

Letter Concerning the Disputation Between Featley, White, Fisher and Sweet (1 July 1623)

John Fisher

Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 28640, ff. 113r–113v

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Anno. 1623. There was a disputation betweene doctor White & doctor Featly on our side & Mr Fisher & Mr Sweete Iesuites on the other in the house of S[i]r Humfrey L. in London, which was abruptly broken of, yet the proceeding so farre as it went is set out in print. This letter following (either true or fained) concernes it./

Right Hon. Lord I knowe it the especiall prouidence of God that yo[u]r Lordship was present at a late conference wherein do[cto]r White & doctor Featlie vndertooke to shewe against me & my companion, that the protestant Church had beene visible in all ages & that there their professors might be named especially in the ages before Luther/ Yo[u]r Lordship may remember the substance of all their prooffe to haue consisted in this that the true Church was alwaies so visible as that the professors thereof in all ages might be named/ We refused to dispute of the Minor because it transferred the question, that & avoyded that plaine prooffe of the visible Church which was propounded & expected/ If as they conclude they are able to name their professors in all ages, why did they refuse to giue vs a Catalogue of theirs as we were readye to haue giue[n] them another of ours? Why went they about to proue they were able to name them, when with as litle adoe they might haue named them? Where deedes are justly expected, wordes without deedes are worthely expected suspected/ Certainly hereby they are so farre from discharging themselues of the greate enterprise they vndertooke as they stande more ingaged the[n] before to the performance of it; for hauing nowe professed & acknowledged that the true Church, or (to vse their owne wordes) the Church which is visible as the Ch Catholike Church ought to be, & the Church whose faith is eternall, must be able to name her professors in all ages; either for their owne honour & for the satisfaction of the world, they must set downe the names of their p[ro]fessors in all ages; or else they shamefully discouer themselues not to be that true & visible vnchanged Church which is able to name them./ Very Noblie therefore & prudently

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yo[u]r Lordship in the ende desired another meeting, not doubting [tha]t yo[u]r owne partie within ij or iij dayes would be contente to giue vs the names of their professors in all ages, as we were ready to giue them the names of ours, that thereby both sides might be the better prepared for a further triall: Which when they haue performed we shall not faile to encounter with them, either by way of speech or writing, as yo[u]r Lord[shi]p (all things considered) shall thinke fitte & fayrest, safest or most convenient for discouery of truth./ But if yo[u]r Lordship shall not be able to obtaine at their hands, this yo[u]r most just & important request, the defecte of prooffe on their parte must needes be accompted a plaine flight / & no man hereafter can prudently relye his saluation vpon that Church which (for wante of perpetuall visibility sufficiently prooved) they themselues shall haue concluded to be false & feined./ Thus expecting the issue hereof & yo[u]r Lordships further pleasure from the mouth of this bearer I remaine this 1 of Iuly 1623

Yo[u]r L[ordshi]ps servant in Christ I. F.

I thinke the publishing of this letter, caused the printing of that priuate Disputation, or else some speeches or writings of this kind, as the booke it selfe declareth.

This letter is craftely dispersed by copies thereof into Papists hands to confirme them & into the handes of others dazle them &c.

Who so readeth the booke shall finde that the causes why the Iesuites [*Left margin: finit.*
+] were not satisfyed in the Catalogue of Successors might be these. 1° It was a priuate conference & disputation vnto which (it may well be) they were not requested to bring such a Catalogue. 2° They were interrupted when they beganne to recite. 3° It was not allowed them to beginne at Christ & his Apostles. 4° The Iesuites must also haue begunne there for their Church which it seemeth they durst not. 5° The doctors only yeelded to shewe this successio[n] because of the Papiste bragges, shewing that it is no sound arguing/ These cannot name successor visible & [er]go are no Ch true Church/ These can, [er]go are a true Church. 6° The naming of Successors would be an endlesse quarrell because they counte for theirs, many of the first age that are not theirs & much Cavilling there would be about those hich in truth are ours.

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<https://mpese.ac.uk/t/FisherLetterDispute1623.html>