

ANSWER TO THE GRAND REMONSTRANCE

Charles I (1600–1649), King of England and Scotland (1625–1649)

23 December 1641

We having received from you, soon after Our return out of Scotland, a long petition consisting of many desires of great moment, together with a declaration of a very unusual nature annexed thereunto, We had taken some time to consider of it, as befitted Us in a matter of that consequence, being confident that your own reason and regard to Us, as well as Our express intimation by Our comptroller¹ to that purpose, would have restrained you from the publishing of it till such time as you should have received Our answer to it. But, much against Our expectation, finding the contrary, that the said declaration is already abroad in print by directions from your House, as appears by the printed copy, We must let you know that We are very sensible of the disrespect. Notwithstanding, it is Our intention that no failing on your part shall make Us fail in Ours of giving all due satisfaction to the desires of Our people in a parliamentary way; and therefore We send you this answer to your petition, reserving Ourselves in point of the declaration which We think unparliamentary, and shall take a course to do that which We shall think fit in prudence and honour.

To the petition, We say that although there are divers things in the preamble of it which We are so far from admitting that We profess We cannot at all understand them, as of “a wicked and malignant party prevalent in the government”; of “some of that party admitted to our Privy Council and to other employments of trust, and nearest to us and our children”; of “endeavours to sow among the people false scandals and imputations to blemish and disgrace the proceedings of the Parliament”; all, or any of them, did We know of, We should be as ready to remedy and punish as you to complain of, so that the prayers of your petition are grounded upon such premises as We must in no wise admit. Yet, notwithstanding, We are pleased to give this answer to you.

To the first, concerning religion, consisting of several branches, We say that, for preserving the peace and safety of this Kingdom from the design of the Popish party, We have, and will still, concur with all the just desires of Our people in a parliamentary way. That, for the depriving of the bishops of their votes in Parliament, We would have you consider that their right is grounded upon the fundamental law of the Kingdom and constitution of Parliament. This We would have you consider. But since you desire Our concurrence herein in a parliamentary way, We will give no further answer at this time.

As for the abridging of the inordinate power of the clergy, We conceive that the taking away of the High Commission Court has well moderated that; but if there continue any usurpations or excesses in their jurisdictions, We therein neither have nor will protect them.

Unto that clause which concerns corruptions (as you style them) in religion, in Church government, and in discipline, and the removing of such unnecessary ceremonies as weak consciences might check at. That for any illegal innovations which may have crept in, We shall willingly concur in the removal of them. That, if Our Parliament shall advise Us to call a national synod, which may duly examine such ceremonies as give just course of offence to any, We shall take it into consideration and apply Ourselves to give due satisfaction therein. But we are very sorry to hear, in such general terms, corruption in religion objected, since We are persuaded in Our consciences that no Church can be found upon the earth that professes the true religion with more purity of doctrine than the Church of England does, nor where the government and discipline are jointly more beautified and free from superstition. Then as they are here established by law, which, by the grace of God, We will with constancy maintain (while We live) in their purity and glory, not only against all invasions of Popery, but also from the irreverence of those many schismatics and separatists, wherewith of late this Kingdom and this city

¹ Sir Thomas Jermyn (1573–1645), Member of Parliament for Andover (1604–1611) and Bury Saint Edmunds (1614–1629, 1640), Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk (1640–1642), and Comptroller of the Royal Household (1640–1641)

abounds, to the great dishonour and hazard both of Church and state, for the suppression of whom We require your timely aid and active assistance.

To the second prayer of the petition, concerning the removal and choice of councillors, We know not any of our Council to whom the character set forth in the petition can belong. That by those whom We had exposed to trial, We have already given you sufficient testimony that there is no man so near unto Us in place or affection whom We will not leave to the justice of the law, if you shall bring a particular charge and sufficient proofs against him. And of this We do again assure you, but in the meantime We wish you to forbear such general aspersions as may reflect upon all Our Council, since you name none in particular.

That for the choice of Our councillors and ministers of state, it were to debar Us that natural liberty all freemen have; and as it is the undoubted right of the Crown of England to call such persons to Our secret counsels, to public employment, and to Our particular service as we shall think fit, so We are and ever shall be very careful to make election of such persons in those places of trust as shall have given good testimonies of their abilities and integrity, and against whom there can be no just cause of exception whereon reasonably to ground a diffidence. And to choices of this nature, We assure you that the mediation of the nearest unto Us have always concurred.

To the third prayer of your petition, concerning Ireland, We understand your desire of not alienating the forfeited lands thereof to proceed from much care and love, and likewise that it may be a resolution very fit for Us to take. But whether it be seasonable to declare resolutions of that nature before the events of a war be seen, that We much doubt of. Howsoever, We cannot but thank you for this care, and your cheerful engagement for the suppression of that rebellion; upon the speedy effecting whereof, the glory of God in the Protestant profession, the safety of the British there, Our honour, and that of the nation so much depends. All the interests of this Kingdom being so involved in that business, We cannot but quicken your affections therein, and shall desire you to frame your counsels to give such expedition to the work as the nature thereof and the pressures in point of time require; and whereof you are put in mind by the daily insolence and increase of those rebels.

For conclusion, your promise to apply yourselves to such courses as may support Our royal estate with honour and plenty at home, and with power and reputation abroad, is that which we have ever promised Ourselves, both from your loyalties and affections, and also for what We have already done, and shall daily go adding unto, for the comfort and happiness of Our people.