

1998.1633

Full transcript

CHURCH RATES

A Paper has lately been circulated in Horsham charging the dissenters[sic] who refuse to pay the 'Church Rates' with Dishonesty and Injustice for so doing; because they (the dissenters) in common with all others have received as is falsely stated an allowance or a consideration in the purchase or rent of their property for the purpose of paying the "Church Rates.

As such a serious charge is thus openly made it is necessary as openly to contradict and disapprove it.

Previously to the Reformation there were no Church Rates or Poor Rates. The Tithes alone were then the only "Tax, imposed to keep the Churches in repair, as well as to support the Clergy and the Poor. We shall not stop to inquire into the want of common honesty displayed by those who took and who still hold what was originally applied to repair the Churches and keep the Poor. Whereby they have thrown new and intolerable burdens on the people. We shall not, I say, inquire into this injustice – this shameful want of common honesty; but we shall make it appear that the assertion is false which says that Dissenters have received an allowance in either rent or purchase towards the Rates. This would be granting what neither the law nor any wise man will allow whether Churchman or Dissenter namely, - that the Clergy or the Church have absolutely a legal right to a part of all the real property in the kingdom; whereas the Church Rate, like the Tithe, is nothing more than a mere Tax imposed to support the Church; and which will more fully appear from the following considerations. Before the Reformation this Tax was not in existence; and of course no right or lien on property could possibly be vested in the Church for the purpose of raising this Tax: accordingly it was imposed by the Legislature. Now from that time to the present the greater part of our cities and towns have been erected or built and according as they rose, one house after another this Tax was imposed upon them. Now mark – Did the persons who built them ever get an 'ALLOWANCE' a 'CONSIDERATION' from any quarter for the purpose of paying the Rates? On the contrary after a person has laid out his money in building, this Tax is imposed on it to the injury of his property and then a claim is made for the amount of the value of the deterioration!!!

And yet in the paper which has been circulated we are politely told that the Dissenter ("who may have built his own house) is unjust and dishonest except he come forward and redeem the rate by paying a sum of money equal to the value of what is arrogantly and unjustly asserted the Church possesses in his property. This applies to every house in the Kingdom because when built they all came under this imposition. And it is only because this Tax has existed for some time it is now affirmed that the Church has a positive right in the property, and that the Dissenters are not honest or just except they pay a sum of money to redeem it.

The truth is, the Church Rate is nothing but a Tax and not redeemable at all and instead of being redeemed will no doubt shortly be removed by Parliament from the Dissenters who being a majority of the nation possess too much influence to be much longer oppressed by such injustice or to be taxed for a religion in which they do not believe and from which they receive no benefit whatever but on the contrary neglect and injury; for whilst the Dissenters are forced to pay their rates they in most instances have not the least accommodation even if they wished it, within the walls of the Parish Church which they are obliged to repair, while

some of the best pews are occupied by persons who neither reside in the parish nor contribute a farthing to the repairs of the Church.

Where then is all the dishonesty and injustice complained of? Is it on the side of the Dissenters or of the Church? And as it is a mere Tax, is it right – is it consistent with Christianity to make one man pay towards the support of another's religion? No one can say it is right but the interested the ignorant, or the prejudiced.

J. Clarke, Printer, Horsham