

**THE DUTY AND THE LIBERTY OF  
A CHRISTIAN CHURCH,  
ASSERTED AGAINST POPERY,  
PUSEYISM, AND ERASTIANISM**

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The duty and the liberty of a Christian Church, asserted against popery, Puseyism, and Erastianism by Andrew Gray

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**ANDREW GRAY**

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BY THE  
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PERTH.

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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THE following little treatise was, in substance, delivered before the Synod of Perth and Stirling; and it is now, in a form somewhat extended, published at their request. The author feels that it is a mere sketch; but still it may be useful, as furnishing some materials of thought on a great subject, which is daily rising more and more on the notice of Christendom. A brief view of the bearings of a momentous question may be of advantage to prepare the way for the deeper consideration of the arguments by which its merits are conclusively determined and settled.

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THE DUTY AND THE LIBERTY OF A  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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"My sheep hear my voice."—JOHN x. 27.  
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Two leading ideas offer themselves in these words. One is that of a relation subsisting between Christ and his people; the other is that of intercourse and communion which he and they have together.

However varied the language which is employed to express the relation which Christ's people bear to him, it is always such as to denote intimacy and closeness. They are his spouse, his members, his sheep. When it is said they are his sheep, the meaning is, not merely that they are the sheep of which he is the proprietor, but also that they are the sheep of which he is the watchful, the devoted, the self-sacrificing Shepherd.

Upon the relation between Christ and his people their mutual intercourse is founded. Because there is a relation, therefore there is an intercourse. Moreover, the nature of the former determines the nature of the latter. If the relation were distant and loose, the intercourse might be rare and circuitous; but as the relation is close and endearing, so the intercourse is constant and direct.

Even in Old Testament times, the intercourse was

immediate; and therefore we read of patriarchs who walked with God. It was immediate—without any go-between—in the days of Christ's flesh, when his disciples enjoyed his bodily presence. It is still immediate, now that Christ is in heaven. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," he says, "there am I in the midst of them." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." There is no mediator between Christ and believers. The correspondence which he and they have with each other, is not carried on by means of any third party; through his Word and Spirit, he and they are brought together, and maintain their mutual communications. To say all in a word, respecting the closeness of the intercourse of Christ with his people, there is *perfect union* between him and them. He and they are *one*. How intimate, then, must the fellowship be!

It is a direct intercourse that the text declares. "My sheep hear *my* voice"—not the voice of my apostles, of my ministers, but "*my* voice." The same thing is insisted on in the context, when the shepherd is described as calling his own sheep by name, and leading them out, and when it is said of the sheep, that "a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers;" and also when our Lord exclaims, "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." Paul, too, expresses it when he says, "Let the *word of Christ* dwell in you richly in all wisdom,"—"the word of Christ," not the word of any servant, however gifted or faithful, but the word of our Master and Lord himself.

The affirmation of the text, "My sheep hear my voice," is to be considered as applicable to Christians *individually*. Every believer has personal communion with Christ of the most intimate kind. In particular, he

hears, feels the power of, and cordially obeys the voice of Christ. It was that voice which first awoke him from the sleep of unconcern about his soul, and which went, with quickening efficacy, to his heart, as he lay dead in trespasses and sins. To it he now listens eagerly. The words it utters are his law. It gives him peace, comfort, confidence, direction.

And who will say that our text does not apply to Christians when taken *collectively*? If every sheep of Christ hears the Shepherd's voice, every *stock* into which the sheep are gathered, must hear it too. The family, the congregation, the Church, are pointed at, no less than individual believers, when our Lord declares, "My sheep hear my voice." Christ's people, in the various spiritual communities into which his providence and laws have organized them, have no leader, no chief but himself, no rule but the word of his mouth. Every meeting of his disciples, every council of his servants, every Church on which his Spirit rests, falls within the scope of our text; and it is both the duty and the privilege of them all to hear Christ's voice.

We thus come to the subject to which it is our design, at present, to call special attention. We think that, in regard to that intercourse between Christ and his people, which the text announces, the doctrine of a certain duty, and a certain privilege or liberty, as respects believers, is here distinctly taught. The duty is that of hearing Christ's voice; and the liberty or privilege is that of hearing Christ's voice. One and the same thing is both the duty and the liberty. It is a duty, for Christians are bound to do it. It is a liberty, for Christians love to do it, and it is a wrong and a sin to try to prevent them. We wish to speak, then, of this duty and liberty as concerns the Churches of Christ.