

No. 8.  
 Lieutenant  
 Governor Simcoe  
 to  
 the Duke of  
 Portland,  
 20th June 1796.  
 Enclosure No. 1.

That whatever Insinuations may be thrown out to the Prejudice of Presbyterian Church Polity as hostile to Monarchy, your Petitioners are not afraid but the History of the British Monarchy will prove this Doctrine to be a popular Error, propagated by their Enemies, and imbibed by many enlightened Members of the Church of England, without any other Proof than the strong Assertions of Men who are visibly interested in subjecting Thousands of their fellow Christians and fellow Subjects to Civil Disabilities, and therefore inculcate an essential and natural Union between their Church and the State, although these Things be as distinct and unconnected in their own Nature as Bravery and Scarlet, or Piety and Black.

That in mentioning these Things it is by no means the Intention of your Petitioners to enter into an Argument with their Rulers on the Subject, or in any respect to dictate to them; but that, conscious of their own Integrity, and taking it for granted their Rulers will be guided by Principles of Justice, they presume to state Truths, proper, in their Opinion, for the Legislature of a free and equitable Government to investigate, before a very great Majority of His Majesty's faithful Subjects in this Province be deprived of a Privilege which they humbly conceive to be as much their religious and political Right as the Propagation of their Species is a natural one, and which no Part of their Conduct has ever forfeited. Nay, if Church Polity be admitted as a Criterion of political Desert, your Petitioners will aver in the Face of the World that no Description of British Subjects have deserved more honourable Distinction from the Protestant Succession in the illustrious House of Hanover than Presbyterians; and but for their zealous and steady Co-operation with the moderate Part of the Church of England the Revolution of 1688 had been defeated, and the British Constitution riveted into Tyranny, by High Churchmen, who have ever since pursued them with political Vengeance, upon Pretences that will bear neither Light nor Examination.

But your Petitioners, sensible that all Civil Distinctions on account of Religion tend only to political Disunion and unchristian Wrath, wish for no exclusive Privileges, though, if such Privileges were at all eligible, they have by Desert an equal Claim to them with any others, and decidedly a prior one by Numbers. The great Object of their Hearts is to concur with their fellow Subjects of every Denomination in advancing the public Prosperity, and, forgetful of all the Evils which Men of their Communion have endured with most exemplary Patience for these Hundred Years and upwards, to live in Peace and Love with their Fellow Christians of all Persuasions, and to transmit their loyal Character without Contamination to Posterity.

That after such a Declaration, supported by recent and undisputed Testimony, your Petitioners hope their Rulers will not consider the Privileges of other good Subjects being extended to them in the Light of a presumptuous or unreasonable Request; and that, as long as they themselves entrust their Clergy with the more solemn and awful Duty of admitting them into public Covenant with God, the Legislature will allow them to regard the same Men as fully competent to give public Validity to the Marriage Vow.

When every Remnant of religious Intolerance is growing odious in the Eyes of every enlightened Government, when the Sister Colony of Lower Canada has admitted all Descriptions to a Participation of the same Rights, and the Government of Upper Canada is knocking off with all their Strength the Shackles from the unhappy African, your Petitioners might reasonably hope to share in this general Philanthropy, if their public Character were even doubtful; but, untainted as it is, they flatter themselves that the Honourable Legislature will repeal such Parts of the Marriage Act as tend to make them Aliens in their own Country, and have therefore given just Cause of Uneasiness to every Member of their Communion.

And your Petitioners, as in Duty bound, shall ever pray, &c.

County of Grenville,  
 this 27th Day of March 1796.

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