

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.

JOHN CORBET, 1619 - 1680

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## C O N T E N T S

Introduction	1
Synopsis	2 - 9
<hr/>	
Chapter	
I	The Place and the Period 1
II	Corbet's Life and Writings 4
III	Corbet the Historian 16
IV	Disruption in Church and State 54
V	Disruption in Gloucester - Corbet and Bacon, 1644 63
VI	Corbet the Ecclesiastic. A. B. C. D. E. 67
VII	Corbet and the Two-Kingdom Theory 127
VIII	Corbet, Theologian and Expositor 142
IX	Corbet and the Ethical Teaching of the Puritans 152
X	Corbet - The Man Self-Revealed 158
Conclusion	163
<hr/>	
Appendix	
A	Nonconformists' Plea for Lay Communion 164
B	Of the Cross in Baptism 166
C	Accounts of Deprived Ministers 169
D	Enquiry into Oath required by act made at Oxford 173
Bibliography	174

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose here designed is to record the life and work of John Corbet particularly in his endeavour to find a permanent remedy for the great religious embitterment of his day. Save for a few scattered records, no attempt has been made previously to collect the facts. That he is worthy of recognition is abundantly evident. That his writings could not be ignored owing to his commanding influence at the time is proved by the replies they evoked.

SYNOPSIS

J O H N C O R B E T

1619 - 1680

## JOHN CORBET 1619 - 1680

### CHAPTER I

#### The Place and the Period

The place is the old world City of Gloucester with its Roman Roads and Walls, Abbey, Cathedral etc. Near to the Cathedral is a monument to Bishop Hooper who was burnt at the stake by Queen Mary in 1555. Bishop Hooper began the Puritan movement which became a tradition. Godfrey Goodman (1583-1656) was Bishop from 1625 to 1643. On June 4th, 1642, Goodman ordained John Corbet.

### CHAPTER II

#### Corbet's Life

Corbet was born in Gloucester, 1619, and educated at the Local Grammar School. In 1636 he went to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he became a Batteler (rank or order of Students below Commoners), became B.A. in 1639 and took Holy Orders. In 1640 became incumbent of St. Mary de Crypt and Usher in Crypt Grammar School. When Gloucester was garrisoned for the Parliament Corbet was appointed Chaplain to Colonel Massey and wrote an account of the Siege of Gloucester from August 10th to September 5th, 1643. After the war he removed to Bridgewater and Chichester, then to Bramshot in Hants, obtained his B.D. ejected from Bramshot in 1662. He obtained a general licence

authorising him to preach in 1672. He died in 1680.

### CHAPTER III

#### Corbet - The Historian

Gloucester was of great military importance owing to its geographical position. It was the only place held by Parliament between the West and Lancashire. After Edge Hill (October 23rd, 1642) its importance became supreme owing to its influence upon the Welshmen as well as its military considerations. Corbet wished to show the Hand of God in the affairs of his native town and this led him to write his Historical Relation. He did not set out to be an historian but his account is of great value.

### CHAPTER IV

#### Disruption in Church and State

From meeting of Short Parliament April 13th, 1640

Abolishing of episcopacy was believed to be the only means of securing the protestant character of the State and Church. Three parties in the Church (1) High Church Party, (2) Moderate or broad Church Party, (3) The Root and Branch Party. London was the stronghold of the last-named, though many towns joined, also Lancashire and Cheshire. On August 22nd, 1642, the Royal Standard set up at Nottingham and the first Civil War began. Solemn League and Covenant, September, 1643. Presbyterianism accepted by both Houses, August 19th, 1645, but system not generally put into operation.

## CHAPTER V

### Disruption in Gloucester

#### Corbet and Bacon, 1644

Religious life of Gloucester, striking illustration of divisions. Baxter at first favourably impressed with Gloucester but later had to change his views. In July, 1644, Roger Bacon who had been a Minister in Bristol for several years came to Gloucester. His preaching led to controversy and he was compelled to appear in the Cathedral before Military Governor, etc. to answer questions which Corbet had assisted to prepare. Bacon compelled to leave Gloucester. He wrote "The Spirit of Prelacy yet working" (1646) to which Corbet replied in "A Vindication of the Magistrates and Ministers of the City of Gloucester". [1646]

## CHAPTER VI

### Corbet - The Ecclesiastic

(A) Ecclesiastical situation in 1660 - the defeat of Presbyterianism. Corbet early in the field to secure recognition of Presbyterianism and a moderate Episcopalianism. In "The Interest of England in the matter of Religion" (two parts, 1660) he propounds three questions (1) Whether the Presbyterian Party should in justice or reason of state be rejected and depressed, or protected and encouraged. (2) Whether the Presbyterian Party may be protected and encouraged and the Episcopal not deserted nor disobliged. (3) Whether the upholding of both

parties by a just and equal accommodation be not in itself more desirable and more agreeable to the State of England than the absolute exalting of the one Party and the possible subversion of the other.

(B) In 1661 Roger L'Estrange (1616 - 1674) a Tory Journalist replied in "Interest Mistaken or the Holy Cheat". In 1676 also there appeared a belated reply by Samuel Thomas (1627 - 1693) a non-juror, entitled "The Presbyterians Unmasked" or "Animadversions upon the Nonconformist Book called 'The Interest of England in the Matter of Religion'". Corbet also wrote "A Consideration of the present state of Conformity in the Church of England" which reveals his standpoint in 1662 as to why he could not conform.

(C) Corbet wrote "The Discourse of Religion" in 1667, asserting that reformed Christianity settled in its due latitude is the stability and advancement of this Kingdom. He does not wish to undermine episcopacy but some indulgence to dissenters is submitted for consideration. This was replied to in 1668 by Richard Perrinchief. Perrinchief was a Royalist Divine, who replied to Corbet's plea for toleration in a "Discourse of Toleration", in answer to a late book entitled "A Discourse of the Religion of England". 'The Discourse of Toleration' by Perrinchief was followed by Corbet's "A Second Discourse of the Religion of England" in 1668. This further asserted that reformed Christianity is the stability of the Kingdom and included an answer to a "Discourse of Toleration".

Comprehensiveness of the establishment and the allowance of a just latitude to dissent is the best remedy against dissenters.

Corbet's "Second Discourse of the Religion of England" 1668, was followed in that year by another from Perrinchief "Indulgence not justified". Corbet and Baxter tried to arrange accommodation between Presbyterianism and the Church of England on the basis of comprehension, in the hope that when that was achieved it would be easier to deal with the case of the Independents who were to look after themselves in the meantime as they were quite able to do.

(D) In the same year, 1668, an anonymous writer replied to Corbet's "Discourse on the Religion of England" (1667) under the title "Dolus an Virtus" an answer to a Seditious Discourse concerning the Religion of England and the settlement of Reformed Christianity in its due latitude". The writer was perhaps an Anglican but he presents the case of the Independents very well. <sup>HE SAYS,</sup> [Presbyterians are reported to be but Popish Jesuits.] "Dolus an Virtus" cannot distinguish between toleration and connivance suggested by Corbet who would have Presbyterians put into the comprehensive state, with the Independents only tolerated and that with careful restrictions. The Quakers are to be connived at. <sup>In fine,</sup> The Presbyterians wish to have special favour. "Why should they have pre-eminence" he asks "over the rest of the Dissenters; and by what right should they measure out their toleration and connivance more than the others do theirs?" His point is that if Presbyterians were admitted to the Church as such, they would aim at Presbyterianising the whole.

(E) During the time Corbet was at Bramshot he was involved in controversy with Bishop Gunning, which Calamy records in the "Nonconformist Memorials" II page 333. Gunning gave a public challenge to the Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and Quakers, and appointed three days for the Disputation. Corbet undertook the defence of Presbyterianism and was harshly dealt with by Gunning who refused to hear him. Corbet wrote "A Defence of my Endeavours for the Work of the Ministry" which was printed with the "Nonconformist Plea for Lay Communion" in 1683. The whole point of his defence was that he had not violated any of his oaths, that he had been properly ordained according to the established Church of England, and that he was under a perpetual obligation which was the determining motive of his action in preaching.

## CHAPTER VII

### Corbet and the Two-Kingdom Theory

Relation and distinction between the Church and State.

- (1) The Magistrate's authority in Ecclesiastical matters.
- (2) The performance of Civil Offices by Ecclesiastical persons.

Thomas Edwards (1599-1647) declares in Antapologia that the Presbyterians give to the Magistrate a coercive and co-active power to suppress heresy etc. etc. Cartwright says "The Prince and Civil Magistrate hath to see all the Laws of God, touching His Worship and all matters and orders of the Church be executed and duly observed and to see that every Ecclesiastical person

do that office whereunto he is appointed and punish those failing. (Reply page 192). Corbet says, Magistrate's power and Ecclesiastic's wholly different, not subordinate but collateral, Ministers subject to Magistrates and Magistrates to Ministers in divers respects. Samuel Thomas, above referred to, wrote in the "Presbyterians Unmasked" accusing Corbet of setting up "Imperium in Imperio" for the Kirk may assume to themselves the power of judging whether there are such corruptions or no, etc.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Corbet - The Theologian and Expositor

Clash in the 17th Century. Many sectaries. Two chief parties Calvinist and Arminian, merciless in opposition, but there were men of the via media like Baxter and Corbet. Latter wrote "An Account of the Principles and Practices of Several Nonconformists" and "A Humble Endeavour of some plain and brief Explications of the Decrees and Operations of God". God is the cause of all good but God's part leaves man a free agent. In the "Kingdom of God among men" he refers to special grace which effects Conversion. The root of Godliness lies in regeneration and inward sanctification. Corbet wrote two brief expositions on portions of Jonah and John.

## CHAPTER IX

### Corbet and Ethical Teaching of the Puritans

Ethical teaching of Puritanism grew out of their Theology. Cartwright left no systematic treatment of Ethics. Old and New Testaments were inspired codes of Divine Law and only needed expounding. Doctrine of total depravity held that man was

utterly unable to keep God's Law. Puritan influence made lasting impression on the Sabbath, the Home, and Amusements especially the Drama. Corbet wrote on "Matrimonial Purity" - a good example of the Puritan ideal of marriage.

## CHAPTER X

### Corbet - The Man - Self Revealed

Soliloquies common in the seventeenth century. Corbet wrote "Self-Employment in Secret" published 1681 with preface by John Howe. This reveals Corbet's inner life and contains records under various dates.

Conclusion

Appendix A. B. C. D.

Bibliography

JOHN CORBET - 1619 - 1680

The Place and the Period

## CHAPTER I

### THE PLACE AND THE PERIOD

Our story opens in the picturesque cathedral city of Gloucester, pleasantly situated in the shadow of the Cotswold Hills on the East, with Malvern Hills on the North and far away to the West is the Forest of Dean and beyond that the beautiful Valley of the Wye. By the outskirts of the City the Severn makes its serene, unruffled course as it approaches the end of its journey to the sea.

Gloucester is an old-world city, with its Roman roads and walls, old taverns, quaint old houses and ancient abbey of mediaeval days. Above all stands the Cathedral "the Lighthouse of the Vale" a wonderful edifice destined to live for ever in the memory of the beholder. Inside one is awed by the massive grandeur of the nave, the chapels, and the choir. Immense Norman pillars uphold the remote vaulted roof. Here is the tomb of Edward II and Robert the Norman. There are the famous cloisters, gloomy crypt, old abbey chapels upon which the Cathedral is built, and the Chapter House where Domesday Book was ordered to be written.

Near to the Cathedral is a monument to Bishop Hooper who was burnt at the stake by Queen Mary in 1555, and opposite the monument is an old archway "Queen Mary's Gate" where the Queen is said to have watched the execution.

Gloucester is famous also as the birthplace of Robert Raikes. The old houses in which he started his Sunday School still stand.

The period of our story is no less interesting - the stirring times of the seventeenth century with its struggles, political and religious. Gloucester was Puritan and Parliamentary throughout. Bishop Hooper began the Puritan movement which became a tradition in the City.

James I was informed that "there was scarce ever a church in England so ill governed" and in 1616 on the death of Dean Field (1561 - 1616) he appointed William Laud (1573 - 1645) 'bidding him to reform and set in order what he found amiss'<sup>1</sup>

In January 1617 Dean and Chapter decreed "that the Communion Table should be placed altarwise at the upper end of the quire close to the East Wall ..... as was the custom in the royal chapel and in most of the Cathedral Churches." This gave great offence to Bishop Smith and the Puritan party in Gloucester. Smith who favoured the Puritans was Bishop from 1612 to his death in 1624. He protested that if any such innovations were brought into the Cathedral he would never more come within its walls, and is said to have adhered to his resolution.<sup>2</sup>

He was succeeded in 1625 by Godfrey Goodman (1583 - 1656)

<sup>1</sup> Laud's Works IV 233 Victoria County History of Gloucester 32

<sup>2</sup> Victoria County History of Gloucester, 33

who held the See during the troublous times of the ensuing years. He was not a vigorous opponent of Roman Catholicism and in 1635 his intercourse with certain Roman Catholics gave rise to the suspicion that he was a secret member of the Roman Catholic communion.

In 1634, in his report to Laud of the diocese, Goodman said that "he had put down some lectures and put up others, but he knew not, nor could conjecture that there was any one unconformable man in all his diocese." "If it be true" commented Laud "It is a great clearing of those parts which have been so much suspected"<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless Goodman was not of the Laudian type, and in 1640 the Puritan party was strong in Gloucester. In that year Goodman was tried for refusing to sign or accept the canons. He was deprived of his See, but was restored in 1642. He became obnoxious to Laudian and Puritan alike, and his house was sacked in 1643, when he took refuge in Wales. During this upheaval Goodman ordained John Corbet on June 4th, 1642, but that is to anticipate, and it is time to retrace our steps.

1

Laud's Works V. pt. II, p. 330 - Victoria County History 34

CORBET'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

1619 - 1680

## CHAPTER II

### CORBET'S LIFE AND WRITINGS, 1619 - 1680

John Corbet was born in Gloucester in 1619<sup>A</sup>, and was baptized in Holy Trinity Church, February 14th, 1619. His father was a shoemaker named Roger Corbet who gave his son a good education, sending him to the local grammar school, the Crypt School in Southgate Street adjoining St. Mary de Crypt Church. According to Rudge, the Crypt School was founded by John Coke, Alderman of Gloucester, by whose will, dated May 18th, 1528, he directed, among other things, a school-house to be built in the parish of Crypt 'for a continual free school of grammar for the erudition of Children and scholars' (p. 126). In 1611 Alderman Lawrence Wilshire gave £100 for the establishment of an Usher in the same school (p. 127). The first name in the list of Ushers is Edward Barwell, elected September 22nd, 1613.<sup>1</sup>

In 1636 Corbet proceeded to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he became a batteller.<sup>B</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rudge: History and Antiquity of Gloucester B.M.10352 C.C.18.

<sup>A</sup> D.N.B. gives Corbet as born 1620 but the above date of baptism, 14th Feb. 1618/19 O.S. is confirmed by the Rector of St. Mary de Crypt in letter to writer, dated June 19th, 1930.

<sup>B</sup> Battler. A rank or order of students at Oxford below Commoners (New English Dictionary). "The Battlers are entitled to no commons, but purchase their meat and drink of the cook and butler, unless they serve a fellow or gentleman commoner, and then they may have the dishes which come from their tables. Of these battlers some are servitors who attend the Bachelors and Commoners in the Hall, for which they have an allowance". Salmon 'Present State of University' 1744.

He became B.A. Jan. 5th, 1639.<sup>1</sup> He took Holy Orders and became a lecturer in Gloucester. In 1619 the Corporation had provided that a yearly sum should be assigned for the maintenance of a lecturer to preach twice in the week in the City, on the ground that insufficient care had been taken 'for the settling and establishing of the public preaching of God's Word'<sup>2</sup>. These lectureships were founded by the Puritans in order that they might have the opportunity of hearing ministers of their own persuasion, and as a further indication of the times, in 1641 Gloucester was one of eleven counties to send a petition to Parliament asking for the abolition of Episcopacy.

In 1640 Corbet became incumbent of the 12th Century Church St. Mary de Crypt, and Usher in the Crypt Grammar School where he was associated with John Biddle (1616 - 1662) who only escaped capital punishment for his Socinian views through Cromwell and is regarded as the Father of Unitarianism. In the list of Ushers, John Corbet's name appears elected February 8th, 1640, and in the list of Masters John Biddle was elected May 25th 1641, and he continued till October 1645<sup>3</sup>.

Corbet began his Ministry in Gloucester as already said "under Doctor Godfrey Goodman (1583 - 1656) a Popish

<sup>1</sup> Wood Fasti Oxon I 507

<sup>2</sup> Victoria County History Gloucestershire  
Edited W. Page II 32.

<sup>3</sup> Rudge: History and Antiquities of Gloucester 129 - 30.

Bishop of the Protestant Church"<sup>1</sup> who declared himself a Romanist in his will. Goodman was at one time thought to incline to Presbyterianism<sup>2</sup>, and Corbet was ordained by him on June 4th 1642. The Gloucester records do not state whether Deacon or Priest, or if he advanced to the Priesthood - probably not, as in the case of Richard Baxter. Corbet simply says he was ordained Presbyter according to the form of Ordination in the Church of England.<sup>3</sup>

Corbet was little more than a youth yet he proved him self of more than usual ability. He was undoubtedly endowed with a large amount of practical sagacity and full of religious zeal.

When Gloucester was garrisoned for the Parliament "he was appointed Chaplain to Co. Edward Massey, the Governor, and preached violently against the Royalist cause, declaring that nothing had so much deceived the world as the name of a King, which was the ground of all mischief to the Church of Christ"<sup>4</sup>. Corbet's position as Chaplain enabled him to become fully acquainted with military events. His account of the siege of Gloucester from August 10th to September 5th 1643, when it was relieved by Essex, is of great interest and value. Gloucester was the only place between Bristol and Lancashire to with-

<sup>1</sup> Calamy. Nonconformist Mem. II (1802) 259

<sup>2</sup> Bibliotheca Gloscentrensis XX.

<sup>3</sup> Corbet 'The Point of Church Unity and Schism discussed (1679)61  
also "Defence of my Endeavours for work of Ministry 12.

<sup>4</sup> Wood. Athen. Oxon. I 673 cf. Ch. VI E.120

stand the King who personally besieged it for twenty-six days in vain.

After the war, Corbet removed to Bridgewater in Somerset, where he was appointed Minister but his stay was short, removing thence to Chichester. Here he is said to have been much frequented by Schismatics<sup>1</sup>. From Chichester he went to Bramshot in Hants as Rector, and while there supplicated for the degree of B.D. on May 14th 1658, which he obtained<sup>2</sup>.

In 1658 Corbet and John Hooke were added to the Commission in the County of Hampshire for ejecting scandalous, ignorant, and insufficient ministers"<sup>3</sup>. Turner states "We probably shall not be far wrong in saying that he was Rector of Bramshott for 1654-1662. That would put his Ministry in Chichester in the decade 1644-1654"<sup>4</sup>. He was ejected from Bramshott by the 'Act of Uniformity' in 1662. Calamy states he lived privately in and about London until King Charles's Indulgence. Nevertheless informers report him as preaching on May 27th 1664 at Mr. Bailey's in Ironmonger Lane, and on December 14th at the 'Seven Starres' on Ludgate Hill. In 1669 the Bishop of

<sup>1</sup> Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis VI

<sup>2</sup> D.N.B. does not know if he obtained B.D. but see Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714 p.328 for confirmation.

<sup>3</sup> Capes. Rural Life in Hampshire. 197.

<sup>4</sup> Turner. Original Records of Nonconformity III 536.

Chichester reports him as preaching with Mr. Reeves to a conventicle of "neere 200" of 'middle rank' held 'att the house of Roger Shotters in "Fernhurst" (Farnhurst) which is as far from Haslemere southward (on the Chichester Road) as Bramshott is South-West just off the great London-Portsmouth Road (Mr. Reeves had been his neighbour in the old times for when John Corbet was at Chichester Thomas Reeves was at Bognor).<sup>1</sup>

In 1672, Calamy tells us "a part of his old flock invited him to Chichester. The paper was put in by Edward Hobson and expresses their desire to have him licensed and inserts as a reason for granting the licence the fact that he was 'sometime minister of the City of Chichester'" It was not a special licence for a particular place but a general licence authorising him to preach in any place allowed or licensed - whether in Gloucester, Chichester, Bramshott, Farnhurst or London.<sup>1</sup>

G. L. Turner gives the following copy of Licence document.<sup>2</sup>

"Mr. John Corbet sometimes Minister of the  
Citty of Chichester in the County of  
Sussex desires a Lysence to preach and  
pforme religious services in any lysensed  
place he is of, the Presbiterian pswation"

<sup>1</sup> Turner : Original Records of Early Nonconformity III 536

<sup>2</sup> Turner : Original Records of Early Nonconformity III 535

Although we have evidence that Corbet was not idle after his ejection yet he 'lived privately' during this time until the death of his first wife.

Afterwards Corbet went to live, probably as Chaplain, in the house of Sir John Micklethwaite, President of the College of Physicians. He subsequently resided with Alderman Webb at Totteridge in Hertfordshire and for his second wife married a daughter of Dr. William Twysse (Prolocutor to the Westminster Assembly). Baxter also later moved to Totteridge. He and his wife lodged with a farmer until June 23rd, 1670, when they moved into a house of their own, and 'to their great comfort she (Mrs. Baxter) got Mr. Corbet and his wife to dwell with us' Mrs. Baxter and Mrs. Corbet seem to have fallen in love with each other at once, while to the men this renewal of acquaintance after so many eventful years was a deep delight.<sup>1</sup> Baxter says "In all the time he was with me I remember not that ever we differed once in any point of doctrine, worship or Government, ecclesiastical or civil, or that ever we had one displeasing word"<sup>1</sup>. The friendship was only separated by death. After Corbet's death in December, 1680, Mrs. Baxter welcomed the widow into her family circle once more and there she remained until Mrs. Baxter's death on June 14th, 1681, being present with Mr. Baxter who relates the following "As he with Mrs. Corbet and others stood by her bed, she cried out to him 'My mother is in Heaven and Mr. Corbet is

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Powicke. Richard Baxter: Under the Cross. 41. 42.

in heaven and thou and I shall be in heaven!"<sup>1</sup>.

We are indebted to the same authority<sup>2</sup> for a last glimpse of Mrs. Corbet in a letter she wrote to Baxter on November 1st 1685 addressed to his lodging in Southwark<sup>3</sup>.

Dear Sir,

I very thankfully received your most welcome letter ... a choice mercy still to be in your thoughts, and have a share in your remembrances. I often think, if it were now with me as it was in times past, how glad I should be of one of those hours with you, as formerly I passed over in silence ... I now hear from my good friend Mrs. Rand how wonderfully God doth uphold you under the present circumstances. The relation she gave me of it was a very great comfort to me and much refreshed me.

Your very thankful and much obliged  
friend and servant,

FRANCES CORBET

1 Ibid. 100

2 Ibid. p. 42

3 Baxter was then a prisoner in his lodging.  
MSS. (Letters) IV 13a. 14b.

This beautiful friendship has caused us to run far ahead.

On the publication of the licence granted by Charles II in 1672, Corbet, as we have seen, was invited to return to Chichester, where he was received with all his former popularity. He soon became involved in controversy with Bishop Gunning, (who was at Chichester from 1670-75,) on the subject of his Nonconformity to which Corbet was unbending in his loyalty. The Bishop had given a public challenge to the Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and Quakers. Corbet accepted it on behalf of the first-named, but after the Bishop had fired his own volley of invectives, Corbet was not permitted to speak. His 'Defence of My Endeavour for the Ministry' in answer to Bishop Gunning was printed in 1683.

Corbet continued his Ministry until November, 1680, when being dreadfully afflicted with the stone he journeyed to London to undergo an operation, but died soon after his arrival, on December 26th, 1680. He was buried in St. Andrews Holborn, and the funeral sermon was preached by Richard Baxter who held him in high regard for his piety, learning and humility. Baxter in his funeral sermon says Corbet 'was a man so blameless in all his conversation, that he never heard one person accuse or blame him, except for Nonconformity, - that he was of so great moderation and love

of peace that he hated all that was against it, and would have done anything for concord in the Church, except sinning against God and hazarding salvation.

Corbet is described "as a man of great moderation, a lover of peace, and advocate for catholic communion and union of saints, and of blameless conversation. He saw some things to approve and some things to dislike in all parties and valued not the interest of a party of faction"<sup>1</sup>.

Besides fulfilling his ministerial duties Corbet had the pen of a ready writer characteristic of his age, and a list of his writings is appended hereto. Corbet's writings are quoted freely in the following, in order that he may speak for himself. This seems the surest way of revealing the type of man he was, his views, convictions, disposition, and character.

<sup>1</sup>  
Neal: History of Puritans IV. 466.

CORBET'S WRITINGS

- 1645 An Historical Relation of Military Government of Gloucester  
B.M. E 306 (8) Williams Chethams
- 1646 A Vindication of Magistrates and Ministers of City of  
Gloucester from Calumnies of R. Bacon  
B.M. E 337 (15) Rylands
- 1660 The Interest of England in Matter of Religion  
B.M. E 2121 (3) Williams Edin.Univ. New.Coll.
- 1660 Second Part do. do.  
B.M. E 1857 (2) Edin.Univ.
- 1667 Discourse of Religion of England  
B.M. 873 e 58 (1) Edin.Univ. New Coll. Williams, Rylands
- 1668 A Second Discourse do.  
B.M. 873 e 58 (2) Edin.Univ. Williams
- 1679 The Kingdom of God among Men - The point of Church Unity &  
Schism discussed <sup>A</sup>  
B.M. 4406 aaa 21 Williams New Coll.
- 1681 Self Imployment in Secret  
B.M. 4411 a 22 Williams Chethams
- 1682 An Enquiry into the oath required of Nonconformists by an  
Act made at Oxford etc.  
B.M. 4105 bb 50 New Coll.
- 1682 Account given of Principles and Practices of Several Noncon-  
B.M. 4139 c 34 Williams formists
- 1683 Humble Endeavour of ... Explication ... of decrees ... of God  
Williams New Coll.
- 1683 Nonconformists' Plea for lay Communion  
Williams New Coll.
- 1684 Remains of Corbet from his own MSS.  
B.M. 3753 a. 7. Edin.Univ. Williams New Coll.

Note A In one volume entitled "Sound Religion".

THE CONTENTS OF THE SEVERAL TRACTS IN MR. CORBET'S REMAINS

	Page
(1) A Discourse of the Church	1
(2) A Discourse of the Ministry	34
(3) A Discourse of Certainty and Infallibility	77
(4) The True State of Ancient Episcopacy	101
(5) A consideration of the present state of Conformity in the Church of England	136
(6) A Discourse of Divine Worship in three parts:	
(i) Worship in General	171
(ii) Of Idolatry	187
(iii) Of Superstition, less than Idolatry	209
(7) A short Exposition on Jonah 2. 1,2,3,4.	249
(8) Exposition on John 16.33	257
(9) An enquiry into the Oath required of Nonconformists, by an Act made at Oxford, wherein the true meaning of it, and the Warrantableness of taking it is con- sidered.	
(10) A plea for Communion with the Church of England &c. with a modest Defence of his Ministerial Nonconformity, and the Exercise of his Ministry, in Answer to the Bishop of Winchester's charge against him. (A)	
(11) Humble Endeavour of some plain and brief Explications of the Decrees and Operations of God about the free Actions of men, more especially of the Operations of Divine Grace.	
(12) The Principles and Practices of Nonconformity; wherein it appears their Religion is no other than what is Professed in the Church of England.	
(A) <u>Note:</u> Winchester is wrong. Should be Chichester where Gunning was Bishop 1670 - 5. cf. p. 8, 117, and Calamy's Non. Mem. II p. 333 - 7, and Palmer II p. 4.	

REPLIES TO CORBET

- 1661 INTEREST MISTAKEN Or the Holy Cheat . . . . observations  
upon 'Interest of England in matter  
of Religion' by Roger L'Estrange  
  
B.M. 851 d19
- 1668 DOLUS AN VIRTUS An answer to a seditious discourse  
concerning the Religion of England.  
  
B.M. 111 b53 33 pages
- 1668 A DISCOURSE OF TOLERATION  
In answer to a late book intituled  
'A Discourse of the Religion of  
England'  
  
by Richard Perrinchief  
  
B.M. 701 c42 (2)
- 1668 INDULGENCE NOT JUSTIFIED  
  
'by Richard Perrinchief'  
  
B.M. 701 c42 (2)
- 1676 THE PRESBYTERIANS UNMASKED  
Or Animadversions upon a Nonconformist  
Book called 'The Interest of England  
in the Matter of Religion' 1676  
  
by Samuel Thomas (1627 - 1693)  
  
B.M. 4136 a22 195 pages

III

C O R B E T

T H E H I S T O R I A N

As a remarkable feature of Corbet's "Historical Relation" is the paucity of dates, the following may be noted here:-

Aug. 22nd	1642	Charles erected standard at Nottingham and presently sent Rupert and Maurice to take possession of Worcester, which was favourable to him.
Sept. 21st	1642	Parliament demand Worcester - Refused - Earl Essex enters.
Oct. 20th	1642	Charles left Shrewsbury for London.
Oct. 23rd	1642	Battle of Edge Hill.
Oct. 29th	1642	Charles entered Oxford as Headquarters.
November	1642	Col. Thomas Essex becomes Governor of Gloucester. After a month he was ordered to Bristol.
December	1642	Earl Stamford succeeds Col. Thomas Essex. Massie succeeds Stamford as Deputy; and as Governor from July 26, 1643 to May 26, 1645.
Feb. 2nd	1643	Royalists take Cirencester.
Feb. 3rd	1643	Rupert demands Gloucester - refused.
Mch. 25th	1643	Massie takes 1500 Welsh prisoners to Gloucester.
July 13th	1643	Waller defeated at Roundway Down.
July 26th	1643	Bristol falls.
Aug. 10th	1643	King appears before Gloucester. Siege begins.
Aug. 29th	1643	Earl Essex left London to raise siege.
Sept. 5th	1643	Earl Essex relieves Gloucester.
Jan.-Sept.	1643	Charles treats with Irish R.C. 'The Cessation'.
Nov. 19th	1643	Attempt to corrupt Backhouse and take Gloucester.
April 1st	1644	Col. Purefoy's regiment sent to assist Massie.
May 26th	1645	Massie appointed to Western Command.
May 26th	1645	Massie took Evesham.



### III

#### CORBET - THE HISTORIAN

Calamy in "Nonconformist Memorial" II, 333, says, "Corbet had a considerable hand in compiling Rushworth's first volume of Historical Collections, which by competent judges is reckoned a masterpiece of its kind." Rushworth, however, gives no clue to the part undertaken by Corbet. The statement of Calamy would be quite in harmony with Corbet's interests, and his love of scholarship, and the work would be congenial to his tastes. But we are on surer ground when we come to the siege of Gloucester and Corbet's "Historical Relation" of that far-reaching event.

Corbet did not set out to be an historian, but only to record the events he witnessed as a testimony to God's Hand in the affairs of his native town. He also wished to perpetuate the heroism of his fellow-citizens who were inspired by religious motives. Dorney, the Town Clerk also wrote a "Brief and Exact Relation of Siege of Gloucester"<sup>1</sup> (1643).

<sup>A.</sup>  
Dorney was present during the siege and subsequently made "Certain speeches upon the day of the Yearly Election of Officers in the City of Gloucester." 1643 B.M. 291 a.52

<sup>1</sup> Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis. <sup>207</sup>

A. NOTE:  
Baxter spells Darney. He was Baxter's host during his month's stay there (July - August 1642)  
Rel. Bax I 41-42

In speech No. 1, October 3rd, 1643, Dorney says it is a city free from Popery, famous for fidelity and constancy in the cause of God and the Commonwealth. "Your City is a blessed City, a City Benedicta, the blessed of the Lord. He was in the midst of it when the enemies besieged it. He fought for you when they fought against you. He in His great mercy preserved you from their great fury ... When your passages were stopped on earth, there remained a way open to Heaven, to use the sweet expression of one of your Divines."

The whole county of Gloucester was engaged in the struggle of the Civil War, and the situation of its capital in the centre of an agricultural population mostly favourable to the king gave it a preponderating influence on the turn of events. Its inhabitants had long supported the Parliamentary cause as was the case generally with the merchants and manufacturers. Gloucester depended largely upon trade and manufacture and was in constant touch with the city of London and imbibed the spirit of both Houses of Parliament. The local gentry do not seem to have been able to counteract this to any degree. In religion also, Gloucester and indeed the county were zealously opposed to anything Laudian, and favoured "Presbyterianism" as popularly so-called.

When Gloucester was garrisoned for the Parliament, Corbet became Dinner Chaplain to Col. Edward Massey. Anthony A. Wood (1)

(1) Wood - Athenae Oxonienses, 2nd Ed. 1. p. 673 B.M.685 11.12.

says (vol. 1 page 673) "He preached seditiously, vilified the King and his party in a base manner and would several times say in common discourse and in the pulpit that nothing had so much deceived the world as the name of the King which was the ground of all mischief in the Church." Nevertheless in his "Historical Relation of the Military Government of Gloucester"<sup>A</sup> (which Corbet subsequently wrote) there is no evidence of partisanship. It is regarded as an accurate account of the siege, and all subsequent Historians have been indebted to his record which relates the events till the removal of Sir Edward Massey<sup>B</sup> (1619? - 1674?) to the command of the Western Association.

Corbet reveals a lofty motive in the opening pages of the 'Historical Relation', giving defence of religious freedom as one of the anti-monarchical principles of the Citizens of Gloucester ..... 'But some higher cause had a greater influence on the endeavours of many for a well-bounded freedom and regular privileges; a knowledge of things pertaining to Divine Worship according to the main principles of the Christian Profession, which religion is not according to the will of man, but grounded upon an unchangeable and eternal truth, and doth indispensably guide every soul to one law perpetual and constant." p. 9 - 10.

It will be noted that Corbet claimed that religious freedom must be 'well bounded' - which Lloyd, in his 'Brief

<sup>A</sup> Unless stated otherwise all references in this chapter are to Corbet's 'Historical Relation'.

<sup>B</sup> Corbet spells the name Massie.

Account of the Foundation of the Protestant Dissenting House in Gloucester, 1899', states indicates Corbet's opposition to Independants, Baptists and all the Sects.

This interpretation is, however, by no means certain, as Corbet may refer to the citizens' resentment against the arbitrary ceremonies of Laud. The context and their traditions are more favourable to this view, even though they did not favour the sectaries.

Corbet dedicates his History to the Mayor, Aldermen, Common Council and Burgesses of the City, who, in the action of those times, - which he states transcended the Barons' Wars and the tedious discords between the Houses of York and Lancaster, because undertaken on higher principles and for nobler ends, - have acted not the least part for the particular government, to their own safety and honour, but, by general acknowledgment, to the preservation of the whole Kingdom. He wrote that the worthy deeds of that time might be preserved and also to record for subsequent generations the providential manner in which Gloucester was preserved. Gloucester, he said, stood apart from all the other places, as the King possessed the whole of the West country, with its exception, from Bristol to Lancashire.

Corbet says "Gloucester lay in the heart of the enemies' country like a forlorn hope, and it was maintained not so much for its own sake or that so much ground might be

retained by Parliament, but to divide the King's Association, to stop his recruits, to scatter his forces, and continually distract the designs of his army" Not one place in the Kingdom (he says) has so much exhausted the enemy nor had similar advantage to ruin him. "It can pain them at the heart: 'tis a fire kindled in their bowels, that might eat out their strength had but a part of the great supplies sent elsewhere without effect, been sent thereto." Corbet is writing that "the day of small things" may not be forgotten.

Continuing, Corbet says The City of Gloucester first engaged itself in the common cause of Religion and Liberty, when the Houses of Parliament declared to the Kingdom their resolution of a defensive War. They were actuated by high principles and lofty motives, and were ready at all times to respond to the call of Parliament. The several Remonstrances of both Houses were received with all due respect, whereas no Declaration sent from the other Party, found the courtesy of a formal Entertainment. p. 6-7. The City had determined not to stand neutral but to join itself to one Party at all hazards.

Their situation and strength precipitated a decision lest it should be seized upon by the enemy whose eye was upon it, and so cast into perpetual bondage. The greatest part of the county acquiesced in the defence of their birth-rights and the privileges and power of Parliament against all invasions, usurpations and tyranny. p. 7.

The first pretended ground of difference between the King and Parliament was the ordinance of Militia "They desiring such Officers in whom the state might confide, and the King refusing to depose them that by himself were instructed." p. 7.

When the Commission of Array was about to be offered at Cirencester by Lord Chandos and some other disaffected (i.e. Royalist) gentlemen, it was crushed at once 'by the rude hand of the multitude'<sup>A</sup> Henceforth the full stream of the county ran for the Ordinance of the Militia and against the King's declarations and Commissions of Array. Most men foresaw greater hope of liberty from Parliament than from the King.

<sup>A</sup> (Aug. 23rd 1642. Bibli Glos. XXIII).

The inhabitants consisted chiefly of farmers, petty freeholders and such as use manufactures that enrich the county and pass through the hands of a multitude, a generation of men truly laborious and jealous of their property, whose principal aim is Liberty and Plenty. (9)

The City and County had been more fortunate than many other parts of the Kingdom in its Ministry, which bore fruit in morals. "Thus have we found that the Common People addicted to the King's Service have come out of Blind Wales and other dark corners of the Land."

Corbet fears one purpose of the enemy was the undermining of true religion by means of a blind and irrational worship that might bring forth an ignorant and slavish generation of men. He also deploras the lack of discipline and finds "the plague and mischief of the whole realm in a gross ignorance, and neglect of Military discipline, that might keep the body of the State in health and vigour". (11) He states that the trained bands, accounted the main support of the realm and bulwarks against invasion, were both effeminate and incapable, so lacking discipline that young and active spirits could surpass them in a couple of days' experience. He states soldiers were sent by Parliament to train the latter and the Militia, and a company of Volunteers was added to the trained bands in Gloucester and some pieces of ordinance from London and Bristol. The city, which was open on three sides, was fortified

by the citizens which proved both tedious and costly. This was when the enemy was only heard of from afar, and at that stage they little thought the place would become the seat of War. The first alarm was given from the city of Worcester which was entered by five hundred of the King's Horse, "at that season not the least part of his Majesties forces." His whole strength could not amount to the number of a just army, according to the slender proportions of those times, neither could they march like a set and perfect body, but flashed through the land as the lightning that strikes from one quarter of the Heaven to the other". p. 12.

In his narration Corbet says "the noise of a nearer enemy raised volunteers who marched towards Worcester<sup>A</sup> expecting to meet Colonel Nathaniel Fiennes with a strength of horse, but he had drawn off. But the volunteers again came on and with much confidence approached the town on the Welsh side of the Severn, supposing the Earl of Essex at hand to assault on the other side. In this they were deluded by a false message from the enemy at which instant also Prince Rupert arrived at Worcester. In consequence of

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Worcester from the outset was favourable to the King. On September 21st, 1642, Lord Say, Col. Fiennes, Col. Browne, etc., demanded entrance on behalf of Parliament and were refused by Lord Coventry and Sir William Russell. Worcester was for a time possessed by Parliament, but even then it remained Royalist at heart.

this deceit their Horse rushed upon an ambuscade, when through the straightness of the passage over a bridge near Powick and then through a narrow lane, neither the rear could be brought up, nor the van make a retreat. "There ensued" says Corbet, "a hot skirmish, performed with gallantry on our part. Persons of value were slain and taken, the rest wholly routed, and fled in confusion far beyond pursuit."<sup>A</sup> Corbet regarded this slight victory as a great advantage to the King "because the omen and first fruits of the War". The King's forces, however, learning of the approach of the Parliamentary Army quitted.<sup>B</sup>

<sup>A</sup> Reliq Bax I 42 contains detailed account, Baxter being an eye witness. He says "and though the enemy pursued them no farther than the bridge, yet they fled in grievous terror to Pershore, and the Earl of Essex's Life Guard lying there, took the alarm that the enemy was following them and away they went. This sight quickly told me the vanity of armies and how little confidence is to be placed in them. Upon this, Prince Rupert fetched off the Lord Byron and marched away, and the next day the Earl of Essex came to Worcester, with many Lords and Knights and a flourishing army, gallantly clothed, but never tried in Fight". Essex was accompanied by many excellent divines, as Stephen Marshall, Dr. Burges, Sedgwick, Dr. Spurtow, Perkins, Moor, Simeon Ash, etc.

<sup>B</sup> Clarendon says the encounter at Worcester made the name of Rupert very terrible as having gained an advantage over the Parliament, nevertheless Rupert moved off towards the King at Shrewsbury; but Clarendon's statement may be founded on a manoeuvre which brought temporary advantage. A thousand horse had been sent to Powick by Parliament to surround or intercept Rupert's retreat towards Herefordshire. A spy was sent falsely announcing that the Lord General had entered Worcester and if the Powick detachment would advance, the Royalists could be effectually cut off. Following this, they moved towards the city and a powerful ambuscade of horse and foot attacked them, killing twenty-five before they were aware of the snare. Another manoeuvre was practised on the Parliamentary army on the other side of the city which caused it to fall back four miles and Rupert thus prevented the two joining. Nevertheless Earl Essex arriving that night had only to wait till the next morning to make sure of entering the city without further treachery.

Corbet further records that the Royalists moved from place to place, as their inconsiderable number would scarcely allow them to erect any garrison; yet they increased by their rapid movement and gathered strength as they passed along, overcoming the contempt of their small numbers and by frequent execution gained the repute of a party not easily to be vanquished.

During this time the Parliament Army lay still or marched according to the slow paces of a greater body. p. 13.

The day after the above named skirmish, the Earl of Essex entered Worcester with his whole strength and there continued for a month. He sent forth several parties (as Lord Stamford to Hereford) to prevent the forces in South Wales, whilst the King lay about Shrewsbury and raised himself such an army as was able to deal with and endanger that main power raised by Parliament. p. 13.

Corbet further records that Edge Hill (October 23rd 1642) was the first large field of blood in these Civil Wars and though the King's Army was much broken, yet his strength increased and multitudes began to look towards him as one at leastwise possible not to be overcome p. 13.<sup>A</sup> After Edge Hill Colonel Thomas

<sup>A</sup> Reliq Bax 1 <sup>43</sup> Baxter visited Edge Hill the morning after the Battle "and found the Earl of Essex with the remaining part of his army keeping the Ground, and the King's army facing them upon the Hill a mile off; and about a thousand dead bodies in the Field between them: (and I suppose many were buried before); and neither of the armies moving toward each other. The King's Army presently drew off towards Banbury and so to Oxford. The Earl of Essex's army went back to provide for the wounded and refresh themselves at Warwick Castle (the Lord Brook's House).

Lord Brook was a zealous commander on side of Parliament and was killed (March 1643) leading an attack on Lichfield.

Colonel Thomas Essex marched into Gloucester from Worcester with the command of two regiments of foot soldiers as Governor of the Town, superceding the Deputy Lieutenants who still had the sole command of the County. In less than four weeks Essex was ordered to Bristol where the King's cause and party were favoured by two extremes, the wealthy and powerful and the basest and lowest. The middle rank "The true and best citizens" were for Parliament. Essex (a) took his troops with him and Corbet states "The City of Gloucester was thus again left 'naked' till the arrival of the Earl of Stamford (b) with his regiment of foot and two troops of horse from Hereford." The Earl was, however, at once commanded to the West, but the regiment remained under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Massie (c) who was at first Deputy Governor under Lord Stamford, and afterwards Governor for two years and six months "an

Notes:-

- (a) Colonel Thomas Essex who had been Governor of Worcester took command of Gloucester which had not previously had a Governor, in November, 1642.
- (b) Earl Stamford was appointed Governor of Gloucester, December 1642.
- (c) Massie succeeded Stamford, first as his Deputy and later, from July 26th 1643, to May 26th 1645, as Governor. He was a soldier of fortune, having served the King at York in 1642 as Captain of the Pioneers in Colonel William Wragge's Regiment. Massie was, however, a strong Presbyterian and, therefore, was opposed to Charles on religious if not on political grounds. He gained a great reputation in the defence of Gloucester. When Parliament appointed Massie as Lieutenant General of the West, the whole Garrison of the City of Gloucester petitioned for his continuance among them,

uninterrupted and happy Government."

Massie is described by Corbet as a Commander whose experience, fidelity, and valour, with indefatigable care and industry might answer the expectation of so great a trust with that regiment whose very name proved a terror to the enemy, and long enjoyed the honour of the most ancient regiment in the Parliament Army, though broken, torn and worn, with extraordinary duty and service. p. 15. He continues, "Oxford was the King's Head Garrison.<sup>A</sup> Herefordshire was possessed by his forces upon the first removal of the Earl of Stamford to Gloucester. Wales rose on the King's behalf 'by the power of Lord Herbert'. The Earl of Essex with his army withdrew towards London and so there remained for the Parliament in that part only two broken regiments at Bristol (which was much distracted by intestine divisions) and one regiment at Gloucester. This part of the country was thus left with a most slender guard and here the enemy resolved on their chief game for the winter's action. Corbet continues 'and if this country must be preserved, it must be done by volunteers' ..... but the greatest defect was the want of able and experienced officers, neither had they any Commander-in-Chief upon whom the hearts of the people might fasten. On the 1st of January, 1643, the King's

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The King entered Oxford as Headquarters Oct. 29, 1642.

army came to Cirencester resolved to storm it. After two days (January 3rd, 1643) they withdrew and then the Gloucester forces under Lieutenant Colonel Massie checked the attack on Cirencester by attacking Sudely Castle, at that time kept by Captain Bridges on behalf of Lord Chandos.<sup>A</sup> The Castle was besieged on January 29th, 1643, and after three days surrendered on condition that all should have liberty of person, return to their own house, leave all arms in the Castle and take an oath not to serve against the Parliament. Within two days Prince Rupert appeared before Sudely Castle with about four thousand horse and foot pretending an attempt to regain it, but marched his artillery towards Cirencester. Lieut. Col. Massie provisioned the Castle to defend it, and placing Colonel Forbes and a sufficient guard there retreated to Gloucester. After three days Prince Rupert came to Cirencester "a straggling and open town neither well fortified nor capable of defence".

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Washbourn in "Bibliotheca Gloucestersis" (1825) p. 27, Rylands R 13463, states "A vague account of the attempt of Lord Chandos to secure Gloucester, appeared in London and was printed and published by the House of Commons "Happy News from the City of Gloucester" December 22nd, 1642. A true discovery of the practices of Lord Shandoise to betray the City to the Cavaliers".

Corbet says "The Champaign country<sup>B</sup> round about was most advantageous to the horse in which the enemies' strength did chiefly consist. (p. 20). On the second of February, the town was assaulted and taken. The Welshmen, it was reported, suffered most "few of ours were slain in the fight but many were murdered after the taking of the town. Eleven hundred were taken prisoners and at least two thousand arms lost which the country had there laid up as in a secure magazine. The miserable captives were entertained with all despite and contumely according to the enemies' accustomed cruelty in the beginning of the War". p. 21.

The very next day after the loss of Cirencester (February 2nd, 1643) the City of Gloucester was demanded (February 3rd) by Prince Rupert ..... "The hearts of many sunk very low and began to lie flat. Zeal and Religion upheld some. All had a kind of will but the strong fidelity and resolution of the soldier at that

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Agricultural land was 'all champion' that is unenclosed by hedges. So "the citizen soldiers had to advance over an open plateau and consequently were subject to fierce attacks from Rupert's Cavalry". Trevelyan "England under the Stuarts". p. 254

time and in all the extreme hazards, upheld the garrison, p. 22. Colonel Massie replied to Rupert "They were resolved with their lives and fortunes to defend the City for the use of the King and Parliament and in no wise would surrender at the demand of a foreign prince."<sup>1</sup> A further answer was returned from the Mayor of the City (for the Martial Command was not fully settled) that he was resolved to keep the City in his Majesty's behoof and would not deliver the same according to this summons" p. 23. A second summons was received with like result.

Corbet says "Hitherto the city of Gloucester had been lodged in the midst of many out garrisons, as the heart in the body, but now it has enough to do to maintain its own safety." Sudely Castle had to be deserted. The garrison of Tewkesbury was surprised with alarm and defended only with 'such slender forces as Gloucester could spare out of its penury,' and at length (Feb. 1643) yielded to Sir William Russell of Worcester.

Worcester also was lost to Parliament. Corbet says the desertion<sup>2</sup> of Worcester increased the forces of Gloucester by two hundred foot and dragoons<sup>3</sup> and took off the fear of a greater mischief; for though the quitting of the place caused us to resent our great distress, yet the taking thereof would have confounded our thoughts, and hazarded the main chance where the whole strength did not lie at stake." p. 25

Corbet continues:- The enemy lay strong at Cirencester

<sup>1</sup> As Rupert was regarded.

<sup>2</sup> (i.e. surrender)

<sup>3</sup> Permitted to leave Worcester.

and Tewkesbury. "Our men were confined to the town walls (Gloucester). The works were not half finished. The soldiers within were mutinous and desperate. There were no monies coming from the state and but small supplies out of the country. The vilest mutineers therefore were to be dealt with by entreaty, their insolences suffered with patience. Their advantages were so great, by our extremity, that their humours had a full vent and ran forth into incorrigible wickedness. The City was constrained to free quarter and great disbursements by way of loan, and the Governor had to use his skill in keeping together the malcontented soldiers." p. 26.

"Now, moreover, the army raised in Wales by the power of the Earl of Worcester and his son Lord Herbert begins to appear, and is designed for Gloucester. It comes on at Coford, in the Forest of Dean three miles from Monmouth" The Welsh attacked and "drove our party before them so that it was borne down by their multitudes, yet with a greater loss on their part". Sir William Lawdy, Major General of South Wales was slain, and Lieutenant Colonel Winter,<sup>1</sup> and several officers and about forty soldiers were taken prisoners. "All

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Sir John Winter (1600? - 1673?) Secretary to Queen Henrietta Maria. Early in 1643 he was Lieut. Colonel of the Welsh forces raised by Marquis of Worcester. He strongly fortified his house at Lydney. He was hard pressed by Massie in April 1645 and fired his house, retiring to Chepstow, where he was for a time governor. D. NB XXI 685

the strength of these parts are now driven into the walls of Gloucester, and only Berkeley Castle is held still for an intercourse between us and Bristol. This City (Gloucester) was accounted one of the chief holds of the Kingdom, and far from the well-spring of succour, yet was there no care of a competent Brigade or Magazine, a common defect, by which the State hath received much detriment; that through the penury of men, arms and ammunition, remote garrisons are left in despair, otherwise the intention of the main army must be diverted for their relief."

p. 26. Gloucester was in this perilous condition when a great power of the Welsh Army "settled at Hignham House, within two miles of the city, and began to intrench. The Governor placed a guard at the Bishop's house to keep them at a distance. Sir Jerome Brett, their Major General had the confidence to demand the town, but the summons was received with scorn from a "Welsh<sup>1</sup> Brigade, and became ridiculous when Prince Rupert had been twice refused, besides an inveterate hatred by fabulous tradition had passed between the Welshmen and the Citizens of Gloucester". p. 27.

Prince Rupert had designs upon Bristol, but he was "drawn off to stop Sir William Waller's advance for our relief." p. 27. Several sallies were made on the troops at Hignham House. "The name of our Blue Regiment<sup>2</sup> became a terror to those miserable Welshmen, who were partly constrained to take up arms, partly allured with the hope of plunder." p. 28.

<sup>1</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>2</sup> "Blue Regiment commanded by Dennis Wise, Mayor of Gloucester". Bibli. Gloscen. XXXVI - XXXVII. "At Edge Hill every variety of hue was visible on the backs of Essex's army. The regiments of Denzil Holles and Lord Robartes had red coats, Lord Brooke's regiment purple coats, Lord Saye's blue, Col. Ballard's grey, Col. Hampden's green." Firth. Cromwell's army 233.

Immediately after the taking of Malmesbury Sir William Waller bent his course towards Gloucester: and gave notice of his advance to Lieutenant Colonel Massie and directions to keep the opposing force at Hignham well occupied. He also ordered that the flat-bottomed boats which were brought from London for service upon the river should be sent down to Frampton village, six miles below Gloucester. Massie attacked the Welsh at Hignham on March 23rd and 24th, 1643, and the place surrendered, nearly 1500 prisoners being taken to Gloucester (on March 25th). "Thus", says Corbet, "the first fruits of Wales were blasted, the strength of the nearer parts being almost vanquished, and the effects of this victory had been more lasting had it been used to the best advantage" (29).

There was difficulty regarding the accommodation of the prisoners; many of them were sent home "with an oath never to serve against the Parliament", others changed sides. This Victory "dashed the King's affairs in these parts" and increased the fame and reputation of Sir William Waller. "Sir Matthew Carew forthwith quitted the Town of Tewkesbury, which within twelve hours was repossessed by our forces, and Captain John Fiennes was commanded thither with a slender strength of horse and dragoons" (p. 30).

Hereupon a Royalist force of horse under Lord Grandeston from Cheltenham marched upon Tewkesbury, while Sir William Waller advanced towards Monmouthshire about the first of April, 1643, with the object of reducing those parts to the obedience of King and Parliament. The garrison at Monmouth took flight.

He stayed there a while and sent several parties abroad for supplies of money, then marched to Usk. "But the reducing of the country came to nothing, for the gentlemen did not perform, and he found there what usually comes to pass in such cases, that men desirous of alterations invite help upon ample promises, but they never make them good, and seldom appear in the business till the Soldier hath done the work to their hands, or they have gotten some strong hold to secure their engagements." (p. 31)

Prince Maurice entered Tewkesbury with a regiment of foot and horse, and this force combined with that of Lord Grandeston resolved to make after Sir William Waller and intercept his return from Wales. Sir William was nimble in his retreat. He crossed the Severn at Chepstow, passed through the lower part of the Forest of Dean and along with Massie attacked the enemy at Tewkesbury. "Sir Matthew Carew fled, and many escaped the hands of our men, who wanted numbers to surround the town, but most of the common soldiers and some valuable officers were taken." (33)

It is easy to believe, as Corbet states, that Oxford was miserably gulled, and in a few hours extremely affected, by these contrary events. News of Waller's retreat had arrived at Oxford early in the morning but before noon an express messenger arrived with the loss of Tewkesbury "which was cast upon the heat of the first report like cold water into a boiling pot" p.33.

Prince Rupert did not attempt the re-capture of Tewkesbury, the government thereof was entrusted to Sir Robert Cooke who

had newly raised a regiment of foot by commission from Sir William Waller." p. 34.

The main strength of the King's army was drawn from this part when Reading was beleaguered<sup>1</sup> by the Earl of Essex, by which means the Parliament forces had a large and free game in this Country (i.e. county) and went on with a full stream of success, driven with a gentle gale of providence, and a kind of unimitable happiness, in unbloody victories." "The fortune of the former did over-rule the event of the succeeding action, and the name and presence of Sir William Waller did include more than a thousand<sup>2</sup> men. Neither was he wanting to himself, but made the best use of his present fame, and kept it up by constant active endeavours, lest a little intermission might permit the enemy to recollect himself, or the real weakness of this Army be discerned." p. 35. He moved in the direction of Hereford, which City he attacked; a parley was held; most of the common soldiers ran over Wye Bridge into Wales. The next morning the surrender was complete. The Town compounded, was secured from plunder, and after fourteen days, deserted. Sir William Waller obtained many fair victories, but had no power to make them good, because his field was too large for his strength. They could over-run the enemies' country, but get no ground, master no stronghold, nor reduce a people naturally malignant.

<sup>1</sup> Reading was captured by Essex, April 27th, 1643

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Was worth more than 1000 men.

An attempt was made to retake Worcester (April 26th, 1643). But the troops were recalled at the news of Lord Capel's advance<sup>1</sup> "at which instant Sir William Waller was taken off these parts, and ordered to march into the West. with all speed to prevent the joining of Sir Ralph Hopton's forces with the rest of the King's army. Sir Robert Cooke's regiment was called off from Tewkesbury for the Western Expedition, and that Town once more slighted". (p. 36)

**I**n July, 1643, General Massie reported to Parliament that nine out of ten in the City of Gloucester were favourable to the King. Gardiner thinks Massie was trying to find excuses for going over to the King.<sup>2</sup> Waller was, however, defeated at Roundway Down on July 13th, and Corbet records that the surrender of Bristol (July 26th, 1643) brought gloom to Gloucester. "The minds of the people were filled with amazement and the failing of such a promising Government made most men infidels or at least to question all things" (p. 39). He states that meanwhile the enemy dealt underhand and by the mediation of seeming friends, affectionately solicited a

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Arthur Capel, Lord Capel of Hadham (1610 - 1649) Royalist leader died on scaffold. Had sympathy with popular party but shocked by their violence, threw himself into opposite camp. Signed the declaration and profession disavowing all designs of making war upon the parliament'. In 1643 he was sent to Shrewsbury as Lieut.-General of Shropshire, Cheshire, and North Wales. D. N. B. III, 919.

2

Gardiner "History of Civil War I, 198.

surrender with terrible information of our manifold losses abroad, of the rage of the King's army and inevitable desolation, and withal tendered an opportunity of an Accommodation between His Majesty and the Citizens. (p. 40)

As to the military strength of Gloucester he says "No more than two regiments afoot, one hundred horse with the trained bands and a few reformadoes; there were besides about one hundred horse and dragoons from Berkeley Castle; in the whole fifteen hundred men, forty single barrels of gunpowder with a slender artillery". As to the defensive works, these for a large compass were but half perfect and the ditches though watered round were narrow. In this posture did the City stand when the King's forces hovered over the hills and now and then skirted upon the Town before a close siege was laid upon the 10th of August. They came down like a torrent, full of victory and revenge, with indignation that a forlorn City should stand before them.

The King appeared in person before the City (August 10th, 1643). "Some whisperer gave a malignant intimation that the King's presence would sway the people".

The King's notable summons was sent by two Heralds at Arms:-

"Charles Rex.

"Out of our tender compassion to Our City of Gloucester and that it may not receive prejudice by Our Army, which we cannot prevent if we be compelled to assault it; We are personally come before it, to require the same, and are graciously pleased to let all the inhabitants of, and all other persons within the City, as well Soldiers as other, know, that if they shall immediately submit themselves, and deliver this City to Us, We are contented greatly and absolutely to pardon every one of them without exception, and do assure them in the word of a King, that they nor any of them shall receive the least danger or prejudice by Our Army in their persons or estates. But that we will appoint such a governor and a moderate garrison to reside there as shall be both for the care and security of that City and the whole County. But if they shall neglect this offer of grace and favour, and compel Us, by the power of Our Army to reduce that place (which by the help of God We shall easily and shortly be able to do) they must thank themselves for all the calamities and miseries that shall befall them. To this message We expect a clear and positive answer, within two hours after the publishing hereof. And by these presents do give leave to any persons safely to repair to, and return from Us, whom that City shall desire to employ unto Us in that business, and We do require all the Officers and Soldiers of Our Army quietly to suffer them to pass accordingly". (p. 42).

The following reply was drawn up on behalf of the City and presented by Sergeant Major Pudsey and a Citizen:

"We the Inhabitants, Magistrates, Officers and Soldiers within this Garrison of Gloucester, unto His Majesty's gracious message return this humble Answer. That we do keep this City according to our Oath and Allegiance, and for the use of His Majesty, and his royal Posterity, and do accordingly conceive ourselves wholly bound to obey the commands of his Majesty signified by both Houses of Parliament; and are resolved by God's help to keep this City accordingly". (p.43).

Corbet states that "His Majesty with all mildness seemed to receive this answer, only to wonder at our confidence, and whence we expected succour, adding these words, Waller is extinct, and Essex cannot come. The enemy advanced forwards into the suburbs on the East side, where they lost a Commander in the first skirmish and the rest were fired out". (p.43)

The Besiegers entrenched on the South and East and sallies were made to drive them out, returning without loss, with prisoners and arms.

Some Royalists were killed, among them a Lieutenant Colonel, and Captain of the Queen's Black Regiment. Sir Jacob Ashley was shot in the arm and upon several approaches the enemy suffered many killed and wounded. The Welsh forces under the command of Sir William Vavasour advanced to the Bishop's house, half a mile from the West Gate. General Ruthin placed his leager behind the Priory of Lanthony on the south side, very near, but sheltered from our shot by a rising ground". (p. 44)

Sir Jacob Ashley with a strong party quartered in some part of the suburbs on the east side. The east and south ports were dammed up and rammed with a thickness of earth cannon proof, and the walls on that side from port to port were lined to the battlements, since there we thought to receive the main shock." (p. 44)

Several sallies were made - the enemy was indefatigable and swift in the entrenchments - artillery and ammunition were brought up by the enemy. "They shot large granados out of their mortar-pieces". (p. 45)

The Welsh and Worcester forces now came up. Then about four hundred musketeers commanded by Major Pudsey and Captain Grey, assisted by Captain Faulkner, members of the garrison, sallied forth from the north gate along with Captain Massie and "fell upon their main guard, slew many officers, two canoneers with about a hundred common soldiers mortally wounded, took a Lieutenant with four more prisoners, nailed their cannon, and retreated with the loss of two slain and about four taken prisoners." (p.46)

"After ten days' siege two several parties were designed for the nailing of the enemies' cannon". (p. 46) "But the design failing through the misguidance of the other party, they were called off ... The failing of the enterprise crossed a brave exploit and feasible ... The enemy were kept waking by continual alarms to waste and weary them". (p.47)

"The sadness of the times did not cloud the countenance of the people, they beheld their fortune with a clear brow and were deliberate and cheerful in the endeavours of safety. No great complainings were heard in our streets, no discontent seized on

the soldiers, at other times prone to mutiny; men of suspected fidelity did not fail in action; every valuable person was active in his own place." (p.48)

Enemy preparations were being made for storming the City. Grenades, fire balls, and great stones were shot. They worked hard to fill up the moat with faggots and earth at the place where they battered. They sank a mine under the East Gate, whereupon a countermine was sunk in two places. Numerous activities were carried out by the besieged. (pp. 48/49)

His Majesty resided about a mile distant. Some suggestions were made in favour of the surrender of the City "in regard to the great power and terrible menacings of the enemy, with the small hopes and in a manner, impossibility of relief .. These manifold persuasions made the besieged more obstinate and enabled them to understand themselves as a people worthy of entreaty, a prize worth the purchase, and in no wise lost or desperate, the enemies themselves being judges". (p.50)

Corbet's account of the actual raising of the siege is worth recording.

"Our relief seemed slow, and the straitness of the siege debarred all intelligence. Only two spies which we sent out, returned from Warwick, and brought news of the advance of the Lord General. The report of His Excellency who then lay under a cloud did give no great assurance. The truth is, the sense of the depth of our distress did not reach us; Sir William

Waller, upon whom the citizens in London cast their favour, had not the relics of an Army. The General's Army crumbled away; the malignants of London fermented tumults in the City, and insurrections in Kent distracted the business. The House of Lords voted a treaty with the King, the House of Commons debated the matter. The resolution of Gloucester turned the stream, whose succour was resolved upon as the Kingdom's safety. The recruit of the Army was too slow for the service. The London Trained Bands, or none, must relieve us; but could not agree who should undertake the business. Essex was not favoured but the more prudent saw that he must be the man" (p.51)

"Prince Rupert with the greatest part of the King's horse drew from Gloucester to retard their march ... The enemy stayed before us till the last hour, judging every particle of time a great advantage, not knowing what a moment might bring forth" (p. 52)

"This day (September 5th, 1643) we discovered their carriages marching from the leaguer, and their horse and foot marching after; yet we were not confident of the raising of the siege till the men were drawn out of the trenches, the rear guard fired their huts. We then perceived that God had sent deliverance and that in the close of a solemn fast, as a precious return of prayer". (p.52)

"His Majesty was forced to leave the Town behind him, and constrained to a tedious march in that tempestuous

rainy night. The admirable care of Providence was beheld in the season of our relief when all things were prepared by the enemy for a general storm; our ammunition consumed, but three single barrels of powder left in our magazine, and not so much more elsewhere". (p. 53)

, "Great was the failing of the King's hopes in this defeat who, by the gaining of this town would have held an undivided uninterrupted command, and the granary of the Kingdom in the heart of his Country, on the west bounded with the sea, clear through the middle of the land to the northern parts, where also the Earl of Newcastle's Army prevailed, and in breadth reaching from the utmost Wales to the London Association, and backed with Ireland, with whom an Accommodation was then preparing". (p. 53)

The 5th of September was subsequently ordered by the Mayor and Common Council to be observed as a day of Thanksgiving for raising the siege. It was called Gloucester Holiday and kept accordingly till the Restoration. Many attempts were made after the siege to recover the City for the King but none succeeded.

Corbet was greatly interested in the siege, both on account of its national and religious significance, and also because Gloucester was the City of his birth.

In the composition of his record he seems to have been actuated solely by the desire of truth. There is no trace of prejudice or party feeling, and whilst he is capable of vindicating the justness of the defence against the overtures of the King, he is a faithful narrator of the occurrences of the time. He does not dwell upon the privations and sufferings of his fellow citizens though he records them. Neither does he exaggerate the achievements of his friend and patron, Colonel Massie.

We are less acquainted with the camp of the Besiegers, distinguished as it was by the presence of the King, Nobility and such men as Chillingworth and Falkland,<sup>(1)</sup> who found relief at night disputing religious subjects in some lowly cottage or smoky hut. Of Falkland it is said that "when sitting amongst his friends often after a deep silence and frequent sighs he would with a shrill and sad accent utter the word "Peace! Peace!" and passionately profess that the very agony of War took his sleep from him and would shortly break his heart.

(1) <sup>[FALKLAND]</sup>  
Slain at Newbury September 25th (three weeks later)  
^

The wisdom of Charles in attacking Gloucester has been much discussed and was evidently the cause of division of opinion in Charles's Councils. Clarendon<sup>1</sup> held Gloucester's influence on trade and the people's livelihood to be so great as to render it of mighty importance to the King. If Gloucester had been recovered Charles would have had the Severn entirely in his command, and his garrisons at Worcester and Shrewsbury and all those parts might be supplied from Bristol and the trade of that City thereby so advanced as to increase the King's revenue and bear a greater burden of the War besides the liberation of many troops.

Rapin<sup>2</sup> a soldier by profession, believes that Charles "Had all the reason in the world to undertake it" and Gardiner states that the Welshmen would not cross the Severn so long as Gloucester barred their free passage. This was an important consideration and if Charles could have succeeded he would have had free course, North, South, East and West. As to the far-reaching effect of this, for once, Charles and his Parliament agreed.

1 Clarendon 'History of the Rebellion' Book VI 288. 157

2 Rapin. History of England II. 477

Rudder<sup>1</sup> in his 'History of Antiquities of Gloucester' says that in a petition from the Mayor of Gloucester to Parliament it was stated that 241 houses, besides barns, stables, outhouses, gardens, orchards and goods of the suburbs of the City were burned, pulled down and utterly destroyed the night before the leaguer was laid to the City. The losses by burning and destroying amounted to twenty six thousand pounds which they petitioned to be repaired out of the Commonwealth's enemies. Besides the actual losses occasioned by the siege, Gloucester bore a considerable proportion of the expenses necessary for carrying out the plans of Parliament.

Corbet continued his "Historical Relation", down till June 1645 when Massie was removed from Gloucester, and though we need not follow him in detail yet he affords many a glimpse of the times and the successive events of the conflict in those parts.

Colonel Massie, we are told, was not satisfied in keeping his own garrison but was eager of continual service to destroy or disable the enemy, for which no other place in the kingdom was conceived capable of like advantage.

<sup>1</sup> Rudder's History of Antiquities of Gloucester' 41.

He therefore sought help from Parliament 'yet reserved a submission to Parliament's pleasure' and continued at Gloucester (55 - 56).

All things rested on his sole care both to store the garrison with provisions and raise money out of that small pittance of the country out of the enemies hands. The soldiers became discontented and were ready to disband. Not one gentleman of the country dare assist them and no member of Parliament resided near to give encouragement.

Yet the people never groaned under Massie's government. Their voluntary submission was witness to his moderation. 58. They were wholly 'cooped up' with the enemies garrisons round about and wholly divided from the rest of the Parliament's Army.

The 'Act of Pacification' made by the King with the Irish Rebels began to undeceive the world and wipe off the varnish of the former Oaths and Protestations.<sup>A</sup> Some of the Irish forces landed at Bristol and thence fell down on Gloucestershire. Every corner of the country was pestered with the enemies garrisons. Nevertheless, Massie did not only defend his own garrison, but made sundry adventures and inroads

A

In January 1643 Charles empowered Ormond and others to confer with Irish leaders. In April he authorised Ormond to treat for one year's cessation of arms and in July he consented to offer Irish a free Parliament. They undertook to send him 10,000 men. Cessation was concluded on Sept. 15th, 1643. Montague: "Political History of England" VII 288.

upon the enemies quarters, staved off and kept them within their bounds, 66. The failure of the siege brought despair of ever reducing the city by storm and led to attempts by means of treachery and corruption. 71

One of these attempts was in the mid-winter, 1643-4<sup>(1)</sup> It was a plot to take the City by corrupting Captain Backhouse, one of the Officers of the Garrison. Corbet records it as follows:-

"Captain Backhouse undertook the business and returned an answer on a liberal garb, protesting that he honoured his Majesty with his soul and was ready to perform all real service ..... Stanford desired him forthwith to express his conditions, propose the way, and descend into particulars of the service, assented to constant intercourse, and assured him that none but the Lord Digby should be privy to the design." p. 73.

Corbet continues, "These propositions are sent to Oxford, entertained by the King's Cabinet Council, the Lord Digby becomes the great undertaker and ratifies the proposal of Captain Backhouse." - 75.

Lord Digby's reply contains the following passage:-

"....Therefore I do here solemnly engage my word unto you as a minister of State and a Gentleman, that if you shall perform faithfully what you promise there you shall

(1) It began on November 19th 1643. Bibliotheca Gloscentrensis  
p. 83

punctually receive immediately after such a pardon as yourself shall desire, and the sum of two thousand pounds." Digby offers to pay £300 on account. "As for the particular ways of effecting our design, those you propose are very rational." The military side of the affair to be carried out by one of the following, whichever Backhouse prefers. Sir William Vavasour, Colonel Myn, Colonel Washington, or the Governor of Berkeley Castle (p. 75). The letter is signed "Your assured friend G.D." (p. 76)

Corbet continues "Here this degenerate Lord sells his honour and betrays the esteem of gallantry, by promoting and engaging himself in the vilest treason and to insinuate himself into the close workings thereof when many brave spirits out of their abundant justice have disdained the proffer of so base a service. And herein did he derogate from the repute of an able statesman in relying upon the doubtful expressions of an unknown person and whose condition could not invite any of the least ground of belief." (p.76) The date was fixed for Feb. 15, 1644 at 9 p.m. when Rupert was to advance with 1500 horse and foot, but the plot misfired.

From the 'Relation' we learn that the expectation of the London supply and the daily hope of money upheld the common soldier 'by a mere delusion'. Its delay, according to Corbet, became a greater advantage, since its real strength had before been crumbled to dust. About April first 1644, Col. Purefoy with his regiment of horse was sent by the Committee of

both Kingdoms to assist Massie to deal with surrounding garrisons. Corbet reveals Massie in a favourable light in all his exploits. "Nor at any time did he suffer his soldiers to ransack any place that he took by storm, giving his reason, that he could judge no part of England an enemy's country, nor an English town capable of devastation by English soldiers." (p. 93) Ultimately Corbet was able to record with satisfaction that the enemy had no footing in the county save Berkeley Castle and Lidney House (p.97). An illuminating reference to Massie's trials is here revealed: "The troops with officers of horse and foot were much distressed for lack of support, and though the exigence of the soldier hath been great in many places, yet the gleanings of other Brigades hath been better than our vintage. No officer had any portion in the Contribution money: No pay for the troops for many months together; no allowance for Scout, Spy, or Intelligencer who observe only the liberal and open-handed, nor the hopes of reward to encourage the soldiers' gallantry." (p. 107)

The capture of Evesham (May 26th 1645) is referred to as 'the concluding honour of Col. Massie's government' before his removal to the Western Command. Corbet says Massie had an honourable invitation from the Western gentlemen some days before and the same day he entered Evesham received a Commission from the Lords and Commons to lead an army in the West (p.138).

The whole city of Gloucester unanimously petitioned both Houses of Parliament for Massie's continuance as governor as

"he had kept the whole soldiery together chiefly by the love and respect they bear to him." (p.139)

The petition was not received with favour, nevertheless the Speaker was directed in the name of the House to let them know that they were very sensible of the dangers that might attend an alteration in that kind, but that the Governor provided to succeed might speedily give such assurance against such dangers, that there will be no cause for them to continue, much less to increase their fears." (p.140)

On June 3rd 1645 the Lords and Commons ordered that Master Luke Nurse, Major of Gloucester, Alderman Singleton, and Colonel Blunt, or any two of them shall have the command of the garrison of Gloucester, and of the Forces and garrison in Gloucestershire in as ample manner as Colonel Massie had till the appointed governor came down to his charge there, or the Houses take other order. (P. 140)

Colonel Massie in the meanwhile laboured to disengage the affections of the country, and to take off discontents and mutiny, and besought the Parliament to send down the succeeding Governor that he might seek to interest him in the hearts of the people, which he never desired to endear unto himself, but to their masters whom he served, which was a full testimony of a true Servant to the State, upon the sole terms of Conscience and Honour.

Thus Corbet concludes his "Historical Relation", written with considerable skill, his accuracy still unchallenged, and a lively interest maintained throughout.

IV

DISRUPTION IN CHURCH AND STATE

## CHAPTER IV

### DISRUPTION IN CHURCH AND STATE

The Short Parliament met on April 13th, 1640 and continued until May 5th. Pym exposed the grievances of Church and State and was about to organise a petition against the Scottish War when the King dissolved Parliament as his aim in summoning Parliament had been to obtain money for carrying on the war. A period of Absolutism then followed and Convocation issued a new set of High Church Canons and proposed an oath to defend the existing establishment of the Church. The Long Parliament assembled on November 3rd 1640 and London became the centre of the Revolutionary movement. "Our English theorists spoke for the most part of religion, Church Government and individual conscience."<sup>1</sup> One of the first acts of the Long Parliament was the liberation of those who had suffered under the late tyranny. "Everybody knows the cases of Leighton, of Lilburne, of Prynne, Burton, and Bastwick; how for writing books against prelacy and play-acting or Romish innovations by church dignitaries, men of education and learned professions were set in the pillory, had their ears cut off, their noses slit, their cheeks branded, were heavily fined, and flung into prison, for so long as the King chose to keep them there."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan 'England Under the Stuarts' 200

<sup>2</sup> Morley. Oliver Cromwell 66

In November 1640 the Scots Commissioners removed from Ripon to London, accompanied by preachers and Theologians. They remained till June 1641. Every Sunday large audiences listened to the Scottish divines proclaiming the merits of the Scottish form of religion, "To hear these sermons", wrote Clarendon, "there was so great a conflict and resort, by the citizens out of humour and faction, by others of all qualities out of curiosity, and by some that they might the better justify the contempt they had of them, that from the first appearance of day in the morning on every Sunday to the shutting of the light the Church (St. Antholin's) was never empty."<sup>1</sup>

The question of abolishing the Episcopacy loomed large and though the great body of Englishmen had no love for the Presbyterian system on the one hand, nor the sectarians' demand for freedom on the other, they believed the abolition of the Episcopacy was the only means of securing the Protestant character of the State Church.<sup>2</sup>

The Presbyterians and Episcopalians both strove to realize their ideal of a church and neither was prepared to accept the solution of Toleration. At the time there were three distinct parties in England, holding divergent views on the question of church government.

<sup>1</sup> Clarendon 'History of the Rebellion'

<sup>2</sup> Trevelyan 'England under the Stuarts' 200

(1) The High Church Party, which consisted of all those who had been, and were still, supporters of the Laudian policy. At the head of this party was Hall, Bishop of Exeter, the author of the treatise "Episcopacy by Divine Right."

(2) Moderate or Broad Church Party. Also attached to Episcopacy but desiring changes in government and worship. There were various sub-sections in the party, but they were at one in desiring a limited episcopacy.

(3) The 'Root and Branch' Party, which would destroy all church dignitaries above the simple presbyter or parish minister. It would also apply ecclesiastical revenues to other religious causes or to the state.

London was the stronghold of this party though many of the great towns shared their feeling as also did some of the Eastern counties, and Lancashire and Cheshire.

On November 22nd 1641 the "Grand Remonstrance" was passed by 159 votes to 148. "The Grand Remonstrance" was to these men something far greater than a constitutional document. For them it was a challenge put forward on behalf of a religious faith.<sup>1</sup> It was presented to the King on December 1st, and clauses 181 - 191, explained and defended the scheme of the Parliamentary leaders for the reform of the Church.

<sup>1</sup> Gardiner. "History of England" X 87.

Clause 185 read as follows: "And we do here declare that it is far from our purpose or desire to let loose the golden reins of discipline and Government in the Church, to leave private persons or particular congregations to take up what form of Divine service they please, for we hold it requisite that there should be throughout the realm a conformity to that order which the Laws enjoin according to the Word of God. And we desire to unburthen the consciences of men of needless and superstitious ceremonies, suppress innovations, and take away the monuments of idolatry."

Clause 186 runs: "And, the better to effect the intended Reformation, we desire there may be a General Synod of the most grave, pious, learned and judicious Divines of this island, assisted by some from foreign parts professing the same Religion with us, who may consider of all things necessary for the peace and good government of the Church, and represent the results of their consultations to Parliament, to be there allowed and confirmed, and receive the stamp of authority, thereby to find passage and obedience throughout the Kingdom."

During the year 1641 many changes were made. Communion tables were ordered to be removed from the East wall of the Church and set in the body of the Church, pictures of the Trinity were removed, and images of the Virgin Mary were demolished. In some places where feeling ran high, altar rails and screens were destroyed, painted glass windows

broken, statuary ground to powder, and pictures cut into shreds.

The bill of October 1641 for removing the Bishops from the House of Lords had hung fire. It had been read in the House of Lords once and had then been laid aside. The Bill was read a third time on February 5th 1642 and the Royal Assent was given on February 14th.

On August 3rd 1642, the General Assembly of Scotland sent a letter to Parliament urging a thorough reformation, with a view to "one confession of faith, one directory of worship, one public catechism, and one form of Church government." Parliament made the following declaration: "That this Government by Archbishops, Bishops, their Chancellors and Commissaries, Deans and Chapters, Archdeacons and other ecclesiastical officers depending upon the hierarchy, is evil, and justly offensive and burdensome to the Kingdom, a great impediment to reformation and the growth of religion, very prejudicial to the State and Government of this Kingdom; and that we are resolved that the same shall be taken away."

On August 22nd 1642 the Royal Standard was set up at Nottingham and the first civil war began.

The Parliamentary Army which set out from London in September 1642 sacked churches on their way, burnt communion tables, and destroyed surplices and prayer-books. Dr. Featley, a Paedobaptist, had his barns and stables at Acton burnt, and the windows of his church in Lambeth were smashed,

the rails burnt, and the font destroyed.

In January 1643 the Bill for the abolition of Episcopacy was passed by both Houses.

On June 12th 1643 English Commissioners were sent to Scotland to negotiate a treaty of assistance with Scotland.

Two peers and four commoners were entrusted with this commission, but the peers named took no part. Sir Henry Vane was the ablest and most distinguished of the commoners. They were assisted by two ministers Stephen Marshall a Presbyterian, and Philip Nye an Independent.

On June 12th 1643 Parliament passed an ordinance commanding that an Assembly of Divines should be convened at Westminster on the 1st of July following.

The Solemn League and Covenant, drawn up in September 1643, contained articles pledging the signatories to preserve the established religion of Scotland, to introduce a uniform system of Church Government, doctrine and form of worship, in the three Kingdoms, to aim at the extirpation of popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, etc., to preserve the privileges of Parliament and the liberties of the Kingdom, to search out incendiaries and malignants, and promote peace, and to defend everyone belonging to the brotherhood of the Covenant.

Early in 1643 the Committee for scandalous ministers had been followed by a Committee for plundered ministers,

this title being used for those who had been ejected from their livings by the Royal Army. This Committee provided them with relief and their attention was directed to malignant clergymen who held benefices in and about town. In the July of that year they were empowered to consider all cases of scandal and to dismiss those whose characters would not bear examination. On September 6th, the Deputy-Lieutenants and the Committee of Parliament were ordered to take the examination of witnesses against those ministers whose lives or doctrines were scandalous, and also against any who had deserted their charges or assisted the forces raised against Parliament.

The Westminster Assembly was convoked by order of the Long Parliament to consider the condition of the church, as 'many things in its liturgy, discipline, and government required further and more perfect reformation.'

It met for the first time on July 1st 1643 and consisted of about 30 lay, and 130 clerical members. The average attendance was about sixty. It was entirely the creature of Parliament and was never anything more than an advisory body. It pursued its way without interruption until the summer of 1647, being engaged in endless discussion. It superseded the Prayer Book by the Directory of Public Worship. It ordained ministers, drew up the Westminster Confession and Longer and Shorter Catechism. After the summer of 1647 the retirement of the Scots marked the ending of the main business

of the Assembly. A small number of Divines continued to meet until the Spring of 1652 for the purpose of examining candidates for ordination. Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump Parliament led to their silent disappearance without any formal dismissal. They had sat for nearly ten years and held over a thousand sittings.

On January 4th 1645, the day of Laud's attainder, Parliament established the Presbyterian Directory and prohibited the use of the Anglican Prayer Book. The Presbyterians demanded the King should comply with this at the conference at Uxbridge in January and February of that year. There was also added the control of the militia and the Navy by the Parliaments of England and Scotland which led to the New Model as the Parliamentary Army was new modelled in April 1645. Sir Thomas Fairfax was in charge and the new army contained many Independents, the signing of the Covenant not being insisted on. The army became the mainstay of those sects which dreaded equally an Anglican or a Presbyterian domination. In August 1645 the House of Commons debated the details of the Establishment of the Presbyterian system in England, and passed an order for the election of elders which was accepted by both Houses on August 19th 1645. This may be regarded as the first step in the establishment of Presbyterianism in England. It required 'that all parishes and places whatsoever, except peer's chapels, shall be brought under the government of congregational, classical,

provincial and national assemblies.' The system, however, was not generally put into operation, and at the Restoration the whole system of classes and synods disappeared. Then with the Restoration came a reaction which was almost universal in its derision and hatred of the Puritans. Puritanism could not, however, be ridiculed out of existence, so weapons of State were employed to compel them to conform to the established church, or crush them out. The cruelties of the Clarendon Code, severely intense as they were, all failed in their object. The Nonconformist Martyrdom was many years longer than that of the Protestant Martyrs under Mary, though it has never captured the imagination like the fires of Smithfield, Oxford, and Gloucester. In spite, however, of every effort to exterminate it, Puritanism, not only survived, but triumphed, and with the Revolution came 'Religious Toleration, when it again emerged into the light of day.

V

DISRUPTION IN GLOUCESTER

CORBET and BACON

1644

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## CHAPTER V

### DISRUPTION IN GLOUCESTER

#### CORBET AND BACON (1644)

The religious life of Gloucester at this period is a striking illustration of the divisions of the age. When the clergy of the Established Church had been expelled, their posts were occupied by those who held Presbyterian views, using that word in its widest meaning. The latter soon found themselves confronted with other adversaries even though the full tide of Separation had not yet arrived. Baxter at first was very favourably impressed with the religious life of Gloucester but later had occasion to change his views. In July, 1644, Roger Bacon who had been a minister in Bristol for several years, came to Gloucester. He had suffered from the Bishop and fled from Bristol before it was taken by the Royalists. He is said to have lost about £400, in addition to suffering persecution. He was in Gloucester for several months and engrossed no small share of the thought of the City. He was a stranger on arrival but was permitted to preach and once invited by Corbet. His first sermon was upon the monthly Fast before the greatest if not the only congregation of the day. Corbet says<sup>1</sup> "Divers ministers

1

Corbet - Vindication of Ministers of Gloucester.<sup>3</sup>

who were present were much troubled about particular doctrines delivered and also at the whole frame of his prayer and sermon as being in no way suitable to a solemn humiliation. The Magistrates and religious persons of a better understanding and temper took a like offence. He preached other sermons in the absence of Mr. Hart. The Mayor stopped the course of his preaching which restraint was taken off by the Governor for a further trial"<sup>1</sup> Bacon was compelled to appear in the Cathedral in the presence of the Military Governor, a Committee of Ministers, the principal inhabitants sitting as moderators in the choir, and a large crowd filling the Cathedral. Bacon had been allowed three days for preparation, and the Governor, Mayor and Aldermen were judges as well as the Committee<sup>2</sup>, and according to Bacon, Massey was candid and impartial towards him. On the first day, the disputation lasted five hours. Bacon states "I answered ten questions which Mr. Holroyd, Mr. Corbet and Mr. Hodges, in their wisdom thought meet in writing to propound unto me, whereunto I subscribed either affirmatively or negatively as I thought meet and as the Lord gave me understanding"<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Corbet Vindication of Magistrates 3.

<sup>2</sup> " " " " 14. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Bacon 'spirit of Prelacie yet working' 3.

Bacon's answer in writing was handed to the Governor and then to Corbet, who according to Bacon was to dispute with him. Corbet was then about twenty-five years of age. There was a scene of great confusion, sometimes several disputing with Bacon at the same time.

The following questions were submitted to Bacon.

(1) 'Whether the Moral Law be abrogated'

Negative according to Bacon

(2) 'Whether good works be a means to Salvation'

Negative

(3) 'Whether God be displeased with His People that are in Christ for their sins, we mean such a people as are in the Covenant of Grace'

Negative

(4) 'Whether those in the Covenant of Grace are to try their justification by their sanctification'

Affirmative

(5) 'Whether Faith be a condition of the New Covenant'

Negative

(6) 'Whether godly sorrow for sin be required of such a one as is in the Covenant of Grace'

Affirmative

(7) 'Whether confession of sin of our original corruption and sinful actions reckoning them before the Lord be required in a Christian.'

Affirmative

(8) 'Whether you hold communion with the Church of England in our Parochial Assemblies to be lawful.'

Negative

(9) 'Whether Repentance be necessary to the remission of sins'

Negative

(10) 'Whether there be a real change in the person that is saved?'

Affirmative

Bacon was compelled to leave Gloucester and was furnished with an escort to Sudely and a horse to bear him to London. There he found a Patron in Lord Say and Seal to whom he dedicated "The Spirit of Prelacie yet Working" (1646) as did Corbet "A Vindication of the Magistrates and Ministers of the City of Gloucester from the Calumnies of Mr. Robert Bacon in the Spirit of Prelacie" Corbet's reply followed Bacon's attack almost immediately and it is evident Bacon leaned to Antinomian teaching.

Note

Baxter says Rel. Bax I<sup>41</sup> "Whilst I was in Gloucester I saw the first contentions between the Ministers and Anabaptists that ever I was acquainted with.....  
.... and after them in the Wars came one Mr. Bacon, a Preacher of the Army, and drew them to Antinomianism on another side..... while these tares did dwindle and wither away the solid piety of the place."

VI

CORBET THE ECCLESIASTIC

The outstanding event in the ecclesiastical life of England in 1660 following the Restoration of Charles II is the defeat of Presbyterianism. Later it was thrown over to the Nonconformist side but this was not contemplated when they took the lead in the return of the King. Even though Charles may have been willing to grant a general toleration, that was not the Presbyterians' wish or aim. They expected to find themselves in a place of authority, but disillusion was close at hand. Before the year was out Corbet was hard at work to secure the recognition of Presbyterianism and willing to accept a moderate episcopalianism. He published in 1660 "The Interest of England in the matter of Religion" first and second parts. In the first part he propounds three questions:-

- (1) Whether the Presbyterian Party should in justice or reason of state be rejected and depressed or protected and encouraged.
- (2) Whether the Presbyterian Party may be protected and encouraged and the Episcopal not deserted nor disobliged.
- (3) Whether the upholding of both parties by a just and equal Accommodation, be not in itself more desirable and more agreeable to the State of England than the absolute exalting of the one party and the total Subversion of the other.

NOTE: Drysdale in 'History of Presbyterians in England', p.383, speaks of Corbet's work as an admirable account of the Presbyterian position and claim, and as written in a beautiful style and spirit. He also described Corbet as a very able man. He gives the date as 1661, which is wrong. It was first printed 1660. Whiting "Studies in English Puritanism" (pp.482-3) says first part printed October 1660 and second part 1661. Both parts were printed in 1660. Compare copies in B.M. and Edin. Univ. The 1661 copy was a second impression.

The Preface states his purpose as follows:

"The peace here propounded is the friend and sister of Truth. It offers not to enthrall or burden Consciences of either persuasion. By allowing some diversity of opinion, it takes away the difference of Parties, and permits the points of difference to be matters of speculation but not of practice. As to give an instance, some of the Episcopal way hold that a Bishop differs from a Presbyterian in regard of Order; that he is ordained ad speciale Ministerium. Others of the same way hold that they differ not in Order but Degree. The Presbyterians believe they are the same in regard of Order, yet that a difference in Degree may be admitted, and so they accept of a President-Bishop."

"All the Episcopal Divines judge it ordinarily necessary that a Presbyterian be ordained by a Bishop in conjunction with Presbyters."

"And consequently the persons of these several persuasions need not divide, but may easily be made one in practice, by the regular consociation of Episcopacy and Presbytery. The Peace here pursued was earnestly expected and promised in the late great Revolution."

Chapter I thus puts Corbet's own position:

"The Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland were legally united in one King but by violence subjected to one Usurped Power of different forms successively, were for divers late years reeling to and fro like a drunken man".....

The ancient fundamental constitution was overturned, and the people, tired of a tedious civil war, were desirous of present ease. The recent designs touching religion were wholly alien from the disposition of these nations. He refers to Cromwell having made himself supreme in the state and having ably conducted affairs so that he became less hated and more feared, yet not beloved. The Army "was acted by working spirits, zealous of peculiar notions touching things both religious and civil, utterly repugnant to the way of general satisfaction and national settlement." (7) "Considerate men saw plainly that the state of England was grown poor and feeble." (9)

Then came the Restoration at which Corbet rejoiced. "In this great turning time it is of the highest importance to inquire and search how the King and Kingdom, who in so wonderful manner have been restored to each other, may be put into a stable possession of peace, happiness, and security unto all mutual complacency and satisfaction" (12). He says "His Majesty has been brought back to a willing and free-spirited people by their own act." There is need for "a well tempered and composed state of affairs both religious and civil, by the abolishing of former differences, and the reconciling of all reconcileable parties." In religion, Corbet says there are two chief parties; Episcopal and Presbyterian

and while these remain divided, the Kingdom of England and the Protestant religion is divided against itself. This disunion may be removed "either by the abolition of one party or by the coalition of both into one." The former plan can only be accomplished by violence. The latter may be brought to pass by Accommodation or mutual yielding. A third course is possible, toleration indulged to the weaker side. Corbet's object in the present discourse is to consider in which of these ways the true interest of the kingdom lies. He warns his readers against being prejudiced against the terms Presbyterian or Prelatist. The reason why the first inquiry is propounded on the Presbyterian behalf is because Episcopacy now stands on the rising ground and seems to have no need of an advocate. The Presbyterians do not aim at "an ample, splendid and potent State: but at liberty and security in their lower orb." (18)

The Presbyterial Government is "that form of Ecclesiastical Government by Parochial or Classical Presbyteries, Provincial and National Assemblies." (19) The Presbyterians admire and magnify the Holy Scriptures and take them for the absolute perfect rule of faith and life without the supplement of ecclesiastical tradition. They assert the study and knowledge of the Scriptures to be the duty and privilege of all Christians. They acknowledge the necessity for a standing Gospel-Ministry. They hold the teaching of the Spirit necessary to the saving knowledge of Christ. They exalt divine ordinances, but debase

human inventions in God's worship. They allow the natural expressions of reverence and devotion, as kneeling and lifting up of the hands and eyes in prayer; as also the mere circumstances of decency and order. They worship God in the Spirit according to the simplicity of Gospel Institutions. They affirm that good works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards men, are necessary to salvation.

(20 - 21) Corbet is careful to maintain that their doctrine bears full conformity with that of the Reformed Churches held forth in their Public Confessions; and particularly with that of the Thirty-nine Articles, with one or two exceptions. They press upon themselves and others a spiritual and real mortification and self-denial. They are strict observers of the Lord's Day; constant in prayers. Also they abstain from oaths. They are sober, just and circumspect in their whole behaviour. Their position lies midway between those who believe in a ceremonial worship and hierarchical government and those who reject an ordained Ministry and settled Church regular unity.

The Presbyterian party contains several thousands of learned, godly, orthodox ministers, diligent and profitable preachers, exemplary in their conversation, and some excelling in polemical and practical divinity.

(23) "They have no fellowship with the

spirit of enthusiastical and anabaptistical fancy and frenzy" They are not fanatics: "they are persons of known bearing, prudence, piety and gravity." (p. 24).

He refers to the attempts made to suppress the Puritans by the suppression of Lectures, afternoon sermons on the Lord's Day, the issue of the Book of Sports ordered to be publicly read by ministers under penalty of deprivation, sundry superstitious innovations, a new book of Canons, and the enforcement of a new oath for upholding the hierarchy. (p. 32)

Corbet argues in favour of the free use of the holy Bible to the common people, as the sacred Scriptures are apt to make deep and strong impressions on the minds of men (p. 34). "The way in scorn called Puritanism will never utterly sink until Protestantism itself shall fail, and Popery be set up with a bloody inquisition." If there is a design to reconcile England to Rome, then let the Puritans or Presbyterians be quashed, otherwise let England be "a kind mother to these her children; for this interest is one chief strength of the true Reformed Protestant Religion." (p. 35)

He desires that the well-known principles that strike at the heart of Popery should be brought forward, namely, the perfection of holy Scriptures in opposition to unwritten Traditions, the authority of the Canonical

Books in opposition to implicit faith, the reasonable serving of God according to the Word in opposition to blind devotion, worship in opposition to a pompous train of ceremonies, the efficacious use of religious exercises and the power of godliness in opposition to splendid formality. (P. 36).

The English Bishops who were heartily averse from Popish innovations were most benign and favourable to the Puritans. He does not glory in the frequent use of the term Puritan, but is constrained to use it for distinction sake. (P. 39).

He boldly affirms that "neither can Sects or Schisms with any truth of justice be reckoned the offspring of Presbytery." Corbet is anxious to appeal to the King before the latter makes his declaration and before any decision is arrived at, any decisive action is taken. He is one of the earliest Presbyterians in the field and represents the mind of the party which included such men as Baxter and Calamy. The whole ecclesiastical polity was in the melting pot and even Presbyterianism was a vague, indefinite collection of various phases of thought and methods of organization. Corbet was willing to accept the Bishop in the sense that the Bishop would have leadership along with a Council of Presbyters. He favoured the scheme propounded

by Archbishop Usher, <sup>(a)</sup> which was substantially the one presented by Baxter to the Savoy Conference in 1661.

Corbet was one of the first in 1660 to put forward a platform for the Church on which he and Baxter were agreed. <sup>(b)</sup>

He wrote his "Interest of England in matters of Religion" in 1660, before Baxter moved, and this was probably independently of Baxter who was then in London. Corbet was thus early in the field with his scheme and was acting before a decision was arrived at in regard to the prayer book of 1662 which he wished to anticipate. He evidently saw what was likely to result and wished to make his position clear and also that of others. He wished distinctly that a form of Presbyterianism might be recognised in the Church of England, though not the Scottish form.

"The Interest of England" was written while the Presbyterians were still uppermost as they were in the Convention Parliament (April 25th to December 29th 1660). It was still possible for the King's promises at

(a) James Usher (1581 - 1656) Archbishop of Armagh. In 1641 he was on a committee for Religion of the House of Lords and drew up a scheme or 'model' of modified episcopacy in which the Bishops were to preside over synods of Presbyters and to be incapable of acting without their advice. Nothing came of this plan, though it played a part in the treaty of Newport 1648 when Charles I was willing to accept it.

(b) Baxter, though not strictly a Presbyterian, preferred 'Presbyter' to 'Priest', said "Though Presbytery took root in Scotland, yet it was but a stranger here. Most that ever I could meet with were against the jus divinum of lay elders and for the moderate primitive episcopacy, and for an accommodation of all parties to concord".<sup>I</sup>

<sup>I</sup>  
Rel. Bax.<sup>I</sup> 146

Breda on April 4th, 1660 to be substantiated. All that he had done or offered to do to the Presbyterians, indicated him as friendly and the whole thing was still in the balance. All that was needed to arrange an accommodation with the Episcopalians was goodwill on the part of the latter. Corbet was, therefore, endeavouring to the uttermost to bring this about at the psychological moment.

Corbet urged "A well grounded accommodation" producing an entire and firm union. He argues that in the primitive Church the Bishop was but a Presbyter in a higher degree, the President of the Presbytery and ruler in association with all the Presbyters. (p. 68). Corbet urges that the Presbyterian proposals concerning the Prelacy, Liturgy, Ceremonies, and Canonical Subscription are in no wise repugnant to the Church's existence or well being.(p. 77). He says that in order to maintain the Divine Right of Prelacy, "It is necessary

to show from Scripture any difference between a Bishop and a Presbyter". The Presbyterians, he claims, hold that only Scripture is the rule of Worship. Corbet suggests that a Liturgy ought to be framed of confessions, petitions and thanksgivings, wholly collected out of sacred Scripture and thinks that such a form would be a happy expedient to put an end to this controversy (p. 95). This, of course, is exactly what Baxter ultimately did in his Reformed Liturgy. Corbet sees no alternative but for the Bishops either to "retreat to a moderate compliance with Presbyterians or advance to a reconciliation with Papists". (p. 116)<sup>1</sup>

In the second part of 'The Interest of England' Corbet says, "The State of this Kingdom requires a temper or medium between two extremes, to wit, medium abnegationis in those unnecessary things wherein no accord can be expected between the parties, by abolishing, or not enjoining them, and medium participationis in things necessary to order and government, wherein the moderates of both parties do easily comply with each other". (p. 65)<sup>2</sup>

1  
First Part 'Interest of England'

2  
Second Part do.

Corbet writes "God hath put it into the King's heart to extend compassion to multitudes of his loyal subjects, in taking off the rigour of sundry impositions in matters ecclesiastical<sup>A</sup> and they think it good to make use of those His Majesty's concessions without the prejudice of any part of religion or of order and decency in the Church" (p. 78). Some, however, object to this, saying that "the Presbyterians yield in nothing, the late indulgence hath made them more resolved against all points of Conformity" (p. 79). Have the Presbyterians, he asks, abated nothing, when, for peace sake, they had declared a readiness to part with the Presbyterian platform of Church Government ... and to submit to a regulated Episcopacy; as also to waive the Directory for Worship, and to accept a Reformed Liturgy?" (p. 79).

I What have the Prelatists done in testimony of their moderation? (p. 79). The Presbyterians have conscientiously and judiciously made use of His Majesty's favour (p. 81). "When Governors resent the non-compliance of a party, their best remedy is to remove the occasions, when it may be done without crossing the interest of state or maxims of government (p. 83).

II Another impediment is "an erroneous confidence, in the more numerous party, that they need not seek nor mind the way of peace; for they reckon themselves sure to carry it by the

A reference to the King's Declaration Sep. 1660?

references in text are to Second Part of

'Interest of England'

major vote in all Councils and Conventions." (84) The dissenting party is not small, is not composed of the rabble multitude, nor of fanatic spirits. They are honest and sober people, who act from principles of knowledge and can give a reason for their practices in all things pertaining to conscience. Another obstacle to the proposed union is, he says, "an opinion of many, that the sure and only means of preventing schism, and maintaining unity in the Church is by multiplying ceremonial injunctions and causes, by requiring full conformity to controverted forms which might well be spared" and by requiring "assent of judgment by subscription to all particulars of doctrine, worship, and discipline, in every jot and tittle thereof." (88)

III A great prejudice exists against Presbyterians only in consociation with Presbyters and against Classical and Presbyterian meetings as inclining to faction. Some regard the jurisdiction of a single person as the surest way to keep Church affairs in a fixed state. Corbet says "Let the frame of ecclesiastical polity lean neither towards tyranny nor anarchy, but be set upright for just liberty. Bishop Hall, in his Discourse entitled "A Modest offer of some meet considerations to the Assembly of Divines at Westminster", commends the method of Scotland for prevention of Error and Heresy by a gradual proceeding from the parochial unity to the Presbytery and from thence to the Provincial Synod, and from thence to the General

Assembly for determining any controversy." (93) Corbet seems to agree with the Bishop's policy as leaning neither to tyranny nor anarchy. This suggests that as Hall (an Episcopalian) proposed yielding something to Presbytery, so Corbet (a Presbyterian) was willing to yield something to Episcopacy. Further, Corbet pays tribute to His Majesty's excellent qualities. The sovereign's greatness and the people's liberty rest upon the same fundamental constitution, and if the one be shaken, the other will also be. It is evident that the Presbyterians love the King and Kingly Government. The Presbyterians are ready to comply with Episcopacy regulated, and Liturgy corrected; and they prefer union by Accommodation before Toleration with Division. (101) Neither of the two great parties can exist without the King "and this gives Corbet assurance that they are both and must be both his." (103) In some tender points of conscience they wait upon his indulgence and are willing to close with uniformity, not with rigour, but in some convenient latitude and relaxation. There is a yielding which can be regarded as in no wise abject. Corbet makes reference to the saying "No Bishop, No King", and he says "I do not well understand the rise of this saying, and therefore dare not speak in derogation of their judgments who were the authors of it" (106) The Nobility and the Gentry are said to be for the most part in favour of Prelacy. He says that they cannot be offended at a regulated Episcopacy when they see that order, harmony and general peace are likely to follow. (107) "The reduction of absolute Prelacy to Episcopal Presidency here desired may concern the nobility and gentry as well as others". They have little cause to fear that which is commonly so much dreaded,

namely the excessive rigour of discipline from a president Bishop and grave Presbyters jointly governing. For it is pre-supposed that no act of discipline shall be exercised against or besides the Laws of the Land which cannot be made without the consent of the Nobles and Commons in Parliament.<sup>1</sup> (p. 109)

A union between Episcopacy and Presbytery will not undermine the former - "Episcopacy will stand more firm in conjunction with Presbytery than by itself alone" (p.113)

If the Presbyterian Churches would become more firm and stable by the superintendency of one grave President (and the truth is that in all Presbyteries there appeareth some Episcopacy either formal or virtual) so an Episcopal Church may be judged more firm and stable by a Bishop's superintendency and consociation with assistant Presbyters" (p. 114)

If it should be asked why such a scheme as suggested by Corbet failed, the answer is that the Anglo Catholics of that day were the obstacles to Peace. They held to the absolute necessity of apostolical succession and were not willing to abate one jot or tittle. Although the Anglo Catholics were not a majority of the nation they

<sup>1</sup> See. Par. 9. Ordinances of 1645.

were in power and knew it. They were also moved by animosity, nursing a grievance of former years and were animated by motives of revenge. The King did not intend to go on his travels again and the Bishops had Clarendon as their main support. Corbet did not advocate toleration in "The Interest of England in the matter of Religion, 1660" any more than Baxter did, who would have left the Independents etc. to fight their own way, though of course if Corbet's scheme had been accepted some compromise must have been provided for the others. Corbet, in his willingness to accept the Bishop differed entirely from Cartwright, as also did Baxter, who would along with Corbet have accepted the Bishop, though refusing a Bishopric himself, if the Bishop's authority had been reduced to his status in the Church of the second century.

Baxter and Corbet were almost identical in being willing to accept the old prayer book with certain modifications. The Bishops were under a misapprehension in thinking Baxter meant his suggestions in regard to the prayer book to be sine qua non of acquiescence as he desired comparatively few changes, but, like Corbet, wished the Bishop to be stripped of his extra episcopal

functions to make him a spiritual personage without disciplinary powers, first among his brethren, but not their Head.

The historical accuracy of Corbet's position is, on the whole, now admitted by most scholars. A study of the early Church Ministry like that of Principal Lindsay and substantially that of Canon Streeter sets forth the evidence for it convincingly. But the Diocesan view of Episcopacy and its claim to a divine origin is not based on history so much as on a doctrine of apostolic succession which is supposed to be traceable in the New Testament and to be guaranteed by the experience of the Church.

In "The Point of Church Unity and Schism Discussed" (1679) Corbet continues to manifest a keen desire for a peaceable solution of the divisions, compatible with a right interpretation of the Scriptures. He states the Church has the power of its fundamental constitution from Christ. Of itself, it has only the power of making secondary laws or canons. He maintains that the greater part of the Nonconformists admit the Episcopacy of Ignatius and Cyprian, and that Bishop Usher's Model of Government by Bishops and Archbishops with their Presbyters was by some of them presented to the King as a groundwork of accommodation. p. 45.

B

L'ESTRANGE (1661)

and

THOMAS (1676)

reply  
to

CORBET'S 'INTEREST OF ENGLAND  
IN MATTER OF RELIGION' (1660)

---

also

CORBET'S 'A CONSIDERATION OF THE PRESENT  
STATE OF CONFORMITY IN THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND'

## L'ESTRANGE (1661) AND THOMAS (1676) REPLY

As already stated Corbet published in 1660 "The Interest of England in the matter of Religion" in two parts. In 1661 Roger L'Estrange (1616-1704) a Tory Journalist and Pamphleteer, who flung himself into the controversy respecting the settlement of the Church, wrote a reply, "Interest Mistaken" or "The Holy Cheat, proving from the undeniable Practices and Propositions of the Presbyterians that the design of that Party is to enslave both King and People under the Masque of Religion."

This was dedicated to the House of Commons, and the writer complains that there is a faction under the note of Presbyterianism which seems much concerned to stickle against Bishops and Church Rites. He declares their aim is to "Tumultuate the People and make a Party against the Civil Power". A careful reading of their Pamphlets shows that the King's Authority is called in question, and they publicly maintain that the late War against the King was lawful.

The object of his treatise, L'Estrange declares "Is to lay open the Presbyterian juggle so that in one age they be not twice deluded by the same Imposture" He says his arguments are drawn from their own Practices and Positions from Precedents of former times (Cartwright and his Disciples)" He complains that Corbet has not meant fairly

to represent the Bishops or he would have referred to good ones also. He states that Corbet misrepresents the present state of affairs. L'Estrange is persuaded that severity to the pretentious Presbyter is the true interest of the nation, yet allowing indulgence to the conscientious (4). He states that some individuals have done His Majesty some service, but, to the best of his remembrance, the entire party has never rendered any service to the King. He is also the more suspicious because he does not remember whenever the Party was satisfied with less than everything.

The writer queries what is meant by the Presbyterian Party mentioned by Corbet and says that their cause is not the form but the exercise of the Government, for they like well enough to have that power themselves, which they condemn in others. When he sees a bold, seditious faction, bidding defiance to the Civil Magistrate under the Church's colours he does not find anything so sacred in the name of Presbyterian as to protect a turbulent Party assuming that appellation (24).

L'Estrange undertakes to prove that the same Party for which they plead (The Sober Presbyterians) are no less enemies to the King and People, than to Bishops, "and which is more, from their own Practices and Positions

I will make it good" (25). As to Corbet's assertion that they accept, in the main, the thirty-nine Articles, and differ only in the Prelacy and Human Mystical Ceremonies, L'Estrange asks "Can any man imagine that these are true and conscientious reasons for the quarrel, or that the middle way which the Presbyterian steers betwixt fanaticism and popery is the just measure of the Cause?" (27)

He states that Corbet's remark about the Presbyterian Party being numerous and Godly is open to question, as "That Party is a little given to false musters" (28).

Touching on the Presbyterians' practical ministry, L'Estrange says "I will grant that, without the aid of seditious lectures, I do believe that the strife had never come to blood." (29)

As to the liberty Corbet advocates, the Writer says "What is intended by your Liberty might be a doubt did not the coherence explain it to be a freedom of acting to all intents and purposes at pleasure (whether without Law or against it no matter) according to such precedents of former times as our Resolver refers to and justifies".

L'Estrange asks what return the Presbyterian Party have given for the King's concession. His Declaration was no sooner public, but a Petition was exhibited<sup>1</sup> from

<sup>1</sup> See 'Reliq Bax' II<sup>265</sup> for Petition. Baxter states: 'when we had received this copy of the Declaration we saw that it would not serve to heal our differences.'

divers Ministers, in and about London for more liberty, with some formalities, indeed, of gratitude for that. How many bold and scandalous invectives from that time, both from the Press and the pulpit against the Rites of the Church and Episcopal Clergy, nay, and against the Sacred Majesty of that very person to whose incomparable clemency they owe their heads and their fortunes (37).

Referring to Corbet's avowal of loyalty to the Civil Magistrate and Monarch, L'Estrange asks "Did not these Presbyters Corbet talks of, place the Supreme Power in the two Houses, and under that commission seize the King's Forts, levy arms, tax the people, plunder and kill their fellow-subjects, impose oaths, share His Majesty's revenues, pursue and Jewishly sell and betray His Sacred Person?" (40) "What was the Covenant but a Sacrament of Religious Disobedience, a mark of Discrimination who were against the King and who were for Him" (41)

L'Estrange makes reference to Cromwell's "Two Houses" which he says "Corbet miscalls the Parliament of England, upon which bottom stands the Presbyterians Fabric" (49) He argues that the "Two Houses" do not constitute a Court of Judicature, as the Government of this Nation is in King, Lords and Commons. He says that Presbytery was never settled, not ever likely to be. He indeed accounts the Presbyterian Discipline

very tyrannical (63). As to the use of the Liturgy not the tenth part of the Presbyterians would be content with it, some of them are against all set forms of Common Prayer whatsoever. Others (non moderate forsooth) do not oppose a prescribed form, so it be not enjoined. A third sort vouchsafe to promote the English Liturgy, provided they may have the purging of it themselves. L'Estrange says, Corbet's drift is to persuade them that to comply with the Presbyterians is to "Comport the Spirit of this Nation" (73). If toleration may compass the difference there were some hope, but by toleration, says L'Estrange, is not meant an unprudential yielding to an unpractical and churlish faction, but a discreet and pious application of tenderness towards such as from fair comportment in the main of Order and Good Manners appear to merit it. L'Estrange asks why should the subversion of the Presbyterians be mentioned. How those that were never up should be thrown down, he cannot imagine. By what Law or Equity do these People pretend to any Interest of Establishment in England. The whole course of the Presbyterian Discipline hath been tumultuous and their avowed Principles are more destructive to loyalty than even the rankest of the Jesuits themselves". (90)

He states that divers late Discourses are effectually no other than Cartwright's Principles and Morals couched in warier terms. (98). He says the grand source of their miseries was the Covenant, by which, as by a spell, the people were insensibly bewitched into an aptness to work whatever wickedness the Interpreters of that Article should say was the intention of it (101).

Why should Presbyterians, a small irregular Party, pretend to give the Law to a Supreme Authority, the Cherished Constitution and Incomparable greater part of the Nation. (134). L'Estrange says "The Presbyterians may find many things to thank His Majesty for, but he wishes they could hit upon a handsomer manner of doing it and not perpetually be craving for more, when they should be doing him service for what they have already received." (168).

It is obvious that L'Estrange wilfully confused the Presbyterianism of Corbet with that of Cartwright and Scotland.

In 1676 there appeared "The Presbyterians Unmasked or Animadversions upon a Non-Conformist Book called 'The Interest of England in the Matter of Religion'" The writer was Samuel Thomas (1627 - 1693) a Non-Juror.<sup>1</sup> It is a belated attack on Corbet and his book of 1660.

Thomas in his preface states that Corbet is profuse and lavish in his praises of Presbyterians, "and has an excellent knack of whitening Ethiopians and putting wolves into sheeps' clothing, but Corbet must not be angry if they endeavour, for their own security, to strip them of that covering lest, under the specious disguises of Religion, Reformation, and Liberty, they once more rend and tear us and make us a prey to Atheism Confusion and Tyranny"

Corbet having stated there are two main disagreeing parties within the Kingdom, the Episcopal and the

1

Thomas was a Cambridge M.A. Vicar of Chard in Somerset, Prebend of Compton and Bishop of Wells, from both of which he was deprived for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance. "The Presbyterians Unmasked" was republished in 1681 under the title "The Dissenters Disarmed" without a preface, as a second part of the "New Distemper of Thomas Tomkind (died 1675)" Baxter terms Thomas's reply "A bloody invective." Orme: Baxter's works XVIII 188).

Presbyterian, Thomas taxes Corbet with failing to show how disunion may be said to be removed, either by the abolition or toleration of one Party. He says that the Prelatists have great reason to complain of Corbet's fraudulent, disingenuous dealing in endeavouring to cheat the world with an imperfect portraiture of the Presbyterian Party. This must be clear to anyone who will read and consider the Solemn League and Covenant. For its first Article they pledge themselves to endeavour, in their places and callings, the preservation of the Reformed Religion (in the Church of Scotland) in their Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government..... and swear also, to endeavour the reformation of the Religion in the Kingdoms of England and Ireland in their Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government according to the Word of God and the example of the best reformed Churches (8).

Thomas then refers to the second article where they swear "to endeavour the extirpation of the Church Government by Bishops etc., and asks with what face, therefore, can Corbet presume to tell us that the form of Ecclesiastical Government by Parochial and Classical Presbyters, Provincial and National Assemblies is remote enough from the main cause of Presbytery".

Thomas continues "Now how injurious the Scotch Discipline (which England's Presbyterians have thus covenanted to introduce) is to the Civil Magistrate, how oppressive to the Subject and Pernicious to both, Bishop Bramhall (since Primate of Ireland) hath abundantly manifested in his "Fair warning for England to take heed of the Scotch Discipline" (10). He says, "Since the Presbyterians have sworn to endeavour the preservation of the Discipline and Government of the Church of Scotland, it is but a piece of Justice and Reason that the King's Majesty should look upon them as persons owning these seditious principles, upon which such enormous disciplinarian practices are granted" (10).

In reply to Corbet's contention that the Presbyterians are persons of known learning, prudence, piety and gravity, Thomas asks whether the Quakers did not excel them in gravity, the Anabaptists in Piety, the Independents in Prudence, the Prelatists in learning, and some Jesuits in all four. (15).

Thomas says "It would seem that Corbet is of opinion that all parties ought to be tolerated, yea encouraged, who choose their way with sincerity of

affection and gravity of judgment, inasmuch as they appear to have the impress of Divine Authority, and the character of Evangelical Purity. If this be not his opinion then he should show why Independents ought to be encouraged as well as Presbyterians (18).

He says the great things for which the Presbyterians contend according to Corbet are the lively opening of the Pure Doctrine of the Gospel, the upholding of all Divine Institutions, particularly the strict observance of the Lord's Day, a laborious and efficacious Ministry, taking hold of the Conscience and reaching to the Heart, the Godly Discipline etc. Thomas replies that it seems these Godly Disciplinarians did not look upon disobedience to the Lord's established Prelacy and Ceremonious Worship as true and real disobedience. He denies Corbet's assertion that the Presbyterian interest will never be extinguished while the religion of England continues Protestant, asserting that exactly the opposite will result if the Protestant Doctrine by law established in the Church of England be upheld and preached, and that the Prelatists are much more worthy to be entrusted with the Protestant principles (39).

"A CONSIDERATION OF THE PRESENT STATE OF CONFORMITY IN THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND" (Printed in 'Remains' 1684) p.136

In this Corbet reveals his standpoint in 1662. He gives the reason why he could not conform. "Nothing" he states "ought to allow me to dissemble or lie in matters of religion" and so he would if he declared his assent to these things contained and prescribed in the Liturgy from which he really was compelled to dissent. He could not declare his assent and consent to the use of all things in the said book contained and prescribed. To many things of indifferent character he can assent but what these are he must be allowed to judge for himself. They related to the whole Scripture appointed to be read. He did not think it in itself unlawful that some apocryphal chapters should be read in the Church, but he did question whether he could consent to use the calendar and tables so far as they direct to the reading of apocryphal chapters, in the same place and under the same title with canonical chapters, also to the reading of the proper lessons, though apocryphal, rather than the lessons in the ordinary course, though canonical. He also scrupled about the express declaring of assent and consent to the use of tables and rules directing to the solemnising of appointed festivals, etc. He held it was, to him, doubtful whether any human power may lawfully institute such times and days as some of these appointed. Then as to the use of the surplice, supposing that the use thereof is not, in itself unlawful, nevertheless, he

questioned whether he might lawfully consent to a rule enjoining the use of it to such ministers and in such congregations, by which the use thereof is judged unlawful, or to which it is odious or greatly offensive by invincible or inveterate prejudice. He owned the whole doctrine of the Trinity and of the Incarnation of the Son of God as set forth in the Athanasian Creed, yet he was not satisfied to declare his assent "to the assertions, which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. Also, this is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved. Also, he therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity." There were various other points on which he scrupled such as debarring from the Lord's Supper all who through unfeigned scruple of conscience refused the Act of kneeling, though he did not scruple the lawfulness of it for himself. He scrupled also about every parishioner communicating at least three times in the year when it is sadly known that in most Parishes many parishioners are notoriously unfit. The compulsory use of the Cross in Baptism was also questioned by him, Corbet stating that the Sign of the Cross had been more suspected to be unlawful than any other ceremony enjoined in the Church of England. "The Grand objection" said Corbet, against its lawfulness is its supposed necessity as an essential part of the Sacrament. "Sacraments are signs appointed to ratify, seal and confirm the Covenant of God, and if any human form

constituted any sign to this end it would be a high entrenchment upon the sovereignty of God. But the Sign of the Cross in Baptism is not properly used to this end and purpose". Corbet had no scruple about the marriage ring.

It will thus be seen that in these and in other scruples relating to the Catechism, Confirmation, the Prayer Book, and the Burial Service, Corbet endeavoured to be absolutely fair and loyal to his own convictions. In all these, with perhaps scarcely a single exception, his position coincided with that of Baxter and the Nonconformists generally, as is well known. <sup>I</sup>

In "The Point of Church Unity and schism Discussed" (1679) Corbet says he has now been in the ministry nearly forty years, and was young when he was ordained Presbyter according to the form of ordination in the Church of England. "He thought then he might submit but things have changed." p.61-5

<sup>I</sup> Note: Baxter wrote: "The surplice I doubted of, but more inclined to think it lawful, ..... (though I never wore it to this day). The ring in marriage I made no scruple about ..... So that subscription, the Cross in baptism, and the promiscuous giving the Lord's Supper to drunkards, swearers, fornicators, scorers at godliness, etc., that are not excommunicate by a Bishop or Chancellor that is not of their acquaintance, these three were all I now became Nonconformist to". Reliq. Bax I 14. Of this Bishop Knox says in "John Bunyan" p. 43 (1928) "It would be difficult to find a more moderate and temperate statement of the Puritan position".

CORBET'S "DISCOURSE ON THE RELIGION OF ENGLAND" 1667

CORBET'S SECOND "DISCOURSE ON THE RELIGION OF ENGLAND" 1668

and

PERRINCHIEF'S REPLIES (1668)

## THE DISCOURSE OF RELIGION OF ENGLAND, 1667

In 1667 Corbet wrote "A discourse of the Religion of England, - asserting that reformed Christianity settled in its due latitude is the stability and advancement of this Kingdom." He does not wish to undermine Episcopacy, nor any other form of Government but some indulgence to dissenters of sound faith and good life is submissively offered to the consideration of the Superiors. In this work he divides the religion of the Realm into three parties of most important consideration. First, the Protestants of the Church of England, second, the Protestant Nonconformists, third, the Papists. "It is now five years" he says "since the passing of the Act of Uniformity cleared the Churches of the supposed enemies of her polity. Private meetings for religious worship are prohibited and the Five Mile Act in force, passed for the breaking and dissipating of the whole party. Such care is taken to strengthen the state and restrain Dissenters. Nevertheless the State Ecclesiastical hath advanced little in the esteem, acceptance or acquiescence of people. The Dissenters are still the same, and are rather strengthened in their averseness. And those of them that repair to the public assemblies retain their principles of reformation (as they speak) without separation."

Corbet argues that

"The extirpation of the Dissenters is both difficult and unprofitable. (pp. 25 - 26). Violent methods do not comport with the nature of Christian religion and the success of such a course of action is very doubtful. The Nation is not likely to grow better by the subversion of this sort for in them no small part of the nation's sobriety, frugality and industry doth reside. They are not the great wasters, but mostly in the number of Getters. The displacing of them has not increased civility and good conversation among men. To purge the nation of this people may be to purge out more of its vitals than the strength of this State can bear. The Church's infallibility and the people's implicit faith may help against all dispute; but it cannot be so in England whilst the people read the Scriptures and the established doctrines. Faith remains with us, and if no greater latitude can be allowed than is at present, a race of Nonconformists is like to run parallel with the Conformists to the world's end."

Corbet is careful to state that the representation of this difficulty is not threatening to Rulers, nor an Intimation of rebellion (pp. 27 - 28).

A comprehensive state of religion is required, but he sees the difficulty of devising a rule or model that shall provide for all. There must be acquiescence in any consti-

tution that is in some sort proportionable to the ends of government. All that are thought fit to abide with security in any state may be reduced to three sorts.

- (1) Those that are of the Established and Approved Order.
- (2) Such as may be tolerated under certain restrictions.
- (3) Such as may be only connived at.

The settling of a nation may be made up of an Establishment, a Limited Toleration, and a Discreet Connivance. To be comprehended within the Establishment it is requisite not only to be of importance in the public interest, but also of Principles congruous to such stated orders in the Church as the stability of the constitution requires. As for Toleration and Connivance, they must be regulated with respect not only to common charity, but also to the safety of the Established Order.

Corbet says no attempt is made to intermeddle with the form of Church Government, but only to consider the prescribed uniformity of judgment and practice. This must not be narrow, but as broad and comprehensive as possible. It must not be loose and incoherent, but well compacted, that it may attain the ends of discipline, which are to promote sound doctrine and godly life, and to keep out idolatry, superstition and all wicked error and practice.

The ecclesiastical superiors are besought to review the enjoined Uniformity, as the Church though she be of venerable authority does not claim an infallibility.

Corbet discusses 'Whether the Dissenters are capable of being brought into such a Comprehension' (p. 32)

The inquiry is whether they be of a judgment and temper that makes them capable of being brought under the magistrates paternal care and conduct to such a stated order as will comport with this Church and Kingdom. The Presbyterians generally hold the Church of England to be a true Church, though defective in its Order and Discipline; and frequent the worship of God in the public assemblies. Many of those that press after greater reformation do yet communicate as well in the Sacraments, as the Word preached, and Prayers. The ministers of the Presbyterian persuasion in their proposals to His Majesty declare that they do not, nor ever did refuse the true Ancient Primitive Episcopacy or Presidency, as it was balanced or managed by a due commixture of Presbyters therewith. They state that they are satisfied in their judgments concerning the lawfulness of a Liturgy or Form of Worship. As regards Ceremonies, they hold themselves obliged in every part of Divine Worship to do all things decently and in order. They desire that certain ceremonies be not imposed. They heartily acknowledge His Majesty to be

Supreme Governor over all persons and over all things and causes in these his Dominions.

With regard to Toleration and Connivance Corbet proposes an establishment of such latitude as will settle this Church and promote peace, wealth and honour of the Civil State. As for others that are of sound belief and good life yet have taken in some principles of Church Government less congruous to National Settlement, he would never be a means of exposing them to oppression, contempt and hatred, but would admit their plea, as far as it will go ..... Every true Christian should be tender to all that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. Nevertheless, their Liberty pleaded for is not to be inordinate, but measured and limited by the safety of true Religion in general and of the Public Established Order, which is not impracticable.

Corbet's appeal for compromise is not restricted to the Anglicans but Dissenters of Narrow and Rigid Principles are urged to exercise Moderation (p. 38 - 40).

Corbet's "Discourse on the Religion of England" (1667) was answered (1668) by Richard Perrinchief (1623? - 1673) a Royalist Divine. He opposes Corbet's appeal for Toleration in "A Discourse of Toleration; In answer to a late book intituled 'A Discourse of the Religion of England'".

Perrinchief argues that Toleration will not remove dissensions nor hinder the destructive effects of them. It is not in the interest of the nation and those who speak and write for a Toleration plead for their own interest.

Perrinchief asserts that the faction which designed the ruin of our Church and State, aiming to get a party for themselves, after they had quite overthrown all whose cares were to be for discipline, did then give liberty to all tender consciences. As a result the dissensions of religion were so far increased that it was the wonder of all men how it was possible so few years could produce such a prodigious catalogue of heresies. All these also were carried on with the usual effects of schism. In every town almost which was capable of two preachers, one Presbyterian and another Independent were planted there. Those who so earnestly press for a toleration of dissensions in religion represent unto us the necessity of it, but the great miseries of the nations which come by them, we acknowledge to be the most necessary consequence of them. It is evident that a toleration will not be a remedy for them, because that hath been the very cause which hath hatched them to this number and strength. Whoever heard of Seekers and Quakers

before the general licence was granted for every one to be as mad in religion as he pleased? Independents were not vulgarly known, and their name was as obscure to the world as the nature of that sect was to the authors themselves in the beginning; till such time as they were summoned from America and Holland to confront presbytery.

Perrinchief asserts that every sect when it is in its beginnings is lowly and meek; but having gotten strength so far as to lay down fear they boldly take counsel from their fortune and dictate against their contemned inferiors and professed Dissenters.

He deals with Corbet's arguments that the Dissenters from the present ecclesiastical polity are momentous in the balance of this nation, that Dissenting ministers notwithstanding all reproaches, provocations and wishes, do appeal to God, and that they dare not conform for conscience sake, and that the several laws for uniformity for regulating corporations, against conventicles for the removal of non-conforming ministers from boroughs have not advanced the esteem and acceptance of the ecclesiastical state, and the acquiescence of the people in it. In reply Perrinchief maintains that the reason these laws have not had their intended effect is not because the King and the

Parliament were mistaken in their counsels; but because those who were entrusted with the execution have been unfaithful in their offices.<sup>I</sup>

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I

'A DISCOURSE OF TOLERATION:' IN ANSWER TO A LATE BOOK  
INTITULED A DISCOURSE OF THE RELIGION OF ENGLAND. 1668

Author: Richard Perrinchief.

Richard Perrinchief (1623? - 1673). Royalist  
Divine Educated at Magdalen College, Cambridge.  
Graduated B.A. and M.A. Ejected from his Fellowship  
by the parliamentary commissioners under the ordinance  
13 Feb. 1645 - 6. Admitted to the Rectory of St. Mildred's  
Poultry, at the Restoration. Proceeded D.D. at Cambridge,  
1663. Prebendary of St. Peter's Westminster, November 1664  
and Prebendary of London, August 1667. Wrote (1) Discourse  
of Toleration, in answer to a late book (by J. Corbet)  
entitled A Discourse of the Religion of England, London,  
1667; Perrinchief opposed toleration or any modification  
of the Establishment. (2) 'Indulgence not justified' being  
a continuation of the 'Discourse of Toleration' in answer to  
a late book entitled A Peace Offering or Plea for Indulgence,  
and to the cavils of another (by J.C.) called the 'Second  
Discourse of the Religion of England,' London, 1668.  
(Dictionary of National Biography)

"The Discourse of Toleration" by Perrinchief was followed by Corbet's "A Second Discourse of the Religion of England" (1668) further asserting that Reformed Christianity settled in its Due Latitude is the stability and Advancement of this Kingdom" wherein is included an answer to a late book intituled "A Discourse of Toleration" B.M. 873e58 (2)<sup>1</sup> 49 pages.

Corbet laments that the troubled state of Religion continues in this Kingdom, but there is no cause for despair or despondency concerning the cure. The most effective means of reconciliation between themselves is the reconciling spirit. The comprehensiveness of the establishment and the allowance of a just latitude to dissent, is the best remedy against dissensions. He emphasises the fact that dissenting religion does not involve state factions. So far as the Nonconformists are concerned the good of the King and the Kingdom is their great concern. In this connection Nonconformists and Dissenters seem to be used in a vague way by Corbet, who claims that Indulgence towards dissenting Protestants ensures the peace and happiness of the realm. He says that men differently persuaded in the present controversies may live together in peace.

<sup>1</sup> The name of the writer of 'Discourse of Toleration' is not printed on Corbet's 'A Second Discourse of the Religion of England' but 'by R. Perrinchief' is written in pencil on copy of Corbet's Second Discourse in Williams' Library. Corbet's name is also only in pencil. Perrinchief's name does not appear on "A Discourse of Toleration" but it is ascribed to him in D.N.B.

Corbet states that the latitude advocated in his former treatise is unjustly impeached as providing only for the Presbyterians and ruling out all other dissenters; whereas it would comprehend within the establishment those of all sorts that are of principles congruous to State order (inside the Church) so that no sort is excluded whose principles make them capable. Some<sup>1</sup> Nonconformists are for imported Episcopacy after the form of the ancient Churches; divers others<sup>2</sup> as to particular forms of government are latitudinarians, and others<sup>3</sup> there are besides these who would live peaceably under the present Hierarchy might they be spared from the personal profession or practice of some things they think unlawful or doubtful. Moreover beyond the established order, the latitude he pleads for would include the toleration of those that are of sound faith and good life but have taken up some principles of Church Government less congruous to national settlement. Corbet objects to the maxim that no toleration of dissenters, howsoever regulated, can be safely granted by the Supreme Government without a standing army - which (says Corbet) makes little for the safety and liberty of true religion. If it be said the tolerated party may become dangerous or suspected, it is always supposed that they will stand by their good behaviour and the Ruler's favour, but indeed they are not like to prove dangerous if the establishment be large enough: for it is the NARROWNESS thereof that makes the dissenters numerous

<sup>1</sup> Presbyterians?

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Platonists?

<sup>3</sup> Congregationalists?

and still increases their number. (pp. 36 - 40). Corbet points out that the ancient Nonconformists earnestly opposed separation and held communion with the Church of England in its public worship and adds if Episcopacy yield to a moderate course, why should any prudent Dissenters go about to molest it? Why should the Episcopal clergy dread that moderation that would render Episcopacy more generally acceptable and put some end to the hitherto incessant strugglings against it?

The right and sure way to establish Episcopacy in a land where Reformed Christianity is established, is not to urge precise conformity in opinions and orders, but to encourage soundness in the faith, ability and industry in the proper work of the ministry and a conversation becoming the Gospel; and to discourage Pluralities, non-residences, Licentiousness and Idleness in all sorts who serve not Christ but themselves.

For himself Corbet is chiefly solicitous for the tranquility and rest of a troubled nation. He would do anything that were not a sin to him to recover the liberty of his public service in the Church. But if it cannot be..... he will be content to remain a Silenced Sufferer for Conscience towards God. He would much rejoice in such enlargement of the Public Rule as might give safe entrance to others, though he himself by some invincible strictness of apprehension, should remain excluded. In his opinion, it will be no dividing of the Nonconformists or weakening of their interests, if a part of them might close with the approved order of the nation, enlarged to the latitude of their judgments, when others of straighter judgments are left without.

Corbet's second Discourse on the Religion of England (1668) was followed by another from Perrinchief "Indulgence not Justified" B.M.701.6.42 (1). In this Perrinchief says:-

"The present practices show how little the Nonconformists rest in a bare dissent from the public rule when most of those ministers who relinquished the places of their ministry have set up private congregations by which they forsake the communion of the Church. What truth or justice hath he that dares deny these to be dissensions and that those men are not touched by what is said of them?" (32)

Corbet (he says) "answered not the reasons which proved that dissensions were become factions, nor did he take notice that all those who have no good-will to the state are scattered among them that are enemies to the Church. But he only proposes a different consideration (or treatment) of the Nonconformists from the Papists because these acknowledge a foreign jurisdiction". (33)

Perrinchief goes on to maintain "what Whitgift and Hooker had pointed out and experience had confirmed that the Puritans or Presbyterians were the first party that broke the peace, and did so on principles which were flung in their faces by the other sects who proceeded

further and further upon their positions." (34) He says:-

"The integrity and unity of the Protestant Presbyterian Churches beyond the sea do not conclude to the soundness of that party among us, no more than their miscarriages can disparage those Churches who disclaim them. For some do undertake to prove that that party among us, is a particular sect from all of that name beyond the seas" (34).

Perrinchief refers to the relations of the Presbyterians and Independents as follows:-

"The Presbyterians and Independents have a further agreement, yet there was no peace among them, but they mutually wrote and preached one against the other, the first declaring and petitioning that the last should not have a Toleration, and the last by subtlety and force weakening and exposing the first to contempt and ruin". (36)

In the foregoing Perrinchief is not correct, at any rate as to men of the Corbet and Baxter type. They certainly did not petition against toleration for the Independents, indeed Baxter definitely denied any such act. Corbet and Baxter tried to arrange an accommodation with the Church of England on the basis of comprehension of Presbyterians believing it would be easier to deal with Independents later.

Baxter complained that Owen by his line of action

imperilled the proposals for comprehension in 1667,<sup>1</sup>  
doing no good to either his own party or the Presby-  
terians.

The spirit of Perrinchief is seen in the following:-

"By this reply (the distinction betwixt obliging or  
binding the conscience and settling it or leaving no  
room for doubting) I am satisfied that Corbet's ignorance  
is greater than his malice, which I doubted before." (p. 38)

1

See Reliq. Bax. III 61 ff  
Baxter gives account of Dr. Owen's attitude  
at considerable length.

D

"D O L U S   A N   V I R T U S" (1668)

OR

"AN ANSWER TO A SEDITIOUS DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE  
RELIGION OF ENGLAND AND THE SETTLEMENT OF REFORMED  
CHRISTIANITY IN ITS DUE LATITUDE (1667)

Corbet published his "Discourse on the Religion of England" in 1667, and "A Second Discourse" in 1668. The first was replied to in 1668 not only by Perrinchief but also by "Dolus an Virtus" or "An answer to a seditious Discourse concerning the Religion of England and the Settlement of Reformed Christianity in its due Latitude" This was a tract of thirty-three pages, in which Corbet was assailed and his desire for peace was challenged, the writer saying, "A man may see an itching humour in you to be doing, but what one can hardly conjecture, except by the shadows of your motions which are subtle and therefore, properly to be called Presbyterian." (2) The writer charges Corbet with not stating plainly and clearly what he means by Pure Reformed Christianity, but he may conjecture Corbet's meaning that he would only have the Presbyterians included so that they might be equal with the Bishops and preach in pulpits what now they utter in darkness and, by zeal, render Episcopacy first unnecessary, then inexpedient, and, at length, Anti-Christian. (6)

The author states that although it may be difficult to distinguish between toleration and connivance, yet Corbet will have three sorts although he never speaks in respect to three states of dissenters; Presbyterians, Independents and Quakers, etc. He says "Corbet would have Presbytery put into the Comprehensive State with Episcopal Protestants, settled and established and cherished by law. The Independents

are only to be tolerated, but with careful restrictions that they come not too near the line. The Quakers are to be wisely and charitably connived at as rules of safety may suggest." The writer charges Corbet with taking this rule from the Rainbow which hath three chief colours, Yellow, Green and Purple. The Presbyterians are put in the outward and greater circle. The less lightsome and Greenish Independents in the middle state, and the Quaker who professes himself to be the only pure light, in the lower rim which is nearest the earth. "I am sure you would have the fine yellow Presbyterians put in the Circle of Comprehensive Probation, or else your whole book signifies nothing." (10) He further argues that the object in view is to let the Presbyterians come within the line of communication and favour with the Episcopal Divines, and all the rest to be kept out that they may have some Body under them to control. "Why?" says the Author. "They must have a controlling spirit, and must have someone to control and trample on. To control and trample on inferiors is but a Presbyterian's property, but to control superiors is their very essence and nature." (11)

This opens up the question what really was the spirit of Presbyterians in the time of their ascendancy, and an answer is suggested by a vote of the implemented Rump on March 5th, 1660, when they (the great majority) re-imposed the Solemn League and Covenant, and the Catechism of the Westminster Assembly was ordered to be adopted by the Parochial Ministers on pain of ejection. The ordinance

for this purpose was expressed in the following terms, "If any Minister, receiving the State's maintenance misse catechizing (a particular catechism is prescribed) ten Sabbath days in a whole year, unlesse it be upon such cause as two Justices shall approve of, such omissions being proved by the Oath of any two witnesses, this person is to be ejected out of his living as a negligent and scandalous minister." Waddington in his Surrey Congregational History, (p.45) quotes this from a book entitled "Beames of former light" (p.101) which appeared in April 1660 anonymously but has been ascribed to the eminent Independent Philip Nye<sup>A</sup> (1596?-1672). The writer expressed himself very strongly against the ordinance. It seemed to him more peremptory and would be more severe in its operation than any law previously enacted since the reign of Mary. He touches the quick when he says "It is with us now as in the first Reformation, the Popish then, so the Episcopal disaffected Ministers now, have necessarily been turned out of this employment: so that such is the scarcity of well-affected and able men to carry on this work, that many Parishes throughout the Nation lye vacant and are as sheep without a Shepherd, especially in the remoter parts. And where it is otherwise, and places better furnished, the number is not sufficient, no, not in the City of London or the Universities, to preserve their people to the interest of the present work of Christ, but are more and more prevailed upon, and infected with the old Leaven of Popery and Superstition, and the

A Calamy Non. Mem. I p.87

There is no proof that Nye was the author, but on p.177 of the book there is good evidence, viz., "about 7 or 8 and 20 years since (i.e. 1632 or 33) Master George Walker preached a visitation sermon (I have cause to remember it, being then suspended and put out of the Ministry by the visitor."

Nye was suspended from St. Michael's Cornhill in 1633.  
( 'By Mr. Ph. Nye' is written in ink on title page of copy in Williams's Library.)

wretched Principles of the Episcopal malignant Party, which daily increaseth everywhere." (p. 158 - 9)

"This being so, the faithful and well-affected Ministers of the Gospel should not at such a time especially, but for very great unworthiness, be ejected out of their places. There is too much ground to fear that some one such imposition as in this case, and rigorously prosecuted upon such as cannot conform, will give the malignant party the day they look for; and those that do conform and keep their places will be so overtopped by Malignants and their followers as they will not be able to do much in reforming their people anywhere." (p. 160)

The author of "Dolus an Virtus" does not refer to this book and so it is unlikely that he had come across it. It would have furnished him with just the support he needed for his argument - that the Presbyterians in power were ruthlessly intolerant, but now (1667) when the Bishops have regained the upper hand, they plead for favour on the ground of their moderation. "But", says "Dolus an Virtus" the nation can easily perceive that the wiser sort of Dissenters are as ready now for War in their minds as they were twenty-eight years' ago, when it was first begun. They have now the same resolution, greater purses by plundering and cheating the whole nation, more men educated already in their principles and trained up to their commands

Note: Italics mine.

and "which is the sum of all, a greater probability now of Victory than before you durst promise yourselves". He asks "why then do you not proceed prosperously, and endeavour to get by strength that authority and power for which you do now so whiningly pray and supplicate?" (15)

The author states that the doubt which the Bishops may justly have is whether a condescension to incorporate the Presbyterians into their own Sphere, may not prove ruinous to their own Clergy and the whole State, for, "While you are below as Suppliants your differences are little; but when you are in power they will be then momentous again" (18) He also inquires how it comes to pass that the Presbyterians being a part of the Dissenters, should pretend any pre-eminence over the rest of the Dissenters, and by what right they pretend to measure out their toleration and connivance more than the others do theirs. He says "Do you not think that these Dissenters, whoever they be, have not the same plea for their more favourable toleration and connivance which you allow them?" He asks if Corbet's counsel of moderation to the Dissenters of narrow and rigid principles, comes from his heart, and ought they in reason and conscience, to acquiesce in it? He says "You are all now equal in the state of toleration and connivance, nor have you, the wise Dissenters, any one word to say for yourselves but what the others have" (21). As to those we do not establish, which you exalt, the Presbyterians being in the interests of the King, there is no

argument to justify this, as "we are well satisfied how anti-monarchical Presbyterianism is" (24). Presbyterians profess much affection to the Monarch and the Royal Family and pretend to have the King in great veneration, but it is conditional. Also the comprehension of Corbet leaves out half the Dissenters. (31) If needless Schisms and Conventions weaken the common interest of Reformed Christianity he asks why Corbet and the Presbyterians begin them again.

He concludes "When you shall be set in that power you gape for but as I have (I hope) very justly called my answer to you 'Dolus an Virtus', so you shall find that you shall never have wit enough to catch us with tricks, nor courage enough to convince us by the sword that your pragmatical Proposition is the Interest of England."

The author's point that the Presbyterians, if admitted to the Church as such would aim at presbyterianising it, is a strong one. Evidently the author of 'Dolus an Virtus' thought they were of the same temper as Thomas Cartwright in Elizabeth's day; that was his mistake. The Presbyterians of the implemented Rump were not representative of the party as a whole. Certainly they were not representative of the party for whom Corbet spoke.

He like Baxter was a Presbyterian with a place in his scheme - and even the place of a corner-stone for the Bishop.

Another of the author's points that the Presbyterians, if raised to power would trample on the Independents is also

significant in the same sense, viz., that Presbyterians of the Cartwright and Scotch type had proved themselves worse persecutors than the Bishops, but a new and better spirit had begun to pervade the so-called Presbyterians of which there is no better illustration than that of Corbet himself, and this spirit would tend to friendliness with the Independents.<sup>1</sup> It cannot be too often stated, that whilst Corbet and Baxter might be called Presbyterians, they and the party they represented, were Moderate Episcopalians. It was the dolus of their adversaries to fix the name Presbyterian on them in such a manner as to excite strong and bitter prejudice thereby.

<sup>1</sup> 'Dolus an Virtus' is anonymous and may have been written by an Anglican, but much in it is suggestive of an Independent Author.

"A DEFENCE OF MY ENDEAVOURS FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY"

PRINTED WITH NONCONFORMISTS' PLEA FOR

LAY COMMUNION, 1683

"A DEFENCE OF MY ENDEAVOURS FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY"

This work was printed in 1683 along with 'Nonconformists' Plea for Lay Communion'. It was the outcome of the treatment meted out to Corbet by Bishop Gunning. Calamy, Vol. II, p.333 to 337 gives an excellent account of the treatment Corbet received. "He lived privately in and about London till King Charles's 'Indulgence' in 1672, at which time a part of his old flock invited him to Chichester where he continued his labours with great assiduity and success.

At the time of his being there Bishop Gunning<sup>A</sup>, out of his abundant zeal gave a public challenge to the Presbyterians and Independents, Baptists and the Quakers and appointed three days for the disputation; the first for the two former and the other two for the two latter. On the first day a considerable congregation being present in the Church and Mr. Corbet and others ready to make defence the Bishop came and took the pulpit having a heap of books about him, and from his fort fired very fiercely, his whole harangue being full of sharp invectives. Schism and rebellion were the ball he shot and that poisoned with the strongest venom; forgetting that "A Bishop should be no brawler". Mr. Corbet who was known to have a great command of himself earnestly but modestly offered to interpose by way of defence but the Bishop would hear little and told him that he should answer by writing and take another time and place. Mr. Corbet desired, as was most reasonable, that their defence should be in the same time and place with the Bishop's crimination. When the Bishop would hear nothing Mr. Corbet turning to the Mayor and his Brethren present, desired that they would be pleased to assign some convenient time and

<sup>A</sup> Gunning (1614 - 84) was Bishop of Chichester 1670 - 1675

place for the hearing of his vindication, but they declined it. After this Mr. Corbet drew up his defence in writing and taking with him some substantial citizens went to the Bishop's Palace to make a tender of it to his Lordship who refused to receive it. Mr. Corbet prayed him to read it; which when he refused he began to read it himself but that would not be borne. The Bishop urged him to write now, offering him pen, ink and paper. Mr. Corbet replied that that was needless for he had written already at home where he might be more composed, what he now tendered. The Bishop, persisting in his refusal Mr. Corbet finally told him, since nothing else would do, he must take some other method for his vindication, intimating he would use the Press. When Mr. Corbet went away the Bishop followed him to the Palace Gate with bitter railing; but Mr. Corbet under all expressed the greatest temper and meekness, returning good wishes and words for very evil ones".<sup>1</sup> Palmer's Nonconformist Memorial Vol II p.45  
<sup>†</sup> Calamy's Nonconformist Memorial Vol II p.333/7

Note

Reliq Bax III 104 - 5. Baxter records meeting Dr. Gunning in the fields in May 1673 (with whom I had the contention and fierce opposition to all the motions of Peace at the Savoy) and at his invitation went after to his lodgings to pursue our begun discourse. He vehemently professed that he was sure that it was not conscience that kept us from conformity, but merely to keep up our reputations with the people .... and that we lost nothing by our Non-Conformity ....

Baxter refers to Gunning's "passionate invectives" at the Savoy. Reliq Bax II 364 and says "he was their forwardest and greatest speaker ... a man of greater study and industry than any of them... and of a ready tongue ..., but so vehement for his high imposing principles, and so over-zealous for Arminianism and Formality and Church-Pomp .... that I conceive his Prejudice and Passion much perverted his judgment".

Corbet keenly felt the fact of being at variance with the Bishop (Gunning) and proved himself capable of justifying his position in the forementioned "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 myself obliged to present the afore-said Defence to the consideration of all impartial readers, It takes its rise from the several heads of the Bishop's charge against me, all which were owned by himself before many witnesses and are here set down. p. 11

1. That forasmuch as I did not exercise the ministry in subordination to the Bishop, as regulated by him, I transgressed against the nature of my office as not being the office of a Pastor mentioned in 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."

(p.11).

#### Heads of the Defence

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 not otherwise than as in subordination to, and as authorised and regulated by the Bishop of the Diocese.

3. That I invade not the right of the Diocesan Bishop in exercising the Ministry where he claims the right of being the Pastor. p. 11

4. That I do not violate any true bonds of Church-Unity nor in any respect cause divisions and offences. p. 12

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

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 (12) "To have the Power of the keys of binding and loosing, of remitting and retaining sins in Christ's name, as his commissioned officer, is to have Episcopal or Pastoral power, and this Power belongs to the said Office of Presbyterate."<sup>A</sup>

The Pastoral Authority or Presbyterate is further declared by many passages in the public forms of the Church of England touching that order." p. 14

<sup>A</sup> See supra p. 6

"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 Apostolic 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 entirely and completely the form of words used by our Saviour, John 20, 22, 23 towards the Apostles, expressing their Pastoral Authority; and the latter part, Be thou a faithful dispenser, etc. is no derogation or diminution from the Power granted in the former part. p.14 If the Presbyters are not the Apostles successors in the Pastoral Authority, how could they have right to the form of ordination?"

"In the form of ordering Priests or Presbyters in one of the prayers after the mentioning of Christ's sending abroad into the world, his Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Doctors and 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?" p. 14

"This Church did before the last alteration made A.D.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 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. p. 15. 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 Lord's Family." p. 15.

(N.B.) "I acknowledge that the passages here alleged are taken out of the old Book of Ordination, that was established in this Church till the late alterations made A.D. 1662. If those alterations signify another meaning about the several 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 signify no other meaning  
Note: N.B. mine. cf. note p. 123

than what was signified in the old Book, my citations are of force to show what is the sense of this Church, as well of the present as of the former times about this matter." N.B. *I*

"Here I must take notice, that in opposition to part of what hath been alleged, 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 joined 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

NOTE:

*I* The N.B. is mine, and is meant to draw attention to a fact often denied by High Anglicans, viz. that the ordination service of the Prayer Book was so altered in 1662 as to exclude definitely from the ministry of the Church of England all who did not submit to episcopal ordination, and that this marked a radical departure from the Church's former attitude. Cf. Powicke's 'Richard Baxter' vol. II pp. 221 - 223, and appendix 7.

of Ordination, which Christ used towards His Apostles. p. 15. If it 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; p. 16 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 refuses 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. etc. 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." p. 16

"Being dedicated to this Ministry, I stand under a perpetual obligation to fulfil it, according to my ability and opportunity and as necessity of souls requireth of me.

I discern not that 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 own pastor or bishop. p. 21

I do not discern that any Bishop can by divine right so challenge or claim such a circuit of ground for his diocese (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. p. 22

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 our chief corner stone, and none are to be shut out from the communion of the 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 privileges. p. 25

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." p. 28

I am licensed by the King to be a Teacher and to teach in any place licensed and allowed by him (p. 28).

I acknowledge the King's supremacy in all causes, and over all persons civil and ecclesiastical (p. 29).

The Civil Magistrate, notwithstanding his authority in ecclesiastics, cannot discharge any minister of the Gospel from the exercise of his ministry in those circumstances wherein Christ commands him to exercise it. (p. 29)

I presented this clear and open defence with desire and expectation of his Lordship's 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. (p. 30)

This defence of Corbet's has a personal interest in showing the high motive not only of Corbet but of Baxter and the Puritan preachers in general. "They stood under a perpetual obligation" and no ecclesiastical opposition could ever disannul that sense of obligation. This was Baxter's plea, that he might be allowed to preach. He urged that no Nonconformist should allow himself to be silenced by anyone, because of the obligation laid upon him by God. Corbet was actuated by the same motive, and though he was a martyr to the terrible affliction of stone, and Bishop Gunning subjected him to bitter and cruel treatment, Corbet persisted in fulfilling that obligation to the uttermost.

CORBET AND THE TWO-KINGDOM THEORY

## CHAPTER VII

### CORBET AND THE TWO KINGDOM THEORY

The relation and distinction between Church and State was one of vital concern to Presbyterianism both in regard to

- (1) The magistrates authority in Ecclesiastical matters, and
- (2) The performance of civil offices by ecclesiastical persons.

Corbet could not be indifferent to such vital principles which occupied a great place in the literature of the period, and had important bearing on ecclesiastical administration. The full-blooded Presbyterian view is undoubtedly that of Thomas Edwards (1599-1647) who declares in his "Antapologia" that "The Presbyterians give to the Magistrate a coercive and coactive power, to suppress heresies, schism, to correct troublers and unruly persons in the Church, to tie and bind men by their authority to the decrees of synods made according to the Word of God, which power as Voetius shows, only the Remonstrants with the Libertines did not admit, but all the Presbyterians do reject such opinions, that the Magistrate could not by his authority bind and compel men to observe the decrees of synods, conformable to the Word of God." (Edwards Antapologia, p. 159).

The Presbyterians' attitude towards the Civil Magistracy is set forth in the above and the following passage:-

"It is the full concurrent testimony and judgment of the most learned Protestant Divines that the care of Religion and God's worship belongs to the Magistrates, that God hath given him a power and authority objective and external in Ecclesiastical Causes to look to Religion as to Civil Justice and that he is bound to see the true Religion and service of God set up and maintained in his Dominions.

(Edwards) 'Casting down last Stronghold p. 34.)

But the Prince's power is limited. Cartwright's words on this point were authoritative. "As for the beauty and consummation of the body of the Church, seeing it consisteth of Jesus Christ who is the Head and always joined to it, I cannot see why the Church under persecution should not be established, having both the foundation and superstructure, as well as when it hath a Christian magistrate. If the magistrate whom God hath sanctified to be a nurse to his Church, were also the head of it, then the Church could not be established without the Magistrate; but we learn that although the Godly magistrate be the head of the commonwealth, and a great ornament to the Church, he is but a member of it.

The Church may be established without the magistrate so as that all the world and all the powers of hell cannot shake it, but it cannot expect outward peace and quietness without a godly magistrate; and therefore the church on these accounts praiseth God, and prayeth for the Magistrate by whom it enjoys these singular benefits" (A Reply p. 51) In another passage Cartwright writes "I answer in the name of the authors of the Admonition, and those some other which you speak of, that the Prince and civil magistrate hath to see all the laws of God touching His worship and touching all matters and orders of the Church be executed and duly observed, and to see that every ecclesiastical person do that office whereunto he is appointed and to punish those which faileth in their office accordingly. As for the making of the orders and ceremonies of the Church they do (where there is a constituted and ordered church) and to the ecclesiastical governors, and that as they meddle not with the making of civil laws and laws of the commonwealth; so the civil magistrate hath not to ordain ceremonies pertaining to the Church. But if those to whom that doth appertain make any orders not meet, the magistrate may and ought to hinder them, and drive them to better, for so much as the civil magistrate hath this charge so see that nothing be done against the glory of God in His dominions." (A Reply p. 192.)

Archbishop Whitgift, his great protagonist, contended that civil authority was committed to ecclesiastical persons, and that not only was this authority no hindrance to them in the discharge of their duties, but it was also a great help to their ecclesiastical functions. In reply, Cartwright stated the opinion of himself and his followers in the following passage: "The truth is he may as well say the magistrate may minister the sacrament and preach, which is the proper duty of the Minister, as say the minister of the word may sit in judgment of civil causes which is the proper duty of the magistrate...The Doctor wishes the Minister to have the sword in his own hand, that, besides the sentence of excommunication he may strike further into the hearts of the people. That is a fear which the apostle most properly gives to the civil magistrate because of the sword which he beareth, but is here transferred to ministers; thus it comes to pass that they having both civil and ecclesiastical vengeance in their own hands, make themselves more terrible to the people than the magistrate, who has only the civil sword. If this be not in time prevented, the magistrate will grow in contempt; and other inconveniences, with which princes have been already beaten ought so much the more strictly to be examined. (Second Reply.)

"But the magistrates have this proper and peculiar to themselves above the rest of the faithful, to set in order and establish the state of the church by their authority, and to preserve and maintain it according to God's will being once established. Not that they should rule the ecclesiastical matters by their authority, for this belongeth unto Christ alone and to him he hath committed this charge."

(A Reply p. 187)

These views are in harmony with the oft quoted words of Andrew Melville.

How far they were the views of Corbet may be seen by the following from his treatise, "Of the Ministry" printed in "Remains", under the title named.

"Magistratical and Ecclesiastical power are in their nature wholly diverse and they are not subordinate but collateral powers; yet Ministers are subject to Magistrates and Magistrates to Ministers in divers respects according to the nature of the power that is seated in either of them".(p.73)

"The Magistratical power is Imperial, the Ecclesiastical is ministerial; and so the pastor is under the magistrate as his Ruler by the sword, not only in civil but in sacred things; and the magistrate is under the pastor as his Ruler by the word, or his authoritative teacher.

The pastor's power over the magistrate is no diminution to his right, for it takes away none of his authority, nor doth it hinder the exercise and efficacy of it, but it is his benefit, because it is an authoritative administering to him the mercies of the Gospel in Christ's Name; and if he be not under that authoritative administration he is not under the blessing of the Gospel. Howbeit the pastoral discipline may not be so exercised towards the supreme magistrate as by dishonouring him to make him less capable of improving his office to the common good, which the excommunicating of him would do but if magistrates whether of higher or lower rank, be excommunicated, nevertheless they must be obeyed.

The magistrates power over the pastor is no diminution to his spiritual authority, for it is not given to hinder but to further the efficacy and exercise thereof. So that both powers are mutually preservative and accumulative not destructive or diminutive." (p. 73)

"The Church is Christ's family, and the magistrate is not the lord, but a member of it, and cannot govern it at his pleasure but only as the Lord himself hath allowed, and the state therefore required. In short the magistrate as well as the minister hath received his authority for edification

not for destruction". (p. 74)

Corbet continues

"The magistrate cannot make any new essential or integral part of religion, either Doctrine of Faith or Divine Worship; but he is as much bound up to the religion that is of God's making as the meanest of his subjects; for he and they are God's Subjects both alike; but by his civil sanctions he may strengthen the true religion, and enforce the observance of the Divine Laws; and this is the most noble part of his work in matters of Religion.

The Magistrate may and must take care that sacred things be duly administered by sacred or spiritual officers, and he may and must punish them for maladministration. He may and must restrain persons of impious principles from venting their wicked errors, and from any open impious practice, by a power formally civil, though objectively ecclesiastical. He may convocate synods or councils of ecclesiastical persons to advise and conclude according to the Word of God, how the Church being corrupt, is to be reformed, and how to be guided and governed when reformed; and he ought to use his own judgment of discretion concerning the decrees and judgments of ecclesiastical persons in reference to his own act of political ratifying the same.

The Magistrate cannot make any new kind of sacred or spiritual office because he cannot institute any new sacred

work, and the work that Christ hath instituted hath an officer of his own institution already appointed for it; also because a spiritual office is to be administered not in the Magistrates, but in Christ's Name; yet he may make new offices for civil service about sacred things." (p. 74)

"He cannot appoint anything in religion that is forbidden by the divine laws, nor forbid anything appointed by the divine laws. All his authority being from God, cannot be against His. And therefore such injunctions and prohibitions can lay no obligations of obedience upon the subject. Hereupon he cannot forbid the preaching of the Gospel, or the administering of the Sacraments; for then it were at his pleasure whether Christ should have a Church or Kingdom upon Earth. He cannot take one part of the Pastor's office from him, while he continues him the exercise of the other, for that were to maim and mar the office. He cannot deprive a Pastor of his Pastoral office, or discharge him from fulfilling his Ministry because it is held from Christ and not from him".(p. 74) He may not compel a minister to give the Sacraments to whom he pleases, nor may he compel any to profess either in word or deed what they believe not, or to take that which God hath made the special privilege of Believers.

The accidental parts, modes and circumstances of Religion which are necessary in general, and left undetermined of God in particular, the Magistrate hath power to determine according to the general rules of God's Word." (p. 75)

"The Magistrate may not appoint that which is not simply forbidden of God, if it be scandalous, or mischievous in the consequents; nor may he forbid that which God hath not appointed but left indifferent, if the omission of it be scandalous, or mischievous in the consequents; because in such cases God hath forbidden the former and required the latter by his general command; and because the Magistrate hath his authority (as was said) for edification, not for destruction." Remains 75

Here we have Corbet's answer to Thomas's calumny in the book previously cited "The Presbyterians Unmasked" - namely - 'their plucking from the Civil Magistrate his power in causes ecclesiastical and erecting imperium in imperio', which in the light of what has been advanced is seen to be a groundless and gross mistake. For the Magistrate can reform corruption in the Church. Thomas says, 'But notwithstanding this there may be 'imperium in imperio', for the Kirk may assume to themselves the power of judging whether there are such corruptions or no; and whether the Civil Magistrate reforms those corruptions in a warrantable manner or no; and consequently of checking him in both respects if he chance to judge otherwise than they do.' (46)

Corbet says 'The Magistrate convenes and convokes Synods and Councils made up of ecclesiastical persons to advise and conclude determinatively, according to the Word of God, how the Church is to be reformed and refined from corruption; how to be guided and governed when reformed.' Remains 74)  
First Part Interest of England 41)

Thomas objects, 'But notwithstanding this there may be imperium in imperio; for the Kirk may challenge to themselves a power of convening without, yea against, the Civil Magistrate's command, and here they actually challenge the power of conclusively determining how the church is to be reformed and governed." (46)

Corbet says "He ratifies and establishes within his Dominions the just and necessary decrees of the Church in Synods and Councils by his civil sanction." (41)

Thomas objects "But notwithstanding this there may be imperium in imperio": for the Kirk may claim the power of determining whether its own decrees be just and necessary or no; and of putting them in execution, though the Civil Magistrate deny to ratify them by his civil sanction."

Corbet says "He judges and determines definitively with a consequent and political judgment, or judgment of discretion, concerning things judged and determined antecedently by the Church in reference to his own Act." (42)

Thomas replies, "But notwithstanding this there may be imperium in imperio: for the Kirk may take upon them to control the King (as well as private persons) if his definitive judgment of discretion, which they allow to every private person, in reference to his own act, should chance to contradict their antecedent determinations." (49)

Corbet First Part 'Interest of England' 41 - 42

Thomas 'Presbyterian Unmasked' 46 - 49

Corbet says "He takes care politically that even matters and ordinaries merely and formally ecclesiastical be duly managed by ecclesiastical persons orderly called thereunto." (42)

Thomas answers "But notwithstanding this there may be imperium in imperio: For the Kirk may imagine that in case the King refuse to take this political care, themselves may appoint ecclesiastical persons to manage them, and that their so doing is an orderly call to those persons to act accordingly" and generally, Thomas continues, "That if Presbyterians grant no more power to belong to the King of England in ecclesiastical matters than is alleged they deny his supremacy and consequently erect imperium in imperio" (49)

Thomas insists that notwithstanding anything Corbet says to the contrary the charge against the Presbyterians that they are anti-monarchical is a true accusation and not a calumny.

He further (104) disagrees with Corbet in regard to the death of Charles I. Corbet having said "In those times the Presbyterian ministers of London in their public Vindication thus declare themselves:- We profess before God, Angels and men that we verily believe ... the taking away of the life of the King and this present way is not only not agreeable to the word of God, the principles of the Protestant Religion ... of the Fundamental Constitution and Government of this Kingdom, but contrary to them, as also to the Oath of Allegiance, the Protestation of May 5th, 1641, and the Solemn League and Covenant."

Thomas refers the reader to a little book called<sup>I</sup> 'Beams of Former Light' written (by Mr Nye as 'tis reported) on occasion of that ordinance made by the Secluded Members at their re-admission into the House of Commons (1660) imposing on all ministers the Assembly's lesser Catechism under the penalty of their being ejected as scandalous (p.161) if they neglected to use it though but ten Sundays in a year. In which book the author heaps up the arguments of the old Presbyterian Nonconformists against the new ones (Pp. 163-164) From which discourse it appears that those men did for the advancement of their interest contradict the principles of their Nonconformist predecessors. And that they have upon the same score contradicted their own principles, I shall evidence partly from this John Corbet's affirmations and partly from their late book called "The Covenanters Plea against Absolvers" (p. 164).

He deals in some detail with the taking of oaths, vows and covenants and quotes a passage from Corbet to the effect that neither the Parliament nor any power under heaven can discharge them from the obligation of an oath (Pp. 165 - 169).

Thomas says 'This is good doctrine it seems when applied to the Covenant and understood in a sense advantageous to Presbytery, but when the question was about the obligations of the Oath of Allegiance wherein they swore that they would defend His Majesty, his heirs and successors to the uttermost of their power against all conspiracies and attempts whatever, which

I See supra - pp 112, 113

should be made against him or their persons, crown or dignity I say when this was the question, the Presbyterian practices manifested that they accounted the contrary good doctrines, viz., that those two Houses (who were far enough from either deserving or being capable of the title of the Parliament of England might discharge men from the obligations of this oath" (169).

Corbet says they can have no pleasure in commotion, for order and regular unity is their way, and therefore stability of government and public tranquillity is their interest.

Thomas replies "Which has something of truth in it, if understood of Presbyterians when they are got into the saddle themselves, and are well settled in an usurped dominion but till then (for ought I see) they take as much pleasure in commotions and alterations (altercations?) as Jesuits do, and will disturb the public tranquillity and subvert all legal order and regular unity rather than suffer their own interest to be rejected or depressed; witness their late wars and their Solemn League and Covenant, and a series of other actions, whose direct tendency was to the destruction of our English polity, both ecclesiastical and civil, as is before manifested." (173)

Corbet says neither can Sects or Schisms with any truth or justice be reckoned the offspring of Presbytery (44).

Thomas replies "If he means by Presbytery exact Presbytery and that Scotch form of ecclesiastical polity where there is no presiding Bishop he contradicts Father Hierome who (though

Presbyterians account him their great friend) testifies in several places that Episcopacy was instituted for the prevention of those schisms which were begotten by Presbytery. (p. 175)

Referring to the Synod of Dort and its healing the breach in the Netherlands, he says: If the present Convocation at Westminster should apply such remedies to the wounds and breaches made by Presbyterians in Church affairs I doubt he would not call it an healing Synod. But since he seems to approve and take pleasure in the exercise of such severities as degradation, sequestration, excommunication, etc. towards these that could not in conscience subscribe to the dictates of that Synod, I wish him and his party so much happiness as to be treated with the like severity by our government civil and ecclesiastical in case they will not subscribe to the Articles and Canons of the Church of England (p. 180).

Thomas concludes 'And upon the answer to that matter contained in these Papers I firmly build this contradictory position, that the Presbyterian Party ought not in justice or reason of state to be protected and (much less) encouraged, but to be rejected and depressed; unless they will renounce the practices and principles here objected and laid to their charge, and will disclaim that Covenant which otherwise will engage them in such turbulent and seditious practices as can never be justified by such rebellious principles.'

Thomas, either through sheer ignorance or wilfulness, persists in the belief that Corbet's Presbyterianism was

entirely the same as that of Edwards, Cartwright, Scotland, and the Westminster Assembly. This, of course, was not true. Yet in spite of all the advocacy of limited episcopacy by men like Corbet and Baxter, all their writings and public utterances, it is a striking commentary on the age, that it was generally believed that all who went by the name of Presbyterian even after the Restoration were of one type with Scotland and the Assembly.

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CORBET, THE THEOLOGIAN

CORBET - THE THEOLOGIAN

In England the seventeenth century was characterized by a general and keen interest in religion under all forms of its manifestation - mystical, experimental, ecclesiastical, theological. Even its politics were moulded by its religion. But theology, i.e. the systematic statement of religious belief, held the first place and evoked endless controversy. To say nothing of the many sects which contended each for the truth of its own particular difference, there were two parties the Calvinist and the Arminian, which divided between them the vast majority of the nation, and kept it in a state of perpetual ferment. Arminian gradually became almost identical with Anglican, while Calvinist became almost another name for Puritan. This fact, since Anglican usually meant Royalist, and Puritan usually meant Parliamentarian, mingled intense political bitterness with the theological. On both sides the extremists were in a majority and were merciless to their opponents. But there were men of the via media who deprecated the spirit of violence, and tried to show what they really believed, that the essential truth of Calvinism could be maintained without denying an element of truth in Arminianism. Of these moderates Baxter was the leader and was followed among many others by Corbet. In "An account of the Principles and Practices of Several Non-conformists" Corbet states "In the doctrines of predes-

tinuation, 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" (22). A few references to his writing entitled "A Humble Endeavour of some plain and brief Explications of the Decrees and Operations of God" will show this. Thus in dealing with the subject of "Free Will and Divine Grace" Corbet argues that the help of Divine Grace is the main cause of all the good in man, but our wills are the main cause of the evil man does, and of man's abiding in that evil state into which human nature has fallen, and of this God is no cause at all. He further argues that God decrees to bring some to Salvation by His Free Grace and Love. God did not decree nor effect Sin, but foresaw it.

Corbet states that Election infers a certainty that the Elect shall attain to Grace and Glory, yet Non-Election infers no necessity of the sin and damnation of the Non-Elect, save only that which is called "Necessitas Consequentiae", i.e. the necessary consequences of sin - to which sin, however, no man is elected by God - on the contrary he is commanded to repent of it. Not that God wills the Conversion and Salvation of all to whom the Gospel is made known, yet He wills it so far as declares His Goodwill towards men and assures the Diligent of

good success in their endeavours and convicts the negligent of being inexcusable despisers of His Grace towards them.

God has given all men some help of Grace in order to their spiritual recovery. This may be improved to the obtaining of more and it is God's ordinary way to deny more help or to withdraw what is given, but only upon resistance of what is offered. Of a general continual decree of Salvation, Corbet holds that God doth not decree the Salvation of those that are not saved, and thinks it an improper way of speaking to say that God doth decree the Salvation of all upon condition. There is, indeed, a decree, that all without exception by whom God's conditions are performed shall be saved. But this is no other than the decreeing of the General Law of Grace, and is wholly another thing than the Decree of Election. General Election sounds as a contradiction in the terms.<sup>1</sup> In the "Kingdom of God among men" Corbet refers to special grace which effects conversion, and asserts that the root of godliness lies in regeneration and inward sanctification.

<sup>1</sup> The Explication of Decrees, 12.

Of Non-Election he writes "Forasmuch as God hath not decreed such Grace to all as doth infallibly end in Eternal Salvation, there are some Non-Elect." Mere Non-Election is no decree. The Non-Election of some He holds is agreeable to the wisdom and consistent with the Goodness of God. For that any miss Salvation is not through any omission on God's part but through men's neglect to do their part. That the Non-Elect are not under an impossibility of being saved is evident from the position before proved, namely that the negation of God's Decree doth not infer an impossibility of the Event. He holds that the conversion and salvation of man is sincerely designed in God's public Declarations and Proposals, as the nearest and proper thing thereto. That they should turn and live is pleasing to His Will and He has no pleasure in their sin, nor any failure to obtain Salvation.<sup>1</sup>

In the second part of this work he writes about the "Operations of God about the Actions of Men". God is the cause of all good, but God's part in all human acts is unsearchable, yet man is a free agent. The natural liberty of the will is not a perfect indifference but an indetermination with a power of self-determining. This self-determining power of the will makes us capable

<sup>1</sup> The Explication of Decrees, p. 13.

subjects of God's moral government by laws.

Corbet believes that God's agency is not determined or limited by the creature, yet God hath enabled men freely and variously to receive His influx. Men do not limit God's will, but only the effect which God's agency would produce if men's will concurred. Even if the good effect in man doth not follow the operation of God that is designed, yet that operation is not without effect, for by it there is wrought in man a power or capacity for that effect which does not follow. Corbet states that God punishes sin with sin. He punishes voluntary hardness of heart with judicial hardness, yet though to punish be God's Act He does not properly cause the penal sin, but in His righteous judgment He denies to give that help of Grace which is needful to keep a man from such sin, and which is forfeited by the abuse of Grace already received.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the above, it may be remarked that Corbet was not a speculative Theologian any more than Baxter. He, like his friend, founded every doctrine on the express or implied teaching of Scripture. In this they moved strictly along the line of Puritanism which contended from first to last for the sole and sufficient authority of the revealed word of God.

1. The Explication of Decrees. page 23  
146

On this point Corbet wrote a treatise entitled "The Infallibility of God". For him the Word of God is final, as God cannot lie. He incorporates the following from Baxter quoting him with approval.

"We may infallibly know the Christian Doctrine to be of God by his unimitable image or impression which is upon it, supposing the truth of the historical part. Likewise the truth of the historical part, namely, that this doctrine was delivered by Christ and His Apostles, and that those things were done by Him and them, which the Scriptures mention, we may know infallibly."

Corbet's Remains p.94

Corbet insisted that because the Apostles and other first witnesses knew the true infallibility, and the first Churches received the testimony from the first witnesses, and the Christians and Churches of the next age received it from those of the first with a greater evidence of natural infallibility of certainty, so we of the present age, receive it infallibly from the churches of all preceding ages successively to this day by the same way.

Corbet accepted, along with all Puritans, the verbal theory of inspiration, putting the Bible in the place of the Pope.

The following extracts express his views:

### Of Supernatural Certainty

"Supernatural Certainty is an assent upon indubitable Supernatural Evidence, viz., Divine Revelation is supernatural. A Divine Evidence is the highest kind of proof, and causeth Certainty if any thing can cause it. For there is nothing more sure in the nature of things than God's Veracity, and nothing more is requisite to the certainty of that which brings a divine supernatural evidence or discovery, than to know that it is divine, or of God."  
(Remains, p.81)

### Of the Certainty of Belief upon Divine Testimony

"The highest degree of Credibility, and consequently of Certainty from testimony is that which rests upon an immutable veracity, which belongs to God alone. A surer evidence of the truth of any matter cannot be, than a Divine testimony thereunto; For there is not a surer and clearer truth than this, That God is unchangeably true. And this is the ground of that Certainty which men call the certainty of Divine Faith, the object whereof can never be false. (Remains, p.85)

### Of the Nature of Infallibility

"The nature and grounds, and subject of Certainty being

considered, I come to consider of Infallibility, which one sort of men lay claim unto without warrant, and some others without reason explode, as a thing transcending all created understandings, though they grant a kind of Certainty; as the one by usurped authority impose upon men's belief in the matter of Religion, which is man's highest concernment; so the other take away or lessen that security of the mind, which is reasonably required in so great a matter, and give too great advantage to the pretenders on the other extreme." (Remains, p.87)

#### Of the Infallible Knowledge of the Sense of Scripture

"As we may be infallibly certain of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scripture, so likewise of the sense of the Scripture at least in points fundamental or essential to the Christian Religion, and that without an infallible Teacher.

We may certainly know, that an interpretation of Scripture repugnant to the common reason of mankind, and to sense rightly circumstantiated, is impossible to be true; and consequently we may infallibly know it." (Remains, p.95)

#### Of our Certainty of being in the State of Grace

"It may lastly be inquired, What Certainty one may have of his being in the state of Grace: As for the Certainty of Salvation, that is a different inquiry, and depends on another question, touching the Certainty of Perseverance in a justified state which is not here to be meddled with; and we inquire not whether one may be certain

of his being in the state of Grace by special revelation, but in an ordinary way.

That any one ordinarily should have certain knowledge of his being in the state of Grace, supposeth his certain knowledge of these two things, (1) That God hath declared in His Word that they which have such and such qualifications are in the state of Grace, (2) That he himself is so qualified; For it is the conclusion of these two premises the one whereof is the object of divine faith, and the other of a clear and right self-knowledge. The Certainty of the former, viz. That God hath declared persons so qualified to be in the state of Grace none deny that acknowledge the Certainty of Christ's Gospel. The Certainty of the latter is the matter of debate, whether it be possible, and whether it ought to be had." (Remains. p. 99)

Corbet's views of Assurance thus expressed and deduced from the manifestation of the working of God's spirit in his life, were not in strict accordance with the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XVIII.

The Confession denies that assurance is of the essence of Faith, but that a believer might wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it. Corbet's Assurance was subjective, and the Confession and Scots Evangelicals opposed this as an 'Assurance of sense', i.e. I feel He is mine. They distrusted their feelings and laid no stress on subjectivity. Corbet, however, like Baxter, could accept the objective also and include the 'Assurance of Faith'

i.e. I take him for mine.

Their Theological position was that of moderate, liberal, Calvinists.

CORBET AS EXPOSITOR:

We have only two short Expositions of the Scripture by Corbet, both published in his 'Remains' in 1684.

They are:

- (1) Jonah, Ch. II, Verses 1, 2, 3, 4.
- (2) John, Ch. XVI, Verse 33.

They are both of a devotional character with personal appeals for consecration and the assurance of divine help in every time of need. In tribulation the believer may enjoy Peace.

Corbet indulges in no extravagance of treatment, but his interpretations are eminently sane and helpful. The expositions are models of brevity, being only six pages each.

CORBET AND THE ETHICAL  
TEACHING OF THE PURITANS

CORBET AND THE ETHICAL TEACHING  
OF THE PURITANS

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The ethical teaching of Puritanism grew out of its Theology. Cartwright (1535 - 1603) who was the real English formulator of Puritan Ideals and Life left no systematic treatment on the subject of Ethics, though English Presbyterianism was plainly outlined in the "Second Admonition to Parliament"<sup>A</sup> which was issued at Geneva. The Puritan movement, as a whole, like every movement under the inspiration of reformed Theology, is singularly barren in systematic ethical discussion. The reason is not far to seek. The Old and New Testaments are inspired codes of Divine Law. They have only to be expounded, and church government, ritual, conduct in private and in public, at once receive complete and final regulations.

Cartwright's ethical teaching can be gathered for the most part from his great work on the Gospels ("Harmonia Evangelica, Commentario Analytico, Metaphrastico, Practico, Illustrata 1647). He held the doctrine of total depravity in its crudest form, expressing the conviction that man's sinful nature made him utterly incapable of keeping God's law. Nevertheless, Puritanism proved a great stimulus to ethical teaching and conduct, as evidenced in the writings of Baxter, Bunyan and many others.

Note A Scott Pearson in "Thomas Cartwright and Eliz. Puritanism" 74 does not accept Cartwright's authorship.

The Puritan derived his name from his conviction that all worship that had not Scriptural sanction, especially the use of any rite sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church, was sin, idolatry, a thing neither to be practised nor tolerated. The positive 'notes' of Puritanism, - doctrinal and practical, Salvation by faith in the imputed Righteousness of Christ, the condemnation of the drama, - of popular amusements, dancing, music, - were coloured and intensified by this hatred of Rome, and of everything which the Medieval Church had sanctioned, and the compromise which, it seemed to Puritans, the Church had made with the world and the flesh.

This attitude was a revival of the other-worldly spirit of the early Church, animated by a hatred of Rome as intense as that felt by the early Christians against Paganism. The Puritan held that all conduct sprang from the heart and bad conduct was a witness that the heart was sick, even unto death. The only cure of this sickness was in justification by Grace alone. The first step towards good conduct was the sincere confession that we are sinners and the second, the acceptance of God's gift of forgiveness, through Jesus Christ, Who is the Creator of the new man. These occupy a prominent place in Luther's Theology.<sup>(1)</sup>

There were three distinct spheres in which the Puritan made a lasting impression - the Sabbath, Amusements - especially the Drama, and the Home. About the last, Corbet wrote a Treatise entitled 'Matrimonial Purity'.

(1) They are reemphasized by Barth in the present day.

## THE HOME

The Home Life was specially singled out for religious exercises among the Puritans, and Foreign observers have often said that the period from 1550 onwards is remarkably praiseworthy in this respect, and an especially English phenomenon. An Italian, visiting London in 1500 wrote, severely on the general want of affection and the bad treatment of children. Every boy and girl was turned out of home by the age of nine and bound apprentices elsewhere for seven years to perform the most menial offices. Their future depended no longer on their parents. The marriage of the girl and the business of the boy was entirely a matter of the patron.<sup>1</sup>

Two great changes revolutionised both practice and opinion within the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - the abolition of the Monasteries and the increasing knowledge of the Family Bible. With the passing of the ideal of celibacy which had held sway for more than a millennium there was no superiority in a state of virginity. The whole system had come to an abrupt end by 1560. With the spread of Bible knowledge a new conception of ideals arose as to family life, and the literature of the seventeenth century shows how the ideal of the earlier centuries had passed. There grew up a serious feeling both in Puritan circles and among poets like Herbert and Vaughan against a too utilitarian conception of marriage.

1. Italian Relation of England. Camden Society 1847. p. 24

The "Sanction of Love" they said "is marriage", but, and this was at any rate practically a new idea "The sanction of marriage is love, or should be". It was largely from this tendency of Puritanism with respect to love and the marriage bond that there sprang up the conflict between the conscience and the heart. That this is so is shown by the feelings and opinions of Milton, one of the most rebellious thinkers of his day. He was unhappily married and his "Arguments" took the form of four divorce tracts which boldly laid down the doctrine that marriage was a matter that did not concern the civil law at all, that for a husband the Mosaic law was final and still held good. Milton based his views on the Old Testament, Corbet on the New Testament. Corbet wrote a tract on "Matrimonial Purity" which is a good example of the Puritan ideal of family life and of the instruction that was given for that relationship. Corbet says "Marriage is the Bond of an individual Conjunction between Man and Woman, instituted of God to an individual Conversation or Course of Life. This Bond cannot be dissolved by man, because it is not man but God that makes it, though the Married parties voluntarily enter into it, and public Officers instrumentally authorise their Act according to God's Law. Hence it is said, WHOM GOD HATH JOINED LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER. But this Rule puts no bar to God's right of dissolving this Bond by an Act of His Law upon causes therein declared."

"By the Church of ROME, Matrimony is held a Sacrament upon this Ground, that God hath consecrated it to be a Symbol of the indissoluble Conjunction of Christ with the Church, and of Grace to be conferred upon those that enter into it (p.225). Indeed it is used in Scripture as a similitude to express or illustrate the Mystical Union betwixt Christ and His Church."

"The debasing of Matrimony, came in with the degeneracy of the Church. Quickly after the Apostles' age, Christians departed from the simplicity that is in Christ, by devising rules of Life which Christ required not; and built upon the precious foundation, which had been laid, Wood, Hay and Stubble. And the Devotion both of men and women was carried forth to a self-devised religiousness, yet the essentials of Christianity were preserved sound." Corbet interprets marriage and divorce according to the letter and spirit of the New Testament, which includes and transcends all morality. He wrote "To preach Christ is the matter of this dispensation, and to Preach moral duties is not extraneous to the Preaching of Christ, but comprised under it. Yet it must be acknowledged, that morality in its best estate (as it is vulgarly taken for temperance and righteousness towards men, and other virtues of that rank, as proceeding from a merely natural principle, which an Aristotle might describe in his Ethics) is far below Christianity. For it is found in many that are alienated from the life of God, and led merely

by the Spirit of this world (p. 33)."<sup>1</sup> "Indeed to preach Christ is to preach the whole Duty of man, and more especially those duties that are consequent to, and founded in our redemption; as also to set forth the whole mystery of the Gospel, which is the ground and reason of our duty." (p. 34)<sup>1</sup>

Corbet was supremely practical in his teaching. He held that the life of faith must of necessity manifest itself to all in a life of works. His solution of all human problems was through a right relationship to God, a right state of heart, a right spirit. This was the secret, the only guarantee of good behaviour, of pure and wholesome domestic life, and of peace within the Church.

<sup>1</sup>

The Kingdom of God among Men.

X

CORBET - THE MAN

SELF REVEALED

## CHAPTER X

### CORBET - THE MAN - SELF REVEALED

It was a custom of the seventeenth century Puritan to write down his soliloquies. Oliver Heywood, (1629-1702) tells us that when leaving home for Cambridge his Father enjoined him to get every day some sanctifying thoughts and write them in a book, and title it, "The Meditations of my Youth". This was not uncommon and Corbet has left us evidence upon self-examination etc. in his "Self Employment in Secret", which was published in 1681, with a preface by John Howe (1630-1705)<sup>1</sup>. Howe informs us that the inscription on the papers was "The state of my own Soul" signifying that their intended use was that of a mirror to represent himself to his own eye not to other men's. Howe describes it as the dissection of Corbet's Soul wherein may be seen "The secret motions of those inward latent principles from whence all proceeded". Corbet entitles this work "The state of my own Soul according to the strictest search that I can make" and says the following particulars were set down in December, January, February, 1663. The work is a "Covenant" between Corbet and his Maker such as was common among devout Souls of the period. He seeks to devote himself to God, and to fulfil all His purposes in love to Him and his own fellow creatures.

<sup>1</sup>

Howe was chaplain to Cromwell, ejected 1662, identified with "The Happy Union" 1691.

In reviewing his past life, according to the clearest judgment that he can make, Corbet states that he has not gone backward but proceeded forward in the ways of Godliness, and this increase he reckons not by sudden fits now and then, but by the main progress of the work. He states that he has been grieved that he is not more elevated in the hope of Heaven, and that he cannot attain to a longing desire to be gone hence and to be there with Christ. When he finds he has a good enterprise in hand for God's Glory and some public benefit, he seeks to guard himself against vanity of mind, and to be single in heart. He constantly reminds himself of his mortality.

On March 4th, 1675, he further records that upon the review of foregoing evidences, after twelve years, he finds through Grace, the same faith abiding in him more and more rooted. He is able to call to mind all the remarkable sins from his childhood and youth until then, and, as far as he can judge, he has repented of them both generally and particularly. He is not "Conscious of any sin lying upon him" which doth not consist with habitual repentance and with a hatred of sin. His conscience bears him witness that in the exercise of his ministry he has no selfish end of worldly advantage or reputation among men, but that if he were not constrained by the command of Christ and the necessities of Souls he would gladly retire to

privacy and solitude. He states his temporal estate is mean and low, yet he is content with it, and grateful. He lives in as narrow a compass for expenses as possible that he may have something to devote to the poor. He has not, as yet, overcome the fear of Death, yet he is sure that the unwillingness that is in him to die, is not that he may enjoy the pleasures of sins or any gratification of the animal life. Though he is conscious of a burden of sin and corruption yet he believes that there is within him a predominance of Love of God and Holiness.

On March 27th, 1676, he records more observations touching the state of his Soul. He finds himself firmly resolved to give up any part of his wordly estate that he shall be found to hold to another's wrong. He is resolved to live according to Conscience at all costs. As he has trusted his earthly Father and Mother he will not be suspicious of God, though Death and Judgment be of dreadful consideration.

On February 22nd, 1678/9 he further soliloquises "God will never damn any Soul in Hell that hath the habitual predominant Love of God, though culpably remiss and otherwise sinful, while he remaineth such; yea, Hell and such Love of God are inconsistent."

He examines himself and finds that he loves the Will of God, and strives with patience to attain it, watching his heart that he may not find any impure thought or deed.

He further records his experiences in August, 1680. "If he were out of all fear of damnation he would rather be Holy than unholy". He makes this his chief care because he makes the enjoying of God his chief good. In the same month he again writes "I hope when the end cometh my God will say to me 'Dear Child, thy warfare is accomplished, thine iniquity is pardoned, enter thou into My rest.'" He continues his soliloquies under the title "The workings of my heart in my affliction" dated August 5th, 1680. He begins. "The Will of God in laying this affliction upon me I unfeignedly approve as Holy, Just, and Good; and I am unfeignedly willing to bear the affliction as it is an evil laid upon me by His Will, till the time come in which he think fit to remove it." This soliloquy is longer, and is the unveiling of his heart in what must have been a sore physical trial. (Affliction of the stone) He feels himself better in the inner man by this chastening, and he would live more sincerely and be more careful about his Holy life. He is anxious to fulfil his duty, and first, he can justify God, who exercises His own Holiness and Justice in this castigation. He accepts the punishment of his own iniquity, and exercises a hatred of the sin for which

he now smarts. He desired to be delivered from the affliction, if it be the Will of God, but is heartily content to be used as God pleases.

He records a large collection of notes for himself, of which the following are a good example:-

NOTES FOR MYSELF

Keep thy Heart with all Diligence; for out of it are the Issues of Life.

Death and Life are in the Power of the Tongue.

Entertain not a sensual Imagination for a Moment; and give not way to the least glance of the eye towards Vanity.

Be always expecting some Trouble or other, to interrupt thy outward Peace and Rest.

Never expect anything from the World; and when it offers thee anything that is good for thee, receive it; but catch not at it greedily.

If any neglect or slight thee, care not for it, yet observe it.

Any matter of Trial to thee reckon among thy gains.

What thou doubttest, do not.

In thy Actions, consider not only what is lawful, but what is best in the present Circumstances; and do that.

In every Delight of Sense, watch against all Brutishness.

When thou art in Company where the Talk is but Vain, watch to put in a word, that may be to Edification.

If any despise thee do not bear a grudge against him for it. And be not offended with any, merely because they do not honour thee.

Uphold the reputation of thy colleague, or any that is joined with thee in service, as thou wouldst thine own.

## CONCLUSION

It only remains to add that Corbet must have been an exceedingly fine character for Baxter to have referred to him as 'his dear friend'. Baxter states he never had any difference from him on Theology or Polity and that no-one ever spoke of Corbet unkindly save on Church Government. Corbet saw something to appreciate in all forms of government and he strove to be absolutely fair and just in controversy. Baxter preached his funeral sermon which was a worthy tribute to a good man and worthy also of the preacher. Corbet had a calm temperament, calmer than Baxter, and illustrates a phase of Theological thought even better than Baxter. The latter was very logical in working out his position and thought, but was sometimes carried away by his emotion. Corbet was not only logical, but more dependable than Baxter, as less likely to be carried away by his emotions.

In an exciting age, Corbet maintained a serene state of heart. From all the information we possess of him, in public and in the private records of his own secret life, we are constrained to accept Calamy's judgment that 'he was a great man in every way'. That a study of his life leads to this conclusion is confirmed by a modern disinterested writer who describes Corbet as "peace-loving, moderate, and extremely conscientious".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

M. Schian in Realencyklopädie, Haucks, Vol. XV, 679 (1904)

A P P E N D I X

- A Nonconformist plea for Lay  
Communion with the Church  
of England.
- B Of the Cross in Baptism
- C Accounts of Deprived Ministers
- D Enquiry into oath required by  
Act made at Oxford



A

NONCONFORMISTS' PLEA

FOR LAY COMMUNION WITH

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

printed 1683

(Appendix)

Corbet was intensely anxious to remain in communion with the Church of England as shown in 'The Nonconformists Plea for Lay Communion with the Church of England, together with a Modest Defence of Ministerial Conformity and the Exercise of their Ministry' printed in 1683 after his death.

'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.'

2. 'Though I judge 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 Lord's Supper.'

3. 'I am desirous of going, 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 Catholic Christian. (p. 5)'

4. 'Though 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 God's ordinances celebrated among them all. (p. 6)'

The chief matters for which I refuse to declare an assent as is enjoined, lie not in the ordinary Morning and Evening Prayer, but in other parts as the Order of Baptism, Confirmation, Burial of the Dead, etc., and in certain Rubrics or Rules to which I cannot subscribe. (p.6)

I am engaged to endeavour reformation only according to my power and calling.

My engagement to endeavours of reformation doth not necessitate me to unwarrantable separation.

My engagement to endeavours of reformation doth also engage me against Schism. (p.7)

I confine not godliness to any peculiar way narrower than mere Christianity.

The Kingdom of God stands not either in Conformity or Nonconformity as such. (p.8)

Summary of the Case p.10.

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 Catholic 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, though 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 myself a free man governing my own acts according to my conscience and not subject to the opinions and affections of others, or the interests of a party.

If I cannot mollify them that seek to suppress me, I would render them more excusable.

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

THE THIRD PART : OF SUPERSTITION LESS THAN IDOLATRY

II OF THE CROSS IN BAPTISM

Some Nonconformists say, that they deny not the Civil use of the Cross in Coins and Banners. Others of them say, they dare not reprove the Ancient Christians that used the sign of the Cross merely as a professing signal action to show to the Heathen that they did believe in Christ crucified. Indeed that usage thereof was not an Act of Worship, but an informing of men touching their faith.

It seems lawful to signify, as by words so by other signs, that we are Christ's and His devoted Servants. For Words are but a kind of signs.

The grounds of scrupling the sign of the Cross in Baptism are these:-

- (1) That it is not a mere circumstance, but an Ordinance of Worship, as important as an external rite can be.
- (2) That being a solemn and stated Symbolical sign of a Divine Mystery, and devised of men, it is of that class or rank of things which are not necessary in genere, and so not allowed to be determined and imposed by men, as things necessary in genere are allowed.
- (3) That either the whole nature of a Sacrament or at least a part thereof, is in it.

That it is a Sacrament is thus proved. It is an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual Grace. The outward sign is the representation of the Cross, the instrument of Christ's sufferings; and the inward spiritual Grace is forti-

tude in the Christian warfare, according to the words of the Liturgy.

Here is a signification of Grace to be given us of God, and of our duty according to that Grace. Likewise this sign hath assigned unto it the moral efficacy of a Sacrament for working Grace, by teaching and exciting us to the spiritual warfare, and minding us of Christ crucified. Also it signifies and seals our Relation to Christ or the Grace of being a Christian. And the Liturgy so speaks, WE RECEIVE THIS CHILD INTO THE CONGREGATION OF CHRIST'S FLOCK, AND SIGN HIM &c. IN TOKEN &c.

The pretence that no rite can be a Sacrament, but what God hath instituted is answered before, Sect. 4. And though the imposers thereof, say it is not a Sacrament; yet if they so declare its meaning, as to be of the formal nature and reason of a Sacrament, they make it to be one indeed, though in word they deny it.

If it were granted that it hath not the complete or entire nature of a Sacrament, yet there is one essential part of a Sacrament most apparently in it, that is, to be an engaging sign on our part in the Covenant. For we use it as a token of engaging ourselves to Christ crucified, as our Captain and Saviour, by His Cross; and to perform the duties of His Soldiers and Servants to our lives ends. And as Baptism dedicates to Christ, so doth the sign of the Cross,

according to the express words of the Canon, viz., IT IS AN HONOURABLE BADGE, WHEREBY THE PARTY BAPTIZED IS DEDICATED TO THE SERVICE OF HIM THAT DIED ON THE CROSS. So it hath that in it which is essential to a Sacrament, and part of the nature thereof at least.

Besides, it seems to be an Ordinance of that nature and kind, which Christ our Lawgiver hath reserved to Himself from the reason in Sections 3, 4, 5.

## Accounts of Deprived Ministers

p. 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 herself, 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.

p. 6

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 Usher's 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 joint 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 man's shoulders, as he thought it did formerly on the Bishops here.

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We 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 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.

12 We 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 inconsistence with the welfare of Govenours, when we offer an appeal concerning it to the whole Christian Church, both of the present and former ages.

12 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. We 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 concurr with them in the common interest of true Religion.

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.

.14 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. We would exercise Discipline toward such only, as voluntarily submit thereunto. We would have no coercive power annexed unto it, nor temporal penalties immediately consequent to any Spiritual sentence. We 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. 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 ingagements into the frames of secular Kingdoms, and that in precedency to the civil power.

The wording of the oath imposed by the Five Mile Act was a real difficulty to many of the Nonconformist ministers, and a real stumbling-block to any rapprochement between Nonconformity and the Church. John Corbet, therefore, in "An Enquiry into the Oath required of Nonconformists by an Act made at Oxford," which was published posthumously in 1682, endeavoured to set forth a new and acceptable form of the oath, and one which would make the meaning intended by the Churchmen more clear. He suggested that it should run: "I do swear, that I do believe that it is not lawful upon any pretence whatever, for any of the King's Majesty's subjects to take arms against his person or authority, or any of his rights and dignities, and that I abhor the traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those that are legally commissioned by him, in the legal pursuance of such commissions. And that I will not at any time endeavour any alteration of government either in Church or State, by rebellion, sedition or any other means forbidden or not warranted by law." The underlined words show Corbet's additions. In this sense, as a renunciation of the principles of schism and rebellion, Corbet thought there would be no difficulty in taking the oath.<sup>1</sup>

1

Whiting - Studies in English Puritanism p. 534

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