

Petition for His Brother's Freedom (1622)

Francis Phellips

Transcript

Norfolk Record Office, MC 1/123, 386X5, ff. [1r]–[2r]

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To the Kinges most excellent Ma[jes]tie

Most dread soveraigne

If the thrones of heaven and earth were to be solicited one and the same ways, I shoul{d} haue learned by my often prayeng to God for yo[u]r Ma[jes]tie how to praye to yo[u]r Ma[jes]tie for others: Butthe liturgies of the churche and Court ar diferent, as in manye other poyntes so in this especiallye, that in the one there ys not so poor e a siner, but maye offer his vowes immediatlye to the Almightye, wheras in the other a right loyall subiect maye poure out his soule in vaye without *ora pro nobis*: Now suche is the obscure condition of yo[u]r humble supp[lian]t, as I knowe no saint about the sacred person, to whome ^{I can} addresse my orisons, or on whose mediations I dare repose the least assurance Let it therefore be lawfull for me in this extraordinarye occasion, to passe the ordinarye formes, and raisinge my spiritt aboute vnertainties, fixt my entire faith vpon yo[u]r ma[jes]ties suprea^me goodnesse, which is and ever ought to be esteemed the best Tribunal and best sanctuary for a good subiect: But how good soever my cause be, it would be high presumption in me to stand vpon it, I haue therefore rather chosen to cast my selfe at yo[u]r Ma[jes]ties feete, from whence I would not willinglie rise, but there remaine a monument of sorrowe and humilitey, till I had obtayned some gracious answeere to my petic[i]on: For though yo[u]r Ma[jes]ties thoughtes cannot descend so lowe, as to conceyve how much it importes a distressed subiect to be releived or neglected, yet yow maye be pleased to beleeve, that we ar as highlye affected, and as much anguished, with the extreamities that presse o[u]r little fortunes, as Princes or with theirres: I speake not not of anye pride I take in comparing small thinges with great, but onelye to dispose yo[u]r ma[es]tie: to a favorable construction of my wordes, if they seeme overcharged with zeale and affection, or to expresse more earnestnesse then perhappes yo[u]r ma[jes]tie maye thinke the businesse merittes: For as my selfe valewes yt, the sute I am to make to yo[u]r Ma[jes]tie, is no sleight one, but maye safelye be graunted without the trouble of Referees, for as I dare assure your Ma[jes]tie, vpon my life, it is neither against the the lawes of yo[u]r kingdome nor, will diminishe anye of yo[u]r royall treasure, either that of yo[u]r coffers or that of yo[u]r peoples hartes, it being an Act of clemencye, or rather a word, for even that will serve to create in yo[u]r poore distressed suppl[ican]t and a hew hart, and send him awaye as full of contentude as he is now of greife and despaire: Nor is it for my selfe that I thus importune yo[u]r Ma[jes]ties grace, but for one that is farre more worthy, and in whome all that I am consistes, my deare and onely brother, who (by I know not what misfortune) hath fallen or rather bene pusht, into yo[u]r high displeasure, not in darke and crooked wayes (such as corrupt and ill affected subiectes vse to reade) which both him selfe and all good Englishmen (that know not the privye patche of the court) would haue sworne had led most safelye and most directlye to yo[u]r ma[jes]ties service: From yo[u]r ma[jes]ties displeasure (then which there needes noe other invenc[i]on to crucifie a generous and honest mynded subiect) hath yssued and bene derived vppon him, a whole torment of exemplarie

punishment, wherin his reputation, his person, and estate haue greivouslye suffered: For having vpon the last recesse of parliament retired him selfe to his poore home in the Cuntrye, with hope to haue breathed a while after the troublesome affaires, and still breathing nothing but yo[u]r ma[jes]ties service, ^{he} was sent for ere he had finished his Christ-masse by a Sergeant at Armes, who arrested him in his owne house with as much terror as belongs to the apprehension of Treason it selfe: but thanks be to God his concience never started, and for his obedience, he well shewed it was not in the power of any authoritye to surpris it, For at the instant without asking so muche as a mynutes tyme of resolution, he rendred himselfe to the offices discretion, who according to his direction brought him vp a captive, and presented him to the councell table as a dilinquent, From whence he was assoone comitted to the tower, where he hath ever since bene kept close prisoner, and that with so straight a hand, as his deere beloved wife and my selfe, having sometyme since an vrgeant and vnfayned occasion to speake with him, about some private businesse of his famylie, and thervpon makin{g} humble sute vnto the Lordes of yo[u]r ma[jes]ties most ho[noura]lbe privye councell for the favor of accesse, we were to our great discomfortes denied, by reaso as their Lo[rds]hips were then pleased to declare vnto vs, that he had not then fullye satisfied, yo[u]r ma[jes]tie in some pointes, which is so farre from being his fault, that I dare saye it is the greatest part of his affliction that he

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sees himselfe debarred from the meanes of doing it: The Lo[rd] Comissioners that were appointed by yo[u]r ma[es]tie to examyne his offence, since the first weeke of his imprisonment haue not done him the honor to be with him, by which meanes not onely his bodye ~~th~~ but the best part of his mind namelye his humble invenc[i]ons are kept in restraint./ May it therefore please yo[u]r most excellent ma[jes]tie now at the ~~er~~ lengthe after 3 moenthes extreame durance, to ordayne some such course of expedition in this cause, as may stand with yo[u]r iustice and yet not avert yo[u]r mercye, either of them will serve, o[u]r turnes but that which is most agreable to yo[u]r ma[jes]ties royall and gracious inclination will best accomlishe o[u]r desires: To live still in close prison is all one as to be buried alive, and for a man that hath anye hope of salvation it were better to pray for the daye of iudgment then to lye languishing in such waking miserye: yet not ours but yo[u]r ma[jes]ties will be done, for if in yo[u]r princelye wisdom yow shall not thinke it so soone to restore him to his fomer Condic[i]on, or to accept the frutes of his correction (A humble and penitent submission for his ^{vn}happinesse in offending yo[o]r ma[jes]tie) which I assure my selfe is long since ripe and growne to full proporc[i]on, in so forward an affection and so propper for all manner of loyall duties as he hath ever bene, If I saye it be not yett tyme to shew mercye, but that he must still remayne within the walles of bondage, to expiate what he did within these of priviledge, my hope is that he who will dye at any time for yo[u]r ma[jes]ties service, will find patience to live any where for yo[u]r ma[ies]ties pleasure, onelye let me beseech yo[u]r ma[jes]tie againe and againe, not to denye you[r] most humble and obedient subiecte that mitigation of rigor of his suffering, so farre as to graunt him the libertye of the tower, and that he may longer groane vnder the burthen of the Incomodityes, which daylie preiudice his health and fortunes in a higher degree I beleeeve then yor ma[jes]tie either knowes or intendes./

I am the more bold to importune yo[u]r ma[jes]tie in this point of favor bycause it concernes my owne good & preservacon, for yo[u]r ma[jes]tie shall daigne to vnderstand, that I haue noe meanes to live yo[u]r subiect, but what procedes from his brotherlye loue and bountye, so as if I maye not be suffered to goe vnto him, and receyve order for my mayntenance, I know none but o[u]r father which art in heaven, of whome I can begg my dailye bread; he that was my father vpon earthe is long since departed and if I haue not bene misinformed who was then beyond seas, yo[u]r ma[jes]ties anger was to him little better than the messenger of death, Though I perswade my selfe it was rather sent in yo[u]r ma[jes]ties name, then on yo[u]r warrant, for what vse could yo[ur] ma[jes]tie haue of his being no more, who never was nor never could be but your faithfull and affectionate servant, who in his hart adored yo[u]r royall person as much as ever mortall man did immortall God. And Lastlye whose hart was ^{so} bent to please yo[u]r Matie, that the very sound of yo[u]r displeasure was enough to breake yt, more perfect obedience then this ~~cannot~~^{can no} Subiect shew, to make his Soveraignes favor and disfavor equall to life ad deathe: Pardon me dread Soveraigne yf in this action I cannot hynder my fathers ghost from appearinge, for how can it possiblye be at rest, as long as yo[u]r fatall displeasure raignes in his poore familye, and makes it the house of contynuall mornynge, Remove then yf it be yo[u]r blessed will the cloudes that haue so long honged over o[u]r heades, and let not the present storme that wantes matter to produce, extorte a thunderbolt, For what is Phillippes or the sonne of Phillippes that yo[u]r ma[jes]tie should destroye them, wee are vnworthy of Caesars anger aswell in regard of o[u]r meanes as innocence./

To concludue my prayers I most humblye beseech yo[u]r ma[jes]tie to forgiue them, and let not my ignorance of the stile and Ceremonyes vsed in Court be imputed to yo[u]r

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humble and well meanyng Suppl[ian]t as a wilfull wante of reverence, for there lives not in yo[u]r domynions a subiect, in whose brest the two loyall qualities of loue and feare, doe more religiouslye meete, or who would more willinglye part with his owne essence, to adde the least acquisition to the greatnesse and ma[jes]tie of his soveraigne; Trew it is that the subiect that employed the facultyes of my woule at this present, was of such a Nature, as I could not deny it the vtmost of my affection, And he who thinkes he can never speake enough, maye easilie speake too much, my comfort is that neither my brother nor my selfe can be said to haue ^{fayled or} exceeded in any thing but wordes, but what will that avayle vs vnlesse yo[u]r ma[jes]tie will pardon, withot that all crymes ar equall, and as much daunger lyes in an humble petic[i]on as in a plott of high treason: Be pleased then most gracious Soveraigne to give vs back o[u]r questionable wordes, and keepe o[u]r vndouted hartes, at least shew vs so much mercye as to Judge vs accordinge to yo[u]r owne goodnesse, for if we had not libertye to approche hither, we should be in daunger of loosing the happiest parte of o[u]r birthright, and instead of being yo[u]r ma[jes]ties subiects, become other mens slaves. From yo[u]r ma[jes]tie therefore yo[u]r faithfull subiect craves and expectes, the ioyfull word of grace, which if I maye be so happye as to carrye my poore brother, before he growes any elder in miserye, I shall fill many an honest hart with praise and thankesgiving, and for my particular, yo[u]r ma[jes]ties greatest favors and liberalitye shall not more oblige and bolt or affect others, then this yo[u]r royall clemency shall me. In memorye wherof I shall daylie

pray that yo[u]r ma[jes]tie may obtayne all yo[u]r desires in heaven, and be obeyed in all yo[u]r commandes vpon earth, that yow maye live to see yo[u]r holie intenc[i]ons take effect for the good of Christendome, and so honor the age we live in with the merittes of yo[u]r wisdome, fyally that yo[u]r felicitye in this world may overtake that in the next, and make yow weare a perpetuall Crowne to gods glorye and yo[u]r owne.

Yo[u]r Ma[es]ties most humble loyall and Englishe subiect

Francis Phillippes

Other manuscript witnesses

- British Library, Additional MS 40838, ff. 54r–56v
- British Library, Additional MS 4108, ff. 48r–50v
- British Library, Additional MS 44848, ff. 93r–95v
- British Library, Additional MS 69394, ff. 89v–93v
- British Library, Hargrave MS 226, ff. 283r–290r
- British Library, Harley MS 3638, ff. 93r–98r
- British Library, Harley MS 444, ff. 180r–184v
- British Library, Harley MS 4888, ff. 257x–258x
- British Library, Harley MS 6865, ff. 272r–275x
- British Library, Lansdowne MS 1232, ff. 11r–14v
- British Library, Additional MS 12511, ff. 49r–51v
- British Library, Additional MS 25707, ff. 139r–141r
- British Library, Additional MS 34217, ff. 32r–v
- British Library, Additional MS 72421, ff. 46r–49v
- British Library, Harley MS 1221, ff. 106r–108r
- British Library, Harley MS 2232, ff. 69r–72v
- British Library, Stowe MS 180, ff. 49x–50x
- Beinecke Library, Osborn b32, pp106–113
- Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 749, item 5, 1–6
- Bodleian Library, MS Eng. hist. e. 28, ff. 54–62
- Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson B 151, ff. 47v–48r
- Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 264, ff. 28r–29v
- Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 82, ff. 135v–139v
- Cambridge University Library, MS Ee.5.23, pp478–480
- Cambridge University Library, MS Mm.6.33, ff. 129r–133r
- Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.b.277, ff. 226r–229r
- Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.b.303, pp239–241
- Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.b.303, pp329–333
- Huntington Library, HM 36836, ff. 30–43
- Inner Temple Library, Petyt MS 538/18, f. 186x
- London Society of Antiquaries, MS 291, ff. 18r–22r
- Nottingham University Library, Cl LP 21, ff3
- St John's College, MS K.56, item 52
- St John's College, MS K.56, item 53
- The National Archives, SP 14/129, /21 [ff.28r–29r]
- University College, MS 152 [on deposit at the Bodleian], ff. 204–209
- Woburn Abbey, MS 19, pp235–237

