

**A SHORT  
TREATISE  
CONCERNING THE  
lawfulness of every mans  
exercising his gift as God Shall  
call him thereunto**

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SHORT TREATISE  
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The Gifts of the Spirit are in every one for the good of the whole body, and that there is no private gifts, nor private Christians that we read of in Scripture to prove at large out of the word of God which shall be that which shall guide all our actions by, that what gift soever the Spirit giveth: It is for the good of the whole body, and so according to its place in the body, the measure of grace received he is to use it for the help of his fellow members, to the edifying of the body: I may bring for the further clearing of this truth, the judgments of many worthy Divines, *Calvin* speaking of the communion of Saints hath these words; *The Saints which are gathered together into the fellowship of Christ with this condition, that whatever benefit God bestows upon them, they should continually communicate one to another.* *Ursinas* on Communion of Saints hath these words: *That all receiving one, who beleiveth are in common partakers of Christ & all his graces, as being his members, and then that every one ought readily and cheerfully to bestow their gifts and graces which they had to the common commodity and safe of all.* *Master Perkins* on the Creed from our Union with Christ, and our union and communion one with another saith; *That a Christian though he be the freeest man upon earth, yet he is a servant to all men, and especially to the Church of God, to do service to the members of it by love for the good of all.* And this good is procured when we convey the gifts of God bestowed on us to our brethren, which is done these five ways. First by example, secondly by admonition, thirdly by exhortation, fourthly by consolation, fifthly by prayer, all which he openeth and presseth to this purpose. *Master Bolton* in his general directions for a comfortable walking with God, is full & large for this, but to prove it by several Scriptures, in *Romans* 12:6, having then gifts according to the grace that is given to us whether Prophecy let us prophesy, let us according to the proportion of faith, the first of *Cor.* 12. and the 9. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit with all. *Ephes.* 4:11, 12, and he gave some to be Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, and some Teachers, and some Pastors for the edifying of the body of Christ; *Ephesians* 5:11. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another even as ye do, *Heb.* 3:13, but exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, *1 Cor.* 14:31. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all be comforted, in the first of *Peter* the 4 and the 10. As every one hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as faithful stewards of the manifold graces of God: thus you have all these places to prove the lawfulness of all to exercise the gifts as God shall give them opportunity with conveniency, and also the Judgments of many worthy Divines: now we shall shew you the reason of it why every one ought to communicate of what God hath bestowed on them for the good of the whole body, the first reason is because God himself hath commanded it. The second reason is, because it was the very end of God's bestowing these gifts upon us, for the edifying of the body of Christ. The third reason is from our near union and communion one with another. The fourth reason is from our brethren's right to it, they have all right to our gifts and abilities. The fifth reason is this, it is the way to enlarge our own gifts and abilities. The sixth reason is, God's glory and the Saint's example.

The seventh reason is because of our enemies' wiles and Satan's malice, all calling for it at our hands. Now to answer certain objections that are brought in against the universality of this truth.

The first objection is this, that none ought to preach but those in office, none else may properly be said to Preach.

To this I answer, that when the dispersed Christians were scattered in that persecution it is said that they went about preaching and the hand of the Lord was with them, and great multitudes believed and turned to the Lord, *Acts* 11:19, 20, 21. But some object and say, that this is not such preaching as is mentioned in *Rom.* 10:14, 15, but it is manifest and clear that they strive about words and to no purpose at all; for there was that very Preaching, and that very sending as is there mentioned in that tenth to the *Rom.* and the 15, for that preaching of the dispersed Christians was made necessary for the working of faith, else the text saith not right, in saying they believed: But some farther object and say, that these were all Church-officers, and so might Preach wherever they came.

To this I answer, that it could not be so, for we never read in all the whole book of God, that all the members of a Church were officers; but this is apparent, that all the members were scattered only Apostles, as you may see it in the 8 of the *Acts* the first. I shall give you another instance in the fourth of *John* and the 39. It is said that many of the Samaritans believed at the report of the woman; if it be so, then one of these must needs befall those that hold none ought to Preach but those that are Church-officers, and this woman was a Church-officer, and so a Herald and an Ambassador, and so sent and so Preached, or else that the spirit was mistaken that said they believed.

Another instance we have of one that was no Church officer and yet a Preacher and a publisher of the Gospel, in the eighth of *Luke* and the 38, 39, the man out of whom the devils were cast out; Christ sent him away, and bid him go and declare what great things he had done to him, and the text saith, that he went and preached in the Cities. It is manifest that this man was no Church-officer and yet a preacher of the Gospel. Again, what think you *Moses* desire, when he desired that all the Lord's people were Prophets, either *Moses* say you jeered or else he wished that all good people were Church-officers which could not be *Numb.* 11:29. What think you of *Saul* in the first of *Sam.* 6:10. And when they came thither to the hill, a company of the Prophets met him, and the spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied: so also the 19 of *Sam.* And the 20, and *Saul* sent messengers to take *David*, and when they saw the company of the Prophets prophesying and *Samuel* standing as appointed over them; the spirit of God was upon the messengers of *Saul*, and they prophesied all, see in the 24 verse, and he stript off his clothes also and prophesied, now none of these were Church-officers.

But they further object, and say; that these had an extraordinary spirit given them, and therefore might. To this I answer, that none had this extraordinary spirit, but those that penned the Scriptures or that was able to work Miracles. But these, it is apparent in the *Acts* and in these places, had not such a Spirit as worked Miracles, or that penned Scriptures, and yet prophesied.

Again to this I answer, that such a Spirit as that they had; Is promised to the people of God, in our days, in the second of the *Acts.* and the 18. And on my servants and on my handmaids, I will pour out in those days of my spirit, and they shall prophesy, but to this promise some answer, that it was made good in the Apostles' times; and we must not look for the making good of this promise in our days. To this I answer that in the Apostles' times, they were called the last times; but if then they were the last days much more now. And so may look for the fulfilling of this promise, and we ought also to pray for the making good of it.

The second objection is this, for none unless he be skilled in arts and tongues, Is fit for the work of the ministry, to this I answer that the scriptures doth plainly affirm, that the true understanding of scripture, comes not by human learning, by arts and tongues, but by the spirit of God, in the first *Cor.* 2:12, 13. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God: which things we speak not with the words, which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth us, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Secondly I answer, that the natural man cannot find out these things, be he never so well qualified, with all human wisdom and learning. In the first of *Cor.* 2:14, But the natural man perceiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, in the first Chap. and the 20. ver. where is the wise, where is the Scribe, where is the disputer of this world that not God made foolish the wisdom of this world.

Thirdly, I answer that the want of furniture in skill and arts and tongues, Shall not hinder any from this knowledge, when the Lord is pleased, in the holy means appointed to send forth his spirit, with such illuminations, & infusions into the soul, in the first of *Cor.* 2:10, or the spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God in the 15 *vers.* But he that is spiritual, Judgeth all things,

Fourthly I answer, that God counts it his glory sometimes to hide this thing from the wise & prudent; and to reveal them unto babes, and sucklings. Such that are destitute of human learning in arts and tongues, which must needs be the meaning of that place in the 11 of *Matt.* 25.

Fifthly I answer, that there is not only grounds, and principles of saving truths, given to such that are destitute of human learning, and the like, but to understand a Proverb and the interpretations of words, of the wise: and their dark saying *Proverbs* 1:6, 7; *Psalms* 25:12.

Lastly I answer, that the Apostles desiring that other might understand these things: prayeth to God for them, not that God would give them skill in arts and tongues, though it might be desired, in those that want it. But that God would give them the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of his son *Ephes.* 1:17.

Thus you have the second objection answered, as God hath enabled me.

The third objection is this, that none ought to exercise these gifts in such a public way but those that have a call to it.

To this I answer that all the call mentioned of in holy scriptures, was the peoples' great necessity, and their great willingness to hear them and receive them. And the approbation of godly ministers, and all this I have had for my call, but if none might Preach the Gospel, unless he had the consent of all. None should preach amongst us, that is for the 3. object.

The fourth objection is this: that it may happily be lawful in a man's family but not in a Church, I speak in the world's language. Their reason is because one is public and the other private. And God hath given a private spirit and this is to private men to exercise privately with. He hath also given a public spirit and this is for public persons, which they call themselves, for a public use.

To this I answer, that there are no [such<sup>1</sup>] members, of the body of Jesus Christ. But [everyone<sup>1</sup>] is of the

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<sup>1</sup> Added for clarity, Ed.

same nature of the whole: a public member of a public body. And the spirit proceeding from the head to every member is one and the same spirit, and his gifts of like nature: public gifts of a public spirit for the good of the whole body. And so in its place, according to its measure to be used, whatever gift it be; that so though the members be many, yet the body is but one, every one member of the head, and all members one of another. And though the members have several offices, yet every member in the body hath some office and useful gift, and that not for its own profit alone or the profit of two or three members next [to] it, but for the good of the whole body, God having so placed the members in the body, that the chiefest cannot say to the meanest, I have no need of you, nor the meanest cannot also say to the chiefest, I am not to care for you, but every member to have the same care one of another, though this care be manifested diversely, according to the several offices they have in the body; and the several gifts given it for the discharge of the same, for though in respect of the polity of the congregated bodies, the more part are out of office, yet as we are all one body in Christ, and members one of another, there is never a member out of office, and that for the service of the whole: there are now more private Christians, than private member of Christ, neither in any other sense, can they properly be called private Christians, than they may also be called private members of Christ. Seeing that in the whole book of God, we find no such phrase as private Christian, or private spirit. Thus have I labored, as the Lord hath helped me to discover the lawfulness of my practice, both public and private: I have labored to answer all the objections, that I ever had against it unless it be this that though it be lawful, yet not at this time, and that for this reason, because haply it might hinder the work of reformation.

To this I answer, that in the work of reformation, it is necessary that all errors should be brought to light, and that all truths should be discovered. This I finding out of God's word to be an error that is held commonly amongst us that rather than any man should be a publisher of the gospel of Christ, unless he were skilled in arts and tongues and sent forth by our Prelates, thousands of our meeting houses should be shut up, and the people starved for want of food though God hath abundantly provided for them. I thought no time so fit to publish this truth by my practice as now at this time when God hath given us such glorious hopes of a glorious reformation, and when so many of those that pities poor souls to see them lie in ignorance and blindness, and power in their hands to redress it. Therefore I thought no time so seasonable as this time, and thus have you all the objections that are brought against me answered.

That which occasioned me to put these few lines forth to the view of the world, hath been by the importunity of many that bear good will to Sion & to this truth. Also the evil aspersions that are cast upon me for this my practice, I have heard a noise,<sup>2</sup> but I have seen as yet nothing out of the word of God that might dissuade me, but rather persuade me and to encourage me in the way to go on by none that object against it. To this day could I never procure any fair reasoning of any person whatsoever; though I have exceedingly sought it to hear their grounds what they have had against it. Could it be made apparent out of God's word that it were unlawful for me to go on in this way, or that there were no need of the discovery of Christ in the world, or that the people did not earnestly desire it, I should cease with joy and rejoicing of heart. But so long as there can be nothing found in God's word against it, and seeing the great necessities of the people and their great willingness calls for it, I shall be willing to suffer what God shall please to inflict upon me for the same. Yet I am persuaded though I be trodden under foot, yet this truth shall flourish & spread itself forth in the world to the amazement of all that do oppose it. And thus according to what light the Lord hath bestowed on me out of his free love in his Son, I have for the satisfaction of some published these few lines to the world.

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2 "hard anoyse" in original

***FINIS.***

*John Spenser.*