

Oiii2 The wisest King did wonder when hee spy'd

Notes. This poem, by Richard Corbett, was widely circulated, most often paired with the answer-poem, “The warrlike King was troubled when hee spy’d”. Both poems have been printed and annotated elsewhere—by Bennett and Trevor-Roper in *Corbett, Poems*, and by V.L. and M.L. Pearl (“Richard Corbett’s”). McRae (*Literature 175-78*) explores the religio-political and literary significance of this satiric exchange, which, despite the title’s allusion to parliament’s June 1628 attacks on Buckingham, focuses chiefly on religious and ecclesiastical controversies.

“Verses supposed to bee made by Dr. Corbet Bishop of Oxford against the opposing the Duke in Parliament 1628”

The wisest King did wonder when hee spy'd
The Nobles march on Foot, their Vassalls ride.¹
His Majestie may wonder more to see
Some that will needs bee Kings aswell as hee:
A sadd presage of daunger to this land, 5
When lower strive to gett the upper hand;
When Prince and Peares to Peysants must obey,
When lay-men must their Teachers teach the way²
When Prym and Prinn and Jourdan³ must define
What Lords⁴ are hetrodox, and what divine, 10
Good brother Brough, Elder of Amsterdam
Shutt up at home your wilde Arminian Ramm,⁵
If heere hee comes, these men will cutt his throat,
Blest Buchanan⁶ sings them a sweeter note,
Hee teacheth how to curbe the power of Kings, 15
And shewes us how to clipp the Eagles Winges,
It is a Paritie⁷ must sett all right,
Then shall the Gospell shine like Phœbus⁸ bright,
Our Consistorian Fabrick⁹ is the thing
Wee must reare up in spight of Church and King,

Against the Papists wee have gott the day,
Blinde Bishops¹⁰ onely now stande in our way,
But wee will have a trick to tame their pride,
Tonnage and Poundage¹¹ ells shall bee deny'de.

Source. BL MS Sloane 826, fol. 153r-v

Other known sources. Corbett, *Poems* 82; Corbett, “Richard Corbett’s” 32; Rous 42; Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 116; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 8v; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 62, fol. 42v; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 84, fol. 72r; BL Add. MS 22118, fol. 36v; BL Add. MS 22959, fol. 35v; BL Add. MS 29996, fol. 70v; BL Add. MS 35331, fol. 28r; BL Add. MS 61683, fol. 68r; BL MS Egerton 2541, fol. 118r; BL MS Harley 6383, fol. 29r; BL MS Lans. 491, fol. 184v; BL MS Sloane 1479, fol. 47r; CUL MS Dd.11.73, fol. 102v; St. John’s MS K.56, no. 30

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¹ *The wisest king...Vassalls ride*: alluding to Ecclesiastes 10.7 in which the author— usually identified as Solomon—notes, “I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth”.

² *When lay-men...teach the way*: Walter Yonge (BL Add MS 35331) believed this line referred to a controversial Puritan tract, *Maschil Unmasked*, by a London draper, Thomas Spencer. Both Pearl and Pearl and Bennett and Trevor-Roper argue, however, that the line refers to the House of Commons’ committee on religion.

³ *Prym and Prinn and Jourdan*: John Pym, William Prynne and Ignatius Jordan. John Pym was a leading anti-Arminian MP; Ignatius Jordan a notoriously Puritan MP; and William Prynne a Puritan polemicist and pamphleteer.

⁴ *Lords*: in this context probably bishops.

⁵ *Good brother Brough...wilde Arminian Ramm*: perhaps an allusion to William Brough, Rector of St. Michael in London, who was later accused of teaching “the errors of Arminianism, of universal grace and free-will in man fallen, and the apostacy of the saints” (qtd. in Tyacke 196). Arminianism had begun in the United Provinces (hence the reference to Amsterdam). The rise of Arminianism in England was a source of great concern in the parliamentary sessions of 1628 and 1629. Pearl and Pearl argue that “Ramm” is an allusion to the French logician Petrus Ramus.

⁶ *Blest Buchanan*: George Buchanan, sixteenth-century Scots Calvinist who defended the right of resistance to an ungodly monarch.

⁷ *Paritie*: equality of rank in the Church—i.e. a Presbyterian rather than an episcopal system of Church government. Anti-Puritan discourse routinely assumed that Puritan demands for parity in the Church implied a Puritan desire for social and political parity in the commonwealth.

⁸ *Phœbus*: the sun.

⁹ *Our Consistorian Fabrick*: a Presbyterian system of Church government.

¹⁰ *Blinde Bishops*: Walter Yonge identifies three such “Blinde Bishops” in a marginal note: William Laud, Bishop of London, Richard Neile, Bishop of Winchester, and Samuel Harsnett, Bishop of Norwich (BL Add. MS 35331). All three were noted anti-Puritans and suspected Arminians.

¹¹ *Tonnage and Poundage*: a customs levy usually granted by parliament to a king for life at the beginning of his reign. Parliament had failed to make this grant in 1625, but Charles I had continued to collect the tax anyway, prompting parliamentary protests in 1626, 1628 and 1629.
