



An Account given of the
Principles & Practises
 Of Several
NONCONFORMISTS.

Wherein it Appears that their Religion is no
 other than what is Profest in the Church
 of *England*.

In Vindication of themselves and others of their per-
 swasion, against the misrepresentation made of them.
 And in hearty desire of Unity in the Church, and of
 peace and concord among all true Protestants, for the
 strengthening of their Common Interest, in this time
 of their common Danger.

Written by Mr. *John Corbet*, late of *Chichester*, and
 approved by many other Nonconformists.

L O N D O N.

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To the Reader.

Readers, Least you should think that the agreement of all here written (in sense and very much in words) with what I have Published, doth signifie that it is not wholly the Authors work, but any of it mine, I do truly acquaint you that he never so much as acquainted me with his writing it; nor did I read it all before I gave it to the Printer; nor did I alter, adde or diminish one word in all the book. But as we were of one Mind and Heart, our agreement is no wonder: And his widow (the daughter of the famous Dr. Twisse) assureth me that several eminent Nonconforming Divines saw it and approved it; as I doubt not but most others will do when they have seriously perused it.

But, alas, I that have known these twenty years, what other designs have been in some mens heads, inconsistent with all such indeavours for our Concord, and how powerful those men have been who profess, [that there is no way of Concord, and avoiding Schisme, but by obeying the Governing Universal Church, which hath the power of Universal Legislation and Judgment, which is a Forreign Jurisdiction;] I say, I that know this must needs know, how little more than the satisfying of our Consciences, such pacificatory endeavours as these do signifie. But as my dear Brother dyed in the comfort of Christs judgment [Blessed are the Peacemakers] the rest of us wait in hope so to dye.

Richard Baxter
Feb. 10. 1681.

Several Tracts not yet Printed, prepared for the Press, and left under Mr. John Corbett's own handling, intended shortly to be Published, are as follows;

1. **T**HE true State of the Ancient Episcopacy.
2. The present Ecclesiastical Government, compared with the Ancient Episcopacy.
3. A Consideration of the present State of Conformity in the Church of *England*.
4. A Discourse of the Church and of the Ministry thereof.
5. A Tract of Certainty and Infallibility.
6. Of Divine Worship, in three parts; 1. Of the Nature, Kinds, Parts and Adjuncts of Divine Worship. 2. Of Idolatry. 3. Of Superstition less than Idolatry.
7. His Humble Representation of his Case, touching the Exercise of his Ministry.
8. Discourses between Dr. *Gunning*, late Bishop of *Chichester*, and himself; wherein are several Humble Defences made both as to his Principles and Practice.
9. An humble endeavour of some plain and brief Explication of the Decrees and Operations of God about the free Actions of Men. More especially of the Operations of Divine Grace.
10. Matrimonial Purity.

*An Account given by some deprived Ministers, of
their judgement and practice, &c.*

THE manifold reproaches heaped upon the Non-conformists, among whom it is our lot to be numbred, have filled the whole Nation. Our Religion hath been represented as a mixture of folly and villany; our principles and tempers as turbulent, seditious, and utterly inconsistent with the peace of Church or State; and our pretences as frivolous and often baffled. Our Governours have been admonished to beware of us as their worst and most dangerous enemies, and excited to use the utmost severities against us.

Hereupon it behoves us to humble our selves in the sight of the Lord, and to implore his mercy, and to bear his just rebukes in the unjust reproaches cast upon us by men; also to suffer these indignities with Christian patience, and to shew our selves reconcilable to those, who have been so adverse to us, and to endeavour peace and concord with them, if it be possible, many of whom we suppose to have been acted in this matter with an undissembled zeal, though not regulated by sound knowledge or due charity, but hurried with unreasonable prejudice and passion. We hold it also our duty not to neglect our own necessary vindication, but in honest simplicity to make known to all, what principals and practices we own and stand to. Though we are taught and encouraged to labour and suffer reproach, and to reckon it a very small thing, to be judged by man's judgment, yet we are bound to

vindicate our innocence for the truths sake, and out of charity towards all men to provide, what in us lies, that none may take an occasion of stumbling in us. And here it shall suffice us only to make a true representation of our selves, having this confidence, that the bare stating of our case will be our sufficient defence.

1. In the first place we declare, that with us the kingdom of God is not Conformity or Nonconformity as such, but Christianity or real Godliness, which is most summarily comprized in the baptismal Covenant of Grace, and more explicitly yet briefly in the Creed, Lords Prayer and Decalogue, and at large and most perfectly in the Holy Bible. A religiousness made up of little opinions, and modes, and phrases, and siddings with this or the other party, is none of ours, though we are injuriously personated in some late writings, to act such a part. Faith, hope and love is the essence of our Religion, and with us differences in things not essential, do not make different Religions. We disdain our being of a party as such; And though the godly be a peculiar people, we confine not godliness to any peculiar way narrower than mere Christianity. We make no Humane additions in Sacred things, nor any mutable circumstances to be the terms of Christian Fellowship.

2. Accordingly we seek not the advancement of any Sect or Party, to the injury or neglect of the Universal Church, or Christian cause, or the common good. And as we are no faction, we know that Factionness is not our Interest, but turns to our greatest loss. Our aims being Christian and Catholick, we seek the increase of the visible Catholick Church, or the whole Society of men professing true Christianity, in order to the increase of the Church invisible, or the Society of Regenerate Christians. And to these ends we desire and most approve the primitive simplicity in Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline. And herein we boast not, as if we were the only

only men of the Primitive Christian Spirit, but we answer them, who have trampled upon us as an impertinent trifling Sect.

3. We heartily own the Protestant Reformation in Doctrine, and particularly that of the Church of *England*, contained in the Nine and Thirty Articles, except those Two or Three that relate only to some of our present differences, and not at all to the Doctrine of Faith and Sacraments. And we greatly esteem the soundness of the Doctrine contained in the Homilies. We unfeignedly assent to the sense of his Majesties Declaration concerning Ecclesiastical Affairs in that Passage, wherein he justly rebukes those that had the hardyness to publish, that the Doctrine of the Church (against which no man with whom he had conferred, had excepted) ought to be Reformed as well as the Discipline.

Be it here observed, that some Conformists tell us, that *they heartily subscribe to the Nine and Thirty Articles, taking the liberty of interpretation, that is allowed by the Church her self, though it be most reasonable to presume that she requires subscription to them, as to an Instrument of Peace only*; And for this, the Testimony of an eminent Bishop is cited, saying, *The Church of England doth not define any of these Questions as necessary to be believed necessitate medii, or præcepti which is much less, but only to bind her Sons, for Peace sake, not to oppose them.* But for our parts we believe the very truth of the Doctrine contained in them, according to the genuine sense of the words.

4. We are not ashamed constantly to affirm, that the word of God is the perfect Rule of Divine Faith and VVorship; and we apprehend that it is not Lawfull for the Church, or any power upon Earth, to make new worship of the same common nature and reason, with those universal and perpetual Ordinances, which the word hath already made. Nevertheless particular modes and accidents, and mere circum-

stances of worship, which are common to it, with all Humane actions, are left to the determination of Humane Prudence; according to the general Rules of Scripture. And we take such determination in those matters to be no addition to God's word, and no argument of the defectiveness of his Laws, but merely an application of the general Law in particular cases, as the Law it self doth warrant. A firm agreement of the Non-Conformists with the Church of *England*, in the substantial parts of God's worship, hath been long since manifested in their Papers presented to his Majesty. We still acknowledge the lawfulness of a set form of Liturgy for matter agreeable to God's word, and suited to the nature of the severall Ordinances, and to the necessities of the Church: yet the Minister should not be so confined to it, as not to make use of his own gifts of Prayer and Exhortation. VVe still profess that we are obliged to do all things decently and in order: but we are not satisfied in the lawfulness of such Ceremonies, as in their designed end seem to draw to near to the significancy and moral efficacy of Sacraments, and which have been rejected by many of the Reformed Churches abroad. And we believe that God's worship is best managed for the Exterior form thereof, when it hath least of Humane mixtures in things unnecessary adjoynd and appropriated thereunto.

5. We intirely own that Ministry, that God hath set in the Church, whether extraordinary and temporary as that of the Apostles, or ordinary and perpetual, as that of Bishops or Pastors, and Teachers. VVe believe that it is Christs high prerogative, transcending all Humane authority to institute Spiritual Offices; (how be it there may be Offices *circa sacra* of man's appointment) That Spiritual Officers receive their authority from Christ as the immediate *Donor* thereof by his Charter (though their designation to their Office is not ordinarily immediate without man's interposing) and consequently they are Christ's immediate Stewards, commissioned by him

him and accountable to him, each one for himself in particular ; That the power of the Keys for binding and loosing, for retaining and remitting of sins is essential to a Presbyter or Bishop ; That Ministerial power is delivered by Ordination, as by way of solemn investiture ; and that each particular Church ought to have their proper Bishop or Pastor, (one or more) residing among them for all Ministerial duties, who hath no coercive power upon the bodies or estates of men, and may rule them by no other instrument, than the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, working upon their Consciences, and their outward standing in the Church.

6. The Church being the Lord's heritage and portion ought not to lye common, but must be fenced with Christ's Spiritual Discipline, that it be not laid waste and lost in a VVorld of Ungodliness breaking in upon it. This charge is committed to the Pastors, who are accountable for the same to the chief Shepherd. By the order of the Church of *England* all Presbyters were charged, till very lately, in the form of ordaining Ministers, *to administer the Doctrine, Sacraments and Discipline, as the Lord hath ordained, and as this Realm hath received the same.* And that they might the better understand what the Lord hath commanded, the Exhortation of St. *Paul* to the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus* was appointed to be read to them at the time of their Ordination. *Take heed to your selves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you over-seers to rule the Congregation of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.* Admission into the Church by Baptism is one act of Pastoral Government, and includes the judging of the title of the party to be so admitted. That which we require in the adult for their visible Church-Membership, is their intelligent owning of the Baptifinal Covenant by a serious profession, there being no notoriety or proof of an invalidating contradiction. Other parts of Discipline are the publick admonition of scandalous offenders, and injoyning of penitence, the Excommunication of the obstinate, and

and the absolution of the penitent. This Spiritual Government is not to be managed with external force and terror, like the secular power, but by Reproof, Exhortation and Doctrine, that the offender may be convinced and judged in his own Conscience. And we take it for a great reproach to Christ's Discipline to tell the VVorld, that it is a powerless thing of it self, and insufficient to obtain its end, unless the temporal Sword inforce it. Yet we would not have the Church destitute of the Magistrate's due assistance and encouragement.

7. As touching the form of Church Government, the Scripture-bishop or Evangelical Pastor we do and ever did acknowledge. Likewise we neither do nor ever did renounce the Episcopacy or Presidency, which was of an ancient Ecclesiastical Custom, as in the time of *Ignatius*, yea or of *Cyprian*. Bishop *Ushers* model of Government by Bishops and Arch-bishops with their Presbyters, was by some of us presented to his Majesty, as a ground-work of accommodation. King *Charles* the First in his discourse touching the differences between himself and the two Houses in point of Church Government, declares his judgment in these words, *That he is not against the managing of the Episcopal Presidency in one man, by the joynt counsell and consent of many Presbyters, but that he had offered to restore it as a fit means to avoid those errors, and corruptions, and partialities, which are incident to any one man, also to avoid tyranny which becomes no Christian, least of all Church men; besides it will be a means to take away that odium and burden of affairs, that may lye too heavy on one mans shoulders, as he thought it did formerly on the Bishops here.*

VVe judge the Episcopal or Pastoral Office to be a personal trust, not to be discharged by delegation to others, and especially that it cannot be deputed to them that are not Bishops or Pastors, and that secular persons cannot administer that power, which intrinsically belongs to Spiritual Officers. And we cannot justifie any Ecclesiastical Government in a stated

ted bereaving of the Pastors of particular Churches of that power, that is essential to their office, and in a stated hindering of the effectual exercise of Church Discipline.

8. We detest all manner of Sacrilege, and we think we are as willing as any others, that it should be noted and reprov'd, and that one kind thereof, the unjust alienation of Lands and Goods, devoted to the Church's use for the support of Gods service, we utterly condemn. But there are those that think they can never enough inveigh against this kind, yet fear not to commit the same sin in other instances, which are not less abominable, as the Sacrilege of Pluralists, Non-residents, and all negligent and insufficient Ministers, who devour that which is Holy, taking the Ministerial benefice, and not performing the service. And to alienate persons and gifts, that have been solemnly consecrated to God, we take to be real Sacrilege.

9. We are as willing as any others to take notice of the heinous sin of Schism. But we earnestly desire many that cry out against Schismatics, more impartially to consider the nature of this sin, and to hate it in its full extent. We know the necessity and excellency of Christian Unity and Concord, and the deformity and misery of division, and earnestly pray that Christian Charity might be so conspicuous, that all may know that we are Christ's Disciples by our loving one another. We are for building the Church's Unity upon its only adequate Foundation, which is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever; and in vain do any hope to build it upon a narrower Foundation. We are against the devising of new Articles of Faith, and new parts of Religion, and the enforcing of Oaths and Subscriptions to the same. We require subscription or ingagement to no more than the Holy Bible, and if any swerve from the truth in wicked error or practice, let them be tryed and judged by that unalterable Law, which themselves have assented to. And we think

think this the surest way to preserve the Christian Church in soundness of Doctrine, integrity of Life, and Holy Peace. But if the setting forth of a publick confession of Faith or Articles of Religion be insisted on, we allow it as a rule to Preachers, who may be punishable, if they preach contrary Doctrine, though they be not inforced to subscribe to every Title. Moreover we hold not our selves obliged to forsake a true Church as no Church, for the corruptions and disorders found therein, or to separate from its worship for the tolerable faults thereof, while our personal profession of some error, or practice of some evil is not required as the terms of our Communion. How be it we are not so indifferent in this matter as to make no difference between Churches and Pastors. The more pure and powerfull administration of God's Ordinances is to be preferred before that which is more faulty and less effectual. And here again we acknowledge, that in this preference due caution must be used. VVe must not respect our own particular benefit before publick peace and order, and the general good.

10. VVe believe that the power of civil Magistrates is God's Ordinance, necessary for the Government of the world ; that their whole authority is derived from him, and subordinate to him, the only universal and unlimited Sovereign Lord ; That God's Glory and the Eternal Salvation of men, are higher and nobler ends of their authority than temporal prosperity and peace, that all their decrees and executions should chiefly refer to these ends. and that in their way they are charged with the Souls of men under their jurisdiction. VVe acknowledge that Supreme Magistrates have a civil supremacy in all ecclesiastical matters, and a political Episcopacy over the Pastors of the Church, in their sacred administrations, and may compell them to the performance of their duty, and punish them for their negligence or mal-administration, that they may call Synods, and make Canons, and warrantably thus reform the Church, when it stands in need
of

of Reformation. Accordingly we acknowledge the Kings Supremacy in all causes, and over all persons, Civil and Ecclesiastical, in these his Majesties Realms and Dominions. Moreover we believe that the higher powers are not to be mere Executioners of the judgments of Ecclesiasticks, but that they may and must be Judges thereof themselves, in order to their own execution; That their great and proper work about Religion is to incourage and inforce obedience to the Divine Laws, and in subserviency thereunto, to determine such things *circa sacra* as are requisite in general, but in the particulars are left undetermined of God; Likewise that by moderate penalties they may restrain persons of impious Principles, as Atheists, Infidels, Hereticks from venting their wicked errors, and from any open impious practice; and that they may constrain men to use such means as God hath made Universally necessary to bring the ignorant to knowledge; but not to profess either in word or deed what they believe not, or to take that which God hath made the special priviledge of believers. Lastly, Their imperial Government in Religion should be mixed with a paternal clemency and tenderness, according to the meekness of Christ, whose Servants they are, not only as Christians but as Magistrates.

13. It is our Principle, that Humane Laws bind the Conscience, or (to speak more properly) the subjects in point of Conscience, not by a primary obligation as the laws of God do, but by a secondary and subordinate, as from a power derived from God. As it is an evident and important truth, that Inferiors ought to obey their Superiors for Conscience sake, so it is as evident and important, that when Mens commands contradict the commands of God, it is God and not man that must have the preeminence in our obedience. With us it is no controversy, whether the King or Conscience be the Supreme Governour. It is the Magistrate only that enacts publike laws, and hath the publike decisive judgment

ment, whether according to his Laws we are justifiable or condemnable. As for Conscience it is no Governour at all, but only a discernor of our duty, and an internal witness for us, or against us, according to our practice ; and consequently it is concerned to know the will of God, and whether the commands of men be consentaneous or contrary thereunto, which men call the judgment of discretion. If the Magistrates command be just, the Subjects pretending against its lawfulness cannot justify his disobedience ; and if the command be sinfull, his judging it to be lawfull cannot excuse his doing of it from being sin. It is the Subject's duty in these cases first to lay by his error, and then to act according to truth and right, and for that end to use the best means for his own true information.

Whereas some teach, that when we doubt of the lawfulness of the thing enjoined, and are certain that obedience to authority is a duty, we must do the thing ; VVe conceive that we cannot be certain of our obligation, to obey in a case wherein we are not sure of the lawfulness of the thing commanded, because we are sure we must not obey the Magistrates command in things unlawfull, and our ignorance or error cannot alter our obligation to Gods Law. Here is therefore an uncertainty on either side, and perhaps the danger may be greater on the side of obeying than refusing. For possibly the injunction of a heinous sin may be the matter of the uncertainty, and in this streight we apprehend it more unsafe and less excusable, to choose the greater before the lesser sin, though indeed it be lawfull to choose neither.

VVe hold not that an indifferent thing becomes unlawfull by being commanded, but on the contrary, that a thing indifferent before the Magistrate's command, doth after the command become a duty, it being such as he hath authority to command. Indeed we cannot receive the Dictates of some men, who have written too daringly about Conscience, in reference to Humane Powers. VVe boast not of such Principles as make men of ductile Consciences, obsequious to all
designs

designs and interests, but we embrace such as will keep the Church and VVorld in order.

14. VVhen the higher powers command what God forbids, though we are bound not to perform it, yet we must be subject, and not resist, but patiently submit to suffering. The cause of Religion doth not warrant Subjects to take arms against their Lawfull Prince, nor may they, by armed violence against authority, attempt the publique reformation thereof. We hold that it is unlawfull by the constitution and laws of this Kingdom, for any Subjects to take arms against the King, his Office, Authority or Person, or by force of arms to resist any Magistrate or Officer, legally Commissionated or Authorized by him, yea Subjects are bound not only not to resist but to assist and defend their Sovereign with their Estates and Lives, and the Preachers of the Gospel ought to teach the people obedience and loyalty, and to indeavour to root out all Principles of Sedition, Rebellion and Disobedience. VVe believe that we are under no Bond or Obligation to act any thing contrary to these our avowed Principles. And we further make known our detestation of all the indignity and violence offered to the person of our late Sovereign, and especially that most horrid execrable fact of taking away his life, as also the usurpations and violent change of the Government that did accompany the same, against which crimes, while they were carryed on, the brethren of our perswasion openly protested even to the faces of the actors.

Touching Government and Obedience we know no controverſie between us and the Conforming Clergy, that is purely Moral or Theological. Indeed there hath been political and law controversies, respecting the different constitutions of States and Kingdoms. Now some men to serve their own designs have made these to be taken for differences in Religion, when as they are agitated among States-men and Lawyers, without respect to any difference in Religion, and with much variety and uncertainty of opinion. And as for us we publicly profess to ascribe as much to Princes and Sovereign

reign powers, as is ascribed to them by the ancient Christian Church in any general Councell, or by any Protestant Church in any Synod or publike Confession thereof. And in the political Questions about royal prerogatives, and the priviledges of Parliaments, and the peoples immunities, we interpose not at all, for they are out of our Sphere, but in reference thereunto we acquiesce in the determinations of the laws of this Kingdom.

15. VVe doubt not but this free and open dealing will be our defence against those licentious Tongues and Pens, that have proclaimed the Religion of the Non-Conformists to be a Foolish Religion, when indeed it is no other than the Religion professed by the Church of *England*; and that our Principles of Government have a palpable inconsistency with the wellfare of Governours, when we offer an appeal concerning it to the whole Christian Church, both of the present and former ages.

As for our state of Nonconformity, it is our grievance and distress, and it is not in the power of our own wills to help us. VVe affect not singularity, disunity or dissent from others, and so far as we are constrained to it, we take it for our infelicity. We grudge not at the liberty of others, but are so far glad on the behalf of able and faithfull men, as they are in a capacity of more publike service for God and his Church; and though we are dissatisfied in the way wherein they have gained it, yet we retain Charity and Peace towards them, and are willing to concur with them in the common interest of true Religion.

16. They are much mistaken in our case, who think it is the mere inexpediencie of the things enjoined that we stick at. VVe question the truth of some assertions, and the lawfulness of some ordinances of worship, and fear the dangerous tendency of some forms and rules of Ministration, of which and of other matters in difference we are ready to render a particular account, when authority shall require it. VVe acknowledge that some parts of the matter of our dissent are com-

Comparatively small things, and in no wise to be valued more than Unity and Peace. VVe lay the main stress on the main truths and duties of Christianity, and for these lesser things, we would bear with others in the belief and practice of them, but others will not bear with us in forbearing to own or use them, while we think them erroneous and forbidden, or at least do rationally doubt of their truth and lawfulness. Now this presseth upon us, that we may not do lesser evils that greater good may come, and therefore we cannot do these comparatively little things. For it is not a little thing to sin deliberately in the least matter, and the willfull breach of the least of God's Commandments is a contempt of his authority in the whole Law. And whereas we are commonly said to *strain at Gnats and swallow Camels*, if we be indeed convicted of such partiality, let us bear this brand of Hypocrites. In the mean while let our accusers know and dread the guilt of rash judgment.

Moreover if some of the things themselves be small, yet it is not a small thing, that is required of us about them, namely a declaration and subscription of our unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in large Humane Volumes, imposed by our Superiors, who acknowledge they are not infallible. VVe have not so much as our internal judgment and choice left to us about a multitude of humane ordinances and determinations. Our peaceable bearing and holding Communion with them, that practice these things, yea our quiet submission to the use thereof as tolerable sufficeth not, (as we apprehend it) but there must be also an hearty and intire approbation thereof as laudable. Had we sufficient authoritative warrant to believe, that these recognitions import no more than our peaceable behaviour toward the Church, as some have intimated, we would as readily subscribe the same as they. But we do not think it safe to proceed upon the presumption of such a meaning as hath no better warrant, and we dread to profess the approbation of the things we disallow.

Further--

Furthermore, though in some regard we are more concerned about the controverted opinions, forms and ceremonies, to wit as they are bound upon all Conformists to be personally owned and used by them, (to which we may add the enforcing of Reordination, which is a bar set to many of our number) yet there are other things wherein the state of Religion is as much or more concerned. It is hard for us so to bind our selves under all the present orders and customs in the Ecclesiastical Polity, and its management, as to ingage against all necessary reformation. VVe are sensible how much the good of the Church, that is, the increase of true Godliness, lyes in the due exercise of Discipline, and we are very tender of setting any bar against it, by our own act.

17. But least by this intimation we may be thought to intend what indeed we do not, we declare that we will not endeavour any alteration of the Government in Church or State, as it is in the King, whose Civil and Ecclesiastical Supremacy we have before acknowledged; nor the alteration of the true Episcopal Office which Christ hath settled in his Church; nor will we endeavour any alteration in the Church, by any seditious or unlawfull means, but only by Prayer to God, by humbly Petitioning our Superiors, or obeying the King if he command it, or such like lawfull means, as belong to us in our places and callings.

18. We affect not Church-domination, (howsoever we have been reported to grasp at power in our own way, as much as others do in theirs) we only desire a liberty of discharging our duty to the Congregations, to which we are sent. VVe would exercise Discipline toward such only, as voluntarily submit thereunto. VVe would have no coercive power annexed unto it, nor temporal penalties immediately consequent to any Spiritual sentence. VVe utterly disclaim this opinion, that when the Clergy hath Excommunicated any man, the Magistrate is bound in Conscience to confiscate, banish, or otherwise punish meerly upon their sentence, without hearing or trying the cause by his laws at his own bar.

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We look upon Church Tyranny as the great calamity of Christendom, and would by no means have a hand in its advancement, under any form of Government whatsoever. Having read in History by what steps the Roman Clergy overtop'd Princes and Emperors, we can in no wise promote the twisting of Clergy domination by oaths and other publique engagements into the frames of secular Kingdoms, and that in precedency to the civil power.

19. All the reasons of our Non-conformity cannot be here expected by any that know upon what terms we stand. We make it our humble and earnest supplication to our Superiors, that by their favourable permission we might have leave to write and publish more largely and particularly, both touching our dissents, and in answer to the accusations made against us. For such a defence, as we now ask leave to make, hath hitherto been forbore, to avoid the displeasure of our Governors.

20. It is easie for that side which is uppermost to speak for their own way, that as much hath been written as may satisfy any that have a mind to be satisfied. But they should remember the common infirmity of Mankind, and what strange disparity there is in Mens understandings, and what diversity of apprehensions, especially in matters of doubtfull disputation. VVe profess in his sight who knows our hearts, that we have a mind to be satisfied, if we knew how. And there is rational evidence for the truth of what we speak, for that our dissatisfaction must needs be against our interest, if it were remediable. Any conscientious Principles narrower than the truth, entangle those that are governed by them; and our Principles of Non-conformity, if erroneous, are a great snare unto us, and keep us under such confinement, as is no way desireable by us. And therefore if we might be free, we would use it rather, and willingly retract that error, that puts us to so much trouble. And surely they judge too hardly of us, that think the supposed shame of a retraction, would keep us from embracing our own liberty and safety,

safety, and promoting the Churches Peace and Unity. If our Consciences were well secured, we would trust God with our reputation. To those that speak of our baffled cause, and charge us with invincible obstinacy after shamefull overthrows, we shall not now mention such Books of special note, and not tediously voluminous, as were written on our side in former times by men of reputation, that were never answered; we shall only mind them to consider, what answer hath been made to some later Published writings on our part, as *the Petition for Peace, with the Reformation of the Liturgy, and the last reply made to the Bishops by the Divines, Commissioned together with them for the review of the Common Prayer,* though the matter and season earnestly called for it. For they were presented to the Bishops before the act of Uniformity came forth, while the things for which we suffer were under publike consultation.

21. Our dissents can be no just provocation to any. Our equals that differ from us are upon this account no more reproached in us, than we in them, and we can no more be thought to reflect an imputation of evil on them, than they on us. Towards our Superiors our dissent carries in it no more indignity, than a supposition that they may err. And we agree with them in so much, as the wisdom of God hath made necessary to Christian concord.

22. His Majesty expressed his resolution to become the effectual moderator of our differences, and graciously accepted the proposals made by some of us with acknowledgment of their moderation. This he hath largely made known in his declaration concerning Ecclesiastical affairs, wherein he gives this Testimony to the Ministers of the Presbyterian perswasion, that attended on him in *Holland. To our great satisfaction and comfort we found them persons full of affection to us, and of zeal to the Peace of Church and State, and neither enemies, as they had been given out to be to Episcopacy or Liturgy; but modestly to desire such alterations in either as without shaking Foundations, might best allay the present distemp-*
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ers. And he expressed himself in reference to those things wherein the learned men of either persuasion were agreed as followeth, *If upon these excellent foundations in submission to which there is such a harmony of affections, any superstructure should be raised to the shaking of those Foundations, and to the contracting or lessening of the blessed gift of Charity, which is a vital part of Christian Religion, we shall think our self very unfortunate, and even suspect that we are defective in that administration of Government, with which God hath intrusted us.* And he saith farther, *That he doth not think his reverence to the Church of England, as it is Establiſhed by Law, in the least degree diminished by condescensions, not peremptorily to insist on some particulars of ceremony, which howsoever introduced by the piety and devotion and order of former times, may not be so agreeable to the present, but may lessen that piety and devotion for the improvement whereof they might happily be introduced, and consequently may well be dispensed with.*

This gracious healing declaration was received with the thanks of the House of Commons, and with the applause of the people, and it was to our special joy. Had the moderation therein specified stood in force, we have no cause to doubt but that Tranquillity and Concord in the Church would have ensued. But the frustration thereof lay not on our parts. It is our comfort that we have earnestly fought Peace and Unity, though we have not so far prevailed, as to gain so much as the abatement of one Ceremony, but our Bonds have been made stronger, and the terms of our Ministerial liberty much harder to us, than they were in the former times of Prelacy.

22. Some indeed say that to indulge us any abatement of injunctions, even in things indifferent and mutable, would cherish us in our ungovernable persuasions, and the Church would yield up her authority to those Principles, that would be an everlasting hinderance of her settlement. These men speak as if our exclusion, not our conformity were desired. But against their uncharitable and unsober assertion, we offer

our Principles already here testified to the tryal and judgment of all impartial and unprejudiced minds, and challenge our adversaries to gainsay them, or to prove that we falsely pretend unto them.

23. The extravagant Pens of some Writers have made ridiculous and odious descriptions of us, to expose us to the common scorn and hatred. They would make the World believe that instead of the Precepts of the Gospell intelligibly set forth, we make a Religion of Metaphors and Allegories, and new phrases, of thin airy notions, frivolous and senseless nicities, and fanatick whimsies. This they fix promiscuously upon the Non-Conformists from passages collected out of some Writers, that go under that name. But suppose those passages as erroneous and frivolous as they would make them, would any party in the VWorld or they themselves be so dealt with? Should a collection of errors, absurdities, incongruities, injudicious expressions, and such like weaknesses be pick'd here and there out of the writings of this and the other Conformists, and then be Intituled the Religion of the Conforming Clergy. Let the Divinity of the Non-Conformists, that is extant defend it self, we are not carefull about this matter. Indeed we cannot boast that none among us are injudicious, yea, or that any one among us doth never write or speak an incongruous word. If our adversaries so boast of themselves and theirs, let them take the glory of it, we are not called to this boasting, or to compare our selves with others. It is too well known how great a part of the Clergy throughout Christendom (as indeed of all other sorts of men) are defective and imprudent in their expressions. But by insisting on this kind of exceptions, our adversaries have done us this right as in effect to tell the VWorld that the Non-Conformists are not deprived and silenced for Treason, Rebellion, Drunkenness, Swearing, Incontinences, Rayling, Insufficiency, Idleness, seldom Preaching, Pluralities, Non-Residence, and such like immoralities.

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Let not the progress of our just and necessary defence be taken for self exalting. For we do not exclude others, but only include our selves in that sobriety, from which some would exclude us, and we do this to shew that others ought to receive us, seeing we accord in the greater things, notwithstanding our lesser differences.

24. We earnestly disavow, and teach the people to beware of the conduct of pretended inspirations; and we own God's publick Laws written in Scripture and Nature for our perpetual Rule. The World knows that the rational evidence of Christian Religion, and of the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, hath been as much owned among us, and as largely asserted by some of ours, as by any of them, that so speak, as if they were the only Propugnators and Preachers thereof. We take the Spirit's grand Testimony to the truth of the Gospel, not to stand in some inward unaccountable suggestion and perswasion, but in an objective evidence propounded to the reason of Mankind; though we likewise hold the Spirit's internal teaching, and the gift of illumination to be necessary to saving Faith. We do not hunt after mysteries in words and phrases, yet we would not make void or lessen the great mystery of Godliness, and make no more of it than a Scheme of Moral Philosophy. We approve not affected Language, yet we would not have the things of the Spirit of God spoken in Scripture Language called *Canting*. We make it our business to understand the things we affirm, and to speak sense to our Hearers in the plainest words, and in preaching to avoid vain janglings, and impertinent curiosities, useless speculations, novelties, and vain ostentation of wit and fancy, and to insist on things essential or of great importance to Christian Piety, and whereinfoever we have done weakly, we desire to do better, and refuse not to learn even from our adversaries.

25. In man's Conversion to God we urge not the necessity of any thing that is unnecessary. We stand not on certain modes, methods and circumstances, in which it may be

brought about, wherein the wisdom of God proceeds variously towards several persons, according to the different circumstances of their condition. As for instance, we assert not a general necessity of this or that measure of humiliation, much less of a dismal despairing horror (as some have said of us) we press conviction and humiliation no farther than to make a sinner restless till he come to Christ, and find rest to his Soul in him. And we take not conversion to be (as some have slandered us) an embracing of our opinions, or an adhering to our party; but an internal principle of Faith, Hope and Love expressed in a sober, righteous and godly life. If this be it, which some mean, when they speak so highly of morality and virtue, we will not differ with them about the name. For morality or immorality taken not vulgarly but theologically, is no other than the conformity or inconformity of our minds and actions to God and his Laws. And that to preach morality in this sense is to preach Christ, we acknowledge as freely as any others. But we know the vulgar notion thereof respects the civil righteousness of the natural man, and for the sake of common hearers, who understand words, as they are commonly used among themselves, we think it necessary to distinguish between saving grace and moral virtue. Furthermore we say not, nor are we acquainted with them that do say, that the morally righteous man is at a greater distance from grace, than the prophane, and better be lewd and debauched than to lead an honest and virtuous life. We hear no such words out of the mouths of Non-Conformists, though some have suggested it against us, to make us odious. And it seems strange, that any should insinuate a charge of Antinomianism against us, by making the personated Non-Conformist to call the Doctrine of good works legal preaching, when it is so well known, that some of ours have done as much as any in confuting the Antinomian dotages. We teach none to call themselves Godly, meerly because they hear Sermons, frequent Lectures, and meet together for Prayer and other Religious Exercises: yet our aim is that

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men should make Religion their business, and we encourage their diligence in attending on God's Ordinances, and redeeming the time, and helping each other forward in the way to Heaven.

26. Though we are accused to be of that Spirit that saith, *Stand by thy self, come not near to me, I am holier than thou*; yet we place not Holyness in any peculiar garb of profession, or in standing at a greater distance from others, than God would have us, We receive all men as much as either brotherly kindness or common charity will allow. VVe affect no greater singularity than the uncontroverted Non-Conformity to the VWorld makes necessary. Differences of persuasion in the matters controverted, we make not to be marks of distinction between good and bad men. VVe judge not any as ungodly upon the meer account of their Conformity, yea we have incomparably more value for a Godly Conformist, than for a meerly Opinionative Non-Conformist. VVe renounce not Communion in the publique worship of the Parish Churches, though for its outward form and order in some respects it be not that which is most desireable by us. It is our hearts desire and prayer to God, that the VVord, Prayer and Sacraments therein dispensed, may be blest to the great increase of true Godliness in those that attend thereon. Yea we wish so well to the ability and godliness of our opposites in these controversies, that it would be our great rejoycing, that every Parish Church in *England* were filled with an able Godly Minister though conformable. VVe own the Catholick Communion of Saints, and desire a part in the Prayers of all faithfull Christians, whether they pray by a set form or without it.

27. VVhereas we are charged with immodesty and boldness in our inquiries and conclusions, we profess that in the Doctrines of predestination, redemption, divine Grace, free will, original sin, justification, perseverance, and assurance of Salvation, we differ not from the Established Doctrine of the Church of *England*, and we approve her moderation.

deration used in those Articles, which we take in the same sense with the English Episcopal Divines in general, that lived in Queen *Elizabeth's* and King *James* his times. And for our parts we judge that the controversies about these points might be lessened, and would gladly do our endeavours to the lessening of them.

28. Our Doctrine tends to unquietness and confusion no more than the common Doctrine of Protestants, and of the Church of *England* it self, for it is the same as we have shewed. And we protest against such citations to the contrary, as men bring out of writers reputed of our party, and renounce whatsoever is written or spoken contradictory to our here avowed Principles. And we think it not fair dealing in our adversaries to repeat and aggravate all intemperate passages vented in those times, when impetuous actions hurried men into extremities, and states-men and sword-men heightened the differences between Divines, and especially to do this after our professed moderation hath been acknowledged by our Governments. Besides, the generality or at least the far greater number of the silenced Ministers now living were not engaged in the late wars. And if these were allowed to preach the Gospel, we should be thankfull for the favour, though the rest remain excluded.

29. We acknowledge the importance of a publique settlement, and how necessary it is that both people and teachers be under the regulation and influence of authority. And that the willfull and indiscreet might be held in their due limits, we would not have things left at random, but under stated rules. We seek not to be received upon lawless terms, but are willing to submit to tryal, not only upon accusation of lewd scandal or insufficiency, or negligence in our calling, but of venting any error contrary to the received Doctrine, or of doing any thing contrary to peace and order. But it is unreasonable for any to urge this concession for the rigorous imposing of doubtfull and needless things, which tend to trouble and not to settle the Church. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to the

the Apostles and Elders, and Brethren assembled at *Jerusalem*, to lay upon the Churches no other burden than things necessary. And here we take notice of their impertinency, who think it enough to confute all our plea for moderation, by publishing quotations out of our writers, which were written against an intolerable toleration, to wit of heresies, blasphemies and open impieties, and not the indulgence which we have pleaded for. If they can see no *medium* between tolerating all things and tolerating nothing, others can. Besides it is an accommodation and union, that we have sought by a sufficient comprehensiveness in the publique constitution, and then therewithall an indulgence towards remaining Dissenters, but such as for the subject of it hath nothing that is intolerable. We have a true regard to our Brethren that are more strengthened in their judgments than we are, and would not have them the worse for our liberty, if we could obtain it.

30. Though we have not the same latitude of judgment with Conformists in some points, yet we have the same Catholick Spirit to promote the common interest of Religion, and more especially the Protestant Reformation, and to dread the weakening or shattering of it by needless Schisms. We mind the way of unity and consistence, and retain healing principles, we hold it not our duty to publish all truths, when the unseasonableness thereof might cause disturbance; nor to defend lesser truths with the disadvantage of greater. We would not widen breaches nor make other mens opinions worse than they are, to commend our own. It is none of our persuasion that men are bound under pain of damnation to labour to establish God's publique worship in the greatest perfection by hazarding the Church's peace, and unsettling a good establishment, though less perfect. If by scruple of Conscience we cannot joyn in one Church Communion, yet we ought to keep the unity of Faith and Love. So far are we from assenting to that which some affirm, that where men part Communion, it is of necessity that they esteem one another impious, although we grant there is a fault on one side or both.

31. VVe solemnly protest that we have thus declared for moderation not only or chiefly because we have need of it, but because the Church of God hath need of it, and because we think it the only way of peace and the common interest of Religion in these Kingdoms; and if we stood where others now stand, we would give what we plead and pray for. It may be remembred, that those of our perswasion did seasonably declare their desires of unity, even during his Majesty's exile, and the Episcopal party then protested for moderation, and the first appearance of the hopefullness of an accommodation between the parties, was of no little avail to promote his Majesty's restauration, whom God preserve to reign long over us. If we or any of us have heretofore been more rigidly addicted to our own opinions, then stands with our now professed charity, we make a willing retraction thereof.

32. VVe have here set forth our principles that all may take notice, how we are mis-represented by those that make other representations of us. And we are ready to clear our selves against those that accuse us of contradicting them in our practice.

33. The exercise of our Ministry, which we continue in our present state of inconformity, is no way inconsistent with the professions here made. VVe assent and submit to the King's Ecclesiastical Authority, as we have amply shewed before, and we think we come not short of the conformable Clergy, in owning the authority of the higher powers in sacred things. Yet we believe that no humane power can nullifie our Ministerial Office, or disoblige us from our charge of fullfilling it according to our ability and opportunity, and as the necessity of Souls requireth of us. If we lived where our Ministry were not necessary, we were bound to forbear upon the Magistrates prohibition, and to remove to a Country where it is necessary, and a way open for us. But whatsoever others apprehend, to us it is most evident, that multitudes of Souls in the places where we live cry aloud for our help also. This apprehension of ours reflects no dishonour upon

upon the conscientious conformable Ministers, (for whose ability and industry we bless God,) but we heartily wish that the number of them were so proportionable to the people of this Land, that there were no need of us in this service. As for those that make slight work of the cure of Souls we pass not to be despised or judged by them for this carefullness towards the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

A Minister that is intolerable by being utterly insufficient, heretical, or otherwise destructive to the ends of the Ministry, we are not obliged to honour, but to disown. It is our part to make the most of a tolerable though weaker Ministry, and to do what we may to countenance God's publick service in all places. If we live where the publick authority hath set up worthy Ministers, our duty is to promote their reputation with the people, and to farther the success of their labours, and to attend on their Ministry when we are not necessarily hindered. And our labours in concurrence with them can be no grievance to any, to whom it is not a grievance, that their Lords service, and the success of their own indeavours, should be farthered by their fellow-servants. VVhere the publick Churches cannot contain the multitude of inhabitants, that should resort unto them (which is unquestionably the case of *London*) it is no affront or injury to the most worthy Ministers, and no unwarrantable division, at the same time to hold other Religious meetings, as the number of the people shall make needfull. Though our Ministry be alike necessary in general; yet at vvhhat time, in vvhhat place, to vvhhat numbers of people, and in vvhhat other circumstantial measures it is necessary to be exercised, the case may be very different vvvith severall persons, as they are placed in different circumstances. In vvhich diversity it is the vvork of prudence to discern vvhhat is duty by that general rule, let all things be done to edification. It is the end that of right alvvays limits the means, and it is our part so to manage our calling that vve may best serve our Generation, according to the vvill of God. According

to this Rule vve indeavour to steer our course.

34. We do what in us lyes to avoid the provoking of our Governours, and all appearance of contempt to their authority. We invade no mans right, we resist not the civil power, nor break the peace, nor cause tumults, nor give occasion thereof. We abhorre seditious conventicles, insurrections were never contrived in our meetings, nor in any, whereof we are conscious. Experience hath witnessed our peaceableness, and Disloyalty or Sedition is not found amongst us by the most inquisitive of our Adversaries.

35. VVe have not forsaken the Parochial Assemblies, but have joyned in the service of God there performed, and some of us do it in our ordinary course, and others of us have not declined it of set purpose, but as our absence is caused by that necessary work of the Ministry, whereunto we are called. Some of us have Communicated with the said assemblies in the Sacrament of the Lords Supper; Yet we would not have our charity and peaceableness mistaken for an indifferency unto Communion with all Parochial Churches and Ministers whatsoever, or for a full satisfaction or acquiescence in the whole, and all particulars of the Liturgy, so as to be able to declare our unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing therein contained.

Our proceeding is as even and regular, as the straits and difficulties into which we are cast, will suffer it to be. VVe would that they who charge us with irregularity and disorder in our actions, would with charity and candor consider the circumstances of our condition, and help us out of those distresses that force us at sometimes to be more severed from them, than otherwise we would or might be. VVe desire the Clergy of *England* to take notice, that we have no mind to promote the Popish design of nullifying and treading down the Parish Churches and Ministers. VVe are well aware how Papists make a harvest of the divisions of Protestants, and hope to do their work by the dissensions between Conformists and Non-Conformists. As the precious interest of Protestantism
ingageth

ingageth us, we do what we may to preserve a worthy esteem of the Religion of the Church of *England*, and we humbly supplicate them, who have cast us out, to consider how they may receive us again upon the account of this common interest, which (God is our witness) we value more than our own particular enlargement.

36. A great part of the invectives written against us, is made up of the pretended weakneses and mis-behaviours imputed to those that go under the name of Non-Conformists. To this we say first, that it is a palpable injury to burden us with the various parties with whom we are now herded by our ejection in the general state of Dissenters, and to make us responsible for them all. Nor are we justly chargeable with all the absurdities and miscarriages of such as are of our own persuasion. But let it here be minded, what the Scripture saith, *in many things we offend all*, and that none of ours pretend to be more than men in their imperfect state; as also that besides the huge multitudes of common hypocrites, who by open intemperance, unrighteousness and ungodliness, notoriously discover the falshood of their profession, (by which sort in general none are more hated than we are,) there be many specious hypocrites, who are the servants of sin, under the shew of greater zeal for God, and these will be the blemish of all Religious societies, into which they are admitted. Now we would not that any detested hypocrisie should be palliated, nor that the real faults of the sincere should be unproved. But promiscuously to asperse a whole sort of men known to be strict and serious in their profession, and to describe their way in general as a course of hypocrisie or folly, is like to do no good but much mischief, especially in exposing seriousness in Religion on all sides, to the scorn of the irreligious.

VWhen we look through the big and swelling words of crimination into the matter it self, we find little more in it than their meer inconformity, blazond with ugly tearms, and the names of horrid sins put upon it. For the accusers call them proud, froward, false, fierce, fullen, traytorous, seditious,

clamorous. and an unruly generation upon no better proof, than that they have said it. The *farrago* of the late cunningly contrived defamations, if well examined, will be found really to produce against them little more than such weaknesses and swervings, as are common to any, even the most moralized sort of men.

Indeed we find this against us, if it be material, that our Religion hath not made our Plough-men Courtiers, nor our Trades-men Philosophers. VVe never took it for any part of the work of true grace to make men of rustick wits, and breeding to become gentile, or to raise our plain people to the accomplishments of the learned. Yea such as excell in grace may be very mean and low in the gifts of nature, and speak so incongruously as to make themselves ridiculous to proud wits. But should Ministers make a scorn of them for defects in this kind, and have more value for an ungodly sort, that are of finer wits and better breeding? If so, there is not the same mind in them that was in Christ, who said with rejoicing, *I thank thee O Father Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes.* Nevertheless for ought we find, the people of our persuasion, according to their rank and quality in the VVorld, are not inferior to others in point of discretion, civility, good neighbourhood, and acceptable conversation among men; in all which their Religion is a furtherance, and no disadvantage to them.

VVe vwill not justifie our favourers in vwhat they are reproveable; but then let every one bear his ovvn guilt, and let not the innocent be burdened vwithout cause. VVe as well as the accusers take notice of divers things in some of ours which are not justifiable, and yet not remediable by us in our present state. The weaker sort of true Christians are liable to errors and failings, that occasion trouble to themselves and others: and there be many that have no troublesome differences in Religion, because they have no Religion. Shall these irreligious persons because they are not troublesome, be
more

more esteemed and thought better Christians, than serious, zealous and conscientious persons, because peradventure they give us some trouble through their mistakes? The Pastors should not value people by the interest of the flesh, but of Christ. To what end have they received their Pastoral Office, which is to help the weak, and to heal that which is lame, that it be not turned out of the way, if they cannot bear with such, nor restore them in the Spirit of meekness? Besides, let the breaches, offences and exasperations of these times be considered, and it cannot seem strange, that the weaker sort of sufferers should be more averse, than they ought to be, from those by whom they suffer, especially when in many places their more able teachers are driven from among them by the *five mile Act*, and they are left to such as will heighten their aversation. We would our reprovers would help us for their parts to make our people better. Whereas some have charged us with cherishing their naughty humours for unworthy ends, we thought all might understand, that if we basely sought our own profits, we might make a better trade of Conformity, than of seeking a sorry maintenance, by serving the sins of our adherents in this poor condition of outcasts. VVe desire not to hold the people as appropriated to our selves, but teach them highly to esteem all faithfull Ministers for their works sake, and we are glad of their profiting by others as by our selves. VVe are not conscious of willfull connivence at their faults. VVe humour none in their injurious thoughts of Governors, or speaking evil of dignities. VVe teach men to fear God and honour the King, yea to honour all men and love the Brotherhood, to bridle their tongues, to be meek and lowly, no busie bodies, but to do their own work with quietness. VVe exhort all to unity with the whole Catholick Church, and to be at peace among themselves. The truth is, there is too much wrath and bitterness, railing and intemperate language on all sides, and we condemn it as much in those that are among us as in others, and are more offended at it in them than in others. And we think our accusers have little

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reason so to accuse and judg us and ours, as if they took themselves and theirs to be sinless in this kind. The Lord forgive and heal us all, and increase the number of the sons of peace, and true peace-makers.

37. VVhereas a remarkable writer hath published these words, *we should be reconciled if the Presbyterian Ministers would perswade their people to do, what they can do themselves,* We declare to the world, that we heartily embrace these terms of reconciliation. And as we have done already, we will not cease to do our uttermost to perswade them, upon whom we have any influence, and we would gladly come to the tryal to see which party should outvy the other in forwardness in allaying the present distempers, and lessening the differences, and drawing on towards peace and union.

38. We have here done our part to remove the offences taken at us by testifying to all men, that conscientious dissatisfaction, and not carnal interest, or a Spirit of opposition, is the ground of our Non-Conformity: and to bring such as differ from us to be more in charity with us, than to judge that we are utterly unworthy or incapable of the publick Ministry, or that such persons as for ignorance and lewdness are scandalous and contemptible among their Neighbours, are more tolerable in that sacred office than we are, or that gross insufficiency, non-residence, and other hainous negligence should be made less criminal, than our dissent about the ceremonies, subscriptions, renunciations, and such like injunctions.

VVe submit what we have done to the wisdom, piety and clemency of our Governours. VVe acquiesce in Gods wise and holy determinations concerning us. And we resolve through his grace to abide stedfast and unmoveable in our subjection and loyalty to our Sovereign, in our due obedience to those that are put in authority under him, in our earnest endeavours of holiness, unity and peace in the Church, in brotherly love to all faithfull Christians, in charity to all men, and in the Faith and Patience of the Disciples and Servants of Jesus Christ.

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WVe are moved at this time to publish this account of our pacifick principles and inclinations, that we might promote (what in us lies) the true bond of union among sincere Protestants. These though of different persuasions in points of lesser moment have one joynt stock, the Protestant Religion, for which they are all jealous, and at this time allarm'd by the imminent danger from an irreconcilable and restless adversary, that would destroy them all. All true Protestants have their interest not a part from, but in strict conjunction with the whole body of that profession, they have no possible way of securing themselves but in the general good of the state of *England*; They cannot fly to the refuge of any forreign Prince or State, they acknowledgeno forreign jurisdiction, all their stake lyes at home. VWhereupon one would think that the common safety should incline all the severall parties to strengthen their common interest by a good and firm accord, upon just and reasonable terms; And whosoever remain averse from it seem to value a partial interest, and their own peculiar state more than the Protestant Religion it self.

A just latitude of Church-state in the established order, for the comprehending of all those whose more moderate Principles render them capable of being conjoynd in one settled National Government, and for others, who by reason of their narrower principles cannot enter into such conjunction, a sufficient yet duly limited indulgence are the things, which we humbly propose and earnestly desire. We seek not the destroying of foundations, but some necessary reformatiions, relaxations and forbearances. For us to set forth the propounded latitude in the particular limits thereof, would be presumptuous both in reference to Superiors, and to the parties concerned in it. We humbly leave it to the prudent and pious consideration of our Governours. This grand affair is acknowledged to be full of difficulty, caused by the passions, prejudices and interests of the severall parties: nevertheless we hope that the prudence and patience of those who sit at the helm of Government, is able to master it. Next under the
power,

power, wisdom and goodness of God standing on our side, our help stands in the wisdom and piety of our Sovereign and his Parliament. His most excellent Majesty in his declaration concerning Ecclesiastical Affairs hath mentioned particular concessions on both sides, and a harmony of affection therein, which he calls excellent foundations to build upon. The moderation specified in that gracious declaration would do much to the present healing of our breaches in great part, and would set us in the surest way for as perfect healing thereof, as may ordinarily be hoped for in the imperfect state of things in this World.

F I N I S

