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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

**Dryden, John**

**London, 1743**

To the Reader.

**urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-1525**



TO THE  
R E A D E R.

**T**HE Nation is in too high a Ferment, for me to expect either fair War, or even so much as fair Quarter, from a Reader of the opposite Party. All Men are engag'd either on this side or that: and tho' Conscience is the common *Word*, which is given by both; yet if a Writer fall among Enemies, and cannot give the Marks of *Their* Conscience, he is knock'd down before the Reasons of his own are heard. A Preface, therefore, which is but a bespeaking of Favour, is altogether useles. What I desire the Reader should know concerning me, he will find in the Body of the Poem, if he have but the patience to peruse it. Only this Advertisement let him take beforehand, which relates to the Merits of the Cause. No general Characters of Parties (call 'em either Sects or Churches) can be so fully and exactly drawn, as to comprehend all the several Members of 'em; at least all such as are receiv'd under that Denomination. For example; there are some of the Church

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by Law Establish'd, who envy not Liberty of Conscience to Dissenters; as being well satisfied that, according to their own Principles, they ought not to persecute them. Yet these, by reason of their fewness, I could not distinguish from the Numbers of the rest, with whom they are Embodied in one common Name. On the other side, there are many of our Sects, and more indeed than I could reasonably have hop'd, who have withdrawn themselves from the communion of the *Panther*, and embrac'd this Gracious Indulgence of his Majesty in point of Toleration. But neither to the one nor the other of these is this Satire any way intended: 'tis aim'd only at the refractory and disobedient on either side. For those, who are come over to the Royal Party, are consequently suppos'd to be out of Gunshot. Our Physicians have observ'd, that, in process of Time, some Diseases have abated of their Virulence, and have in a manner worn out their Malignity, so as to be no longer Mortal: And why may not I suppose the same concerning some of those, who have formerly been Enemies to Kingly Government, as well as Catholick Religion? I hope they have now another Notion of both, as having found, by comfortable Experience, that the Doctrine of Persecution is far from being an Article of our Faith.

'Tis not for any private Man to censure the Proceedings of a Foreign Prince: But, without suspicion of Flattery, I may praise our own, who has taken contrary Measures, and those more suitable to the Spirit of Christianity. Some of the Dissenters, in their Addresses to his Majesty, have said, *That he has restor'd God to his Empire over Conscience*. I confess, I dare not stretch the Figure to so great a boldness:

boldness: But I may safely say, that Conscience is the Royalty and Prerogative of every private Man. He is absolute in his own Breast, and accountable to no Earthly Power, for that which passes only betwixt God and him. Those, who are driven into the Fold, are, generally speaking, rather made Hypocrites, than Converts.

This Indulgence being granted to all the Sects, it ought in reason to be expected, that they should both receive it, and receive it thankfully. For, at this time of day, to refuse the Benefit, and adhere to those, whom they have esteem'd their Persecutors, what is it else, but publickly to own, that they suffer'd not before for Conscience sake, but only out of Pride and Obstinacy, to separate from a Church for those Impositions, which they now judge may be lawfully obeyed? After they have so long contended for their Classi- cal Ordination (not to speak of Rites and Ceremonies) will they at length submit to an Episcopal? If they can go so far out of Complaisance to their old Enemies, methinks, a little Reason should persuade 'em to take another step, and see whither that wou'd lead 'em.

Of the receiving this Toleration thankfully I shall say no more, than that they ought, and I doubt not they will consider from what hand they receiv'd it. 'Tis not from a *Cyrus*, a Heathen Prince, and a Foreigner, but from a Christian King, their Native Sovereign; who expects a Return in *Specie* from them, that the Kindness, which he has graciously shewn them, may be retaliated on those of his own Persuasion.

As for the Poem in general, I will only thus far satisfy the Reader: That it was neither impos'd on me, nor so much as the Subject given me by any Man. It was written during the last Winter, and the beginning.

ginning of this Spring ; though with long interruptions of ill Health, and other Hindrances. About a Fortnight before I had finish'd it, His Majesty's Declaration for Liberty of Conscience came abroad : Which if I had so soon expected, I might have spar'd my self the labour of writing many things which are contain'd in the third Part of it. But I was always in some hope, that the Church of *England* might have been persuaded to have taken off the *Penal Laws* and the *Test*, which was one Design of the Poem, when I propos'd to my self the writing of it.

'Tis evident that some part of it was only occasional, and not first intended : I mean that defence of my self, to which every honest Man is bound, when he is injuriously attack'd in Print : And I refer my self to the Judgment of those, who have read the *Answer to the Defence of the late King's Papers*, and that of the *Dutchess* (in which last I was concerned) how charitably I have been represented there. I am now inform'd both of the Author and Supervisors of this Pamphlet, and will reply, when I think he can affront me : For I am of *Socrates's* Opinion, that all Creatures cannot. In the mean time, let him consider, whether he deserv'd not a more severe reprehension, than I gave him formerly, for using little respect to the Memory of those, whom he pretended to answer ; And at his leisure, look out for some Original Treatise of Humility, written by any Protestant in *English* ; I believe I may say in any other Tongue for the magnified Piece of *Duncomb* on that Subject, which either he must mean, or none, and with which another of his Fellows has upbraided me, was Translated from the *Spanish* of *Rodriguez* ; tho' with the Omission of the 17th, the 24th, the 25th, and the last

last Chapter, which will be found in comparing of the Books.

He would have insinuated to the World, that her late Highness died not a Roman Catholick. He declares himself to be now satisfied to the contrary; in which he has given up the Cause: For matter of Fact was the Principal Debate betwixt us. In the mean time, he would dispute the Motives of her Change; how preposterously, let all Men judge, when he seem'd to deny the Subject of the Controversy, the Change it self. And because I would not take up this ridiculous Challenge, he tells the World I cannot argue: But he may as well infer, that a Catholick cannot fast, because he will not take up the Cudgels against Mrs. James, to confute the Protestant Religion.

I have but one word more to say concerning the Poem as such, and abstracting from the Matters, either Religious or Civil, which are handled in it. The *first part*, consisting most in general Characters and Narration, I have endeavour'd to raise, and give it the Majestick Turn of Heroick Poesy. The *second* being Matter of Dispute, and chiefly concerning Church Authority, I was oblig'd to make as plain and perspicuous as possibly I cou'd; yet not wholly neglecting the Numbers, though I had not frequent occasions for the Magnificence of Verse. The *third*, which has more of the Nature of Domestic Conversation, is, or ought to be, more free and familiar than the two former.

There are in it two *Episodes*, or *Fables*, which are interwoven with the main Design; so that they are properly Parts of it, though they are also distinct Stories of themselves. In both of these I have made use of the common Places of *Satire*, whether



true or false, which are urg'd by the Members of the one Church against the other : At which I hope no Reader of either Party will be scandaliz'd, because they are not of my Invention, but as old, to my knowledge, as the Times of *Boccace* and *Chaucer* on the one side, and as those of the Reformation on the other.



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