

**PRESBYTERIAN
RIGHTS ASSERTED**

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Presbyterian Rights Asserted by Walter Farquhar Hook

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WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK

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BY

A PRESBYTER OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.



LONDON:
JAMES BURNS, PORTMAN STREET,
PORTMAN SQUARE.

M.DCCC.XXXIX.

949.

PRESBYTERIAN RIGHTS ASSERTED.

THE present circumstances of the Church of England, and her future prospects, render it highly important for the clergy of the second order in the ministry to understand their real position in the Church; their duties and obligations to the first order of the ministry on the one hand, and their own rights and privileges on the other.

That a very general ignorance prevails on this subject, it is impossible for any one to doubt. By the generality of our legislators it is unknown that we possess *any* peculiar rights and privileges: they regard us as mere servants of the state, and they look upon the bishops as magistrates appointed to keep us in order. This, too, is perhaps the view generally taken by those of the clergy who are designated low-churchmen. They look upon themselves as ministers employed by the government, and placed by the same government under the control of certain other ministers, who have high secular rank conferred upon them. Some of those who are styled high-churchmen are apt to err in the opposite extreme. Being deeply impressed with the divine right of episcopacy, they forget that the right of the presbytery is equally divine, and draw

the hasty conclusion, that episcopacy is a despotism, and that, consequently, to the caprice of their diocesan all the clergy of a diocese are bound, without questioning, to submit. If, without disrespect, I may speak of the bishops themselves, and infer their opinions from their conduct, I should say that they are as divided in their opinion as to their relative position with respect to the other clergy, as any of the parties to whom I have alluded. I believe, that with very few exceptions, there has never existed a body of men more desirous of doing their duty than the existing bishops of the Church of England. But their notion of episcopal duty varies considerably. Some appear among us as spiritual peers, associating with the other clergy, as the lord-lieutenant of the county with the inferior magistrates. These are generally the best, though not the most apparently active, bishops in the Church. They never needlessly interfere with the parochial clergy, but are always willing to assist them : they are the great patrons of learning and piety. Other prelates seem to regard themselves as schoolmasters ; indeed I have heard it said of a high-establishment prelate, that his notion of a bishop is, that he is an *examining master* plus a *proctor*. Others, again, consider the whole diocese as one parish, and every parish priest as their curate ; thus reducing the clergy, in point of fact, to two orders, bishop and deacon. These are the most busy prelates ; but their activity, as we shall

see, is not always advantageous to the Church. They seem most of them to have forgotten the *authority, rights, and privileges* of the second order of the ministry, which possesses *authority, rights, and privileges* scarcely inferior to their own. The fourth Council of Carthage decrees, "ut episcopus in ecclesia et in consessu presbyterorum sublimior sedeat; intra domum vero collegam se presbyterorum esse cognoscat."* At the same time, these are the bishops who are desirous of obtaining from the state increased power—power to do as magistrates, what *as bishops* they have no right to do. If they obtain an increase of power, our order will be depressed even more than it is now; and this is another reason why it is necessary to let them know what our rights really are.

Now the present writer was a zealous supporter of episcopacy at a period when to speak of the apostolical succession was looked upon as a sign of dementation by many who are now the most able advocates of the doctrine. He may consider himself, in a very humble sphere, as one of those who have been instrumental in opening the eyes of the public to the Scriptural authority of the episcopate.† He does entirely believe that episcopacy

* Can. xxxv.

† It is not meant to say, that at the commencement of this century the doctrine was not taught; it was asserted by many of our great divines, by Bishop Horsley especially, and his worthy successor in the archdeaconry of St. Albans, the late Archdeacon

39.

949.



