

Directions for Preachers (1622)

James VI & I and George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury

Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 28640, ff. 114r–116v

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The Archbishops letter to the Bishop of Norwich about Articles fro[m] the k[ing]
Right Reverend father in god my very good Lo[r]d & brother I have receiued from the kings
most excellent Maj[es]tie a letter the tenor whereof here ensueth.

Most reverend Father in god, right trusty & right entirely beloued Councillor we greeete you
well Forasmuch as the abuses & extrarangies of Preachers in the Pulpit haue beene in all
times repressed in this Realme by some acte cou[n]cell or statute with the advise & resolution
of grave & learned Prelates; in so much as the very licensing of Preachers had beginning
by an order of Starrechamber the 8th day of Iuly in the 19th yeere of k[ing] Henr[y] the
eight our noble Predecessor: & whereas at this present diverse young students by reading of
late writers & vngrounded Divines doe broche many times vnprofitable vnsound seditious
& dangerous doctrines to the Scandall of this Church & disquieting of the State & present
government We vpon humble representation vnto vs of these inconveniences by your selfe &
sundry other grave & reverend Prelates of this Church as also of our Princely care & zeale
for the extirpation of schisme & dissention growing from these seedes & for the setting of a
Religious & peaceable government both of Church & State doe by these our speciall letters
straitelie charge & command you to vse all possible care & diligence that these limitations &
Cautions herewith sent vnto you Concerning Preachers be duelie & strictely from henceforth
by the severall Bishops in their severall Diocesses within your jurisdiction observed &
kept / & to that ende our Princely pleasure is that you send them forthwith severall copies of
these Directions to be by them speedily sente & Communicated to every Parson Vicar Curate
Lecturer & Minister in every Cathedrall or Parish Church withⁱⁿ their severall Dioceses / &
that you earnestlie require them to employ their vttermost endeavors in the performance of
this so important a busines, letting them knowe that we haue a speciall eye

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to their proceedings, & expecte a stricte accompte hereof both from you & every of them
And these our letters shall be your sufficient warrant & discharge in this behalfe. Given
vnder our Signet at our Castle of Windsor the 4th of August in the 20th yeere of our reigne of
England &c & of Scotland the 56.

By this you see his Majesties Princely care that men sholde preache Christ crucified,
obedience to the higher powers & honest & [Christ]ian conversation of life, (but in a regular
forme) & not that every younge man should take vnto himselfe an exorbitant libertie to teach
what he listeth to the offence of his Maj[es]tie & to the disturbance & disquiet of the Church
& Commonwealth. I can giue vnto yo[u]r Lordships no better directions for the p[er]for-
mance hereof then are prescribed to you in his Majesties letters & the schedule herewith
sent vnto you Whereof I pray you to be very carefull, since it is the Princelie pleasure of his
Highnes to require an accompt both of you & me for the same. And so not doubting but by

your Register or otherwise you will cause these instructions to be communicated to your Clergie I leave you to the Almighty & remaine yo[u]r Lo[rds]hs loving brother

Croydon Aug. 12. 1622.

Geo. Cant[uar]

Directions concerning Preachers.

1 That no Preacher (vnder the degree & calling of a Bishop or Deane of a Cathedrall or Collegiate Church) & that^{they} vpon the kings dayes & Festiv & set Festivall dayes) doe take occasion by the expounding of any Text of scripture whatsoever to fall into any discourse or Common place (otherwise then by opening the coherence & division of his Text) which shall not be comprehended & warra[n]ted in essence substance effecte or naturall inference within some of the Articles of Religion set forth 1562 or in some of the Homelies set forth by Authoritie in the Church of England, not only for a helpe of non-preaching Ministers, but withall for a patterne & a Boundarie (as it were) for the Preaching Ministers / & for their further in

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instructions for the p[er]formance thereof that they forthwith reade over & pervse diligentlie the said booke of Articles & two bookes of Homelies.

2 That no Parson Vicar or Lecturer shall preach any ser Sermon or Collation hereafter vpon Sundaies or Holidiaies in the After-noon in any Cathedrall or Parish Church throughout the kingdome but vpon some parte of the Catechisme or some texte taken out of the Creede Tenne Commandements or Lords prayer (Funerall Sermons only excepted) & that those Preachers be most encouraged & approved of, who spende the Afternoones exercises in examining of Children in their Cathechisme & in expounding of the severall points & heades of the Cathechisme which is the most ancient & laudable custome of teaching in the Church of England.

3 That no Preacher of what Title soever vnder the degree of a Bishop or Deane at the least doe from henceforth presume to preache in any populer auditorie the deepe points of Predestinatio[n] Electio[n] Reprobation or of the Vniu[er]salitie Efficacie Resistibility or Irresistibilitie of Gods Grace, but leave those Theames to be handled by lerned men & that moderately & modestlie by way of vse & application rather then by the way of Positiue doctrine as being fitter for the Schooles & Vniu[er]sities then for simple Auditories.

4 That no Preacher of what title or Denomination soever shall presume from henceforth in any Auditory within the kingdome to declare limite or bound out by way of positiue doctrine in any lecture or sermon the power, prerogatiue jurisdiction authority or dutie of Sovereigne Princes, or otherwise meddle with those matters of State & the reference betweene Princes & the people then as they are instructed & presided in the Homelie of obedience & in the rest of the Homelies & Articles of Religion sette forth (as before is mentioned) by Authority publike authority, but rather confine themselues wholly to these two heads of Faith & holy life, which are the subjecte of the auncient Sermons & Homelies.

5 That no Preacher of what title or denomination soever shall causeleslie & without invitation from the Text fall into bitter invectives & vndecent rayling speech against the persons of either Papists

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or Puritans; but modestlie & grauelie when they are occasioned therevnto by the texts of Scripture free both the Doctrine & Discipline of the Church of England from the aspersions of either Adversarie, especially where the Auditory is suspected to be tainted with the one or the other infection.

6 Lastlie that the Archbishops & Bishops of this kingdome (whom his Ma[jes]tie hath good cause to blame for this former remisse-nes) be more wary & choice in Licensing Preachers & revoke all Grau[n]ts made to any Chancellor Officiall or Commissary to passe Licenses in this kind / & that all the Lecturers throughout the kingdome (a newe bodie severed from the aunciente Clergie of England, as being neither Parsons Vicars nor Curates) be licensed hence-forward in the Courte of Faculties, only vpon recommendation of the partie from the Bishop of the Diocesse vnder his hand & seale with a Fiat from the Lo[rd] Archb[ishop] of Canterbury & a confirmation vnder the greate seale of Engl[and] / & that such as transgresse any one of these directions be suspended by the Lo[rd] Bishop of the Dioces, or in his defaulte by the Lo[rd] Archb[ishop] of the Province *ab officio et beneficio* for a yeere & a day, vntill his Maj[es]tie by the advise of the nexte Convocation shall prescribe some further punishment.

The same Lo[r]d Archbishop to our Bishop of Norw[ich] about the same.

Salutem in Christo. I doubt not but before this time you haue receiued from me the Directions of his most excellent Maj[es]tie concerning Preaching & Preachers which are so graciously set downe that no godlie or discreete man can otherwise then ac-knowledge that they doe much tende to Edification, if he doe not take them vp vpon reporte, but doe punctuallie consider the Tenor of the words as they lie, & doe not giue an evill construction to that which may receiue a fayre interpretation/ Notwithstanding because some fewe Church men & many of the people haue sinisterly conceiued (as we here finde) that those

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Institutions doe tende to the restraunte of the exercise of Preaching & doe in some sorte abate the nu[m]ber of Sermons, & so consequentlie by degrees doe make a breache to ignorance & superstition; his Maj[es]tie in his princely wisdomes hath thought fitte that I should adu[er]tise you, of the graue & weightie reasons which induced his highnes to prescribe that which is done.

You are therefore to knowe that his Maj[es]tie being much troubled & grieved at the hearte to heare every day of so many defections fro[m] our Religion to Popery & Anabaptisme, or other pointes of Separation in some parts of this kingdome, & considering with much admiratio[n] what might be the cause thereof (especially in the reigne of such a king who doth so constantly professe himselfe an open adversarie to the Superstition of the one & madnes of the other) his Princelie wisdomes could fall vpon no one greater probabilitie, then the lightnes, affectednes & vnprofitablines of that n kinde of Preaching which hath beene of late yeeres too much taken vp in Courte Uniu[er]sitie City & Country. The vsuall scope of very many Preachers is noted to be a soaring vp in points of Divinity too deepe for the Capacity of the people, or a mustering vp of much reading, or a displaying of their owne wittes, or an ignorant meddling with Civill matters, as well in the private of severall Parishes & Corporations as in the publike of the kingdome, or a venting of their owne distastes,

or a smoothing vp of those idle fancies which in this blessed time of so long a peace doe boile in the braines of vnadvised people; or lastlie a rude or vndecent rayling, not against the Doctrines (which when the text doth occasion the same is not only approved but much Commended by his Royall Maj[es]tie) but against the persons of Papists & Puritans. Nowe the people bredde vp with this kind of teaching & never instructed in the Cathechisme & fundamentall grounds of Religion are for all this aierie nourishment no better then *abras[a]e tabull[a]e* newe table bookes readie to be filled vp either with the manuels & Catechismes of the Popish priests or the ~~gap~~ papers & pa[m]phlets of Anabaptists Brownists & Puritans. His Maj[esty] therefore calling to minde the saying of Tertullian *Id uerum quod primum* & remembring with what Doctrine the Church of England in her first & most happie reformation did drive out the one & keepe out the other from poysoning & infecting the people of this kingdome, doth finde that the whole scope of this Doctrine is contained in the Articles of Religion, the two bookes of Homelies, the lesser & greater Cathechisme, which his Maj[esty] doth

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therefore recommende againe in these directions, as the Theames & proper subjects of all sounde & edifying preaching. And so farre are the said Directions from abating, that his Maj[esty] doth expecte at our hands that it should increase the number of Sermons by renewing in vpon every Sunday in the afternoone in all parish Churches throughout the Realme, that primitiue & most profitable exposition of the Cathechisme, wherewith the people yea the very children may be timely seasoned & instructed in all the heades of Christian Religion; the which kinde of teaching (to our amendment be it spoken) is more diligentlie observed in all the Reformed Churches of Europe, then of late it hath beene here in England. I finde his Maj[esty] much moved with this neglecte, & resolued, the if we that are his BB doe not see a reformation hereof (which I trust we shall) to eø recommend it to the care of the Civill magistrate: so farre is his Maj[esty] from giuing the least discouragment to solide preaching, or discreete or religious preachers. To all these I am to adde that it is his Maj[esty]s princelie pleasure [tha]t the former Directions & these reasons of the same be fairely written in every Registers office, to the ende that every preacher of what Denomination sœu[er] soever may (if he be so pleased) take out copies of eche of them, with his owne hand gratis, paying nothing in the name of Fee or expedition; but if he doth vse the paines of the Register or his Clerkes then to pay some moderate fee to be pronounced in open courte by every of you in your severall jurisdictions which you houlde vnder me. Lastlie that from hence forward a course may be taken that every parso[n] Vicar Curate or Lecturer doe make exhibite of these his Maj[esty]s directions & the reasons for the same, at your severall insuing visitations, paying to the Register by way of Fee but ijd. only at the time of the exhibite. And so wishing, (but withall in his Maj[est]ies name requiring) every of you to haue an especiall & extraordinary care of the premisses I leave you to the Almightye Sept. 4. 1622

yo[u]r very loving frend Geo. Cant[uar]

Other manuscript witnesses

- British Library, Additional MS 29492, ff. 17r–18r
- British Library, Additional MS 29975, ff. 53r–54v
- British Library, Additional MS 44848, ff. 197v–200r

- British Library, Hargrave MS 311, ff. 186r–v
- British Library, Harley MS 1877, ff. 63r–v
- British Library, Harley MS 354, ff. 65r–67r
- British Library, Harley MS 3791, ff. 68r–v
- British Library, Harley MS 4289, ff. 238r–v
- British Library, Sloane MS 1710, ff. 306x–307x
- British Library, Additional MS 12496, ff. 420r–421v
- British Library, Additional MS 29303, f. 3r
- British Library, Additional MS 34217, f. 39r
- British Library, Additional MS 35832, ff. 79r–80v
- British Library, Additional MS 6394, ff. 23r–24x
- British Library, Additional MS 72364, ff. 1r–v
- Bodleian Library, MS Carte 77, ff. 251r–254v
- Bodleian Library, MS Eng. hist. d. 144, ff. 69b–71v
- Bodleian Library, MS Jones 56, ff. 129r–130r
- Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 264, ff. 30r–31r
- Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 265, ff. 12r–13v
- Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 73, ff. 169r–173r
- Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 82, ff. 259r–261r, 264–267v
- Bodleian Library, MS Wood F.23, ff. 176r–177v
- Cornwall Record Office, EL MS 655/9, ff. 1r–6v
- Cambridge University Library, Additional MS 27, ff. 89r–90r
- Folger Shakespeare Library, MS G.b.9, ff. 172v–176r
- Lambeth Palace Library, MS 669, pp.199–200
- Lambeth Palace Library, MS 943, ff. 81–93
- Lambeth Palace Library, Reg. Abbot 2, ff. 199r–200r
- Queen's College, MS 121, ff. 31–33
- St John's College, MS K.56, item 9
- The National Archives, SP 14/132, /85 [ff.214r–215r]
- The National Archives, SP 14/132, /86 [ff.216r–v]
- The National Archives, SP 14/132, /93 [ff.229r–230v]
- The National Archives, SP 14/132, /94 [ff.231r–232r]
- The National Archives, SP 15/42, /88 [ff.137r–139v]
- The National Archives, SP 16/36, /88 [ff.137r–139v]
- UT Austin MS, BL Microfilm 751 Phillips MS 12341, p–304?
- Wellcome Library, MS 805, ff. 52r–59v