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FIFTY
QUESTIONS

PROPOUNDED

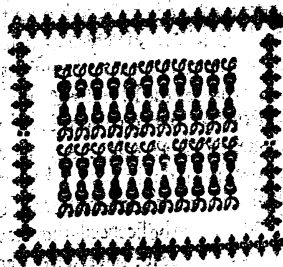
To the ASSEMBLY, to answer by
the Scriptures: whether corporall punishments
may be inflicted upon such as hold
different opinions in
Religion.



You are bought with a price, be not the servants of men. 1 Cor. 7. 23.

You suffer fools gladly, 2 Cor. 11. 19. and yet I may not be suffered.

By S. R.



may 20th

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Fifty Questions, &c.

WHether corporall punishments can open blinde eyes, and give light to darke understandings?

2 Whether carnall punishment: can produce any more then a carnall repentance and obedience?

3 Whether the destroying of mens bodies for errors, be not a means to prevent their conversion, seeing some are not called untill the eleventh houre: and if they should be cut off for their errors the seventh houre, how should they have come in? *Mat. 20.6.*

4 Whether those who would force other mens consciences, be willing to have their own forced?

5 Whether it be wisdom and safe to make such sole Judges in matters of Religion, who are not infallible, but as lyable to erre as others?

6 If a father or Magistrate have not power to force a virgin to marry one shee cannot love; whether they have power to force one where they cannot believe, against the light and checks of their own consciences?

7 Whether the Scripture makes the Magistrate Judge of our faith?

8 If the Magistrate may determine what is truth; whether we must not beleve and live by the Magistrates faith, and change our religion at their pleasures? and if nothing must be preached, nor no books of Religion printed, nor be allowed to passe, unless certein men may please to approve and give their allowance thereto, under their hands, whether such doe not by this practice, tell God, that unlesse he will reveale his truth first to them, they will not suffer it to be published, and so not known to be (even with him) notwithstanding the Magistrate may and ought to hinder the printing and publishing of that which shall be against the safety and welfare of the State. But we must distinguish between matters civil and religious: we question their power in the latter. Also, whether the Licenses setting his hand to the books to licence it (he being a Priest by his ordination, and from the Pope) be not the marke of the beast (spoken of, *Revel. 13.17.* And whether all such as have gone to them to licence the truth ought not to repent of it, and do so no more? Also whether these men be fit to be Licencers of the truth, who when the truth hath been tendered them to be licenced, they have confessed the truth of it, as they have been free to licence it; but refused, because they durst not? And whether it can be made appear, that God hath revealed his truth first to these Ministers of *England*, and so the first spreaders of it? Instance, who

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opposed the Prelate, the Ministers or the people, first? And so of the rest.

9 Whether it be not the command of Christ, that the tares (those that walke in lies) and the wheat (those that walke in the truth), should be let alone, and the blinde (led in a false Religion) which are offended at the declaration of the truth should be let alone *Mat. 13.30.38. Mat. 15.14.*

10 Whether he was not reproved that would have fire from heaven to devour those that reject Christ, *Luk. 9.54.55.*

11 Whether the servants of the Lord are not forbidden to strive, but to be gentle towards all? *2 Tim. 4.2.*

12 Whether the Saints weapons against errors, be carnall or no? *2 Cor. 10.4.*

13 Whether it was not Christs command, that his Disciples when they were persecuted, they should pray, and if cursed, blesse?

14 Whether the Scriptures declare, that the Saints should persecute others, and whether the gentle lambs of Christ can serve the Wolves so, seeing he sent his as sheep among wolves, and not as wolves among sheep, to kill and imprison, *Matth. 10.16.*

15 Whether Christ hath said, He will have an unwilling people compelled to serve him?

16 whether ever God did plant his church by violence and blood-shed?

17 Whether tares may not become wheat, and the blinde see, and those that now oppose and resist Christ, afterwards receive him: and he that is now in the devils snare, may get out and come to repentance: and such as are Idolaters, as the Corinthians were, may become true worshippers, as they that are strangers may become Gods people?

18 Whether to convert an Heretick, and to cast out unclean spirits, be done any other way then by the finger of God, by the mighty power of the Spirit in the word?

19 Whether he that is not conformable to Christ, may not at the same time be a good subject to the State, and as profitable to it as any?

20 Whether men that differ in Religion, may not be tolerated, seeing *Abraham* abode among the Canaanites a long time, yet contrary to them in Religion, *Gen. 13.7. & 16.13.* and he sojournd in *Gezer*, and King *Abimelech* gave him leave to abide in his land, *Gen. 20.21, 23, 24.* And *Isaac* dwelt in the same Land, yet contrary in Religion, *Gen. 31.* The people of *Israel* were about 430 years in *Egypt*, and afterwards in *Babylon*, all which time they differed in Religion from the State, *Exod. 12. 2 Chron. 36.* Christ

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and his Disciples differed from the common religion of the State, *Acts 19. 36.* and when the enemies of the truth raised up any tumults, the wisdom of the Magistrate most wisely appeased them, *Acts 18. 14. & 19. 15.*

21 Whether it be not better for us, that a Patent were granted to monopolize all the corn and cloth, and to have it measured out unto us at their price and pleasure, which yet were intollerable; as for some men to appoint and measure out unto us what and how much wee shall believe and practice in matters of religion.

22 Whether there be not the same reason that they should be appointed by us what they shall believe and practice in religion, as for them to do so to us, seeing we can give as good grounds for what wee believe and practice (as they can do for what they would have) if not better.

23 Whether men heretofore have not in zeal for religion, persecuted the Son of God, in stead of the son of perdition?

24 Whether it is not a burden great enough for the Magistrate to govern and judge in civill causes, to preserve the subjects rights, peace and safety?

25 If the Magistrate must judge and punish in matters of religion, the Magistrate must ever be troubled with such persons and such causes: and if after his conscience be convinced, hee had no such power, or see that it was truth he punished; what horrours of conscience is he like to possesse?

26 Whether he is fit to appoint punishments, that is not fit to judge?

27 If the Magistrate must punish errors in religion, whether it doth not impose a necessity that the Magistrate is to have a certainty of knowledge in all intricate cases? and whether God calls such to that place, whom he hath not furnished with abilities for that place? And if a Magistrate be in darknesse, and spiritually blind, and dead; be fit to judge of light, of truth and error? and whether such be fit for the place of the Magistracy? then whether it be not a scruple to a tender conscience to submit to such in evil causes, because not appointed to that place by God? whereas if the Magistrates power be onely civill, the doubt is resolved, because such as may be fit for Magistrates, and men ought in conscience in civill things to submit unto them.

28 Whether there be any Scripture that saith, that any mans conscience is to be constrained, and whether the Magistrate can reach mens consciences, and whether he be fit to make a law to conscience, who cannot know when conscience keeps it, and that cannot reward conscience for keeping it, nor punish the conscience for the breaking of it?

29 Whether it be not in vain for us to have Bibles in English, if against our souls persuasions from the Scriptures, we must believe as the Church believes?

30 Whether the Magistrate be not wronged, to give him the title of *Civill Magistrate* onely, if his power be spirituall?

31 Whether laws made merely concerning spirituall things, be not spirituall also?

32 Whether if no civill Law be broken, the civill peace be hurt or no?

33 Whether in compulsion for conscience, not only the guilty, but the innocent suffer also? As if the husband be an heretick, his sufferings may cause the innocent wife and children shall suffer, as deeply also?

34 Whether such as are spiritually dead, be capable to be spiritually infected?

35 Whether God will accept of a painted sepulcher, a shadow, a meere complement of obedience, when the heart is dead and rotten, and hates God and all that is good? God hath no need of hypocrites, much lesse of forced ones: God will have those to worship him, as can worship him in spirit and truth, *John 4.*

36 Whether the Scriptures appoint any other punishment to be inflicted upon Hereticks, then rejection and excommunication? *Tit. 3. 10.*

37 Whether freedome of conscience, would not joyne all sorts of persons to the Magistrate, because each shared in the benefit?

38 Whether those states (as the Low Countries) who grant such liberty, doe not live quietly, and flourish in great prosperity?

39 Whether persecution for conscience, doe not harden men in their way, and make them cry out of oppression and tyranny?

40 Whether some corporall punishments would not make thousands in England face about to Popery, as it did in Queen *Maries* time?

41 Whether laws made concerning religion, have not always dashed the most holy men, witness *Daniel*, and the three children; therett will be of what religion you will.

42 Whether the Saints crave the help of the powers of this world to bring Christ to them, or fear their powers to keep him from them?

43 If no religion is to be practised, but that which the Common-wealth shall approve on; what if they will approve of no religion? shall men have no religion at all?

44 Whether the Saints ought not to continue their Assemblies of their

worship of God, without, or against the consent of the Magistrates; they being commanded to do so, *Mat. 28. 18, 19, 20. Heb. 10. 25.* By an Angel from God, *Acts 5. 20.* It was the Apostles practice (who were not rebellious nor seditious) *Acts 4. 18, 19, 20, 23, and 5. 22, 28.*

45 Whether Uniformity in Religion, in the State, doe not oppresse millions of souls, and impoverish the Saints bodies?

46 Whether Gods people have not disputed and taught a Religion new worship, contrary to the State they lived in, and spread it in travelling and open places; as appears, *Acts 17. 2, 17, and 18. 48.* yet no origancy and impetuoussesse. Yea, contrary to publike authority in the Nations Uniformity, in false worship, *Dan. 3.* the three children; so the Apostle, *Act 14. 5.* The Saints have openly witnessed, that in matters spirituall, Jesus was King, *Acts 17. 7.* and for this Christ suffered; as appears by his accusation, *Iohn 9. 19.* Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews, *Psal. 2. 6. Acts 2. 36.* Gods People have seene the disturbers of the civill State, upon the Apostles preaching, there followed uprores, and tumults, and uprores, at *Iconium*, at *Ephesus*, at *Ierusalem*, *Acts 14. 4. Acts 19. 29, 40. Acts 21. 30, 31.*

47 Whether Jesus Christ, appointed any materiall Prisons for Blasphemers of him? Whether notwithstanding the confidence of the truth they have, to which they would force others, whether the Bishops, their Fathers, &c. have not been as deeply mistaken; for now they, are found to be Antichristian.

48 Whether it be not a naturall Law for every man that liveth, to worship that which he thinketh is God; and as he thinketh he ought to worship; and to force otherwise, will be concluded an oppression of those persons so forced. Whether it be best for us to put out our eyes, and see by the eyes of others who are as dim-sighted? In my judgement, your judgement is a lye: will ye compell me to believe a lye? compell ye a man to be present at a worship which he loaths?

49 Whether the Civill, or the Spirituall State must be supream: which of these must judge the other in spirituall matters? if the Magistrate then hee is above the Church, and so the head of the Church; and he hath his power from the people (to govern the Church) whether it will nor follow, that the people, as a people, have originally as men a power to govern the Church, to teach her duty, to reform and correct her; and so the Spouse of Christ, wife of Christ must be corrected according to the pleasure of the World, who lye in wickednesse? *Iohn 3.*

What

What power a Church hath over a Magistrate, if hee be a Member of the Church: if Members, they may be excommunicated, if so discerning.

Reason 1 Because Magistrates must be subject to Christ, but Christ censures all offenders, *1 Cor. 5. 4, 5.*

2 Every brother must be subject to Christs censure, *Mat. 18. 15, 16, 17.* but Magistrates are Brethren, *Deut. 17. 5.*

3 They may censure all within the Church, *1 Cor. 5. 17.*

4 The Church hath a charge of all the soules of the Church, and must give account of it, *Heb. 13. 17.*

5 Christs censures are for the good of soules, *1 Cor. 5. 6.* but Magistrates must not be denied any privilege for their soules, else they by being Magistrates, should lose a priviledge of Christs.

6 In which priviledges, Christians are all one, *Gal. 2. 28. Col. 3. 11.* Sins of Magistrates are hatefull and condemned, *Esa. 1. 10. Micah. 1. 12.* Its a Paradox, that a Magistrate may be punished by the Church, and yet that they are Judges of the Church.

50 Whether every man upon this Religion, which in his conscience he is perswaded is true; whether hee doth not upon the truth thereof render his soul.

If this Religion the Magistrate be perswaded be true, he owes a three-fold duty.

First, Approbation, *Esa. 49. Revel. 21.* with a tender respect to the truth, and the Professours of it.

Secondly, Personall submission of his soul to the power of Jesus his government, *Act 13. 18. 1 Cor. 5.*

Thirdly, protection of them, and their shutes from violence and injury, *Rom. 13.* to a false Religion he oweth.

1 Permission (for approbation he owes not to what is evil) as *Mat. 13. 30.* for publike peace and quietnesse.

2 Protection of the Person of his subject (though a false worship) that no injury be offered to the persons or goods of any, *Rom. 13.*

The Kings of *Judah* compelled men as servs the Lord, *Ezra. 7.* Kings may now compell, &c.

They who live under the Jewish worship only were compelled, strangers were not.

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Secondly, they were not compelled to any thing, but what they knew and confessed was their duty, 2 *Chron.* 6. 12, 13, 14, 15.

Thirdly, if they did compell, their actions were not morall to oblige other Kings to do so. May not the Prelates by the same reason alleage the order of the Priesthood for their Episcopacy, as you for the Kingly.

Fourthly, the Kings of Israel did not imprison *Schismatics, Pharises, Herodians, &c.*

Fifthly, the Kings of Israel had extraordinary profits to direct them what to do infallibly; these Kings have none such to direct them.

Sixthly, if the Law be morall; where is it set down in Christs Testament (which is to be our Rule) that the Magistrate shall compell all to his Religion: for to another he will not.

Object.

Then every man may live as he list.

Answ.

Had not he as good live as he list; as live as you list?

Object.

Then it seems errors may be suffered.

Answ.

If truth may be suffered also, it will prevail against Errors. Its no more in their power to hinder Errors, then it was in the power of the Prelates to hinder mens preaching, writing, and speaking against them. If you can hinder Satans suggestions, and the vain imaginations of mens hearts, and expell the darknesse in men, and place light in stead thereof, and hinder men from speaking each to other, then you can suppress errors, else not, the Lord onely can surpris Errors by the mighty power of his Spirit with his Word; and wee believe hee will certainly do it in his time to his glory, and the comfort of his people, *Answ.*

One thing more I desire to know why the Priests of *England* assume to themselves the title of a *(Divine)* is it because they are exercised in Divine Truth, or because they partake of the Divine Nature, or both, if so, then many Tradesmen may as well have the title of Divine given them as well as they, because they partake of the Divine Nature, and are as much exercised in matters Divine, as the most of them, but it is a question to mee, whether the title Divine is to be given to any man, but onely to God alone; whose being, is onely Divine.

FINIS.