

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.*

**T**HE 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,



Church, or the work of the Ministry, whom Christ hath not excluded, but qualified and called thereunto according to the Scriptures which are the rule of admission and exclusion from the said priviledges.

2. The unity of the spirit, which we are charged to keep in the bond of peace, is not concord in external forms and orders without participation of the same new nature, and walking in the same holy way. It is said *Eph. 4.* One body, and one spirit, and one hope, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all; but not one ceremony, one posture of body, one garb of Church-ornaments, one habit of vestments, one ritual and unity of assent to all opinions and formalities: An holy fellowship in the spirit of grace, and in the life of faith and love, is far more excellent than the greatest compliance in ceremonies and unnecessary doctrines of doubtful disputations, and consequently, is far more regardable in that estimation and reception of persons either for Church-Communion, or the holy Ministry.

Touching Schism, let this be noted: It is not Secular power and interest, that of it self can constitute a true Church or Pastor, nor can it excuse those that are born up by it from Schism when they act Schismatically, and do all that they can to continue the snares of division; neither are all they without more ado to be accounted Schismaticks who are destitute of Secular power, and who cannot in all points observe the commandments of men, or neglect to give their necessary help in Christs service, when they are forbidden of men.

Schism is the causing of divisions in or from the Church, as the Apostle sets it forth *Rom. 16. 17.* Mark them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine that ye have learned: And let them be marked indeed whosoever they are. The guilt of it lies as much upon those that make unwarrantable separations; and they are most culpable that are the chief causers of the division; and such are they, who impose unlawful terms of Church-Communion and Ministerial liberty, and they also that rigorously impose such terms thereof, as Christ and his Apostles never warranted them to impose, either expressly or by consequence.

Let the case, of such as are cast and kept out of a Church by wrong sentence, or by imposition of unlawful terms of communion, or unnecessary terms, that are unlawful to them by unremovable doubts of conscience, be considered, for such a case may be:

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What shall they do? Must the unrighteousness of others be a perpetual bar to them against the injoyment of those priviledges, to which they have a right before God? Why may they not lawfully enjoy Gods ordinances in distinct assemblies, if they hold them peaceably and charitably?

Let the case of such Ministers as are cast and kept out of the Ministry by the imposition of unlawful terms, or unnecessary terms that are unlawful to them by unremoveable doubts of conscience, be considered, for this case also may be: What shall they do when they are under an obligation to Christ to fulfil their Ministry; and when the necessities of souls make theirs, as well as others ministry to be necessary, and when all the help that can possibly be given both by them and by those that dissent from them, is little enough? Every pastor tho he be under the publick judgment of Superiors, hath a judgment of discretion also ( that is to say, a right of discerning ) about his own call and obligation to this service.

Let it be here also considered, whether the necessary means of saving souls, such as is the due preaching of the Gospel, be not incomparably more precious than uniformity in matters of opinion and ceremony, and accidental order.

There is a great difference between inimical segregation, like sedition in a Commonwealth; and a going severally upon weighty reasons, and without breach of charity: And among other weighty reasons this may be one, That all Christians of sound faith and good life, that are dissatisfied about some humane injunctions and orders in a Church, may not for lack of tender regard towards them, be utterly abandoned and exposed to be led aside into the errors of the wicked, as to heresie, apostacy or a course of irreligion.

It is in the power of Rulers to grant this Indulgence to such Dissenters, when it is not in the power of Dissenters to change their judgments. And this is not to set up Church against Church, or according to an ancient manner of speaking, Altar against Altar; but only either occasional and temporary Assemblies, or at the most but divers Churches distinguished by their several places of Assembling, as one Parish-church from another; and by diversity of External Order, as the allowed Congregations of Foreigners in *London* from the Parish-churches. The same true Religion for the substance thereof, is exercised; and the same holy ends are



are pursued in the one and the other. And there will be no opposition between them, but what an unchristian Enmity proceeding from Worldly lusts and interests will produce.

If any object the inconveniencies that may follow the permitting of Church-Assemblies besides those of the established Order, I have this to reply: 1. Our Rulers may so provide, if the Clergy would not gainsay, that few may stand in need of that permission, in comparison of those that now do; and the way is to fix the terms of Church-communion and Ministerial Liberty, so as to comprehend all sober Protestants; and this is done by requiring no more as necessary to the one or the other, than what Christ hath made necessary thereunto. 2. After such Comprehension settled, the Toleration of all tolerable Dissenters within such limits as will secure publick peace and safety, is more agreeable to the wisdom and clemency of Rulers, and the charity of Christians, than the Rigorous constraining of the said Dissenters to what they cannot bear, and the restraining of them from the liberty of serving God according to their consciences. 3. But if the present state of things must continue, the inconveniencies that may follow the present practise of the Protestant Nonconformists, are far less than what will follow the deserting of their Ministry, and the neglect of souls in so great a need of their help.

The considerations foregoing I submit to the judgment of impartial Readers, in reference to the case of Protestant Nonconformists, of whom I am. Moreover, I judg it necessary to give some account of my own principles and practise. I have not wilfully forsaken my Ministerial station in the established Order, but am driven from it. I am ready to make Oath before any that have power to administer it to me, That my conscience is not satisfied, that it is lawful to observe all the terms that are imposed. Let it be noted, That I do not affirm the unlawfulness of the terms; but that they are unlawful to me in regard of my conscience, and I am ready to render Reasons of my dissatisfaction. It hath been alledged, That so much hath been written for Conformity, as may satisfie any that have a mind to be satisfied: But I profess in his sight, who knows my heart, That I have a mind to be satisfied if I knew how.

I set up no Faction or severed Party against the common interest of Religion; but according to my mean ability I seek the edification, peace and concord of all Christians of all persuasions, and the



increase of true godliness among them all.

I renounce not Parochial Churches as no true Churches ; I have not forsaken the communion of such Churches, nor encouraged others to forsake them ; but have communicated with them in the Worship of God, and so shall do : and this my principle and practice I am not sparing to declare to my friends that are of another mind in this particular. Nevertheless where a Parish Minister is utterly unmeet for the charge of souls, I cannot encourage any to commit the charge of their souls to him. But as for all conscientious and faithful Conformists, I highly prize them for their works sake, and seek to promote their Reputation, and the success of their Labours.

I will thankfully accept the liberty of Ministerial employment in the said Churches, when it shall be granted me. And for the obtaining of my liberty, I am ready to submit not only to whatsoever is *in specie* or particularly enjoined in Gods word, but to whatsoever is necessary *in genere*, and left *in specie* to humane determination, if it be determined according to the general Rules of Gods Word.

I have given an account of my self according to the latitude of my own principles ; but I have not done it to the prejudice of others that are of sound faith and good life, but of narrower principles touching *Church-government* ; for by the considerations here propounded, their due liberty is provided for.

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

I AM licensed by the King to be a Teacher, and to teach in any place licensed and allowed by him. His Majesty hath declared the same to be grounded on his Supremacy in Ecclesiastical Affairs. In the last Law against Conventicles it is provided, That neither that Act, nor any thing contained therein, shall extend to invalidate or avoid his Majesty's Supremacy in Ecclesiastical Affairs. Of my License granted by his Majesty, there hath been no Revocation that I know of. If upon Reasons of State it hath seemed good to his Majesty to grant no more Licenses since such a time:



a time, I do not see that it follows thereupon that he hath made void the Licenses that he hath granted.

His Majesty hath graciously declared, *That he had stemberted effects of one years Indulgence, than of many years severity before that time.*

Tho the Parliament were dissatisfied in the way of the Kings granting the Indulgence; yet they approved the thing it self, and accordingly passed a Bill for the grant of it; who by occasion of their speedy Recess it passed not into a Law.

It appears that the Parliament hath the matter of Indulgence, or Liberty to Dissenters, still under consideration, by the Bill of Comprehension, which at their last meeting was voted in the Houe of Lords, with the concurrence of divers Bishops; but their Prorogation hindered the compleating thereof.

Now when this is the sense both of King and Parliament about this matter, I humbly hope that our Superiors will take it into their prudent consideration, and be favourable to honest and peaceable people under their Jurisdiction.

But supposing, tho not granting, that my License is not in force; I proceed to some other considerations.

I acknowledg the Kings Supremacy in all causes, and over all persons Civil and Ecclesiastical.

As the power given to Spiritual Pastors, is declared in Scripture to be given for edification, and not for destruction; so the power given to the Civil Magistrate in matters Ecclesiastical, is given to the same intent.

As in Naturals, the inferior subordinate causes have no power of acting against the efficacy of the Superior; so in Morals the inferior Ruler hath no authority against the Superior. Therefore if Magistrates, being all of them subordinate to God, shall command any thing contrary to his Law, such their command cannot beget an obligation on the subj. & to fulfil it, tho the subject must not Resist their power.

The Civil Magistrate, notwithstanding his Authority in Ecclesiasticks, cannot discharge any Minister of the Gospel from the exercise of his Ministry in those circumstances wherein Christ commands him to exercise it.

The Civil Magistrate is to judg what laws are fit for him to enact and execute about Ecclesiastical matters, and the Ministers of the Gospel have a right of discerning, which is called a judgment of



discretion, about their own pastoral acts, what they ought, and what they ought not to do, according to Gods word, otherwise they must be held obliged to a Blind, Popish, Brutish Obedience.

But whatsoever the Ministers discern to be their duty to do, they ought to do the same only in such ways as are consistent with their Loyalty to God and the King.

The Bishop hath no external jurisdiction in his publick Courts, but what is derived from the King as Supream; and the Ecclesiastical Laws, by which the Bishop is to proceed, are the Kings Ecclesiastical Laws. Consequently no Minister, that lives under any Bishops Jurisdiction which is but derived, can be obliged to obey the Bishop proceeding in his Court, any further than he is obliged to obey the King, who hath the supreme jurisdiction under God and Christ, and that is no further than is consistent with obedience to God.

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**I** Presented this clear and open defence with desire and expectation of his Lordships answer in writing according to his promise, ( as I apprehended ) but he refused to receive it. I trust through the grace of God, that I am ready to renounce any error, whereof I shall be convicted, and to receive any truth that shall be made manifest to me. And I give this account before men in the sense of that great account which I must give to the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, who searcheth the hearts and reins, and will give unto every one according to his works.

FIN IS



*Several Tracts not yet Printed, prepared for the Press, and left under Mr. John Corbet's own hand-writing, 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. Matrimonial Purity.

*Those already lately Printed of Mr. John Corbet's, are,*

1. Kingdom of God among men, with a A Discourse of Church-Unity and Schism. 80.
2. Self-Employment in secret.
3. An Account given of the Principles and Practises of several Nonconformists.
4. 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.



