

To the Kings most Excellent Maiesty, and the Honourable Court of Parliament.

The humble Petition of many his Maiesties loyall and faithfull subiects, some of which having beene miserably persecuted by the Prelates and their Adherents, by all rigorous courses, for their Consciences, practicing nothing but what was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ, who was Lord of all Administrations, *Math. 28.19. and practiced by the Primitive Christians; submitting to his Maiestie and his Lawes, so farre as concernes our Estates, Libertie, and Lives; and so, as we conceive, give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsars, and to God those things that are his.*

First, then were our Religion as false as our Adversaries pretend, yet were that no ground to take away our Lives or Estates: for Securitie being had, for our Loyaltie to our Prince and COUNTRY (which when wee refuse to give, wee desire no longer to live) wee say, our Errors in Judgement were it proved against us (as wee are sure by the Word of God it can never be) were no ground for Persecution; as is cleare by the Parable of the Tares and Wheat, *Math.13.* By the Tares, must needs be understood men professing a false Religion: which when some desired to have pluckt up, the Lord declared his mind to the contrary, and gave command they should be let alone, and grow with the Wheat unto the, Harvest in the World, not in the Church, lest men undertaking to pluck up the Tares, wanting wisdome to distinguish, should pluck up the Wheat in stead thereof, as it hath and shall come to passe: according to the words of Christ, which sheweth, that some shall be blindly devoted, as to kill the Saints, thinking they doe God service; and therefore Christ will have the Tares let alone with the Wheat until Harvest: Then who, without sinne, can attempt to pluck them up, before that time? And this doth no way contradict Gods Word, which saith, That the Magistrates are Gods Ministers, to take vengeance on them that doe evill: the Tares being sinners against God in false Religion, whom he hath reserved to be punished with flaming fire at the day of Christ; the other being trespassers against men, and are justly to be punished by the Magistrate.¹

Secondly, the same Christ our Lord commandeth, That those that are blindly led on in a false Religion, and are offended at him for Teaching his, should be let alone; and referreth their punishment, to the falling into the Ditch.²

Thirdly, the Lord Christ reproveth those Disciples, that would have had Fire come downe from Heaven, and devoure those *Samaritans* that would not receive him, in these words; Ye know not of what spirit ye are, for the Sonne of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them. Which sheweth plainly, that Christ would have no man hurt for Religion, yea, though they were refusers of himselfe.³

Fourthly, when the Lord Christ sent forth the Twelve to preach the Gospel of the Kingdome, this is the utmost that he directed them unto concerning those that should refuse to heare their words, namely, to shake off the dust of their feet for a Testimonie against them, leaving their further punishment to the Day of Judgement. This was cleare under the Law, where none was compelled to the worship of God by the Authoritie of the Magistrate, but as the Lord did perswade the heart by his Word. And as this was so under the Law, much more in the time of the Gospel, the Body being of Christ: as first, by the Commission of Christ given to the Apostles; where Christ sheweth, though all power in Heaven and Earth was his, yet hee onely appoints

¹ *Math 18.17.1 Cor. 5.5. John 16.2. Rom. 13. 1 Thess. 1. 7, 8. Rom 2.8, 9, 16. Rom.13.1. 1 Pet. 2.13, 14.*

² *Math 15.14.*

³ *Luk. 9.54, 55, 56.*

Preaching the Gospel for the gathering his Churches throughout the world: according to *Pauls* words, where hee faith, The Weapons of our Warfare are not carnall, but mightie through God, to the pulling downe of strong Holds, casting downe Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it selfe against the knowledge of God.⁴

Againe, the same Apostle commandeth, That the servant of the Lord strive not, but be gentle towards all men, suffering the evill, instructing with meeknesse the contrarie-minded, proving if God at any time will give them repentance, that they may acknowledge the Truth, and come to amendment, out of the snare of the Devill. Which plainely sheweth, that Repentance must be continually waited for, and not constrained by violence or persecution; and that because Repentance is the gift of God, and cannot be given by man: and therefore Religion not to be forced or compelled.⁵

According to these Commands, the holy Prophets fore-told, That when the Law of *Moses* should cease in matters of worship, and the Law of the *Messias* should be set up in stead thereof, that then the carnall Weapons should cease, They shall breake their Swords into Mattocks, and their Speares into Sythes, Nation shall not rise against Nation, neither shall they learne Warre any more; They shall fit every man under his Vine, and under his owne Fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; There shall none hurt nor destroy in all my holy Mountaine, for the Earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Seas. Which when Christ came, he taught and practiced, and so did his Apostles and servant: Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my Soule is well pleased; I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew Judgement to the *Gentiles*; he shall not strive nor crie, neither shall any man heare his voice in the streets; a bruised Reed shall he not breake, and smoking Flax shall he not quench, till he send forth Judgement unto Victorie. Advising them to be so farre from persecuting those that should oppose, and not be of their Religion, that when they were persecuted they should pray, when they were cursed they should blesse, leaving the Judgement to God.⁶

The reason of all is, They who are now blind, may see; They who now reject the Truth, may receive it; They who are now Tares, may become Wheat; They who are now in the snare of the Devill, through wicked workes, and Adversaries to the Truth, may hereafter come to Repentance; They that are now Idolaters, as the *Corinthians* sometimes were, may hereafter, as they, become true worshippers of God, obtaining mercie as the Saints have done: for some come not till the Eleventh Houre, though some came at the First, Third, and Sixt Houre, yet some not till the Last which, should they be put to death, because they come not with the First, they then would be prevented from coming at all.⁷

It is affirmed by King *James* of famous memorie, in his Speech at the Sessions of Parliament, Anno 1609. That it is a sure Rule in Divinitie, that God never loves to plant his Church with violence & Bloudshed.

Againe, in his Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance, *Pag.4.* speaking of those Papists that tooke the said Oath, faith; I gave a good prooffe for it, that I never intended persecution for Conscience cause, but onely desired to be secured of them for Civill obedience. It was usually

⁴ *Math.* 10.14, 15. *Gen* 9.27, *Exo.* 35.5. 21, 22, 29. *Levit* 3.1. *Coloss* 2.17. *Psal* 18.44 & 110.3. *Mat* 28.19, 20.

⁵ *2 Cor* 10.4, 5. *2 Tim* 2.24. *Ephes.* 2.5.

⁶ *Isa.* 2.4. *Micha* 4.3, 4. *Isa.* 11.9. *Isa.* 42.1, 2, 3. *Math.* 12.18, 19, 20. *2 Tim.* 2.24, 25, 26. *2 Cor.* 10.4. *Rom* 12.14 to the 20.

⁷ *Acts* 8.3. *Acts* 9.5, 6. *1 Cor.* 6.9. *1 Pet.* 2.10. *Math.* 20.6.

the condition of the Christians to be persecuted, but not to persecute. And lamentable it is to see the folly of late times, and we cannot but grieve at the folly of men, who thinke by humane Inventions, and carnall aide of Lawes and Statutes, to helpe God, and with worldly power and pompe to defend the Churches of Christ; as if he by his owne power were not able to doe it, and to performe his own will.⁸

The Church of Christ hath formerly been knowne, by enduring Miserie and Imprisonment; but it is the marke of the Church of Anti-Christ, to terrifie others by Imprisonments, Banishments, and Persecutions, boasting her selfe, that she is highly esteemed in the world, whereas the true Church cannot but be hated of the same.⁹

It was commanded by the Law, If a man met a betrothed Damsell in the field, and the man force her, he was to die: Then what shall those expect, that shall force the Conscience, the Spouse of Christ?¹⁰

The example of many Nations, both in Scripture, and at this day knowne, may suffice to suffer the Conscience free: *Abraham* lived in *Egypt*, in *Gerar*, among the *Philistines*; after, with the *Hittites*: *Lot* in *Sodom*; *Isaac*, in *Gerar*; *Israel*, in *Egypt* 430 yeeres; after, in *Babylon* 30 yeeres; yet never constrained in their Religion. Also in the dayes of our Saviour, how many Religions were there in that Empire of *Casars*, yet not by him persecuted, or constrained to his Religion.¹¹

It was the Judgement of *Luther*, That the Lawes of the Civill Magistrate extended no further then over the bodies and goods, and that which is externall; for over the Soule, God will have none to rule but himselfe. And therefore, where-ever the Civill Magistrate undertaketh to set Lawes for the Soules and Consciences of men, he usurpeth that Government and Authoritie to himselfe, which appertaineth onely to God.¹²

And therefore wee conceive it the highest of Antichrists impietie, sitting in the Temple of God as God, shewing himselfe that he is God, 2 *Thess.* 2.4. in giving Lawes to the Conscience, which is Gods Prerogative.

In the building of the Temple, there was no sound of Iron heard, to shew, that Christ will have in his Church a free consent, not compelled nor constrained by Lawes and Statutes, for the Kings of the Earth shall bring their glory unto it.¹³

Againe, the Churches of Christ must looke for suffering, with every particular member thereof, as he himselfe did, who is their Head, being thereby made perfect, being the way and means that God hath appointed to publish the Gospel: Which caused the Fathers to say, The Blood of the Martyrs was the Seed of the Church.¹⁴

Therefore Christians are to be exhorted, not compelled: for he that will not doe that whereunto he is exhorted and perswaded, the Gospel injoying, is no true Christian as yet; and they that goe not this Gospel way, to perswade men by exhortation and counsel, but seeke to doe it by constraint, shew themselves not Gospel Teachers.¹⁵

For consider, if an earthly King will take it so ill, as surely he may at his subjects hands, to have any equalize themselves with him, or to make Lawes for his subjects to be guided and

⁸ *Math.* 26.52, 53, 54.

⁹ *John* 15.18, 19. *Revel.* 13.3.

¹⁰ *Deut.* 22.25. *Hosea* 2.19. 2 *Cor.* 11.2.

¹¹ *Gen.* 20. *Gen.* 13. *Gen.* 13. *Gen.* 26.

¹² *Psal.* 89.27. *Isa.* 33.22. *Phil.* 2.9. 2 *Tim.* 3.16. *James* 4.12. *Rev.* 22.18, 19.

¹³ *Deut.* 27.5 *Josuah* 8.31. *Isa.* 60.11. *Revel.* 21.24.

¹⁴ *Rom.* 8.29. *Phil.* 3.10. *Heb.* 3.10.

¹⁵ 2 *Tim.* 2.24.

ruled by ; how much more the King of Kings, Christ Jesus, by whom alone Kings reigne, will suffer himselfe to be displaced, and an earthly King placed therein?¹⁶

Thus wee conceive it is cleare, That no man ought to be forced in matter of Religion, the Gospel being spirituall, and requireth onely spirituall worshippers, like to it selfe: which cannot be made so, but by the Word and Spirit of God, which breatheth where and when it listeth, and not where and when mens Lawes and Statutes pleaseth; which may make hypocrites, but not true Christians.¹⁷

Give glory to God through Jesus Christ alone, Phil. 3.3

By *Edward Barber*, sometomes Prisoner in *Newgate* for the Gospel of Christ.
In all humilitie submitting to better Judgements.

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¹⁶ *Duet. 4.2. Prov. 30.6. Rev. 22.18, 19.*

¹⁷ *John 4.24. John 3.8. 2 Cor. 5.10. Gal. 1.10.*

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