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THE
Nonconformist's
P L E A

FOR
LAY-COMMUNION

WITH THE
Church of ENGLAND.

Together with a Modest Defence of
Ministerial Nonconformity, and the
Exercise of their *Ministry*.

By Mr. JOHN CORBET, late of
CHICHESTER.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Thomas Parkhurst*, at the Bible and three
Crowns in *Cheapside* near *Mercers Chappel*. 1683.

A N
A D V E R T I S E M E N T
T O T H E
R E A D E R .

H E R E thou hast some Remains of
the Reverend and Learned Mr.
Corbet late of Chichester ; Those
that knew him say, that he was a
man endued with the wisdom that is from above,
that is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle,
(meek, moderate,) and easie to be intreated,
full of mercy and good fruits, without partiali-
ty, without hypocrisie ; therefore it is conceived
that any thing which he had designed for pub-
lick use, may be well accepted of, by all those
that desire to follow after peace with all men, so
far as is consistent with purity : Whether the de-
sign of these Remains of his be not to vindicate
the truth, and to promote purity first, and then
peace, is left to thee to judg after thou hast im-
partially perused and considered them in the

fear of God; and if in any measure they con-
duce to so good an end, it is hoped thou wilt be
thankful to God for the benefit which the Church
of Christ, and therein thy self, mayst receive by
the use of them. Thou hast them just as they were
left under his own hand; if himself had lived
to publish them, thou mightest possibly have had
them in some better method: but it is not
thought fit that any other person should take
upon him to alter any thing in them.

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THE

The Nonconformists Plea for Lay- Communion with the Church of England, &c.

NOtwithstanding my Nonconformity, and the exercise of my Ministry in that state, I am inclined upon the following considerations to have communion with Parish-Churches in the worship of God; at those times in which our own Congregations do not require my presence therein.

1. I own Parish-Churches, having a competent Minister, and number of credible Professors of Christianity, for true Churches, and the Worship there performed, as well in the Liturgy or Common prayer, as in the preaching of the word, and prayer before and after Sermon, to be in the main sound and good for the substance or matter thereof. And I may not disown the same in my practice by a total neglect thereof, for my judgment and practice ought to be concordant.

2. Tho I judg their form of Worship to be in many respects less perfect than is to be desired; yet I have found my heart spiritually affected and raised towards God therein, and more especially in the receiving of the Lords Supper. I judg that this form may be used formally by the Formal, and spiritually by those that are Spiritual. It is my part to make the the best of it, being the Established Form.

3. I am desirous of joining, as far as I may, with all Congregations worshipping God in Christ, out of my high regard to all Christian Worship, and out of my love to the communion of Saints universally, and a desire to testify that I am a truly Catholick Christian.

4. Tho

4. Tho I am constrained by force of conscience to be among those that dissent from the enjoined Conformity; yet my design and business is not to advance a severed party as such, but true Christianity or godliness among all that profess the Christian Faith, and what in me lies to keep up a Reverend esteem of Gods Ordinances celebrated among them all.

5. Tho I have reason to have a very tender regard to those that own and accept my Ministry, for their edification and satisfaction, yet by ways of love and concord I am to seek the edification of others also, while I lay no stumbling-block before the one or the other sort.

Against the putting of this intention in practice, I meet with these Objections.

Obj. 1. I may seem a contradiction to my self, and to justify what I disallow, having refused to give my assent and consent to all and every thing contained in the Book of Common-Prayer.

Ans. 1. The denying of assent and consent to all and every thing contained in that Book, doth not gainsay the lawfulness of partaking in that Worship, it being sound for the substance in the main, and the mode thereof being laudable in divers forms and orders, and passable in the most, though in some offensive, inconvenient, or less perfect.

2. The chief matters for which I refuse to declare an assent as is enjoined, lye not in the ordinary Morning and Evening Prayer, but in other parts, as the Order of Baptism, Confirmation, Burial of the dead, &c. and in certain Rubricks or Rules to which I cannot subscribe.

Obj. 2. It is to countenance a more defective and inconvenient way of worship, and it tends to the rooting of others in their formality, and to the encreasing of their number.

Ans. 1. My partaking in any Divine worship which is holy and good for the matter, and allowable or passable for the mode in the main, doth not involve me in the blame of some sinful defects therein, to which I consent not, and which I cannot redress.

2. I do not acquiesce in this Form of worship only, nor do I by my example induce others so to do, seeing in other Congregations I both dispence and attend upon the word and prayer in another Form, and judg it necessary for me so to do.

3. It is to me indubitable that this form is so far profitable and edifying, as that meerly for the defects found therein, there is no cause of renouncing it, or the Communion of the Churches for its sake, especially while other prayer and the preaching of the word is not thereby excluded.

Object. 3. It is against our engagements for reformation.

An. 1. I am engaged to indeavour reformation only according to my power and calling, and this practise doth not gainstay my indeavours of the same within those limits.

2. My engagement to indeavours of reformation, doth not necessitate me to unwarrantable separation.

3. My engagement to indeavours of reformation, doth also engage me against Schism.

Object. 4. It will offend (that is to say, displease) many of my own side.

An. 1. They have no reason to be more offended with me for practising according to my principle, than I am offended with them for practising according to theirs.

2. It is a trouble to me to do any thing in Religion, displeasing to those that are seriously religious, and more especially to those that own my Ministry, and suffer under the same impositions under which I do; but I may not sin for their sakes by a renouncing of true Churches, or by a perpetual neglect of communion with them.

Object. 5. It may prove an occasion of raising a greater enmity against those that cannot be satisfied to partake in this worship, yea, it may stir up a greater severity against them.

An. This objection (if that which is suggested in it be true) is of great mdment, for I must have a tender regard to conscientious brethren and must not use my liberty to be an occasion of their suffering. But to this I say,

1. The moderate judgment and practise of some (who in the mean time have maintained their plea for reformation, and exercised their Ministry according to their capacities and opportunities) hath been advantagious to the general interest of Nonconformists.

2. If so bad a consequence should indeed follow, as is objected, I would for that season forbear the said use of my liberty, and partake with my brethren in their sufferings.

Object.

Object. 6. It may weaken my own party, and make many of them more indifferent towards reformation.

An. 1. I disclaim being of a party as such : I confine not godliness to any peculiar way narrower than mere Christianity. If any among us place their Religion in being of a party, they deceive their own souls, and it behoves me being a Teacher among them to let them understand so much.

2. While I use my liberty, and shew my moderation and charity towards all true Churches, I do not shew an indifferency towards all opinions, and forms, and constitutions, but by word and deed I manifest a desire and endeavour of the best constitution, that hath the greatest tendency to make the best Christians, and to advance holiness and peace in the Churches

Object. 7. It may raise suspitions that I may proceed further in Conformity, and that I am but a lukewarm Nonconformist.

An. 1. The Kingdom of God stands not either in Conformity or Nonconformity as such.

2. I desire that my zeal in the matter of Nonconformity may be proportionable, that is neither more nor less than the thing it self requires.

3. I am not willing to stand at a greater distance from others than I needs must.

4. How ready soever I am to pursue peace and concord, I am not like to conform, till the grounds of my Nonconformity, which are with me of great weight, be removed.

Object. 8. Hereby I may lose or lessen my reputation and interest among those of my own side.

An. 1. My reputation and interest among men, must give place to the pleasing of God, and the keeping of a good conscience.

2. To me the most valuable benefit of reputation is an advantage thereby gained of being acceptable and successful towards men in the work of the Ministry; and that which is most advantagious hereunto, is the reputation of integrity, and to do all things advisedly, honestly, peaceably, without partiality, hypocrisie and selfishness, is the best means of such reputation.

Object. 9. It will not please those of the other side, unless I absolutely conform; and it may be some of them will despise and hate me the more.

An. 1. My design is not man pleasing, and I think it looks not like such; I were very ill advised indeed, if while I venture the displeasing of my own, I should aim at the pleasing of a different party.

2. In reference to the other side, my design is not to please them, but to convince them, that what in me lies, I follow after Church peace and concord, and that the cause of the divisions that are, lies not on my part.

3. Tho on the Conforming side there may be some, who hate those most that come nearest to Conformity, if they are not thorough therein; yet there be others, who are more valuable, that are of a better spirit, with whom my moderation may have good effects.

Ob. 10. It may hazard a breach in our own congregation, and the dissolution thereof, as things now stand with us, and consequently hinder the good of souls, that is now gained by the word and prayer.

An. 1. Indeed such an evil is carefully to be avoided in this time of our difficulty and danger; but I rationally hope that it will not so fall out: Our friends are not ignorant of the latitude of my principle, and the practise here propounded will be no great surprisal to them, it being no more than what I declared that I did before I came to my present station among them.

2. I shall keep a watchful eye upon this concern; if I see any distemper that threatens a breach arising upon this occasion, I will for a while suspend my liberty, and I will proceed herein no other wise than they can bear, I will be calm and gentle towards them, and not carry it peremptorily in any wise. And this I shall do not for my own private ends (the Searcher of hearts knows) but sincerely for their good.

3. I will by degrees insinuate into them the equity of their bearing with me in my persuasions, as I bear with them in theirs, and of allowing me the liberty of my own acts in things that concern my self alone, when in such acts as concern the society, I do nothing without their consent.

4. If it should come to pass that they will impose upon me what is not fit for me to comply with; in that case, I will not violently break from, nor stay to make breaches among them, but quickly withdraw my self.

The Sum of the Matter.

I consult not my private interest in the case, but am sincerely solicitous to know and do herein what is my duty to do.

I would do what I can, to justify my Catholick principle and spirit, and I would abstain from the appearance of unwarrantable separation.

I would give no occasion to any of disowning or reproaching a form of Divine Worship which is found in the substance thereof, and accepted of God from the sincere, tho' it be less perfect in divers material points, and less convenient for the mode.

I would in all things be a faithful guide to the people to whom I preach the Gospel, I would lead them in the way of peace and concord, and be free from giving them an occasion of withdrawing from the established worship more than is necessary.

I would shew my self a freeman governing my own acts according to my conscience, and not subject to the opinions and affections of others, or the imagined interests of a party.

If I cannot mollifie them that seek to suppress me, I would render them more inexcusable.

I would testify, what in me lies, that Nonconformists are capable of an accommodation, and silence them that gain say it.

A Defence of my Endeavours for the Work of the MINISTRY.

THAT I might not be wanting to my just Vindication in this Cause, I hold my self obliged to present the aforesaid Defence to the consideration of all impartial Readers: it takes its rise from the several heads of the Bishops charge against me, all which were owned by himself before many Witnesses, and are here set down.

1. That forasmuch as I did not exercise the Ministry in subordination to the Bishop, and as regulated by him, I transgressed against the nature of my Office, as not being the Office of a Pastor mentioned *Eph. 4. 11.*
2. That I violate my oaths and promises which I made at my Ordination, to obey the Bishop or Ordinary.
3. That I trespass against the Right of the Bishop, upon the account of exercising the Ministry where he is the Pastor.
4. That I make a Schism in the Church.
5. That I violate the Authority of the Civil Magistrate.

To these particulars, the several Heads of my Defence following, are a direct Answer.

1. That I have received from Christ the Office of a Pastor mentioned *Eph. 4. 11.* and that I am bound in my present state to fulfil it.
2. That I am not obliged either by the nature of my Office, or by any oath or promise, or by being under the regulation of Authority, to exercise my Ministry no otherwise than as in subordination to, and as authorised and regulated by the Bishop of the Diocess.
3. That I invade not the Right of the Diocesan Bishop in exercising the Ministry where he claims the right of being the Pastor.

4. That I do not violate any true bonds of Church-Unity, nor in any respect cause divisions and offences.

5. That I do not violate the Authority of the Civil Magistrate.

§ 1. That I have received from Christ, the Office of a Pastor, mentioned Eph. 4. 11. And that I am bound in my present state to fulfil it.

THE Ministry that I have received, is the sacred office of Presbyterate, to which I am ordained according to the form of Ordination that was established in the Church of England.

That this office is of divine right, I take for granted; and that according to the Scripture it is the office of a Pastor, mentioned Eph. 4. 11. I thus prove.

1. Wheresoever this office is set forth in the Scripture, it is set forth as the office of a spiritual Pastor or Bishop, which is to feed the Flock of God by teaching and ruling it: And a Presbyter who is a sacred Officer of the Christian Church, but not a Bishop or Pastor, is no where mentioned in Scripture. If it be said, that this Office is otherwise set forth in Scripture, or that a Presbyter, who is a sacred Officer of the Christian Church, yet no Bishop, is there mentioned, let the Assertor shew the place or places.

If it be said, that this Order of Presbyterate may be of divine institution, yet not defined or expressed in Scripture, I desire satisfactory proof from some other Authority; both of its being of divine institution, and what its nature is.

2. To have the Power of the keys of binding and loosing, of remitting and retaining sins in Christs name, as his commissioned officer, is to have Episcopal or Pastoral Power, and this Power belongs to the said Office of Presbyterate.

Forasmuch as some distinguish the Power of the keys into that which is in *foro interiore*, or the Court of Conscience within, and that which is in *foro exteriore*, in the exterior Court, to wit, that of the Church; the former of which is said to belong to the Bishop and the Presbyter, and the latter to the Bishop only. I further inforce my argument; 1. The Scripture makes no such distinction; and where the Law distinguisheth not, we may not distinguish. 2. The distinction in this case is vain; for all power that belongs to the Pastors of the Church, purely respects the Conscience, and it respects the Conscience as having the conduct of the outward man, and that in reference to Church-communication, as well as other matters. 3. If Presbyters may in the name of Christ, bind the impenitent, and loose the penitent as to the conscience, which is the greater and primary binding and loosing, then by parity of reason, and that with advantage, they may bind and loose as to Church-communication, which is the lesser secondary and subsequent binding and loosing.

3. That Officer is a Pastor or Bishop, that hath a power of Authoritative declaring or judging in Christs name, that this or that wicked person in particular is unworthy of fellowship with Christ and his Church, and of charging the congregation in Christs name, not to keep company with him, as being no fit member of a Christian society; & also a Power of *authoritative declaring or judging* in Christs Name, that the same person repenting of his wickedness, and giving evidence thereof, is meet for fellowship with Christ and his Church, and of requiring the congregation in Christs Name again to receive him into their Christian fellowship; for these powers are no other than the powers of Excommunication and Ecclesiastical absolution: Now the Presbyter hath apparently the said Powers, as he can undoubtedly declare, and judg, and charge as aforesaid, touching this or that person or particular; all particulars being included in the general, he hath undoubtedly a Power of applying the Word in Christs Name as well personally as generally.

4. For the further clearing of what is already argued, let it be considered, that an Authoritative Teacher in the Church commissioned by Christ, is also a Pastor; for the government of a Pastor is only by the Spiritual Sword, which is the Word of God; and the discipline which he exercises, is no more than the personal application of the same word to judg the impenitent, and to absolve the penitent in Christs Name; and he that Authoritatively teaches

in Christs Name(as the Presbyter doth)can do so much in the personal Application of the Word.

5. The Pastoral Authority of Presbyterate is further cleared by many passages in the publick forms of the Church of England touching that order.

In the very form of my ordination according to the ancient use of this Church, I received the office of a Pastor and Successor of the Apostles; I mean not in their Apostolick but Pastoral office: The form was this, Receive the holy Ghost; whose sins thou remittest, they are remitted; and whose sins thou retainest, they are retained; and be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God, and his Holy Sacraments, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, *Amen*. Now the former part hereof is intirely and compleatly the form of Words used by our Saviour, *Joh. 20. 22, 23.* towards the Apostles, expressing their Pastoral Authority; and the latter part, Be thou a faithful dispenser, &c. is no derogation or diminution from the Power granted in the former part. If the Presbyters are not the Apostles successors in the Pastoral Authority, how could they have right to that form of ordination?

In the form of ordering Priests or Presbyters in one of the prayers after the mentioning of Christs sending abroad into the world, his Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists Doctors, & Pastors, there follows thanksgiving to God for calling those that were then to be ordered Priests, to the same Office and Ministry of salvation of mankind. Whence it appears, that this Office is the same with some of the forementioned kinds. And what can it be but that of Doctors and Pastors?

This Church did before the last alteration made *Anno 1662.* in solemn form of words require the Presbyters, when they were ordained, to exercise the discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded; and this Realm received the same according to the commandments of God.

And that they might the better understand what the Lord hath commanded therein, this Church did appoint also, that at the ordering of Priests there be read for the Epistle that portion of *Acts 20.* which relates *St. Paul's* sending to *Ephesus*, and calling for the Elders of the Congregation, with his exhortation to them to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock, among whom

whom the Holy Ghost hath made them Overseers, to rule the congregation of God. Or else *1 Tim. 3.* which sets forth the Office and due qualifications of a Bishop. These portions of Scripture this Church appointed to be read to the Presbyters, as belonging to their Office, and to instruct them in the nature of it. And afterwards the Bishop speaks to them that are to receive the office of Priesthood in this form of words, *You have heard, brethren, as well in your private examination, as in the exhortation and the holy lessons taken out of the Gospel, and the Writings of the Apostles, of what dignity, and of how great importance this Office is whereunto ye are called* — That is to say, the Messengers, the Watchmen, the Pastors and Stewards of the Lord, to teach, to premonish, to feed, to provide for the Lords Family.

I acknowledg that the passages here alledged are taken out of the old Book of Ordination, that was established in this Church till the late alterations made *Anno 1662.* if those alterations signifie another meaning about the severall Holy Orders than what was signified in the old Book, then the sense of the Church of *England* in these times differs from the sense of the same Church in all times preceding the said Alterations; but if they signifie no other meaning than what was signified in the old Book, my citations are of force to shew what is the sense of this Church, as well of the present as of the former times about this matter.

Here I must take notice, that in opposition to part of what hath been alledged, it was asserted, That that part of *1 Tim. 3.* which contains the office and qualification of a Bishop, was read at the Ordination of Presbyters, not because it belonged to their Office, but because it was joyned with that which follows touching the office of a Deacon, then likewise read as properly concerning the office of a Presbyter, pretended to be no other than the Deacon there mentioned.

To this I answer, If the Presbyter in the Church of *England* be indeed no other than the Deacon spoken of, *1 Tim. 3.* it seems strange that this Church, yea and the Universal Church, should so miscall an Officer, as to give him a name, *viz. Presbyter,* which the Scripture always appropriates to another Officer (as is pretended) and to neglect the Scripture name of this Office, *viz. Deacon.* It is strange that an Officer said to be no other than the Deacon there spoken of, should have the power of the keys, the same form of Ordination which Christ used towards his Apostles. If it were

were so, it is likewise strange that the qualifications of the said Deacon should be appointed to be read at the Ordination of a *Presbyter*, as properly belonging to him; and also at the Ordination of a Deacon inferior to a *Presbyter*, as properly belonging to him, the former part of the Chapter touching a Bishop, being omitted. Besides all this, the new Book of Ordination puts the matter out of doubt, and evidently refutes the aforesaid evasion. For in it the latter part of *1 Tim.* 3. beginning at verse 8. touching the Office of Deacon, is appointed to be read at the ordering of Deacons; and the same is not appointed to be read at the ordering of Priests, but another portion of Scripture, *viz.* Eph 4. 7. *et c.* Furthermore, if the Deacon mentioned in *Timothy* be no other than the subject *Presbyter*, I would know in what place of Scripture the Deacon of the Church of *England*, inferior to a *Presbyter*, is set forth. And be it noted, that the Deacon of this Church is not so much the Deacon of Tables, as of the Word; and therefore a *Presbyter* must needs be degraded in being made no more than a Deacon of the Word.

Hitherto I have insisted on the nature of my Office, and have proved it to be the Office of a Pastor. Now I proceed to prove, That in my present state I am bound to fulfil it.

Being dedicated to this Ministry, I stand under a perpetual obligation to fulfil it, according to my ability and opportunity, and as the necessity of souls requireth of me. And whatsoever some think, the thing is most evident, That the souls of men cry aloud for all the help that can possibly be given them by those whom Christ hath qualified and called to the work of the Ministry, whether Conformists or Nonconformists.

This apprehension reflects no dishonour upon conscientious Conforming Ministers, for whose ability and industry I bless God. But the number of them is not so proportionable to the people of this Land, as to make the labours of those that are cast out, to be needless. The harvest is great, and the labourers are too few.

As for this City, in which are six Parishes within the Gates, besides two in the Suburbs, I leave it to the consideration of those that know the state thereof, whether there be sufficient care taken for the preaching of the Gospel; when as there is no settled preaching on the Lords days, or week days, in any of the Parish Churches. The Parish in which I dwell, hath for many years had

no Minister at all, and the two Parishes without the Gates for many years have had neither Ministers nor Churches, in one of which is the house that was licensed by his Majesty for our meeting. The only settled preaching is at the Cathedral, performed sometimes by the Superior Clergy, but mostly by a greater number of others in their courses, who generally living at a distance, cannot be so well known to the people as their appointed Teachers ought to be; and let them that know the place of preaching consider and judge, whether it can contain the inhabitants, if all should repair thither.

It pass not to be despised or judged by them, who make slight work of the cure of Souls, for whom Christ hath given himself a ransom: Certainly they are more precious than to be exposed to perish for lack of sufficient instruction and exhortation, rather than preachers authorized by Christ, if silenced by men, when not disobedient to any ordinance prescribed by his word, should speak to them that they might be saved. The necessary means of saving souls, such as is the due publick preaching of the Gospel, together with personal instruction, is incomparably more valuable than the maintaining of uniformity in little opinions, and ceremonies, and other accidental forms and orders.

§ 2. *That I am not obliged either by the Nature of my Office, or by any Oath or Promise, or by being under the regulation of Authority, to exercise my Ministry no otherwise than as in subordination to, and as authorized and regulated by the Bishop of the Diocess.*

THIS Head hath Three distinct Branches to be distinctly proved, whereof the first is, That I am not obliged by the Nature of my Office to exercise my Ministry no otherwise than in subordination to, and as authorized and regulated by the Bishop of the Diocess.

1. The Nature of this Office doth not require it either in reason, or from the declared will of Christ: first not in reason, for there is evidently no reason in the nature of the office, being the office of a Bishop or Pastor, that it cannot be exercised but in subordination to a Dioceſan Biſhop: if any ſay that there is, let him ſhew it.

2. Chriſt who is the Author and only proper giver of all ſpiritual authority in the Church, hath not either by himſelf, or by the Mediation of the Apoſtles, ſo defined or limited the aforeſaid office of Preſbytery, as that it can be exercised no otherwiſe, than in the aforeſaid ſubordination. If any one affirm that Chriſt hath ſo defined or limited it, it reſts upon him to make proof of it.

If it be urged, that I have no power but what I received by the Ordainers, and that is a power of adminiſtring only in the aforeſaid ſubordination. I answer, 1. I have already proved that by the very form of my ordination I received the office of a Paſtor and Succeſſor of the Apoſtles in their Paſtoral office. 2. Tho Chriſt give the ordinary ſpiritual power, and particularly that of Preſbyters in ſome reſpect by the mediation of men, yet he gives it not by them as giving the power, but as instruments either of deſigning the perſon to whom he gives it, or of the ſolemn inveſtiture of that perſon, as the King is the immediate giver of the power of a Mayor in a Town Corporate, when he gives it by the mediation of the Electors, not as giving the power, but deſigning the perſon to be inveſted with it, or by the mediation of ſome officers, as instruments of the ſolemn inveſtiture 3ly, For as much as the ordainer or ordainers that deſigned me to this office of Chriſts Donation, could not by any act of theirs enlarge or leſſen it as to its Nature or Eſſential State, or define it otherwiſe, than it is ſtated by Chriſt in his word; in caſe ſuch words were pronounced out of the Book of ordination (I ſay not that they were, but in caſe they were) as import a leſſening of the office in its eſſential ſtate, they are void and null. If a Miniſter, that joyns a man and woman in Marriage according to the true intent of that ordinance, ſhall add other words that forbid the husband the government of his wife, that addition is a nullity.

2. I am not obliged by any Oath or Promise, to exercise my Ministry no otherwise than as in subordination to the Bishop of the Diocess.

I acknowledg that when I was ordain'd, I made those promissory Answers to the Bishops Interrogatories, which are contained in the Book of Ordination that then was. But, 1. let it be considered, that if the said interrogatories and answers, or any of them, superinduced any limitation upon the Office, that takes away any thing essential to it, (I say not that they did, but in case they did) they were nullities. 2. The promise then made to obey my Ordinary, and other chief Ministers to whom the government and charge over me is committed, concerns me only as a Presbyter standing in relation to the Bishop, as one of the Clergy of the Diocess, which I now am not, being cast out of that relation, and made incapable of it; and consequently the said capacity ceasing, the obligation ceaseth. 3. The said promise must be understood either unlimitedly, or with limitation; if unlimitedly, it was a sinful promise in the matter thereof, and therefore void; if with limitation, as in things lawful and honest, then I have not broken it; for it is not lawful nor honest for me to desist from fulfilling the Ministry that I have received, if the Ordinary so require.

3. Nor am I obliged as aforesaid by being under the regulation of Authority. I freely acknowledg, that in the exercise of my Ministry I am not exempt from the Regulation of any just Superior Authority in the Church (as for the Civil Authority, it is afterwards to be spoken of) whether it be by way of government, or of agreement. And I had much rather live under a Regulation, than not. But it cannot be supposed, that any Superior Authority can limit me to the prejudice of Christs Authority and interest, and the obligation that he hath laid upon me to discharge the Office with which he hath intrusted me. My Office is a Trust received from Christ, to be accounted for to him. I am his, and not the Bishops Minister. Let it be supposed, tho not granted, that the Bishop of the Diocess were my rightful Superior to Regulate me in my Office; yet for him to forbid me to discharge my Office, and for me thereupon to desist, is to the prejudice of Christs Authority, who would have me now to discharge it. Christ chargeth me, among the rest of his Ministers, in those words of St. Paul, Col. 4. 17. *Take heed to the Ministry that thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.* If any shall say, That Christ hath

now forbidden me to exercise the Ministry, or discharged me from it, it behoves them to prove it, and I am ready to receive and consider any proof of it.

§ 3. *That I invade not the Right of the Diocesan Bishop in exercising the Ministry, where he claims the Right of being the Pastor.*

HERE left my sense of Episcopacy be mistaken, I judge it necessary to premise, 1. That I fully own the Scripture-bishop, or Evangelical Pastor. 2. That I do not disown the Episcopacy that was of ancient Ecclesiastical custom in the time of *Ignatius*, yea or of *Cyprian*. 3. That Bishop *Ushers* Model of Church-government by Arch-bishops and bishops, with their Presbyters, was offered to his Majesty by the Divines of the Presbyterian persuasion (as they were called) for a ground-work of accommodation between the Bishops and them. And I assent to the offer which they made. 4. After the same manner I assent to the state of Episcopacy as described by *K Charles* the first in his discourse touching the differences between Himself and the Two Houses in the point of Church-government, in these words: *That he is not against the managing of the Episcopal Presidency in one man, by the counsel 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 which may lye too heavy on one mans shoulders, as he thought it did formerly on the Bishops here.*

But I do not as yet discern the divine Right of Episcopacy in the state and priviledges thereof here following, wherein I desire information, and would gladly receive satisfaction, if there be such divine Rights indeed. None can be justly offended with me for examining in my own defence that Right which I am accused to have invaded.

do not discern that a Bishop *in fini gradus*, I mean one that hath none under him but Parish-Ministers, who are pretended to have no Episcopal governing-power, I say I discern not that such a Bishop can by divine Right challenge to himself alone the Episcopal Authority over hundreds of particular Churches. For every particular Church should have its proper Pastor or Bishop.

And particular Churches with their proper Pastors, are so evidently of Divine Right, that some eminently learaed men in the Church of *England* have declared their judgment, That no Form of Church-government besides the meer Pastoral Office and Church-assemblies, is prescribed in the Word of God, but may be various, according to the various condition and occasion of several Churches.

Neither do I discern, how it is possible for one man to do the work of a bishop towards hundreds of Churches, I mean the work of a bishop *in fini gradus*, under whom there are no subordinate Bishops or Pastors. For the work of such a bishop is to oversee all the Flock, to preach to them all, to baptize and confirm all that are to be baptized and confirmed, to administer the Lords Supper to all, to bless the Congregation, publickly and privatly to admonish all as their need requires; to excommunicate the impenitent, to absolve the penitent, and that upon knowledg of their particular estate.

If such a Diocesan bishop saith, it sufficeth that he perform all this to the Flock by others, namely by the Parish-Ministers as his Curates, and by other Officers his Substitutes; it is answered, 1. That the Pastoral Authority is a personal trust. 2. It is desired that he shew his Commission from Christ the Prince of Pastors, to do his work by others; for I am now inquiring what is of divine, and not of humane Right. 3. None but a bishop can do the proper work of a bishop.

But if it be said, That the Parochial Congregations are not Churches, but only parts of the Diocess, which is the lowest particular Church: I desire proof from Scripture, That such Congregations as our Parishes, having their proper Presbyter or Presbyters invested with the power of the keys, are not particular Churches properly so called. The reason of my desire of this proof is, because the Scripture is a perfect Rule for the Essentiall constitution of Churches, tho accidents thereunto belonging may
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be regulated by humane prudence. 2. It is most evident in Scripture, that a particular Congregation of Christians, having their proper Pastor or Pastors, Presbyter or Presbyters, are Churches properly so called: And a Parochial Minister I conceive to be a Pastor or Elder according to the Scripture.

Moreover if a Diocess containing a hundred, two hundred, five hundred, or a thousand Parishes (as somewhere it doth) do constitute but one particular Church, and those particular Parishes be not properly to be accounted Churches, but only so many parts of that one Diocesan Church, why may not ten thousand, yea ten times ten thousand Parishes be likewise accounted but one particular Church, and brought under one man as sole Bishop or Pastor thereof?

In all this I have not argued against the right of an Arch-Bishop, or Overseer of other Bishops, such as *Titus* must needs be, if he were Bishop of *Crete*, where Bishops or Elders were to be ordained in every City. If either Scripture, or Prudence guided by Scripture, be for such an office, I oppose it not, and nothing here spoken makes against it.

If our Diocesan Bishops be in very deed Arch-Bishops or Overseers of inferior Bishops, to wit, Parish-Ministers, I do not here argue against it, but only say, that in their Archiepiscopal Diocess or Province they cannot exercise their authority any other-wise than according to the rules of Gods word for the edification and peace of the Church, and that they cannot discharge the inferior Bishops from their obligation to Christ, whose immediate Ministers and Stewards they are, and to whom they are immediately accountable.

Moreover I do not discern that any Bishop can by divine right so challenge or claim such a circuit of ground for his Diocess (as for example the County of *Sussex*) as that thereupon he can by the said right prohibit all other Pastors whatsoever to do the work of the Ministry in any case without his licence within such a circuit of ground, or that such a measure of ground is related to his Episcopal office as a propriety for government Ecclesiastical, like as certain territories and dominions are as a propriety in reference to Civil government, related to the temporal Sovereignty of a Prince.

The partition of one Church from another by local bounds, is not of divine institution, but of humane prudence from the convenience of the thing; I say convenience, not absolute necessity; And the state of things may be such as to compel to vary from it in some particulars.

It is supposed by learned men, that in the Apostles times there were several Churches at *Rome* under their several Bishops or Pastors in the same local bounds, as one of the Circumcision, and another of the Uncircumcision. And if it were not so *de facto*, I think few will deny but that it lawfully might have been so.

If upon the aforesaid diversity of condition in the persons, namely, as being of different nations and languages, there may be several Churches under several Bishops or Pastors within the same local bounds, why not also upon other diversity of condition, which may render them as uncapable of being of the same particular Church, as if they were of divers nations? One instance may be an unmovable diversity of persuasions about points of Religion.

As for example, Why may not *Lutherans* and *Calvinists* of the same nation, town or village, have their several Churches under their several Pastors, and live in peace? Nothing could hinder the said peace, but want of Christian Humility and Charity. And consequently, why among us may not Christians that have invincible diversity of persuasions in matters of Church Government live peaceably within the same precincts in their several Churches?

Besides all this, if the local bounds assigned for one mans immediate Pastoral charge be so vast, and the multitude of Souls therein be so great as to render it impossible for any one man to fulfil that charge towards them, can it be judged an usurpation against divine right, if another Pastor without licence from him should perform ministerial service within those bounds? Likewise let it be considered what may or may not be done, in any circuit of ground, where the inhabitants are destitute of competent provision for their Souls, and lie neglected by such as claim the Pastoral charge over them. Is it an intrusion or usurpation, if in that case one that is dedicated to the work of the Ministry shall endeavour without licence from the said neglecters, by preaching and other ministerial service to save souls that are so exposed?

Furthermore, let it be considered how any Clergy-man can be the proper pastor of a people, that doth not the work of a pastor towards them, which work I have before set forth.

Lastly, I cast in this consideration also, how any Clergy-man can be the proper pastor to a people against their wills: I doubt not but a people may sin, yea, greatly sin in not receiving a pastor duly offered to them, and so they may as greatly sin by receiving such a pastor as may be imposed on them: But how any one can actually bear the pastoral relation to a people, that never consented to that relation, I would be better informed.

Thus it hath been examined, whether I am culpable by trespassing against the divine right or rights of a Diocesan Bishop in exercising the Ministry where he claims the right of being pastor. And it hath been examined in that form, which the matter being a tender point is capable of. As for his humane rights, they are his preeminence and jurisdiction under the King as Supreme, and to which he is intituled by the Law of the Land. Now I am no usurper against this; for I claim no such preeminence, I exercise no such jurisdiction. As for my obedience to his jurisdiction as an officer subordinate to the King, it shall be spoken of in its own place.

§ 4. *That I do not violate any true bonds of Church-Unity, nor in any respect cause divisions and offences.*

THE Case of Schism now in controversie is not to be huddled up, but well stated, whereunto many considerations are prerequisite. Those that are set down, I take to be of moment: but the exprefs application of them, I forbear, and doubt not but the considering and impartial Reader will excuse me therein; and judg that he himself can easily do that part with more convenience than I can in this writing. Church-Unity is not to be built upon the doctrines and ordinances of men, but upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone; and none are to be shut out from the Communion of the Church,