

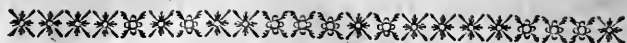
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13  
*The Claims of the Church of England  
seriously examined:*

IN A  
L E T T E R  
TO THE  
AUTHOR OF AN ANSWER  
TO  
Dr *MATHEW*'s OBSERVATIONS  
ON THE  
CHARTER, and CONDUCT  
OF THE  
SOCIETY for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

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By a PROTESTANT DISSENTER of *Old England*.

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*Caleb Fleming*



L O N D O N :

Printed for W. NICHOLL in *St Paul's Church-yard*. 1764.

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The CLAIMS of the  
C H U R C H  
O F  
E N G L A N D,  
SERIOUSLY EXAMINED, &c.

S I R,

Y OUR answer to Dr *Mayhew's Observations* discovers you to have a very able pen; and would incline the reader to conclude you a person of no common influence or intelligence.

Whatever you may be, is a consideration that has nothing at all to do with the justness or conclusiveness of the argument: yet, since you are pleased to be *anonymous*, your readers have thereby the more unbiaſſed attention.

As a *Protestant Dissenter*, though an inhabitant of *Old England*, I think myself deeply interested in the subject-matter of your *Answer*; and shall, accordingly, take the liberty of this epistolary address. It appears, to me, that your principal design is to support the *English ecclesiastical system*, as the most perfect standard of a religious christian profession. If you are right, I am egregiously wrong. You will therefore allow it to be in character for me, to investigate the merits of your plea, and to examine into those claims of reverence which you will have to be due to a civil church-establishment. You affect to use the stile of, *our church*; and to lay an emphasis on *the church of England*. But when the terms are once fairly understood, what do they, what can they mean more “than  
“ the *peculiarities* of a public profession, to  
“ which the civil power has annexed certain  
“ secular motives, or temporal privileges and  
“ emoluments?”—And as to the *forms* of profession, whence were they taken? and who did determine their expediency?—were they derived from the *New Testament* writings? or did apostolical, or divinely inspired men determine the expediency and usefulness of those forms? or, by what authority are those forms rendered more sacred than other different forms of worship, in which Societies are agreed, as, in their opinion, more conformable to the Gospel standard? If *numbers* be an argument of their  
superior



superior importance, will not *Popery* have much the advantage of the *English* church-establishment? and if the countenance of civil power, and the advantage of temporal motives; then, perhaps, the papal system will again as clearly claim the preference.

But you say, *Our church has ever been highly honoured by foreign protestants. The Lutherans prefer it to the Calvinist communion, the Calvinist to the Lutheran, the Greeks to both; which may sufficiently justify the expression, understood in a latitude not uncommon, that all other persuasions esteem it next to their own.* Admit this to be the case, the superiority or greater perfection of your church is not acknowledged by either the *Lutheran*, the *Calvinist*, or the *Greek* church; since they each do professedly give a preference to their own. However, it ushers in and supports a heavy universal charge: *And further, most, if not all of them, blame the English-dissenters for separating from it.* Here you point your weapon, and would cut deep into the heart of the *culprit*. But, *Sir*, are not these foreign protestants very impertinent, to pretend to sit in judgment upon us who dissent from your church? would they not severely censure us, should we blame them for dissenting from the *Romish* Church? or, for not conforming themselves to your Church system, in their credenda and ritual. Or, why do they presume to think differently from one another?—They, *Sir*, are  
not

## 6      *The Claims of the Church of England*

not to be supposed capable or competent judges of our protestant-dissent. And they manifestly lie under strong prejudices, from the public aid which has been given to foreign protestants by the *English* Government ; which has occasioned such a raised idea of the *English* church-establishment. For though the protestant dissenters do contribute their share to the civil power, in all its exertions, they have not the least consideration given them, on account of such favourable acts of national succour. But I add, did foreign protestants understand the true principles of protestantism, they would never have once thought of blaming us dissenters, for our not submitting, in religious character, to a public conscience. — The argument, you see, Sir, fairly turns its edge another way than what you designed, when you introduced “ most, if not all of the foreign protestants, “ *blaming* our separation from your established “ church ;” They might easily have concluded, we could have no temporal inducement, nor any civil convenience, as the reason of our separation.

You go on saying, — *That Dr Mayhew seems to entertain the worse opinion of it, because the members of the Church of Rome likewise esteem it more than they do others. But we have to reply, that they hate it more also, as the most dangerous enemy to their cause, and strongest bulwark of the reformation.* — This indeed, I must take the liberty  
of

of saying, presumes to confront a thousand observations, and ten thousand testimonies.— Surely, *Sir*, it is no better than mere declamation; it has not any thing in the truth of facts to support upon. One might appeal to the papists themselves, if they had virtue enough to own *in what way* they make the numerous perversions of *English* protestants to the popish superstition. Among the ten thousands practised upon, I myself have been witness to the argument made use of by the seducing priest. He pleads the *Credenda* of the established *English* Church, in order to reconcile to the absurdity of transubstantiation; and will have it, that the one is every whit as contradictory to our reason and senses, as the other: nor does he think it at all difficult for any to admit the creed of Pope *Pius*, who can swallow the *Athanasian* and *Nicene* creeds; or devoutly use the *Litany* in the public service. And in the article of *Church authority*, he apprehends the advantage lies with him; since his visible judge of controversies openly claims infallibility, in absolving and condemning.—Whereas the Church of *England* only speaks of these powers with some ambiguity of expression.—And as to the *Church hierarchy*, he pleads the greater propriety in his sovereign pontiff's being head of the church, than in a church's having a civil head. This he rallies with spirit; and especially, when a *woman* is declared to be head of the church. At the same time, he is capable of improving  
this

this constitution of the *English* church to the purpose of reconciling his convert to the idea of giving supreme honours to the Virgin Mother.

You, Sir, have mentioned an hierarchy, of which, verily, I had no conception till I found it in your *Answer*; where you thus express yourself: — *That there are different ranks of men in civil government, was never held to be an objection against it: and where is the harm of it in ecclesiastical? In the Presbyterian hierarchy, one is raised considerably above another, though the preference usually may be temporary: and their acts of power have been as enormous as those of the English Bishops formerly, and are much greater than those of the English Bishops now.* — So very ignorant am I, as to confess, that this *Presbyterian hierarchy* never before reached either my eyes or my ears. — The confusions of the *interregnum* may not surely be called, a *Presbyterian hierarchy* — and what enormous acts of power Presbyterians since have been or can be guilty of, equal to those of *English* Bishops more ancient or modern, I am not able to say any thing concerning them, except by it should be meant, the *Scotch civil church establishment*. — This however I assuredly know, that those people, called *Presbyterians* in *England*, have nothing like any acknowledged hierarchy. The people choose their own ministers; and the ministers with their people choose who shall ordain, or separate them,

them, by prayer and exhortation, to the office of *pastors* and *teachers*; i. e. in the modern sense with us of those terms. — On all occasions, that I have known, they disclaim any power or dominion over the faith of one another. And notwithstanding they have had a custom of making a profession of their faith, they do not engage to hold the opinions they have, any longer than they can see their evidence. If I am not greatly mistaken, this is the true stating of what is called, *Presbyterianism* in *England*. What the meaning can be “ of one being raised considerably above another, in the presbyterian “ hierarchy,” I understand not.

*That there are different ranks of men in civil government, (you say) was never held to be an objection to it: and where is the harm of it in Ecclesiastical? — Indulge me in answering, possibly none at all: i. e. if by Ecclesiastical, you do not mean any thing relative to the Kingdom of Christ, or to his church. — But if you do, either there is an apparent and notorious harm, i. e. a very manifest repugnancy to his express prohibition; else, to me, the Gospel teachings are not intelligible. Need I give you information? I am firmly persuaded you must know what Jesus Christ has said, Matt. v. 3.—xviii. 1, 2, 3. —xx. 25, 26, 27.—xxiii. 8—12. Luke xii. 14. John xvii. 16.—xviii. 36.*

If these teachings of Jesus are intelligible, there is *harm* in supposing an hierarchy in his church, for, it is impossible there should be one; *i.e.* if he has given a fair and just account of its nature, spirit, and constitution. But if, by an ecclesiastical hierarchy, you would be understood to mean, something of a *civil* complexion, far am I from being inclined to debate with you, either the *wrong* or the *right* of such an institution. At the same time, if I understand the Gospel canon, all, and every thing that looks like an *hierarchy* is excluded the church of Christ. Whether therefore, there be found any such resemblance of civil government, in a difference of rank, and claims of title and power, either in the church of *England*, or in that of *Scotland*, or of any other protestant church, so far all such churches must be said to differ from the church of Christ. You likewise speak much of *church-authority*, and say, *All church-authority was formerly too heavy; but surely the Episcopal now is as moderate as any: and it is proposed to be reduced yet lower in America; and dissenters will be no way subject to it.*—Perhaps, Sir, one may safely allow that you have evidence with you, in what you here say of church-authority. And more than this, upon the supposition of your having influence in the scheme of appointing an *American* Bishop, we protestant-dissenters cannot but be pleased with that  
farther

farther *reform* intended in those episcopal appointments. May we not hope for a reduction of episcopal power nearer home? — I am led farther to take notice of something less agreeable, which relates to your ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Having mentioned Dr *Mayhew's* favourite comparison of your church to the *Romish*; you declare, *the Doctor quite mistakes the matter.* — For verily, *not one, but two prelates, preside over the church of England; and four over her sister church of Ireland: which grievously spoils the similitude. And all these preside in subordination to the King.* The *Romish* priest takes great advantage from the *similitude* which your Hierarchy has to his own. But about this, Dr *Mayhew* thinks the Church of *England* has too little concern; since she seems to be more solicitous about *episcopizing* the *American* colonies, than she is in guarding against the depredations of Popery at home. — To invalidate such observations, you, *Sir*, are pleased to boast of the lenity and tolerant spirit of the *English* Church. Which you do in terms that must shock the minds of all protestants, who are persuaded of the horrid system and spirit of popery; and cannot but greatly alarm the protestant dissenter. Your words are these, *We confess indeed, that we cannot perceive why the presbyterians and congregationalists in New England, might not as safely breathe the same air with a Bishop, as their brethren in Old England do.* However, we

are unwilling to disquiet any of them, by importing and settling among them a creature, which it seems they, some of them, account to be obnoxious. Only we hope, that his occasionally travelling through the country cannot infect it very dangerously. Moravian Bishops are authorized by law to live, and act as such, where they will in our plantations. Popish Bishops reside here, and go about to exercise every part of their function, without offence and without observation. Dissenting Ministers reside here, and hold their meetings for ordinations, and whatever purposes they think fit, and these assemblies give us no umbrage.—Give me leave to remonstrate a little on this tremendous account of your security; and also on the unkind, ungenerous treatment you give the protestant dissenters—How is it that so much countenance can be given to the popish superstition, by a church which calls herself, *protestant*? Is not popery an avowed, merciless, mortal enemy to all protestants? you tell us, that you are friendly to a toleration of the most intolerant, so far as you can do it with safety. But how is it possible you should be safe, in hugging the viper in your bosom, that is preying daily upon your vitals; and cannot be satisfied with any thing less than the extirpation of heresy? has popery changed either its principles, or spirit? have the many laws against popish recusants, made by our Legislature, no reason at all on which they support? and why have the most celebrated pens of your own clergy, so much dilated upon the deformity and



and malignity of popery ; if you can look upon that superstition with so much ease and quiet, and allow her Bishops to exercise every part of their function, without offence and without observation?—These, *Sir*, are very unaccountable things, in our conceptions. Altogether mysterious. And why must *Dissenting Ministers* be put into the same category or predicament with *Moravian* and *Popish Bishops*? I take leave to remind you, that your church or clergy have known the time, when they have been glad of the concurrence and united assistance of protestant dissenters against the efforts of popery. And however you may affect to throw a *shade* on the civil war and *interregnum*, and emblazon on the power abused by Sectaries, in the time of *Cromwel* ; there was no small probability of popery recovering her tyranny, had not *Charles I.* been cut short of his intentions. His favourite, *Laud*, was very little removed from popery, in his church-system ; and the King himself extremely well affected to popery. — Moreover, whether you will own it or not, the *safety* of the Church of *England*, is, to this day, owing greatly to a protestant-dissent. And so thought the late *Dr Arrowsmith*, one of your own Divines, of excellent character, when he publicly said, at the rebellion of 1745, “ that he looked upon “ the *protestant-dissenters* in *England*, as the great “ *buttress* of the protestant cause.” — So far as the Church of *England* retains the principles and spirit of protestantism, we are and ever  
were

were her most cordial friends, and shall be always willing to defend her against popery. But if she can once think of caressing popish Bishops, and allow them to exercise every part of their function against statute-law, without offence and without observation— You may not wonder, if we fill with the darkest apprehensions for you, for ourselves, and for posterity! — Nor should you think it unreasonable, that a complaint is made of your being more solicitous to guard against *presbyterianism* than against *popery*: since we are fully persuaded, that *paganism* itself is much preferable to popery. Which latter is a system of profession, that proclaims open war with all mankind; and claims a spiritual tyranny over the souls of men. How notorious are her insults on the reason, understanding, and senses of mankind! how cruel her massacres! how diabolical her inquisitions! and how impudent her execrations of all the protestant world!

What reason have we then to put up this prayer for you? “ from blindness of mind and “ from hardness of heart, *good Lord* deliver “ him.”

After all, I could heartily wish that Doctor *Mayhew* had had less reason for the comparison he has made. Yet, to shew you he is not singular, please to take the following passage from *Voltaire*, who tells us, “ that the *French* prophets

“ phets went to *England*, but finding that the  
 “ Episcopal church there had too much re-  
 “ semblance with that of *Rome*, they strove to  
 “ set up their own \*.”

It seems however, at all events, the *hierarchy* of the *English* Church must have a defence.— For, you say, *if Bishops are stiled Lords, it is because by the ancient constitution of our country, they sit in the upper house of Parliament; where, I believe, they are thought as useful members as the rest.* — This well accounts for the origin and source of episcopal dignity. So *Rapin* says, “ Very probably, from the beginning of the  
 “ monarchy, till about the end of the reign of  
 “ *Henry III.* the Parliaments consisted only of  
 “ *Lords*, who were in possession of all the lands  
 “ in the kingdom, for which they did homage  
 “ to the King. And indeed it appears, the  
 “ *Lords*, before that time, granted the King  
 “ the money necessary for the support of the  
 “ Government, without any mention of the  
 “ Commons. It may therefore be said, that  
 “ the *Lords* sat in parliament by a double title,  
 “ *viz.* for themselves, and as representatives  
 “ of the nation. But after the *Commons* were  
 “ introduced into parliament, and had a sepa-  
 “ rate house, the *Lords* lost the latter of these  
 “ titles, and sat only for themselves, the rest of  
 “ the people having other representatives. The  
 “ *Bishops* and *Abbots* who belonged to the body  
 “ of

\* Works, Vol. IX. p. 80. 12mo. Engl. edit.

“ of the Lords, had probably their seat too by  
 “ a double title, as possessors of Baronies, and  
 “ as representatives of the Clergy, secular and  
 “ regular\*.”

Thus the ancient constitution of our country, whether pagan or papal, gave the Bishops a seat in the upper house of parliament; where, doubtless, both Kings and their first ministers of State have found them as useful and convenient members as any of the rest: and we have no reason to question but they will continue to be so.

But, to remove from Dr *Mayhew* all anxiety for the liberties of his dear country, you, Sir, are kind enough to assure him, *that though a Bishop should be placed in America, no one either is, or ever was intended or desired for New England. It is only desired he may resort thither from time to time, to officiate among those of our own communion. His constant abode will be in whatever province is willing to receive him, with his Majesty's approbation: who will certainly, for reasons of every kind, send such persons in this character, as are least likely to cause uneasiness.*—More than this, *He is not to bold Courts to try matrimonial or testamentary causes, or be invested with any authority now exercised either by provincial governors or subordinate magistrates, or infringe or diminish any privileges or liberties enjoyed by any of the Laity, even of our own communion.*

The

\*. *Hist. of England*, Vol. II. p. 360. 1st Eng. edit. folio.

The gracious meaning of which is, “ only  
 “ let a Bishop be once admitted, without any  
 “ opposition, allow him but a peaceful entry  
 “ into the *American* colonies, and leave the rest  
 “ with us, we will be satisfied with the conse-  
 “ quences.” — Persons, capitally concerned in  
 this scheme, are too well acquainted with the  
*superstitious* ply or bent of mankind, to be doubt-  
 ful, as to any depending events. But, *Sir*,  
 may I ask, Is the *American* Bishop to touch or  
 affect no man’s property? is he to make no al-  
 teration in the civil condition of any of the  
 people? on what then must he maintain his  
 episcopal port and dignity? — on *American* air  
 only? — Surely there must be some provision  
 made, suitable to his high appointment.—Here  
 it may not be improper to put the question,  
 concerning the end of his appointments — *cui*  
*bono?* of what advantage? — You answer, to  
*ordain* and *confirm*.—These are the capital things  
 mentioned by you, as making needful the exe-  
 cution of such a scheme for the *American* colo-  
 nies.

As to *Ordination* — It is owned, that Episco-  
 palian do lay much stress upon it. But may  
 I not say, it is, at least, a moot point: and  
 what none of you have been able to clear from  
 much objection? you are not able to produce  
 any thing like a lineal uninterrupted succession  
 from the Apostles. And you know, *Sir*, we  
 C are

are able to prove, from undoubted historical testimony, that in so late a time as the reign of *Q. Elizabeth*, some prelates had no such thing as episcopal ordination, unless it was from popish Bishops. — And we also object to the *form* in which you ordain, as having in it neither truth, spirit, nor energy. You say, when you ordain, *receive thou the holy Ghost*; — but are not able to prove that you convey one single mental or spiritual ability. — And though you add, *whatsoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whatsoever sins ye retain, they are retained*: — yet, it does not appear, that you have, or ever had ability of conveying such power to any one clergyman whom you thus ordain. — And we presume to say, that any *Layman* whatsoever, has as much real ability to absolve or censure efficaciously even the Bishops themselves, in whose diocese he happens to have his residence. If you, *Sir*, can confute this assertion, you will have the satisfaction of your humble servant earnestly soliciting such episcopal blessing.

In the article of *Confirmation*, the other capital advantage proposed to his Majesty's *American* subjects; you will allow me to ask, *what it meaneth?* or, how we are to understand any real benefit can possibly accrue from your episcopal hands? — I will take the liberty of placing before you, each of the several texts in the *New Testament* where the Greek word, *επιστηλω*, is rendered, *confirm*, and applied to the ministrations

tions of Apostles or apostolical men, who had the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. The first is in *Acts* xv. 32. “And *Judas* and *Silas*, being “prophets themselves, exhorted the brethren, “and confirmed.”—Which could mean no more than their giving them full assurance, that the christian doctrine did set them entirely free from all Jewish ritual and ceremony. For this was the principal design of their being sent to *Antioch*, by the apostolic council held at *Jerusalem*, as *St Luke* informs us.

In chap. xiv. 22. *Paul* and *Barnabas* are said “to confirm the souls of the Disciples; ex-  
“horting them to continue in the faith, and  
“that we must through much tribulation en-  
“ter into the kingdom of God.” The occasion of this was, “certain Jews from *Antioch* and  
“*Iconium* had persuaded the people”—to what? why to submit to *circumcision*. Compare chap. xv. 1. which they did, in order to cover them from persecution; as *St Paul* has informed us, *Gal.* vi. 12.—The *confirming* here, must be understood, of the having their minds established in the *simplicity* of the Gospel profession. And in this sense we must interpret *Paul* and *Silas*’s confirming the churches throughout *Syria* and *Cilicia*, chap. xv. 41. They, by their continued teachings of the same pure and uncorrupt doctrines of the Gospel, and by miracle, did establish and confirm the churches in the faith; and as they delivered them the apostolical de-

crees for to keep, which set them free from all ceremonious ritual. See chap. xvi. 4, 5.

Once more : The word *ἐπιστήω*, is rendered *strengthen*, chap. xviii. 23. and has, as in the other places, the idea of encouraging the Christians to persevere in their profession, under all the discouragements and terrors of persecution.

I would now ask, and I hope I am not impertinent, what sort of similitude has *confirmation*, in the church sense and practice, with the apostolical confirmations? — I add, we are informed, by ecclesiastical history, that *confirmation* was anciently given immediately after baptism, as well to infants as to adult persons. Surely here was no similitude with the apostolical confirmation. Moreover, there was the consecration of the *chrism*, which was always the Bishop's act; then there was the *unction* itself, with consignation, or the sign of the cross on the forehead, or other parts of the body; then imposition of hands\*. In all *ordinary* cases, the Bishop was the only standing and regular minister of this part of confirmation, which consisted in imposition of hands and prayer, to invoke the *gift of the holy Ghost*. — But in some *special* and *extraordinary* cases, a Presbyter might act by special commission from his Bishop. Nay, even Deacons, as it was in the case of *Energumens*,

\* So Bingham informs us in his *Church Antiquities*, Book XII. c. 2. Sect. 1.



*Energumens*, or persons possessed with evil spirits after baptism \*.—The *unction* was conceived of, as the seal of the gift of the holy Spirit †.”

As to *imposition of hands*, this is said to be apostolical. And no doubt they did lay on hands, and they did it with efficacy too, as they were enabled to confer spiritual gifts. Of which we have an account, in *Acts* viii. and xix. chapters. — So they did not only confirm the faith of the christians, by these expressions of divine power, but also by raising the dead ; on whom they laid on hands for that purpose ; and also by removing maladies from the sick and the miserable. But do any christian Bishops discover divine abilities, either of conveying any spiritual gift, or of performing any miraculous cure ? if they do not, how does it appear, that they are capable of any thing like an apostolical act of *confirming* the people ?

Possibly, you may smile at my reasoning, and be inclined to conclude, that I have not viewed *confirmation* through any episcopal telescope, or rather magnifying optic glass. — This I have not done ; but if I may not be troublesome, would put another question, — Is there any precept or example for such conduct in all the *New Testament* ? — You say indeed, *that Episcopacy*, (by which I understand you to mean, *diocesan episcopacy*) *is as provable from scripture, as either infant-baptism, or the observation of the*  
*Lord's-*

\* See Sect. 3, 4, 5.

† Chap. 3. Sect. 3.

*Lord's-day.* This, Sir, is to assert roundly, but has nothing in it that is convincing; unless you expect, that an implicit confidence should hang on your mere assertion.—But since I am so unhappy as not to be able to pay you that homage, you will not be offended at my saying, that if infant-baptism and the observation of the Lord's-day, are not more clearly provable from the New Testament writings, they have very little in those writings that will countenance their observance. But then here you will again say, *that if there be some appointments in your church, which the scripture does not require, so have there been in other churches; nay, in all the churches of the world.*—I cannot here much differ from you; for churches of the world, I presume must be worldly churches; and all such churches have much in them that is no way agreeable to the scriptures.—Or, should you choose to be understood, *of all the churches in the world,* it will be no sort of defence of what is wrong, or unscriptural. Every christian-church is obliged to conform to the New Testament Scriptures in all and every of its appointments, and so far as it does not, it is no christian-church, but a church of the world.

You add, *Our church has not many things of this kind, nor lays great stress upon them: and to think indifferent things unlawful, is as unreasonable and superstitious, as to think them necessary.*—What, Sir, you may call or imagine many things, I know not; but this I know, the things

things that you lay stress upon, have long been too many for vast numbers of conscientious men to comply withal.—Were there not nearly *two thousand* ministers, who resigned their Livings at the *act of uniformity*, soon after the Restoration?—And have you diminished much of the number of such things, or of the stress laid upon them, in your more moderate times?—Is there not something Jesuitical in saying, — *That to think indifferent things unlawful, is as unreasonable and as superstitious, as to think them necessary?*—You well know, Sir, that those very things which you call, *indifferent*, are what altogether lose their indifference by your making them necessary. This is what justifies our thinking them unlawful; the unreasonableness and superstition belongs to you alone, who make them necessary.—And I am constrained to say, this distinction you have artfully hid from your Readers, in order to fix an *odium* upon a conscientious and religious Protestant-dissent. — *e. g.* What stress do you lay upon *Confirmation*? and yet, we presume, you have no New Testament authority for diocesan episcopacy. And *Confirmation* by the hands of a Bishop, has with us Protestant-dissenters, no better appearance than a popish sacrament; and can have no better tendency than to create a superstitious reverence of the Bishop, and give the confirmed a false and dangerous foundation of his soul's dependence. Whether thousands and ten thousands are not greatly misled and deluded by this episcopal action, is what may be

derstand how they can think ill of one another, without wishing ill.—The refinement does not lie level with common capacities: and a man ought to be well acquainted with nice, *scolastic* distinctions, in order to form his conduct upon any satisfactory sense of these propositions. A *party-spirit* that thinks ill of another, will be extremely apt to wish ill. And, with me, a *party-spirit* and a *christian-spirit* are disparates; they, by no means are reconcilable.—Whether the warm advocates of episcopacy or independency may not highly approve the distinction you have made, I cannot tell; but all who do avow the distinction, should rather seem to be of a party, than of a christian-spirit.

You farther say,—*And in bodies of men, whose opinions differ, there must be mutual condescensions, and time allowed for one side to come over into the sentiments of the other, else they cannot proceed together.* However plausible, I am unhappy in again disagreeing with you. Christianity not only supposes, but allows of difference of opinion; nay, it asserts the unavoidable necessity. For, says an Apostle, *it must needs be that there be heresies among you; that they which are approved may be made manifest.* Besides, the divine canon is as intelligible to one man, as it is to another. And every individual man must form a judgment for himself, and only for himself. Nor are there to be found any bodies of men who think at all, but what have among themselves different ideas and conceptions. But no two  
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You will yet plead the strong desire in any party or denomination to make profelytes—for these are your words, speaking of the *New England* episcopalian people, —*Undoubtedly, they would be very glad, if all the inhabitants were of the communion of the Church of England; as undoubtedly the Doctor would, if they were all of his communion.*—However conclusive this may be thought to be, or an *argumentum ad hominem*, it does not appear to be just, or of weight, when carefully examined. Our business, as Christians, most certainly is, to keep at the utmost distance from all party zeal; and not suffer that hurtful unreasonable passion to govern us. Our solitudes are not to be, the making men of the same persuasion or mode of profession with ourselves; but to lead them to an honest and unbiassed use of their own powers; to persuade them to make the best judgment they possibly can for themselves of the divine canon; and not to suffer any sinister aim or worldly motive to warp their attentions. Here then, *Sir*, you perceive that I think you capitally wrong in another of your first principles.

Unless you allow of the justness of this observation, you will destroy the spirit of all genuine religion. For though you are pleased to say,—*That persons of different parties in religion may think too ill of each other, without wishing ill to each other at all: and so may mean very well, though they judge greatly amiss.*—Yet, there are few, if any can fathom your meaning, or un-

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bodies of christian men, who as such differ in their religious professions, have any right to expect that the one body should come over into the sentiments of the other body; for if they had, then this right of expectation would be reciprocal; the mutual condescensions are therefore silly and stupid, if formed upon this expectancy.—And I presume to affirm, there is an infinitely better ground and reason of mutual condescension; and that is, the *equal* right which those two bodies of christian men have of forming their judgments, and directing their own religious practice, upon that distinct interpretation made by them of the divine canon.

I may not omit to notice your being an advocate for *Toleration*. And here, *Sir*, you expressly ascribe the merit of the act of toleration to the members of the established church; and claim Mr LOCKE as a member of that church.—If I have been well informed by an intimate of Mr *Locke's*, so far from being a conformist to the church of *England*, he, whilst at Lady *Marsham's*, used to prefer the hearing of a lay-preacher among the dissenters, because there was no other non-conforming church conveniently near for him. But however, this I will not farther debate with you; any more than by saying, “I believe he was not a member of the Church of *England*.”

As to the *Act of toleration* being ascribed to the members of the Church of *England*, there does not seem to have been a whit more merit  
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As a conclusion of this Letter, I would humbly propose a few questions, and I beg the solution of them; *viz.* Whether it can be shewn that the Church of *England* has any claim to *infallibility*? and what right she has to give law to conscience, by making her articles of faith, and her forms of worship, the standard of an universal *English* conformity? whether, if she has no such claim, a dissent from her system of opinion and ritual can be deemed, in the eye of reason and truth, either heretical or schismatical? and whether a conscientious dissent, upon the principle of a right of private judgment concerning the sense and meaning of the divine New Testament canon, be not as properly a farther reform from popery, as her original separation was a reform from that corrupt system?

If any thing in this Letter should discover a temper or spirit that deserves reproof, fix no blame on any one Protestant-dissenter, except the Author of this Address; for truly, *Sir*, not any of the contents have ever been communicated to any person whatever, but to the Printer,

By, S I R,

*Your most humble Servant.*



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