Parliament, when either they had any Prospect of a numerous Party of Fanatick Members in the one, or the Encouragement of any Favourite in the other, whose Covetousness was gaping at the Patrimony of the Church. They who will consult the Works of our venerable Hooker, or the account of his Life, or more particularly the Letter written to him on this Subject by George Cranmer, may see by what Gradations they proceeded. From the dislike of Cap and Surplice, the very next Step was Admonitions to the Parliament against the whole Government Ecclesiastical: then came out Volumes in English and Latin in Defence of their Tenets: and immediately Practices were set on foot to erect their Discipline without Authority. Those not succeeding, Satire and Railing was the next: And Martin Mar-Prelate (the Marvel of those times) was the first Presbyterian Scribbler, who sanctify'd Libels and Scurrility to the use of the Good Old Cause. Which was done (says my Author) upon this account; that (their serious Treatises having been fully answered and

refuted) they might compass by railing what they had lost by reasoning; and when their Cause was sunk in Court and Parliament, they might at least hedge in a Stake amongst the Rabble: for to their Ignorance all things are Wit which are abusive; but if Church and State were made the Theme, then the Doctoral Degree of Wit was to be taken at *Billinggate*. Even the most Saint-like of the Party, though they durst not excuse this Contempt and vilifying of the Government, yet were pleas'd, and grinn'd at it with a pious Smile; and call'd it a Judgment of God against the Hierarchy. Thus Sectaries, we may see, were born with Teeth, foul-mouth'd and scurrilous from their Infancy: and if Spiritual Pride, Venom, Violence, Contempt of Superiors, and Slander had been the Marks of Orthodox Belief; the Presbytery and the rest of our Schismatics, which are their Spawn, were always the most visible Church in the Christian World.

'Tis true, the Government was too strong at that time for a Rebellion; but to shew what Proficiency they had made in *Calvin's School*, even *Then* their Mouths water'd at it: for two of their gifted Brotherhood (*Hacket* and *Coppinger*) as the Story tells us, got up into a Pease-Cart, and harangued the People, to dispose them to an Insurrection, and to establish their Discipline by Force: So that, however it comes about, that now they celebrate *Queen Elizabeth's Birth-night*, as that of their Saint and Patroness; yet then they were for doing the Work of the Lord by Arms against her; and in all probability, they wanted but a Fanatick Lord Mayor and two Sheriffs of their Party, to have compass'd it.

Our venerable *Hooker*, after many Admonitions, which he had given them towards the end of his Preface,

Preface, breaks out into this Prophetick Speech ;
 " *There is in every one of these Considerations most
 just Cause to fear, lest our hastiness to embrace a
 thing of so perilous Consequence (meaning the
 Presbyterian Discipline) should cause Posterity to
 feel those Evils, which as yet are more easy for us
 to prevent, than they would be for them to re-
 medy.*"

How fatally this *Cassandra* has foretold, we know
 too well by sad Experience: The Seeds were sown
 in the time of *Queen Elizabeth* ; the bloody Har-
 vest ripened in the Reign of *King Charles* the Mar-
 tyr: and because all the Sheaves could not be car-
 ried off without shedding some of the loose Grains,
 another Crop is too like to follow ; nay, I fear, 'tis
 unavoidable, if the Conventiclers be permitted still
 to scatter.

A Man may be suffered to quote an Adversary to
 our Religion, when he speaks Truth: and 'tis the
 observation of *Maimbourgh*, in his History of Cal-
 vinism ; that wherever that Discipline was planted
 and embrac'd, Rebellion, Civil-War, and Misery
 attended it. And how, indeed, should it happen
 otherwise ? Reformation of Church and State has
 always been the ground of our Divisions in *Eng-
 land*. While we were *Papists*, our Holy Father
 rid us, by pretending Authority out of the Scrip-
 tures to depose Princes. When we shook off his
 Authority, the Sectaries furnish'd themselves with
 the same Weapons, and out of the same Magazine,
 the Bible. So that the Scriptures, which are in
 themselves the greatest Security of Governors, as
 commanding express Obedience to them, are now
 turn'd to their Destruction ; and never, since the
 Reformation, has there wanted a Text of their in-
 terpreting to Authorize a Rebel. And 'tis to be

noted by the way, that the Doctrines of King-killing and Deposing, which have been taken up only by the worst Party of the *Papists*, the most frontless Flatterers of the Pope's Authority, have been espous'd, defended, and are still maintain'd by the whole Body of Nonconformists and Republicans. 'Tis but dubbing themselves the People of God, which 'tis the Interest of their Preachers to tell them they are, and their own Interest to believe; and after that, they cannot dip into the Bible, but one Text or another will turn up for their Purpose. If they are under Persecution, as they call it, then that is a Mark of their Election; if they flourish, then God works Miracles for their Deliverance, and the Saints are to possess the Earth.

They may think themselves to be too roughly handled in this Paper; but I, who know best how far I could have gone on this Subject, must be bold to tell them they are spar'd: though, at the same time, I am not ignorant, that they interpret the mildness of a Writer to them, as they do the Mercy of the Government: in the one they think it Fear, and conclude it Weakness in the other. The best way for them to confute me, is, as I before advis'd the *Papists*, to disclaim their Principles, and renounce their Practices. We shall all be glad to think them true Englishmen, when they obey the King; and true Protestants, when they conform to the Church Discipline.

It remains that I acquaint the Reader, that the Verses were written for an ingenious young Gentleman, my Friend, upon his Translation of *The Critical History of the Old Testament*, compos'd by the learned Father *Simon*: The Verses therefore are address'd to the Translator of that Work, and the Style of them is, what it ought to be, Epistolary.

If

If any one be so lamentable a Critick, as to require the Smoothness, the Numbers, and the Turn of Heroick Poetry, in this Poem; I must tell him, that, if he has not read *Horace*, I have studied him, and hope the Style of his Epistles is not ill imitated here. The Expressions of a Poem, design'd purely for Instruction, ought to be Plain and Natural, and yet Majestick; for here the Poet is presum'd to be a kind of Lawgiver, and those three Qualities, which I have nam'd, are proper to the Legislative Style. The Florid, Elevated, and Figurative way is for the Passions; for Love and Hatred, Fear and Anger, are begotten in the Soul by shewing their Objects out of their true Proportion; either greater than the Life, or less: but Instruction is to be given by shewing them what they naturally are. A Man is to be cheated into Passion, but to be reason'd into Truth.



