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A
D I S S E N T

FROM THE
CHURCH of ENGLAND,

Fully justified :

And proved the genuine and just Consequence
of the Allegiance due to CHRIST, the
only LAWGIVER in the CHURCH.

BEING THE
DISSENTING GENTLEMANS

T H R E E

LETTERS and POSTSCRIPT,

In Answer to

Mr. JOHN WHITE's on that Subject.

To which is added,

A LETTER to a BISHOP, &c.

The F O U R T H E D I T I O N .

B O S T O N : Printed.

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M D C C L X V I I I .

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T H E

## P R E F A C E.



THE Gentleman to whom these Letters are address'd having called us forth to a vindication of our *religious* principles and practice ; we think ourselves happy that without fear of the heavy fines, imprisonments and deaths, which our Forefathers suffered, we can make our Defence.

A calm and unprejudiced examination of our cause is all the favour we ask. Such an examination, we are humbly confident, will shew——That we separate from the Church of *England* in no one thing, but in which she

separates herself (yea, but wherein *she knows* that she separates herself) from the Church of JESUS CHRIST — That we are *Non-conformists* to the Establishment only in those points in which the Establishment is *not conformed* to the primitive apostolic plan of discipline and worship established in the *word of GOD* — And that wou'd the Governors of this Church be pleased to lay aside those things which they themselves *know* and *acknowledge* to be no parts at all of genuine, original, real *Christianity*; and to be but *the devices* of fallible and weak men; the difference would be no more; our separation would at once vanish; we should immediately *join together, with one heart and one mouth giving glory to GOD*.

Here we rest our cause; upon *that* which is the grand basis of *Protestantism*, and of all rational and reformed Religion; viz. *That the Scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and of manners*: Whoever departs from this, must wander into endless mazes of *Church-tyranny* and *Superstition*; till he plunges at last into  
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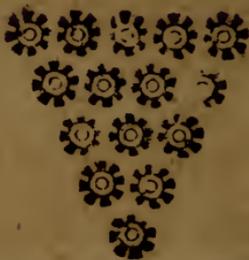
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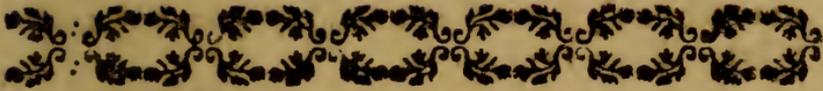
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that horrid abyſs of both, POPERY, or the Church of ROME.

To every impartial judge our *dissent* from the Church of *England* will appear, nothing but a protest which we publickly make against *A new Edition of CHRISTIANITY, with Corrections and Amendments*, which our brethren of the Establishment have taken upon them to set forth. We are content with the old, the primitive, plan of doctrines and rites which CHRIST and his *Apostles* established in the Church: Our brethren are not; they are for altering, improving upon, and mending CHRIST's scheme: For embellishing and adorning it with some *additional splendors*; and for making *new terms* of Christian communion besides those which CHRIST made: In this we differ from them: And *this* (we pray it may be noted) *this* is the only point in difference betwixt us. Here the merits rest. Which of us have TRUTH and RIGHT of our side, we readily submit to every unbiassed judgment: Yea, we are even bold to submit it to the *conscience*, and the *sedate reflections*, of our brethren themselves.

May the GOD of Truth judge betwixt us ! We are assured he will judge. To him alone be the glory of dominion over conscience, and of all authority in religion ; throughout all Churches, and all Ages.  
*Amen.*





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O F T H E

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Mr.

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THE

The first part of the book is devoted to a general  
description of the various forms of strength

and the methods of measuring them. It is  
found that the strength of a material is

not constant, but varies with the direction  
of the force applied. This is due to the



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T H E

Dissenting Gentleman's

A N S W E R

T O T H E

Reverend Mr. WHITE'S

THREE LETTERS, &c.

S I R,

✻✻✻✻ Debate of this kind I should not have  
✻✻✻✻ *chose* in the present situation of our pub-  
✻ A ✻✻✻✻ lick affairs : but as you have done me  
✻✻✻✻ the honour of publickly addressing to  
me *three* long letters for my conviction and edifica-  
tion, gratitude and good manners *constrain* me to  
answer.

As *worldly* considerations are very strong on your side, I assure you, I have an ear *always open* to any thing that can shew conformity to be my duty. *Dissenters* are not men of so peculiar a turn of mind, as to love suffering and reproach, or to despise the dignities, preferments, and lucrative posts, to the amount of *millions* a year, which are shared among their fellow-subjects, could they with a good Conscience partake of them, as they have a *natural right* to do.

But, notwithstanding this prejudice in favour of your argument, and all the ingenuity with which you set it off, I cannot say it has wrought in me

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the conviction you seemed to hope. So far, Sir, from this, that the more carefully I examine the grounds of my *separation*, the more thoroughly I am convinced of its lawfulness and expedience; that it is a *debt* I owe to GOD, to *Liberty*, to *Truth*, and an act of homage and allegiance due to CHRIST, the *only* Lawgiver and King in the Church.

I shall not enter upon the enquiry, on which you largely expatiate, who are the *best Livers*, Churchmen or Dissenters? And amongst which the best means for *holy living* are found? Let the world judge betwixt us. Would to GOD that both of us had greater reason to boast!

The controversy betwixt us, Sir, I apprehend, may easily be brought to a *plain* and *short* issue, if you will heartily join in it. It turns upon the *single point* of the XXth article of your church, *viz.* *That THE CHURCH hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in matters of faith.* For if *THE CHURCH* hath *really* this authority and power, then all objections of the Dissenters about sponsors, the cross in Baptism, kneeling at the Lord's-supper, and every other thing are impertinent and vain: *the Church* having this *authority*, ought reverently to be obeyed. And, if instead of two or three ceremonies, it had enjoined two or three score; and if to the *thirty-nine articles* it had added an hundred besides, we ought meekly to have bowed down to her *spiritual jurisdiction*, and to have practised and believed as *the Church* had taught and enjoined.

But, if on the contrary, Sir, *the Church* hath really and in truth, *no power at all*, nor *authority* of this kind; yea, if CHRIST, the great *Lawgiver* and *King* of the Church, hath expressly commanded that *NO POWER* of this kind shall ever be *claimed*,

*claimed, or ever be yielded, by any of his followers, then your church is reprehensible and highly criminal before God, for usurping this power : and then the Dissenters are justified, and will have honour before God, for entering their protest against such Usurpation ; for asserting the rights and privileges of the Christian Church ; and standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free.*

Our *separation* from the establishment you are pleased to represent in very terrifying and black colours, as a sin of near the first magnitude. —

“ Our Ministers, you say, have guilt lying heavily upon them on account of their schismatical and uncatholick proceedings. — They are notoriously peccant, (*i.e.* are great sinners) in throwing off the authority of those whom they ought to obey and submit themselves to. — Their conduct is such as you challenge all the wit and integrity of the nation ever to reconcile with *holy living*. — You represent them as carnal, evil, and deceitful workers, disorderly walkers, whom God will, undoubtedly, for these things, bring into judgment\* ; and *the faithful*, far from being permitted to enter into any *pastoral relation* to them, are not permitted to have any *Christian communion* with them ; no, not so much as any *intimate unnecessary acquaintance and familiarity* with them in common life † ;” with much more to the same purpose.

You speak also “ of the *Lay-dissenter*, as having stained his soul with guilt ‡ ; and of the doctrine on which our separation is built, as being *false* and *dangerous* §. This you wish me to lay to heart, and seriously to consider.”

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I have,

\* Letter I. page 22, 23. † Letter II. p. 2. ‡ Letter II. p. 26. § Letter III. p. 59.

I have, according to your wish, Sir, *lain it to heart*, and *seriously considered*. The result of my consideration I shall now freely give you ; and in return heartily wish, that laying aside all prejudice and *worldly attachments*, you would impartially consider—What is the true nature and constitution of the *Christian Church* ; and what the allegiance which, as a subject of JESUS CHRIST, you owe to HIM, the *only* Lawgiver and King in the Church ; who will shortly call you to account for your conduct in this respect.

To come then to the point—THE CHURCH, you say, and solemnly subscribe it, *hath power to decree rites, and authority in matters of Faith*. This is the grand hinge upon which the whole controversy turns. Now here, Sir, let me ask you,

FIRST, *What CHURCH* is it, to whom this authority and power is given ? You will, doubtless, say, the *Church of England*, for the *Church of England* expressly claims and exercises this power ; and you *avow* and *defend* it in this exercise and claim : yea, this is the *very basis* on which its whole frame and hierarchy stand. It obliges all its Ministers to subscribe to *articles of faith*, which it hath *authoritatively* decreed ; and to use in religious worship *ceremonies and rites*, which it hath *authoritatively* enjoined.

But mind, Sir, I beseech you, the consequences of this claim. If the *Church of England* hath really this authority and power ; hath not the *Church of France*—the *Church of Spain*—the *Church of Rome* the very same ? Hath *England*, in this matter, any privilege from God, any spiritual prerogative, any charter from Heaven, which its *neighbour countries* have not ? You will not pretend it has. But if it has *no* privilege nor prerogative of this kind, then  
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the *Church of France* and the *Church of Rome* have also, you acknowledge, **POWER** to decree rites and ceremonies in **GOD'S** worship, and **AUTHORITY** in points of faith; consequently, all the fopperies and superstitions of the *Romish Church*, at least, which cannot be proved to be contrary to the word of **GOD**, are to be reverently submitted to by all the members of that Church, and cordially received.

But will not your claiming this power for the *Church* absolutely overthrow the *Reformation* itself, and subvert the *very foundation* of the Church you seek to establish? For, till you can shew, why the *Church of England* is possessed of this power, but not the *Church of Rome*; why a body of acknowledged fallible Men in *Britain* have authority to make and to injoin articles of faith, but not a body of pretended infallible men at *Trent*; whence **ENGLAND** came thus spiritually-gifted, and endowed beyond all its *neighbour kingdoms*—your separation from the *Church of Rome* is incapable of a just and solid defence.

To this, perhaps, you will reply—But *our Church* hath expressly guarded against any such *abuse* of the power it claims, by adding in the XXth Article—*Yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to GOD'S word written; neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another.* But, upon this, I intreat your patience for these two remarks:

1st, Whatever *ceremony* or *rite* then cannot be shewn to be **CONTRARY** to **GOD'S** word, your Church, yea, the *Church of Rome* hath, you acknowledge, full authority to enjoin: consequently, as *your Church*, by virtue of this authority, hath enjoined the *cross* in *baptism*, it hath full power also

to require you to *cross yourselves*, whenever you enter the place of worship, say your prayers, look toward the east, touch the bible, sit at Meat— It hath *full power* to enjoin the use of *salt* and *spittle* in *baptism*, *chrism*, *extreme unction*, and an hundred other things, which are no more *contrary to God's word*, than the cross in baptism is.

As your Church now *consecrates ground*, it has every whit as much *power* to consecrate the *other element*, and to make *holy water* as well as *holy earth*; and to order it to be decently sprinkled upon its members, (*for all things, you know, are to be done decently and in order*) in token that they shall keep themselves pure from sin: It hath *power* to consecrate *holy knives* to cut the sacramental bread; *holy basins* and *ewers* for the priests to wash in before the sacrament, *holy vestments and robes*, and a great variety of *holy utensils*, lighted *tapers* for the altar, &c. (all which, you know, Sir, was done by your admired bishop *Laud*) knocking on the breast, bowing towards the east, prostration before the altar.—All these, I say, and innumerable other ceremonies, *your Church* claims *authority and power* to enjoin; for none of these can be shewn to be more *contrary to the word of God*, or to be a whit more superstitious, ridiculous, or absurd, than the *crossing* at baptism, or the *solemn consecration* of churches and their yards. But,

2dly, The *limitation or guard*, which the article seems to put upon *this power* of the Church, is really of no force, and amounts to nothing at all.

For tho' it says—that the Church *may not ordain any thing CONTRARY to God's word, nor so expound one scripture as to be REPUGNANT to another*: yet of this *repugnance and contrariety*, the

CHURCH

CHURCH alone, you will observe, and not every private person, is allowed to be the proper judge : for else the article is absurd ; it actually overthrows itself ; and takes away with one hand, what it gives with the other. For, if every private person hath authority to judge of the Church's decisions, and to reject them, if they appear to him repugnant to Scripture, then the Church's authority, in points of faith, comes to just nothing at all. It is an authority to decree, where none are bound to submit ; that is, an authority over no body, and authority to do nothing. But such a senseless, unmeaning, impertinent claim, can never be the design and import of this article. It does claim therefore for the Church some real authority to settle points of faith ; consequently, to points thus authoritatively settled by it, private Christians, its members, are reverently to submit, even tho' to their own judgments they appear repugnant to the word of God.

This, Sir, must be the real meaning and intent of the article, notwithstanding the restrictive clause. Accordingly, in consequence of this claim, your Church hath authoritatively decreed thirty-nine articles of faith ; and these it declares to have decreed for the taking away difference of opinion, and to establish an agreement in true Religion \*. The plain language of authority. These articles it obliges all its ministers to subscribe ; and our Princes, as Heads and Governors of the Church, have authoritatively forbid its Clergy to preach any thing repugnant to them, and required them to frame their sermons according to the plan here prescribed. From all which it appears, that ; notwithstanding the pretended limitation, there is a real authority claimed by

\* Preface to XXXIX articles.

by the Church, that is to say, by its *Governors*, to settle points of faith. But if there be *such authority* really vested in them, then the people are bound to *submit* to their decisions, and have no right of private judgment to *examine* or *reject* them; for there cannot be *two* CONTRADICTIONARY rights; a *right* in governors to prescribe, and a *right* in subjects to refuse. — But if the *Church of England* has really this authority and right, the *Church of Rome* had it before her; and, as the elder and *mother-church*, ought to have been obeyed. The *reformation*, therefore, as we are wont to call it, was a rebellion against superiors, a disobedience to the authority vested in *the Church*, and ought, as such, to be renounced by returning to the *Church of Rome*.

In this manner, Sir, a *Romish priest* will turn upon the *Church of England* its own dangerous artillery; and by the meer concessions of this XXth article, thousands of Profelytes have, no doubt, been gained from you. Nor, with all your ingenuity, would you find it easy to ward off the force of such arguing, should any of your parishioners be likely to be seduced. And this, perhaps, is the reason why the numerous converts these Priests are said to make, are gathered *all* from *your Church*; whereas, from amongst *the Dissenters*, you hardly ever hear of one gained. But,

SECONDLY. I want much to be enlightened as to THE PERSONS who are invested with *this authority* and *power*.

You say, it is *the Church*; But *who*, I pray, are *the Church*, in whom this great power is lodged? You will please to observe well, Sir, not the *Bishops* and *Clergy*, who are wont to speak of themselves as *our spiritual pastors and guides*, as being *over us in*  
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*the Lord, as stewards of the mysteries, &c.* This power to order the manner of God's worship, and to settle articles of faith, is *not* at all lodged in *them*, but entirely in the KING and PARLIAMENT of these realms.

You need not be informed, Sir, that *all the Clergy* of this kingdom, with *all the Bishops* at their head, have not the least *authority* to enjoin one ceremony or rite of worship; or to either *establish* or *annul* one article of faith. No, but *all* power and jurisdiction relating to these matters is lodged chiefly in *lay-hands*; it is solely in the KING and PARLIAMENT, and *the Clergy* are to act in all things under *their* direction and controul. The KING and PARLIAMENT are in truth the real *Fathers, Governors, or Bishops* of this Church: *these ONLY* have power to make or to unmake forms and rites of worship, and do *authoritatively* instruct and prescribe to *the clergy* what they are to believe—in what manner, and to whom the sacraments are to be given—what prayers they are to offer up—what doctrines to preach—who are to be admitted to the *episcopate* or *priesthood*, and who to be refused—by what ceremonies, and prayers, and exhortations they are to be set apart, and consecrated to their office.—These, with every other circumstance relating to religion and the worship of God, which is *authoritatively* prescribed or enjoined in *your Church*, you know, Sir, not the *Bishops and Clergy*, but the KING with *his Parliament*, are the *ONLY persons* who have *authoritatively* enjoined and prescribed them.

“ The *Clergy* of the whole Land, in convocation  
 “ assembled, cannot so much as attempt any ca-  
 “ nons or constitutions without the King's li-  
 “ cence. If the King and Clergy make a canon,  
 “ the”

“ tho’ it binds the clergy *in re ecclesiastica*, yet it does not bind Laymen\*.”

Yea, so far, Sir, were the *Bishops* and *Clergy* from having any hand in the first forming our present established Church, or in ordering its rites and articles of faith, that it was done not only *without*, but in *actual opposition* to them: “ For in the first of *Q. Eliz.* the *Parliament alone* established the Queen’s supremacy and the Common-prayer-book, in spite of all opposition from *the Bishops* in the House of Lords; and *the convocation* then sitting, were so far from having any hand in those church-acts for reformation, that they presented to the Parliament several propositions in behalf of the tenets of *Poperly*, directly contrary to the proceedings of the Parliament†”—

Hence then, Sir, I think you must be absolutely forced to own (what I know gentlemen of your robe do not care to hear) *viz.* That the *Church of England* is really a PARLIAMENTARY Church; that it is not properly an *ally*, but a meer *creature* of the State. It depends entirely upon the *acts* and *authority of PARLIAMENT* for its very essence and frame. The qualifications of its ministers, their

\* *Vide Examination of the Codex, &c.* page 114, 148.  
 “ By the 25th of Hen. VIII. cap. 19, it is a *præmunire* for the convocation to meet without the *King’s writ*: and when they are met to do any thing without the *King’s licence*: and then no resolution of theirs to have the force of a *canon*, unless the *King* confirm it. Nor is it then valid, if it be contrariant or repugnant to the laws, statutes, and customs of this realm, or be to the damage or hurt of the *King’s prerogative royal*.—And of this the courts of *Westminster-Hall* must judge.”—*Hale* in his *Analysis*, page 12, says, “ If ecclesiastical laws are not confirmed by *Parliament*, the *King* may revoke and annul them at his will and pleasure.”—*Vide Notes on an Answer to the Examination of the Bishop of London’s Codex.*

† *Vide Priestcraft in Perfection*, Pref. p. 4.

power to officiate, the manner in which they are to administer the sacraments, are all limited and prescribed by *authority of Parliament*, and this *authority*, which at first made, can *alone* alter and new-make it ; can abolish, or add to its articles or rites, according to its pleasure, even tho' the whole body of *Bishops and Clergy* ever so much dislike, or protest earnestly against it.

It is a point therefore *incontestible*, and absolutely out of doubt, that THE CHURCH your article declares to have *this authority and power* here, is the KING and PARLIAMENT of these realms ; and it is no other than they. But,

THIRDLY. The grand point which yet sticks, and which, without your assistance, I shall never get over, is, how came the *civil magistrate* by this authority in the Church of CHRIST ? Who gave *him* this power to decree rites in Christian worship, which *Christ* never decreed ; and to make articles of faith which *Christ* never made ? Neither CHRIST, nor *the Apostles*, ever gave him this authority ; whence then is it derived ?

The *subjection to higher powers, and obedience to magistrates*, which the scriptures enjoin *Christians*, relates *only to civil*, not at all to *religious* matters : For this obvious reason ; that the *magistrate* at that time was every where *Pagan*. The Apostles therefore instead of paying, or exhorting *Christians* to pay, any subjection to him in *religious affairs*, strenuously exhorted them to renounce and disavow it — *to come out from among them and be separate*. They were every where, you know, Sir, *Dissenters* from the *established Church*.

CHRISTIANITY is so far from enjoining, that it actually forbids, obedience to *civil governors* in things of a *religious* nature. It commands us to  
call

call no man upon earth father or master\*, *i. e.* to acknowledge no authority or jurisdiction of any in matters of religion, but to remember, that ONE, one only is our master and lawgiver, even CHRIST; and all Christians are brethren; *i. e.* stand upon an equal foot, having no dominion over one another. Tho' the Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority upon them, yet it shall not, our LORD says, be so amongst you §. Nay, but your Church replies, in this its XXth article, it shall be so amongst us.— There are some who have authority over others in matters of faith. — There are other masters besides CHRIST.— Thus the article and the scripture manifestly clash: will you be so good, Sir, as to adjust the controversy betwixt them; and tell me which I am to follow.

The Church is CHRIST'S kingdom: a kingdom not of this world: For his voluntary humiliation and suffering of death, he is advanced to the high honour of being sole Lawgiver, Judge, and Sovereign in religious matters.— He only hath authority to fix the terms of communion for his followers or church; and the terms which He hath fixed no man upon earth, nor body of men, have authority to set aside, to alter, or new-make. And if any men upon earth shall presume to alter, or new-make, terms of communion in his Church, they are guilty of great arrogance, and invade his authority and throne. But this, we apprehend, is what you have done. You will not now receive a person to public baptism or the Lord's-Supper upon the terms on which CHRIST and his Apostles would have received him. Neither CHRIST nor his Apostles ever made the sign of the cross, or other sponsors besides the

\* Matt. xxiii. 8, 9.

§ Matt. xx. 25.

the parents, necessary to a child's baptism ; nor did they ever make *kneeling* a necessary term of receiving the sacramental supper ; but both those *you* make necessary \*. Thus you have taken upon you to *new-model* the church of CHRIST, to change and set aside *his* laws, and to make *others* in their room.

Now give me leave to ask you, Sir, by what authority do you presume to reject those from *your* Church, whom in your Conscience you believe CHRIST and *his* *Apostles* would have received into *theirs* ? Are you wiser than *they* ? Or is *your* Church better framed, and more perfect than *theirs* ? If an honest and sincere Christian now brings his child to you to be publickly baptised, desiring it may be done *without* the sign of the cross, and that *himself* may stand forth as *surety* for its education ; would you not *refuse* him ? Or if he desired to be admitted to the communion of christians, in the other sacrament of the supper, but that he might not take it *kneeling* : Would you not *reject* him ? But if the same person had come to JESUS CHRIST or the *Apostles*, offering himself and child upon the *same terms*, would they not have *received* him ? But how is it, Sir, that you take upon you to *reject* from CHRIST'S Family and Church, those whom you believe HIMSELF would have *received* ? Is not this *lording it over* GOD'S heritage, and usurping CHRIST'S throne ? Is it not setting yourselves up for *law makers* and *rulers* in his kingdom ; claiming homage from *his* subjects ? And are not

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\* The XXVIIth *canon* requires, the minister never wittingly to administer the communion to any, but to such as kneel. The XXIXth *canon* requires, that no parent shall be urged to be present at his child's baptism ; nor be admitted to answer as godfather for his own child.

his faithful subjects, by the allegiance they owe HIM, obliged to enter their protest against such usurpation, and to stand fast in the liberty wherewith CHRIST has set them free?

Where then, let me appeal to your own sober judgment, does the guilt of schism lie: upon you or upon us? Upon us, who offer ourselves to communion in your Church upon the terms which CHRIST appointed, and are ready to do every thing which CHRIST has commanded: Or upon you, who absolutely reject us, unless, besides what CHRIST hath ordered, we will submit also to some orders and devices of your own? We come as the Lord's servants, and desire to eat at the Lord's-table, with reverent submission to all his appointments. Nay but, say you, you shall not come to the Lord's-table, unless you will kneel; i. e. unless you will come in that posture, which tho' CHRIST in his wisdom did not think proper, yet which we in our wisdom have thought proper to ordain. In other words; unless besides being CHRIST's servants, you will also be ours; and pay subjection to our institution and authority in this religious rite.

This, Sir, is the true state of the controversy betwixt us: judge now, I pray you, with the impartiality of a Christian, who makes the schism, and who has reason to fear being brought into judgment, by the great Lawgiver of the Church, for the unhappy breach which subsists.—Let a great Prelate who at present adorns one of the highest stations of your Church be heard as judge betwixt us.—“ In  
 “ all other societies, the express will of the founder,  
 “ and the terms of fellowship and communion  
 “ which he has laid down, are accounted sacred.  
 “ In all other kingdoms the will of the supreme  
 “ power is a law. No one pretends, or dares pre-  
 “ tend,

“ tend, to make laws of equal force with his.  
 “ How hard then is the fate of the *Christian Church*,  
 “ or of the *Kingdom of CHRIST*, when his will is  
 “ declared *insufficient*, and the *invented words* and  
 “ *decisions* of his subjects are made co-ordinate  
 “ with his own, equally exclusive of others of his  
 “ subjects from the *communion* of their fellow-sub-  
 “ jects ! And how hard is the fate of those *belie-*  
 “ *vers in him*, who *desire communion upon the terms*  
 “ *God has prescribed*, to be excluded by the words  
 “ of men ; by the inventions of men, imposed  
 “ upon them for *his precepts* ! And how unhappy  
 “ is the *Church*, to be reduced by any such me-  
 “ thods within *more narrow bounds* than our LORD  
 “ *himself has confined it* \* 1”

But you are in readiness to retort, and with great  
 assurance tell me, “ That the *avoidance* of kneel-  
 “ ing *insisted upon* by our Ministers, is not less an  
 “ imposition than your injoining it. — That we  
 “ do really *impose* the observance of *one particular*  
 “ *gesture* upon our communicants. — That *sitting*  
 “ is the regular unvaried practice of our Churches ;  
 “ observed as constantly and universally amongst  
 “ us, as *kneeling* is amongst you, — *never allowed*  
 “ to be departed from ; which our Ministers *re-*  
 “ *quire, insist upon, and refuse to abate.*” — And  
 you ask me, “ If one should present himself to take  
 “ the Sacrament standing, or offer to take it on  
 “ his knees, whether I do not think he would un-  
 “ dergo some severe expostulations, and be plain-  
 “ ly told, we had *no such custom, nor the Churches*  
 “ *of God*, and it would not be given him at  
 “ all §.”

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\* Bishop of Winchester's Postscript to his Answer to Dr. Hare's Sermon, page 254.

§ Letter II. page 56, 57, 58. Letter III. page 8, 9.

I believe the world will be surprized, Sir, and that an *ingenuous bluffs* will cover your own face, when you find that this account of us is absolutely without truth, and quite contrary to fact. I have spent my whole life amongst *the Dissenters*, and am acquainted with a great number of their Churches and Ministers ; but never once, till now, heard that SITTING at the Lord's-table was ever *insisted on* as a term of communion with them ; or that it is their *unvaried and universal* practice. The contrary to this, I know to be truth. In the Church to which I myself belong, there is a person who for many years has constantly received KNEELING, without the least offence to the congregation, or any expostulation from the Minister on that account. In some of our Churches, I am well informed, there are some who receive *standing*, some *kneeling* : In this every one amongst us is left entirely at his liberty. Tho' the posture of *sitting* be generally thought by us most suitable to the *Commemorative supper* of our LORD ; instituted instead of the *Paschal-Supper* of the *Jews* ; and most agreeable to the Practice of CHRIST and *his Apostles*, who, without all peradventure, *sat* around the table ; yet in this we are all left to follow freely our own persuasion. Nor is there, I believe, amongst our ministers one in five hundred, who would refuse to give the Sacrament either *standing* or *kneeling* to any one who thought *either of these* the fittest posture of receiving. Our *liberty* as to this matter you might have seen in *Baxter's reformed Liturgy* ; where it is expressly said — “ *And let none of the people be forced to sit, stand, or kneel in the act of receiving, whose judgment is against it.*” And in *Dr. Calamy's brief Account*, &c. which you appear to have read —

The

“ *The Communicants amongst Protestant Dissenters,*  
 “ *are AT LIBERTY to use THEIR OWN POSTURE*  
 “ *in the time of receiving ; tho’ a table gesture is most*  
 “ *commonly used\*.*”

Thus, Sir, I have at large considered your charge of SCHISM upon *the Dissenters* ; and hope by this time you begin to think more favourably of us ; and to *justify* our principles as truly *catholic* and *generous* ; the only *broad-bottom* on which the peace of the Church can be solidly fixed ; and that *the guilt* of the separation lies wholly on your *Church*, which insists upon UNCHRISTIAN and UNSCRIPTURAL *terms* of communicating with it.

But I hope to finish your conviction, Sir, and to wipe off every speck of the taint of schism from *Dissenters*, by calling to your remembrance your own excellent definition of the *Catholic* or *Christian Church* ; and reasoning with you on it. “ *The*  
 “ *Catholic Church, you say †, is one outward and*  
 “ *visible Society DIVINELY instituted ; the most ad-*  
 “ *mirable and glorious Society under Heaven.*” —  
 Mind, Sir, your own words ; and it will soon end the debate. If it be a *Society DIVINELY instituted*, then whatever *Society* is not of *divine*, but of *merely human* institution, is not the *Church of Christ*. If it be a *Society divinely instituted*, then the *terms of admission* into this *Society* and the *qualifications* of its members are *divinely fixed*, *i. e.* fixed by the will and authority of GOD : Whatever *visible Society* then hath its *terms of admission* and the *qualifications* of its members NOT *divinely fixed*, fixed only by the will and authority of men, cannot be the truly *Catholic* and *Christian Church*.

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Now

\* Letter to a Divine in Germany, page 11. † Letter I. page 73.

Now here shall I intreat you, Sir, with the impartiality of a *Christian*, who has nothing but *truth* and the *will of God* in view, to stop a moment and compare the CONSTITUTION of the *Church of England*, and the CONSTITUTION of the *Church of Christ*, and see if they are not Societies of a quite *different Frame*; the one a *human*, the other a *divine* institution; the one resting entirely on the authority and will of *men*, the other upon the will and authority of *GOD*.

If you enquire after the constitution and frame of the *Church of Christ*, where must you look for it? only in the *Bible* §. But if you enquire after the constitution and frame of the *Church of England*, where must you look for that? in the *Statute-book* in the *Canons*, and *Common-prayer-book*, and in the *Codes* of the *English-law*.

The Church of CHRIST is a *religious* establishment, founded upon *the Scriptures*, as the only authentic rule of its doctrines and worship; the Church of ENGLAND is a *civil* establishment, founded upon *Acts of Parliament*, as the only authentic rule of what is to be believed and practised therein. The one a *spiritual structure*, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief corner-stone: the other a *political structure*, built upon the foundation of the Lords and Commons of the realm, THE KING, as supreme head, being the chief corner-stone.

Into the *Church of Christ* any person may be admitted, who submits to the *terms* appointed by *Christ*: but into the *Church of England* he cannot be admitted, except over and above *these* he submits

§ The Bible only is the Religion of Protestants: *Chillingworth*.

waits also to terms which *human authority* hath instituted and devised.

In *Christ's Church* the Lord's-supper is appointed and used ONLY for *spiritual* and *religious* ends ; but, in the *Church of England*, it is notoriously both instituted and used for *political* and *worldly ends*, to qualify for a post. In the *former* it was appointed with intention, and as a *mean of uniting* all Christians ; and of destroying all variance and distinctions betwixt them. In the *latter* it is appointed with intention, and as a *mean*, of *discriminating* and *dividing* Christians ; and of making a *distinction* betwixt one and another.

In the *Christian Church*, no openly debauched or scandalously wicked person has a *right* to come to the table of the Lord, or to partake of its provisions ; but in the *Church of England*, if such a person has a commission from the King in the army or the fleet, or any profitable post, this gives him a *right* to come to the communion-table, a *right* to demand the holy elements at the *Priest's hands*, as a qualification for his post.

In the *scriptural Church of Christ*, there are no such officers ever heard of as *Archbishops, Deans, Archdeacons, Prebendaries, Canons, Chancellors, &c.* — But there is *another Church*, you know, Sir, where *these* are officers of great influence, of high importance and rank. But whence came this pompous train ! From the *apostolic fountain* at *Jerusalem*, or from the *corrupted source* at *Rome* ?

The *Church of Christ* never excommunicates, nor pretends to exercise its discipline upon any but its own members ; For *what have I to do*, the Apostle says, *to judge them that are without*\* ? But the *Church of England* extends its ecclesiastical authority over those who *never* belonged to it ; and  
by

\* 1 Cor. v. 12.

by a very extraordinary act of power, *excommunicates* such as *never were* of its communion; that is, it casts such *from*, who never were *in* it. In common life such a thing would be reckoned *marvellous* indeed. Should I solemnly threaten, yea actually proceed to cast a person *out* of my house, who never was *in* it, I should work as great a miracle as was ever wrought in the *Church of Rome*: But miracles of this kind, Sir, your Church, you know, sometimes works.

Again; the rod with which the *Church of Christ* chastises its delinquents is *spiritual*, not *carnal*; but the rod of the *Church of England* is *carnal*, not *spiritual*. By the constitution of the *former*, the excommunicated member is only to be deprived of *spiritual* privileges, such as fellowship in prayer, singing, sacrament, &c. As for his civil property and rights, it meddles not with these; for *CHRIST'S kingdom is not of this world*; but by the Constitution of the *latter*, the excommunicated member is delivered over to the *civil arm*, to humble and chastise him; he is disabled from asserting his natural rights, from being a witness, from bringing actions at law, and if he does not submit in *forty days*, a writ shall issue forth to imprison him.

In the *Church of Jesus Christ*, those who are entrusted with ecclesiastical discipline are solemnly *charged before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels*, to be no respecters of persons, *to do nothing by partiality, and not to prefer one before another* \* : neither *the gold ring, nor the gay cloathing* †, nor pecuniary gifts, are to have any influence upon their *ecclesiastical* proceedings; but the poor are to receive the same measure with the rich. But is it thus, Sir, in the *Church of England*?

\* 1 Tim. v. 21.

† James ii. 2, 3.

land? May not a grievous Sinner, according to her constitution, be suffered to commute? to have pardon for money, and to skreen himself by a round fee from the stroke of the Church's rod? Yea, when he is going to be delivered, or actually is delivered, into the hands of *the Devil*, and *Satan* has him in his keeping, will not an handsome sum presently pluck him thence, and restore him to the Church's soft and indulgent bosom again? ——— You remember, Sir, the Heathen Satyrist,

————— *At vos*

*Dicite pontifices, in sacris quid facit aurum.*

Perfius, Sat. II.

And you know what was said, upon a like occasion, by a much greater than he—*Thy money perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the gift of God (Pardon and Absolution) may be purchased with money, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter* \*.

Some of the most sacred acts of spiritual jurisdiction, its solemn censures and excommunications, are exercised in the Church of England by unconsecrated and meer laymen. These hold the keys, open or shut, cast out or admit to it, according to their sole pleasure. The Chancellors, Officials, Surrogates—who administer the jurisdiction of spiritual courts, and determine the most important spiritual matters, such as *delivering men to the Devil*, &c. frequently are, and, by express provision of law, always may be laymen. And truly, Sir, I greatly pity you gentlemen of the Clergy, that some of the most tremendous and solemn parts of your sacred office, such as *excommunications, absolutions*, &c.

you

\* Acts viii. 20, 21.

you are *forced* to perform, not according to, but sometimes, perhaps, directly against your own judgments, as you are *authoritatively* directed and commanded by these *lay-persons*. *Forced*, I say, to do it, notwithstanding what you urge about *your own concurrence*; for if you refuse to concur, you are immediately liable to *suspension ab officio & beneficium*; and if you continue obstinate, to be *excommunicated* your own selves §.

The Church of JESUS CHRIST never owed its support (it scorned to owe its propagation and support) to the powers, preferments, and riches of this world; it was its glory, that it made its way, and was established upon earth, not only *without*, but in *direct opposition* to them: it commands its Ministers *not to strive, but to be gentle to all men; in meekness, instructing those who gainsay*—(2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.) But the Church of England, conscious of its weakness, props itself on every side with *civil dignities and emoluments*; calls in the powers and riches of *this world* to its support and defence; intrenches itself deep under shelter of *penal laws*, and from thence thunders out its *excommunications*, and threats of *finer and imprisonments*, upon any who shall dare to write or speak any thing derogatory to its ceremonies and forms of worship, or its articles of faith ||

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§ There is one thing, says Bishop Burnet, yet wanting to compleat the reformation of the Church; which is, to restore primitive discipline against scandalous persons, the establishing the government of the Church in *ecclesiastical-hands*, and taking it out of *lay-hands*, which have so long profaned it; and have exposed the authority of the Church and the censures of it, chiefly *excommunication*, to the contempt of the nation; so that the dreadfullest of all censures, is now become the most scorned and despised.—*Hist. Reform. Abridg.* page 367.

|| The IV, V, VIth canons solemnly denounce—“That who-  
“soever shall affirm that the form of GOD’s worship contained

There is one difficulty more, Sir, which I have often revolved, but could never possibly get over; it seems to hang as a *dead and insuperable* weight upon the frame of your Church; if you can handsomely remove it, you will merit *Lambeth* for a reward.

The *Church of England* and the *Church of Christ* seem to be *two* Societies, absolutely *distinct*, and of a quite *different* constitution, as they have *two* different HEADS, or FOUNTAINS of power, whence all authority, jurisdiction, and ministrations in the *two* Churches severally spring. In the Church of *Jesus Christ*, HIMSELF is *supreme Head*, the only Lawgiver and Sovereign: *To us there is but ONE Lord\**. *ONE is your Master, even CHRIST †: Gave him to be HEAD over all things to the Church ‡. ALL POWER is given to ME in Heaven and in Earth, go ye therefore teach all nations ||. CHRIST is the ONLY fountain of influence, jurisdiction, and power in his Church, by commission from whom alone all its officers act.*

But in the *Church of England*, you well know, Sir, the *King, or Queen*, is SUPREME HEAD, “vested with *all power* to exercise all manner of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and *Archbishops, Bishops, Archdeacons*, and other ecclesiastical persons, “the *Common-prayer*, hath any thing in it repugnant to the “word of GOD—or that any of the XXXIX articles are in “any part erroneous, or such as may not with a good conscience be subscribed, let him be EXCOMMUNICATED “*ipso facto*, and not be restored until he repent and publicly revoke his wicked errors.”

And by the *Acts of Uniformity*, it is enacted—“That if “any one shall declare, or speak any thing in the derogation or depraving of the book of *Common-prayer*, he “shall, for the *first* offence, suffer imprisonment one whole “year, without bail or mainprize; and for the *second* offence “shall be imprisoned during his life.”

\* 1 Cor. viii. 6.

† Mat. xxiii. 8.

‡ Ephes. i. 22.

|| Mat. xxviii. 18, 19.

“ sons have *no manner* of jurisdiction ecclesiastical, but by and under the KING’s *Majesty*, who hath full power and authority to hear and determine *all manner* of causes ecclesiastical ; and to reform, and correct *all vice*, sin, errors, heresies, enormities, abuses whatsoever, which by *any manner* of spiritual authority or jurisdiction ought or may be lawfully reformed \*.” —

At the first establishment of this Church under Hen. VIII. and Edw. VI. all the *Bishops* took out commissions from the CROWN, for the exercising of their *spiritual jurisdiction* in these kingdoms, during the *King’s* pleasure only ; “ and in their commissions acknowledge all sort of jurisdiction, as well ecclesiastical as civil, to have flowed originally from the REGAL power, as from a *supreme Head*, and a *fountain and spring* of all magistracy within his own kingdom †.”

Yea, even the *power of ordination* itself, which is reckoned a *peculiar* of the episcopal office, the first reformers and founders of this Church derived from the KING, and exercised only as by authority from *him*, and during his pleasure. “ Thus *Cranmer* Archbishop of *Canterbury*, *Bonner* Bishop of *London*, &c. took out commissions from *the crown*, importing, that because the Vicegerent (*Cromwel*, a lay person) could not personally attend the charge in all parts of the kingdom, *the KING* authorises *the Bishop* in his (the *King’s*) stead to ordain, within his diocese, such as he judged worthy of holy orders ; to collate to benefices ; to give institution ; and to execute  
“ all

\* 26 Hen. VIII. chap. i. 37 Hen. VIII. cap. xvii. 1 Eliz. cap. i. † Burnet’s Hist. Reform. Part II. Col. p. 91.

“ all other parts of the episcopal authority ; and  
 \* this during the King's pleasure only\*.”

In consequence of this SUPREMACY the KING or QUEEN of *this Church* hath power to excommunicate from, or to re-admit into it, independent of, yea, in direct opposition to, all its *Bishops* and *Clergy*. The KING or QUEEN revoke, if they please, any spiritual censures of the *Bishops* or *Archbishops* ; yea, can suspend, deprive, or even excommunicate, themselves ; or can, by their proclamation only, without the least confession, humiliation, or satisfaction for their offence, pardon and restore *excommunicated persons*, the vilest offenders, to the Church's bosom again §.

Yea, further ; they have power to forbid all preaching for a time ; as did K. *Hen. VIII.* K. *Edw. VI.* Q. *Mary*, Q. *Eliz.*—to limit, instruct, and prescribe to *the Clergy* what they shall, and what they shall not preach ; as did Q. *Eliz.* King *James I.* K. *Charles I.* K. *William*, &c. — Finally, to the King or Queen ONLY does it pertain to declare what is HERESY, and *authoritatively* to pronounce what *doctrines* and *tenets* are, and what are not, to be censured as such : Nor have all the *Bishops* and *Clergy*, assembled in convocation, the least authority to censure any tenets as *heretical*, if the PRINCE on the throne refuse his consent.

Now here, Sir, I am pressed with an *insuperable difficulty* how to reconcile this constitution of the *Church of England*, with the constitution of the *Church of Christ*. Are they not most indisputably *two different Societies*, subject to *two different*, some-

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times

\* *Vid.* Examination of the *Codex Juris*, &c. pages 32, 33.

§ A *Parson* was deprived for adultery ; afterwards a general pardon came, which pardoned the adultery. It was adjudged that the *Parson* was *ipso facto* restored to his benefice. *Coke* 6 Rep. 13.

times *opposite*, authorities, animated and governed by *two different* Heads? In CHRIST'S *Church* HIMSELF is the *only* Sovereign and Head; HE only hath power to decree ceremonies and rites, to fix terms of communion and authority in points of faith: nor hath any *earthly Prince* power to make laws in *his* kingdom, which shall bind the consciences of *his* subjects; or sovereignly to dictate to *his* servants and ministers what they shall believe, and what they shall preach. Yea, *his subjects* are expressly commanded and charged to receive nothing as *doctrine* or *parts of religion*, which are only *commandments of men*\*.

But in the *Church of England* there is ANOTHER *Sovereign, Lawgiver, SUPREME HEAD* besides JESUS CHRIST; an *authority* which commands things which CHRIST never commanded, which teaches doctrines HE never taught, which enjoins terms of communion, and rites of religious worship, which CHRIST never enjoined—What now can I judge, SIR! What do you yourself judge! but that the *two Churches* are two distinct and *quite different* Societies (for in *one* and *the same* Society, surely there cannot be *two supreme Heads*) that they are framed after different models, consist of different members, are governed by different officers, statutes, and laws.—Consequently, my SEPARATION or DISSENT from *the one*, does, by no means infer my SEPARATION from *the other*. Yea, what am I to judge but that by the allegiance I owe to CHRIST my *ONLY supreme Head and King* in spiritual matters, I am *obliged*, to enter my protest against the pretensions and claims of any *OTHER supreme Head*. For, can a man *serve two Masters*? Can he be subject at the same time

to

\* Matt. xv. 9.

to TWO *supreme Heads*? Can he be faithful to CHRIST, the *only KING* in the Church, and yet acknowledge ANOTHER *King*, as a fountain of all magistracy and power therein? Surely he cannot.

Permit me, good Sir, to exercise your patience a moment or two more upon this remarkable *contrast*, and I will dismiss the ungrateful subject.

By the constitution of the *Church of Christ*, it is expressly ordered and declared--That the WOMAN shall not be suffered publickly to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man\*. But by the constitution of the *Church of England*, the WOMAN is permitted publickly to teach, yea, to limit and controul in *spiritual* and *religious* matters, and authoritatively to INSTRUCT all the *Bishops*, and *Clergy*, and *Men* in the land. Thus did Queen *Elizabeth*, thus did Queen *Anne*, and thus hath every *Queen* authority to do that fits upon our throne; authority to *prescribe* and *dictate* to all, both *Ministers* and *People*, what the one are to preach, and the other to receive. And was it not, Sir, a very comely and edifying sight, to behold the two Houses of Convocation waiting upon the good Queen (*Anne*†) in the case of *Whiston's* books upon the Trinity, to be *instructed* by her Majesty, whether they were to be condemned as *heretical*, or not? That venerable and learned body had solemnly decreed them to be *dangerous* and *heretical*; but this their *cenfure* was of no force, till they had laid it before the *Queen*, to have her judgment upon the point. Upon her Majesty's determination it *entirely* depended, whether *Whiston's* tenets were to be *rejected* by the *Church of England* as erroneous, or

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not.

\* 1 Tim. ii. 12.

† Anno 1715.

not. Her Majesty, in this case, was of a *different* opinion from her two Houses of Convocation; she thought not fit to censure the books: So her *single* opinion, strange to relate! her *single* opinion carries it against that of *her Bishops and Clergy*. She over-rules and sets aside all their proceedings, *restrains* and *counteracts* them in one of the very chief of their *pastoral* functions, the guarding against errors and heresies in the Church.

Behold here, Sir, A WOMAN exercising spiritual ecclesiastical authority *over the Man!* Yea, behold *the Representative* of the Clergy of the whole land, a most learned, grave, and venerable body, waiting upon A WOMAN, to learn from her mouth what *the Church* is to believe, and what to reject, as to this great *mystery of faith*: upon A WOMAN who could be supposed to know as little of this matter as of the motion of the stars; yet by her *sole* determination, (I repeat it with astonishment, and you hear it, no doubt, with perplexity and grief) *your Church* was uncontrollably and authoritatively directed in this deep and mysterious point.

I ask you, Sir, in the *name of God*, Is *this* the constitution and frame of the *Church of CHRIST*? Is it not a *Constitution* of a quite different nature; a Society not *DIVINELY*, but *humanly* instituted; and, therefore, by your own Definition, *NOT* the *Church of Christ*? And may not, think you, a person separate peaceably from it, without any the least danger of thereby separating himself from the one scriptural, apostolic, and catholic Church?

When you ript the *Pope* of his *SUPREMACY*, and gave it to our *Princes*, you should have taken care not to have left his *INFALLIBILITY* behind. An *infallible Head* and Director of *the Church,*

Church, be it *Woman* or *Man*, be it an *He* or a *She-bishop*, is a thing plausible enough, and carries a good face : but, to lodge the absolute direction of the *consciences*, the *faith*, and the *discipline* of the Church with a *fallible Head!* to give a *Prince*, yea a *LADY* bred up in all the softnesses and diversions of a court, an uncontrollable dominion over the religious conduct both of *Clergy* and *Laity* authoritatively to direct what *those* are to preach, and what *these* to believe as the *doctrine of CHRIST!* to make *HER* the *sole Judge* in all controversies which shall arise upon any the most mysterious and inexplicable points; so that *all the Priests* are to *ask knowledge* at *HER lips*; and whatever she determines, is to be received by the Church as *Christian verity and truth!* This is such a *Constitution* as quite shocks the understanding; and comes not a whit behind *Transubstantiation* itself. Hence, doubtless, Sir, the triumphs of *Popish Priests* over you! Hence their inroads upon you, and the thousands they are continually carrying captive from your tents! And hence the sad increase, and the insults of *Deists*, who taking the scheme of the *Church of England* to be that of the *Christian Church*, are authorized by common sense, they think, not only to reject, but to treat it with contempt!

And now, Sir, having so largely discussed this point, I presume you are convinced, “ *That this same peaceable separation of ours is not, what you call it, a piece of arrant nonsense and contradiction;*” and that you will cease to be so displeas’d at our treating your grave lectures upon the heinous sin of *SCHISM*, as *solemn Cant*, and *ecclesiastical scare crows*. You see, likewise, how extremely unapt, and quite wide of the point, are

the *two instances* you bring to illustrate our case, viz. “ of a wife separating from the bed and board “ of her husband—Or of two or three counties “ disliking a monarchical government, and throw- “ ing off their allegiance to the King \*.” Has the *Church of England*, Sir, any such power or authority over us *Dissenters*, as the husband has over the wife? Pray, who gave it that authority? Have we ever plighted it our troth? or bound ourselves by a solemn vow to honour and obey it to the end of our life?—Or have we ever sworn allegiance to it; or do we owe it any homage; as *the counties* have sworn, and do owe to *the King*?

Amongst the *peculiar excellencies* of your *Church* you reckon, “ The use of the *three creeds* in public worship; as one of the most effectual and “ powerful means both for teaching and preserv- “ ing the Christian faith entire and uncorrupt, “ which we have not in our Churches †.” The *Creed* called, the *Apostles*, we have in constant use amongst us: And as for the *two other*, especially the *Athanasian*, we are content you should have the honour of its being *peculiar* to yourselves. But methinks, Sir, it should a little check your triumph over us here, to remember, that some of the wisest and most illustrious members of your Church, both Clergy and Laity, account the use of *this Creed* your great sin and reproach, and with *A. B. Tillotson*, wish you were well rid of it.

What are you, Sir, amongst the *weak and uncharitable* minds who damn to the pit of Hell all who cannot receive all the dark and *mysterious points* set forth in that creed? Do you in your conscience think that there is NO SALVATION for those who do not faithfully believe the several articles.

\* Lett. I. page 74.

† Lett. I. page 55.

it contains; and that *whosoever doth not keep whole and undefiled the faith therein delivered, he shall* WITHOUT DOUBT *perish everlastingly.*? What! the many great and worthy persons, bright ornaments of your own Church, who instead of *keeping it whole and undefiled*, have openly disavowed, preached, and wrote against it, dying in this disbelief, have they *without peradventure everlastingly perished.*? Alas! for the good Doctors *Clarke, Whitby, Burnet, &c.*——— For the illustrious *Sir Isaac, &c. &c.* Yea, alas! for the whole *Greek Church*, who have strenuously rejected the article of the *Filioq*; —— They are gone down, it seems, to the *infernal pit!* And notwithstanding their great knowledge and piety in this world, are, for not believing the *Athanasian Creed*, sunk into EVERLASTING DARKNESS and DAMNATION in the other! Do you wonder *Deism* prevails, if this be genuine *Christianity*?

It is a fact, I presume, indisputable, that a great part of the most learned and virtuous of your Clergy are departed from the *Athanasian doctrine*; and that those of them who are not, do by no means think its belief *absolutely and indispensably necessary to Salvation*. What now must a *Deist* think, when he hears both the one and the other *thirteen times a year*, most solemnly declaring in the presence of *Almighty God*, and as instructors of his people, *that whoever will be saved, it is before all things necessary that he hold the ATHANASIAN faith*; and most *peremptorily denouncing EVERLASTING DAMNATION* upon those who do not believe it; that is, many of them denouncing DAMNATION upon themselves! — Is this your “*powerful and effectual means of preserving the Christian faith?*” — I should think it one of the *most effectual* to sub-

vert and destroy it. It has no doubt, been in fact a great stumbling-block in the way of *Infidels* and *Jews*; and hardened them in their opposition to the *Religion of CHRIST*, when they see it doomed to *undoubted* and *everlasting* perdition all who do not heartily and sincerely believe (for that must be meant by *faithfully*) these deep and mysterious points, which we acknowledge to be inexplicable, and far above the powers of reason to comprehend.

“ But the Dissenting Ministers, you tell me; who have complied with the terms of the toleration, have solemnly subscribed the VIIIth article, which approves the *Athanasian Creed* \*.” Let Dr. Calamy answer †. “ The Dissenting Ministers about the city, in a body gave in their sense of the articles when they subscribed them; and among the rest of this VIIIth article, in the gloss upon which the *damnatory clauses* of this Creed are expressly *excluded* the subscription.— And there was something of the same nature done in several parts of the country.” Now the fathers and predecessors of the present Dissenting Ministers having made this *public* protest and declaration at their subscription, and the *Legislature* having accepted, or at least not rejected it; under the favour of *this protest* their successors may be supposed now to subscribe with the *same disapprobation* of the *damnatory clause*. If it were not to be thus taken, there is, I hope, not a Minister among us but would publicly disown and renounce his subscription.

I should now proceed, Sir, to the examination of other parts of your letters; to shew the great *insufficiency*

\* Appendix, page 78. † Life of Mr. Baxter, page 236.

*sufficiency* of your arguments and objections; and to observe that, in many instances, you have extremely mistaken and given quite wrong representations of our religious principles and practice.— But I relieve your patience at present — If this province be undertaken by no other hand, you may in some time, by divine permission, expect to hear farther from,

S I R,

Your very humble servant,

A. DISSENTER,

1873

1873

1873

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THE  
Dissenting Gentleman's  
SECOND  
LETTER, &c.

S I R,

'T IS with some regret I proceed in vindication of my dissent, as it will constrain me to say some things, which may seem to be disrespectful to *established forms* of worship. But *Self-defence* is a principle which generous minds allow strongly to operate. I highly reverence and esteem, and most heartily rejoice in the great number of illustrious and excellent persons, both *Clergy* and *Laity*, which the Church of *England* can boast. But yet, as the present *established forms* were drawn up when this kingdom just emerg'd out of *Popish* darkness; and as in drawing them up, *especial regard* was had to the *then* weakness of the people, who could not be all at once entirely brought off from the old ceremonies and forms: As there are several parts of our liturgy, and ecclesiastical constitution, which a great number, I apprehend, if not all our *Bishops* and *Clergy*, wish to see altered: And finally, as the alteration of those, and the removing a few things, acknowledged in themselves to be *mutable* and *indifferent*, would heal the *unhappy breach*, and restore the chief part of the Dissenters

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ters to the Church.—Upon all these accounts, I may be allowed, I hope, with freedom to make *my defence* against your vigorous attacks; and to represent my objections, and the grounds of my *dissent*, in as strong a light as I am able.

The part of a public *Monitor*, and of my *Instructor* in this affair, which you have *voluntarily* taken on you, will allow me, as I go along, to put you in mind of a great objection or two which Dissenters are wont to urge, but which you have quite overlooked, and to intreat you will direct me how to get over them.

“ We letter-writers, say you, have a privilege  
 “ of setting down our thoughts as they offer them-  
 “ selves, without scrupulously adhering to strict and  
 “ close method\*.” This privilege you have indeed with great freedom taken: I shall therefore be indulged the same.

To begin then with your defence of SPONSORS *in baptism*. It is the opinion of the *Dissenters*, that when an *Infant* is brought to be entered by Baptism into the Family or Church of God, and a solemn vow and *engagement* is to be made before the Church for its *religious education*; that the PARENTS, whose child it is, and to whom both God and *Nature* have committed its education; that *those*, I say, are the *proper persons* to stand forth, and take upon them this great and important trust; and to bind themselves by a *solemn vow* faithfully to discharge it. Now our objections to the order and practice of *your Church* are,

1. That in a very arbitrary and strange manner, without the least shadow of authority from *Reason* or *Scripture*, or the *ancient practice* of the Church, you actually SET ASIDE the Parents in this solemnity;

\* Lett. III. page 69.

uity; and FORBID them to stand forth, and take upon them this great charge to which GOD hath called them. For your XXIXth canon expressly commands, *That no parent shall be urged to be present at his Child's Baptism, nor BE ADMITTED to answer as Godfather for HIS OWN Child.* And,

2. That you require *other persons* to appear in the *parents* stead, and to take upon them this *important trust*, and most solemnly to promise before GOD, and *the Church*, the performance of that, which few of them ever do, or ever intended to perform; or, perhaps, are ever capable of performing. What now, Sir, is *your answer* to these *objections* of the Dissenters? Why, truly, the *first*, which is indeed the *chief*, you very prudently *slip over*; and attempt not the least apology for *setting aside* the parents; so that you leave us still to consider *this*, as a thing utterly indefensible, unlawful, absurd, and which will admit of no excuse.

But as to the *second, viz. the solemn vow and obligation* under which the *Sureties* lay themselves, to this you largely speak, and tell me — “ It is a  
 “ gross mistake to imagine, that the promises there  
 “ made by the *Sureties* concerning the future faith  
 “ and practice of the child, are made in their *own*  
 “ name: As if *they* engaged thereby, that, when it  
 “ is grown up, it shall actually believe all the ar-  
 “ ticles of the Christian faith, shall renounce the  
 “ Devil and all his works, &c. Whereas the  
 “ Church considers *these answers*, as the CHILD'S  
 “ answers, only made by its *Representatives*: they  
 “ contain *ITS* part of the baptismal covenant, or  
 “ contract; which, because, by reason of its ten-  
 “ der age, it cannot *itself* utter, is utter'd by its  
 E “ *Sureties*

“*Sureties*—\*.” But if this be, Sir, a *gross mistake*, the most celebrated of *your own writers* have led us into it. “*The Sureties in Baptism*, says your learned Dr. *Nichols* †, *religiously ENGAGE for the faith of the baptised; that they SHALL sincerely believe all that is revealed in the Gospel, and SHALL direct the subsequent actions of their lives by the laws of Christ.*” A cloud of witnesses, I believe, can be brought from the *Doctors* of your church, whose judgment is the same. But no wonder the Learned differ in so mysterious a point—You go on and affirm—“That the *Sureties* are, by the Church, considered in this affair, *no otherwise* than as *the mouth* of the child. —You see, Sir, here are *no promises* NOR *engagements* which *ANY* besides the *CHILD* are supposed to enter into, and to be bound by. Read over the office of public baptism, you will not find, I assure you, *ANY promises* or *stipulations* at all made by *the Sureties* in their own name: I mean any that are explicit ‡.” But this account of the matter appears to me extremely dark; and rather greatly to strengthen than remove our objections. For,

FIRST, It represents *the Church* as acting a very extraordinary and unaccountable part; *viz.* as receiving *a child* to baptism on account of *ITS OWN faith*, and *ITS OWN promise*, uttered by *its Sureties*; when, at the same time, it knows, *the child* neither does nor can, either *promise* or *believe* any more than the font at which it is baptised. It considers the child as *ACTUALLY covenanting* and *contracting*, yea, as the *ONLY* covenanting and con-

\* Lett. I. page 31. † Nichols's Defence, &c. Part II. page 273. ‡ Ibid. pages 31, 32.

contracting party in this solemnity, when it knows it to be absolutely *incapable* of either. It represents *the Church* as very solemnly asking *THE CHILD* — *Dost thou believe? Wilt thou be baptised? Dost thou forsake the Devil? &c.* When it is fully persuaded of its *utter inability* to believe, or resolve, or will any thing about it. Now when a *Deist* stands by, and sees a learned and grave *Divine* thus asking, and talking, and covenanting with a *Child*, can you wonder, Sir, if he smiles, and merrily treats the whole transaction as a jest?

“ *The answers, you say, are considered by the Church as ONLY the answers of THE CHILD, and contain ITS part of the baptismal covenant; which because, by reason of its tender age, it cannot itself utter, is to be uttered by its Sureties:”* That is to say, the child *thinks*, but cannot *speak*: it really *covenants, contracts, promises*, but not being able by reason of its tender age to *utter* its good intentions, these *Sureties* are its *mouth* to utter them for it. But why, good Sir, its *mouth* to speak for it; and not its *understanding* also to think for it; its *will* to promise for it; and indeed its *soul*, and its *very self*, to covenant and contract for it? Is not *the child*, by reason of its tender age, as absolutely incapable of *covenanting*, as it is of *uttering*; of *contracting*, as it is of *speaking*? If *the Surety* therefore does *one* of these good offices for it, he undoubtedly does *the other* also. But,

SECONDLY. If there be, as you say, *no promises NOR engagements which ANY besides THE CHILD are supposed to enter into, or to be bound by*, the consequence is extremely plain, that then there are no promises nor engagements entered into *at all*, for its *religious education*. For *the child* surely, does not *engage* for its *own* religious education. If

the *Sureties* therefore do not enter into any promise of this kind, it evidently follows, that there are no express engagements entered into by any for the child's education. And thus, behold, your boasted *double security*, turns out at last *no security* at all! But, a *Surety not bound!* a *Sponsor promising nothing!* a *Security unengaged!* This is language, Sir, in the *mercantile*, whatever it may be in the *scholastic* way of life, absolutely unintelligible. And to retort your own instance; my Lawyer I should think a very wrong-headed man, who should pretend to lend my money upon a *double security*, and make a merit of so doing, when at the same time he confessed, there were *no promises, nor engagements*, by which *either* of the *Securities* were *explicitly bound*.

To be plain, Sir; as for this business of a *child's* believing, promising, covenanting by *representative* or *proxy*, I cannot but think a gentleman of your penetration, will easily perceive it to be a thing absolutely inexplicable, impossible, and absurd; a thing utterly repugnant to reason and common sense, and without the least shadow of foundation in the *Christian Religion*. For if by the constitution of the gospel covenant, a child may *believe* by proxy, *repent* by proxy, *vow, promise, and contract* by proxy, he may also, no doubt, *be saved* by proxy, or *be damned* by proxy. But, into what a jest will this turn the religion of *Christ*?

As for the *antiquity* of this practice, *Sponsors in Baptism*, you have the good sense and ingenuity not to pretend it was ever known, or so much as thought of, in the primitive *apostolic Church*. *Tertullian*, who lived about *anno Dom. 200.* is the *first*, I apprehend, of all *Christian writers*, that makes

any mention of them. Nor does it at all follow from what *he* says, that these *Sponsors* were any other than *the Parents* of the child. *Justin Martyr* who wrote fifty years before him, when he particularly describes the method and form of *Christian Baptism* in his *Days*, says not a *single word* of any such persons\*.

But we learn from *St. Austin*, about the year 390. (one of the earliest of *Christian* writers, in which any mention of them is found) *when*, and upon *what* occasion these *Sponsors* were admitted. "A great many, says he, are offered to *Baptism*, not by their parents, but by others; as *infant-slaves* are sometimes offered by their masters. And sometimes when the parents are dead, the infants are baptised, being offered by any, who can afford to shew this compassion to them. And sometimes infants whom their parents have cruelly exposed, to be brought up by those who light on them, are now and then taken up by the holy virgins, and offered to *Baptism* by them who have no children of their own, nor design to have any." — These are † *Austin's* words. Observe now *Dr. Wall's* † ingenuous confession on them (and the good Doctor you know, Sir, was never partial in favour of *Dissenters*, but a severe remarker on them :) "Here we see the *ORDINARY* use then was for *PARENTS* to answer for the children: But yet that this was not counted so NECESSARY, as that a child could not be baptised without it."

Hence then it is plain, that *Parents* never were set aside, when they were capable and willing to

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\* *Vid.* Lord King's Enquiry, Part II. pages 67, 68.  
 † *Epist. ad Bonifac.* † *Hist. Inf. Bap.* Vol. I. page 196

offer their children ; and that only in cases of *Parents* incapacity, were *Sponsors* admitted : And in all *such cases*, Dissenters also use them. Why now, I beseech you, Sir, in defiance of this acknowledged usage and practice of the *ancient Church*, as well as of *common sense*, does your *Church* severely decree, “ That NO PARENT shall be urged to be PRESENT “ at his Child’s Baptism, nor be ADMITTED to au- “ senger as Godfather for it ?” What ! would the Parents standing forth together with the Sponsors, and promising jointly with them, at all detract from this solemnity, or render it *less effectual*, to secure the child’s religious education ? It is most evident it would not, and that your practice in this point is undoubtedly an *innovation* ; an unreasonable, absurd, and arbitrary *deviation* from the usage and institution of the primitive *apostolic Church* ; an *absurdity* very generally acknowledged, and complained of, by the members of your *Church*, though not attempted to be *reformed*.

“ But by *this institution* of godfathers and god- “ mothers, you say, your *Church* affords its mem- “ bers some *great* and *special advantages* towards “ growing in grace and goodness, *above* what are “ found amongst us :” and you tell me, “ you “ lay a great stress upon it, as a *wise*, and *useful*, “ and *necessary* institution\*.”—But did you not consider, Sir, that you were here *highly reflecting* upon the wisdom and goodness, not of the *holy Apostles* only, but of your *great Lawgiver* JESUS CHRIST ? These *SPECIAL ADVANTAGES* for growth in goodness and holiness, how came it to pass that the great *Founders* of the *Christian Church* never happened to think of them ? You do not pretend it to be an *institution* of JESUS CHRIST’S,

and

\* Letter I. pages 58, 59.

and yet are not afraid to call it a *wise*, an *useful*, and even a NECESSARY institution. Strange ! that CHRIST in whom were *hid all the treasures of wisdom*, and who loved the Church so as to *lay down his life for it*, should not know this institution to be so *especially advantageous* to the growing goodness of his Church ; or that knowing it to be so, he should *unkindly omit it* ; and that we are obliged to the *superior wisdom and goodness of after-ages* for supplying this defect. It has usually been thought, that *the Apostles* declared the *WHOLE counsel of God* ; and *kept back NOTHING from the Church which was profitable to it* ; and that *the Scriptures* are a *perfect rule* ; but this, it seems, is not true ; you have discovered it, Sir, to be *not true* : For here you shew us a *wise*, an *useful*, and a NECESSARY institution, which they really *kept back* : and which, had it not been for the *sagacity* of their successors, *the Church* had been so unhappy as never to have known. Into what mazes men plunge themselves, when they deviate from the truth !

Of the same *temerity* you are guilty, Sir, when treating of *another institution* of your Church, CONFIRMATION, and glorying over us in its want. “ Another administration of our Church “ is *confirmation* ; this you know you have wholly “ discarded : and surely you will be obliged to ac- “ knowledge you have lost thereby a *very great* “ *advantage*—greatly *conducive* to future holi- “ ness of life\*.” Yes, Sir, this we will freely own, when you also will acknowledge, that you are *wiser* than the *Apostles* ; and can better judge what is *conducive to holiness*, and for the *advantage of the Church*, than its great Lawgiver JESUS CHRIST. Had this Ceremony of *Confirmation*  
been

\* Letter I. page 61.

been really of *great advantage*, and *conducive to holiness*, it is very strange that neither CHRIST, nor his *Apostles*, should have *ordained* it. That it is an *apostolic* institution, you have not so much as *attempted* to prove ; unless *Calvin's* conjectures must be admitted as proof.

The text usually urged for it, (*Acts* viii. 14.) I presume you are fully sensible has *no weight*. *Peter's* and *John's* going down to *Samaria* to pray, and lay their hands on those whom *Philip* had baptised, is, surely, no precedent, no direction, no institution, nor command for our *Bishops* to do likewise. For the end for which the *Apostles* did it, it is expressly said (ver. 15. 17.) was, *that they might receive the HOLY GHOST, i. e.* its miraculous gifts ; and they prayed for them, and laid their hands on them, and they received the HOLY GHOST. That it was his *miraculous gifts* (such as prophesying, speaking with tongues, &c.) to form them into a Church, cannot be disputed ; because, they were something *visible*, and obvious to *sense* ; something which struck the wonder and ambition of the wicked *Sorcerer* ; for it is said, *when SIMON saw that thro' laying on of the Apostles hands the HOLY GHOST was given, he offered them money.* — Besides, as *Dr. Whitty* justly observes, if they laid not their hands on *all* who were baptised, it makes nothing for *Confirmation* ; if they did, then *Simon Magus* also was *confirmed*, and received the *Holy Ghost* : which you will by no means admit.

It was to give then to the newly baptised converts at *Samaria* the miraculous gifts of the *Holy Ghost*, that *Peter* and *John* went and laid their hands on them. But do our *Bishops*, Sir, pretend that, by their praying and laying on of hands, the *HOLY GHOST is given* ? Do they not *disclaim*  
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any powers of this kind ? Seeing them they make no pretensions to *the end*, why with such solemnity do we see them practising *the means* ? Might they not as well stretch themselves upon the dead body of a child, in imitation of *Elisha* ; or make ointment with spittle for the cure of the blind, in imitation of *our Saviour* ; or, anoint the sick with oil, in imitation of the *apostolic Elders* ; as pray and lay their hands on those who were baptised, in imitation of *Peter and John*, who did this to the *Samaritan* converts ONLY, that they might receive the miraculous gifts and powers of the *Holy Ghost* ?

“ As for the open and solemn renewal of the  
 “ baptismal covenant before GOD and many wit-  
 “ nesses, which you say, baptised persons ought  
 “ to make, when they come to years of discre-  
 “ tion :” This they make with us, in the *other*  
*Sacrament* of the Supper ; which *Christ* himself  
 has appointed, and which is the *only* institution his  
 wisdom has thought fit to appoint, for this pur-  
 pose.

But if you will suffer me to *speak freely*, Sir, this ceremony of *confirmation*, as it is at present appointed and practised in your Church, to me, appears so far from being *greatly conducive to holiness of life*, as that I wish it may not be conducive to a quite different, and a very noxious effect : even to *cherish* in mens minds a *presumptuous* and *false hope* ; and to *delude* them into *wrong notions* as to the safety of their state, and as to the *terms* of acceptance and favour with GOD.

By the order of your *Common Prayer*, “ ALL  
 “ persons baptised, when they come to competent  
 “ years, and are able to say the Lord’s Prayer,  
 “ Creed, and Ten Commandments, and the Answers  
 “ of

“ of the short Catechism, are to be brought to CONFIRMATION.” The Bishop having asked, “ Whether they renew the solemn promise and vow which was made in their names in Baptism,” &c. Upon their answer *we do*, proceeds hereupon to declare in the most solemn manner, even in an address to GOD himself, that he has vouchsafed to regenerate these his Servants by water and the HOLY GHOST, (note : not by water only, but also by the HOLY GHOST) and to give them the forgiveness of ALL THEIR SINS : And laying his hand upon the head of each particular person, he CERTIFIES him by that sign of GOD’s favour and gracious goodness towards him.

I pray you, Sir, in the name of GOD, inform me, what warrant has the Bishop to pronounce a man’s sins ALL forgiven, and himself regenerated by the HOLY GHOST upon no other Grounds than his being able to say the short Catechism, and declaring that he stands by his baptismal engagements ? Will you say that this is the Christian doctrine concerning the terms of acceptance and forgiveness with God ? Are good vows and resolutions, declared in the Church, infallible or proper proofs of a regeneration by the Holy Ghost ? Is a man’s professing that he repents, and promising that he will live godly, that actual repentance and amendment of life which alone can ensure the divine pardon and favour ? Are there not multitudes who call CHRIST their LORD, and publickly profess to stand by their baptismal covenant, whom yet he will reject with abhorrence at last ? You will inform me then, Sir, how his Lordship, upon this mere profession and promise, presumes to declare to Almighty GOD, and to ASSURE the person, that he is regenerated, forgiven, and without

out all peradventure in a state of favour with Heaven !

The expressions, you must acknowledge, are couched in absolute and strong terms : nor do I find that there is any intimation, that their forgiveness depends upon their care to *keep*, and to *live up to*, their baptismal engagements. No : but though their *whole life* hath hitherto been scandalously corrupt ; yet upon their being able to *say the Lord's Prayer*, &c. the Bishop solemnly pronounces a most *absolute pardon* over them ; appeals to *Almighty God* that he hath forgiven them *all* their sins ; and lest this should be too little to satisfy the *doubting sinner*, and quash his upbraiding conscience, he lays his hand upon his head, and **CERTIFIES** him by THAT SIGN of God's favour and goodness to him.

This *Bishop*, Sir, the multitudes, who come to be confirmed, are taught to consider as an *Ambassador* of CHRIST, a *Successor* of the Apostles, and a *special Minister* of GOD : When they hear then, this *sacred person*, so solemnly declaring ; that they are fully justified, pardoned, and regenerated by the *Holy Ghost*, can you blame them if they *believe it* ; and rest satisfied that their souls are in a *safe and happy state* ? And as full remission of sins, and the favour of GOD, - are to be had on such *easy terms* ; can you wonder, should you see thousands eagerly flocking from all quarters to accept it ? Or that persons of very vile and profligate characters should often thrust themselves in to partake of this benefit ; and be seen receiving upon their knees *episcopal* absolution, and *solemn assurances* of GOD's favour and grace ?

You know the aptness of mankind, Sir, to deceive themselves with *false hopes* ; and to substitute  
good

good purposes, professions, and vows, in the place of real repentance and amendment of life : and you know this, Sir, (and have no doubt often declared it from your pulpit) to be one of the *chief hindrances* of mens becoming truly good. Now should your office for *Confirmation* be found thus powerfully and directly tending to *cherish* these false hopes ; you must excuse me if I then should think it so far from *CONDUCTING to holiness of life*, as that in my conscience I should believe it to be rather *greatly OBSTRUCTIVE to it* ; and extremely *delusive and injurious* to the souls of men.

Let me further ask you, Sir, on this head—Is it any breach of charity, to suppose, that amongst the *vast crouds* which present themselves on such occasions, there are often *many*, whom GOD, who knows their hearts, knows to be persons of a corrupt and wicked mind, and to be still under the power and tyranny of sin? Can the *good Bishop* himself, in any judgment of charity, suppose there are not *some* such amongst the *thousands* he confirms? Candidly tell me then, Sir, upon what grounds he *absolutely*, and *without reserve*, declares to the *ETERNAL GOD* concerning them *ALL*, that he hath *fully forgiven these his servants*, when GOD at that time knows many of them *not* to be his servants, and that he hath not at all forgiven them? Or, lays his hand on *each individual* person to assure him of *GOD's favour*, and of his *regeneration by the HOLY GHOST* ; when, in truth, some of those he thus assures are absolute and entire *strangers* to the renewing influences of *GOD's spirit*, and fast bound in their sins? To me, Sir, I assure you, this appears, I do not say a very shocking, but I must say a very unaccountable solemnity ; and should be glad to know how to re-

reconcile it to the reverence you owe to God ; or to the faithfulness and charity due to the souls of men.

Near a-kin to *this*, but of a yet more obnoxious nature, is another office of your *Common Prayer*. The ABSOLUTION of the sick. To *this* you know, Sir, *Dissenters* have always strongly objected, as too much resembling the *solemn tricks* of the Church of Rome ; by which they pretend to send men to Heaven, without real amendment and holiness of life. But *this* you very prudently pass over in perfect silence : for what indeed could so ingenious an advocate offer, on so extremely absurd and indefensible a point ?

Being come to the *sick person*, (no matter what or how wicked his former life hath been) the Priest is directed, after some pious exhortations, to examine, “ *Whether he believes the articles of the Apostles Creed ; and truly repent him of his sins ; and be in charity with all the world : And to move him to make a special confession of his sins, if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter.*” After which confession the Priest is ordered to ABSOLVE him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort.

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who hath left power to his Church to ABSOLVE all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences : And by the AUTHORITY committed to me, I ABSOLVE thee from ALL THY SINS, in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. Amen.

The form is extremely solemn, Sir, and the matter of the last importance. You had need therefore be sure you go upon good grounds, lest

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you be found to trifle with the *name of God*, and in things of *everlasting* moment, and to acquit those whom he abhors. Permit me, Sir, in this *great name*, and before the world, to demand of you,

I. *What Church is it, and where is the Church found, to whom CHRIST has left this high authority and power? Is it the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Church of France, or the Church of Rome? Do you here mean by the Church, what your XIXth article hath defined it, viz. the Congregation of the faithful?—Or, do you understand it as in your XXth article, where it is said to have power to decree rites, and authority in matters of faith? If so, I have shewn in my former Letter, that the Church is no other than the King and Parliament of these realms. The King, indeed, has power to absolve all manner of sinners, penitent or not penitent; and by a single Act of Grace, to vacate and set aside the censures and excommunications of all the Bishops, Archbishops and Clergy of the land, and to restore the offender to the Church's bosom again. To absolve, not in Foro Civili, only, but in Foro Ecclesie; not in the State only, but also in the Church. But whether the Kings or Queens of England do this by authority derived to them from CHRIST? Whether that Church of which THEY are declared the supreme Heads, be the Church to whom this high power is given? And whether THEY, as Heads of it, have not this power dwelling capitally, supremely, and principally in them: so as that, what THEY loose on earth, is as certainly loosed in Heaven, as any thing that is loosed by any inferior members who officiate in the Church under them*—These, Sir, are high points, which without  
your

your assistance, I shall not presume to settle. Be so good, Sir, as to let us know, WHAT CHURCH upon earth it is, to whom CHRIST hath delegated this important AUTHORITY; and WHERE the charter or grant is found, by which he gave it the commission? But,

2. That CHRIST hath given, can give, no such AUTHORITY to fallible uninspired men, I should think absolutely out of doubt. Because if he hath given power to any AUTHORITATIVELY to absolve those who are truly penitent, he must also have given them power TO KNOW who are truly penitent: Else it is a power to do nothing, for till they know them to be truly penitent, (*i. e.* till they can search their hearts) they cannot authoritatively absolve them: But if they cannot do it till then, they cannot do it at all. Besides,

3. If the Priest has really from CHRIST this authority and power, the manner in which he is here ordered to apply it, is most certainly wrong. For upon the sinner's confessing his faults, and professing his faith and sincere repentance, the Priest is ordered most solemnly and authoritatively to absolve him. But are any promises or professions which a sinner makes in that distress, a proper ground for such an absolute authoritative absolution? Are not the most profligate, when death is thought to approach, wont to feel their conscience troubled with many weighty matters, ready to confess their sins, to express the deepest remorse, and to vow amendment if spared? But when the danger is past, is there one of a thousand that remembers his vows, and that returns not to his sins with as keen an appetite as ever? Do not you gentlemen of the Clergy, loudly complain of this, when you press to present repentance, and warn us

not to trust to the sorrows of a sick-bed? But notwithstanding all this, when the *sick sinner* sends for you, confesses his sins, professes repentance, and desires absolution, you are directed and required with all possible solemnity, even *in the name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST*, *authoritatively to absolve him from ALL his crimes*, how many or great soever they have been, and to declare him *fully forgiven*. Strange! That you can presume in the name of the  *sacred Trinity*, to ASSURE a man that he *is absolved* from all his sins, when at the same time you *know yourselves NOT SURE* that he is absolved! Yea, when the *only grounds* of your doing it, are but the same *signs of repentance* which a thousand sinners give, who are nevertheless held fast under the power and guilt of sin! What would you call that man, Sir, who in a court of human judicature, should *most solemnly* affirm, and declare in the *name of God*, an *important fact* to be done, which yet at the same time he is *not sure* is done; or who should call Heaven to witness to the *certainly* of that, which he is *not at all* certain of? But is it less dangerous, or less reproachful, thus to trifle and collude in *eternal* things than in *temporal*; in the court of *Almighty God*, than in that of the *King*?

I cannot say, Sir, in what light you view this order of your Church, nor what obedience you pay it, but am humbly of opinion, that it is this *straining the sacerdotal* character which has sunk it into some contempt; and that if it continues thus *strained*, lower, much lower, it will continue to sink. For when men see you claiming from GOD, *awful* and *high* powers, which they are sure GOD has never given you; and hear you with  
great

great solemnity *authoritatively* absolving in the name of the *Holy Trinity*, when at the same time they know the *Holy Trinity* never gave you *any authority* so to do, how natural is it for them to deride the *priestly character* on which these claims are founded, and to treat your other offices with ridicule and disrespect?

And now, Sir, having presented you with some of the *true grounds* of our dissent, many of which you have not at all, and the rest but slightly touched, in your *three* long Letters, I proceed to your attempts to *reflect back* our own pleas and objections upon ourselves, and to prove us *self-condemned*.

Here you complain — “that you walk almost  
“ without light — that our churches are so secret  
“ in all their ways, that there is scarce any know-  
“ ing what they are—that you must grope and feel  
“ for them as in the dark—and that you are some-  
“ thing like one fighting with a Ghost\*.” This seems, indeed, a very just description of your case, for you greatly misrepresent both our *principles* and our *practice*. But the blame of *this darkness*, Sir, be wholly to yourself. Are not our Churches *open*? Our prayers, our sermons, our sacraments, and ordinations performed in view of the world, that whoever pleases may come and see our manner in them!

But “we have no common rules of discipline  
“ and worship, by which we hold ourselves obliged  
“ to walk; at least none made public and laid  
“ before the world, for their examination and dis-  
“ cussion †.” Yes, Sir, we have an excellent  
COMMON RULE of *discipline and worship*, by  
E 3 which

\* Letter II. page 4.

† Ibid.

which all our Churches *held themselves obliged to walk*, even *the same* which CHRIST and *his Apostles*, the great founders of the *Christian Church*, originally drew up, published, and established for it; and which they left as a *common rule*, the ONLY common rule, and a PERFECT common rule, for the use of all future ages, *viz.* the HOLY SCRIPTURES: *This* therefore you may discuss with all the freedom you please.

But to descend to some of the many instances in which you much *misrepresent* us. Your very great mistake, as to our *imposing* SITTING at the *Lord's-supper*, I have shewn in my former Letter. You farther affirm—"That it is generally held amongst us, that the sacrament is for none but *perfect* and *consummate* Christians, such as can give a particular account of their conversion\*." Here you *walk*, Sir, *without light*. There is not a *single Church*, I am persuaded, amongst the *Dissenters* in the whole kingdom, hardly a *single person*, who hath *this notion* of the sacrament. We *universally* hold, that *every* sincere Christian has a right to the *Lord's-table*.

"As to the duty of *fasting*, you say, if you are not *mightily deceived*, it is thrown away amongst us. You have not met with any sermons or treatises of our ministers, shewing the obligations, and pressing its practice upon the people; nor have you ever heard of its being practised, even by the strictest and devoutest amongst us †." You are *mightily deceived*, Sir, a great deal *too mightily*, for one who sets up for so severe a *sensor* of his brethren. Amongst many others, I refer you only to a most excellent discourse on *fasting*, in *Bennet's Christian Oratory*,  
Vol.

\* Lett. I. page 52.

† Letter I. pages 65, 66.

Vol. II. which I am sure, you cannot read without admiring it, blushing, and condemning your own temerity.

You are pleased to give us also a very *grave* and *severe* reprehension for *standing*, and not *kneeling* at our public prayers, and say, “It is little less than *imposed* upon our people, insomuch, that should any one presume to kneel in our Churches, we should *certainly* censure and condemn him for it.\* — That *your Church* has as good right to impose *kneeling* in the public worship upon her members, as *Dissenters* have to impose it upon their children and servants in their *family* devotions †.” — And that we ALWAYS practise it in *private* †.” You are extremely unhappy, Sir, in your intelligence about this *strange* people, whom you have taken upon you to *reprehend*. How came you to know, what their posture of worship *always* is in PRIVATE? Have they taken you into their *closets*? For my own part, I pretend not to have been much with them at their secret devotions, and therefore will not *pronounce* with *such assurance* as you do upon the point; but am very strongly persuaded they practise *variously* in this matter, and do not *always* kneel.

As to their *Families* and *Churches*, though I have been present *at prayers* in a great number of both, (which you, I presume, Sir, never have been) I assure you, I never once saw nor heard any thing like *the impositions* you mention. In their *family* devotions some *stand*, and some *kneel*, according as their inclination and convenience serves.

\* Letter II. pages 65, 67.

† Letter I. page 28.

‡ Letter II. page 68.

serve. And in their *public assemblies*, many kneel at prayer, I believe, the whole kingdom over, without it ever entering into the thoughts of their *fellow-worshippers*, to take the least offence thereat.

You tell me, “ you can name a considerable congregation amongst us, which is greatly scandalized—and has taken a great and general offence, at one of its members kneeling at public prayer\*.” But as in many other points, Sir, it is very *notorious* you have been *ill served* by your *informers*, as to our customs and worship; you must give me leave to think, that they have *here* also made *too free* with your credulity. That we have *weak* brethren amongst us, and those not a few, I am very ready to own. But a congregation, a *considerable* congregation too, so weak as to take a *great* and *general* offence at such a trifle as this! You must excuse me, if I cannot easily admit it. I think you will do justice, Sir, to name the congregation, that it may either *purge* itself of the reproach, or stand *corrected* before the world, for its *unchristian* and *imposing* temper; and learn to act more consistent with that *liberty* and *right* of private judgment, which as *Dissenters* they profess.

No, Sir, *Dissenters* are not for *binding*, where God has *left free*. They are *our brethren*, of another Church, who think themselves capable of *mending* CHRIST’S *institutions*; and not content to use them in the *plainness* and *simplicity* in which DIVINE WISDOM left them, must needs *embellish* and *improve* them by *additions* of their own.

These

\* Letter II. page 68.

These additions of your own, for instance, KNEELING at public prayers, you are so surprisingly sanguine as to represent as “ a great improvement of public worship, and as adding a natural splendor and beauty to it—that our worship is debased for want of it—that kneeling is a more humble and honourable posture—much more expressive of our profound reverence of GOD.—And the humble posture of kneeling, NATURE itself so plainly dictates, and so powerfully prompts us to, that a man, if he were left to himself, whenever — he makes his requests known to GOD, will hardly do it in any other—unless when some affected restraint is laid upon him\*.” How towering a flight ! You do not pretend to say, that either CHRIST or his Apostles, ever enjoined, or constantly, or mostly, used KNEELING at public prayer ; you mention several instances from Scripture, where STANDING was the posture of some of the most solemn addresses to Almighty GOD—Abraham stood before the Lord†, when he offered up that humble intercession for Sodom. Of the Levites and all the Priests, it is particularly recorded, that they stood up ; and all the people are also called upon to stand up, and bless the Lord their God, in that solemn address to Heaven, Nehem. ix. 2, 3, 4, 5. An address of deep humiliation, confession, deprecation, and covenanting with GOD, one of the most solemn that stands upon sacred record ; it is here no less than four several times expressly mentioned, that STANDING was the posture in which their worship was offered up. Moses and Samuel are represented as standing before GOD, when making their most humble and impor-

\* Letter II. pages 66, 67, 69, 73. † Gen. 18. 22.

importunate intercessions with him, *Jer. xv. 1.* When our SAVIOUR in his parable represents *two men praying in the Temple* STANDING is the posture in which he describes them, *Luke xviii. 10, 11.* Yea, himself in express words has, if not actually enjoined, yet most fully declared his approbation of this gesture, *Mark xi. 25.* *When ye STAND praying, forgive.* Finally, when the primitive Christians, it is acknowledged on all hands, every Lord's-day, and at all other times betwixt *Easter and Whitsuntide*, universally prayed STANDING, and NEVER *kneeled* at their public devotions. (Consequently, by the way, not at the *Lord's-supper.* "*Die Dominico nefas ducimus, &c.* says *Tertullian* \* : *On the LORD'S-DAY we account it A SIN to worship KNEELING; which custom we also observe from Easter to Whitsuntide.*"—With all this evidence glaring full in your face, Sir, you have the assurance, shall I call it, or does it deserve some other name, very smartly to reprehend us for STANDING at our public prayers; and to call it a debasement of our worship—to affirm that kneeling is a MORE humble and honourable posture—MUCH MORE expressive of our profound Reverence of GOD.—A great IMPROVEMENT of publick Worship, and that it adds a natural BEAUTY and SPLENDOR to it—Surprisingly enthusiastic! What *Abraham*, and *Moses*, and *Samuel*, and *Nehemiah*, and all the *Priests*, and *Jewish people*, DEBASE the divine worship, when they STOOD before GOD, and made their solemn addresses to him! Yea, what CHRIST himself too debase it, by directing men to STAND praying!

Had

\* De Coron. Milt. page 340.

Had you happened, Sir, to have been of the Council of *the Apostles*, you could have helped them to establish *Christian worship* upon a *greatly improved, a more beautiful and perfect plan*; and have INJOINED this MORE *humble and honourable posture*, this ADDITIONAL *splendor and beauty* to public prayer, which it never came into *their minds* to INJOIN the Disciples.—But as our Bibles at present stand; and GOD and *Jesus Christ* have left us at full liberty to offer up our prayers either *standing* or *kneeling*, you will excuse us if we are not so struck with your *additional beauty* as to give ourselves up blindfold to its charms.

But it seems we are *inconsistent*, in condemning *some* of your ceremonies, when at the same time we readily conform ourselves to *others*: Yea, have *many ceremonies* allowed and practised amongst ourselves. “Such, you aver, we have, tho’ we seem not to know it: Such as uncovering our head when we enter either your churches, or our own Meetings\*.” But you are still “*walking in the dark*,” Sir, as you justly represent yourself, “and *encountering with ghosts*.” The Dissenters have no such custom of *uncovering their heads* when they enter into their *Meeting-Places*, unless in time of worship; no notion of paying reverence to *timber* and *walls*; no Ministers amongst them who have *sense* or *grace* enough to *consecrate* a piece of ground: And when they use this ceremony at entering your Churches, it is, I assure you, purely as a *civil*, not at all as a *religious* ceremony; a *compliment* paid, not in the least to the *building*, but entirely to our *good brethren*, whom we would not needlessly offend.

“ *Kneeling* ”

\* Letter III. page 7.

“ *Kneeling at ordination,*” the next ceremony you mention, tho’ generally used amongst us, was never I believe *imposed*. If the person to be ordained scrupled *that posture*, he would, without all doubt, be permitted *to stand*.

As for “ the *secret ceremonies* which you *suspect*, “ but will not positively affirm, to pass at striking “ the covenant betwixt us and our Pastors,” which you once and again mention, let your *suspensions* on that head, Sir, give you no further pain. I assure you I neither know, nor have ever heard of any such *covenanting* now practised amongst us : And am persuaded, that of all our Churches, not one in five hundred observe any such thing.

“ In balance against your *surplice* you put, what “ you call, the ceremony of our *long sweeping* “ *Cloak* \*.” But the least attention would have shewn the *two cases* to be far from *parallel*. Our Ministers are at full Liberty either to *use* or *disuse* the *one* : Are yours *so* as to the *other* ? Did you ever hear of any learned pious *pastors* amongst us silenced, rejected, and cruelly imprisoned for refusing the *sweeping Cloak* ? But, have you never heard of your *Hoopers, Sampsons, Humpherys*, and an hundred other Ministers, men of distinguished learning and usefulness in *your Church*, who have been *swept* from their stations in it ; silenced, confined, and grievously harrassed *only* for scrupling your *surplice* and *cap* ? Have you never heard of *many Churches* forsaken, and shut up in *London*, and of numerous congregations, both in city and country, deprived for a long while of sacraments and public worship, by the rigorous imposition of *your habits* on their *Ministers* ? And if the most cele-

\* Letter III. page 42.

celebrated divine was now to offer to officiate in any of your Churches, but refused to wear a *surplice*, must he not, by your *canons*, be set aside and refused? Had *our cloak* been the occasion of a thousandth part of the distractions and confusions in the Church, as *your surplice* has been, and swept so many worthy persons from their ministry and livings in it; we should have had the grace, I hope, soon to treat it as a *besome of destruction*, and to have doomed it to the flames.

But “the giving the *Christian-name* in baptism, to the person baptised, you very seriously urge as another solid argument of *ceremonies* amongst us,” and ask, “Is it not an *addition* to the sacrament? Is it not an *imposition*? You add, “Now I see you smile \*.” Excuse me, Sir, I could not help it! your argument is quite *new*, and really surprised me with its solidity and weight. Yes, Sir, I own it an *addition*, an *imposition*, and a very *ridiculous* one too. And should any Minister of ours pretend to *add*, or to *impose*, this ceremony upon his people; and forbid them to call the child by *its name* till it was baptised; you may be assured he would soon meet with the disregard and contempt his impertinence deserved. When you baptise *adult* persons, do you *give* their names in that ceremony? Or do you not *only* call them by names *before* given? The same, I apprehend, is the case as to *children* amongst us.

As for the *ceremonies in marriage*; these, you justly observe, we consider only as *civil* ceremonies, and the Priest as a *civil officer*, appointed by the Magistrate to officiate in this affair. And whatever *decent rites* the Magistrate prescribes in matters of a *civil* nature, we think it our duty re-

G

verently

\* Letter III. page 10.

verently to observe. But, “ the Magistrate pre-  
 “ scribe !” you with astonishment reply. “ For  
 “ God’s sake how does the Magistrate here pre-  
 “ scribe the rites and ceremonies of *marriage*,  
 “ more than the *other* rites and ceremonies of the  
 “ Church \*!” But could not a gentleman of your  
 discernment perceive a difference here ? Is the form  
 of *marriage* any where *instituted* by our SAVIOUR ;  
 or a part of *Christian worship* ; as baptism and the  
 Lord’s-supper are ? May we not therefore own the  
 power of the *civil Magistrate* to appoint *rites* and  
*forms* for the celebration of the *one*, but not so as  
 to the *other* ? By prescribing rites of *marriage*, the  
 Magistrate acts in character, and rules in *his own*  
*kingdom* : but by *authoritatively* prescribing rites in  
*baptism* and the *Lord’s-supper*, we humbly apprehend,  
 he extends beyond the sphere assigned him  
 by GOD, and attempts to rule in CHRIST’S *king-*  
*dom* : and that therefore here we are *to obey GOD,*  
*rather than man.*

You farther ask with surprize—“ What *civil*  
 “ ceremonies in the Church of GOD ! in the midst  
 “ of the administration of a divine institution : in-  
 “ termixed with pastoral exhortations, holy pray-  
 “ ers, solemn benedictions †.”—— But, why,  
 Sir, so astonished ? Did you never *take an OATH*  
 in a civil court of judicature ? And did not the  
 person who administered this SACRED *rite*, give  
 you a *pastoral exhortation*, accompanied with an  
*holy prayer*, and a *solemn benediction*, piously invo-  
 king on you GOD’S blessing and help ? And as  
 to the PLACE, which you call the *Church of GOD*,  
 where *marriage* is solemnized ; you might have  
 pleased to remember, that the *consecration* of tim-  
 ber, and the *sanctity* of walls, is a point too sub-  
 lime

\* Letter III. page 6.

† Ibid.

time for *Dissenters* understandings ; and that in their opinion all places are alike holy, and that no building on earth merits the high honour of being called the *Church of God*.

The same reply we make as to the *ceremonies of burial*, our compliance with which you also briskly *retort* upon us. Is *burial of the dead*, Sir, a *CHRISTIAN institution* ? Any part of the religion or worship of *Christ* ? Is it not purely a *political or civil thing* ? Yes ; and as such *only* we view it ; and consider the person who officiates, as one *appointed* to this office, *directed, instructed, and maintained* by the *STATE*.

But as you are here professedly “ *answering our great and popular objections,*” how came you, Sir, to slide over, in consummate silence, one of the *greatest and most popular*, to this *office of burial* ? which, indeed, is not *ours* only, but an objection of some of the most illustrious members of your own Church. Were you conscious the *objected passages* were incapable of defence, and therefore prudently let them drop ?

There are but *three cases*, you know, Sir, in which your Church *refuses* this solemn *office of burial*, viz. to those who die unbaptised, to self-murderers, and to those who are under sentence of the greater excommunication. As for *all other persons* which are brought to the church-yard, it very strictly *commands* you, even under pain of *suspension*, by *canon LXVIII*, that you use over them the form prescribed by the *Common-Prayer*. Now, hence it comes to pass, that over some of the most *abandoned and profligate* of mankind ; over men who have been cut down in a course of open impiety by a sudden and untimely death ; or who even fell by the hand of *Justice* for some black and  
atrocious

atrocious crime ; over *these*, I say, your Church, and I say it with astonishment, directs and commands you most solemnly to declare, *That almighty GOD of his GREAT MERCY has taken to himself the soul of this your dear brother.* You give GOD hearty thanks that it hath pleased him to deliver him out of the miseries of this sinful world : And you pray GOD, that when you yourselves shall depart out of this life, you may REST IN CHRIST, as your HOPE is this your brother doth. This is what your Church commands you solemnly to say over EVERY person brought to be buried, the three cases above excepted. So that if the man happened to be killed in the very act of committing murder, adultery, or a rape : Or for either of these crimes dies upon the gallows an impenitent hardened wretch, whom vengeance suffered not to live ; yet concerning him you are to declare, that *Almighty GOD hath in GREAT MERCY taken him to himself* : Tho' he died a victim to public justice, and was taken away in wrath. You are to give GOD hearty thanks, that he hath taken this your BROTHER out of the miseries of this sinful world : Tho' you have the strongest reason to believe, that he is gone down to realms of greater misery below. And you are to profess before GOD, that you HOPE the man RESTS IN CHRIST, and pray that you yourselves may rest in Christ in the same manner as this your brother doth : when you have all the grounds in the world to think he died in his sins, and is therefore not gone to be with CHRIST, where nothing that is defiled can ever be admitted. Strange ! and extremely shocking ! what can the people think, Sir ! what must Infidels and Deists think ! when they hear you in the morning denouncing from the Scriptures certain death and destruction from the presence of  
 GOD,

GOD, to all vicious and corrupt persons ; and assuring them that *without holiness NO MAN shall see the Lord* : But in the evening from the *Common-Prayer*, shall hear YOU, the SAME PERSON, declaring *before GOD* your HOPE of the *eternal happiness* of one of the most debauched and profligate men your parish affords ; and sending him hence with all the lofty expressions of confidence and hope, as you would a person of the most shining and exemplary life.

Do you imagine, Sir, People do not think ? Can you wonder DEISM prevails ? That the *Priesthood* is ridiculed ? And that your *good sermons* are no more effectual to reform a corrupt world ? To me this appears (and doubtless it does the same to thousands of your own Church) a most indecent prostitution of your *sacred* character and office ; a trifling and prevarication in things of everlasting moment ; and a fatal snare to the souls of men : Who seeing their debauched neighbour dismissed to the other world with such *confidence* of his good estate, suppress their just fears and say, *I shall have peace, tho' I add drunkenness to thirst.*

But there is a further very *strange* and *extraordinary* circumstance attending this matter, *viz.* That it makes your Church perform, not to say a *miracle*, but something very like it, if not greater than that, for it *damns* and *saves* the same individual persons. Whom it *damns* when *living*, it *saves* when *dead*. *Arians* and *Socinians*, you know, Sir, your Church declares WITHOUT DOUBT to *perish everlastingly*. But let these very men *die*, and your Church as solemnly declares that GOD *bath* in GREAT MERCY *taken them to himself*, and that it HOPES *they REST IN CHRIST*. Can any thing be more transcendent and marvellous

than this ! That the man whom I pronounce WITHOUT DOUBT *to be damned*, I yet HOPE *that he is saved, i. e.* I hope *without hope*.

But you would establish not only the *use*, but the Church's *divine right*, of MAKING *ceremonies* from the instance of the *holy kiss*\*. “The *kiss of charity* used in the Apostolic Church, you ask, “was it a rite of divine appointment, or was it “not ?” I answer you, that as I apprehend this kiss of charity cannot properly be called *a divine institution*, nor be said to be *ordained* by the Apostles. The greeting with a kiss, was an ancient established usage, not only amongst the *Jews*, but the *Gentile* nations also. This usage therefore, or ceremony, was not ordained by the Apostles, but only by their advice regulated and directed to a moral and religious end. It is as if they had said, It is your custom when you meet, to salute each other with a kiss, see that it be a pure, a chaste, or holy kiss, a token of unfeigned charity, friendship, and peace.

“But if this ceremony of the *holy kiss*, was not “of divine appointment (which probably, you say, “is the truth of the case) but a merely ecclesiastical prudential institution, ordained by the Apostles without any precept from the Lord, or any “particular direction of the *Holy Spirit*.”—Then, Sir, I without the least hesitation say, it was not at all obligatory as *a law* upon the consciences of *Christians* ; they might, or they might not practise it, without sinning against God. Even the *Apostles* had *no dominion* over the faith and practice of *Christians*, but what was given them by the *special* presence and spirit of CHRIST, the *only* Lawgiver, Lord, and Sovereign of the Church.  
They

\* Letter II. page 2.

They were to teach only the things which he should command them, Whatever they *injoined* under the influence of *that Spirit*, was to be considered and obeyed as the *injunction* of CHRIST. But if they *injoined* any thing in the Church ( which I can by no means admit) *without* the peculiar influence and direction of *this Spirit*, ( *i. e.* as merely fallible unassisted men ) in that case their injunctions had *no authority* over conscience : Every man's *own reason* had authority to examine and discuss their injunctions, and as they approved themselves to his *private judgment*, to observe them, or not. Should we grant then what you ask—" That the Church in the present age, has the same authority and power as the Church in the apostolic age, considered as not being under any immediate and extraordinary guidance of the Holy Ghost."—What will you gain by it ? This same authority and power, is, you see, Sir, really *no power nor authority* at all.

I proceed next " to the point of DISCIPLINE, the want of which, you say, is objected to *your Church* ; but you will represent the real state of *it*, and then shew that *we* really as much want *it ourselves* \*." We will attend *your own* account of it, which to be sure is not too severe. You acknowledge " that the *discipline* of the Church is of *great moment* towards the edification of its members ; and that the fault is *unpardonable* when Church governors let it fall, through a supine carelessness and neglect.—That there is a great prostration of discipline in the Church of *England*—That it is ruined amongst *you*—That the distempers of the times are evidently too strong for it—That those who sit at

" the

\* Letter III. page 12.

“ the helm, find it prudent not to bear up too  
 “ much against the impetuosity of the storm, but  
 “ to give away till the madness of the people be  
 “ still — That the discipline of the Church has not  
 “ been carried to any degree of perfection — And  
 “ now lies under a *general* relaxation. — That your  
 “ people are often indulged in all their unreason-  
 “ able demands and disorderly ways, to prevent  
 “ their putting in execution their threats, *that they*  
 “ *will go to the meeting* — And finally, that you  
 “ have at least the shadow and form of *discipline*,  
 “ and trust in GOD that *these dry bones will one*  
 “ *day live\**.”

This, it must be owned, is very ingenuously  
 and frankly spoken. And can you blame then the  
*Dissenters*, Sir, for joining themselves to *Churches*,  
 where that *godly discipline* is observed, which you  
 confess to be of so great moment to *the edification*  
 of Christian people ; and which your Church is  
*continually* WISHING, but never attempts to *have*  
*restored*. But here you *retort*, and intimate as great  
 a want of discipline amongst us. “ What are  
 “ there no scandalous sinners, you ask †, no for-  
 “ nicators, adulterers, extortioners, &c. received  
 “ into your Churches ! I must beg your pardon if  
 “ I demur upon this. For I could never perceive  
 “ the doors of the meeting were ever shut against  
 “ any. And if such profligate persons be not ad-  
 “ mitted to *sit at the Lord's-table*, they need not  
 “ fear being admitted to all other parts of your  
 “ worship.”

And is not this, Sir, exactly right ? Ought not  
 our Church-doors to be always *kept open*, that  
 who-

\* Letter III. pages 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, 28. † Ibid. p. 23.

whoever will may come, and be a witness to our way of worship. Such *profligate* persons therefore may come, if they please, and hear their sins *reproved*, and be *exhorted* to repentance and amendment of life. They are *then*, where they ought to be, under the preaching of the word; the *means* appointed by God, to convince and reclaim the profligate and corrupt. Were not *the doors* of the Church at *Corinth* kept *open* in the *Apostles* days, for *Infidels* to come in, and be *present* at their worship, *Vid. 1 Cor. xiv. 23.* But to *the table of the LORD*, to partake of the children's bread, you seem convinced that in *our Churches*, such profligate persons are not suffered to come. And is not this the *true order* and *discipline* of the Christian Church? But—Is it the same, Sir, in *your Church*? Are not some of the most profane and abandoned of men, rakes, debauchees, blasphemers of God, and scoffers at all religion, often seen upon their knees around *your communion-table*, eating the *children's bread*, and partaking of the *holy elements* to qualify for a *post*? Dare your Ministers refuse them! No, they dare not refuse the most impious *blasphemer* the *three kingdoms* afford, when he comes to *demand it* as a qualification for an office in the army or fleet.

And if in any *other case*, the Priest *denies* the sacrament to the most *infamous* sinner dwelling in his parish, if the man, upon an appeal to the *ecclesiastical court*, can secure the favour of the *Lay-Chancellor*, he may securely defy both the Minister and the Bishop to keep him from the Lord's-table. The *Chancellor's* determination shall stand in law, though *contrary* to the *Bishop's*; and the Minister be liable to a *suspension*, for refusing compliance; and if he is *contumacious*, and will not  
give

give the man the sacrament, even to *excommunication* itself. How, Sir, do you reconcile *this* with your affirming, “ That your *parish priest* has as much power as any *Presbyterian* or *congregational Minister*, to repel open and scandalous sinners from the Lord’s-table\* ?” Or how with your “ Representing the *Lay-Chancellor* as a person *only assumed* by the Bishop, not to do any act that is *purely spiritual*, but only to be his *assistant* in his ecclesiastical and judicial proceedings †.”

Is not the Chancellor *supreme* and *uncontrouled* in his court, not liable to be restrained or directed by the *Bishop* in his *judicial proceedings* ? Does he not *finally* and *absolutely* determine on cases of *excommunication*, *sovereignly direct* who shall be *received* to, and who *cast out* from Christian fellowship and worship at the *Table of the LORD* ? And is not *this* an act as *purely spiritual*, as important and momentous, as any done in the Church ? Must not *his sentence* take place without controul, and is the *Minister* in publishing it any other than *his servant*, appointed by law to put it in execution ?

Will you please to hear, Sir, the Sentiments of a great *Prelate* ‡ of your own Church, upon the point in debate. — “ If there be any thing in the office of a Bishop to be challenged *peculiar* to themselves, certainly it should be this (speaking of *excommunication*) yet this is in a manner quite relinquished to their *Chancellors* ; Laymen, who have no more capacity to sentence or absolve a sinner, than to dissolve the Hea-

“ vens

\* Lett. III. page 33. † Ibid. page 38. ‡ Dr. Crofts, Bishop of Hereford, *Naked Truth*, &c. page 58.

“ vens or the earth. And this pretended power  
 “ of the *Chancellor*, is sometimes purchased with  
 “ a sum of money. *Their money perish with them!*  
 “ Good God ! what a horrid abuse is this of the  
 “ divine authority ? But this notorious transgres-  
 “ sion is excused, as they think, by this, that a  
 “ Minister called the *Bishop's Surrogate*, but is in-  
 “ deed the *Chancellor's servant*, chosen, called,  
 “ and placed there by him, to be his crier in the  
 “ court, no better ; that when he hath examined,  
 “ heard, and sentenced the cause, then the Mi-  
 “ nister, forsooth, pronounces the sentence. Just as  
 “ if the Rector of a parish church should exclude  
 “ any of his congregation, and lock him out of the  
 “ church, then comes the Clerk, shews and jingles  
 “ the keys, that all may take notice that he is ex-  
 “ cluded. And by this his authority, the *Chan-  
 “ cellor* takes upon him to sentence not only *Lay-  
 “ men*, but *Clergymen* also brought into his court  
 “ for any delinquency. And in the court of *Arches*,  
 “ sentence even *Bishops* themselves.”

“ I remember when the Bishop of *Wells*, hear-  
 “ ing of a cause corruptly managed, and coming  
 “ into court to rectify it, the Chancellor Dr.  
 “ *Duck*, fairly and mannerly bid him *be gone*, for  
 “ he had no power there to act any thing ; and  
 “ therewithal pulled out his patent, sealed by this  
 “ Bishop's predecessor, which frightened the poor  
 “ Bishop out of the court.” — Behold ! this is the  
 person, Sir, whom you have the courage to repre-  
 sent as only assumed by the Bishop, not to do any act  
 that is purely SPIRITUAL, but ONLY to be his AS-  
 SISTANT in his judicial proceedings.

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But as we are now upon the head of *discipline*, and the law called *the TEST* is a battery which has beat down *all its fences* around your Church, and you are a zealous advocate for *that LAW*, you will permit me here, Sir, to enlarge a little upon *that point*: And to ask—How you can bear to see the terrible desolation it has made of your *godly discipline*, without resentment and grief? Can you be jealous, Sir, for the prosperity and honour of your Church, and yet *patiently* view it lying in this *polluted* and *common* state? Its inclosures broken up, and a way opened *by law* for the most flagitious of men, for *Atheists*, professed *Deists*, and the most *open* and *avowed* finners, to lie securely in its bosom, to suck at its breasts, to be numbered and cherished amongst its holiest and most beloved children, and to be acknowledged before the world as honest and good *Christians*, by being *suffered* to come boldly to the *table of the LORD*.

But why do I say *suffered*? Does not your Church by the *force* of this law, even *compel them to come in*? Many of the unhappy persons, conscious of their *unfitness*, would gladly *draw back*. Knowing themselves perhaps, either to *disbelieve* the truth, or else to *live in open violation* of the laws of *Christianity*, they are loth to add to their other crimes this *prevarication* with *Almighty God*, and affront to *JESUS CHRIST*, and thereby to run a dreadful risque of *eating and drinking judgment to themselves*. But, their *All* lies at stake: They must *qualify*, or be given up to beggary and want. Away therefore with *scruples*! They rush to the Lord's-table, and partake of the *sacred-elements* with consciences and characters all covered with guilt.

You

You will say, perhaps, it is their own fault, they might have *refused* to come. They might, indeed, if they would have lost their posts, their subsistence, their bread.—But can *the Church* reasonably expect such sacrifices as these, from men of corrupt minds? Is *she* then in *no fault*, in laying men under such strong, almost *invincible* temptations, to this odious hypocrisy and profanation of *holy things*? Is she not highly culpable, for opening her bosom to receive men of *impure characters* to all the *sacred* privileges, liberties, and honours, which belong only to *sincere Christians*? Yea, for owning before the world as worthy and good Christians, *persons* whom the world sees, and whom *the Church* herself cannot but see to blaspheme the name of CHRIST, and to live in avowed contempt of his authority and laws?

And what relief, Sir, has the unhappy Minister, of whom as *Steward in God's House*, it is required that he be found FAITHFUL, and who is to answer for his conduct to his great MASTER hereafter? What relief, I ask, has he, when the most *veteran debauchee*, shall come and demand from him *these pledges* of Christian fellowship, and of God's paternal love? Truly, none at all: He must receive him as a child of God, and a dearly beloved brother to the *table of CHRIST*, or have an *action* commenced against him, and be condemned perhaps in damages more than he is worth.

As much therefore as you are concerned for the honour of *the Church*, and for the interest, reputation, and comfort of its *Clergy*, so much you ought to wish and zealously promote the repeal of *this law*. A law, which whatever was its original intention, hath in its application let in like a

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*floodgate* upon your Church, the dregs of the human race. A law, which though at first designed only the more effectually to prevent all danger to the constitution from *Papists*, hath by an unnatural perversion of it, actually broken down *all distinctions* established by divine authority, betwixt *sacred* and *profane* : Has thrust Infidels and Profligates into the *most holy places* of your Temple, and brings Deists and Debauchees to eat at the Lord's table amongst the Children of his House—Let me ask you, Sir, in the *name of CHRIST*, our common Master and Judge, doth not *this law*, as now enforced, occasion the most notorious *prostitution* of a holy sacrament of his religion ? Is not its avowed and open tendency and use, to *pervert* an institution of *our SAVIOUR* to *ends*, not only quite different, but even opposite to *those* for which He appointed it ? Is it not making *THAT* a *political* Instrument to *divide* Christians, which *CHRIST* instituted as a *religious* instrument to *coalesce* and *unite* them ? Must it not be highly odious and offensive to *Almighty GOD*, to see an *holy sacrament*, which his wisdom hath ordained for spiritual and religious purposes only, thus prostituted, perverted, made an engine and tool of *state*, employed to strengthen and perpetuate *differences* amongst good Christians ; and thereby debased, not to *worldly* only and *secular*, but to much *worse* than *worldly*, ends ?

As to myself, Sir, I assure you, though I think *this law* to be a most unrighteous restraint upon us, and an undoubted violation of our natural rights ; yet I am far from being persuaded that its *repeal* would be of the least service to our interest as *Dissenters*. I doubt, and have often thought, that there is too much truth in what you say — “ *That*  
“ *high*

“ *high trusts, public offices, and court-employments,*  
 “ *would be extremely apt to corrupt us, and to make*  
 “ *practical religion more visibly decay,*” and that it would really rather injure than strengthen our interest. I have never therefore, as a *Dissenter*, been at all solicitous for the repeal. No, Sir, so far from this, that could I allow myself to *hate* and *wish ill* to the Church, I would most heartily wish it pertinaciously to hold fast this shameful corruption. I would wish it, by no means, to give up this open profanation of the authority and name of *Christ*; this prostitution and perversion of an holy sacrament of his religion; this destruction of all *discipline*; this open door for the reception of the most abominable and profane to its most *holy mysteries* and *rites*: This, if I wished it ill, I would earnestly wish your Church *inflexibly* to continue: not doubting but, if long continued, it will surely at length bring down upon it the heavy *anger of Almighty God*; the just resentment and jealousy of a despised and insulted SAVIOUR; and the deep scorn and contempt of all wise and thinking men.

Whilst *this law* continues, Sir, in its present application, yourself cannot but see, that your *discipline* must necessarily lie scandalously *prostrate, ruined, relaxed*. It is impossible you can maintain hardly the *shadow* and *form*, much less the *spirit* of primitive ecclesiastic government. Your *holy things* must lie *common, vilely trodden under foot*. Of all persons in the land therefore, *the Clergy* should be the *first*, to labour with all their might the repeal of this *unhappy law*. A law, which cannot but be supposed terribly to bear hard upon, and wound the consciences of many of them: and which subjects them to so servile a prostitution

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of their character, as cannot but load it with great infamy and reproach.

You tell me\*, “ That you will engage, *simple* “ *as you sit here*, that this law shall be repealed ; “ and our incapacities removed, when we will lay “ down our enmity to the Church, that is in short “ to one half part of the constitution.—— For “ *Church and State* here in *England* are so incor- “ porated and united, that they have, like the “ married pair, the same friends and enemies, and “ stand or fall together.” I cannot pretend to say, Sir, how *simple you sat there*, when you gave us this assurance, but I would to God you were able to *stand up*, and make it good. For,

1. Are you sure that *the Church* is really any *essential* part at all, much less the *half part* of the *British CONSTITUTION* : Or, that *Church and State* are so married and interwoven, that they must stand or fall together ?—— Many, Sir, besides Dissenters, will think, that this is a very partial and wrong representation of our most excellent frame of government. Let any one in his imagination *annihilate* the form of our *present Church*. Let him suppose its Liturgy, Clergy, Articles, Canons, with all its ceremonies and rites, entirely *vanished* from the land : its *immense revenues* applied in ease of our heavy taxes, and for the payment of the public debts ; and Preachers paid only by voluntary contributions, as they are amongst *us*. Would *the STATE* hereby sustain so *essential* a loss, that it could not thenceforward *possibly subsist* ? What ? would the *British* monarchy be overthrown—Our courts of judicature be shut up—the course of law be stopped—Parliaments no  
more

\* Letter I. page 11.

more meet—commerce and trade stagnate—because what you call *the Church* is no more? Romantic and absurd! No: The frame of our happy government, both *civil* and *military*, might remain the *very same*: And you will give me leave to observe on the present occasion, that in one part of this kingdom, those who profess themselves to be of your Church, as to its external polity and ceremonies, are almost to a man inveterate avowed enemies of our happy civil constitution, and have risen in an impious rebellion against his present Majesty, and joined with *Spaniards, French, Italians*, and home-bred Papists, in their wicked attempts to subvert the Protestant religion and liberties.

2. This *destruction* of the Church of England, is what we by no means wish. May God in mercy prevent it, by causing her *to see, in this her day, the things belonging to her peace*— We bear it no enmity; *God is our witness*. We wish it from our souls, glory, prosperity, purity, peace: The glory of being formed according to the *perfect plan* of the primitive *apostolic* Church; purged of those things, which yourselves *know* to be *no parts* of the *religion of CHRIST*! We wish to see it *established* upon the catholic and *broad bottom*, upon which *alone* it can stand *firm*; even the *scriptural* foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, *Jesus Christ* himself being its *only* Lawgiver and King: and not upon the narrow basis on which it now rests, the *articles* and *canons*, the *institutions* and *inventions* of fallible and weak men; on which it can never be strongly and firmly fixt; which are all in the Apostle's language, *wood, hay, stubble*; whose end is *to be burnt*! We wish, Sir, that as it opens its bosom, and admits the vilest debauchees without demurring

murring at their open violation of *God's commands*; so it would charitably extend its arms to take us into its communion, without insisting upon our obedience to the injunctions and *commands* of MEN! Finally: we wish, that what GOD, in his wisdom, hath been pleased to leave *indifferent*, your Church also, in her wisdom, would be pleased to leave *the same*: that you would not attempt to *mend* the institutions of JESUS CHRIST: but would receive us into your Church upon the same terms and qualifications as CHRIST and *his Apostles* would have received us into theirs; and as GOD will receive us into Heaven at last!— This, Sir, I assure you, is all the *harm* we wish the Church: Judge then yourself, whether we bear it any *enmity*; and whether you are not now bound to take from us the *incapacities*, which you engaged, *simple as you sat there*, should on this condition be removed.

And you will give me leave, Sir, to think, and to hope, that there are numbers of your worthy *Clergy* of the same mind; that it would not at all lessen either the glory, stability, or prosperity of your Church, if its bounds were *thus enlarged*, to admit the *moderate Dissenters*, who sincerely desire so happy a *coalition*. Its enemies seem to multiply, and dark clouds to rise around it. *Popery* is making dangerous and mighty inroads on the one hand; and *Deism* on the other. There may come a time, as there formerly has been, when the frame of your Church being terribly threatned, we may again be considered as no despicable *auxiliaries*. But—If we cannot be so happy, as not to be *cast out* and *rejected* by our brethren; our consolation is this, that GOD *judgeth in the earth*; and that he will surely, at the *proper season*, vindicate and plead the cause of the injured and oppressed.

But

But to return to the point of *discipline*. To the acknowledged irregularity of Lay-Chancellors in your Church, you would fain “put in balance the “lay-preaching, lay-praying, and lay-ordination “allowed in our Churches.\*” To which I reply, that in the generality of our Churches there is no such thing either allowed, or ever done. Besides, if there were, Did not your *own Church* set us the pattern? In *the rubrick* before the general confession at the communion, did it not direct? — *Then shall this general confession be made, in the name of all those that are to receive, either by ONE OF THEM, or else by ONE OF THE MINISTERS.* How it came to be *omitted* in the late editions of the Common-prayer; whether it is done according to law, and by authority of Parliament; you, Sir, perhaps can say.

As to “Laymen being an essential part of all “our consistories and synods; sitting in them, and “having an equal vote with pastors in all business “—jointly with them *suspending* from the Lord’s- “table, &c. †” This, Sir, is no other than the *scriptural* apostolic plan. The aggrieved person is by our Lord, you know, *Mat. xviii. 17.* directed to *lay his Complaint before THE CHURCH, i. e.* the congregation of the faithful: and if the offender *neglected to hear THE CHURCH* (the congregation) admonishing and reproving him, he was then to be considered *as an heathen man and a publican*. So the corrupt member, at *Corinth*, was to be solemnly excommunicated. How? Not by any particular person, *Chancellor, or Bishop*; but it was to be the act of the *whole Church*. To the *whole body or congregation* of believers in that city,  
St.

\* Lett. III. page 38. † Ibid. page 37.

St. Paul gives directions, That when they were come together, they should deliver such an one to Satan.— And, that they should put away from amongst themselves that wicked person, 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 13. which excommunication he afterwards calls a punishment inflicted by the MANY, 2 Cor. ii. 6. So in that weighty and momentous question—How far the Gentiles were to submit to the law of Moses? The Elders and Brethren are joined with the Apostles in the decision and decree, Acts xv. 23. The Laity therefore have a right to be consulted, and to judge, in these important Church Matters, together with the Clergy; as they do, by their representatives, in what you call our Consistories. But with you, Sir, a single Layman (this is the absurdity which you seem willing to lose sight of) I repeat it, a single Layman, not only in distinction from, but in actual opposition to, the Bishop, and all the Church, both Clergy and Laity, has authority to judge and determine these important matters; and excommunicates, or absolves; shuts out, or lets in, according to his sole pleasure.

And here, Sir, let me stop a moment, and review the point in debate betwixt our good Dr. Watts and yourself. As for the lives of the Dissenters, tho' God knows we have nothing whereof to boast, but a great deal that calls for shame and humiliation on this head; yet whether we are quite so deep immersed in the deluge of profaneness, immorality, and vice, which spreads over the land.— Whether the blasphemies and oaths, the debauchery, riot, and guilty excesses, which too generally prevail, be in proportion to our number, found as rife amongst us, as amongst the members of the established church—must be left, and we freely

ly leave it, to the *impartial world* to judge betwixt us.

And as to *special OBLIGATIONS and ADVANTAGES for holy living*, which you contest strenuously with the *Doctor* to lie on your side; what hath been above observed on your several offices for *confirmation, absolution* of the sick, and *burial* of the dead, shews them, I humbly think, to have really an ill aspect upon the morals of your people; a dangerous and apparent tendency to cherish in them *false hopes*, and to give them *wrong notions* of the terms of acceptance, and of entrance into Heaven. And of the deplorable state in which your *discipline* lies (which you acknowledge to be of *great moment* to the edification of the Church) no enemy need to wish a *sadder* account than *yourself* have given of it. Upon the whole therefore, Sir, I cannot think, the worthy *Doctor* to deserve *censure*, for attempting to rouse *Dissenters* from the languishing state of religion amongst them, by putting them in mind of the *superior advantages* they enjoyed, and of the *peculiar obligations* under which they manifestly lay to greater *holiness of life*.

You seem not a little displeas'd \* at its having been urged as a reason for *our dissent*, "That your Church has shewn a persecuting spirit," and with some emotion ask— "Did the Church persecute at any time its own members? Were you or your fathers ever persecuted while they continued in the Church? And were they driven out of it by those persecutions?" I confess, Sir, you quite surprize me by such questions as these. What! are you only a stranger in *Britain*; and  
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\* Letter III. pages 60, 61.

have never heard of the bitter sufferings of our worthy fathers the PURITANS ? With what silencings, deprivations, fines, imprisonments, and lingering and cruel deaths for more than an *hundred years*, they were terribly harassed and oppressed by *your Church* ? Have you never read, with a *bleeding heart*, the unrelenting rigors of your Archbishops *Parker, Bancroft, Whitegift, Laud*, — under the *first* of whom above an *hundred* ; under the *second*, above *three hundred* pious and learned men, not only *Members* but *Ministers* of your Church, were silenced, suspended, admonished, deprived, many of them loaded with grievous and heavy fines, and shut up in filthy jails, where they expired slowly thro' penury and want ? And what were *the crimes* which drew this dreadful storm of *episcopal* vengeance on them ? Nothing but their scruples about the *Surplice* and the *Cap*, about *bowing* at the *name of Jesus*, about *Christ's* descent into Hell, and such like momentous points.

Have you never read, *Sir*, what desolations *Laud* brought upon *our fathers*, whilst yet in your Church ? How *many hundreds* of them were sequestred, driven from their livings, excommunicated, persecuted in the high-commission court, and forced to leave the kingdom for not *punctually conforming* to all the ceremonies and rites ; and not daring to tell their people, that they might *lawfully* profane *the sabbath* by gambols and sports ; and to publish from their pulpits the *permission* of the *King* to *break the command of God* — And yet you ask — “ *Were your fathers ever persecuted while they continued in the Church ?* ”

Pray ! what was it peopled the savage desarts of *North-America* ? Was it not the *thousands* of persecuted and oppressed families, who fled from *tyrannising*

rannising BISHOPS? Who not being suffered to worship quietly in their *native* country, as their consciences directed, sought a peaceful retreat from the rage of their *Fellow-Christians*, amongst more *hospitable Indians*.—To omit a thousand acts of cruelty, which thro' several successive reigns *our fathers* suffered not only *from*, but when actually *in, the Church*.—Did she not at last, in a most arbitrary and unrighteous manner, *cast out* at once above *two thousand* of them, excellent and pious Ministers, and abandon them, and their starving families, to great poverty and distress? To *heighten* that distress, did not your Church, by *another Act*, banish them *five miles* from any *city, burrough, or church* in which they had before served: and thereby put them at a *proper distance* from their acquaintance and friends, who might minister to their relief? Did she not by *another Act* forbid their meeting to *worship* God, any where but in your *own Churches*, under the penalties of heavy fines, imprisonments, and banishment to foreign lands?

In consequence of these *cruel Acts*, were not vast numbers of *pious Clergymen*, our forefathers, (once the *glory* of your Church) with multitudes of their people, laid in prisons amongst thieves and common malefactors, where they suffered the greatest hardships, indignities, oppressions; their houses were rudely rifled, their goods made a prey to hungry informers, and their families given up to beggary and want. “ An estimate was published of near *eight thousand* Protestant *Dissenters*, “ who had perished in prison in the reign only of “ *Charles II.* By severe penalties inflicted on “ them, for assembling to worship God, they suffered in their trade and estates in the compass of  
of

“ of a few years, at least two millions; and a list  
 “ of *sixty thousand* persons was taken, who had  
 “ suffered on a religious account, betwixt the *Re-*  
 “ *formation* and the *Revolution* \*.”—Behold, the  
 groans and the blood of myriads of oppressed *Puri-*  
*tans*, which cry beneath the altar, *How long, O*  
 LORD! But you are *deaf* to all their groans—And  
 with insensibility enough ask—*Were your fathers*  
*ever persecuted?*—

“ But the Presbyterian and Independent Churches  
 “ have each in their day of power, discovered as  
 “ much, and indeed *more* of that Spirit †.” Too  
 much of that *bad Spirit*, it is acknowledged, they  
 have *each* shewn. But surely there is *no comparison*  
 betwixt the cruelties and oppressions of your Church,  
 and of their’s. Your *little finger*, has been *thicker*  
*than their loins*.

“ But whatever the Church may have been  
 “ heretofore, you affirm, it is not *now* of a perfe-  
 “ cting spirit : and that there is not the least ap-  
 “ pearance of its having disquieted and oppressed  
 “ any on account of religion, for more now than  
 “ half a century ‡.” You had forgot, Sir, the  
 famous *Schism*, and *occasional Conformity Acts*,  
 which long since that date *much disquieted* and *op-*  
*pressed* us. The *Test* and the *Corporation Acts*,  
 had also slipped your memory, which at *this time*  
 deprive us of valuable and important privileges, to  
 which as faithful subjects, and members of the  
*Common-wealth*, we think we have a natural un-  
 doubted right.

The present Governors of your Church indeed,  
 (Thanks be to Heaven for it) are too wise and too  
 righteous,

\* Vid. Neal’s Hist. Purit. Vol. IV. p. 554. † Lett. 3.  
 page 61. ‡ Ibid.

righteous, to permit *persecution* to rage against us. But to *their* clemency and justice, Sir, not to the kind and benevolent *spirit* and *constitution* of your Church, I humbly apprehend we owe it, that we are not *at this time* severely persecuted and oppressed. If the *Act of Uniformity*, which to be sure you will call a *grand pillar* of your Church, is not a very unrighteous and persecuting *Act*, yet several of your *Canons* breathe, you know, Sir, a very cursing and persecuting *spirit*. By the *former*,

“Whoever shall declare or speak any thing in the  
 “derogation or depraving of the book of *Common-  
 “prayer*, or any thing therein contained, or any  
 “part thereof, he shall for the *first* offence suffer  
 “imprisonment for *one whole year*, without bail or  
 “mainprize; and for the second offence, be *im-  
 “prisoned DURING LIFE.*” Here I affirm no-  
 thing, but appeal to the whole world; I appeal,  
 Sir, to your own conscience, whether this be or be  
 not an *unjust and a persecuting Act*? By the lat-  
 ter, the *Canons*, “If any man shall affirm any of  
 “the things contained in the book of *Articles*,  
 “*Common-prayer*, or of *Ordination*; (in which  
 yet there are *many things* acknowledged by your  
 own most learned Divines, and I doubt not, by  
 yourself to need alteration;) your IV, V, VI, VII.  
 and VIIIth *Canons*, thunder out upon him a ter-  
 rible *excommunication, ipso facto\**, by which he

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is

\* Concerning an *Excommunication ipso facto*, our late learned *Primate, Dr. Wake*, has observed, “*First*, That there  
 “is no need in this case, of any *admonition*, as where the  
 “judge is to *give sentence*; but every one is to take *notice*  
 “of the *Law*, at his peril, and to see that he be not over-  
 “taken by it. And, *Secondly*, That there is no need of  
 “any *sentence* to be pronounced, which the *Canon* itself has  
 “passed; and which is by that means *already promulged*  
 “upon every one, as soon as he comes within the *obligation*

“ of

is to be cut off as a cankered and rotten member, and not to be restored, till he hath repented and publickly revoked his *wicked errors*. Doth not this favour, Sir, of an antichristian and persecuting spirit.

But you seem not, with submission, to have *yourself*, a just horror of the dreadful sin of *persecution*, and to be a little too deeply tinged with this *fanatical* spirit: For you call aloud for “the Church’s sword to fall upon *Heretics*,’ as well as upon *immoral persons*: and put me in mind, that by that “ancient discipline” (which you *wish* to see restored) “*open Scismatics* were treated almost as “*roughly* as any sort of offenders whatsoever\*.” By *Heretics*, no doubt, you mean those whom you take to be such: and by *open Scismatics*, those who are withdrawn from *your Church*: *These* you wish to see *roughly handled*, and to have the Church’s sword drawn upon them. But, God Almighty be praised! We live under so just a government, as is not, we hope, like to gratify this *cruel wish*.

Do you not remember, Sir, that the *first reformers* were counted *Heretics* and *open Scismatics*, by the top Churchmen amongst whom they lived? That JESUS CHRIST and his *Apostles* were counted the very same? That our *dear brethren* in *France*, who are now *bleeding* under the Church’s sword, are most confidently reckoned *such*, by all the *Rulers*

“of it. In other cases, a man may do things worthy of  
“censure, and yet behave himself so warily in them as to es-  
“cape the punishment of the Church, for want of *legal*  
“*evidence* to *convict* him. But *excommunicatio canonis*  
“*ligat etiam occulta delicta*. Where the Canon gives sen-  
“tence, there is *no escaping*; but the *conscience* of every  
“man becomes *obliged* by it, as soon as ever he is sensible,  
“that he has done that which was forbidden, under the  
“pain of *such* an *excommunication*.” *Appeal in Behalf, of*  
*the King’s Supremacy*, page 22.

\* Letter III. pages 12, 21.

lers and Priests there? But is it fit that these *Heretics* should be thus *roughly handled*? Or, is it *those only*, whom you are pleased to call by *that name*, who merit these *rough* measures? Whenever, Sir, you shall produce your patent from Heaven, constituting you *JUDGE of HERSEY*, and shall be able *authoritatively* and *infallibly* to pronounce *what is*, and *what is not*, to be punished as *such*, *then* the Church's *sword* will, I hope, be put into your hands. But till *then*, Sir, it is much *safer* to let it remain *sheathed*; lest, under the notion of *Heretics*, you fall upon, and roughly handle, men better than yourself. This has ever been the case, since the days of the Apostles, when *Ecclesiastics* have presumed authoritatively to draw and use the *Church's sword*.

But you add, “ ’Tis well we cannot say your Church has shewn a *dividing* spirit, and *actually divided itself* by an open schism, from a sound part of the Catholic Church; *that*, indeed, would have been an *unanswerable reason* for your dissent\*.” Yes, *this*, also, Sir, we can say, and therefore stand *justified* by your own confession. That misguided unhappy Prince *Charles I.* and his furious Primate *Laud*, began this *fatal schism*, in complaisance to the Church of *Rome*, and actually divided the *Church of England* from a sound part of the Catholic Church; and the same *schismatical spirit* has ever since too generally prevailed in it.

The *Dutch*, *Walloon*, and *French* Churches here in *England*, were established by charters from several of our Princes; but Lord *Clarendon* informs us, “ The *Bishops* growing jealous that the countenancing *another* discipline of the Church here  
“ by

\* Letter III. page 60.

“ by order of State, would at least *diminish* the  
 “ reputation and dignity of the *episcopal* govern-  
 “ ment,” got them suppressed. “ And that this  
 “ might be sure to look like *more* than what was  
 “ *necessary* to the *CIVIL* policy of the kingdom,  
 “ whereas in all former times, the Ambassadors  
 “ and all foreign Ministers of State employed from  
 “ *England*, into any parts where the *reformed re-*  
 “ *ligion* was exercised, frequented their Churches,  
 “ and gave all *possible countenance* to their profes-  
 “ sion; the *contrary* to this was now with *great*  
 “ *industry* practised, and some advertisements, if  
 “ not instructions, given to the Ambassadors there  
 “ (*Le Clerc* says they were *ordered*) to *forbear* any  
 “ extraordinary commezee with men of that pro-  
 “ fession. And Lord *Scudamore* the last ordinary  
 “ Ambassador there, not only declined going to  
 “ *Charenton*, (the *Protestant* Church) but furnish-  
 “ ed his own chapel with wax-candles on the  
 “ communion-table, &c. And besides, was care-  
 “ ful to publish upon all occasions by himself, and  
 “ those who had the nearest relation to him, that  
 “ the *Church of ENGLAND* looked not upon the *Hu-*  
 “ *gonots of FRANCE* as a part of *THEIR* COMMU-  
 “ *NION*; which was likewise too much, and too  
 “ industriously discoursed at home\*.” Behold  
 here, Sir, the Church of *England*, actually di-  
 viding itself from a sound part of the Catholic  
 Church! For *such* surely you will own the brave  
*Protestants in France*, who have borne testimony to  
 the faith by so great and so glorious a fight of afflic-  
 tions, and sealed it with seas of blood.

I would also put you in mind of another fact,  
 that seems to have escaped your reading, or me-  
 mory,

\* *Clarend. Hist. Rebell. Vol. III. pages 26, 27.*

mony. Upon the Queen of *Bohemia's* earnest solicitation with the King her brother (*Charles I. Anno 1634.*) a collection was ordered throughout *England*, for the poor persecuted Ministers of the *Palatine*, who were banished their Country for their religion. In the brief which was granted for this purpose, was this clause : *Whose cases are the more to be deplored, because this extremity is fallen upon them, for their sincerity and constancy in the true religion, which we together with them profess.* Archbishop *Laud* excepted against this clause, and denied that the religion of the *Palatine Churches* was the same with ours, because they were Calvinists, and their Ministers had not episcopal ordination. *Laud* acquainted the King with his objections. The clause was ordered to be expunged, and the brave unhappy *Palatines* were thus publickly disowned by the Governors of the Church, who in all reasonable construction, must be supposed to know and speak its sense, and not allowed to be professors of the same true religion\*. How unchristian and schismatical this !

Of the like schism was it also guilty, in the *Occasional Conformity Act*, which took place in a late reign. For it thereby FORBID under severe penalties, all its members who had any places of profit or trust, to worship or hold communion with any of the foreign Churches, *Dutch, French, &c.* in those kingdoms, in which its *Liturgy* was not used. And should any Minister of any of the reformed Churches of *Scotland, France, Germany, Holland*, now come into *England*, would your Church receive them as Ministers, or admit them as such, to officiate in its public worship ? I presume you

I 3

know,

\* *Nesb's Hist. Purit. Vol. II. page 271.*

know, Sir, she would not. But is not this *virtually* renouncing their Communion? Nor will you admit even the *Lay Members* of any of these *foreign Churches*, to your Communion at the *Lord's supper*, except besides what CHRIST has *ordered*, they will submit also to some *order and institution* of YOUR OWN.

Now your great *Stillfleet* \* hath thus determined — “ That which *confines*, must also *divide* the Church; for by that *confinement*, a *Separation* is made betwixt the parties confined, and the other; which separation must *be made*, by the party *so limiting* Christian Communion.” Upon the whole then, it is most evident, that *your Church* has shewn, and does shew, a *schismatical* and *dividing* spirit, has actually *divided itself* from sound parts of the universal Church. *This* therefore you will please to take, as an *unanswerable reason* for our *dissent*.

You must excuse me, Sir, if I think you treat a great deal *too severely* a worthy body of men, our *MINISTERS*; when you represent them as “ persons whom the faithful, far from being permitted to enter into any *pastoral relation* to them, are not permitted to have any *Christian Communion* with them; no, not so much as any *intimate unnecessary* acquaintance and familiarity with them in *common life* †.” — And tell me — “ They are not duly ordained to their office; that their administrations are most certainly irregular, an unnecessary and wanton, if not a factious departure from the primitive order. And that therefore I cannot depend, at least with so much assurance, as is requisite to the peace and acquiescence

\* Ration, Account, page 359. † Letter II. page 8.

“ essence of my mind, that such ordinances will be blessed to me \*.”—I have weighed this matter with a good deal of attention, and upon the whole am fully satisfied, both from *Scripture* and *Antiquity*, that *Presbyters* have a right to, and did from the Apostles times actually *ordain*. There are *two* things, amongst many others, which I beg leave to offer to your consideration upon this point.—

1. That the Ministers of the *reformed Churches* in all foreign parts, have almost all of them, I apprehend, no other than *Presbyterian ordination*.

The whole company of illustrious Protestant Churches of *Scotland, France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark*, except perhaps *Sweden, &c.* have none but *Presbyterian* ordination amongst them. For *Luther, Calvin, Bercer, Melancton, Bugenhagenius, &c.* and all the first *Reformers* and *Founders* of these Churches, who *ordained* Ministers amongst them, were themselves *Presbyters*, and *no other*. And though in some of these Churches, there are *Ministers* which are called *Superintendants* or *Bishops*, yet these are only *primi inter pares* †, *the first among equals*; not pretending to any *superiority of ORDER*. Having *themselves* no other Orders than what either *Presbyters* gave them, or was given them as *Presbyters*, they can convey *no other* to those they ordain ‡. You are a gentleman of too great

\* Letter I. page 73. † Account of *Denmark*. p. 253.

‡ The *Danish Church* is indeed at this time governed by *Bishops*. But they look upon *Episcopacy* as only an human institution; and the first Protestant Prelates in that Kingdom, were ordained by *Bugenhagenius*, a meer *Presbyter*; who by consequence, could convey no other than a *Presbyterian ordination*

great discernment to urge the stale pretence, that this is to these Churches a matter not of *choice*, but of *necessity* and *force*. For if they thought *episcopal ordination*, I do not say *necessary*, but even more *regular* or *expedient*, could they not with the *greatest ease* immediately obtain it? Would not the Church of *England*, upon the *least* intimation of their willingness to receive it, most readily send them *Bishops* to supply this defect? You know, Sir, too well its charitable disposition, and even *offers* of this kind, in the least to suspect it. Whatever *cenfures* you pass then upon the *orders* and *administrations* of the Ministers amongst us, they equally fall upon all the *reformed Churches* throughout the whole *Protestant world*. If *ours* are an unnecessary and wanton departure from the primitive order, *theirs* are the same. Now it gives me great pleasure to see myself in such a croud of excellent and good company. And unless you can offer something more *demonstrative* on this head, than I have ever yet seen, my mind will enjoy *full peace* as to the regularity of the ministration on which I attend. But,

2. It seems a little strange to hear you glorying over *us*, and consequently over all the *foreign Churches*, as to this matter of *ORDERS*, when these *very ORDERS* in which you glory, you acknowledge to have derived *ONLY* from the *Church of ROME*. A *Church* which yourselves, in your homilies, confess to be *idolatrous* and *antichristian*.  
 “ Not only an *harlot*, as the Scripture calleth her,  
 “ but also a foul, filthy, old, withered *harlot*;  
 “ the *soulest* and *filthiest* that ever was seen.—And  
 “ that

dination to their successors ever since. *Seckendorf. Hist. Lutheran. Lib. 20. Sect. 1. With Caveat, page 15.*

“ that as it at present is, and hath been for 900  
 “ years, it is so far from the nature of the TRUE  
 “ Church, that nothing can be more \*.” — *Note,*  
 These *homilies* every Clergyman publickly declares,  
 and subscribes with his hand, that they contain a  
*godly and wholesome doctrine*, fit to be read in Churches  
 by Ministers.

Now it is ONLY Sir, from this *filthy, withered,*  
*old HARLOT*, that you derive, by ordination,  
 your *spiritual descent*. You confess yourselves *born*  
*of her*, as to *ecclesiastical pedigree*: And the sons of  
 this foulest and filthiest of Harlots, you acknowledge  
 as *brethren*, by admitting *their Orders* as regular  
 and valid; whereas *those* of the *Protestant Churches*  
 you reject. If a *Priest*, ordained with all the  
 superstitious and idolatrous rites of this *anti-*  
*christian* and *false Church*, comes over to the  
 Church of *England*, you admit him as a BROTHER,  
*duly ordained*; without obliging him to pass  
 under *that ceremony* again: but if a Minister  
 of the *reformed Churches* joins himself to you,  
 you consider him as but a *Layman*, an *unordained person*,  
 and oblige him to receive *Orders* according  
 to your form. How, Sir, is it possible to account  
 for this procedure! Can *that Church*, which is *no*  
*true Church*, impart *valid* and *true Orders*? Can  
 a *filthy old Harlot* produce any other than a *spurious*  
 and *corrupt* breed? Will you rest the *validity*  
 and *regularity* of your administrations on your  
 receiving the *sacerdotal character* from the Bishops  
 and Popes of the *Romish Church*? Many, if not  
 most, of whom, were men of most corrupt and  
 infamous lives; *men*, who were so far from being  
 regular and *valid* MINISTERS in the Church of  
 JESUS CHRIST, that they were not so much as

re-

\* Vid. *Homilies*, pages 162, 225.

*regular* or *real* MEMBERS of it at all ; and therefore could not possibly, *duly*, or *regularly*, OFFICIATE therein ; consequently, had *no power* to communicate or convey *Order* or *Offices* in the CHRISTIAN Church. Whatever *Offices* they conveyed therefore, are at best doubtful and suspicious ; if not absolutely null, irregular, and void.— So that really your own *Orders*, if strictly examined, may minister great doubt and disquietude of mind.

If *Charity* then were silent ; *Prudence*, methinks, should loudly dictate, that you *speak gently* as to the authority and orders of our *Ministers*, when you know it is in their power so strongly to *retort*. It was therefore surely not *wise*, Sir, as well as extremely *unkind*, to set them up as objects of public *odium* and *avoidance* ; and to admonish “ every good “ man not to have any intimate or unnecessary acquaintance with them, or familiarity in common “ life.” But—BLESSED, our Lord hath said, *are ye, when men shall hate you, and SEPARATE YOU from their COMPANY, and CAST OUT your names as EVIL, for the Son of man’s sake : REJOICE ye in that day, and leap for joy ; for behold, your reward in Heaven is great\* !*

You very strenuously contest what you call “ one of the favourite and fundamental principles “ of the dissention, namely, *That every Lay- “ Christian has a right to chuse his own Pastor* †. A right so evidently founded on *Reason, Scripture*, and the undoubted *Practice* of the primitive Church, and so generally acknowledged by *all the learned* of your own Communion, that I cannot but a little wonder at the alertness with which  
you

\* Luke vi. 22, 23. † Letter II. page 6.

you make your attack upon it. The charge given to the Christian people — *To take heed what they hear—to beware of false Prophets—not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits* — incontestibly proves them to have a *right of judgment* and of *choice*, relating to this matter : and that *this right*, which GOD has given them, it is *their duty* to use.

When an *Apostle* was to be chosen in the room of *Judas* the traitor, the *whole body* of the Disciples were applied to on that occasion, *Acts* i. who APPOINTED by *common suffrage*, TWO from their whole number to be candidates for that office, § 23. “*The election, you say, was evidently made by GOD\**.” But was it not *as evidently* made by the people also ? If the choice of ONE from the TWO be acknowledged to be the act of GOD ; was not the choice of *these TWO*, from amongst the *whole number*, as much the act of the people ? The people then were *actually* concerned in that choice. “*The seven Deacons, Acts* vi you say, *were but presented or recommended by the brethren†.*” But let the sacred story judge—*Wherefore, brethren, LOOK YE OUT amongst you, seven men of honest report : And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they CHOSE Stephen and Philip, &c.—* Can words be more express ?

That *Bishops* and *Pastors* were chosen in the *ancient Church* by the suffrage of *the people*, the evidence is so strong, as greatly to try the countenance of the person who disputes it. *Ignatius*, if you will allow him genuine, says, *Prepon est in uniuersos ecclesia Thesu kecrotonesai episcopon†.* It becomes  
you

\* Letter II. page 8.

† Ibid.

‡ Epist. ad Philad.

*You as the Church of GOD to CHUSE a Bishop.* Alexander was made Bishop of Jerusalem by the compulsion or CHOICE of the members of that Church. Upon the death of Anterus, Bishop of Rome, all the people met together in the Church to CHUSE a Successor—and they all took Fabianus and placed him in the episcopal chair. So Cornelius, his Successor, was ELECTED by the suffrage of the Clergy and Laity. Cyprian often acknowledges he was made Bishop of Carthage, *Favore Plebis—Populi universi Suffragio, &c.* By the FAVOUR and VOTE of all the People\*. And expressly says, *Plebs maxime, habet potestatem, vel eligendi dignos Sacerdotes, vel indignos recusandi.* The chief power of CHUSING worthy Ministers, and of REJECTING the unworthy, belongs to THE PEOPLE. I produce no further evidence upon a point so incontestible, but the words of a learned Brother of your own, high enough for church-power, “*That the people had votes in the choice of Bishops all must grant ; and it can be only IGNORANCE and FOLLY that pleads the contrary †.*”

“*You think a man provides very well for his soul, who submits himself to the instructions, and devoutly attends all the administrations of an able and orthodox Minister, by whomsoever provided. And it will be confessed, you suppose, that the King, and Bishops, Lord-Chancellor, Nobility, and Gentry, who are our greater patrons, are more competent judges of the abilities and orthodoxy of Clergymen, and of their fitness for particular stations, than the common run of men, especially the vulgar †.*” But imagine your-

\* Vid. Constitut. and Discipline of the Primitive Church, page 46. † *Lowth* on Church power. † *Ibid.* p. 9.

yourself, Sir, for a moment on the other side the water, preaching this wholesome doctrine to the good *Protestants* in *France*. If *Kings, Bishops, &c.* have authority and right to *appoint Pastors* to the people, then the people *are bound* to receive and attend *the Pastors* they send. But if this be *right* in one country ( I must again put you in mind ) it is *right* also in another ; unless *one kingdom* can produce a warrant, or charter from Heaven giving it *such authority*, which *other kingdoms* have not. If this doctrine be truth in *England*, it is truth also in *France*. The brave *Protestants* then have *rashly* and *unwarrantably* withdrawn themselves from the Pastors, whom their *King* and *Bishops* had set over them ; they ought to return, and submit to their *established* guides, and not *proudly* attempt to find Ministers more able and orthodox, than those *their superiors* have solemnly deputed to that trust.— Will you stand, Sir, to this doctrine ? If not, you must allow every man a right to judge for himself.

To the common and just plea—“ That every  
 “ man has as good right to chuse his own *Pastor*,  
 “ to whom to commit the care of his soul, as to  
 “ chuse his *Lawyer* or *Physician*, with whom he  
 “ intrusts his body or estate,” you reply : “ Phy-  
 “ sicians in many places are provided by Gover-  
 “ nors for those who are sick, as in *Chelfea*, and  
 “ other Hospitals, whilst no body dreams of any  
 “ incroachment upon their natural rights \*.”  
 But tell me, Sir, would you not complain, if  
 whenever you were sick, you were OBLIGED to  
 accept of this *public provision* ; and MUST commit  
 yourself to the care of those gentlemen of the fa-  
 K culty

\* *Lowth* on Church-power, page 13.

culty who officiated in the Hospital, supposing you lived near it, whatever notion you had of their fidelity or skill? Or should a *Physician* be provided, and established by *Law* in each parish of this kingdom, would you not call it an *infringement* of your natural right, to be *obliged* to call him in (however *ignorant* or *uncapable* you took him to be) and to commit your health to his care; especially if there was at hand *another*, licensed by authority, whom you thought to have better judgment, and from whose precepts you had received frequent and signal relief? I am persuaded in this case, you would strongly and very justly *complain* of the restraint. But every man surely, is as capable, and has as undoubted a right to *judge* and to *chuse* what Minister to attend for the edification of his soul, as what Physician to use for the recovery of his health.

“ No, you reply, there is a difference in the  
 “ *two* cases; your *Pastors* are your *Guides* and *Governors*, to whom you owe *subjection* in spiritual  
 “ things: And it is not, I think, quite so reasonable to challenge to yourselves the chusing of  
 “ these, as of the other who have *no authority* over  
 “ you \*.” But I beseech you, good Sir, who MADE *them* my GOVERNORS? Who GAVE *them* this rule and authority over me? Does every *gay STRIPLING*, just emancipated from the *College*, that can get (and there are *various ways* of getting you know, Sir, not fit to be here mentioned) to be inducted into a good living, does he, I ask, thenceforward become GOVERNOR of *all the souls* dwelling in his parish, to whom they owe SUBJECTION in *spiritual things*? What, must all the  
 the

\* *Lowth* on Church-power, page 14.

the learned, the wise, the grave, and experienced persons residing in that parish, consider the *enrobed* YOUTH as their *spiritual* RULER, vested with AUTHORITY over them, in things pertaining to GOD, to Conscience, and to Eternity ! Yes, he has AUTHORITY, you say, over me, I owe him *spiritual* subjection. But how far, Sir does the authority of my *young* Ruler extend ? Must I believe whatever he tells me, because *He* hath said it ; or, do whatever he commands me, because *He* hath enjoined it ; or, follow my *spiritual* Guide wherever *He* shall lead me, without considering, examining, and judging for myself, whither the course tends ? And if I happen to think he is leading me *wrong*, must I still obey and submit to my *ghostly* DIRECTOR, and trust GOD with the event ? Am I to deliver myself up ENTIRELY, or only a little, and in part, to his sacerdotal authority ? And must I see things in religion, only and always by the eyes of my overseer, or ought I not also sometimes, at least, to see with my own ? Will you please to inform me also, whether as my *young* GOVERNOR undertakes to judge for me now, he will also undertake to be judged for me hereafter ; and to be damned for me too, if I happen to go astray, by going as he directs ? — A certain Nobleman, not half a century ago, got his *huntsman* inducted into a good living ; and from the care of his bounds, advanced him to the priesthood, and to the cure of souls. Now from the time of his investiture with this new character and office, he became the GOVERNOR and GUIDE, it seems, of all the souls in his parish, and they owed him subjection in *spiritual* things. If a Locke then, a Newton, or even his Lordship himself who gave him the living, had dwelt within its bounds, they ought re-

verently to regard HIM as their *spiritual GOVERNOR and DIRECTOR*; and to *submit themselves to him*, as having *THE RULE over them*, and *watching for their souls*.—But are these *claims* to be vouch-  
ed, or is this *doctrine* to be preached, in this age of liberty and light? Let them for the honour of *CHRISTIANITY*, be eternally suppressed. — I am forced then to return, Sir, to the point whence I set out, and to acknowledge *the right* which every man has, in things of religion, to *call no man upon earth MASTER*, but to examine and judge, and chuse for himself.

As to the *manner* in which the choice of our Ministers is conducted, against which you except, I believe no elections of any kind, are transacted with greater *fairness* and *equity* than these. And the nature of the thing speaks, that thus it must be. For *ours* being *assemblies* formed only by *consent*, and supported only by *voluntary* contributions of their members, any oppressive or iniquitous management would throw them presently into confusion, disband and break them up. To your question — *Who are the Electors?* And to all the objections you raise on that head.—I reply, by praying you to turn your eyes, Sir, to a *British Parliament*, or to an *English Convocation*, and tell me, *who are the Electors?* And how is the choice conducted? But if both the *Parliament* and *Convocation*, notwithstanding the enormous disproportion and inequality of the *Electors*, be yet *accounted* and *gloried in* as the *REPRESENTATIVE* of the nation; and you compliment your *Fellow Britons* upon their *invaluable privilege* in being ruled by *Laws of their own making*, and in paying no taxes, but what *themselves* by their Representatives, have

have *consented to levy* — — Your exceptions to our elections will be presently withdrawn, and you will still give us leave to *glory*, as possessing this ancient undoubted right of the Christian Church.

But it is time, Sir, that I now release your patience and attention, having strained, I fear, both to their utmost extent. There are many other parts of your letters as liable to remark, as those I have taken notice of, but I would not be tedious.—I might have expostulated with you largely on your reading, as parts of your publick worship, the fabulous and gross *legends of Bel and the Dragon, of Judith and Susannah*; and above all, the *magical romance* of receiving a fair virgin from the enchantments of her *infernal lover*, and conjuring away the *amorous Devil Asmodeus*, by the fumes of a fish's liver.—Is it for the honour of the *Christian* name, think you Sir, to have such *spurious and idle tales* read solemnly in our Churches (if solemnly they can be read) and made parts of our *public-worship*? What will an *unbeliever* think, when present at such worship! When he sees *such things* not only bound up with the HOLY SCRIPTURES but commanded to be read *as such* in the order of the Common-prayer! Will it not heighten his contempt of the *credulity* of believers, and establish his prejudices against the history, the miracles, and doctrines of CHRIST?—

I might also have asked you, Sir, to what *oriental DEITY* you pay your devours, when from the *North, the South, the West*, the worshippers in your Church on certain solemn occasions, turn reverently towards *the EAST*, and make their *peculiar honours*? To whom, Sir, I beseech you, are these *peculiar honours* paid? Not surely to the

*immense, omnipresent* JEHOVAH ; he is an *INFINITE Spirit*, you know, alike present in all places ; not more confined to one quarter of the Heavens, than to another : To represent him as *being so*, is to dishonour and offend him, to detract from the glory of his *Immensity* or *Omnipresence*, and to give men very false and unworthy notions of *God*. This worshipping towards the *EAST*, is not, I think, *ordered* by any *Canon* of your Church, which is now generally received ; but it is (if I mistake not) its *common* and *prevailing* practice. I should be glad to be informed, for I assure you, Sir, I am quite ignorant, what *shadow of ground*, either from Reason or Scripture, you can possibly pretend, for this unaccountable *Superstition*, for such you must allow me at present to think it. If you say, the worship is paid *toward the ALTAR*, this seems to make the matter more inexplicable still. For *what* is there in the *ALTAR*, to make it a proper object of *religious* veneration ? Indeed, whilst the *Bread* God was upon it, the people who believed it to be the *very body* of *CHRIST*, did well to pay their homage to it : But now *that IDOL* is taken thence, I cannot for my life perceive, what shadow of *Divinity* Protestants see in the *ALTAR*, that they should give it *religious* honours.

As much, Sir, am I at a loss, when endeavouring to reconcile to reason and good sense, another of your *additional beauties and splendors* of public worship, *viz. bowing at the name of JESUS*. As for that passage of the Apostle, *Philip. ii. 10. That at the name of JESUS every knee shall bow* — the *learned men* of your church, I presume, *universally* disclaim it, as in the least *authorizing* or *injoining* this practice. Your great Dr. *Nichols*

*chols*\* vindicates your Church from such an *uncouth and ridiculous abuse* of this text, and affirms, *that it is not once mentioned in any of your ecclesiastical constitutions*, as to this matter; and adds, *that you are not so DULL, as to think, that those words can be rigorously applied to this purpose.* But if *this text* be acknowledged not in the least to authorize or require this *act of worship*, what shadow of argument, Sir, can you possibly bring, either from *Reason or Scripture*, which shall so much as seem to support it? Why then does your Church command (Canon XVIII.) *that when in time of divine service the LORD JESUS shall be mentioned, duly and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present?* Is not *this*, Sir, by your own confession, an act of *will-worship*, a *commandment*, an *invention of men*, not in the least founded upon the authority and will of God!

But why, Sir, must this *lowly reverence* be made at the *name of JESUS*, and not at the name of CHRIST, at the name IMMANUEL, JEHOVAH, or GOD? Is there not in *all these*, something at least *as venerable and worthy of peculiar honours*; indeed something *much more so*, than there is in the *name of JESUS*? a *name* not at all *peculiar* to our blessed Saviour, but which was *common* to him with a great many other men? — But if this *peculiar reverence* must be made at the *name of JESUS*, why not at *all times* whenever it is mentioned, at least in public worship? Why in the *Creed* only, which is but a *human composition*, and not every time it is read from the *Gospels and Epistles*, which were indited by the HOLY GHOST? But I press no further a *point*, which I believe few of your  
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\* Defence. &c. Part II. page 319.

own Church think capable of a rational and solid defence —

I have now finished my reply, Sir, to *the Letters* with which you have publickly honoured me, and have with freedom set before you, the chief *difficulties* and *objections* which keep me in a state of separation from your Church. If by calm and fair argument, you can shew my objections to be futile and weak, I shall with pleasure become your *convert*, and readily obey the calls of worldly interest and honour.

But as you, Sir, have the *dignities, emoluments, and powers* of this world on your side, you must give us leave to think, at least till we are better taught, that we have T R U T H on our's. T R U T H, which is GREAT, and *will finally prevail*. Nor am I, Sir, without hope, that, upon an *impartial* review of the merits of the cause betwixt us, *omnipotent* T R U T H may even bend *your* mind towards us; and dispose you, like *one* who has since had the honour of being called the *great Apostle*, to join yourself to *those* you once censured and despised.

What though we have not the *honours* and *profits* of this world to draw you to our Communion, are we ever the less like to be the genuine *Apostolic Church* of a crucified, despised, insulted J E S U S for this? Hath he not expressly told us, that *his kingdom is not of this world*\*.—That *whoever will come after him, must deny himself, and take up his cross*†.—That *not many mighty and noble are called*‡?—Are not the *witnesses to T R U T H, to Prophecy, cloathed in sackcloth*§, till the promised *times of refreshing* come from the appearance of  
CHRIST?

\* John xviii. 36.

† Mat. xvi. 24.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 26.

§ Rev. xi. 3.

CHRIST ? Is not the PURE Apostolic Church, the *true Spouse of CHRIST*, represented in the *Revelation* as a woman driven into the wilderness \*, *i. e.* in an afflicted and forsaken state ; whilst the *corrupt* and *antichristian* Church ( the apostate Church of Rome ) is caressed and enriched by the *Kings of the Earth* †, glittering in all the pomp and splendor of this world, wantoning in luxury, power and wealth ? Does TRUTH need the charms of *earthly grandeur* to recommend it, or the force of *civil power* to spread or to establish it ? Was it *thus* the blessed GOSPEL was at first propagated, made its way, and prevailed over all the earth ? No, worldly grandeur and power have *generally*, you well know, Sir, if not *evermore*, been extremely *injurious*, to it ; have enervated, obstructed, under pretence of improving, have greatly corrupted and depraved it, and have robbed it of its *native* beauty, and glory, and strength.

High dignities and preferments, mitres and thrones, lordships and large revenues, have a mighty force you will own Sir, to *bias* and *pervert* the mind, in its searches after TRUTH. These are not *the means* which the GOD of TRUTH uses, to *draw* the mind to it ; but you know they are *the means*, which the *great ENEMY* is wont to use, to *seduce* the mind from it. It is therefore, I apprehend, Sir, no presumption at all in favour of *any Church*, that it shines with all the glory of worldly honours and wealth. This the *prophetic Scriptures* very clearly describe as the state of the *false Church*, whilst the *true Church* of JESUS CHRIST, his genuine and faithful followers, are to be a  
*little,*

\* Rev. xii. 14.

† Ibid. xvii. 4, 5—13—17.

*little, despised flock: A sect every where spoken against: In the world it is to have tribulation, till the expected happy period, when it shall be the FATHER'S good pleasure to give them THE KINGDOM.*

Let not then the *low estate* of our Interest, as to the present world, at all frighten or discourage you, Sir, from casting in your lot amongst us. *The world passeth away*, and all its glories and pomp will soon vanish like a dream before the descending *Son of God*, whom we stedfastly expect.—And then to be *found faithful*; and to have stuck with *unshaken LOYALTY* to the *ONLY Law-giver, Lord, and King* of the Church.—To have *denied ourselves* any worldly honours, preferments or profits out of conscience towards *Him*—To have been *separated from mens company*, cast out and reproached, because we would not make a sacrifice of our virtue and integrity to the applause of *the many*, or the favour of *the great*.—Will yield divine comfort, and procure *immortal honours* in the everlasting *kingdom of God*. Pardon me, Sir, if I am here acting a little out of character, and seem to invade *your office*: For I am extremely ambitious of engaging so ingenious a gentleman amongst us.

These, Sir, are the prospects with which *Dissenters* support themselves under all their disadvantages with regard to the present world. They remember *whose Disciples and Followers* they are—*who it is* that hath said, *IN VAIN do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the COMMANDMENTS OF MEN*. *Who* hath strictly charged them *to call NO MAN upon earth MASTER*, because *ONE only is their MASTER, even CHRIST.*

CHRIST.— And finally, *who it is* that hath promised, that *if any man shall forsake house, or brethren, or sisters, or children, or lands, for his names sake; he shall receive an hundred fold; and shall inherit EVERLASTING LIFE.*

I now conclude, Sir, by beseeching you very carefully to remember, that the controversy betwixt us depends *absolutely and entirely* upon the decision of this *single point*.—Is there *any OTHER Lawgiver or King* in the Church of GOD, to whose *authority and command*, as to things of religion, CHRISTIANS are bound to submit, **BESIDES JESUS CHRIST?** Or is there *not?*—If there be *no other Lawgiver, besides JESUS CHRIST, no other King, no other authority* to whose *decrees* in point of doctrine, and to whose *injunctions* in point of worship, CHRISTIANS are obliged, and ought to *submit*: then *the DISSENTERS*, in every impartial judgment, will be, must be *justified*: then *They act right*: then They ought to be *commended*, and will surely be *rewarded* for adhering loyally and firmly to the **ONE only KING and LORD** of the Church: And for faithfully opposing the claims of *any OTHER Power*; and for refusing obedience to the *injunctions of any OTHER Lawgiver*; and the *decisions of any OTHER Judge*; who hath made *other articles of Faith, other terms of Communion, other rites of Worship*, **BESIDES** and **ABOVE** those which **CHRIST** himself has made.

For to illustrate the case.—If any *foreign Prince* shall pretend to make laws, and prescribe rules of action to the people of *these realms*, and shall exact obedience to his *injunctions* from the subjects

jects of *King GEORGE* ; I ask, does not your *allegiance* to HIM, your *ONLY* Sovereign, *require* and *oblige* you to make your protest against any such laws, and to *refuse* your obedience to them ? But is not the Church a *province* in which CHRIST ALONE is *King*, as much as these realms are the dominions *ONLY* of *King GEORGE* ? If any *human Potentate* then shall rise up in *the Church*, and shall claim *authority* and *dominion* over the consciences of CHRIST'S subjects ; authority as to *things of Faith*, to decree what HE hath not decreed ; and dominion as to *things of Worship*, to appoint rites and institutions which HE hath not appointed ; I ask you, Sir, does not your *allegiance* to CHRIST, your *ONLY* Sovereign, *require* and *oblige* you to enter your protest against such *usurped authority*, and to refuse your obedience to it ?

This, Sir, I repeat it, because I earnestly entreat your peculiar attention to it, is the *essential* and *important* point upon which the controversy betwixt us entirely turns. If you *can* prove, that there is *ANOTHER* Lawgiver, *ANOTHER* Judge, *ANOTHER* King in the Church, *besides* JESUS CHRIST, to whose authority we are to submit in things of religion ; and that the *King* and *Parliament* of these realms are this *Lawgiver*, and this *Judge* ; you will then at once gain your point ; and by that *single blow* you will entirely overthrow the *dissenting* Interest and Churches. We will immediately become your Converts, and flock into the *Established Church*.

But if you *cannot* prove this point ; you then *yield* the cause to us ; you then, in effect, own us *justified* before the world ; and you leave us to indulge the rational and reviving hope of being acknowledged

known by our *great* LAWGIVER, at his return into the world, as his *loyal* and *obedient* subjects; of being advanced to *peculiar* honours and dignities in his kingdom, as we have here suffered on account of our *duty* and *allegiance* to him; and of receiving from *our* JUDGE, before angels and men, that sentence of applause — *Well done, GOOD and FAITHFUL Servants, enter ye into the joy of your LORD.*

I have only to add, Sir, that this *principle* — That CHRIST is the *only* Lawgiver and King in his Church; and that no man, no body of men upon earth, have any authority to make laws, or to prescribe things *in religion*, which shall oblige the consciences of his subjects; is *the grand, the only principle*, upon which the UNITY, the PURITY, and the PEACE of the *Christian Church* can possibly subsist. Take away *this*, and you let in endless discords and corruptions into it: You split it into parties: You make CHRISTIANITY one thing, in one country; a quite different, in another. In *England* you make it wear an *Episcopal* form. In *Scotland*, a *Presbyterian*: In *France*, a *Popish*: In *Denmark*, a *Lutheran*: In *Prussia*, a *Calvinist*: In *Russia*, a *Grecian*, &c.—But ought these things to be so? Is CHRIST *divided*? Is this *the* UNITY of his one beautiful, well-compacted *body*? Can these be *all* genuine apostolic CHRISTIANITY? — Rather, are either of them so? — When the *powers of this world* take upon them *authoritatively* to interpret and prescribe in things of religion, which are CHRIST'S kingdom and province, they act beyond their sphere: They invade the throne of *another* Prince: The certain consequence of which is confusions, separations; the *unity* of the Church is broken, the rights of *Christians* violated, a gate  
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opened

opened for innumerable superstitions and inventions to enter, and mingle with the pure doctrines of CHRIST; and hence necessarily flow schisms, emulations, contentions, and every evil work.—

I beseech you, Sir, by the *mercies of GOD*; and for the *honour of CHRISTIANITY*; and by the *allegiance you owe your ONLY Lawgiver JESUS CHRIST*, to weigh these things in an impartial and unbiassed mind. May his *Spirit of TRUTH* judge betwixt us upon the point, and teach us his will! To his influence I commend you, Sir, and am,

*With great Sincerity,*

*Your very humble Servant,*

A DISSENTER.

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## POSTSCRIPT,

*Containing Remarks on the DEFENCE of  
your THREE LÉTERS.*

THE above Letter being sent to the press before your *Defence*, &c. was advertised; its publication was staid, till I had seen what occasion it might give, either to retract or support what was offered in my *first Letter*. You seem moved at its pretended to be an Answer to your *three Letters*, when so small a part of them is considered therein: And with airs quite suitable to the cause you are pleading, *ecclesiastical authority*, give me to understand, that your taking any notice of this performance is to be considered as a condescension to which you were not obliged, and which I had no right to expect from you. But, pray recollect: What was the avowed design and purport of your Letters? Was it not to *refute the great and popular objections of the Dissenters*, and to *bring me over to your Church*? But upon reading your Letters, I found you had scarce touched upon the *principal objection* which kept me from your Church. Was it not then my part to state the objection to you, and set it in its full light? As *unasked*, you had taken on you to be my instructor in this affair; had I not a right to lay my difficulty before you, and to demand your solution of it?

What, must I *confine* myself to *the pleas* which you had seen fit to cook up for the Dissenters; and if I presume to offer *others*, will you magisterially call them *ramblings*, in which you are not obliged to follow? Very pleasant indeed!

Here therefore I now put in my claim, Sir, and *give you to understand*, that I expect your plain and full answer to the *several objections* against your *established forms* presented in the above Letter: Some of which, tho' you knew them to be of great weight with Dissenters, you dextrously avoided bringing into the debate. To this you are most clearly and indispensably obliged by *the province*, you have taken on you. If there be any parts of the *Liturgy* indefensible and absurd, this (1.) condemns *your own CONFORMITY*, who not only declare, but solemnly subscribe your *unfeigned assent and consent* to ALL and EVERY THING contained in and prescribed by the *Book of Common-prayer*, &c. And (2.) it justifies the SEPARATION, by proving it a severe and cruel thing to cast out above 2000 of our Ministers from the Church for not declaring and subscribing this *unfeigned assent and consent*, &c. which began the *Separation*.

This being premised, we come to the point of *Church-authority*, upon which the controversy turns. Here I observe with pleasure, that you are for mutilating your XXth article, ridding your hands of one part and holding only to the other. "*The Church's authority in matters of faith you have nothing, you say, to do with* \*." — But *this*, you know, your Church claims as much as *a power to make ceremonies*; and against  
this

\* Defence page 18.

this Part of its claim I as much excepted as against the other. When you declare therefore *you have nothing to do with it*, you mean, if I take you right, you will not pretend to undertake its defence. This to be sure is wise : No man upon earth being able to defend it. But then, is it not extremely hard that your Church should still *inflexibly* maintain its claim to *this authority* : Should force its *clergy* to subscribe and acknowledge this claim ; and keep Dissenters from a share in those emoluments, “ *after which, you say, they languish,*” partly for refusing their solemn subscription to so *unreasonable* a claim ?

“ By the Church’s power to decree rites and ceremonies, is meant, a right in the pastors and governors thereof, to ordain and appoint such things, so as to make it, *ordinarily*, the duty of the people to conform themselves to them.\*”

— You have artfully declined to say, *whom* you understand by its *pastors and governors* ; but from other passages † it is evident you mean the *Bishops and Clergy* ; for the *civil magistrate*, you declare, *has no such power at all* ‡. Now,

1. That the *Clergy* have no power nor authority at all of this kind over the *Laity*, I proved beyond all doubt from the express command of our great Lawgiver. — *Call no man upon earth MASTER ; ONE is YOUR MASTER, even CHRIST, and all ye are brethren* ||. *The Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion and authority over them, but it shall NOT BE SO amongst you* §. What have you said in answer to these texts ? Not a single word. You leave them to stand in full force a-

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\* Def. page 10. † Lett. II. page 14. ‡ Def. page 18.  
 || Mat. xxiii. 8, 9. § Ibid. xx. 25.

gainst you : And, without one text of Scripture to support this authority of the *Clergy* over the *Laiety*, you go on to treat it as a thing indisputable and allowed : and labour hard in raising a pompous structure upon the sand. What you say as to the *kiss of charity*, has been considered above, page 29. Shoul I even *this* be allowed to be a *merely ecclesiastical and prudential institution*, it will by no means establish the *authority* you claim for your *Pastors and Governors* ; the orders, decrees, and appointments of those times being by the *common consent* and *suffrage* of the whole Church ; in which the *Laiety* had an equal, if not a far greater, share of authority than the *Clergy* \*. But,

2. Your lodging this power in the *Pastors and Governors* absolutely contradicts *the articles* themselves. For as the XXth article claims it for *the Church* : So the immediately preceding article (XIX.) expressly defines what it means by *THE CHURCH*, viz. *A congregation of faithful men where the pure word of God is preached*.—It is to the *whole body* of the faithful, then, that this power of decreeing ceremonies, if any such there be, belongs : How then do you presume, Sir, to wrest it from *them*, and to vest it solely in the *Clergy* ? And,

3. When you add, *that to this right of the Pastors to decree ceremonies, it is the peoples duty, ORDINARILY, to conform themselves* : The word, *ordinarily*, seems thrown in as a mist to darken the point ; a seasonable *salvo* to which to retreat when you feel yourself pushed. What mean you, Sir, by *ordinarily* ? How shall the people know *when* it is, and *when* it is not, their duty, to submit to these  
injunc-

\* Vid. Exam. of the Codex, page 120.

*injunctions* of their spiritual Governors? Are the people *themselves* to judge, *always* to judge, of the fitness and expedience of the enjoined ceremonies; or are they not? If they are not; then they are *absolutely* to resign themselves to the direction of their Governors; which is palpable and gross *Papery*, and leads directly to *Rome*. But if they are; then the *Babel* of Church-authority is at once overthrown: For then the authority resides no longer in *the decrees* of the Governors, but in *the judgment* of the people. It is the judgment *they* form of them, which *alone* makes them binding upon them, or not. Of *their number*, whether they are too many; and of *their nature*, whether they are superstitious, foppish, and vain, you seem sometimes to allow, *the people* are to judge: But if they have a right *to judge*, they have a right also *to act* in consequence of that judgment; and to withdraw from those Churches where such ceremonies are enjoined, as *they think* foolish and vain; and to join themselves to others, where *they think* the worship of God performed in a more scriptural and proper manner. So then, the solemn parade of *church-authority*, you see, turns out a mere shadow. It is an authority to command, which no one is under obligation to obey. This power of *making ceremonies* must be either limited or unlimited: If it be not *unlimited* (which you seem to disavow) Pray! *what* is it limits it? *What* prescribes its bounds, *beyond which it shall not pass*? If the Church has power to ordain *five* ceremonies, why not *ten*? And if *ten*, why not *more*? Who shall pretend to say, *how far* it may go?

Your illustration "*as to the King's injunctions,*" &c\*. will not reach the case; because the constitution

\* Def. page 14.

tution and laws of *England* empower the King to make such injunctions: But you have not yet proved, and I presume never will prove, that the constitution of the *Christian Church* impowers its Pastors to *decree* ceremonies and rites.

You ask \*—“ Where does the Church pretend “ *to be alone the proper judge, or where disallow “ private Christians to judge for themselves in these “ matters?*” I will tell you, Sir, in its XXXIVth article, which decrees, that *whosoever through his PRIVATE JUDGMENT, willingly and purposely doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church which be not repugnant to the word of GOD, and be ordained by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly (that others may fear to do the like) as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the AUTHORITY of the MAGISTRATE. Private judgment, you see, is here forbid to oppose the common order of the Church, and the authority of the Magistrate; and when it presumes so to do, is to be censured and punished for it.*

“ The Church of *France*, and the Church of “ *Rome*, you acknowledge to be as much possessed of this power as the Church of *England*: “ But it does not follow that because they have a “ power to decree *rites*, that they may therefore “ decree *fopperies* and *superstitions* †.” — But by what mark, I pray, do you distinguish betwixt *rites* and *fopperies*; betwixt *ceremonies* and *superstitions*? The consecrating of ground in the *Church of England* is a rite; but the consecrating of water in the *Church of France* is a foppery.—The Priest’s signing the baptized infant with the sign of the cross,

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\* Def. page 13.

† Ibid. page 11.

in token that it shall confess a crucified Christ, is a *significant rite* : But his putting his finger into its ear, in token that it shall hear the word of God ; or salt upon its tongue, in token that its speech shall be seasoned with salt, are *intolerable fopperies*. — Can you help blessing yourself, Sir, in the refinement and delicacy of such distinctions ! — The bowings to the altar, bowing at the name of *Jesus*, kneeling at the communion, sponsons, surplice, hoods, lawn-sleeves, and every thing of this kind, used in the Church of *England*, are *edifying and decent ceremonies*, “ *of clear signification and indisputable use\**.” But the slippers and staff, knocking on the breast, elevations, crossings, gesticulations, sprinklings with holy water, &c. practised in the Church of *Rome*, are *ridiculous superstitions*. — How happy to have Governours thus spiritually gifted ; able to distinguish betwixt things that differ !

“ My suggestion, that by the mere concessions of your XXth article thousands of profelytes have been gained from you to the Church of *Rome*, is rash, you say, and groundless : Nor do you believe I can name *one* who was ever gained by it †,” — I will give you two instances almost equal to a thousand. The *first* shall be the renowned *Chillingworth*, who was gained to the Church of *Rome*, chiefly by this argument, *viz.* *The necessity of an infallible living judge of controversies ‡* : Which is but a different expression for the *authority of the Church in matters of faith*. Now if this argument was so plausible as to vanquish, and lead captive so great a master of reason, multi-

\* Def. page 11. † Ibid. page 15. ‡ Vid. Life of *Chillingworth*, page 7.

multitudes of weaker minds have, no doubt, fallen by its force. The other shall be King *James II.* of whom Bishop *Burnet* says, he gave me this account of the *change of his religion*.—“ All due care  
 “ was taken to form him to a strict adherence to  
 “ the Church : Amongst other things much was  
 “ said of the AUTHORITY of the Church ; and of  
 “ the tradition from the Apostles in support of  
 “ *Episcopacy*. So when he came to observe that  
 “ there was more reason to submit to the *Catholic*  
 “ *Church*, than to *one particular Church* ; and that  
 “ other traditions might be taken on her word, as  
 “ well as *Episcopacy* was received amongst us ; he  
 “ thought the step was not great, but that it was  
 “ *very reasonable* to go over to the Church of  
 “ *Rome*.\*” See how dangerous a weapon is this  
 same *Church-authority* : And how capable of being  
 used to the infinite prejudice of the Protestant  
 cause !

“ But granting the authority of the Church,  
 “ (*i. e.* of its Pastors and Governors, its Bishops  
 “ and Clergy) How, you ask, would our *reforma-*  
 “ *tion* be overthrown by it ; which was not  
 “ carried on in opposition to authority, but with  
 “ the concurrence of all the authority in the na-  
 “ tion † ?” Strange, Sir, you should so soon for-  
 get ! Did not I remember you that the *reformation*  
 under Queen *Elizabeth*, and the present forms of  
 worship prescribed in the *Common-prayer*, were  
 strongly opposed by every Bishop in the kingdom ;  
 and the *Convocation* then sitting, were so far from  
 having any hand in it, that they presented to the  
 Parliament several propositions in favour of *Papery*,  
 directly

\* *Burnet's Hist. of his own Times*, Octav. Edit. Vol. I.  
 page 94.

† *Ibid.* page 15.

directly contrary to the proceedings of the Parliament? The *Civil Magistrate*, you affirm, *has no power at all, nor authority in these matters\**. They are the *Pastors* and *Governors* of the Church, in whom alone it is lodged. But behold, these *Pastors* and *Governors* were zealous for the old religion! They argued, voted, petitioned strenuously for it, and against the *reformation*. The *reformation*, then, upon your principles, is built upon a wrong bottom: Was carried on, not in concurrence with, but in avowed opposition to, *all the authority of the nation*. How justly might I here return your own ungenerous compliment, *It was great rashness (too great in conscience) if indeed it was not TREACHERY and PLAYING BOOTY, to set the Protestant cause upon so sandy a foundation†*. Your principles, if digested into proper form, will stand thus.—“ The Church hath power and authority to decree ceremonies and rites: But by *the Church*, observe, I understand, not the *King* and *Parliament*; not the *civil Magistrate*; who have no power at all relating to these matters; but the *Bishops* only and *Clergy*, who are appointed and called of God to be its *Pastors* and *Governors*: But remember, my countrymen, the *Common-prayer*, and forms of worship now established and used amongst you, were introduced into this Church, not by *the authority*, no, nor yet by *the consent*, of the *Pastors* and *Governors* whom God had set over it, but in *direct opposition* to them. It was a *change* brought about entirely by the *Civil Magistrate*; who had no authority to effect it. It was therefore really no other than an ecclesiastical rebellion, an  
“ un-

\* Def. page 18.

† Ibid. page 19.

“ unjustifiable revolt from the only *rightful* Rulers  
 “ and Governors of the Church in its spiritual  
 “ concerns.” —

This, Sir, is the plain language and tendency of your principles ; though I know you have been so wise as to contradict them again, by allowing,  
 “ that if Church-Governors will not come into such  
 “ reformation, as is according to GOD’s word, but  
 “ obstinately persevere in maintaining their sinful er-  
 “ rors and corruptions, the people may reform them-  
 “ selves \*.” — But this concession overthrows your whole scheme of Church-authority ; makes THE PEOPLE the *supreme* and *ultimate* judges, as to points of faith and rites of worship ; brings down the decrees of the most numerous and most holy Councils, Convocations, and Synods, to stand at the bar of *every man’s* private judgment ; and vests him with *authority* to receive or reject them, as to *himself* shall seem fit. So powerful is truth, which will prevail !

But your positions as to the *Civil Magistrate*, deserve a more distinct and accurate consideration.  
 “ He has no power at all to decree rites in divine  
 “ worship †.—This power is not in the King and  
 “ Parliament, for in this very article (XX.) which,  
 “ together with the rest, is confirmed by act of  
 “ Parliament (13 *Eliz.* c. 12.) and thereby made  
 “ a part of our ecclesiastical constitution, they  
 “ have plainly owned it to be in *the Church* ; and  
 “ no body imagines, that by the Church they  
 “ meant *themselves*. The King and Parliament  
 “ then have plainly disowned any such power in  
 “ themselves, and have recognized it to be in the  
 “ Church ‡.” — This, Sir, is a doctrine, of dan-  
 gerous

\* Def. page 13. † Ibid. page 18. ‡ Ibid. page 17.

gerous and important consequence, and quite contrary to fact. For,

1. As it was the *Queen* and *Parliament* alone, without, yea in opposition to, the *Bishops* and *Convocation*, which decreed the present form and worship of your Church, and to their authority alone it owes its very being, birth, and support; by affirming that they had *no power nor authority of this nature*, you knock down and demolish the *Church of England* at once, and lay it prostrate in the dust. And,

2. That the King and Parliament by acknowledging this power to be in *the Church*, have not *disclaimed* it, nor put it out of their own hands, is incontestible hence, that they have at the same time expressly told you, what they mean by *the Church*; not the *Bishops* and *Clergy*, but the *congregation of the faithful*; of which congregation *themselves* are not only a part, but the *principal and ruling* part. And accordingly, our laws and constitution have vested the *supreme power* of prescribing ceremonies and rites, *only* in them. I ask you—By *what authority* do the rubricks of the *Common-prayer*, bind the *Clergy* to obedience; or whence is it, they are *obliged* to observe the rites and forms prescribed in that book? Is it not *entirely* by the authority and act of *Parliament*? As for the Pastors and Governors to whom you *appropriate* this authority (the *Bishops* and *Clergy*) they have no power, by our constitution, to make one single law, to decree one rite, or to prescribe one ceremony. When assembled in Convocation, they are absolutely under the controul and direction of the *Civil Power*. “ Even the very subjects of their enquiry and debate, as well as the extent of their ordinances in point of obligation, are

“ prescribed by *Statute Law*; that they cannot so  
 “ much as *attempt* any canons or constitutions,  
 “ without a royal licence; and that none of their  
 “ ordinances are binding, even against the private  
 “ Customs of a single parish\*,” How is it then  
 you affirm, *the King and Parliament to have disown-*  
*ed any such power in themselves, and to have recog-*  
*nized it to be in the Church?* But,

3. The point is if possible, still rendered more  
 clear from the XXXIVth article above cited;  
 which says, *If any man through his private judgment,*  
*openly breaks the ceremonies of the Church, ordained*  
*by COMMON AUTHORITY, he shall be openly rebuked,*  
*as one who offendeth against the common order of*  
*the Church, and hurteth the AUTHORITY OF THE*  
*MAGISTRATE.*—The *Authority of the Magistrate,*  
 then, is indisputably concerned in *ordaining* these  
 ceremonies: And your Church, Sir, however loath  
 you are to hear it, is undoubtedly a *Parliamentary*  
 and *Civil* constitution, made, formed, supported  
 entirely by the *Civil Magistrate,* and by him alone  
 is it capable of being thrown into a new form.

“ But you ask, “ Are not the Dissenting Churches  
 “ in the same sense *Parliamentary*? Do they not  
 “ depend entirely upon an Act of Parliament, the  
 “ Act of Toleration †?” No; the Dissenting  
 Churches were formed, subsisted, and grew *with-*  
*out and before,* any Parliamentary authority. We  
 are thankful to the excellent and good government  
 under which we live, for the Act of Toleration.  
 But, would humbly beg leave to say, we derive  
 not our power to assemble for divine worship, nor  
 our Ministers theirs to officiate in such assemblies,  
 from

\* Examinat. of the Codex, page 114. † Def. page 21.

from any *human law*, but from our *natural right* as men, and from the authority of *CHRIST*. The Act of Toleration only protects us in the enjoyment of this right.

“ But above all things you marvel, that whilst  
 “ I was making this push at the Church of Eng-  
 “ land, I did not reflect how much *I laid myself*  
 “ *open* : For if there was ever upon earth a Church,  
 “ which could properly be called *Parliamentary*,  
 “ it was the *Presbyterian*, in the time of the grand  
 “ *rebellion* \*.” What you call the grand rebellion,  
 Sir, a *British House of Commons*, since the Re-  
 storation, call a *vindication of their JUST LIBER-*  
*TIES* ; and brought one of their members, *Lenthal*,  
 upon his knees at the bar, and there sharply re-  
 primanded him, for presuming to reflect upon it  
 in the manner you have done †. Besides, if it was  
 a *grand rebellion*, the shame and reproach of it falls  
 chiefly upon the *Church of England* ; the *Parlia-*  
*ment* who began it, consisting almost entirely of  
 members of that communion, as *Lord Clarendon*  
 himself owns. But, what if the *Presbyterial Church*  
 established afterward by them was truly *Parliamen-*  
*tary*, how have *I laid myself open* ! Had I said or  
 suggested any thing at all relating to *that Church*, or  
 the proceedings of *those times* ? Not a single word :  
 but, for aught I had said, it appears not but I as  
 much condemn that *establishment* as yourself. How  
 then have *I laid myself open* ! Are you, Sir, the  
 gentleman, that reproves me for *ramblings* ?

You put the case ‡, “ that any of our Dissent-  
 “ ing Churches, or the Church of *Scotland*, should

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“ by

\* Def. page 20. † Journal of the 12th May, 1660.

‡ Def. pages 23, 24.

“ by an Act of the general Assembly ordain, that  
 “ a decent basin, with clean water, should be  
 “ provided, and placed near the pulpit, that so the  
 “ Minister taking the child in his arms, may con-  
 “ veniently pour or sprinkle water upon its face,  
 “ in the name of the Father, &c. Here are several  
 “ rites ordained, which Christ in his wisdom  
 “ did not think proper to ordain, and one of them  
 “ at least as exceptionable as any excepted against  
 “ in our Church, *Sprinkling* — What will this  
 “ gentleman say to such an appointment ?” I will  
 say, Sir, that if compliance with this injunction be  
 made a *necessary term* of receiving baptism in that  
 Church (as the *Cross* and *Sponsors* are made *necessary*  
*in yours*) so as that no child shall be baptized,  
 that is not *sprinkled* from such basin; and the pa-  
 rent that desires to have his child *dip* (believing  
*that* to be the only way in which Christian Bap-  
 tism ought to be administered) shall not have it  
 done; in that case, Sir, I will say the Church acts  
 a tyrannical, unjust, schismatical part; and if I  
 could have my child baptized in any other Church,  
 constituted upon a more *Catholic* and *Scriptural*  
 plan, I should think it my duty to apply to it on  
 that occasion. The spirit of ceremony-making  
 and church-tyranny, is of a restless and in-  
 croaching nature, and ought *timely* to be crushed.  
 It was from such *little beginnings*, the mass of *Romish*  
 poperies grew up to its present enormous and oppres-  
 sive height.

“ The *natural rights* you represent some of our  
 “ fellow-subjects as submitting to be deprived of  
 “ by disqualifying laws, without going about to  
 “ *turn the world upside down for their repeal* \*,”  
 are vastly too *trivial*, to be compared with those  
 of

\* Def. pages 6, 7.

of which Dissenters are deprived : nor are they disqualified as to these, upon the account of *conscience* and *religion* (the hard case of Dissenters) for acting as we think the authority and laws of God indispensibly oblige us : Nor finally, can the persons you mention, perhaps be properly said to have a *natural right*, to sustain at the same time two different characters, and to execute two offices which are generally inconsistent and interfere with each other—So the cases are not parallel. Besides, why are we represented as *turning the world upside down*? Have we ever kindled tumults, raised mobs, demolished houses, threatned courts (as you know, Sir, who have done)—under a seditious cry, that our *Churches were in danger*? We appeal to the impartial world, for the *loyalty* and *peaceableness* with which we behave.

You pass over, by your own confession, *almost half my pamphlet* \* unremarked ; in which the constitution of the Church of *England* is compared with that of the Church of *CHRIST*, and they are incontestibly shewn to be *societies* of a quite different, and even opposite nature ; so as that a person's separation from the *one*, does by no means imply his separation from the *other*. Your replying nothing to this, you will give me leave to impute to some other cause, than “ *your not observing any thing in it, which pretends to refute or contradict any position advanced in your letter.*” Is not the charge of *Schism* your favourite and constant topic? But, if I prove the *two societies* so entirely *different* in their constitution and frame, as that my not communicating in the *former*, does in no wise break me off from, nor in the least in-

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interrupt

\* Def. page 37.

interrupt my communion in the *latter*; is not this a *refutation* of one of the principal and most interesting parts of *your letters*? And did not justice to your argument demand, if you could have given it, a proper reply?

“ It is growing mighty modish, you complain, with our people, to laugh at all notions of Church communion, and to make nothing of the most unnecessary seperations\*.” Yes, I thank God, the loud peals you were wont to ring us upon the head of *Schism*, are generally treated with pretty much neglect, not only amongst our people, but even amongst your own. For when one sees grave gentlemen setting themselves up for *Rulers* and *Governors* in the name of the LORD, claiming power to forgive sins, to decree ceremonies, to make laws, and to determine points of faith; and then thundering out their anathemas, upon such as refuse to submit to their authority——What must this provoke, in all sensible spectators, but a mixture of contempt, indignation, and mirth?

Can these *spiritual Fathers*, in their consciences, believe our SCHISM to be so horrid and so damning, and yet refuse to drop the ceremonies which they see to be the *stone of stumbling*, at which we so grievously and wickedly fall! What! for the sake of a few things which they own to be *indifferent*, will they harden themselves against the cries of so many perishing misguided *Christians*, and *destroy the souls for which Christ died*! Forgive me, Sir, if I cannot think it; but that *Schism* is only used as an *ecclesiastical scarecrow*, to keep the simple in awe; and to establish a sacerdotal empire over ductile and weak minds.

“ All

“ All Christians, you affirm, living within the  
 “ Church of *England*, which is co-extended with  
 “ the kingdom, may be truly said to owe it obe-  
 “ dience and submission ; and are *de jure*, whe-  
 “ ther they will be or not *de facto*, true members  
 “ and subjects of it\*.” But pray tell me : Is not  
 the *Church of Scotland* equally co-extended with  
*that* kingdom, as the *Church of England* is with  
*this* ? And do not all who live within its pale,  
 owe it like submission ? Is not the *Presbyterian* dis-  
 cipline and worship as much established there, as  
 the *Episcopal* is here ? If it be *Schism* then, and a  
 grievous sin for Dissenters to withdraw from the  
 established Church in *South Britain*, is it not *alike*  
 schismatical and wicked in your *Episcopal* brethren  
 to withdraw from the *Presbyterian* Church esta-  
 blished in *the North* ? Whence is it we never hear  
 from you any solemn admonitions to your brethren  
 beyond the *Tweed*, of the detestable sin of *Schism* ;  
 warning them of its damning nature, and exhort-  
 ing them speedily to unite with the established  
 Church ! Here your grave lectures may possibly  
 have good effect ; and if you really thought *Schism*  
 so grievous an offence as you affect to represent,  
 it is strange you never try the power of your per-  
 suasions with your brethren in the *North*. This  
 would be a noble proof that you were in earnest,  
 and sincere. But whilst, amidst your warmest ha-  
 rangues against the *English* separation, you encour-  
 age and support the dissent from the *Scottish*  
 Church ; what can be thought of your outcries a-  
 bout *Schism*, but that they deserve a name more  
 severe than I am willing here to give ?

Your

\* Def. page 29.

Your notion of our being “*true members* of the “*Church of England de jure*, tho’ we are not, and “*will not be de facto*” — is a refinement, indeed, and quite surpasses my comprehension. I thought it entered essentially into the idea of a *Church*, that it is a *society of VOLUNTEERS*: A company joined together in certain acts and professions by *common CONSENT*: And that *without*, much less *against*, his own agreement and consent, no man could, with truth, be stiled a member of any Church. All persons living in Christendom may be said to owe *Jesus Christ* obedience and submission, with infinitely greater reason than all the people of *England* can be said to owe it to the *Church*: But does it therefore follow, that they are all *de jure*, if they will not be *de facto*, *TRUE members* of the *Church of Christ*? What, those who openly renounce *Christ*, declare him an impostor, and utterly disavow obedience and subjection to him, can *such*, with any truth or propriety, be stiled *true members* of his Church! Strange Divinity indeed! *Christ’s Church* then, instead of a *congregation of faithful persons*, may now be defined a society of impious blasphemers, of infidels and profane persons, who neither fear God, nor believe in *Jesus Christ*; these all may be declared and treated as *true members* of his Church. If this, indeed, be right, then with some pretence it may be said, that those who openly renounce and disclaim the *Church of England*, and declare they will not live in any subjection to it, may yet be considered as *true members* of it.

I owe allegiance to the *King of England*, because I receive protection from him, and enjoy innumerable *civil* blessings by means of his government, under which I *consent* to live. But it does not  
hence

hence follow, that I owe subjection to the Church of *England*, (as you argue, page 29.) from whom I receive no protection, enjoy no benefit nor advantage, and in communion with which I by no means *consent* to live. CONSENT, Sir, is indispensibly and essentially necessary to form the relation betwixt pastors and people : And without this *consent* no Church in any Christian or Scriptural sense can possibly be formed. *Dissenters* therefore can with no justness nor propriety in the world be stiled *true members* of your Church. Your solemn excommunications of them is really a casting such out, as never were in it : So the miracle still remains.

As to our *posture* of receiving the Lord's-supper, instead of ingenuously owning your great *misrepresentation*, you seek by frivolous and quaint questions to raise a dust to conceal it. As, " what meaneth this *informant*, by *some* of their Churches, which have admitted kneeling ? What by *some* in their Churches ? If there were any considerable number, &c.\*" Their *Number*, give me leave to tell you, Sir, is nothing to the purpose. It is the LIBERTY they have to do it, is the only point in debate. If all have this *liberty*, though not one in five thousand should actually use it ; my point stands firm, yours is overthrown ; and you stand convicted before the world of having given a very wrong and injurious account of us. You rashly asserted that *sitting* among us was NEVER allowed to be departed from ; that our Ministers INSISTED upon, and REFUSED to abate it. — This, from my own certain knowledge, from the information of others, from *Baxter's* reformed Liturgy, I proved

\* Def. page 32.

proved to be a false representation. In the second edition of my letter, (page 21.) I added a passage from Dr. Calamy's *brief Account to the German Divines*, which expressly says, — *The Communicants amongst PROTESTANT DISSENTERS are AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE in the time of receiving; though a table-posture is most commonly used. Note.* To this *brief Account, &c.* you appear to have been no stranger; you had, doubtless, read it; for you quote a long passage from it, (Letter II. page 62.) not *four lines* distant from that I have now cited. How then could you take upon you so roundly to affirm — *that it is NEVER ALLOWED to be departed from, &c.* When you had seen it declared to the world that our *Communicants were AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE!*

But, if this deserves an ingenuous blush, I am called upon to blush with you, “for having said that Christ and his Apostles, without all peradventure, *sat around the table*, when every body knows, who knows any thing at all, that they used the *recumbent* posture, which is no more sitting than it is kneeling.\*” — If my assertion cannot be supported by indisputable authority, I have a blush at your command. Let my vouchers be heard. St. Matthew † says, *he SAT DOWN with the Twelve. — And as they were eating JESUS took bread, and blessed it.* St. Mark ‡, *As they SAT and did eat, JESUS took bread, &c.* St. Luke §, *When the hour was come, he SAT DOWN, and the twelve Apostles with him: And he took the bread*

\* Def. page 31. † xxvi. 20. ‡ xiv. 13.

§ xxii. 14.

bread and gave thanks. If I am now to be corrected for representing *Christ* and his Apostles as *sitting* around the table, the weight of the stroke will fall entirely upon *the Scriptures*; under which patronage I am safe. I make no manner of doubt, Sir, but the posture was *sitting*; though with the body, perhaps, a little *leaned* or *reclined*. Nor would our language afford our translators any better, or indeed any other, word than *sitting*, to express it by. Pray, how would you render it — *As they RECUMBED and did eat.* — *And when the hour was come, he RECUMBED with his twelve Apostles?* If every body, “*who knows any thing at all, knows they used the recumbent posture,*” then good Mr. Henry knew nothing at all; for, he says, “*He sat down in the usual table-gesture; not lying on one side, for it was not easy to eat, nor possible to drink in that posture, but sitting upright, though perhaps, sitting low.*” Or, rather, as Dr. Lightfoot tells us, the posture was, sitting on a couch, leaning the left elbow on the table.

My account of the constitution of the Church of England, of the regal supremacy, and of the proceedings of the Convocation in the affair of Mr. Whiston, you call *misrepresentations*\*; but I observe you are so prudent as not to offer a single word in proof of their being such.

Your representing me as having a great zeal for *Arianism*, and being fond of these new notions †; for which I had given not the least real occasion, is an artifice so low, that you must give me leave to look down with great pity upon it; not doubting  
but

\* Def. pages 37, 38.

† Ibid. pages 38, 44.

but I have both an *advocate* and an *avenger* in your own bosom.

There is something truly extraordinary in your affirming——“ That the *damnatory clauses* of the “ *Athanasian* creed may be as safely subscribed, “ without any explanatory declaration, as the *holy* “ *Scriptures*; at least such passages, as *He that believeth not shall be damned* —— *He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of* “ *God abideth on him\**, &c.” — As much as to say, You may as confidently assent to the decisions of a weak and fallible *man*, concerning the *everlasting state* of multitudes of his fellow men, as to the decision of the omniscient and infallible God — Or thus, because God hath fixed *some* terms for a man’s entrance into life, therefore *man* may take upon him to devise and fix *others*.— Or thus, because CHRIST had authority to pronounce, that no man who received not *the Gospel*, which he preached, should finally be saved, therefore *Athanasius* ( if he was its compiler ) had authority to pronounce, that no man who believed not the *creed* which he had made, should attain eternal life, but should *everlastingly perish*.— Are these conclusions just ?

I cannot think myself to need your forgiveness, Sir, for asking, “ whether *you* were amongst the “ weak and uncharitable minds, who damn to “ the pit of Hell, all who cannot receive all the “ dark and mysterious points set forth in the *Athanasian* creed.”— For does not that creed most *peremptorily* pronounce this damnation on all *such* ? Are not *you* a zealous advocate and admirer of that *creed* ? Do you not *yourself*, thirteen times a year, in the presence and Church of God, and as his  
Minister

\* Def. page 40.

Minister and Ambassador declare solemnly to the people, *That whoever does not keep WHOLE and UN-DEFILED the faith therein delivered, he shall WITHOUT DOUBT perish everlastingly?* Where then is the wrong of my asking, *Whether you are amongst the weak and uncharitable persons?* &c. For if you are *sincere* in its use, and do really believe what you solemnly tell the people, when you read to them *that creed*, you must, surely, be content to be reckoned in that number. For how to reconcile a solemn declaration that certain persons, WITHOUT DOUBT *perish everlastingly*, with HOPES of their salvation, is what no wit of the subtlest Jesuit is able to perform.

The subscriptions of our Ministers, with the protestation they made against the *damnatory clauses*, can with no truth, I apprehend, be called “a *pro- testatio contra factum*, nor a subscribing assent to “the truth of certain propositions, at the same “time declaring they do not assent to it\*.” For it really amounted to no more than this — “I be- “lieve the articles of this creed, and think it a- “greeable to the word of God; but I here pub- “lickly declare, I do not consider the *damnatory* “*clauses* as any part of the creed, nor give my as- “sent to them.” As for the subscription of our present Ministers, if it be not done under a claim of the benefit of this *protestation* made by their predecessors, or with some such *protestation* made by themselves; I freely own, Sir, I cannot justify it, and think it a thing which ought not to be done.

SUBSCRIPTION to *human creeds* have, I apprehend, been of infinite disservice and hurt to the Christian Church; have rent it into a variety of sects and angry parties, and filled it with innume-  
 N rable

table strifes and debates : They are a fence, raised  
 around the Church, which can possibly keep none  
 but *virtuous* and *honest* persons, but never can one  
*hypocrite*, one *heretick*, or *wicked man*, from enter-  
 ing into it. - I wish the case you mention may not  
 be extremely common, *viz.* *Fraudulent and insincere*  
*subscriptions*, and the constant use of forms, which  
 they who use them do not approve of, whereby the  
*conscience is defiled*.\*

But the point of *subscriptions* which is the subject  
 of your *Appendix*, will be considered by an *abler*  
*hand* ; who will give you, I hope, ample satisfac-  
 tion on this head ; To his instructions I commend  
 you, Sir, wishing you with great sincerity, abun-  
 dant peace and truth.

\* Def. p. 44.

T H E

# Dissenting Gentleman's

T H I R D and L A S T

## L E T T E R, &c.

S I R,

I HAVE read carefully your *two Defences*, and attentively weighed the reasons by which you further press my *conformity* to your Church; but must still say, that though I feel the attraction of *worldly interest* strongly operating with your arguments, and giving them great force; yet there is something more forcible which draws a contrary way.

Were I to never live but in the present world, I would soon become your convert: But when I consider that the *purity, simplicity, and liberty* of the GOSPEL, are a *sacred DEPOSITE* committed to my trust; and that there is an *allegiance* I owe to CHRIST, as the ONLY Lawgiver of the Church, for which I must surely be accountable before him; I cannot but think it my *duty*, and therefore, upon the whole, most certainly my *interest* also, to

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continue

continue my *separation*, though attended with some worldly disadvantage and reproach.

The grounds of my *dissent* I have already layn before the world, to whose impartial consideration they are humbly submitted. “ But I have left unnoticed and untouched, you complain, a great part of your Letters.” This, indeed, I have done, and shall also of your Defence; a great part of both being futile, and of little moment to the merits of the cause before us. Debates of this kind, I knew, insensibly swell. I remarked therefore, but upon a *few* of the *many* obnoxious passages with which your Letters abound, that greater liberty might be left to present you with several strong, and to me unanswerable, arguments for dissent from your Church, which you had artfully forbore to mention; and which, tho’ since held up before you and peculiarly urged upon you, you turn gravely away from, and will not be provoked to encounter their force.

I have pressed you with the *constitution* and *frame* of your Church; and have shewn you various points in which its structure and form was not only quite *different from*, but actually *repugnant to*, the Church of JESUS CHRIST; consequently, that it was not, could not be, any *dangerous* and *damnable Schism* for the servants of *Jesus Christ* to separate and withdraw from it, as you had rashly affirmed. But to this *popular and great plea* you have made no reply at all; it stands before you in full strength.

This charge of *Schism* is still rendered more completely *ridiculous*; by observing,—That the very powers which *alone* formed, and which *alone* govern your Church, have given us leave to *withdraw* from it. The *very AUTHORITY* which  
made

*made* your Church, and upon which *alone* it rests, hath allowed us to set up our *separate* Churches for worship; and hath taken those Churches, and the worship performed in them, under its immediate protection and care.

## S E C T. I.

*Of Church-Power, and in whom lodged.*

**T**HE issue of the debate betwixt the *Church* and the *Dissenters*, I have frequently reminded you of, and every attentive person sees, depends absolutely and intirely upon this single point — Is there any *other* Lawgiver or King in the *Church of GOD* besides *JESUS CHRIST*; or, is there not? Is there *power* and *authority* vested in any man or body of men on earth, to make and to injoin *new rites* of Christian worship, and *new terms* of Christian fellowship, besides what *CHRIST*, the *only* Lawgiver, hath *himself* made and enjoined; or, is there not? Could you but be engaged to give a *plain* and *direct* answer to this *one point*, it would soon end the debate. But for reasons best known to yourself, yet very obvious to the world, you are deaf to my repeated solicitations on this head; and will not, cannot be either *persuaded* or *provoked* to speak your sentiments freely and openly upon it.

You strenuously contend that *there is such a Power*; but are greatly at a loss, 1. *Where* to place it? And, 2. *How* to limit and confine it? These are *two things* which it indispensibly lies upon you to *fix* clearly and to *ascertain*; before you can, with any grace, censure our *separation* as unjustifiable and wrong. But tho' in multiply-  
ing

ing words, your talent is not common, and you expatiate diffusely upon things of little moment; yet *here*, where the point lies, and you *saw*, and even *felt* it, you artfully endeavour to evade. However, with much difficulty, a few concessions are extorted from you, which, in part, shew the world your preposterous scheme, and which prove you to be really (as I shall presently shew) no *advocate* for, no *friend* at all to, the true *Church of England*, the Church established by law; but to be a *betrayed*, an *opugner* of it, a dangerous *underminer* of its very basis and foundation; and that, if your principles take place, it must presently be overthrown, and its hierarchy and frame be utterly destroyed.

For, with regard to the *first* of the above points, *viz.* In whom this *power* of making and injoining *new* ceremonies and rites of worship, and *new* terms of Communion in the Church of *Christ*, is vested — You affirm, 1. “*That it is NOT in the CIVIL MAGISTRATE; he has NO SUCH POWER at all\*.*” But, 2. “*It is in the PASTORS and GOVERNORS of the Church †*”. Now,

FIRST, If it be NOT in the CIVIL MAGISTRATE: and HE has, as you affirm, NO SUCH POWER at all; the consequence is inevitable, that then the present *established Church of England* is illegally, unjustly, tyrannically *established*: That it is an *usurpation* upon the rights of Christians, and upon the civil liberties of mankind; and that the very *basis* on which it stands, with its whole *frame* and *constitution*, are fundamentally, essentially and notoriously *wrong*. For, — That the  
present

\* I. Def. pages 18, 19. † Ibid. page 10.

present *Church of England* was constituted, formed and established by the *civil Magistrate*, and ONLY by him, viz. by *Q. Eliz.* and her Parliament, every gentleman, not a perfect stranger to our history and constitution, indisputably knows. When we talk of the *Church established by law*; by what law, I pray, do we mean established? Is it not by a law enacted by the *Crown and Parliament*, and enacted by no authority or power but *theirs*? Is not the *Act of Uniformity* the grand pillar or foundation on which the *Church of England* rests? Was it not *that alone* which established its present liturgy, with all its ceremonies and forms? But by *whom* was that law made? Was it not by the *Civil Magistrate*; and made by him alone; the *Bishops* in the House of Lords, and the *Clergy* in Convocation, labouring earnestly against it.—To say then, as you do, that the *Civil Magistrate has NO POWER* to decree ceremonies and forms of worship, is to say that the *Act of Uniformity* was a tyrannical unrighteous act: that it was enacted by *those* who had *NO POWER at all* to do it; consequently, that the *Church* established by *that law* was an unwarrantable establishment, a spurious illegal thing.—This is the destructive tendency, Sir, of your principles and scheme. You root up foundations, overthrow our constitution, and demolish totally the very *Church* you seem zealous to defend; so that you never spoke, perhaps, a truer word than when you were pleased to describe yourself as a *sorry advocate for the Church*\*. But

\* Defence, page 128. Your learned *WARBURTON* in his *Alliance, &c.* honourably and frankly owns, “*That the Church hath resigned her INDEPENDENCY, and made the MAGISTRATE her SUPREME HEAD; without whose approbation and allowance she can direct, order and decree nothing,* page 87. *And that the Clergy are now under the MAGISTRATE’s direction,* page 74.

Accordingly,

But you ask,—“ Why are we to regard only the  
 “ establishment of *Queen Elizabeth* ? Why is King  
 “ *Edward's* reformation overlooked \* ? ” Not for  
 any advantage which you can possibly get by it.  
 For in the *reformation* under that Prince also, “ *The*  
 “ *majority of the Bishops and inferior Clergy* (direct-  
 “ ly contrary to what you assert) *were on the side of*  
 “ *POPERY* †.” And it was the *Parliament* alone,  
 without the *Convocation*, which established the re-  
 formed liturgy and Service-book then.

But at *Queen Elizabeth's* reformation, when the  
 present Church was formed, erected and establish-  
 ed, you allege,—“ Though the *Bishops* did, in-  
 “ deed, in some of her first years, oppose the *reforma-*  
 “ *mation*, which they had before approved, yet  
 “ they did not long stand out—†.” That the ma-  
 jority of the Bishops did either *before approve*, or  
*afterward comply*, is, I believe, quite repugnant  
 to fact || ; but whether true or not, is not at all to  
 the purpose : For when the *reformation* was actually  
 accomplished, and the Church with its *Liturgy* and  
*Forms* was established ; their standing *in* or *out* af-  
 terward,

Accordingly, an Act in the 2d Parliament of *Charles II.*  
 in *Scotland*, to which all the *Bishops* concurred, and none of  
 the Laity protested against it, enacts,—“ *That the disci-*  
*pline of the external government and polity of the Church is*  
*in his MAJESTY and his successors, as an INHERENT*  
*RIGHT of the crown ; and that they may settle, enact and*  
*limit such constitutions, acts and orders, concerning the ad-*  
*ministration of the external government of the Church, and*  
*the persons employed in the same, and concerning all ecclesi-*  
*astical meetings, and matters to be proposed and determined*  
*therein, as they in their ROYAL WISDOM shall think fit.*

\* II Def. page 140. † Neal's Hist. Purit. Vol. I.  
 pages 45, 51. † II Def. page 140.

|| Only one Bishop conformed himself to the Queen's  
 commands, and was continued in his Place, viz. *Kitcher*  
*of Landaff* : Fuller's Ch. Hist. Book ix. page 59, & Book  
 vii. page 414.

terward, for a *longer* or *shorter* time, makes nothing for your point. The work was done *without them*; this is all I ask; this you are forced to grant. The *Bishops* then had *no hand, no share* at all, in making and establishing the present Church of *England*; but with all their might *opposed* it. It was done by the *Civil Magistrate* (who had *NO POWER*, you say, *to do it*) and done by him *alone*. “At her Majesty’s accession, and even after religion was restored to the same state as under King EDWARD, the *UNIVERSITIES* were *so entirely lost*, that there were scarce *TWO* of the same opinion with the reformers. As to the *Bishops and Clergy* (Bishop Cox adds) they were *UNANIMOUS* for *POPERY*, firm as a rock.

————— *Stat Clerus Totus,*  
*Tanquam dura flix aut flet Marpesia Cautes* \*.

“ But if the reformation was carried on, it was not, say you, *perfected* without the *Bishops* †.” True, because it was never perfected at all. That glorious work remains to immortalise, perhaps, the name of its present Governors. But to whatever *perfection* it hath been at all brought since its first establishment, it was brought *only* and *entirely* by the authority of the *Crown* and *Parliament*; our excellent constitution acknowledging *NO legislative* power or authority but *theirs* ||.

“ And

\* *Neal’s Review*, &c. page 58. Vide also *Fuller’s Ch. Hist.* Book ix. page 56. † II *Def.* page 139.

|| *Synods* and *Convocations* have in all ages of the Church seldom done good; often much hurt; have generally obstructed, not promoted *reformation*; which hath mostly been carried on by *LAY-Councils* and *Hands*. The sentiments of a learned *Father*, who had seen much of these Church-proceedings, may be not unworthy to be here remembered

“ And as for the XXXIX articles, these, you  
 “ allege, were some years after passed in a Con-  
 “ vocation of the Bishops and Clergy \*.” Whether they were passed in a *Convocation* or not, with regard to their *authority*, is of no moment at all. *Their unanimous assent* adding not the least grain to their obligation on the subject; nor *their most zealous dissent* in the least detracting from it. But did not your heart smite you, Sir, at the very mention of *these ARTICLES*; the XXXIVth of which declares expressly *against* you, — *That your Church-ceremonies were ORDAINED by the authority of the CIVIL MAGISTRATE.* The same also your XXXth canon †. You have several times subscribed the truth of this *article*, and sworn to this *canon*. With what countenance then durst you thus publickly *oppugn* and *contradict* it; and in open defiance of our *articles* and *statutes*, our *constitutions* and *canons*, and your own repeated *subscriptions*, presumptuously declare, — — *That the CIVIL MAGISTRATE has NO POWER nor AUTHORITY AT ALL to decree ceremonies in religion?* Do you solemnly subscribe one thing, and publickly teach another! Where is the consistency and

membered. *Sic sentio, si verum scribendum est, &c.* My opinion is this, if I may be allowed to speak the truth; that all CONVENTIONS of Bishops are to be avoided. For I never saw any good come of any SYNOD; nor that it did not much more mischief, than it hindred. For truth, in such assemblies, is generally borne down by a spirit of strife and vain-glory. Greg. Nazian. Epist. ad Precop.

\* Ibid. page 140.

† “ We hold it the part of every private man, both Minister and other, reverently to retain the use of the ceremonies prescribed by *public authority*; considering, that things of themselves *indifferent* do, in some sort, alter their natures, when they are either commanded or forbidden by a *lawful MAGISTRATE*; and may not be omitted, at every man’s pleasure, *contrary to the LAW.*” Canon xxx.

and conscience of this ? But let us see where you lodge *this power*.

SECONDLY. They are the *Church's* PASTORS and GOVERNORS, whom you are pleased to invest with it\*; that is, I suppose you mean (for you are extremely shy of explications) *its* BISHOPS and CLERGY. But you have not deigned to shew me one *text* of Scripture, nor one *Statute* or *Act* of Parliament, which vests them with *this power*. I have shewn you several of *both*, which expressly divest them of it, and utterly deny them any such *jurisdiction* or *authority* at all.

But, for once, we will grant you,—*That these PASTORS and GOVERNORS have authority from GOD to make NEW ceremonies and rites, and to ordain in CHRIST'S Church NEW Terms of Communion.*—Tell me, then, is this *POWER* vested *solely* and *only* in the BISHOPS; or, must their *Deans* and *Chapters* act in concert with them? Has *every Bishop*, within his diocese, this *power* from *GOD* to injoin new ceremonies and rites; or, may his *Archbishop* controul him? This latter, I suppose, not: For *Archbishops*, you own, not to be of *apostolic*, but of *modern* institution; whereas *Bishops*, it should seem, are the *lineal* successors and representatives of the Apostles; in whom therefore the *apostolic* power of governing the Churches rests. *This* then, which is of *divine*, ought not to be controuled by *that*, which is but of *late* and *human* institution.—The *Bishop*, then, of every diocese, as its *Pastor* and *Governor*, has authority from *GOD* to decree in his Church what ceremonies and rites soever, and to make what terms of communion he thinks edifying and fit. Nor has any neighbouring Bishop, no, nor any power upon earth,

\* I Def. page 10.

earth, authority to controul him. For as the **APOSTLES** were all *equal*, so must their successors, the **BISHOPS**, also be : And as the former were not *accountable* to any *temporal* Prince for their jurisdiction in the Church of **CHRIST**, the same exemption also may their descendants and representatives claim. How excellent a scheme of government and holy discipline this ! With what beauty and uniformity, unity and peace is it calculated to bless the Church ! as we shall presently see. But,

**THIRDLY.** Acknowledging this *high power* to be really vested in the Church's *Bishops*, as **GOVERNORS** and **PASTORS** of it. I again ask, How **FAR** does it extend ? Is it *limited* or *unlimited* ? May they injoin *whatever* rites **THEY** think decent and ornamental ; and decree *whatever* ceremonies or new terms of Communion **THEY** judge conducive to the edification of the Church ? As they have now, in the Church of *England*, decreed we will say, *four* only, to give *additional beauty and splendor* to its public worship ; may they not, if they think it conducive farther to this worthy end, decree *four*, or even *forty*, more ? Yes, and make that forty, four hundred, if they happen to think them *useful*, and to promote *decency* and *order* in the worship of their respective flocks. — But do you not plainly see, Sir, how *dangerous* a power this ! A *power* which, in all ages, hath proved the *bane* of the Christian Church ! A flood-gate which hath let in an horrible and filthy deluge of animosities, corruptions, and superstitions upon it ! Hence sprung that enormous mass of profane and foolish rites, which, to the scandal of the *Christian* name, now grievously oppress both the *Greek* and the *Romish* Churches. One good Bishop,  
or

or perhaps junto of Bishops, taking it into his head that there ought to be a *trine immersion* in baptism; another the *signation of the cross*; another an *unction with oil*; another *milk and honey*, and *imposition of hands* immediately after it; another *insufflation* or breathing upon the person's face to *exorcise the Devil*; another *washing of hands* before prayers——thus praying towards the *East*; *sponsors* in Baptism; *kneeling* at the Lord's-supper; first the veneration, then the adoration of *relics*; *images* erected, first only as *memorials*, thence quickly sliding into *objects* of religious worship. Thus, I say, that inundation of abominable corruptions, which at present overwhelms both the *Greek* and *Romish* Churches, gradually came in at this very *breach* which you are now zealously maintaining, namely, *the Bishop's Power to decree rites and ceremonies in the Church.*

'Tis a most *dangerous* and *important* POWER; not fit to be trusted, and therefore, we may be assured, never was trusted with any *fallible uninspired* men. JESUS CHRIST, surely the SUPREME *Bishop* and ONLY *Head* of his Church, well knew what *institutions* were most for its edification; and what *ceremonies* and *rites* would best promote the order and decency of its worship; and either by himself, or by his inspired Apostles, has left a *perfect plan* of both. For any weak and uninspired men therefore to rise up in after ages, and fancy they can *improve* the scheme of worship which CHRIST hath left; that they can add greatly to its *beauty*, its *splendor* and *perfection* by some ceremonies of their own, is, to be sure, a rude invasion of CHRIST's *throne*, which every sober Christian ought highly to detest.

O

But

But with great acuteness you observe, “ That though those CHURCH-GOVERNORS have power to decree *ceremonies* and *rites*, yet not *fopperies* and *superstitions*.” This is extremely pleasant ! But when I ask you, by what criterion to distinguish *rites* from *fopperies*, and *ceremonies* from *superstitions*, you will not, and no wonder, satisfy my *curiosity*. For I defy all the common sense and ingenuity of the nation (to borrow one of your own expressions) to shew the *consecration of earth* to cover the body when *dead* to be an edifying and decent rite ; but the *consecration of water* to sprinkle it when *living* to be a ridiculous and foolish foppery. I defy any man upon earth to say, why *spittle* and *salt* in baptism are not as instructive ceremonies as the *sign of the cross* ?—And, why a bishop has not as much power, according to ancient custom, to *exorcise the Devil* before baptism, as to *lay on hands* after it ( as you say he does in *confirmation*) to impart the graces of the *Holy Ghost*.

SUPERSTITION, Sir, is ever restless, insatiable, incroaching. Every good Bishop will be ambitious of adding some rite or ceremony of his own to *beautify* divine worship and render it more brilliant. Thus, when your holy Bishop *Laud* was Governor of this Church, you had lighted candles upon its altars ; copes of mass Priests with crucifixes and images of the Trinity upon them ; consecrated knives to cut the sacramental bread ; incense pots ; canisters for wafers lined with cambric lace, — with a deal of other furniture all *solemnly* CONSECRATED for the service of *Almighty* GOD, and for the comfort, instruction, and edification of his Church ; to exalt and enliven the *beauties of holiness* therein. And had it not been  
for

for the *noble* and *heroic* STAND against this *rite-making* spirit, which the Puritans and their successors have all along made, there is little reason to doubt, that the Church of *England*, by this time, had fallen little short in these *holy decorations* and *additional splendors*, of the Church of *Moscow* or of *Rome*. — — —

I have dwelt the longer upon *this*, because it is, undoubtedly the *capital* and *fundamental* point on which the debate betwixt the *Church* and the *Dissenters* entirely turns. Prove your Church, Sir, to have this *power* and *authority* from *GOD*, which she exercises and claims, a *POWER* to *decree new rites and ceremonies in Christian worship*, to make *new terms* of Communion, and to *determine controversies of Faith*. — — and you need give yourself no farther trouble; all *other things* in controversy, sponsors, absolution, the sacramental test, and every other thing shall immediately be given up. Make good but this *one point*, and if your Church commands us to sign ourselves *all over* with a significant and instructive *cross*; we will reverently do it.

— If it bids us worship towards the *East*, and to think the *omnipresent DEITY* to be more *there* than in the *West*; and to bow at the name of *Jesus*; we will humbly submit; — or, if it requires us to believe, that an amorous *Devil* was forced away from his beloved maid by the fumes of a fish's liver; or that the vilest wretch that lives, if the King gives him a post, has a *right* to eat at the *Lord's-table*; and that when he dies he *rests in CHRIST*, and is *taken to GOD in mercy*; we will roundly believe it all. There is *nothing* your Church can *injoin* or *decree* but you shall find the Dissenters dutifully submitting to it, when you have once clearly shewn it to have *this POWER* from *GOD*;

and have told us plainly, and without reserve, *what* you mean by *the* CHURCH; and have distinctly pointed out *WHO* *the persons* are in whom this power resides.

But it is pitiful and low trifling, Sir, and indeed consummately ridiculous—to talk of the “CHURCH’s *jurisdiction and authority over* DIS-  
“SENTERS—*of the subjection we owe* IT.—  
“*of the DAMNABLENESS of the sin of refusing*  
“*obedience to* IT——.” When you have not, durst not, cannot openly and plainly tell us *WHO* and *WHAT* it is you mean by the *Church*? Or *WHO* the persons are to whom GOD hath committed this high and important trust?—Is it the King and Parliament; or, is it not?—Is it the Clergy met in Convocation; or, is it not?—Is it each Bishop in his respective diocese; by himself alone, or in conjunction with his Clergy; or, is it not?—Is it the whole body of Christian people the congregation of the faithful; or, is it not? Open yourself freely, Sir, and don’t *be afraid of* TRUTH. TRUTH will never hurt you; it is a most innocent and lovely thing; it may rob you of some *emoluments* and *possessions* of a worldly nature; but be assured it will give you *SOMETHING* more substantial in their stead. Be ingenuous then, and tell Dissenters—in *whom* GOD hath lodged *this* POWER to which *they owe subjection*, and by revolting from which they are guilty of a *dangerous and damnable* sin. If you write again, but will not explain yourself *distinctly* on this point, you yield the cause to us before the world. You make it evident that you write neither for *OUR*, nor *your own* conviction; but that you have *something else* in view besides *finding out* TRUTH. That *something*, perhaps, you may *find*; but it will continue  
with

with you but *for a moment*; whereas, if you find and do the WILL OF GOD, it will give you a possession that will endure FOR EVER.

## S E C T. II.

### *Of the SACRAMENTAL TEST.*

**T**H A T the law called *The TEST*, is not, as you suggest, the *innocent occasion only*, but the plain, the notorious, the *culpable cause* of those prostitutions of the *Holy SACRAMENT*, which, you say, you see with CONCERN; what room can there be for any rational doubt? For does not the very design and intent of that law; at least as 'tis now applied, prostitute and pervert the *Sacrament* to an use not only *different* from, but directly *repugnant* to, THAT for which it was instituted and designed by JESUS CHRIST? The *Christian law* enjoins it as a mean, and with intent, to *unite* and *coalesce* Christians. The *Test-law* enjoins it as a mean, and with intent, to *discriminate* and *divide* them. For the *Ministers* of JESUS CHRIST then to be advocates for a law which prostitutes and perverts an *holy SACRAMENT* of his religion; yea, a law which makes THEMSELVES the very *instruments* and *tools* of this shameful prostitution; is such a violation of their character, such a prostitution of their sacred office, such a betraying the *solemn trust* committed to them by God, for which they must give an account to the *Chief Pastor* at his coming, as cannot but greatly shock an attentive beholder; and as should give, methinks, extremely painful apprehensions to themselves.

“ These *prostitutions*, you assure us, you do see  
 “ with CONCERN ; but yet cannot be for the  
 “ REPEAL, because you think it *inconsistent* with  
 “ the preservation of the CHURCH\*.” What  
 Church alas! must that be, which cannot be pre-  
 served but by an acknowledged prostitution and  
 perversion of an *holy Sacrament* ! Sure, not the  
 Church of CHRIST. Let not Christians do evil,  
 that good may come ; such carnal and corrupt po-  
 licy ever defeats itself ; and its *condemnation is*  
*just* †.

You correct me for saying, — That by the force  
 of this law multitudes of needy persons are *compel-*  
*led to come to the Lord's-table*, and cry, — “ GOD  
 “ forbid ! that the temptations even of poverty  
 “ and want should be esteemed to have the nature  
 “ of force and compulsion, — for in that case  
 “ they would have *no guilt at all* upon their con-  
 “ sciences.” So then ; you can bring off, I find,  
 the young *adulterer* from any guilt with his *lewd*  
*woman*, *Prov. vii. 21.* because *with the flattery of*  
*her lips she FORCED him*. I thought I had written  
 to a *Bachelor of Divinity*, to a gentleman who  
 was no stranger to *Scripture* language, and who  
 knew what is meant when the *King commands his*  
*servants to COMPEL the guests to come in*, *Luk. xiv.*  
*23.* For the like use of the word *compel*, you may  
 please to consult *Galat. ii. 14. vi. 12.* See also  
*Luk. xiv. 18, 20.* in the original.

That the *Priest* has no power to *refuse* the  
 Lord's-supper to the *vilest* person that demands it  
 as a qualification for a post, you care not to admit,  
 and ask, — “ Is there *any law* which forbids the  
 “ Curate to *repel him from the Lord's-table* † ?”

Yes,

\* II Def. pag. 8. † Rom. iii. 8. † II Def. p. 3.

Yes, by equitable construction of the law called the *Test*; most certainly there is: For the *same law* which requires, under severe penalties; all persons in posts to *receive* the Lord's-supper according to the usage of the Church of *England*, does, by indisputable consequence, require some one to *give* it. If it *must* be received by them, it *must* surely be given to them. To suppose the *Legislature* to have *obliged them*, under heavy pains, to partake of the holy Sacrament; but to have *obliged none*, upon their demand, to administer it to them, is to suppose it acting a most *absurd* and *unjustifiable* part; which is not to be imagined. *Who* then is the person to whom, according to law, a man that wants the *sacramental* qualification is to apply for that service? Undoubtedly his *parish Priest*; who is appointed and paid by law for the performance of the several offices which the *State* requires of him; of which *this* is plainly one. Whatever power therefore the rubric gave the Curate to *repeal open EVIL LIVERS from the table of the LORD*, before the *Test-act* took place, in cases of *qualification*, it is now unquestionably *superseded*, and the rubrick *virtually repealed*. For when a new law enjoins what is repugnant to an old, that old law is to be considered as so far set aside. And as for the "*Damages to which the Priest is liable to be condemn'd for refusing the Sacrament*," these the law, 'tis presumed, will give according to the *loss*, which the person can make appear he hath sustained by that refusal; which in many cases may be great; more than the Priest is worth.

"The *Oath of Abjuration* you esteem quite a parallel to the *Sacramental Test*; and urge, that "if one should be repealed because it lays men under violent temptations to prostitute their  
" con-

“consciences; so also ought the other\*.” No, the cases, if duly weighed, will be found to differ widely. An OATH *of fidelity* to the government that employs in us posts of influence and power is a *security* or *pledge* evidently founded in the reason of things; it has been the practice immemorial of all civilized nations: Its necessity, or great expedience, manifestly arises from the nature of civil government; it is therefore, reasonably presumed to be the *will* and *Institution* of GOD the author of civil government; and was instituted for purposes of a *political* or *civil* kind. Here is no *prostitution* then, no *perversion* of this *sacred Rite*, when the *oath* is tendered to a man at his entrance upon a post of trust; and if a needy *Jacobite* takes it, to the pollution of his conscience, *himself* only can be blamed: The *law* that ordered it is clear. But, can any of this be said concerning the SACRAMENTAL *Test*? Hath THIS been an instrument for the support of *civil government* in the greatest, most flourishing and wisest empires of the earth: Hath GOD, the *author* of civil government, given the least intimation of his intending it such a guard? Had CHRIST, the *institutor* of this rite, the least *intention* or *design* that it should be *thus* used and applied; be made an engine and tool of *State*; an instrument to *discriminate* betwixt Christian and Christian; to lift *some* to posts of power in the kingdoms of this world; and to lay upon *others* (men *equally* virtuous) brands of odium and disgrace? Had he not unquestionably a quite CONTRARY design? You know, Sir, that he had. Does he look then with pleasure down, think you, upon the Kingdom and Church, where he sees his *name* and his *institutions* thus openly violated,

\* Def. page 6.

lated, perverted, profaned ; his *Priests* liking to have it so ; approving, espousing, defending the ABUSE ? I own, I cannot think it : and should any man express a fear, that *this* is not the least of those *national SINS* which expose us to *divine displeasure* ; that it is a public violation of that *RIGHTEOUSNESS* and *PIETY* which alone can exalt a people : a blemish, a disease which preys upon the body politic ; and, if it does not threaten its dissolution, yet greatly impairs its strength.— I confess, I could not prove his fears to be *superstitious* or *weak*. For if the Church of *CORINTH* was *severely chastened* for not making a due distinction betwixt the *Sacrament* and their *common meals*, and not eating it *AS the LORD'S Supper* ; I see not but the Church of *ENGLAND* may have something also to fear, for those *perversions* and *prostitutions* which, you own, you see with *CONCERN* ; for its using this *Sacrament* not only *not according to*, but directly *against* its primitive institution ; to a *purpose*, and for an *end*, which quite *opposes* and *subverts* one principal design for which our *divine Master* appointed this *SACRED RITE*.

High offices and court employments, I have acknowledged, might be apt to corrupt *Dissenters* ; as every one knows them to have this influence upon the human mind ; though as a *Briton*, therefore, and a *Christian*, I wish earnestly the *REPEAL*, yet as a *Dissenter* I profess no solicitude about it. “ But I ought not then, you say, so *strenuously* to plead for their being admitted to such employments, but to be very solicitous *against* it.” Review, Sir, in less haste, and you will find, I am so far from pleading *strenuously* for their admission to such employments, that I have not so much as pleaded for it *at all*. All I plead for

for is, the removal of the *incapacity* under which they *unjustly* lie; the breaking a disgraceful yoke which the *Test* hath put upon their necks; and the restoring them to their *native* freedom, and honour, and right. That the *State* may have liberty, if it thinks it needs their faithful services, to avail itself of them; and that it be left to their *liberty*, their *virtue*, their *choice*, either to accept or refuse posts of trust under the government; and that they may not stand branded and stigmatized before the world as persons *incapable* and *unworthy* of such trusts\*

## S E C T.

\* In the late excellent COMMENT on Warburton's Alliance, &c. the passage of my *second Letter*, to which this refers, is not only mistaken, but not faithfully and exactly quoted. In the *Letter* it stands thus, pages 74, 75.—“*Though I think THIS LAW a most unrighteous restraint upon us, and an undoubted violation of our natural rights; yet I am far from being persuaed that its REPEAL would be of the least service to our interest as DISSENTERS. I doubt, and have often thought, there is too much truth in what you say, that high trusts & court-employments would be extremely apt to corrupt us; and that it would really rather injure than strengthen our interest. I have never, therefore, as a DISSENTER, been at all solicitous for the REPEAL.*”

*Note*, This is expressed only as a *doubt*, or *suspicion*; but the author of *that COMMENT* hath made it say in positive and strong terms (page 123.) “*That a repeal of the TEST and CORPORATION Acts would REALLY be injurious to the interest of Protestant Dissenters; or, that I am persuaed it would rather injure than strengthen our interest.*” Which is giving the passage a very different turn.

And when that gentleman asks, —“*Is there an absolute incapacity of being virtuous in high stations?*” I answer, No: But if there be a *great danger* of being *vicious*; this will justify surely an *indifference*; a *non-solicitude* about them; and will excuse, at least, a *doubt*, a *fear*, as to the event. And when he further asks, —“*Would any man think*

*Of our CONSTITUTION in Church and State.*

YOU seem a little displeas'd at my *doubting*.  
 " Whether the *Church* were an essential and  
 " an half part of our CONSTITUTION? and  
 " whether *Church and State* here in *England* are  
 " so *incorporated* and *united* as that, like the *mar-*  
 " *ried pair*, they must stand or fall together? and  
 " alledge, that in all the conversation as well as  
 " in the writings of *Dissenters* and others, we read  
 " and hear continually of the *ecclesiastical* as di-  
 " stinguish'd from the *civil constitution*: Yea, even  
 " from the throne and both houses of Parliament  
 " we  
 " think his conduct justifiable, should he *refuse* a large  
 " estate merely because of the greater danger of his being  
 " corrupted by it?" I answer, 1. There have been in-  
 " stances of such *refusal* recorded, and, perhaps, justly, as in-  
 " stances of heroic Virtue. But 2. TO REFUSE it *when*  
 " *offer'd*, is a thing extremely different from being SOLICI-  
 " TIOUS to *obtain* it. Publick offices and trusts, when *offer'd*  
 " by those in power, ought not to be *refus'd* by such as think  
 " themselves capable of rightly discharging them; because this  
 " would be to reject an opportunity of *publick service*, to  
 " which their country calls them. But this may be done  
 " without a *solicitude* to procure them.

The passage on which this ingenious author has stepped  
 aside to remark, speaks but the very same sentiment which  
 himself has elsewhere, perhaps more strongly expressed.  
*Comment &c.* page 138. " An *indifferency* to the honours,  
 " riches and pleasures of this world, a contempt of and vic-  
 " tory over them, is the *independency* and *supremacy* which  
 " the true Religion and Church can boast; the resignation  
 " (or loss) of which must be infinitely dangerous to her,  
 " her poison, her death wound."—Again, page 131.  
 " Though it may be thought I am pleading for the intro-  
 " duction of Protestant *Dissenters* into places of profit and  
 " trust—" I am fully persuaded that their having such  
 " places would not make them more religious men, nor  
 " from numbers of them so employed would their societies  
 " appear with greater reputation as religious societies."—

“ we often hear of our constitution in *Church and State* \*.” But divest yourself, for a moment of *worldly attachments*, which insensibly warp the mind, and you will see it, I believe, to be a very *rational doubt*. For our *ecclesiastical*, however commonly distinguished by sounds, I have fully proved in my *first Letter* (page 19—29, to which you have not presumed to make the least reply) as also in the beginning of this Letter, to be really (no other than a *civil* constitution; a *system* or *frame* contrived, disposed and enacted by the CIVIL MAGISTRATE; as much as the constitution of the *Treasury*, of the *Army*, or of the *Courts of Westminster-hall*. These all, Sir, have their *constitutions*, (that is, their several parts of the public business assigned them to dispatch, and their several officers and forms and methods of proceeding in them) as really, as truly, and as much as the *Church*. The ARMY is the *constitution* and order of the *civil* Magistrate relating to the direction of the military force. The TREASURY is the *constitution* and order of the same magistrate relating to the collection and disposal of the public monies. The COURTS of *Westminster-hall* are the *constitution* of the same magistrate for the dispensing public justice. And the CHURCH is the *constitution* and order of the same magistrate relating to the manner in which the publick worship is to be performed. The officers in *each* are ALL entirely *made, instructed, controuled* by the power of the CIVIL MAGISTRATE: 'Tis by *his* authority alone they are all qualified and impowered to act in their respective stations; and it is in *that manner*, and by *those Rules* only which HIS *wisdom* hath prescribed,

\* Letter I. page 11. II. Def. page 9, 10.

scribed, that in all their respective offices they verally proceed.

What you call then the *ecclesiastical* is really, you see, no other than a branch of the *civil* constitution ; and what you call the *Church* is in truth no more an *essential*, much less an *half* part of our CONSTITUTION, than the *Treasury*, the *Army*, or either of the *Courts* of *Westminster-hall*. Should, now, the wisdom of the *Legislature* think proper to new-form any of these *constitutions* ; for instance, the method of dispensing Justice in any of our *Law Courts* (which *Courts*, by the way, are all of much longer standing than the constitution of our present *Church*) by which a saving would arise of vast sums to the publick, and Justice be dispensed in a more *rational* and *easy* way : Would you not smile to hear some zealous gentlemen of the robe stand forth and insist,———*That these COURTS were an essential and an half part of the CONSTITUTION ; and that therefore whoever moved for, or so much as wished, an ALTERATION in either of them, could not be safely trusted with any share of the public power, and was really in truth an enemy to the STATE—?* The learned gentlemen of that robe, Sir, no doubt, alike smile to hear you thus reasoning as to the *Church* \*.

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By

\* That the account here given of the *nature* and *constitution* of the *Church of England* is quite agreeable to the sentiments of our *first REFORMERS*, the *Founders* and *Framers* of it, appears from the determination of a select assembly of them, convened at *Windsor* by *K. Edward VI.* by whom (as may be concluded from *Archbishop Cranmer's* manuscript) it was declared,

“ That all Christian Princes have committed to them  
 “ immediately from GOD the *whole* cure of ; their subjects ;  
 “ as well concerning the administration of GOD's word for  
 “ the *cure of souls*, as concerning the ministrations of things  
 “ *political* and *civil* governance. In both these ministrations

By “ the CONSTITUTION *in Church and State*, then, of which we often hear even in “ speeches and addressees from, and to the throne,” can be meant nothing else, than,—*that ORDER or FORM of government respecting ALL persons and things which is established by the laws and customs of this realm.* A CONSTITUTION, by which the *King or QUEEN*, as *supreme Head* of the Church, is the fountain of *all* power and jurisdiction therein ; authorized to instruct, over-rule and controul all the *Archbishops, Bishops, and Priests* in this kingdom, in all their most *SPIRITUAL and ECCLESIASTICAL* concerns — — A CONSTITUTION, by which a *LADY*, when such fills the throne, is empowered to *compose* public prayers for the Church ; to stop all preaching therein ; to fill vacant bishoprics with what persons she pleases, or not to fill them at all\* ; to direct all *Ecclesiastics* what

“ they must have sundry Ministers under them, to supply  
“ that which is appointed to their several offices.

“ The *civil* Ministers under the King’s Majesty in this  
“ realm be those whom it shall please his Highness for the  
“ time, to put in authority under him ; as for example,  
“ the Lord *Chancellor, Lord Treasurer, Lord Admiral, &c.*

“ The Ministers of *GOD’S word* under his Majesty be  
“ the *Bishops, Parsons, Vicars*, and such other *Priests* as be  
“ appointed by his Highness to that ministration ; as for  
“ example the Bishop of *Canterbury*, the Bishop of *Winchest-*  
“ *er*, the Parson of *Coynewick, &c.*

“ All the said officers and ministers, as well of the one  
“ sort as of the other, be appointed, assigned and elected in  
“ every place by the laws and orders of Kings and Princes ”  
[Vide an *Extract from Archbishop Cranmer’s M. S. Still-*  
*ing. Iren. Part II. Ch. viii. page 391.*

\* Any of the Bishoprics may be kept *vacant* by the Princes of *England*, as those of *Ely* and *Oxford* were by *Q. Elizabeth* ; the latter had no Bishop for 22 years. The Parliament dissolved the rich Bishopric of *Durham* in King *Edward VI’s* reign, and gave the profits to the Crown.

And

what they *shall*, or *shall not* preach ; and even in the most *abstruse* and *metaphysical* points to be the *final* Judge of HERESIE ; whose judgment must stand, as to what shall, or shall not, be deemed HERESIE in this Church ; even though it happen to *contradict* that of all her learned CLERGY in convocation convened.

Thus that renowned LADY Queen *Elizabeth*, in the fulness of her *ecclesiastical* power, HERSELF composed a *prayer*, Archdeacon *Echard*\* informs us, for the use of a great number of her *nobility* and *gentry*, as well as her soldiers and sailors, in the expedition against *Cadiz*, directing it to be *used daily* in every *ship*. And by virtue of her *supremacy* she might, I presume, if she had pleased (and that any *future* QUEEN may) compose prayers for the use of the *Archbishops*, *Bishops*, and all the *Clergy* of the land ; and injoin their solemn use every *Sunday* in the Church ; and that the use of such devout FEMININE compositions, no *Bishop* nor *Priest* can agreeably to our CONSTITUTION, in any wise refuse.

The same royal LADY, by virtue of her proclamation only, put an entire stop to all preaching of Ministers and others throughout the kingdom ; and the people were charged to *hear, no other preaching or doctrine, but the Epistle and Gospel of the day, and the ten Commandments, without any exposition or paraphrase thereon*. And should any *future* QUEEN think proper to do the same, I humbly apprehend, all her Bishops and Clergy are,

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And it had remained dissolved to this day, probably, had not Popish Q. *Mary* restored it.

\* Hist. of England, page 367. Col. 1.

by our CONSTITUTION *in Church and State*, obliged to obey.

By the same *constitution* King Charles I. put forth a proclamation (if a WOMAN had worn the crown, *she* also might have done it; as any future QUEEN may) commanding the Clergy not to preach or dispute about *Arminianism*. The learned Bishop *Davenport*, presuming to preach upon the doctrine of *Predestination*, was forced to appear upon his knees before the *Council*; and being severely reprimanded, hardly so escaped: Though he alledged he had preached nothing but the XVIIth *article* of the Church of *England*. The KING, not only in his *superior*, but SUPREME ecclesiastic, wisdom told him,—*The doctrine* “ of *Predestination* was too big for the peoples understandings; and that HE WAS RESOLVED not to permit that controversy to be discussed in the pulpit\*.”

What authority our *constitution* gives QUEENS to judge in points of HERESIE (the most *deep* and *mysterious* points) and to controul the proceedings of the most venerable and holy *Synod*, which the Clergy of this kingdom can possibly compose, has been observed in the case of *Whiston*, whom Queen ANNE, by her *sole* authority, screened from the heavy censure of her learned *Convocation*. HER single judgment, in the balance of our apostolic and excellently constituted Church, being of far *greater weight* than that of the united Bishops and

\* *Vide Fuller's Church Hist. Book IX. page 138.*

The same blessed *Martyr*, by his royal mandate only, without any trial, sequestered and suspended from the execution of his office good Archbishop *Abbot*, for refusing his licence and approbation to a most vile and scandalous sermon of *Sibthorp*.

and Clergy of the whole land. This you are pleased, weakly enough, to call *misrepresentation*; but might have seen the truth of it attested by two of your own learned and reverend Historians *Burnet* and *Tindal*, in their accounts of the year 1711.

Again, by our present *constitution* the King alone, or at least by consent of Parliament, hath undoubted Power to divide the *twenty six* Bishoprics, into which this kingdom is at present cantoned, into as many *hundred*; and thus to render them more like the Bishoprics of the *first ages*; when every Christian Bishop took the *oversight* of no more than he could *personally* know, and than could communicate at *one Table*; a Power to new-frame the whole order of public worship; to abolish its present articles, ceremonies and forms; and to substitute none at all, or quite new ones, in their stead. A Power to dispose of that part of the publick treasure by which the *Clergy* are maintained in a more *equitable* and *juster* manner; and to reduce the shameful exorbitance; by which some members of that great, and in itself venerable and useful body, wanton in vast affluence, indolence and sloth, (which may be what you call *snuggles*) whilst others more virtuous, laborious and learned wear away their lives in obscurity and want. — This, Sir, without question, is our present CONSTITUTION *in Church and State*.

## S E C T. IV.

*Of SPONSORS in Baptism.*

YOUR defence of *Sponsors in Baptism* comes next to be considered. Here you affirm.—“That I represent the use of sponsors as a very “ *mysterious point, as an unaccountable, inexplicable absurd and unlawful thing\**.” An assertion hurried from you by the ardor of zeal, but quite without *truth*. The use of *sponsors*, in all cases of parents *incapacity*, I entirely approve; and expressly told you, *That in such cases the Dissenters all use them* †. You could not, without extreme *inattention*, but see, that it was “ *The SETTING ASIDE the parents; the FORBIDDING them to stand forth and engage solemnly for the religious education of the child; and the receiving the child to Baptism upon account of its OWN FAITH and its OWN PROMISE expressed by its SURETIES,*” that I thus represent. And though I have the pleasure now to find you tacitly giving up, though not honourably retracting, that precipitant expression, “That godfathers are not an *useful only, but even a NECESSARY institution,*” yet scarcely, without pain, can one see you grievously embarrassed in accounting for the *answers* made at the *font*. These, you still insist, are not the *Sureties*, but the *CHILD’S* answers. But your attempts to explain, how a child who *cannot* believe, does yet *profess faith*——! How the infant who in *no sense* can promise or engage;

\* II Def. page 24.

† Lett. II. page 43.

gage ; does yet *really* and in *good sense* vow and engage — ! How *the babe*, who has no thought, no purposes, nor desires, may yet express these *by the mouth* of its Sureties ; and these expressions of what it *hath not*, and cannot possibly have, are accepted by the Church as a proper token that it *hath* them, and as a solid ground of Baptism — ! This is still to me, and I believe to all the world, as inexplicable, mysterious, transcendent a thing as before you undertook to unvail and explain it.

Nay, the *mystery* grows upon you, by attempting to unfold it : For you declare, “ That the *ground and foundation* of infants being received “ to Baptism, in your Church, is the promise of “ God to *believers and their seed*\*.” Mind then, ’tis the *faith of the PARENT* that intitles the *child* to Baptism ; but if the *ground* of its being received to this Christian Sacrament be the *faith of its PARENT* only, why do you receive it as if upon account of *ITS OWN faith* ? Why interrogate the poor *BABE* — ? *Dost THOU believe ? Wilt THOU be baptized ?* — Again, if the *PARENTS’S faith* be *that* which intitles the child to Baptism ; why is not *the PARENT* the person who stands forth to *profess faith* as a qualification for the Baptism of the child ? Why is *the CHILD* called upon *vicariously* to declare, that *itself* believes, that *itself* desires Baptism, &c. when all the world sees that it neither *knows*, nor *does*, nor can in any sense at all *do* either of these things ?

You endeavour to explain the matter “ by an “ infant in the Lord of the Manor’s Court, who  
“ by

“ by his attorney is admitted to his copy hold,  
 “ and covenants to do homage for the same ; or,  
 “ by an Infant King, who hath some one of the  
 “ nobility who in his name and for his benefit is  
 “ appointed to take the coronation oath ; and  
 “ thereby oblige him to observe the laws and pro-  
 “ tect his subjects\*. But these instances avail you  
 nothing. For,

1. The child, when admitted by his attorney in the Lord's Court to his copy hold, *does not covenant* to do homage for the same. That he *does not covenant*, I prove by a very plain and incontestable argument, which is, that he *cannot*. There is no sense at all, no *religious* or *moral* sense, in which the infant can with any truth or propriety be said to *covenant*. No, 'tis the *attorney*, and he *alone*, that covenants to perform the homage. And in the case of a minor King, when one of the nobility takes the coronation-oath in his name or stead (if any such ceremony be ever performed) he does not, cannot in any sense *thereby oblige the royal infant to observe the laws and protect the subject* : Not whilst an *infant* ; because, not being a *moral* agent, he cannot possibly be capable of *moral* obligation : And not when he comes of age ; because the *promise* or *oath* of one rational moral agent, can never properly *oblige* another, if that other was not at all conscious of, nor gave his consent to it. The whole nature and extent of the *obligation* in that case is unquestionably this : The nobleman who takes the oath, as personating the King, and who during the minority is vested with the regal power, swears that *he* HIMSELF will, in the exercise of that power, observe the laws  
 and

\* II Def. page 129.

and protect the subjects. The obligation of this oath, which is made by *himself* only, can extend only to *himself*; and it lasts only so long as he continues vested with the regal power. But when the *royal infant* comes of age, and assumes the power into his own hands; he must *personally* take the oath; or some way or other *signify* his solemn assent to it, in order to his being laid under any *real obligation* by it. And then,

2. These cases also widely differ from that of the *baptized infant*, because in both of them there are several important *services* and *actions* to be done, (which *must be* performed by some one) whilst the *minority* continues. In the *first*, there are suits and services in the Lord's Court, and quit-rents to be paid. In the other, there are *acts* of regal power to be continually exerted for the due government of the people, even whilst the *infancy* remains. These, therefore, being indispensibly *necessary* to be done, and the *infant* being utterly incapable of doing them, hence arises a necessity of some person's undertaking to discharge these offices for him, and to act in the infant's stead. But, is there any thing like this in the case of *baptized infants*? Is there any *service* or *homage*, any *faith* or *vows* which God expects from them whilst their *infancy lasts*? You know there is not. If God then *expects* no such services from the *infant*, why are *sponsors* called forth to pretend to *perform* them for him! And this when the pretence is in every view ridiculous; because in things of religion 'tis utterly absurd for one man to pretend to *promise*, to *repent*, to *believe* in the name of another.

One principal *design* of the Baptism of a child, you own, "is that some SECURITY be given;  
" some

“ *some solemn STIPULATION be made before the Church for its RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.*”  
 Who then, I pray, so proper to give this security, as *the person to whom its education is committed* ?  
 Whom should the Church bring under the engagement of a solemn *vow or covenant* for this purpose ? *Strangers*, who, perhaps, never saw the child ; or, who when the ceremony is past, will never see it more ! Or *the parents*, in whose family it is to grow up, and under whose eye it is to be formed !

An *explicit STIPULATION*, in your Baptism of an infant, you do not pretend there is any but what the *child* (poor babe) *ITSELF makes* ; “ but the Sureties by standing there, and receiving a solemn charge concerning the religious education of the child are justly supposed to accept it\*.” But do you not know, Sir, that this is no *stipulation*, neither explicit nor implicit. A stipulation is a *mutual promise* : But though the Sponsors stand there, and *hear* the admonition ; no answer, no word, no token is required of them by which to signify their solemn purpose and engagement to obey it. Accordingly, when they return home, they too generally with great levity *shake off the charge again, and throw it over to the parent* †. And thus the solemnity of the institution dwindles into a mere trifling, if not, ludicrous ceremony ; and your boasted *double security* still remains no *real security* at all.

Dr. *Nichol's* account of this apparently *absurd* and *mysterious* affair, to which I referred you, is to be sure far more defensible, though quite contrary to yours, *viz.* “ *Baptifatorum fidem religiose*  
 in

\* II Def. page 36.

† Com. to the Temp. pag. 612.

in se recipiant, eos sincerè omnia in Evangelio revelata credere, & subsequentes vitæ actiones juxta Christi normam directuros esse \*.”—

*That the Sureties religiously ENGAGED for the faith of the baptized, that they SHOULD sincerely believe all that was revealed in the Gospel, and direct the subsequent actions of their lives by the law of Christ. This you call MY translation; and tax me before the world “for having WRONG TRANSLATED it to serve my purpose †.”* It will give you, surely, some confusion and pain to be told, that *this* is not mine, but is the Doctor’s OWN translation, or that of his learned friend who published his *Defence, &c.* And I appeal to the public, whether the Doctor’s or Your’s be the proper rendering of the words. Is *recipere in se fidem baptisatorum*,—*To make a solemn declaration and profession touching the faith of the baptized*—? Besides, the Doctor was too wise a person to represent the Sureties, as you would have him, as making a solemn declaration that the infant DID sincerely believe all that is revealed in the Gospel— because this, he well knew, was what no wise or honest man could possibly declare concerning any infant upon earth. He knew it absurd to affirm, —*That the infant DID BELIEVE at all; much more to affirm that it SINCERELY believed; but more even yet, that it sincerely believed ALL that is revealed in the Gospel.*—Which ever way you view it then, ’tis all mysterious and recondite: And this business of the Sureties and their answers at the font, after all your pains to clear it up, is still covered with extremely dark and impenetrable clouds; which, till some new light shall arise,

at the  
Lord’s-supper.

By

\* Nich. Def. Part II. page 273. † II Def. page.

one may venture to prophesy will never be dispelled : It turns the ceremony of your Baptism into little else than a *solemn trifle* ; and furnishes to *unbelievers* matter of everlasting ridicule and contempt.

## S E C T. V.

## Of CONFIRMATION

**A**S to the ceremony of *Confirmation*, you are still so wise as not to assert any *scriptural* or *apostolic* authority for its practice. But yet ask,—  
 “ If both the *ordinary* and *extraordinary* gifts of  
 “ the Spirit were communicated by the Apostles  
 “ by *imposition of hands*, why may we not expect  
 “ that the *ordinary* ones will be still communi-  
 “ cated by the same administration ? And why  
 “ should we not continue that administration in  
 “ the Church in hope and expectation of them\* ? ”  
 “ By these *ordinary gifts*, as you fully explain your-  
 “ self, you mean, what are usually called, the  
 “ GRACES of the Spirit, even the Spirit of LOVE  
 “ and of a SOUND MIND. For you add, “ If this  
 “ Spirit of Love and of a sound Mind was given to  
 “ Timothy by imposition of hands in his *ordina-*  
 “ tion ; why may it not be done by the same cere-  
 “ mony in *Confirmation* ? ” I am sorry there is a  
 Protestant Divine in this kingdom capable of ask-  
 ing such a question as this. For, 1. This Spirit of  
 LOVE and of a sound MIND, *agapes kai Septeronismo*  
 which you encourage us to expect from the laying  
 on of the Bishop's hands, is one of the sublimest  
 GIFTS conferred upon the human race by the  
 Gospel

Gospel of CHRIST. A GIFT which far excels an ability to speak with tongues, a faith that can remove mountains, a power to cast out devils, to heal all manner of diseases, or even to raise the dead.

— The Spirit of LOVE, and of a SOUND MIND, far excels them all ; and yet *this*, it seems, we may now expect by the *laying on* of the Bishop's hands ! Blessed *Episcopacy* indeed, if it carries with it *such gifts* ! But how foolish and wild the claim, if neither *scripture* nor *reason* lend it the least support ! For,

2. Because *this* GIFT was conferred on *Timothy* at his *ordination* by the *laying on* of the Apostle's hands ; does it follow, that the *same Gifts* may be expected in *Confirmation* from the hands of our present *Bishops* ? Is there power in their Lordships fingers to convey so divine a  *blessing* to the head on which they rest ? You should know, Sir, that the learned prelates of this Church *abhor* the presumptuous claim : They pretend to no such power. Why then will you *officiously* presume to claim it for them ? And why amuse the world, and give *infidels* room to scoff, by the use of a solemn *ceremony* for the conferring these *Gifts*, which no mortal man hath now power to bestow ? The age is critical and discerning. For the honour of the Christian *name*, therefore, and the dignity of Christian *Bishops*, all claims not clearly founded on scripture or reason, and all offices and rites not evidently supported by them, should at the least be silently dropt.

The only *rite*, after *Baptism*, which I find either *instituted* or *practised* by CHRIST and his *Apostles*, “ to make a public *recognition* of baptismal engagements in the face of a Christian congregation,” is the celebrating the *Lord's-supper*.

By *this* Christians are openly to profess themselves the subjects and followers of JESUS CHRIST; to recognize the baptismal covenant; to *shew forth that death* by which he purchased them to himself; and in the most public and solemn manner to lay themselves under fresh and most sacred obligations to live obedient to his laws. — Here then are all the ends which can rationally be proposed in the use of *Confirmation*, a human invention, more effectually and better answered in that of the *Lord's-supper*, an undoubted institution and command of JESUS CHRIST. With the *emblems* of their Saviour's *Body and Blood* in their hands, the *recognition* they HERE make of their engagements to an holy life is vastly more solemn, the motives to obedience more powerful and constraining, and they are CERTIFIED of *God's favour and gracious goodness to them* by a *TOKEN* incomparably more important than the laying on of the *Bishop's hands*. — If you ask, “What is this to those who dare not offer themselves to the sacrament\*?” I answer, such have equal reason not to offer themselves to *Confirmation*; the same *faith and sincerity* which are requisite to render a person a proper subject of the one, make him also a worthy communicant in the other.

That this ceremony of *Confirmation* is no part of genuine and primitive CHRISTIANITY, there are few, I suppose none, of our learned Bishops and Divines, but perfectly know. *Tertullian* is the most antient author in which mention of it is found. But by *his* time, it is well known, a great variety of *superstitions*, and ridiculous and foolish rites, were brought into the Church. And you are

are also, I presume, not ignorant that *Confirmation* was then always performed (not as it is with us; but) IMMEDIATELY *after Baptism*, as it is now also throughout the *Greek Church*, and all the Churches of the *East*. A due regard to this will lead you to the true meaning of that expression in your office, which you are so embarrassed in clearing up; where the Bishop declares to God, *That he hath vouchsafed to regenerate these his servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and to give them the forgiveness of all their sins*. An expression taken, probably, from some *antient Liturgy*; and which was suitable and well adapted to the practice of those times, but is utterly *incongruous* and *unsuitable* to ours.

For then; as Dr. *Cave* observes\*, “ Thought  
 “ infants were undoubtedly taken into the Church  
 “ by Baptism, yet the main body of the baptised  
 “ were *adult* persons; who, flocking over daily  
 “ in great numbers to the faith of *Christ*, were  
 “ received in at this door. Usually they were for  
 “ some considerable time *catechised*, and trained  
 “ up in the principles of the *Christian* faith; till  
 “ having given testimony of their proficiency in  
 “ knowledge, and of a sober and regular conver-  
 “ sation, they became candidates for *Baptism* :”  
 Or, as a greater author† says, “ The *Catechu-*  
 “ *mens* enjoyed not the privileges of the *faithful*  
 “ till they had, in a sense, merited them; which  
 “ was when, through a considerable time of trial;  
 “ they had evidenced the sincerity of their hearts  
 “ by the sanctity and purity of their lives: And  
 “ then, as *Origen* says, *We initiate them in our*  
 “ *mysteries.*”

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\* *Prin. Chris.* Part I. pages 194, 208.

† *Inquiry into the Constitution, &c.* Part I. page 102.

“ *mysteries, when they have made a proficiency in ho-*  
 “ *liness, and according to the utmost of their power*  
 “ *have reformed their conversation.* When they  
 “ had changed their manners, and rectified their  
 “ irregular carriage, then they were washed with  
 “ the water of Baptism, and NOT BEFORE. For,  
 “ as *Tertullian* observes, we are not baptised, that  
 “ we may cease to sin; but because we have AL-  
 “ READY ceased.” Now when this was the case,  
 and immediately after Baptism Confirmation was ad-  
 ministered, there was some decency and propriety  
 in the Bishop’s or Presbyter’s ( for Presbyters also  
 then confirmed ) addressing Almighty God as hav-  
 ing vouchsafed to regenerate these his servants with-  
 water and the Holy Ghost, and to grant them the for-  
 giveness of all their sins. But how different, alas !  
 ( vastly different ) the case at present is with the  
 multitudes who flock to our modern confirmations !  
 How rude and unserious they rush to receive this  
 episcopal grace ! In how perfunctory and slight a  
 manner the ceremony is performed. What riot  
 and disorder frequently concludes the day — !  
 is too obvious to the world ; and would seem, per-  
 haps, invidious if set in its proper light.

Your laboured apology for the Bishop’s making  
 that very weighty and solemn declaration over a pro-  
 miscuous assembly, which is supposed to include  
 many vicious and corrupt persons, is effectually  
 overthrown by your own just concession, — “ that if  
 “ he was, indeed, to declare to each individual  
 “ person, by himself, that God had regenerated  
 “ him in particular with the Holy Ghost and for-  
 “ given him all his sins, it would be a different  
 “ case. — Such a person might be tempted there-  
 “ by to entertain better thoughts of the state of his  
 “ soul

his soul than he had reason for, and to *delude* him-  
 self with *deceitful hopes\**." Behold this, in  
 effect, indisputably done ! For *each* individual per-  
 son, after having heard this solemn declaration  
 pronounced over *himself* in common with all the  
 rest, is presented *separately* by his parish Priest ;  
 and kneeling before the Bishop, feels his *consecra-*  
*ting hand* resting upon *his head*, and hears HIM-  
 SELF distinctly and personally *certified* (ASSURED  
 from the *Bishop's* mouth) that THIS is a *TOKEN*  
*of GOD's favour and gracious goodness to him* in  
 particular. What now, I ask, is the obvious, the  
*natural* construction which the person puts upon  
 all this ! Why surely, unless he thinks the whole  
 solemnity a farce ; and that the *Bishop and Priest*  
 (his spiritual guides, whose *lips are to preserve*  
*knowledge*, and who are to be the *mouth of God*  
 to him) have conspired to put a dangerous cheat  
 upon *his soul*, he must strongly conclude *his soul* to  
 be in a happy and safe case ; in a state of *favour*  
*with God* ; and a partaker of that *forgiveness* which  
 his *gracious goodness* hath promised in the gospel of  
*Christ* — Whether the continuance of *this cere-*  
*mony*, in its present form of administration, be ei-  
 ther for the honour of the *administrator*, or for the  
 benefit of the *Church* ? — Whether it hath not an  
 apparent tendency to cherish a *delusive hope*, and  
 to speak peace to *such persons* as are not, by the  
*Christian* covenant, entitled to *peace* ? I with all  
 humility leave to the consideration of those whom,  
 I thank GOD, it more immediately concerns than  
 myself ; who are to be *faithful in GOD's house* ;  
 and to *watch for mens souls* as those *who must give*  
*account to the GREAT SHEPHERD*, who will

Q 3.

shortly

shortly come ; before whom it will be a *tremendous thing* to have the immortal souls of THOUSANDS required at their hands.

## S E C T. VI.

*The Terms of MINISTERIAL Conformity hard and terrible.—LAY-DISSENT justified, — The Rise of the Separation.*

N E X T after CONFIRMATION, I considered two other offices of your *Liturgy*, viz. ABSOLUTION of the Sick, and the BURIAL of the Dead; and shewed them, I apprehend, to be liable to great exceptions ; and to have no friendly aspect upon the *morals* and *souls* of men. I am strengthened in that opinion by observing, that amidst the variety of *trifling* things to which you have descended, in the prosecution of this debate, you have quite overlooked these two important points ; and have not so much as *undertaken* their defence. It does some honour to your understanding not to *attempt* to defend what you know to be *indefensible*, but to let *the forms* lie under the imputations charged upon them ; till God shall put it into the *heart* of those who have it in their power to wipe these unhappy *blemishes* from the face of the Church.

But as to *these*, and some other of your *additional splendors* (doing reverence towards the *East*, and bowing to the *name* of JESUS, which also you do not so much as pretend either to *justify* or *explain*) you observe, — “ That these are things  
“ with which, as a *Layman*, I have no concern.  
“ As to the form of *Absolution*, what has he, for  
“ God’s

“ GOD’S sake, to do with it? If he does not de-  
 “ sign to take *orders* in the Church, and so sub-  
 “ scribe to the use of the *Liturgy*, it is no concern  
 “ of *his* whether that form be defensible or not.\*”

But have not I, dear Sir, as much to do with  
 YOUR *Ministerial-Conformity*, as you with MY  
*Lay-Dissent*? Are you not as much obliged to  
*vindicate*, before the world, your SUBSCRIPTION  
 and USE of these offices in your Church; as I am  
 to justify my SEPARATION from it? Yes, and I  
 now publickly call upon you, and charge it upon  
 your most serious deliberate reflections, as you will  
 soon answer it at a *supreme and impartial* Tribunal,  
 to remember and consider—

That you have *solemnly*, and in GOD’S *presence*  
 (GOD that *searcheth the heart*, and that abhors all  
*prevarication, hypocrisy, and deceit*, especially in re-  
 ligious things) in the *presence of this GOD*, I say,  
 and in the face of *his Church*, you have declared  
 your *unfeigned assent and consent* to ALL and  
 EVERY THING contained in, and prescribed by  
 the *book of Common-prayer, &c.* If then there be  
 any *one thing* contained in that book, any *one*  
*office or form*, irrational, unfit, repugnant to the  
 Gospel-scheme, and which no well instructed  
 Christian can *heartily assent to*, or *unfeignedly ap-  
 prove*. I appeal to your own conscience, I appeal  
 to the whole world ——— Where is the *honour!*  
 Where the *Christian simplicity*, and *Godly sincerity*,  
 of this solemn declaration! What, ——— shall a  
 man, a Minister, in GOD’S *presence*, and appeal-  
 ing to HIM as the *searcher of hearts*, declare his  
*unfeigned Assent* to things, he does not ap-  
 prove;

prove ; and promise his *unfeigned Consent* to use forms in God's *worship* which he *heartily dislikes* ! This is a most grievous yoke ; beheld by *unbelievers*, upon the necks of *Christian Ministers*, with mighty insults and scoffs ; and which every friend to the *Christian* name should wish heartily to see removed. And,

This, as before observed, *justifies* most fully that SEPARATION from your Church, to which our *fathers* were compelled, and which *we* at present continue : when in a most unrighteous and schismatical manner *she* cast out above *two thousand* of her Ministers, for not subscribing and declaring *this unfeigned assent and consent*. These *Ministers* were by this *deprived* of what they had not *forfeited* ; deprived of acting *as Ministers* by those who had no right, nor authority, to deprive them of it. The *pastoral relation* therefore undoubtedly remained betwixt them and their respective flocks ; and they acted a lawful, a worthy part in *continuing* their *ministerial* services, though thus cruelly cast out.

“ No, you reply, they ought to have conformed as *Laymen*, as some of them did ; much less will this justify the *Laity* of those times ; less still the Ministers and *Laity* of the *present* in their separation \*.” To their immortal praise be it recorded, they better understood their *rights* and their *duty* as CHRIST'S *subjects*, the ONLY KING in the Church ; and, with great *suffering* and worldly *loss*, entered boldly their protest against this presumptuous invasion of *his throne* ; this schismatical intrusion of NEW TERMS of the  
Christ.

Christian Ministry and Communion into his Church. The conditions of exercising the Christian Ministry, which the *Act of Uniformity* imposed upon our fathers, were such as no power upon earth had a right to impose upon them: They were such, as if complied with, opened a wide way for innumerable corruptions, superstitions and persecutions to enter and lay waste the Church. Their subscription was required to NEW articles of faith which CHRIST had never made; and their unfeigned assent and consent to NEW rites and forms of worship which neither CHRIST nor his *Apostles* had ever appointed or enjoined: Yea, it obliged them schismatically to confine Christian Communion to those only who would submit to these inventions of men in the worship of God; and to deny Baptism and the Lord's-supper, to those who, by the constitution and laws of Christ's kingdom, were duly qualified to receive, and had an absolute right to them.

Amongst others, there are two ever-memorable circumstances from which the flagrant oppression and tyranny of those proceedings most strongly appear, 1. That the Time fixed for the Ministers subscribing and assenting to the alterations in the *Common prayer* was so short; that not one in an hundred of those who lived remote from London saw, or could be supposed to see them, before their assent and consent was, under so severe a penalty, to be solemnly given. It is a known and certain truth, says one\*, that the *Liturgy*, with its alterations, to which they were unfeignedly to assent, came not out of the press till Bartholomew-Eve; the

\* Tong of Schism, page 150.

the day ensuing, which was the *ultimate time* fixed by the *Act* for the Minister's subscription; so all those, throughout the kingdom, who *conformed*, except a few in *London*, subscribed to they *knew not what*. "The matter was driven on, says Bishop Burnet, with so much *precipitation*, that it seemed expected the Clergy should subscribe *implicitly* to a book they had *never seen*. This was done by too many, as the Bishops themselves informed me —\*." Could any thing be more unrighteous or tyrannical than this? — Yes: For,

2. The unhappy *Ministers* were obliged likewise to declare solemnly, and even to subscribe a *notorious*, most *dangerous* and *important* UNTRUTH, *viz.* — *That it is not lawful upon ANY PRETENCE WHATSOEVER to take arms against the King, or any commissioned by him.* — A *position* absolutely subversive of the *British* constitution, and which the nation was soon after (in *God's* righteous and wise *Providence*) brought openly to acknowledge to be traiterous, detestable, scandalous and false. A *position* which, if admitted, the *glorious* REVOLUTION, and our present *happy* GOVERNMENT, had never taken place; but *Tyranny* and *Popery*, with all their dire curses, had been bound eternally upon our necks. But, be astonished, O Heavens! This *false*, this *base*, this *scandalous* declaration, by the *Act* of Uniformity, the *Ministers*, upon pain of losing their places; were obliged solemnly to make. Our *fathers* nobly abhorred it; scorned to betray the rights and liberties of their country, and to be *tools* of arbitrary power. For this heroic *refusal* they were cast cruelly from their Churches, and delivered up, with their

\* Hist. of his Time, Vol. I. page 212. Oct.

their starving families, to extreme sufferings and distress\*.

This, Sir, was the shameful, the tyrannical yoke, which the *Act of Uniformity* would have put upon the necks of our illustrious predecessors; and to which, as CHRISTIANS and as PROTESTANTS they bravely scorned to submit. Noble was the STAND which they made in defence of Christian liberty and truth. Glorious will their names ever shine in the *British* annals, whilst virtue and integrity are sacred amongst us. Peace and everlasting honour be upon the memory of these Christian heroes: Future generations will rise and call them blessed!

To their MINISTERS thus unrighteously and cruelly ejected, it was the duty and the honour of the *Christian* LAITY to adhere. It was partly for their liberty, and that the gospel might be continued in its primitive simplicity and purity amongst them, that their Ministers thus suffered. It had been inglorious then, ungrateful, and in the

\* “ By the *Act of Uniformity*, says Mr. Locke, all the  
 “ Clergy of *England* are obliged to subscribe and declare  
 “ That it is not lawful upon any pretence whatever to take  
 “ arms against the King. This they readily complied with †.  
 “ For you must know that sort of men are taught rather  
 “ to obey, than understand. And yet that *Bartholomew-*  
 “ *Day* was fatal to our Church and Religion, by throw-  
 “ ing out a very great number of worthy, learned, pious,  
 “ orthodox *Divines* who could not come up to this *Oath*,  
 “ and other things in that *Act*. And so great was the  
 “ zeal in carrying on this *Church-affair*, and so blind the  
 “ obedience required, that if you compute the time of  
 “ passing this *Act*, with that allowed for the *Clergy* to sub-  
 “ scribe the book of *Common prayer* thereby established,  
 “ you will find it could not be printed and distributed, so  
 “ as that one man in FORTY could have seen and read the  
 “ book they did so perfectly assent and consent to.” *Maiz.*  
 col. p. 61.

† Our two thousand worthy predecessors excepted.

the highest degree unjust, to have forsaken their ejected Pastors ; and not have borne their witness with them against the imposing *spirit* which then lifted itself up, and was fastening a disgraceful yoke upon the Disciples of *Christ*. Through the favour of Heaven, a noble spirit of *Christian fortitude* was awakened also in *Lay-Breasts* (and, its mercy be praised, still lives ; beats high ; and, we hope, daily advances to the final and everlasting overthrow of bigotry, church-tyranny, and persecution from the earth.) They saw and detested the dangerous and fatal *Schism* and *Usurpation* upon the rights of conscience, which a party of lordly men were setting up in the Church of *Christ*. They stuck fast to their injured Ministers, and to the principles of Christian liberty. And God hath eminently blessed their Churches for the promoting sincere piety, sobriety, and virtue in all succeeding times.

This was *the rise* of that SEPARATION *from the establishment* which I am defending in these Letters. A SEPARATION, which as it was founded upon *Christian* and *just* principles, so it has marvellously subsisted, under great worldly discouragements ; strengthened and upheld, we trust, by the mighty power of GOD. And by the *same mighty power*, we hope, will still be upheld ; till his mercy shall dispose the hearts of our brethren who have *cast us out*, to receive us again.

As a *Layman*, Sir, I consider the GOSPEL and CHRISTIAN LIBERTY as a *sacred deposit* committed to me by GOD, for which I am to be *accountable* at his tribunal hereafter. As to *these*, he hath expressly charged me, and every Lay-Christian, to *watch*, — to *stand fast*, — to *keep what is committed to me*, — to *fight the good fight* of

of faith, &c.—If I see then the *simplicity* and *liberty* of the GOSPEL corrupted and infringed by the inventions, traditions and commandments of men; the UNITY of the Church broken by *new terms* of communion, and *new articles* of faith imposed upon the Disciples. If I see things ridiculous \*, superstitious †, erroneous ‡ brought into the Church, and made a part of *Christian* worship; things dangerous to mens souls, and which give them wrong notions of the terms of salvation and acceptance with God, and which manifestly tend to cherish a false and *delusive* peace. || In this case, though a *Layman*, I am bound to enter my protest, and to declare openly my *dissent*, as I would not be condemned as a *betray*er of my SACRED TRUST, and would stand before my JUDGE with confidence at last.

## S E C T. VII.

*Several gross MISREPRESENTATIONS of the Dissenters corrected.*

I Proceed next to what you seem to glory in as the peculiar *excellence* of your Letters, but which will soon appear, to your *very* SELF, their peculiar *foible* and *disgrace*, viz. Your *retorting* upon DISSENTERS *their own pleas and objections* ;

R. par-

\* Reading the spurious, romantic, apocryphal fables.

† Bowing at the name of *Jesus* ; and worshipping toward the *East*, &c.

‡ Several of the articles, especially the XXth, and the damnatory clauses of the *Athanasian Creed*.

|| The absolution of the Sick, the Burial Office and Confirmation.

particularly your charge, *That they not only have but IMPOSE ceremonies in divine worship; and that there are various IMPOSITIONS amongst ourselves.*

You here force me to call you forth, Sir, to undergo the mortification of seeing yourself proved, before the world, a *false accuser* of your brethren. SITTING at the Lord's supper you have at several distinct times, and with great variety of language, most confidently asserted, "to be really  
 " IMPOSED by us—to be CONSTANTLY INVARI-  
 " ABLY and UNIVERSALLY practised amongst us,  
 " —That it is NEVER allowed to be DEPARTED  
 " from.—That our Ministers INSIST upon and RE-  
 " FUSE to abate it —\*," with much more to the same purpose. This now is a charge, not only absolutely *false*, but (which is a very *aggravating* circumstance, and must shock greatly your *character* and *credit* before the world) you had *seen it to be FALSE*. For, you had actually read in Dr. Calamy's *Brief Account, &c.* a most express declaration that NO SUCH THING was at all *imposed* amongst us, but that our Communicants were AT LIBERTY to use their OWN POSTURE. I again put you in mind of this, because you have not yet had the honour to own the *falsehood* of this charge, and publickly to retract it. I can assure the publick, there are no less than *seven or eight* dissenting Churches in my neighbourhood, in which the posture either of *standing* or *kneeling* at the Lord's-supper, had constantly been practised for many years past (though in some of them the persons are now deceased) and this without the least offence to any of  
 the

\* Lett. II. pages 56, 57, 58. † Lett. III. pages 8, 9

the congregation, or dislike of the Ministers. — Judge, reader, hence what regard is to be paid to the representations of this zealous Censor ! and how justly he describes himself *encountering with ghosts, and groping in the dark.*

With equal rashness you affirmed, and still stoutly maintain, — — “ That *kneeling* in family prayer is ALWAYS *practised* by Dissenters ; that it is IMPOSED and COMMANDED by the master of the family upon his children and servants, by his signifying his mind to them, and letting them know, once for all, he would have them *kneel,\**” Upon a particular enquiry I assure the public, that I cannot find the least trace of any such *impositions* or *signification* of the master’s mind in any family of Dissenters ; but that, in their family devotions, *standing* is a posture very frequently used, and not avoided in point of conscience, I believe, by ten Dissenters in the kingdom. The matter is too trifling to merit many words: But, to let you see how utterly *unfit* you are for the office you assume, I will take you from the *darkness* where you miserably *grope*, and lead you to a *light* which will a little disconcert your countenance, by acquainting you, that at the three principal dissenting *Academies* in the southern parts of *England*, viz. *Northampton, Taunton, and Bridgwater*, it hath been the general, if not the constant, unvaried usage both of *Tutors* and *Students*, to STAND at *family-prayer*. These are the *nurseries* where most of the dissenting Gentlemen and Ministers in *England* have been formed ; whose *custom* therefore must naturally have a wide and strong influence upon multitudes of dissenting families

milies throughout the whole land. See now with what *truth*, with what *honour*, and *discretion* you bolt your random censures at the religious conduct of your neighbours! and feel the just pain with which they rebound and wound your own head!

But what heightens our perverseness and inconsistency, is this; that at the same time that we thus ALWAYS *worship kneeling in our families*, and the *master* COMMANDS and IMPOSES it upon all its members: "Yet in our prayers at Church, there, it seems, we *always stand*; and it is little less than *imposed* upon our people; for so great and general is the discountenance that *kneeling* lies under, that it requires some courage and resolution for any one to venture upon it; and if ANY ONE *does*, you say it again, he will be CENSURED *for it*.\*" A charge not more bold, than it is *groundless* and *false*. "One congregation, you have said, you can name, where great offence was given by a person kneeling at her prayers." But you have publicly been told, by an authority of great weight, which I presume you durst not contradict, that *the whole account is a MISREPRESENTATION*; of which the most authentic evidence is ready to be produced†. Did I not justly say, that your informers had *served you ill*? A man *conscious* of his own *darkness*, should be cautious into what hands he delivers himself up.

Besides, could you have made good the charge, not against *one* only, but even an *hundred* of our Churches; will this justify the *universality* and *positiveness*

\* II Def. page 72.  
tion, page 14.

† Chandler's Case of Subscription,

*positiveness* of your assertion, *that if ANY ONE kneels amongst us, he WILL BE CENSURED for it?* This publickly accuses not *one* only, nor a *hundred*, but ALL the dissenting Churches of this ridiculous *weakness*; which yet you cannot prove upon any single *one* of them all. The *reproach* therefore comes back with great force upon yourself. — I have made no extensive enquiries on this head, but can take upon me to assure you, there are no less than *six* or *seven* of our congregations near me (I believe there are many more), where *KNEELING at public prayer* hath been constantly practised by one or more members without the least discountenance. And of the many Ministers I have consulted, I find not one who imagines the practice would give offence to any single congregation amongst us.

Alike just and well supported is that other reproach; “*That it is generally held amongst us that the Sacrament is for none but PERFECT and CONSUMMATE Christians.*” After multiplying on this subject many words to little purpose, unless it be to shew the reluctance with which you do it, you are at last forced to *retract* this injurious imputation as to the *Presbyterians* \* (who are by far the greater part of the Dissenters) and acknowledge it to be *false*. You might have done the same by the *Independents*, whom you still leave under its weight. For though they are generally more *inquire*, I fear, in enquiring after proofs of the *sincerity* of a man’s Christianity, than the Scriptures authorise them; yet there is scarce one to be found, I believe, amongst the most rigid of them all, who will not declare, that *every SINCERE Christian*

R 3. *hath*

*both a right to the Lord's-table.* For do they not all acknowledge that every such person is become, by the gospel covenant, a *child of GOD, and a brother of JESUS CHRIST?* Will the most rigid Independent say, then, that *such* have not a right to eat of the *sacramental supper?* No, the *truth of grace,* they will tell you, be it in ever so *weak* a state, intitles to the sacrament. You wrong them therefore much by saying, that they hold it *to belong to, NONE but PERFECT and CONSUMMATE Christians.*

Thus groundless and ill supported, Sir, are the *defamations*, of your dissenting brethren, which your *ear* hath been wide extended greedily to receive, and your *hand* so officious to publish to the world; But suffer, I beseech you, the council of a friend. Put away far from you that little, ungenerous, unmanly, bigotted spirit by which “*You advise the Faithful to shun the conversation and company of our Ministers,——as being NOTORIOUS SINNERS, and not to have any intimate unnecessary acquaintance with them, or familiarity in common life\*.*” Indulge the more Christian and Catholic disposition Dr. Nichols recommends, who informs the world with pleasure “*of the charitable correspondence, and strict degree of friendship which subsists betwixt the established Clergy and some of the dissenting Ministers †.*” It is because they *know* one another no more, that they do not *love* each other better. *Shyness* begets estrangement, *estrangement* aversion, and *aversion* prepares the mind not only to receive with pleasure, but indultoriously to propagate gross misrepresentations,

\* Lett. II. page 8: Lett. I. page 83. † Nich. Def. page 145.

sentations, false accusations, scandalous and little things, utterly without foundation, and contrary to truth.

Had you freely conversed with the *dissenting Ministers* around you, as the learned *Doctor* advises, you had saved yourself a good deal of public *mortification*, which your injurious accounts both of their principles and practice have now unhappily drawn upon you. Cultivate at length, Sir, a *familiar acquaintance* with them. Their acquaintance will do you honour; will edify and enlarge your mind; will give you juster notions of men and of things than a mere *college* education is capable of doing, and prepare you for that happy world where bigotry and party-zeal no more *alienate* pious spirits, but *where ALL the children of GOD are gathered together in ONE*. From them you would have learned — that the ceremonies of the sweeping cloak, of kneeling at ordination, of the people's holding up their hands at that solemnity, of striking a covenant with their pastors, of giving the name at baptism, — are most of them never used at all in the greater part of the dissenting Churches; and the other not the least *imposed*; full liberty is given to use, or to use them not; no stress is laid upon them; much less are they made *indispensible terms* of Christian communion; as *sponsors*, the *cross*, and *kneeling*, are with you. They would, moreover, have told you, what you seem not to know, that it is not the mere *using* ceremonies, against which Dissenters object, so much as the *imposing* them; the laying a *stress* upon them; the considering them as *decorations* and *improvements* of Christian worship; not only *useful*, but *NECESSARY institutions* (as you had the *irreverence* to your divine *Lawgiver* to pronounce

concerning *sponsors*) and the making compliance with *them, terms* of reception into the Family and Church of *Christ*. And finally, they would have told you that mens *uncovering the head* in prayer, is by no means a mere *ceremony*, but a *circumstance* or *act* of worship, which seems dictated by the light of nature ; and is commanded by an Apostle, 1 *Cor. xi. 3, 4, 7* ; and that therefore, your placing *this* in the rank of *ceremonies* practised by Dissenters, was (to return your own compliment) most certainly a very *heedless* and *wrong-headed* thing.

“ The neglect of *private fasting*,” is another charge you advance against us, “ and insist confidently that you were in the right in saying it “ was very little, if at all, practised amongst us \*.” Dissenters, Sir, I presume, have read that instruction of their Master, *Mat. vi. 17. Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face ; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but to thy father which is in heaven.* Though they affect not to flourish with their *Vigils* and *Lents* (which with sorrow they see turned into little else than a *religious farce* by too many around them) nor, like the *Pharisee* are ostentatious in telling God and the world how often they fast ; yet this duty, I am persuaded, is practised with much serioufness amongst them. Besides the excellent Discourse of *Bennet*, to which you were referred, you call for more tracts. See another on the same subject in the *Morning Exercise* by *Barker* ; and from the Lives of the two *Henrys, Allén, Baxter, Tross, &c.* particularly, of the late most ingenious and pious *Abernethy*, you may learn what are their religious  
sentiments.

Sentiments and practice as to this matter. In many of their Churches there are stated periodical fasts, besides the personal domestic ones, which upon extraordinary occasions are not unusual amongst them.

But was it possible you should so alertly attack us on this head, when you knew it in our power with such advantage to retort! if “you have met with no Sermons or Tracts of Dissenters recommending *private fasts*——” Pray, have you met with any which *discourage* and *forbid* them? But, have you never yet met with your own LXXIII<sup>d</sup> canon? which says, “No Minister shall without licence of the Bishop, under his HAND and SEAL, keep any SOLEMN FASTS, either publickly or in any PRIVATE HOUSES, other than such as are appointed by law, nor be present at any, of them; under pain of SUSPENSION for the first fault, of EXCOMMUNICATION for the second, and of DEPOSITION from the Ministry for the third.” This, Sir, is the exalted foot, upon which the duty of *private fasting* stands in your Church! Could any thing then be more *wise*, more *pertinent*, or more *just* than the censures you deal us here?

As to the posture of *STANDING at public prayer*, for which also you had the *sagacity* sharply to reprehend us; besides the great variety of *Scripture examples* which I produced in its justification, you have had since, from a learned hand\*, indisputable proofs from *Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, the Apostolical Constitutions, Jerome and Austin*, that it was the posture in which the Christian Churches

\* Chandler's Case of Subscrip. pages 11, 12.

Churches universally offered up their public and most solemn addresses to God through all the *primitive* times. So unlucky is your hand, that the belts you fling at us, as *debasers of the public worship, &c.* light directly upon the heads of some of the most *sacred* and *venerable* persons which either *Scripture* or *Antiquity* holds out to your view!

“ But the instances of *Abraham, Moses, Samuel, &c.* *STANDING in prayer* serve, you say, “ to little purpose; unless it were also shewn, “ that they were instances of such *simple mere standing* as is practised in our congregations\*.” Yes; they are full to our purpose; because it appears not from the *sacred story*, but they were instances of exactly such *simple mere standing* as is used amongst us. As to the *other gestures* of devotion which your *imagination* would supply, the *SCRIPTURES* are wholly silent; and your fertile imagination, Sir, you will excuse us from accepting as a proper supplement to the *word of God*.

“ The *primitive* Christians, it seems, cannot “ be imagined to do no more than *barely keep upon their feet*.—No, they prayed with hands “ spread, and with eyes lift up toward Hea- “ ven †—” Hence then we infer; *First*, That they did not read their prayers from a *book*: That there were no *Liturgies* in those days. But the Pastor, as *Justin Martyr* and *Origen* say, offered up prayers and praises to God *ose dunamis kai kata dunamin according to his power, oras he was able*. But, *secondly*, by the account which both *Cyprian* and *Tertullian* give of their *gesture and manner*

\* II Def. page 76.

† II Def. page 77.

manner, the publick prayers in *dissenting Churches* vastly more resemble it than those offered in *yours*.  
 “ *Stamus ad orationem,*,—*Cum modestia & humilitate adorantes, &c.* \*” We STAND at prayer, —adoring with modesty and humility, that we may the more effectually commend our prayers to GOD; not even lifting up our hands high, but moderately and decently, no nor boldly elevating our faces. For the Publican whose countenance as well as prayers was HUMBLE and DEJECTED, went away justified rather than the *saucy Pharisee*.

When you have sedately considered the contents of this *section*, you will see cause, Sir, once more to resume your *censorial rod*, and to lay it sinartly on *yourself*; condemning heartily your own *temerity*, in presuming to write so freely about *persons* and *things* you knew so little of; and to pronounce preremptorily upon matters you had so slightly examined.

Though this article of *your MISREPRESENTATIONS* might be vastly enlarged, I conclude with a fresh flagrant instance of it †, which shews your *honour* and *justice* in a very unfavourable light, and too plainly demonstrates that your zeal for the Church hath just eaten them up. It is the case “ of a dissenting Minister in *Cambridge*, whom “ you knew; and who, you affirm, declared from “ his pulpit, that the *Common-prayer-book* had “ damned more souls, than the *Bible* had saved; “ for which he was indicted, and had his public “ trial as a depraver of it—.” Here you stop short, and leave that injured gentleman; yea, you transmit him to posterity, under the scandal  
 of

\* Tert. de Orat. Cap. 13.

\* II Def. page 116.

of the indictment, without having the *honesty* and the *virtue* to inform the world of the issue which you could not but also *know*, viz. that after a long and full hearing, on both sides, he was by the jury HONOURABLY ACQUITTED. This, Sir, is such an instance of partiality, injustice and notorious misrepresentation, as all virtuous and wise men will behold with indignation, and as, I am sure, must give you a good deal of pain in the review. The case of that injured Minister, (Mr. *Joseph Hussey*) has been since published (printed at *Colchester* in your neighbourhood 1737) which I cannot doubt you have seen. From thence it fully appears, that Mr. *Hussey* spake HONOURABLY, not reproachfully of the COMMON-PRAYER, in the Sermon referred to; and that he deserved highly that *acquittal* and *triumph* over his enemies which the *justice* of his country gave him; but which you *injuriously* endeavour to blast and suppress\*.

## S E C T.

\* He was shewing how utterly, repugnant the *Arminian* principles are to several parts of the *Common-prayer*; and after several things said very respectively of that book, concludes,——“ I wish there was more of that *Spirit* of GOD  
 “ breathing in the souls of men now, which breathed in  
 “ the souls of those who made the *Common-prayer*: and  
 “ indeed considering the inconsistency of mens principles,  
 “ with their gross hypocrisies in practice, I fear that at  
 “ the great day, when the books are opened, this book of  
 “ *Common-prayer*, when it is opened, will come in a swift  
 “ witness against them. And if so, I fear it will be found  
 “ that that book they now so much rely on, may be a  
 “ means of sending more of them to Hell, than the Gos-  
 “ pel converts in *England*.”

## S E C T. VIII.

*Dissenters not INCONSISTENT in submitting to some Ceremonies, and refusing others.*

**T**HIS is another charge advanced vigorously against us——“ The ceremonies of marriage and of burial, to which we conform, are injoined in the same manner, by the same authority, and in the same place (the Common-Prayer) as the other ceremonies and rites against which we protest.” And you put it as a stunning difficulty,——“ WHERE and WHEN the Magistrate prescribed the marriage ceremonies otherwise than he did those of Baptism and the Lord’s-supper\*.” I am truly surprized, Sir, that so mere a Cobweb entangles you. Pray, what is your *Common-prayer* ! Is it any thing in the world but a mere *Statute* or *Act of Parliament* ; as really and truly such, and nothing but such, as any *Statute* in our books of law ? Now as the *Magistrate* has in this *Statute* injoined some things of a *Civil* nature, which belong therefore to his kingdom, and which he has a right to injoin ; to these we reverently submit : But as he has also, in the same *Statute* injoined other things of a *religious* nature (pertaining to *Baptism* and the *Lord’s-supper*) which, we humbly apprehend, belong to another kingdom, even that of **JESUS CHRIST** ; to whom, and to *whom ALONE*, **GOD** the Supreme Governor has appropriated *such things* ; as to these, we crave leave to withhold our submission,

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sion, and chuse to obey GOD rather than MAN. And behold, the very Magistrate who made the Statute, has indulged us herein! has excused our obedience in the points as to which we scruple! has repealed the obligation of this law upon Dissenters; and allows them to act in these things as to their judgment seems best! Is there any thing in the least difficult or entangling in all this?

“ But upon this supposition all our objections  
 “ to the burial office as reasons against conformity  
 “ fall to the ground. For if the whole transaction  
 “ be a *political* thing; and the gentleman officia-  
 “ ting is, in that, no other than an *officer of the*  
 “ *State*, how is the Church, for the Lord’s sake,  
 “ concerned in any thing he either says or does,  
 “ on that occasion\*?” Certainly very much. The Church is indeed nothing but a branch or limb of the STATE. But if the STATE exacts of those, whom it deposes to officiate in this part of its administration, *unreasonable and shocking* things; if it commands them to say that *black is white*; to pronounce solemnly a man *saved*, whom they think verily to be *lost*; and to thank GOD that in his great mercy he hath taken to himself an abominable sinner, when in their consciences they believe that GOD took him away in wrath, and hath driven him from his presence to eternal darkness below,— is the officer, will you say, who is to pronounce and to do this, *not at all concerned therein*? Nor that branch of the administration in which he officiates at all wounded in its honour or reputation thereby? Most deeply, no doubt. And all virtuous and good men, by the eternal regards they owe to RIGHTEOUSNESS and TRUTH, ought openly

\* II Def. page 82.

openly to protest against such public violations of them ; and to declare their dislike of such prostitution of *sacred things*.

*The Church*, your learned *Warburton*\* tells you, has, by contract or alliance, resigned up her SUPREMACY in matters ecclesiastical, and her INDEPENDENCY to the State. The STATE, in consequence of this, hath drawn up for her, *articles of faith and forms of public worship*, which it requires the Church to *subscribe* and to use. — Hard fate of unhappy *Church* ! To come as Pupil to the STATE, to ask *what* she must believe, and *how* she must worship ; yea, to be forced solemnly to *subscribe* ARTICLES, which she by no means believes, and to use FORMS of public worship, which she greatly dislikes ! But, is there no prevarication, nor hypocrisy, in all this ? No ; the STATE hath commanded it ; and we are to be *subject to the higher powers*, and to obey those who have the rule over us : 'Tis not for a man's private conscience to kick against the PUBLIC ; but if any one dare say, — “ *That either of the ARTICLES is in ANY PART erroneous ; or that the book of COMMON PRAYER contains ANY THING in it contrary to Scripture ; your IVth and Vth canons* thunder out upon him *ipso facto*, a most terrible excommunication, and cut him off, as a wicked wretch, from the body of CHRIST. — Excellent constitution this ! quite holy and apostolic ! most heavenly and divine ! bearing upon every part a lively and glorious impress of the character of JESUS CHRIST ! — What wonder, if the dignity of the *priestly* character sinks ? If *religion* is ridiculed, and its *sacred things* treated

\* Alliance, &c. page 87.

with drollery and jest ? *It is impossible, we are told, but offences will come ; but wo be to that man ! wo be to those Christians, whose hypocritical and corrupt conduct lays these stones of stumbling in the way of Infidels and Papists ! and by whom the offence cometh.*

## S E C T. IX.

*The egregious absurdity of rejecting PRESBYTERIAN and admitting POPISH Ordinations.*

WE come next to the much contested point of *orders or ordination*, as to which you are wont to make a mighty solemn parade. The severity with which you nullify the *Dissenters* ordination, though the *very* SAME with that of all the *illustrious Churches of* PROTESTANTS abroad, when at the same time you are so complaisant as to acknowledge the validity of the ordinations of the *Church of Rome*, is a conduct so extraordinary as one cannot easily comprehend. The hands and the devoutest prayers of a company of truly virtuous, religious and Christian PRESBYTERS, in *Scotland or Geneva*, are not so efficacious, it seems, to send a man forth a *TRUE Minister* in the Church of CHRIST, as the hands and superstitious prayers of an antichristian, idolatrous, persecuting and wicked BISHOP of *Italy or Spain*.— No ; let a Priest, ordained by one of *these*, come over to the Church of *England* ; he shall be received as a *valid Minister, rightfully* ordained ; But, let another, ordained by the most learned, religious PRESBYTERY which *Germany, Hungary* or the whole world can boast, come over also to *this Church, this protestant Church* ; his *orders shall*

shall be pronounced NOT VALID, he must submit to be ordained *afresh*. The FORMER is admitted, as one *rightly* and *duely* entered a Pastor in the Christian Church, because a *Bishop's* hand was laid upon him, though with a great many ridiculous, superstitious and foolish rites; and though he was really no CHRISTIAN *Bishop*, but an apostate from *Christianity*, an open and avowed idolater and persecutor of the *stock* of CHRIST; yea, tho' the *Church* also into which, by that ceremony, he was entered, was *so far from being a TRUE CHURCH*, that for 900 years past, nothing can be more\*. — But the LATTER, though set apart to the Ministry by the most fervent and holy prayers; though he has long laboured in the *Church of God* with great diligence and success; has suffered, perhaps, the loss of all for the sake of CHRIST and *his truth*; and is fled hither from the rage of *idolatrours and cruel Bishops*; yet (strange to relate!) for not having had the hand of such an idolatrours and cruel *Bishop* in the ceremony of his ordination, he is considered but as a *mere LAYMAN* in this Protestant Church of *England*; he shall not, cannot, be acknowledged by us as a *Minister* of JESUS CHRIST. How mysterious and quite astonishing is the *partiality* of this!

But let us hear your censure on this head, —  
 “ Our Ministers are not duly ordained to their  
 “ office: their ministrations are most certainly  
 “ irregular; an unnecessary and wanton, if not a  
 “ factious departure from the primitive order,  
 “ and therefore those who attend them cannot de-  
 “ pend that such ordinances will be blessed to  
 S 3 “ them,

\* The words of the *homily* which every clergyman subscribes his solemn approbation of.

“ them, nor can they be *pleasing to God*\*.” And concerning the established *Presbyterian Church of Scotland*, you affirm,—“ *That having renounced* “ EPISCOPACY, and their ordinations being irregular, their COMMUNION can be neither SAFE “ nor LAWFUL †.” A most schismatical and rash judgment; which equally condemns ALL the illustrious REFORMED Churches of *France, Holland; Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, &c.* They ALL likewise have renounced *Episcopacy*; their ordinations therefore must be irregular, and their communion neither safe nor lawful.

But to give you, Sir, more just and favourable impressions of ordination by *Presbyters*; and, to sink a little your esteem of that *episcopal ordination*, on which you pique yourself so much, I recommend to your consideration the following things:

1. That *Timothy* was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the PRESBYTERY, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. — That *Paul* and *Barnabas* were ordained by certain *Prophets* and *Teachers* in the Church of *Antioch*, and not by any BISHOP, (of whom there is not a word in all that solemnity) presiding in that city, *Acts* xiii. 1, 2, 3. — And that it is a well known, acknowledged, incontestible fact that *Presbyters*, in the celebrated Church of *Alexandria*, ordained even their own *Bishops* for more than 200 years in the earliest ages of Christianity.

2. *Bishops* and *Presbyters* are in Scripture the very same: and are not a distinct order or office in the Christian Church. The Church at *Philippi* had

\* Lett. I. pages 73, 74.

† II Defs. page 145.

had but *two* orders of Church officers amongst them, *viz.* *Bishops* and *Deacons*, *Philip.* i. 1. And that the name, office, work of a *Bishop* and *Presbyter* are the same, appears from *Tit.* i. 5. 7. *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain Presbyters in every city, FOR a Bishop must be blameless.*—Paul called the *Presbyters* of the Church of *Ephesus* together, and charged them, *Acts.* xx. 27, 28. *To take heed to the flock over which the HOLY GHOST had made them BISHOPS. Episcopous* So *1 Pet.* v. 1, 2. *The PRESBYTERS among you I exhort, who also am a PRESBYTER, feed the flock of GOD among you, performing the office of BISHOPS, Episcopountes.*

The superiority of *Bishops* to *Presbyters* is not only by the first Reformers and Founders of the Church of *England*, but by many of its most learned and eminent Doctors since; not pretended to be of *divine*, but only of *human* institution; not grounded upon *Scripture*, but only upon the *custom* or *ordinances* of this realm. “*The truth is, that in the new Testament there is no mention of any degree or distinction of orders, but only of DEACONS or Ministers, and of PRIESTS or Bishops—*,” says a declaration of the function, &c. which was signed by more than thirty-seven *Civilians* and *Divines*, amongst whom were thirteen *BISHOPS*\*. The book intitled the *Institution of a Christian Man* subscribed by the Clergy in Convocation, and confirmed by Parliament, owns *BISHOPS* and *PRESBYTERS* by *Scripture* to be the same. † And says, tho’ *St. Paul* consecrated and ordered *Bishops* by imposition of hands; yet there

\* Burnet’s Hist. of the Reformt. Vol. I. Ap. page 321.

† To the same purpose speaks the *Erudition of a Christian Man*.

there is no certain rule prescribed in Scripture for the nomination, election, or presentation of them; this is left to the positive laws of every country. And that the main ground of settling *episcopal* government in this nation was not any pretence of *divine* right, but the *convenience* of that form of Church-Government to the state and condition of the Church at the time of the *Reformation*, your learned *Stillinfleet*\* affirms, and proves it to be the sentiment of Archbishop *Craumer* and other chief Reformers both in *Edward VI.* and Queen *Elizabeth's* reign, of Archbishop *Whitegift*, Bishop *Bridges*, *Loe*, *Hooker*, *Sutcliffe*, *Hales*, *Ghillingworth*, &c.† — Yea,

3. It deserves your serious consideration whether, by the constitution and frame of the Church of *England*, SACERDOTAL *ordination* be really at all *necessary* to the making a valid Minister, and to the giving success and efficacy to his ministrations; or, whether there is, really, any such *ordination* in the Church of *England* at all? It seems clearly the sentiment of our first *Reformers* that

\* *Irenic*. Ch. VIII. page 385.

† See a Letter of Dr. *Raynolds* of *Oxford* on this head; where he declares the sameness of *Bishops* and *Priests*, or that they have *equal* authority and power by *GOD's* word, to have been the judgment of *St. Paul*, *Chrysoſtom*, *Jerome*, *Ambrose*, *Auſtin*, *Theodorus*, *Primasius*, *Theophylact*, *Oecumenius*, *Aenselm*, *Gregory*, *Gratian*, the *Waldenses*, *Wickliffites*, *Huffites*, &c. *Neal*. *Hiſt. Purit.* Vol. I. page 497.

Archbishop *Bancroft*, and the rest of the *Bishops* with him, owned the ordination of *Presbyters* to be valid, and therefore refused to reordain the *Scottish* *Presbyters* who were then to be made *Bishops*, declaring, *That to doubt it, was to doubt whether there were any lawful vocation in most of the reformed Churches.* Archbishop *Spotswood's* *Hiſt.* page 514. The *Bishops* of *Scotland*, when *Episcopacy* was settled there, never required the *Presbyterian* Ministers to take *episcopal* ordination. *Bishop Burnet's Vindication* pages 84, 85.

that it was not ; and that they established the Church of *England* agreeable to this plan. For in a select assembly of Divines, convened by the authority of King *Edward VI.* for the settling important points relating to religion, it was determined, as may be presumed from a recorded opinion of Archbishop *Cranmer* their President—\*,

“ That though in the admission of Bishops, Parsons, Vicars, and other *Priests* to their office, there be divers comely *ceremonies* and *solemnities* used (he speaks chiefly of *ordination*) yet these be not of *necessity*, but only for good order and seemly fashion. For if such offices and ministrations were committed WITHOUT such solemnity, they were nevertheless *truly* committed. And there is no more promise of God that grace is given in the committing of the *ecclesiastical* office, than it is in the committing the *civil*—— A *Bishop* may make a *Priest* by the Scriptures, and so may *Princes* and *Governors* also, and that by the *authority* of God committed to them ; and the *people* also by their *election*. For as we read that Bishops have done it, so Christian Emperors and Princes usually have done it : And the people, before Christian Princes were, commonly did *elect* their Bishops and Priests.— In the New Testament, he that is appointed to be a Bishop or a priest, needeth no *consecration* by the Scripture ; for election or appointing thereto is *sufficient* †.”

Agree-

\* Vide Extract from Archbishop *Cranmer*'s M.S. Still-ing. Iren. Chap. VIII. page 391.

† To the same purpose speaks the *Erudition of a Christian Man*—which was drawn up by a committee of *Bishops* and *Divines*, and read and approved by the *Lords* spiritual and temporal, and the lower House of Parliament. An. 1543. Vid. *Neal*'s Hist. Purit. Vol. I. pages 33, 36.

Agreeable hereto the *Bishops* in this Church, in the reigns of *Hen. VIII.* and *Edward VI.* took out commissions from the CROWN, like other STATE-OFFICERS, for the exercising their *spiritual* jurisdiction; in which they acknowledge, —“ That ALL SORTS of *jurisdiction*, as well  
 “ ecclesiastical as civil, flow ORIGINALLY from  
 “ the *regal* power, as from a SUPREME HEAD,  
 “ the fountain and spring of ALL Magitacy  
 “ within this kingdom; and that they ought with  
 “ grateful minds to acknowledge this favour de-  
 “ rived from the KING’s liberality and indul-  
 “ gence; and accordingly they ought to render  
 “ it up whenever the KING thought fit to require it  
 “ of them. And amongst the particulars of *eccle-*  
 “ *siastical* power given them by this commission,  
 “ is that of ORDAINING *Presbyters*; and all this  
 “ to last no longer than the King’s pleasure,  
 “ And these things are said to be *super* and *ultra*  
 “ over and above what belongs to them by Scrip-  
 “ ture\*.” †

From these *commissions*, which the Bishops took out, especially *Bonner’s* Bishop of *London*, it is evident, that all the *power* of ORDINATION which  
 the

\* Rights Chr. Ch. Pref. page 39.

† Even Archdeacon *Echard* acknowledges, that in the reign of *Hen. VIII.* the *Bishops* took out, and acted, by *commissions* in which they were but *subaltern* to the King’s *Viceroy*: But in the reign of *Edward VI.* none being in that office, they were immediately under the KING: But by these *commissions* they declare, “ that they held  
 “ their *Bishoprics* only during the King’s pleasure, and were  
 “ empowered in the King’s name, as his Delegates, to per-  
 “ form ALL THE PARTS OF THE EPISCOPAL FUNC-  
 “ TION.” *Echard’s* Hist. Eng. page 299.

the Bishops had, or could have and exercise, in this kingdom, they derived *entirely* from the CIVIL MAGISTRATE, and *only* from him\*. And that this really is the case as to the *ecclesiastical orders* conferred by our *present* Bishops; that all the validity, significancy or weight which they have in *this* Church, they derive *purely* and *solely* from the authority of the MAGISTRATE; incontestibly appears hence; namely, that the Magistrate has *authoritatively* directed and prescribed HOW and TO WHOM *ordination* is to be given †. And should an *ordination* be given by all the Bishops of this Church in *OTHER* manner and *OTHER* form than *that* prescribed by the Magistrate, *such ordination* would be of no legality at all, nor authority in *this* Church. The man *so ordained* would be no proper Minister in the Church of *England*. A Minister in the Church of *Christ*, he possibly might be; but he would, I repeat it, be no Minister in the Church of *England*; nor would he have *power* and *authority* to officiate as a Priest therein †. The

\* Anno 1550 an order of Council was made that some Bishops and other learned men should devise an order for the CREATION of *Bishops* and *Priests*. Burnet's Hist. Reform. Vol. III. page 195.

† Vid. the judgment of the court in the case of *Howel*, a Nonjuring Clergyman, ordained by Dr. *Hicks* (*Tindal's* Hist. of Eng. Vol. IV. page 502) His ordination was pronounced *illegal*, and he disowned as a *Clergyman*. Vid. a Statute 8 of *Eliz* in Fuller's Ch. Hist. Book ix. page 80.

‡ The Bishop at an ordination asks,—“*Are you called according to the Will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the DUE ORDER OF THIS REALM.*”

*Note*, It is not sufficient to make him a Minister in *this* Church that he is called according to the will or institution of JESUS CHRIST, if he be not also called according to the *due order* of THIS REALM.

The Church of *England*, if you duly weigh it, seems evidently constituted upon the *congregational* or *independent* plan. It is from *the PEOPLE* (in other words, from the King and Parliament, in whom the *People* have lodged their power) that all the officers in this Church receive their whole authority, and are directed *how to act*. In all their *ORDINATIONS*, *Jurisdictions*, *Ministrations*, its Bishops and Priests act entirely by an authority committed to them by the *Civil Magistrate*, received originally from *the PEOPLE*. So that as *the PEOPLE*, by their representatives, are supposed to have authorised, directed and appointed them to act; so, and so only, are all the *Archbishops*, *Bishops* and *Priests*, in this Church to officiate, and to discharge their several functions therein. And if they presume to transgress the bounds which *the PEOPLE*, by their representatives, have set them; and to officiate *OTHERWISE* than in the *form* and *manner* prescribed, their ministrations are illegal, and of no authority in this Church.

This, Sir, I appeal to all who know our *constitution*, is the real and true nature of your boasted *EPISCOPAL ordination*, as it now stands in our Church. It is an *ordination*, performed by a *civil officer*, *i. e.* by one who officiates only by an authority derived to him from the *civil Magistrate*, and the legality of whose ministrations, and their efficacy in this Church, depends entirely upon his observing the *manner* and *forms* which the Magistrate hath enjoined. — — *Ordinations* then, in the Church of *England*, if traced to their proper origin and rightly considered, are in truth nothing but merely *civil* or *popular* ordinations.

Nor

Nor let it be here replied,—That these *Bishops*, who by the laws of *England* are impowered to ordain, are at the same time to be considered as *successors* of the Apostles, and have received *power of ordination* from these Founders of the Christian Church by an *uninterrupted lineal descent*. For the constitution and law of *England* knows nothing at all of this ; it rests not *this power*, which it commits to its Bishops, upon any such *lineal succession* or *descent* (which it knows to be a rope of sand, a ridiculous *chimera*, a thing which no man upon earth is able to make out.) No ; but it considers *the KING*, vested (by act of Parliament, or the suffrage of the People) with a *FULNESS* of ALL *power ecclesiastical* in these realms, as *empowering* and *authorising* Bishops to ordain. This power of *ordination* was once delegated to *Cromwel* ; a *LAYMAN*, as Vicegerent to the King. And by the constitution and law of *England*, this Layman had then as much authority *to ordain* as any *Bishop* in the realm ; and any *Priest* whom he had ordained would have been as much a *Minister* in the Church of *England*, and his ministrations as valid, as if all the Bishops of the realm had laid their hands on his head \* But,

4. The only possible way of avoiding this difficulty, is recurring to the wretched refuge of *POPISH ordinations*, and deriving the validity of your orders and ministrations, and your powers of *ordination*, from the idolatrous *Church of ROME*. If you derive them not from the *CIVIL Magistrate*, you must from *POPISH Bishops*. A dete-  
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rate

\* *Heatb and Day*, the Bishops of *Worcester* and *Chichester*, were deprived of their Bishopsrics by a Court of Delegates, who were all *Laymen*. Vid. *Eckard's Hist. Eng.* page 310.

rate refuge this ! attended with a train of monstrous absurdities ! all which yet, rather than admit the *orders* of foreign *Protestant Divines* and the regularity of their ministrations, you resolutely swallow.

That **POPEERY** is an undoubted fundamental *subversion* of the whole scheme of Christianity. — That it is that **APOSTACY** *from the Christian faith*, described by *St. Paul*, 1 *Tim.* iv. 1, 2, 3. — The **MAN OF SIN** and the **SON OF PERDITION** *sitting in the Temple (Church) of GOD* ; *opposing, and exalting himself above all that is called GOD*, foretold by the **HOLY GHOST**, 2 *Theff.* ii. 3, 4. — And that the *Church of Rome* is represented, by the *Prophetic Spirit* in the Revelation of *St. John* as an *adulterous and bloody WOMAN*, which hath broken the marriage covenant that espoused her to **CHRIST**, and is fallen into a state of abominable and open *lewdness* ; multiplying her *fornications* ; and instead of bringing forth and cherishing a *faithful Seed* to the Redeemer, breaths out horrid threatnings and persecutions against them, *makes war with the Saints*, destroys them from the earth, and is *drunk with their blood* ; that the *Papacy or Church of Rome* is thus described by the **HOLY GHOST**, *Protestant Divines*, and even those of the *Church of England*, readily confess. How astonishing then to see ! That from this idolatrous apostate *Church* you derive, by **ORDINATION**, your *spiritual and sacerdotal powers* ; and boast that you can trace from her by an *uninterrupted line* your ecclesiastical descent. Strange ! that without shame you declare yourselves before the world the offspring of this *filthy withered old HARLOT*, as your *Church* expressly calls her ; and that the validity of your *ordinations* and holy offices

offices in CHRIST'S Church, you rest upon their transmission to you from this *antichristian and false Church*, even at the very time that you acknowledge *that for a THOUSAND years past it has been so far from having the nature of the TRUE CHURCH that NOTHING CAN BE MORE* — What miracles are here ! That which is no *true Church*, nor has been *any thing like it for a thousand years past* ; yet conveys true, regular, Church Offices and powers ! An *anti-apostolic Church* imparting genuine *apostolic orders* ! The *Synagogue of Satan* become the *sacred repository*, where the power of *ordination* to holy offices in CHRIST'S Church, for more than *ten centuries* principally rested, and was almost only to be found ! The *Church of Rome*, which by apostacy hath *cut itself off from the body of CHRIST*, hath nevertheless his *spirit and authority* dwelling in it ; and is *commissioned* by CHRIST to examine, ordain, and send Ministers into his Church, for the edifying of his body and perfecting his Saints ! How in every view marvellous and transcendent is this !

“ But *Harlot* as she is, you say, she may bring  
 “ *forth children* as well as a virtuous matron, and  
 “ *sometimes children far better than herself.\**”  
 Poor consolation this ! For the *children* she brings forth in this state of her divorcement, must be *born of fornication*, a spurious and corrupt race.

This, Sir, is that Church of *Rome* whom you own as your MOTHER, and from whom you claim by *ordination* to be ecclesiastically sprung ; and the *sons* of this vile and detestable *prostitute*, you acknowledge as your *brethren* ; duly born into the  
 T 2 Church ;

\* II Def. page 52.

Church ; ordained, because *episcopally*, in a valid and right manner ; whereas the glorious company of foreign *reformed* Churches, together with the Church of *Scotland* and the *Dissenting Ministers* at home, you utterly disown as *ecclesiastical* brethren ; and affirm, “ *That having renounced EPISCOPACY, and their ordination being irregular, their communion can be neither lawful nor safe.*” Where, alas ! is the decency, the consistency and common sense ; to say nothing of the christianity or charity of this !

The Church of *Rome* by the XIXth article of the Church of *England*, cannot possibly be a part of the true visible Church of CHRIST ; for this it thus defines, — *A congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of GOD is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.* But, do you not acknowledge that the *pure word of GOD* is so far from being preached in the *Romish* Church, that it is there corrupted by most erroneous and abominable traditions, idolatrous rites and *blasphemous fables*, as your XXXIst article most righteously stiles them ; Do you not confess *the wine* to be an essential part of the Lord's-supper ? Is that sacrament then *duly administered, according to Christ's ordinances*, in the Church where *the Cup* is taken from the people ?

In short, “ If blasphemies against GOD, and “ tyranny over men ; if defacing the ideas of “ *Deity*, and corrupting the principles of moral “ *honesty* and *virtue* : if subverting the founda- “ tions of natural religion, and acting directly “ counter to the spirit and design, and over- “ throwing the essential articles of the Christian  
“ faith ;

“ faith ; if the most avowed and bold affronts offered to Heaven, and the bloodiest and most brutal outrages executed on the best of men ; if all these, I say, are sufficient to exclude men from being a part of the truly catholic apostolic Church, the Romanists can certainly have no pretence to it.”

The Church of *Rome* then having by her abominable immoralities, blasphemies and idolatries, *excommunicated* and cut herself off from the body of Christ, she cannot have his *spirit* and *power* dwelling in her ; consequently, has no authority to convey *sacerdotal* characters and offices in *Christ's* Church ; the characters and offices therefore which she pretends to convey, are spurious and of no validity or efficacy therein.

But what finishes the absurdity, and renders it quite *astonishing*, is, — That these very *Popish Clergy*, to whose *ORDERS* you pay such extravagant complaisance, are so unpolite as not to return the compliment to *yours* ; No, so far from it, that they rudely pronounce *you ALL*, from the greatest *Archbishop* to the meanest *Clerk* in the land, a company of mere common unconsecrated *Laymen* ; as unqualified for performing any *holy office* in the Christian Church, as the most illiterate and contemptible Dissenter of us all. To return good for evil is, indeed sometimes truly great. But to see the venerable bench of Bishops and Governors of this Church, with the whole body of its Clergy not only *yielding*, but *contending* before the world for, the validity and efficacy of the orders of *POPISSH Priests* ; when at the same time these very *Priests* are going up and down the kingdom undermining their authority, invalidating their *Missions*, and representing *their sacerdotal powers*

as a mere nullity and jest. — To see them publicly maintaining the *ecclesiastic* characters and office of these corrupters of Christianity, these sworn enemies to our civil government, and to his Majesty King *George*, these crafty seducers, who are gone out spreading treason, idolatry, superstition and destructive error through the land, — this is such a strain of courtesy as no reason can justify; yea, is such a strain of weakness and impolicy as ought not to be beheld without indignant concern. For this gives these *Popish emissaries* a most dangerous advantage over you: they artfully tell their proselytes, “ That you acknowledge the truth and validity of *their* orders; whilst *they* utterly deny the validity of *yours*; the only *SAFE and SURE* way therefore is to stick to *their* ministrations; which, yourselves being judges, are *authentic* and *valid*; whereas there is, at least, a *risque*, a *danger* attending yours;” and, “ *that the people cannot* (to use your own words) *depend with so much assurance as is requisite to the peace and acquiescence of their mind, that SUCH ORDINATIONS will be blessed to them, and that they are pleasing to God,*” Thus they uncourteously turn the weapons against you which you put into their hands; and whilst you are justifying *their* orders, make use of those *very orders* to poison and pervert the people; and craftily to traduce, undermine and destroy your Church.

“ The *great blessing of* EPISCOPAL *ordination* is wanting to the foreign Churches, you affirm, rather through *NECESSITY* than *choice*\*.” This is perfectly romantic, and has not the face of probability. Does not the world know, that in  
their

\* II Def. page 50.

their public confessions and formularies of faith, *Bishops* and *Priests* are declared originally *the same*, and that the power of *ordination* belongs equally to both\*? Can any thing be more manifest than that *episcopal* ordination, if chosen and desired by them, like other *British manufactures*, might with all imaginable ease be in a few days exported to them, and spread in a few months through all their provinces and towns? Are there not in this kingdom thousands of *Ecclesiastics*, who, receiving it from our *Bishops*, would most joyfully carry over this *great blessing* to foreign Churches? Or should any of their *Divines* come over to fetch it, would they not be received, think you, with extasies of welcome; and return loaded with *honours*; perhaps, with favours more *solid* and *substantial* than these? Has there no management or address been used through a century past, to introduce into their Churches this *episcopal* grace? And as to its “*suiting the constitution and frame of their civil governments,*” nothing, you know, can better fit those of the *Lutheran* profession, who have *nominal* Bishops, though no *ordination* but *PRESBYTERIAN* amongst them——. To assert then, “*that the foreign Churches do really PREFER, DESIRE, and some of them SIGH for EPISCOPAL ORDINATION; and that it is not of CHOICE, but of NECESSITY they want it—,*” appears to me to be mere *romance*; an assertion far

\* Mr. Du Plessis (says Bp. Jer. Taylor a man of honour and great learning, attests, that at the first reformation there were many Archbishops and Cardinals in *Germany, France, Italy, &c.* who joined in the reformation, whom they might, but did not, employ in their ordinations; and therefore, says the Bishop, what *necessity* can be pretended in this case I would fain learn? *Episc. asserted, &c.* page 191.

far from doing honour to the person that makes it.

There is one consideration more, upon this head of *ordination*, which I beg leave to mention; the rather, because there hath not generally, I think, that stress been laid upon it which its importance deserves: Which is,

5. Supposing the *power of ORDINATION* to be, from Scripture, ever so clearly proved to belong *solely to Bishops*; yet all the Bishops of this realm refusing to ordain but upon *unjustifiable terms*; *ORDINATION*, in this case, may justly be sought from *Presbyters*; and, when given by *them*, is of undoubted *validity and regularity* in the Christian Church.

The *Bishops* require from all candidates for ordination, as an *indispensible* term of receiving it from them — *That they subscribe willingly, and ex animo to the XXXIX articles, that they are ALL and EVERY ONE of them agreeable to the word of GOD: And that they solemnly declare their UNFEIGNED assent and consent to ALL and EVERYTHING contained in and prescribed by the book of COMMON-PRAYER.* This now is a *term of admission to the Christian Ministry*, which they have *no authority from CHRIST* to insist upon, or to make; yea, a *term* (if with humility I might say it) which they *offend* greatly against the *rights and liberty* of the Christian Church, and against *CHRIST* its only Head, by presuming to make; because, thousands may be *duely* qualified, according to the *will of CHRIST*, to act as Ministers in *his* Church, who cannot with a good conscience comply with *this term*. By insisting therefore on it, they *reject* those whom *CHRIST* receives; and *unlawfully* keep out numbers of worthy persons from a part in  
the

the Christian *Ministry*, who, by the appointment and will of GOD, and by the constitution of the *Christian Church*, have a *right* of admiffion to it ; and whose *Ministry* is greatly needed, and would be useful therein.

Let the *sole power* of ordination, then, be allowed to have been *originally* lodged in the *Bishops* ; yet, if at any time they fhould enter into a combination to *abuse* and *pervert* this power ; to lay a yoke upon *Christian Ministers*, which CHRIST never laid upon them, and which they *ought not* to bear ; and *ordination* cannot be had from THEM upon *honourable* and *Christian* terms ; in *this* we may fafely reason, as our Lord hath taught us in a *like* cafe, that GOD will have *mercy* and not *sacrifice* ; that a mere *ceremony* is to give way to confiderations of a *moral* nature ; and that men, in other respects well qualified, when their fervice is needed, (of which *themselves* and the *people* are to be judges) may act as *Ministers* in the Church of *Christ* ; either without any *ordination*, when it cannot *honourably* be had ; or with fuch only, whether *Presbyterian* or *Popular*, as can be obtained upon *honourable* terms.

These things I recommend, Sir, to your difpaffionate and fober thoughts ; not doubting but they will difpofe you to be lefs fevere upon *Presbyterian*, and more modest in your glorying on *epifcopal* ordination, than you have formerly been. — And whether thofe who now claim the *sole* power of ordination, and confider it as a *TRUST* committed to them by CHRIST, can juftify their *refufing* it, but upon compliance with fuch *fevere* and *unreasonable* terms, — deferves maturely to be weighed ; confidering, that (as far as they bear  
any

any relation to *Christ*) they are not LORDS, but only *Servants* in his House, and that to HIM they must be *accountable*, for so important a TRUST,

## S E C T. X

*Of the Peoples Right to CHUSE their own Pastors.*

THE next point to be considered, is the right of the Christian *Laity* to chuse their own Ministers. The charge given them in Scripture *to try the Spirits*,—*to beware of false Prophets*,—*to take heed of what they hear*, “you own, incon-  
“testibly proves their *right of judgment*, or of ex-  
“amining and proving doctrines; but the thing  
“you want to see is, how from the *right of judg-*  
“*ment*, the *right of choice* can be deduced? \*”  
But can a person of any discernment want to be shewn this? Does not the right of JUDGING in things of religion, necessarily imply not only a *right*, but a *duty* also, of ACTING agreeable to *that judgment*; or, in other words, a right of *choice*? Pray, why must a man *examine*? What! that he may have, peradventure, the guilt and mortification of *combating* his own conscience, and acting *contrary* to his sense of things? What absurdity were this! If the Christian *Laity* were to *try the Spirits*, and to *examine* and *weigh* the doctrine their pretended Pastors brought; then *those*, surely, whom they found to bring *not the doctrine of CHRIST*, and to be led by *not the Divine Spirit*, they were to reject, to turn away from, and not to accept as their *spiritual Guides*.

Ac-

Accordingly, the *Christian* LAITY are charged, *Rom. xvi. 17. To mark* (*Scopein*, to consider, to observe carefully) *them that CAUSE divisions and offences contrary to the Christian doctrine, and to AVOID them.* Note, those who make *NEW terms* of communion in the *Church of Christ*; who set up *NEW ceremonies* of human invention, and command the subjects of *Christ* to yield obedience to them; and who *cast out* of the Church, or *refuse* to admit into it, those who comply not with *such* ceremonies and rites; *THESE*, Sir, are the men (I appeal to your own conscience, and to the bar of *eternal REASON*, at which all must shortly stand) *THESE* are the men which *CAUSE divisions and offences contrary to the Christian doctrine*; *THESE*, therefore, the Christian people are expressly *commanded*, by the Apostle, to *AVOID*. Attentively consider this, and you will never more condemn our *separation* from your Church; this single text alone justifies it before the world; and not only so, but proves it a most plain and indispensable *duty*.

The Church of *England* seems to have *departed from*, and most manifestly to have *destroyed* the primitive Apostolic and Catholic COMMUNION, by setting up and injoining *OTHER terms* of *Christian FELLOWSHIP* than the *GOSPEL* hath injoined, and *rejecting* those whom *CHRIST receives*.—From *this*, therefore, upon *Christian* principles, and by the command of *St. Paul*, we are to *withdraw* ourselves, and to *separate*.

But to return—The manner in which the place of *Judas*, the traitor, was filled up, *Act. i.* and in which the seven *Deacons* were chosen, *Acts vi.* shews it plainly to be the constitution of the *great FOUNDER* of the Christian Church that its *Ministers*

nisters should be appointed by the *election of the people*. An *Apostle* was an officer of *extraordinary* rank, whom it seemed in a peculiar manner the prerogative of CHRIST to appoint solely to that office; but neither doth he *do this*, nor yet order the *Apostolic* college to fill up this vacancy by their own authority and discretion; but (for an *instruction*, no doubt, to future ages) he commanded the *Christian people* (the whole number of believers, as far as appears, that were then at *Jerusalem*) to *chuse out two*, and present them before him, of whom he would appoint *one* to the vacant *Apostolate*. A strong presumptive evidence, every one must grant, in support of *popular elections*.

And when *seven Deacons* were to be appointed to manage the Church's stock; though the *Apostles* were then vested with a *fulness* of power, and had the *gift of DISCERNING SPIRITS* (in both which they have no *successors*) and were therefore far better qualified to have *chosen* Persons for that office than the multitude of *Lay-Christians*; yet behold, as a standing monument to after-times in whom this *elective power* was to rest in the Church, they took not upon them authoritatively to *nominate*, but directed the *PEOPLE* to *look out seven men of good report*. In obedience to this direction, and in pursuance of their right (as the Lord's *freed men*; put into an happy state, where none were to have *authority* or *dominion* over others, but all were to be *brethren*) the whole *multitude*, it is said, *chose* or, as you learnedly render it, *PICKED OUT* of *their number seven men*.——Not to differ on small things, Sir, if you allow the *Christian Laity* to *PICK OUT* their *Ministers*, as the *Apostles*, with their superior powers and gifts of *discerning Spirits*,

Spirits, allowed the Laity in their times, this is all we crave.

As to the practice of the *antient* Church, 'tis not I, as you suggest, by a writer \* of your own, high enough for *Church power*, who says, "That the people had votes in the choice of Bishops, all must grant, and it can be only IGNORANCE and FOLLY that pleads the contrary." I own, I am surprized at your contesting stiffly this point, when the stream of all, even your own writers, beats so violently against you. *Clemens Romanus* †, a cotemporary of the Apostles, says, they appointed Bishops, *Suncudobesasis Tes ecclesias pases, by the consent of the whole Church*. How often does *Cyprian* say, "Nihil fiat nisi consentiente plebe," *Let nothing be done but by the consent of the People*. Again, "Deus instruit ordinationes sacerdotales non nisi sub populi assistentis conscientia fieri oportere ‡ *God appoints that sacerdotal ORDINATIONS should not be made without the assistance and consent of the people*. Himself, he declares, chosen to his office, "Favore plebis, populi suffragio," *by the favour and vote of the people*. Your criticism on the word *suffragium* (which all the Learned know properly and constantly signifies a vote; as it undoubtedly does in *one* if not *both* the very instances you bring to disprove it) is too slender to deserve a particular consideration; especially as you offer not a word against that other express testimony quoted from the same Father, which indisputably shews the sense in which he uses, *suffragium*, "Plebs maximam habet potestatem vel eligendi dignos, sacerdotes vel indignos recusandi," *To the PEOPLE belongs the CHIEF POWER either*

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\* Lowth.

† Epist. ad Cor. Cap. 44.

‡ Epist. 67.

ther of chusing worthy Ministers or of rejecting the unworthy. This is a testimony full to the point, which you could not gainsay, and therefore wisely overlook it.

The *Constitutions* of the Apostles decree, *that he who is to be ordained a Bishop must be CHOSEN by all THE PEOPLE as the most worthy\**.

The *Canons* called the Apostles *depofe such Bishops as are chosen by the Civil Magistrate* †.

The famous Council of *Nice*, in a synodical Epistle to the Church of *Alexandria* forbid *any to be ordained Bishops without the ELECTION of the People*.

The Council of *Constantinople*, anno 382, say they ordained *Nectarius*, cuncta decernente civitate, *all the city decreeing it* ; and *Flavianus*, omni Ecclesia decernente, *according to the determination of the whole Church*.

The Council of *Carthage*, anno 394, say *a Bishop is to be ordained, cum omni consensu Clericorum & Laicorum, with the universal CONSENT both of the Clergy and LAITY*.

*Leo V.* Father *Paul* ‡ confesses, has amply shewn, “ that the ordination of a Bishop could not be *lawful* or *valid*, which was not required and sought by the PEOPLE, and by them approved ; which is said by all the Fathers of those times ; ” and adds, *Qui præfuturus est omnibus, ab omnibus eligatur* ||, *Let him that is to preside over all, be chosen by all*.

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\* *Const. Apof. L. 8. Cap. 4.*

† *Can. Apof. 30. in Photio.*

‡ *Benef. Mat. Sect. 19.*

|| *Leon. Ep. 29. Cap. 5.*

The Counsel of *Paris*, anno 552, require the ELECTION of the PEOPLE and Clergy, on pain of excommunication. *Chrysoſtom*, was choſen Biſhop of *Conſtantinople* by the common conſent of all perſons, Clergy as well as LAITY \*. In the choice of *St. Martin*, the votes of the People carried it againſt the votes of the *Biſhops* themſelves, the People inſiſting upon their privilege †.

Finally ; the mighty conteſts and ſtruggles, of which eccleſiaſtical ſtory is full, into which the great cities frequently fell at the election of their Biſhops, put beyond all doubt the antiquity of the practice. That at *Antioch* when *Euſtathius* was choſen, deſcribed by *Euſebius* (de vita *Conſtant.* L. 3. Ch. 59, 60.) where alſo is the *Emperor's* Letter to the People of *Antioch* (another memorable monument full to the purpoſe) exhorting them not to chuſe *Euſebius* as their Biſhop, but to think of ſome other perſon. — That at *Ceſarea* deſcribed by *Greg Nazian* ‡. — That at *Alexandria* by *Evagrius* §. — That at *Conſtantinople*, ſeveral times, by *Sozomen*, &c. — That at *Ephesus* by *Chryſoſtom*. — At *Verſeiles* by *Ambroſe*. — At *Milan* by *Socrates*. — At *Rome* by *Ammianus Marcellinus*, &c. — It hence evidently appears what the ſentiments and practice were of the Churches in theſe autient times. So that ſo warm a Champion for Church-authority as your zealous *Dr. Wall* is forced to confeſs, “ that it is a-piece  
“ of hiſtory which cannot fairly be denied, that  
“ amongſt the primitive Chriſtians the People uſed  
“ to have their SUFFRAGE in the choice of  
“ Church-officers ; and that this is the moſt regu-  
U 2 lar

\* Socrat. Schol. L. 6. Ch. 2.

† Sulp. Sev. Cap. 7.

‡ Orat. 19.

§ L. 2. C. 6.

“ *lar way* ; that it continued *many years* ; and  
 “ those Christians who have gone about to mend  
 “ this way, have made it worse\*.

These, now, are the grounds on which this  
*right* of the people stands. And thus *impregnable*  
 is the post you so adventrously attack. Your rea-  
 soning upon this head is truly extraordinary ; which  
 in short is this,—“ A man does well who meek-  
 “ ly attends the Ministry of a good, able, ortho-  
 “ dox Minister, by *whomsoever* provided ; but the  
 “ *King, Bishops, Lord Chancellor, Gentry, &c.* are  
 “ MORE COMPETENT *Judges* of the goodness  
 “ and orthodoxy of Clergymen than the common  
 “ people † ;” therefore, the people ought not to  
 judge for themselves in these matters, but to submit  
 meekly to the determination of the *King, Lord Chan-*  
*cellor, Bishops, &c.* A most excellent doctrine ! ad-  
 mirably fit to promote Popery in *Spain*, Mahome-  
 tism in *Turkey*, Paganism in *Japan*. The brave  
 Protestants in *France* then, I urged, have *unwar-*  
*rantly* and *wickedly* withdrawn from the *Minis-*  
*ters* which the King and Bishops had set over them :  
 “ Yes, you reply, undoubtedly they have, if their  
 “ Kings and Bishops set over them, as they do  
 “ here, good orthodox Ministers.” But could you  
 think, Sir, such an answer would be received with-  
 out a smile ? Pray, *who is to judge* of the good-  
 ness, ability, and orthodoxy of the Minister ? Not  
*the People* themselves, according to your scheme,  
 but the *King and Bishops*, who are MORE COM-  
 PETENT JUDGES. Well then, the rulers in  
*France*

\* Dr. Wall's Hist. Inf. Bap. Vol. II. page 334. Nay,  
 if any *Presbyter* was created a *Bishop*, by imperial Mandates,  
 the people were enjoined to renounce him.

† II Lett. page 9. II. Def. page 63.

*France* are more competent Judges of the goodness, ability, and orthodoxy of Ministers than their *Hugonot* subjects; to their superior judgments, therefore, they ought to submit.—What rare *Christianity* and *Protestantism* this! But are the *Hugonots* in *France*, I beseech you, more competent Judges of the ability of the Clergy on whom they ought to attend, than the people of *England*? Or have the King and Bishops here MORE AUTHORITY from God to judge for their subjects, than the King and Bishops there? 'Tis strange, a gentleman of discernment can entangle himself in so inconsistent a scheme.

“That the *minority* of a parish are bound to submit to the choice of the *majority*; so if these happen to chuse a *Popish Priest* for their pastor, those are obliged to receive him as such,” is an absurdity you would charge upon my *Principles* and *Reasoning*\*, but is really nothing, Sir, but the production of your own imagination; there being not a syllable in my Letter favouring such submission; but it expressly claims and maintains the right of EVERY MAN to judge and chuse for himself.

\* II Def. page 63.



## S E C T. XI.

*The BURIAL OFFICE and ATHANASIAN CREED  
most apparently inconsistent and repugnant to  
each other.*

WITH what truth, Sir, and justice you drew your own character *as a sorry advocate for the Church*—\*, the public will judge; that you have shewn no defect of *courage*, every one must own. You proceed in what you call, your *soldierly manner* †, and like a bold and intrepid champion undertake to defend what, I believe, few except *yourself*, but would desert as a quite forlorn and untenable post: And that is, your Church's *thirteen times a year most solemnly pronouncing concerning ALL Arians and Socinians that they CANNOT be saved, that they do WITHOUT DOUBT perish everlastingly*; and yet, with equal solemnity, pronouncing concerning these *SELF SAME persons*, dying in their heresies, that *GOD has in GREAT MERCY taken them to himself*, and that *you HOPE they REST IN CHRIST*. This is such a *contradiction* as, I confess, I did not expect any gentleman of *jobriety* would attempt to reconcile. But let us hear how you perform.—“When we declare that *Arians and Socinians* perish everlastingly, our sense is, that their *heresies* are damnable, and that they upon the account of them are liable to damnation; notwithstanding which, there may be room for  
“ *pardon*

\* II Def. page 128.

† Dedic. page 15.

“ pardon in particular cases, and that, when *one* of these comes to die, it may be charitably hoped that *his* is such a case, and we may lawfully declare, that we do not *quite despair* concerning him\* :” That is to say, you damn the *Heretic*, but save the *Heretic* ; A piece of spiritual legerdemain, which, I own, I cannot comprehend. But does not all the world see, Sir, that the *Creed* plainly and incontestibly refers to PERSONS, not to *things* only ; and absolutely pronounces upon THEIR *final circumstances* or *state* ? WHOSEVER will be saved, 'tis necessary before all things, that HE hold the faith there defined ; which faith, except EVERY ONE doth keep whole and undefiled, HE shall without doubt perish everlastingly. — Does this speak only of the *Heretic*, will you say, and not expressly pronounce upon the CONDITION or STATE of the *person* who holds it ? And does it only say of *him*, that he is liable to damnation, and not that he shall without doubt, or most certainly be damned ?

Again, does the *Creed* leave room to *hope* in particular cases, when, at five distinct places, it determines absolutely *against hope* ; and in such strong and express language, as most evidently reaches, and was intended to reach, to every particular case ? WHOSEVER, — EVERY ONE, — which except a MAN believe, — HE shall WITHOUT DOUBT, perish everlastingly. If, notwithstanding these decisive and most preremptory declarations, the *Creed* still leaves room to *hope* for the salvation of the avowed deniers and oppugners of this faith ; then the use of language is lost, there is no meaning in words,

words, *truth* and *falsehood* are the same; and a man may honestly subscribe the *Koran* of *Mahomet*, and reconcile it with a profession of the *Gospel* of *CHRIST*. Besides, what contemptible chicanery and trifling is it to talk, “*of room for pardon, and hope in PARTICULAR cases,*” when you declare solemnly *this hope* UNIVERSALLY, and in EVERY case; and to say—“*When ONE of these comes to die;*” when you do it over ALL when they come to die: And, “*that you do not quite despair concerning the man;*” when you have the assurance to thank *GOD* that he hath in GREAT MERCY taken him to himself, and to pray him, that when you die, YOURSELF may rest in *CHRIST*, as you hope this *ARIAN* or *SOCINIAN* doth. Is this the language of *NOT-QUITE-DESPAIR*—? Such trifling does but hurt a cause: you had much better have done here, as with the *burial office* and the *absolution*, have passed it in silence over, and not attempted to defend what every one sees to be incapable of defence.

But, the *unfeigned ASSENT* and *CONSENT* which you have solemnly given, and which every *Clergyman* is obliged most solemnly to give, sticks, no doubt, greatly; and makes you strain every nerve to endeavour to let it pass. Such potions, indeed, must be *bitter*; *GOD* grant they be not *malignant*! There is *something* in every wise man that must strongly keck against them. To numbers in your own Church it cannot but be difficult, in *GOD*'s presence and before his Church, before *angels* and *men*, to give their *unfeigned ASSENT* and *CONSENT* to ALL and EVERY thing contained in the *Athanasian Creed*, with all its explanations, limitations, and damnatory clauses. —

A Creed,

*A Creed*, whose limitations they *condemn*; whose explications they *deride*; and whose damnatory clauses they *detest* heartily and *abhor*;—yet in *GOD'S presence*, and before *his Church*, I repeat it with astonishment! to declare one's *unfeigned Assent and Consent* to them ALL— is a position, surely, which though sweetened with the noblest Church preferments, a man might justly dread to swallow! You wonder, Sir, perhaps, to see *Deism, Infidelity, Popery, a corruption of manners and contempt of holy things* prevail throughout the land? I acknowledge, I do not: For when those who are to be the great *Examples and Teachers of RIGHTEOUSNESS*, too generally enter upon their sacred office with a dangerous violation of it; subscribing articles they do not believe; preaching contrary to their subscriptions; declaring solemnly their unfeigned assent to what they do not approve, but, it may be, heartily detest; and prostituting the holy rites and offices of their religion to *political and sordid ends*— Why should it be thought strange, if *POPERY and INFIDELITY* greatly gain ground? And what wonder if they at length fatally prevail\*?

## S E C T.

\* See a like manifest *inconsistence* betwixt the XXVth *article*, and the office for *confirmation*. The *article* says—, “*Confirmation* has not any visible *sign* or *ceremony* ordained of *GOD* —” But the *office* commands the Bishop to declare “ That he hath *laid his hands* on the confirmed “ (after the example of the holy Apostles) to certify them “ by *this sign* of *GOD'S* favour—” Behold an evident *contrariety*! But to both parts unfeigned *assent* and *consent* is obsequiously given!

It is something (more than) odd, a learned Bishop of your own has lately observed, to have *two Creeds* established in the *same Church*; in one of which, those are declared *accursed*, who deny *the Son* to be of the *SAME hypostasis* with *the Father*: And in the other, it is declared they *cannot be saved*,

## S E C T. XII.

*The* Scottish *Presbyterian* ESTABLISHMENT  
*vindicated.*

IF SCHISM be so *dangerous* and *damnable* a thing as you affect to represent\* ; the river *Tweed*, methinks, should not bound it, nor your solemn warnings against it † ; but from the profusion of your charity to the *English* Dissenters ‡, a little should extend also to your *episcopal* brethren the *Dissenters* from the *Scottish* Church. But *these*, such is your partiality, you endeavour to justify instead of censuring ; yea, to justify upon such principles as certainly expose yourself to heavy censure and rebuke. You alledge,—" That *they* did not separate from the *Presbyterians*, but the *Presbyterians* from *them*,—that by tumults, false mutters, and other misrepresentations of persons and things the *Presbyterians* got themselves established,——but that having *renounced* EPISCOPACY, and their ordination being irregular, their COMMUNION can be neither *safe* nor *lawful* § " Behold ! in these last words, that *schismatical dividing* spirit from which you endeavour to vindicate your Church. A severe and unchristian sentence ! by which you *unchurch* at once, and cut off from Christian *fellowship* all the foreign reformed

*saved*, but *perish everlastingly*, who do not assert that there is ONE *hypostasis* of the *Father*, and ANOTHER of the *Son*——  
Essay on Spirit. §. 146.

\* II Def. page 63.

† Ibid. page 128.

‡ Dedic. page 15.

§ II Def. pages 16, 145.

*reformed Churches*, a glorious and great company, and pronounce them not to belong to the visible *Church of CHRIST*. *They all have renounced EPISCOPACY*, in your sense of the word, *their ORDINATIONS* therefore you declare *irregular*, being only Presbyterian, *and their COMMUNION to be neither SAFE nor LAWFUL*, i. e. it is a dangerous and wicked thing to hold communion with them : Your own sober thoughts, Sir, and the *episcopal* authority under which you are placed, will, I doubt not, correct you for so immodest a censure. To assist the former in this good office, I would offer *two* things to your serious review.

1. That the very *canons* of the Church of *England*, to which you have sworn obedience, acknowledge the Church of *Scotland* to be a true Sister Church ; commanding all its *Clergy* to pray for the Churches of *ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, and IRELAND, as parts of CHRIST'S holy CATHOLIC CHURCH* which is dispersed throughout the world. *Canon, LV.* Note, the Church of *Stotland*, when these *Canons* were made, was *Presbyterian* as it is now. And,

2. Consider, that the *Presbyterian* Church in *North Britain*, is established by the *very same authority*, and rests upon the *same law* as the *episcopal* Church in *South Britain*.

The very same *Legislative Powers* which established and formed the *one*, have established the *other* likewise ; if it be schism, then, rebellion and contumacy against *GOVERNORS* to separate from the latter ; it is most certainly the very same to separate from the former also. As for "*Tumults and false musters by which it got itself established.*" You should have known, that the sense  
of

of the *Scottish* nation was, perhaps, ten time more general for *Presbyterianism*, in the reigns of K. *William* and Q. *Ann*, when that form was established there; than the sense of the *English* nation was for *Protestantism*, in the reigns of K. *Edward* and Q. *Elizabeth*, when the *episcopal* Church of *England* was formed and established here. But if the settlement of *PROTESTANTISM* in *England*, by the Crown and Parliament of these realms, was *valid* and *right*, even though the Bishops and Clergy were, almost *unanimously* against it: *PRESBYTERIANISM* in *Scotland* surely, enacted and established by the same Crown and Parliament, must be equally *valid*; especially as the voice of their *Clergy* as well as *Laityan*, not only violently, but generally that way.

A grand *CONVENTION* of the States in *Scotland* at the *revolution*, in a claim of rights which they presented as containing the *fundamental* and *unalterable* laws of that kingdom, declare, —  
 “ That the reformation in *SCOTLAND* having been  
 “ begun by a *PARTY* amongst the Clergy, all *PRE-*  
 “ *LACY* in that Church was a great and *un-*  
 “ *portable* grievance to that kingdom.” King *Wil-*  
*liam*, however, Bishop *Burnet* \* informs us, “ as-  
 “ fured the *episcopal* party there, that he would do  
 “ all that he could to preserve them (established)  
 “ granting a full toleration to the *Presbyterians*,  
 “ provided they concurred in the new settlement of  
 “ the kingdom (*i. e.*) in renouncing King *James*,  
 “ and owning himself as their *Sovereign*). But the  
 “ *Bishops* and their followers resolved to adhere  
 “ firmly to the Interests of King *James*, and so de-  
 “ claring

\* Hist. of his Times, Vol. IV. pages 42, 43. duodecimo.

“ claring in a body, with much zeal, in opposi-  
 “ tion to the new settlement, it was not possible  
 “ for the King to preserve that (episcopal) go-  
 “ vernment there, all those who expressed their  
 “ zeal for him, being equally zealous against that  
 “ order.”

This establishment of *Presbytery* was again in the most solemn manner *enacted* and *confirmed* by the Queen (*Ann*) and Parliament of *England* when the UNION was made. You speak therefore of this affair, Sir, in more coarse and disrespectful language, than is either *decent* or *true*, when you talk of *insurrections*, *false musters*, *misrepresentations*, &c. It was done upon the most *mature* and *grave* deliberations both of King *William* and Queen *Ann*, and of the *Lords* and *Commons* of both kingdoms in Parliament assembled ; it has received the most sacred sanction a human law can receive ; and is made as *essential* and *fundamental* a part of our present *constitution*, as the Church of *England* itself. Take heed therefore that you are not preparing a rod for your own correction ; and lest by teaching men to argue away the legality and reverence of the *Presbyterian* establishment in *North Britain*, you give a second mortal stab\* to the Church established here. You may please to observe also, that when you call the episcopal Dissenters there the *Church of Scotland*, 'tis with just the same propriety, decency and good sense, as if the Presbyterians should call themselves the *Church of England* here.

Hence also it appears, that what you offer in mitigation of the *Jacobitism* and *Rebellion* of the *Episcopalians* in *Scotland* (pages 16, 17.) has one

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material

\* A deadly one you before gave. See page 7.

material flaw, which is, that it is not *founded upon TRUTH*. For you represent the loss of their establishment as being the *cause* of their disaffection; whereas, the *very REVERSE* is exactly the case; and they *therefore* lost their establishment, because they were disaffected, rejected the *revolution*, and adhered staunchly to King *James*. King *William* would have preserved them, if they would have acknowledged his government; they obstinately refused, and fell therefore a just sacrifice to their stupid attachment to a *tyrannical and popish* Prince.

As to the present loyalty of the two parties in that kingdom, the *Presbyterians* and *Episcopalians*, which you have drawn into comparison; you have done one of them great wrong in representing them *both* as, perhaps, *alike deeply engaged* § in the late impious rebellion there. If from the disposition of the *Clergy*, that of the *Laity* may be reasonably presumed, there are *two* important facts, to omit many other, which will dispose every impartial person, I believe, to view that affair in a very different light. One is, the *ROYAL Commander*, the Duke of *Cumberland's* Letter to the *General Assembly* at *Edinburgh*, in which he expresses a strong sense “ of the very steady and laudable  
 “ conduct of the *Clergy* of that Church, through  
 “ the whole course of that wicked and unnatural  
 “ rebellion; and says, I owe it to them in justice  
 “ to testify that upon all occasions I have received  
 “ from them professions of the most inviolable at-  
 “ tachment to his Majesty's person and govern-  
 “ ment, and have always found them ready and  
 “ forward to act in their several stations in all such  
 “ affairs

“ affairs as they could be useful in, though often  
 “ to their own great hazard—.” Upon an im-  
 partial account, the balance, I believe, by every  
 disinterested person, will be found to stand thus,  
 —Of the *Presbyterian* established *Clergy* not one  
 in fifty in the whole body, but wished heartily suc-  
 cess to the arms of his Majesty *King GEORGE*;  
 of the *episcopal* dissenting *Clergy*, not one in fifty  
 of the whole body but wished heartily success to  
 the arms of *Frenchmen, Italians*, and the miscreant  
 crew who came to invade and overthrow our *con-*  
*stitution*, in favour of an abjured and popish Pre-  
 tender.

The other fact is, the necessity which the *Le-*  
*gislation* have found themselves under, by new acts  
 of Parliament, in two different sessions, more nar-  
 rowly to watch, and to lay under fresh restraints,  
 the *episcopal* Churches in *Scotland*. These are well  
 known to be fruitful and fatal sources of *jacobitism*  
 and *disaffection*; dangerous *seminaries* where men  
 are formed and nourished up in allegiance to a  
*Popish Prince*, and in avowed aversion and disloy-  
 alty to their rightful sovereign *King GEORGE*.—  
 Though it be too true then that there were some  
 of the *Laitie* of the established Church, by some oc-  
 casional resentment or unhappy occurrence, hur-  
 ried into that black affair; they herein departed  
 from their settled and professed principles; where-  
 as the *Episcopalians* acted quite *in character*, agree-  
 able to the fixed sentiments and affections of their  
 party, when they prayed and fought heartily for  
 the destruction of our happy government, and for  
 the advancement of a Popish Pretender to the  
 throne. To say then, “ that the *Scottish Presby-*  
 “ *terians*, were, perhaps, as *deeply engaged* in the  
 “ late odious rebellion as the *episcopal Dissenters*  
 W 2 “ there,”

“ there,” is to scatter censures at random, to confront the plainest evidence, and to represent them (as you have done abundantly by your dissenting brethren here) in a very partial and injurious light.

### S E C T. XIII.

#### *Of the Church's AUTHORITY in Controversies of Faith.*

**T**HIS is a *claim*, which, to the grief of its real friends, and to the triumph of its foes, *your* CHURCH hath set up; and obliges all its Clergy solemnly to subscribe. For it is really no other than an invasion of the *DIVINE Prerogative*; and in the language of the *HOLY GHOST*, *a sitting in the temple of GOD, shewing itself that it is GOD\**. It is a claim of *honour* as due to a company of poor *frail and fallible* men, which belongs *only* to the *bnnsicent and infallible* GOD, and to *CHRIST* the *sole* Lawgiver and King in the Church. It is the very *root* of Antichristianism; the *prop* upon which the whole system of Popery rests; it came from the Church of *Rome*, and *thither* it directly leads; nor can the *reformation* be ever justified, or the Church of *England* supported, upon the foot of this claim.

For if *THE CHURCH* hath authority in controversies of faith, The Church of *Rome*, surely, had it *BEFORE* the Church of *England*; yea, had it at the very time when the *reformation* was made. *Cranmer*, then, and *Ridley*, *Luther*, and *Calvin*, were guilty of great petulancy and ecclesiastical rebellion,

\* 2. Theff. ii. 4.

bellion, in refusing to submit to *the Church's* solemn determinations concerning *Image-worship, Transubstantiation, &c.* and in proudly setting up their own *private* opinion against the *authoritative decisions* of their ecclesiastical *SUPERIORS*, to whom they owed *submission*, and whom they ought to have obeyed. — This claim of your Church, Sir, I say it again, is an *unanswerable* argument in favour of *Popery*; which hath drawn thousands, no doubt, and is continually perverting multitudes from *yours* to the Church of *Rome*. Nor can all the learning or-wit of the whole Clergy of the land withstand the force of a single *Jesuit*, let him be armed with and wield skilfully this dangerous weapon, the *XXth article* of your Church.

It was the fatal influence of this *article*, I observed, that seduced King *James II.* and the great *Chillingworth* into the *Romish* tents. These instances you contest with me. But as to the *first*, are guilty of an unhappy oversight, in confounding *two* things, in the quotation from *Burnet's History*, and considering them as *one*, when they are most apparently *distinct*. The *authority of the Church*, and the *tradition from the Apostles in support of Episcopacy*, are in the Bishop's account of King *James's* perversion most manifestly *two* several and different things; whereas, you would strangely have it thought, "that by the *authority of the Church*, is meant only, the *authority of its tradition or testimony concerning Episcopacy*†." But do you not know, and did not the King know, that the *authority of the Church* is one thing, and its *tradition in support of Episcopacy* is another: Does not the Church, besides *this tradition*, claim

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to

to itself moreover an *authority in controversies of faith*? And did not the King wisely and rightly judge, “*that there was more reason to submit to the CATHOLIC Church, than to ONE PARTICULAR Church — ?*” That if the Church of *England* had this authority, the Church of *Rome* had it long before her, and upon better grounds than she; — that if the Church of *England* by its authority might solemnly determine that *CHRIST went down into Hell*, and that *Arians and Socinians* are undoubtedly damned when they die, and perish everlastingly, but yet, there is hope, when they die, that they *rest in CHRIST*, and are *taken to God in mercy*; the Church of *Rome*, by the same authority, might solemnly determine that *images* are to be worshipped, and that a *piece of bread* is transubstantiated into the body and blood of *CHRIST*; there being nothing in the *one* at all more incredible or absurd than in the *other* — †. I own I see not but, upon this principle, the King acted right; and that *every one* that believes this *XXth article* of your Church ought to follow his example, immediately forsake it, and go over to the Church of *Rome* ‡.

Thus did the renowned *Chillingworth*; he thought there was a necessity of an *infallible living Judge*.

† In a debate on a bill against *Blasphemy, &c.* brought into the House of Lords, anno 1721, the Earl of *Peterborough* frankly said, Though he was for a parliamentary King, yet he did not desire to have a parliamentary God, or a parliamentary Religion: And if the House were for such a one, he would go to *ROME*, and endeavour to be chosen *Cardinal*; for he had rather sit in the *Conclave*, than with their Lordships, upon those terms. *Tindal's Hist. Eng.* Vol. IV. page 647.

Dr. *Will. Tindal* was also, by the same principles, perverted to the Church of *Rome*. Vid. *Second Defence of the Rights, &c.* page 79.

*Judge of controversy*; or, *that there always was, and must be some Church upon earth that could not err*, which in other words is, *that had authority in controversies of faith*; finding therefore the Church of *Rome* claiming it with a better grace, and upon fairer and stronger grounds, than that of *England* could pretend, he too hastily went over to it; though he afterward well atoned, by his incomparable writing, for that precipitant step. "But he was too great a master of reason, you say, to take *authority* for the same thing with *infallibility*, under a different expression; and that, therefore our Church, in claiming the former, did, in effect, claim the latter §." However he took them, Sir, nothing is more plain than that they are undoubtedly *the same*. For that to whomsoever GOD gives *AUTHORITY in controversies of faith*, he gives also *INFALLIBILITY*, incontestibly appears hence, *viz.* that else a man might really have *authority* from the GOD of truth, to lead men into *ERROR*, he might have a power, a right from Heaven to seduce and to deceive. The absurdity of which glares at first view, and needs no further to be exposed.

To talk therefore "of the Church's *limited* authority to decide controversies according to the *rule of Scripture and universal tradition*; and that these decisions (so long as they evidently contradict not that rule) oblige her members to *obedience*—," is quite trifling and beneath the character of a rational Divine: For WHO, I pray, is to judge whether the Church's decisions are, or are not, according to the *rule of scripture and universal tradition*.—The Church herself,—  
or,

or, her members? If the Church *herself* and not *her members*; then the authority is *absolute*, a *Po-pish* tyranny is erected, and a blind *unlimited* obedience takes place. But if *the members* are THEMSELVES to judge, and no further to yield obedience than they THEMSELVES see the decisions to be according to the *rule of scripture*, then all *authority* is overthrown; the determinations of the gravest *Synods* are to be weighed in the balance of every man's *private* judgment, and according as they *appear to HIM* to agree with Scripture or not, are absolutely to *stand* or *fall*. Betwixt *authority* and *no-authority* in matters of faith, there is no possible medium; as for *limited* and *unlimited* they are only cant expressions to which you affix no determinate ideas; nor can pretend to tell the world, —*what limits* the authority has, —*where* it is circumscribed, —*in whom* it is lodged, —and *how far* its bounds go?

Accordingly, you find that noble *champion* of the Protestant cause, when escaped from the pernicious snares in which his notions of *Church-authority* had at first unhappily entangled him, expressing himself thus, — —“ For my part, after  
 “ long and impartial search, I profess plainly that  
 “ I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot,  
 “ but upon this rock only, namely, that the *Bible*,  
 “ the *Bible*, I say ONLY, is the religion of *Pro-*  
 “ *testants*. I see plainly and with my own eyes,  
 “ that there are *Popes* against *Popes*, *Councils*  
 “ against *Councils*, some *Fathers* against others,  
 “ the same *Fathers* against themselves, a consent  
 “ of *Fathers* of one age against a consent of *Fa-*  
 “ *thers* of another age, the *Church* of one age a-  
 “ gainst the *Church* of another age, — in a word,  
 “ there is no sufficient certainty but of *Scripture*  
 “ only

“ only for any considering man to build upon :  
 “ *This* therefore, and *this only*, I have reason to  
 “ believe, — I will take no man’s liberty of  
 “ judgment from him ; neither shall any man take  
 “ mine from me. — I am sure that God does  
 “ not, and therefore that men ought not to re-  
 “ quire any more of any man than this, *To believe*  
 “ *the Scripture to be GOD’S word, to endeavour to*  
 “ *find the true sense of it, and to live according to*  
 “ *it.\**” These are the true principles of *Protes-*  
*tantism* and of *Christianity* to which *your CHURCH*  
 must necessarily come back, if ever she would  
 maintain her ground against the dangerous assaults  
 which *Poperly* is making on her ; for as long as she  
 stands hampered with that perplexing and unhappy  
 article (the XXth) she must remain the dupe and  
 the jest of insulting *Jesuits* and *Unbelievers* ; and  
 be content to see her members led in triumph away  
 from her by hundreds in their snares.

## S E C T. XIV.

*Of the POSTURE in which our Lord and his*  
*Apostles eat the SACRAMENTAL-SUPPER.*

**T**HIS is the only point I shall at present  
 further consider. Concerning which I ob-  
 serve.

I. That it is most certain that they *eat it in*  
*their TABLE-GESTURE*, whatever that was ;  
 it was the *gesture* in which they were wont to  
 take their *food at meals*. This is *all* we need to  
 know,

\* Chillingworth’s *Rel. Prot.* Chap. VI. Sect. 56, page 379.

know, to justify our practice : Our Lord and his Apostles took the Sacrament in an *eating*, not in an *adoring* posture. Let no man, then, think himself *wiser*, nor pretend that he can take it in a more *humble, devout, and fitter* posture than THEY.

And,

2. Though it was, perhaps, somewhat different from the posture we at present use (as there are several different ways of *sitting* in different countries and times) yet there was no word in the *English* language so properly by which to render *anapiptoon* and *anakeimenos*, as *sitting*, which our translator, and I, after them, presumed to use ; for which I have fallen under your rebuke.

“ You tell me, page 148, that the posture was “ *lying down or along* ;” and yet just after, “ that “ it was *with the upper part of the body erect* ; and “ advise me to try how conveniently a man may “ eat and drink in that posture.” But to *lay my body down or along*, and yet keep its *upper parts erect*, is a position so extraordinary, that without the help of some *posture-maker*, or your further good instructions, I despair of ever compassing so arduous a point.

That it was the custom of the antients, both *Romans* and *Greeks*, to sit at their meals, cannot be denied ; *Hemetha Dainumenoï Homer. Odyss—* And *Virgil*, who wrote near the time of our Saviour, says, — *Soliti patres confidere mensis* \*. *Æneid. VII.* The custom of *lying* or *leaning* at table was brought in amongst the *Romans* not till the

\* Porro confidere, non in lecto recumbere ad mensas heroïces temporibus morem fuisse diximus. Not. Delp. in Loc. & in *Æneid. I. L. 702.*

the primitive severity of their manners was corrupted by the effeminity and luxury of the *East*; and even then, the posture of *sitting* retained in their *sacred-feasts* in the *capitol* †.

And as for the usage of the *Jews*, Dr. *Lightfoot*, Sir, is an authority which if, without being strongly armed, you presume to attack, the blow will surely rebound, and hurt your own self. But the learned Doctor assures us,—" That at other  
 " meals they either sat, as we do, with their bodies erect, or when they would enlarge themselves to more freedom of feasting or refreshment, they sat upon the beds and leaned upon the table on their left elbow. But on the *Pass-over* night, they used this leaning composure, being the posture of free men, in memorial of their freedom,—And thus are we to understand those texts which mention *John's* lying on *Jesus's* breast, and leaning on his bosom (*John* xiii. 25. xxi. 20.) not, as some have pictured him, reposing himself or lolling on the breast of *Jesus*, contrary to all order and decency; whereas the manner of sitting together was only thus; *Jesus* leaning on the table with his left elbow, and so turning his face and breast away from the table on one side, *John* sat in the same posture next before him, with his back towards *Jesus*; his breast not so near, as that *John's* back and *Jesus's* breast did touch one another, but at such a distance as that there was space for *Jesus* to use his right-hand upon the table, to reach his meat at pleasure; and so for all the rest, as they sat in like manner: For it is a strange fancy that they lay upon the bed  
 " before

† Valer. Max. L, 2, 3.

“ before the table, one tumbling (or lolling) upon  
 “ the breaſt of another †.”

I have now followed you, Sir, much further than I intended to have done. I hope it will not be expected that I remark upon all the weak and indefenſible things your *Defences* contain; there are, I believe, five times as many as thoſe I have here noted; upon which it would tire the reader's patience, as well as greatly try my own, particularly to touch. As for the *discipline* of the Church of *England*, its beſt friends I am perſwaded wiſh, and common prudence would have adviſed, that you had been *quite ſilent* on that head. “ Who-  
 “ ever thinks ſeriouſly (ſays one of the greateſt of  
 “ your preſent *Biſhops*) of the manner, cauſes or  
 “ objects of our *Excommunications* generally ſpeak-  
 “ ing, ſhould methinks in pity forbear to mention  
 “ the word §.” Your *eccleſiaſtical courts*, to whom that diſcipline is committed, are juſtly not only reckoned, but called amongſt yourſelves, *the very dregs of your conſtitution*. And upon your own honeſt confeſſion of the *ſcandalous* and *ruined* ſtate in which *Church-diſcipline* lies amongſt you, (quoted pages 67, 68, of my ſecond Letter) I am well content to let that matter reſt.

As for the *perſecuting* and *dividing* ſpirit the Church of *England* has ſhewn, I think it the eaſieſt of all points (and ſo, I believe, does every one who knows its real hiſtory) to ſupport with abundant evidence the charges on this head. But as both *churchmen* and *Differents*, 'tis hoped, are  
 now

† Lightfoot's Temp. Serv. Chap. xiii. Vid. alſo Rainold. Cenfura de Libris Apoc. Prælect. 79. Altare Damascen. Cap. x. page 552.

§ Answer to the Represent. pages 38, 39.

now growing into a better spirit, and their common interest as *Britons*, as *Protestants*, and as *Christians*, calls loudly for a stricter union; I wave, at present, any further prosecution of a point which might rather tend to widen than heal the unhappy breach. Upon your own principles as to *persecution* also I forbear to remark, though most easy to be proved both unprotestant and unchristian, the merits of the cause betwixt us being little concerned therein.

If *this review* of the controversy, which your *Letters* have called up, shall be a means of holding forth to both the contending parties the several defects of their *ecclesiastical* constitution, and of rendering them more candid and benevolent to each other; and shall at all prepare the way for a *coalition* betwixt them, I shall think it an auspicious and very happy event.

“ The readiness which, you say, my Lords the *Bishops* have shewn, and will shew, to come to a temper with their *dissenting brethren* \*,” will, I doubt not, be very gratefully and delightfully accepted by them, and returned by a correspondent readiness to lay aside all prejudices (for prejudices, I am free to own there, doubtless, are amongst us) and to comply with any just and reasonable proposals for the accomplishing so important and valuable an end.

I hear it with great pleasure, if what you speak is upon good authority, — “ That if parting with the ceremonies, and taking away a few indifferent things will close the breach, you are satisfied that it will not long remain open — †,”

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And

\* Dedic. page 12.

† Ibid. pages 13, 14.

And in return declare, I verily believe that if *such condescensions* as a great part of our Governors both in Church and State would, I presume, think not *unreasonable* to make, were made to the Dissenters, there would no unbecoming *stiffness* or *aversion* be shewn by the most considerable part of them. May Heaven dispose the *minds* of all who have power to further and help on this desirable event! *that with one mind, and with one mouth, we may glorify God, and unite our common zeal against a growing common enemy; and may receive one another, but not to doubtful disputations!* For if we still continue to worry and weaken one another, there is reason to fear lest we finally be destroyed one of another. These things I recommend, Sir, to your consideration: and shall only farther say, that as I have not been able; and am persuaded never shall be; to get you to speak out, and openly and plainly tell us, — *who* you mean by *the Church*, “to which Dissenters owe subjection, which hath power to decree rites, and authority in points of faith; and by withdrawing from, and rejecting the authority of which we are guilty of a dangerous and damnable sin —.” Whether it is the Pope with his Cardinals; or the King with his Parliament; or the Archbishop with his Bishops; or the Bishop of every diocese with his Dean and Chapter attending. — Nor will you so much as pretend to shew us the *charter* which has vested them with this high power, — nor will say, to what things, or how far it extends, — though these are *essential* points upon which the controversy betwixt us intirely depends: You must excuse me from paying any farther regard to your *lucubrations* on these things. I have neither time nor  
 inclina-

inclination to dispute about a scheme which you affect to wrap in obscurity, and which you are afraid to lay open and avow before the world. I here therefore take my leave of the present debate. But though I chuse not to bear you company in the disagreeable employment of *groping in the dark*, you will nevertheless believe me, Sir, to be

*With unfeigned Respect,*

*Your very humble Servant,*

A DISSENTER.



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T H E

Dissenting Gentleman's

P O S T S C R I P T

T O H I S

Three LETTERS to Mr. WHITE.

SIR,

**T**H E extraordinary remark which introduces your *Appendix*—That views of *worldly interest* incourage and supports our *dissent* from the establishment—I shall leave to the universal laugh of your readers, for a confutation; and pass on to points of greater moment in debate.—To begin with your *first*. Of CHURCH-POWER, and in whom lodged.

The Church of *E* ——— *d* claims, in her *articles* and *canons* \* to have power from GOD, to *decree* OTHER *ceremonies* and *rites* of *worship*, and to *make* OTHER *terms* of *Christian communion* than either *Christ* or his *Apostles* ever made or

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\* Art. XX. and Can. XXVII, XXIX, XXX.

decreed ; and to have authority in controversies of faith.

This high and important power she sovereignly exerts ; You, as her zealous advocate, endeavour to support her in it ; and charge all the *Dissenters* as guilty of a very crying and dangerous *sin* in not submitting thereto. The *Dissenters*, I have told you, will readily own the charge, and return immediately to your Church, if you will gratify them in these two most reasonable requests, 1. Tell them plainly, WHO, and WHAT *it is*, you mean by the CHURCH ? And, 2. Prove it, to have *this power* vested in it by GOD.

Your advocates for *Church Power*, I know, love always to deal in *generals* ; and will twist a thousand ways rather than *explain* their scheme, and be forced to *speak out* : But you, Sir, being a gentleman of singular intrepidity ; and affecting to do things in, what you call, a *soldierly manner*, when your late *Appendix* came forth, protesting to treat expressly of *Church-power, and in whom lodged* ; I hoped to see the point, all disguises apart, openly and frankly handled ; and that a certain judgment might now be formed what your sentiments were. But, alas, vain were these hopes ! Not all the invitations and provocations I have used, can draw you from the darkness where you artfully lurk. Though the regard you owe to *truth, to justice, to the souls* of your *dissenting* brethren, and to your own *reputation*, most strongly obliged you to it : yet you have not, durst not honestly and fairly tell us—WHO *the persons are* whom GOD hath trusted with this power ; nor have produced the least shadow of a *charter* from Heaven, investing them with it.

In most manifest contradiction, indeed, to our *constitution* ; our *laws* ; our *articles* and *canons*, to which you have solemnly sworn and subscribed ; and even to your *very SELF* (as I shall presently shew) you continue to affirm—“ That this power “ is NOT AT ALL *in the civil Magistrate* ; that “ he hath declared and recognised it *not* to be in “ himself ; but is solely in the *Pastors* and *Governors* of the Church.”—But when I once and again press and provoke you to say, who these *Governors* and *Pastors* are—Are they the *Archbishops* ; or the *Bishops* ; or the *Deans* and *Chapters* of every diocese ; or the *Priest* in every parish ; or the *Clergy* met in *convocation* ?—You are four, and will not answer. No, if *Dissenters* must have these knotty points solved, let them seek it from other hands.—

But what idea, Sir, will *the public* form of a *Scholar*, a *Divine*, a some-time *Fellow* of a learned *College*, arraigning us before his bar, as guilty of *high crimes* in not submitting to *Church-power* ; writing tract upon tract to persuade and reduce us to it ; coming forth with an *Appendix* professing to treat expressly of *Church-power*, and in whom lodged ; and yet, with all this parade, not capable of being induced to say—*who it is* he means by these *Pastors* and *Governors*, to whom, under peril of everlasting damnation, we are bound to submit.

I observe, you rank yourself with *the Learned*, and claim *precedence* amongst them.—“ *I, and “ another learned gentleman\**.” (*Ego, & Rex meus*) But will not the *Learned* disclaim you ; and treat your lucubrations as an egregious impertinence ;  
who

\* Appen. page 37.

who can thus double and evade, and meanly refuse to speak to the one single point, on which they all see the whole controversy turns? Must not all your pretended charity, and lamentation over our *straying souls*, appear to an high degree ridiculous, and perfect grimace? *Dissenters* dangerously sin in rejecting a power ordained by *Almighty GOD*: They profess themselves ready to yield it submission, if shewn where it is: Mr. *White*, their pretended friend, knows the grand secret; but no prayers can wrest it from him; he is close and demure; and leaves them to wander on, and sin, and perish in the dark.

But to examine your romantic scheme, as far as conjecture can pick it out.—The Church's *Pastors and Governors* are ALONE possessed, you say, of this power. By its *Governors*, 'tis presumed, you mean its *Bishops*; and by *Pastors*, its *Priests*. Every parish *Priest* then, (your good SELF, Sir, amongst the rest) and every *Bishop* of this land, is vested with this high power: viz. a power of *decreeing OTHER rites and ceremonies* in divine worship, and of *injoining OTHER terms of Christian communion*, than either CHRIST or his *Apostles* decreed or injoined; and of *pronouncing AUTHORITATIVELY in controversies of faith*. This, you will note carefully, is the power in dispute betwixt us. This the power which your Church exerts: This the Power you claim for her: and which you affirm is vested *solely*, (if I understand your scheme) in its *Bishops and Priests*.

But, pray, give me leave to ask — How do they possess it! *separately* or *conjunctly*? It must be one of these. Has every *priest* within his parish, and every *Bishop* within his diocese, a right to exercise this power, *separately* and *apart* from others?

Or,

Or, must they assemble in common *council*, and by joint *suffrage* and *consent* issue forth their determinations; to which the consciences of all the faithful are bound to submit? Not *separately* and *apart*, 'tis presumed you will say, but in *convocation* convened.

Accordingly, you lay, I observe, a mighty stress upon the CONVOCATION'S *consent* to the Act of Uniformity, and the present established forms; and seem to represent *this* as that which alone gave *authority* to both; and that as long as this *consent* of the *convocation* was withheld (as for a considerable time it was) so long the reformation "was a  
 " measure not quite *canonical* nor *ecclesiastically* right  
 " —That it was a going a little awry into some  
 " *illegal* or *extra-legal* ways—That the King's  
 " supremacy, on that occasion, was raised to an  
 " *undue height*, and such as *ought not* to be drawn  
 " into example at other times—That most, if  
 " not all, the reviews and alterations which have  
 " been since made, have been made by the *Bishops*  
 " and *Clergy*, in, or by the authority, or with the  
 " concurrence of the *Convocation* (your great mis-  
 " take, here, you will presently see) and if our  
 " Governors shall at any time think fit to subject  
 " it, to any other alterations or reviews, you will  
 " not suffer yourself to doubt, but they will be  
 " made by *ecclesiastical* and even *synodal* authority,  
 " before the *civil sanction* be added to them \*."

The authority of the *Convocation* is, I see, the *phantom* that haunts your mind, and has *distorted* strangely your thoughts, on this subject of *Church-power*. I will candidly endeavour your illumination

\* Append. pages 8, 9.

tion on this point ; as I have the satisfaction to hope, I have, not without good effect, attempted it on some other.

Before you had taken on you, Sir, to write about *Church-power*, you ought to have known— That, by the constitution and laws of *England*, the *Convocation* is really no part of its *Government* ; no branch of its *ruling-powers* ; has no share of its *legislative* authority at all. To be amply convinced of this, I shall lead you to authorities which you will have no *countenance* nor *power*, however strong your *inclination* may be, to contest. To some great ones, in the *law*, you have already been directed\*, which you have (and with good reason) *not* presumed to dispute. Turn your attention, now, to some of your own *Bishops*, the ornament, the supports, the glory of your Church : Who were honoured with the first rank among those *Pastors* and *Governors*, with whom *alone* you declare *Church-power* is lodged.

A gentleman of your erudition hath, no doubt, heard, at least, of the writings of those venerable names *Burnet*, *Kennet*, *Nicholson*, *Hedy*, and particularly *Wake*, your late excellent Archbishop, on this subject of the *Convocation*.

A due attention to their learned *researches* on this point, will effectually ease your mind of the errors it labours under. From the *last* of these great persons, I shall present you with a few *extracts*, to set right your misapprehensions as to the real constitution and nature of your *Church* ; which you seem (excuse my freedom)-extremely unacquainted with, and not at all to understand.

T

\* Dissent. Gent. 1 Let. page 10.

To root up, and destroy for ever, the dangerous absurdity of *two* independent powers (i. e. the power you are claiming for your *Pastors* and *Governors*, independent of the *Civil Magistrate*) the wisdom of our legislature hath enacted and decreed, “ by the statute 25 *Henry VIII.* called the “ *Act of Submission.* 1st. That the *Convocation* “ should from thenceforth be assembled only “ by the *King’s writ.* 2dly. That it should make “ no *canons* or *constitutions* but by virtue of the “ *King’s licence*, first given them, so to do. 3dly. “ That having agreed on any *canons* or *constituti-* “ *ons*, they should yet neither *publish* nor *execute* “ them, without the *King’s confirmation* of them. “ Nor, 4thly. By *his authority*, execute any, but “ with these limitations ; that they be neither a- “ gainst the *King’s prerogative*, nor against any “ *common* or *statute law* ; nor, finally, in any other “ respect contrary to the *customs* of the realm.” Vid. *Wake’s Appeal*, &c. page 4.

The learned *Metropolitan* further informs you † — “ That *Christian Princes* have a right ; and “ from *Constantine* the Great, down through suc- “ ceeding ages, have exerted the right ; not only “ of exercising authority over *ecclesiastical* persons, “ but to interpose in ordering *ecclesiastical* affairs. “ — That when the *Civil Magistrate* advised “ with the *Clergy* about calling a *Synod*, it was “ not looked upon as a matter of *right* ; but that “ he often called *Synods* without such advice : “ And when the *Bishops* have earnestly desired a “ *Council*, and it has been refused by the *Magis-* “ *trate*, they have submitted, and not reckoned “ them-

† *Wake’s Authority of Christian Princes*, &c. page 10.

“ themselves to have a *right* to meet without his  
 “ leave—When a *Synod* was resolved on, the  
 “ *Prince* determined or allowed, the time and  
 “ place of meeting, and what *persons* should come  
 “ to them—When *Synods* are assembled, he  
 “ shews, the *Civil Magistrate* has a right to pre-  
 “ scribe the *matters* on which they are to debate ;  
 “ as also the *manner* and *method* of their proceed-  
 “ ings in them ; and, if he pleases, to sit in, and  
 “ preside over them ; or to appoint his *Commission-*  
 “ *er* to do it in his stead. (Thus *Ld. Cromwell*,  
 “ a Lay-person, sat in, and presided over the *Con-*  
 “ *vocation* for the King, *Hen. VIII.*) They can-  
 “ not *dissolve* themselves, nor *depart* from Coun-  
 “ cil but by the King’s *licence*—Their defini-  
 “ tions are *no further obligatory*, than as ratified  
 “ and confirmed by *CIVIL Authority*.—That  
 “ the *Prince* is not obliged to confirm whatever  
 “ the Clergy shall think fit to determine ; but has  
 “ a power of annulling and rejecting what they  
 “ have done ; to alter or improve, to add to or  
 “ take from it.—He denies the *inherent* autho-  
 “ rity of the Church to make any synodical *autho-*  
 “ *ritative* definitions ; or that the sitting of *Con-*  
 “ *vocations* is any right of the Church.—And  
 “ says, that as even the King’s *licence* cannot give  
 “ the *Convocation* authority to promulge or exe-  
 “ cute any *canons*, but what are agreeable to the  
 “ *customs* and *laws* of the realm ; so he ought to  
 “ submit them to the examination of his Council  
 “ *learned in the law* ; by them to be *advised*, whe-  
 “ ther they are thus agreeable, before he confirms  
 “ them\*.”

\* *Wake’s Authority of Chris. Pr. &c.* page 130.

So that the *Convocation*, you see, are not so much as the King's *supreme Council* in *ecclesiastical* affairs. There are *others* who are to judge *after* them ; to sit as a check *above* them ; to inspect, controul, approve or reject the *advice* they give the King ; even in his Council *learned in the law*.

The Archbishop adds——“ That as the King has power, without a *Convocation*, to make and publish such injunctions as HE *shall think* the necessities of the Church to require, and to *command* the observance of them : So he may, with the advice and consent of his Parliament much more, ( i. e. I apprehend, he may with *without*, much more *with*, their advice and consent) make what *ecclesiastical laws* he shall think fitting, for the discipline of the Church ; and may alter, correct, disallow, or confirm the resolutions of the *Convocation* according to *his own liking* †.”

And, finally, he gives a list of a great number of *alterations*, *reviews*, and *reformations* in ecclesiastical matters, which have been done entirely by **SELECT COMMITTEES**, without any advice or consent of a *Convocation* ( through all the several reigns of *Hen. VIII. Edw. VI. Q. Eliz. James I. and Charles I.* ) When the King having first appointed a certain number of *Bishops* and *Clergymen* (whether they shall be *Clergy* or *Laity*, or what number of *each*, is intirely in *his* choice) to consider *what may be fit* to be ordered, then enjoins it by his *royal authority*. And adds (directly contrary to what you assert) That **AFTER THIS MANNER,**

† Wake's authority of *Chris. Pr. &c.* page 136.

WER, viz. by *select committees*, (and Acts of Council) the reformation of the Church of England was in great measure carried on, and its *most important affairs* transacted\*. And in his *Appendix*, No. VII. he presents you with a long catalogue of *canons ; injunctions ; new translations of the Bible ; articles of religion set forth ; explications made of them ; examinations of ceremonies ; homilies composed ; prayers sent to the Archbishop, with orders for their public use ; visitations of the whole kingdom, with an intire suspension of episcopal jurisdiction ;* (The *Visitors* were two gentlemen, a Civilian, a Register, and only one *Divine*. *Echard's Hist. Eng.* page 300.) *new offices of communion ; other offices reformed ; new catechism drawn up, &c. &c.*—All done by *private commissions*, or otherwise, out of CONVOCATION †. So that the *Clergy in Convocation* have not the least ground to *claim as a RIGHT to be consulted in any future reformations or reviews*. If the government shall indulge

\* *Wake's Auth. of Chr. Pr. &c.* page 256. The King, says *Fuller*, would not intrust the *Convocation* with a power to meddle with matters of *Religion*, from a just jealousy he had of the ill affection of the major part thereof ; who, under the *fair rind* of Protestant profession, had the *rotten core of Romish superstition*. It was therefore conceived safer for the King to rely on the ability and fidelity of some *select confidants*, cordial to the cause of *Religion*, than to adventure the same to be discussed and decided by a suspicious *Convocation*. *Cb. Hist.* Book VII. page 421.

† *Whether ?* And in *what method*, our present Governors may think proper to attempt any further *reviews*, I presume not to guess : But, perhaps may be allowed to say, That whoever knows the real *History of English CONVOCATIONS* ; and observes the *narrow and bigotted spirit ; the petulant, censorious, uncatholic, and rigid temper*, which has ever generally prevailed *there* ; especially, in its inferior members ; will indulge but faint hopes of *reformation* from that quarter.

indulge them with *leave* to assemble, and to give their sentiments on these things, it is to be gratefully received, as a matter of *grace*, not of *right*; and to be used with due humility and deference to the *ROYAL Judgment*; in which the *SUPREME ecclesiastical Wisdom* is by our constitution declared, and by all our Clergy acknowledged to reside.

By this time, no question, Sir, you have an humbler and juster sense of the *power* of a *Convocation*; and perceive it to be no part of our *government*, and that it has no *legislative* power or authority in these realms.

Your favourite *fantastic* scheme, then, “ of *Pastors and Governors having the SOLE POWER as to Church-matters; and that the Civil Magistrate has NONE AT ALL\**,” is really, you now see, of very *dangerous* and *important* consequence; actually subversive of our present happy *constitution*; wrests from the *King and Parliament* an high branch of their *prerogative*; impeaches their *supreme authority*; attempts to set up *another* legislative power; and is a deep *indignity* cast upon our *reformation* from *POPERY*, which was effected *ONLY* by the *Civil Magistrate*, your boasted *Pastors and Governors* struggling vehemently against it. Are *these* the returns you make for the indulgence of that government, by whose favour you live at ease upon the labour and sweat of others! —

The times of *Hen. VIII. Edw. VI. and Queen Eliz.* you say, were extraordinary times, and the *regal* supremacy was then raised to an *undue height*. But, see how the case stood, when the Church was in the zenith of its prosperity and power! I mean at the passing the *Act of Uniformity* of *Charles II.*

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• I Def. pages 18, 19.

In the preamble of which you have the sentiments of the legislature, and of that your *most religious King*, which recites to this effect—“ That the  
 “ book of *Common-prayer*, &c. having been in-  
 “ joined to be used by the statute 1st *Elizab.* and  
 “ since that by the neglect of Ministers, great in-  
 “ conveniences and schisms having happened ; for  
 “ prevention thereof, and for settling the peace of  
 “ the Church, &c. the King had granted his com-  
 “ mission to some Bishops and other Divines to  
 “ review the *Common-prayer-book*, and to prepare  
 “ such alteration and advice as they thought fit to  
 “ offer. And that afterward his Majesty having  
 “ called a Convocation, and having been pleased  
 “ to *authorize* and *require* them to review the same  
 “ book, and make such alterations as to them  
 “ should seem meet, and to exhibit and present  
 “ the same to his Majesty, for his further *allow-*  
 “ *ance* or *confirmation* ; and the same having been  
 “ done ; his Majesty hath *duly considered*, and fully  
 “ *approved* and *allowed* the same ; and recom-  
 “ mended to this present Parliament that the same  
 “ shall be *appointed* to be used in all Churches,—  
 “ Whereupon it is enacted &c.”

See here, how poor a figure *the power* of your *Convocation* makes when shining in its highest glory ! The Clergy are *authorized* and *required* by the King to propose alterations, in Church ceremonies and forms, for HIS CONSIDERATION and ALLOWANCE, as *Supreme Head* of the Church. The King *approves* and *allows* such of them as he thinks fit ; but in order to their having power at all to oblige the members of the Church, the King recommends them to his Parliament ; who turn them into a *law*. And thus only they acquire all their  
 their

their *obliging* force. What, now, did the Clergy in all this affair ! but give their advice. Which might have been taken, or refused : So Lawyers, incapable of voting in Parliament, are often *consulted* in forming and making laws ; shall they therefore set up for a share in the *legislative* power ; and exalt themselves from *subjects* to be *rulers* in the state ?

And when a most happy *alteration* was, afterward, made in this law, by the *Act of Toleration* ; which so deeply affected the forms and ceremonies of the Church, with regard to a great number of the subjects of this kingdom, pray, tell me ! What hand had the *Convocation* and *Clergy* in that important *Church-affair* ?

And as forms of *worship* ; so matters of *faith* are enacted into laws, judged and punished, entirely by the *Civil Magistrate*, without any intervention or assistance of the *Clergy*. By the statute of 9th and 10th of *William III.* it is enacted, — That if any person shall be convicted in the Courts of *Westminster*, or at the *Affizes*, of denying any one of the persons of the *Trinity* to be GOD : Or, of maintaining that there are more GODS than one : Or, of denying the *Christian* religion, or the authority of the *Scriptures* ; he shall forfeit—be imprisoned, &c. — Here again, you see the jurisdiction and decision of the great *articles of faith* declared by Parliament to be in the *Lawyers*.

And as to the punishment of *vice* and *irreligion*, the statutes against drunkenness, cursing, swearing, the breach of the sabbath, &c. sufficiently shew that the Parliament and Common-law Courts have taken to themselves the cognizance of *these*. And what now becomes of your *ecclesiastical* dominion

and *canonical* settlement for above 200 years? When it has been, and might in innumerable other instances be shewn, that the King and Parliament have all along claimed and exerted a *supreme* right in matters of religion, faith, worship, and practice. Your *ecclesiastical Courts*, indeed, are sometimes permitted to take cognizance of some of these matters; but then it is to be remembered, 1. That these are the *King's Courts*; to be held only in his name. 2. The *Judges* in these Courts often are, always may, and (say many of your most learned Clergy) ought *ever* to be *Laymen*. And, 3. The King, whenever he pleases, stays their proceedings; grants *prohibitions*; takes causes out of them, and removes them into his Courts of common law. — What, now, is become of the *original, radical JURISDICTION*, which you claim for your *Pastors* and *Governors*!

But to return to the *Convocation*, — Our excellent *Constitution*, you see, hath with great sagacity circumscribed its power, and reduced it to a mere shadow, or just nothing at all. *Ecclesiastical Synods*, from the famous *Council of Nice*, down to the not-famous *Convocation of L—n*, anno 1717. sad experience hath shewn to have been little else than the pests and troublers of mankind; mints where pernicious *errors* have received the stamp of authority, and been sent out to corrupt the Church, and to set the world in flames; and that, for the most part, they have been *conventions* of interested, ambitious, factious and angry men; who under a fair pretence of *zeal for the Lord of Hosts*, have been driving furiously and foully on in pursuit of worldly views; and with an affectation of being thought *contending earnestly for the faith*, have been only contending, like the *Disciples*, who should be  
*greatest*

*greatest among themselves.* This the wisdom of our *Legislature* knew to have been the *manner*, the *practice* immemorial, of ecclesiastical *Synods*; and therefore guarded, with great discretion, against the portentous evil; denied them all *legislative* power; subjected them entirely to the authority of the *Civil Magistrate*; and thus hardly restrained them from throwing, as they have often done, the world into confusion; and filling the Church with everlasting debates.

And now, Sir, having thus laboured your edification, in a point of high importance, where, 'tis certain, you greatly needed it; by this time you begin to see, not the *futility* only, but the *presumption*, and the real *danger* of your scheme. That it is a suggestion, as *groundless*, as it is *ungrateful* and *ill-timed*, that our reformation was not effected in a *legal* and *right* manner. You see, that, by representing the *Magistrate* as having no power in *Church-matters*, you undermine that *glorious structure*; betray it into *Popish* hands; and subvert the very foundation of your own admired Church: And that by laying so *essential* a stress, as you do, upon the *Convocation's* assent to the Act of *Uniformity*, by which the *reformation* and the *present Church* was established, you suggest to a crafty *Jesuit* unanswerable matter to insult and expose both. For, pray, the *Jesuit* will ask, How was that *assent* of the Convocation obtained? Was it not by the *Magistrates* depriving the holy *Bishops*; and *thrusting out* the Church's *Pastors* from those seats, and from that authority which GOD had given them therein? And can the *assent* of a Convocation thus *packed* by the *Magistrate*, make that *legal*, *canonical*, and *ecclesiastically right*, which

was before illegal, uncanonical, and ecclesiastically wrong.

Besides, to talk of the *Convocation's Assent* and *Concurrence*, is language altogether *unconstitutional*, and has a great deal too *assuming* and *presumptuous* an air. *Submission*, Sir, and *obedience* is all the *Convocation* was *capable* of giving. The *King* may give his *assent*, and either *House of Parliament* may give their *assent*, and thereby confirm and give authority to any *Act*: But should the *Magistrates* of a country town talk of *FURTHER confirming* it by *THEIR concurrence* and *assent*; which would they most provoke, your indignation or your mirth? And yet, the *corporation* of a *Cornish burrough*, Sir, has as much *right*, by our constitution, to talk of *ratifying* by their *assent* any law of the *Crown*, as the *Convocation* itself\*.

And hence, by the way, you see the extreme vanity of your imagination——“ That the Civil  
“ *Magistrate*, by *ratifying* the *XXth article*, hath  
“ recognized and owned *the power* to be not in  
“ *himself*, but in *the Church* †”——i. e. as you are pleased to understand it, in *the Clergy*. By what *Logic*, Sir, do you make *the Church*, in that article, to mean *the Clergy*? Are not the *LAITY* also an *essential* part of the *Church*? Does not the very preceeding article, *XIXth*, expressly declare they are? Defining the *Church*——*to be a congregation*

\* The *Convocation* never gave their assent at all to the *articles of religion* in *K. Edward's reformation*. And all the assent they ever gave to *Q. Elizabeth's* (as far as I can find) was the setting forth the *articles*, which was not done till *January 1563*: Whereas the reformation was established by the first of *Eliz. January 1558*. Vid. *Fuller's Ch. Hist.* B. IX. pages 52 and 72.

† I Def. page 17. Appen. page 5.

*gation of faithful men*—But, would you impute to the *Magistrate* so tame, so absurd, so ridiculous a part, as publickly to *disown* himself to have any power in Church-matters : Yea to *deny* himself to belong to the *congregation of the faithful* ! Yes ; with astonishment be it seen, this is what you are not ashamed openly to impute to him. “ For the “ King and Parliament, you say, have plainly *dis-* “ *owned* any such power, as we are speaking of, “ in themselves ; and recognized it to be in the “ Church, and no body imagines, that by the “ Church they mean *themselves* \*.”—But if by declaring it to be in *the Church*, they have *dis-* “ *owned* it to be in *themselves* ; they have, thereby, also *disowned* themselves to be of the *congregation of the faithful* ; for *this congregation* they declare to be *the Church*, to whom *this power* belongs. Besides ; this is supposing *the KING* to *disown* and *give up* a power which the whole Legislature hath solemnly vested in him ; and which every *Bishop* and *Ecclesiastic* in the kingdom (till the time of K. *William*) did swear, that he believed in his conscience to be true, under the penalty of a *premunire*, viz. “ That the King is the only *supreme GOVER-* “ *NOR* of this realm ; as well in all *spiritual* or “ *ecclesiastical* things or causes, as *temporal* ; and “ that they will assist and defend him in such ju- “ *risdiction* and authority.”

See, now, the hopeful state to which you have brought the *Civil Magistrate* ! You have made him to divest himself of *all power* as to Church matters, and to recognize it to be in *you*, the *Clergy*. He is now, therefore, in all these affairs, to be subject to *you* his *HIGHER POWERS*. You have autho-  
rity

\* I. Defence page 17.

rity from GOD to make *laws*, and to prescribe *rites*, which Kings and Parliaments are to obey: *To bind your Kings in Chains*, spiritual, ecclesiastic chains—Rise up, O ye Kings, to these your *Pastors* and *Governors*! be instructed, and pay homage to their *spiritual* decrees! This doctrine was the happy engine, which hath often lifted *humble* Bishops, to the *high* places of the earth; hath made *Kings* bow down before them; and subjected *Emperors* to their feet.

*Ecclesiastical affairs*, Sir, you are too sagacious not to know, take in a mighty compass; and very naturally comprehend the *principles*, the *manners*, the whole *social* and *moral* conduct, of those over whom these holy Pastors are to *watch*. Thus the *Priests of the Church* have exalted themselves, for many ages, to be *Princes of the world*; and by claims of *spiritual* power, have hooked in enormous shares of *temporal* grandeur and wealth. But, is this a *proper time*, think you, to revive and to press pretensions of this kind? Thank Heaven, that darkness is passed! The light of Christian *liberty* dawns gloriously upon us; and exposes all such *fanatic* claims to just scorn and reproach.

But——I press you no farther. —You begin to relent. Having urged you with the weight of your XXXIVth *article*, which you have frequently subscribed; and of your XXXth *Canon* to which you have solemnly sworn; both which declare positively, *your Church ceremonies to be ordained by the authority of the CIVIL MAGISTRATE*; you are, at length, constrained to own their force. But, without the honour of retracting your former dangerous assertion, “*That the Magistrate has no such power at all.*” You are now brought to acknowledge

\* I Def. page 18, 19.

knowledge——“ That the truth of the case is, “ all our ceremonies, and forms of worship, are “ ordained, as they ought to be, BOTH by eccle- “ *siastical* and CIVIL authority \*.” Honestly said at last ! Well, if by *civil* authority, then the Magistrate has *some power* in ordering *Church-matters*; which you have all along denied him; and then the power is not vested *solely* in the Pastors and Governors, as with great pertinacity you have insisted it was. *Render then to Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar’s*; and lift not up your heel against the hand by whose bounty you are so liberally fed.

You are now willing, I find, to compromise the matter, and to go shares with the *Magistrate*, in the enjoyment of this power; and presume to talk of an “ ALLIANCE, and of TERMS on which “ it stands, betwixt the State and the Church †.” This ALLIANCE, Sir, is a mere *phantom*, conjured up by the strength of a late warm imagination, to preserve at least a *shadow* of its lost power to the Church †. Neither our *history*, nor our *laws* know any thing at all of it. The nature of our *constitution* utterly disowns it; and avows the Church to be *not an ALLY*, but a SUBJECT to the state. An ALLIANCE supposes *independency* in the powers betwixt whom it stands. But, by the famous *Act of Submission*, the Church hath resigned all pretensions to *Independency*; and giving up its powers into the hands of the State. The truth of the case is this. A few centuries past, the Church was found guilty of a dangerous *rebellion* and *high-treason* against the state: Whilst it lay

\* Appen. page 13.

† Ibid.

‡ See a late excellent *Comments* on WARBURTON’S *Alliance*, &c.

lay thus at mercy, as a criminal before its Judge; its pardon and life were given it, *upon the TERMS* of its resigning all claims of *independency*, and submitting itself thenceforward to the will of the Prince. But behold! these *terms of submission*, you have now, it seems, refined into *terms of alliance*; and the Church from a *pardoned criminal*, now claims to be a *rival power*; and to have its rights and jurisdiction *independent* of the state. “*Our ceremonies and forms of worship are ordained by*” ECCLESIASTICAL, *as well as* CIVIL *authority.*” But these, alas! are but illusions which mock your heated fancy; for *ecclesiastical* authority, as distinguished from *civil*, you may rest assured, there is none. Ask your learned *Bishops*, and they will utterly disclaim it. Ask your able *Lawyers*; and they will tell you, that you incur the danger of a *premunire* by presuming to exert any one single act of authority of this kind. Ask all the knowing members of the *Convocation* itself, and they will answer, with one voice, ‘*Tis not in us—*—AUTHORITY *we have none.* Yea; Ask the meanest *novice* in the history of the *reformation*, and of the *establishment* of your Church; and he will presently acquaint you, that your *ceremonies and forms* were NOT *ordained* by BOTH *ecclesiastical and civil authority*; but by *civil authority ONLY*: The *Ecclesiastics* in *Convocation*, and in the *two Universities*, obstinately *refusing* to give their *Concurrence*; and even entering their very solemn and zealous protest against it.

But, you are still harping that the *Convocation* at last *gave their assent*. Pray! how did they give it? Not till they had been first *garbled* and *packed* by the *Magistrate*: All the *Bishops*, save one, *exiled,*

exiled, imprisoned, turned out, by his authority; and *new*, according to his taste, put into their room; besides, the invincible artillery of *Deaneries, Prebends, snug and fat Livings* played strongly upon the inferior *Clergy*: Many *Dignitaries* amongst these, also, being *deprived* by the civil power. And, is it strange that the *Convocation*, thus powerfully attacked, made no long resistance; but yielded, however *reluctant*, to what the *Parliament* had done\*? But their *concurrence*, I must again tell you, whether *free* or *forced*, gave, and could give, *no AUTHORITY* to the *new establishment*; because, by our constitution, they had not the least grain of *AUTHORITY* to give. Suppose the *Convocation* had refused their concurrence to that act of the *Legislature*; would the law not have had its force? You dare not affirm it. Suppose, again the *Clergy* had established any *new forms* without an *Act of Parliament*; would the people have been obliged to yield obedience to them? Neither durst you assert this.

However, not to discourage good beginnings, I will take you where you are.—We are come, then to this issue. That the *civil Magistrate* has power to ordain *ceremonies and rites of worship*, and to make *new terms* of Christian communion; and that the things of this kind which are done in the

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\* Hear whateven *Echard*, who was never suspected of *Partiality* against the *Church*, says—“Fourteen *Bishops*, twelve *Deans*, twelve *Archdeacons*, fifteen *Heads of Colleges*, fifty *Prebendaries*, and eighty *Rectors*, were deprived by the *QUEEN*. But it was strongly believed, that of the rest, the greatest part complied against their consciences; and would have been ready for another turn, if the *Queen* had died while that race of *Incumbents* lived, and the next successor had been of another religion.” *Echard's Hist. Eng.* page 330.

Church of England, are done, at least in part, by *CIVIL authority*. This is what you now grant. But the *question* then returns, with unanswerable weight upon you—WHO gave him *this power*? WHAT *charter* has lodged it in him? Not, surely, the *Scriptures*; the only charter of the *Christian Church*. For all the *power or authority* which the *Scriptures* give the *Magistrate*, relates only, and can relate but, to things of a *civil nature*; and cannot at all relate to things of *worship and religion*. This never can be contested, because the *Magistrate* was, at the time, when the *Scriptures* were wrote, and for near three hundred years after, *Ir-fidel and Pagan*. St. Paul, therefore, by commanding us to be *subject to the higher powers*; and to *obey Magistrates, for conscience sake, because they are the Ministers of GOD, for good*—does not in the least, require our obedience to their decrees as to *ceremonies and forms of worship*; or our *conformity* to their establishments, in things of a *religious nature*. No, St. Paul himself and all the *Apostles* were very zealous *Nonconformists*. The grand scope of all their labours, their preaching; their lives was to persuade and draw men off from the *established forms of worship*; and to convince them that, in these affairs, there was ONE *King* only, and ONE *Lord* to whom their homage *alone* was due: Even JESUS, who by his sufferings had merited this high honour, and to whom *alone* GOD has commanded that, in things of religion, *every knee shall bow*.

Here, then, I again call upon and provoke you to tell me—WHO gave the *civil Magistrate* this authority in *religious matters*?—You are *silent*, and cannot say—Well, then, if by the command of *Almighty GOD*, and by the original

constitution of the *Christian Church*, he hath *none*; then, the subjects of JESUS CHRIST are under no obligation to obey his injunctions, in things of a *religious* nature; consequently, are in no fault in *dissenting* from established forms; and consequently, your censures of them, as *great SINNERS* for so doing, are extremely rash and uncharitable; for which it becomes you, to be humbled greatly before GOD, and to ask pardon of *men*.

See now, the unhappy *pinch* to which you are reduced—If you say the *Magistrate* has authority to decree *ceremonies*, and *forms of worship*, to make *new terms* of communion, and to determine *controversies of faith*—you then sin against the undoubted *rights* and *constitution* of the CHRISTIAN Church; against GOD, against JESUS CHRIST, against *reason* and *common sense*. But if you say that he has not, you then sin against the Church of *England*, against its *laws* and *constitution*: You are a *Dissenter*, at least, in principle; but, perhaps, have not *fortitude* enough to sacrifice, what you call, your *snugness* by professing openly your *dissent*.

Having thus considered the former part of your *self-repugnant* scheme. 1. That the *Magistrate* has not: And, 2. That he has the authority which he claims and exercises in your Church: I should now proceed to the other, *viz.* That it is lodged in the *Church's Pastors and Governors*. But, here, to the surprize of every attentive reader, you content yourself with *asserting*, without paying him the compliment of so much as *attempting* to prove them, possessed of this power. The BIBLE, I thought you knew, to be the *religion of Protestants*; and the SCRIPTURES, the *on'y rule* of their practice and faith. But behold! a *Protestant*, a *Divine*,  
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claim-

claiming an high *power* for his Pastors and Governors ; a *power* in which the peace and purity of the Christian Church are *essentially* concerned ; and yet not able, nor when called upon *pretending*, to produce one single *text of Scripture* in support of this claim.

I have pointed you to several express *commands* of the *sacred law*, which directly FORBID and CONDEMN this pretended *power* ; have shewn you, that *Christians* are the LORD'S *freed-men*, that they are each for himself, *to study, and search the Scriptures*—*To examine and try the spirits*—*To call no man upon earth MASTER*, and are not *to be called RABBI*, i. e. are neither to *acknowledge*, nor to *claim* any authority over others in things of religion, *because ONE only is our Lawgiver and master, in these things, even CHRIST* ; and all *Christians are brethren*. That though the *Princes of the Gentiles exercise DOMINION over them* ; and they who are great, *exercise AUTHORITY upon them*, it SHALL NOT BE SO AMONGST YOU—What have you replied, Sir, to these plain and direct commands : Have you so much as *attempted* to evade their force ; No : but with conscious *impotence* stand still ; and see this *Scripture-artillery* demolishing the boasted *thrones* of your Pastors and Governors, and beating down the *high places* to which your imagination had raised them, without so much as extending a feeble hand for their support.

From what has been said, on the point of *Church power*, you see with how little reason you plume yourself and gentlemen of the establishment, as the only proper champions to encounter the Church of Rome—“ Upon the head of *Heresy*,  
“ *Schism*,

“ *Schifm, Ordination, Tradition, Church-unity,*  
 “ and *Catholic-communion,* no Protestant is so  
 “ well qualified to write upon these, and so likely  
 “ to do it to the conviction of a papist, as one of  
 “ the Church of *England*; but, to be sure, not a  
 “ *Protestant Dissenter* \*.” What protestant Dis-  
 senters can do on the *Popish* controversy, the *Sal-*  
*ter’s-Hall* lectures will shew to their lasting ho-  
 nour. And in truth; all your mighty champi-  
 ons, *Chillingworth; Hales, Stillingfleet; Middle-*  
*ton, &c.* In all their conflicts with the Church of  
*Rome,* have been ever forced to quit *their own,* and  
 to borrow *our* weapons; and to *these* alone have  
 owed the triumphs they have gained:

*Councils, Fathers, the Church’s power to decree*  
*rites and authority in controversies of faith* — — —  
 are armour in which no Protestant dares look a sa-  
 gacious and learned *Jesuit* in the face. No; but  
 the *sufficiency of Scripture,* and the *right of private*  
*judgment* (our distinguishing and proper princi-  
 ples) are the *only* method of assault before which  
 the *Romish* system immediately falls. These, Sir,  
 if you know any thing of the state of that contro-  
 versy, you must know to have been *the principles*  
 upon which your own learned Doctors have de-  
 fended the reformation; and *the principles* on  
 which alone it is *capable* of defence. But then you  
 are to remember also; that they are *principles* on  
 which the Church of *England* can never possibly be  
 defended; and which; if faithfully and duly fol-  
 lowed, would have brought *Chillingworth,* and  
*Hales,* and *Middleton* amongst us; and would  
 make every *intelligent* and *honest* Protestant, in  
 Z 3. this

this kingdom, a *Dissenter* from the established Church.

For if *the* SCRIPTURE be, indeed a *sufficient and perfect* RULE; what becomes of your *additional splendors* (as you are pleased to call them) and your *improvements* upon Christianity! What, of your Church's POWER to *decree ceremonies and rites*! What, of *sponsors* and the *cross* in Baptism, *kneeling* at the Lord's-supper, *bowing* to the East, &c! of which the SCRIPTURES, the *sufficient and perfect* rule, say not a word. And if the *right*, and the *duty of private judgment* be acknowledged; into what a fume, alas! evaporates the Church's boasted *authority in controversies of faith*! Your learned Doctors themselves felt, and owned, the difficulty of the part they had to act. And 'tis, really pleasant to observe; how, in their attacks upon Dissenters, *Councils* and *Fathers*, *Church-authority* and *Church-power*, the *danger and sin of schism*, &c. are gravely mustered up, and plied warmly upon us. But no sooner does a crafty *Jesuit* come forth armed, *cap a pec*, with weapons of this kind, than away they are all flung! to our quarters they retreat! Then, *the* BIBLE, *the* BIBLE *only is the religion of Protestants*, and every man is to *read*, and to *judge for himself*; then, not those, who *separate* from a Church, that imposes unlawful (unscriptural) terms, are guilty of *schism*; but the Church alone is guilty in *imposing* such terms.

A slight attention will shew you, with how extremely *ill a grace* a Church of England Divine must appear upon the head of *Schism*, *Tradition*, *Church-unity*—Who by the *TRADITIONS of men* (*sponsors*, the *cross*, &c.) hath notoriously made void the *Commandment of GOD* (to receive  
one

one another, but not to doubtful disputations \*.) Who breaks, in a flagrant manner, the UNITY of the *Christian Church*, by setting up NEW terms of fellowship and communion in it; and by casting out such as *Christ* receives into it: And who declares, before the world, against CATHOLIC-COMMUNION, by refusing to admit any to the two sacraments of religion: except, besides what *Christ* and his *Apostles* have ordained, they submit also to some rites which *themselves* have ordained, as improvements upon the plan which the inspired *Apostles* left.———And is this, now, a man to encounter *Romish* emissaries? Must he not go forth with infinite disadvantage, and feel his own weapons turned violently upon himself? But, the *Dissenter*, who stands fast to his distinguishing and proper principles (*sufficiency of Scripture, and right of private judgment*) at once beats them from the strong holds of *Councils* and *Fathers* (where you have been long assaulting, but not able to dislodge them) and makes all their *learned sophistry* fall before the sacred force of the BIBLE and COMMON SENSE. And hence it is, as before observed, that the swarms of unhappy profelytes, which these seducers are said to make, are all drawn from your, not one, that I have ever heard of, from our Churches: Your doctrines and forms too naturally preparing them to take that fatal step.

But it is time that we now quit the subject of *Church-power*. I have treated it the more largely, because it enters into the *essence*, and is the one single point, every person sees, on which the whole controversy turns. Your other two points, the *sa-*  
*cramental*

\* Rom. xiv. 1.

*Sacramental test*, and the *regal supremacy*, I shall dismiss in fewer words.

As to the first, the *sacramental TEST*—I perceive nothing in your *Appendix* which either *merits* or *needs* a particular reply. Only because you still insist, *that as the law now stands, the Priest has a power of repelling evil livers, when they come to receive the Sacrament, as a qualification for a place*; and by this wrong apprehension, are kept from viewing the affair in a light so distasteful as it really deserves; I shall offer a few things for your illumination also here: Presuming, when you see, that *you have not power, in that case, to refuse the CHRISTIAN COMMUNION to the wickedest man living*, you will groan under the disgraceful yoke; and for the honour of *Christianity*, and the ease of your own consciences, will be the first to wish its repeal. Now this is a *point of law*; and has been given against you, by the learned in that profession. And, if you attentively weigh the case, their *opinion* will appear grounded upon reasons of very great and unanswerable strength. Because, if the Priest has a *liberty of DISCRETION* in this case, it is then in his power to deprive the *King* of the services of his loyal and good subjects; as also, to deprive the *subjects* of some of the most valuable favours of the Prince; yea, the *Priest* has then a power to put a *negative*, in many cases, upon the nominations of his *SOVEREIGN* to posts of the highest dignity and importance in the State.

His Majesty appoints a person to some great office in his army, his household, or his fleet; but *the LAW* forbids him *to act* (at least, but for a short time) till he has first taken the *sacramental test*: He comes, therefore, according to *law*, to qualify for his place. No, Sir, answers the Priest;

I say

I say you are a prophane and wicked man, a notorious *evil liver* : I am authorized therefore by the *rubric*, and commanded by the *canon*, to refuse you the *Sacrament* ; and, be assured, I will not give it — So here is the King's commission, the subject's expectations, and the officer's good services, all quashed at once.

But can it enter into an imagination so vague as even *yours*, that our *laws* have put it in the *Priest's* power thus to bar the King's commission to a *General*, an *Admiral*, a *Secretary of State*. Gentlemen who too much merit, perhaps, the character of *evil livers* may, sometimes, by the *royal choice* be appointed to high temporal offices ; and may be capable of discharging them with great advantage to their country, and great honour to themselves. But, must the *Priest's consent* be asked ! at his *discretion* must it lie ! whether the person, whom the *King* hath honoured with an high commission, shall presume to proceed in the execution of his trust ! — Yes, it really thus lies in the *Priest's* power (you will have it) to put a *negative* upon the crown. Without the *Priest's approbation* of him, as being not an *evil liver*, no officer shall presume, nor can be qualified by law, to act.

I congratulate you much, Sir, that you are now even with the *civil Magistrate*. The *Noli Prosequi's* and *Prohibitions* he has granted to stop proceedings in your *ecclesiastical* courts, have been matter of long grievance : Now, you have it in your power to make ample *reprizals* on him. You have now a power, by *LAW*, to judge *after, above*, the King. Tho' his Majesty ever so much *wants* and *desires* the services of a brave officer, you are first to *sit in judgment* on him ; to consider whether he is an *evil liver* ; and according as you pre-

pronounce concerning his *moral character*, he shall, or shall not, be qualified and allowed to act— These, doubtless, are the days, of which blessed *Laud* is said to prophesy! Who *hoped to see the time, when no Jack Gentleman in England should dare to stand covered before the meanest Priest*. The holy *Martyr*, indeed, died unblest with the sight. But, *you* his son and successor in doctrine and spirit, are taking bold strides to reach *Pisgah-top*, from whence to feast your eyes with that *promised happy state*.

I might rest the matter here— and hope you are now convinced of the presumptuous and high nature of *the power* you are thus, publickly, again claiming for the *Priest*: But, to silence for ever all doubts on this head, I will present you with an *authority* of irresistible weight. This is no other than the lower House of *Convocation*, anno 1704; staunch Champions for the Church, you know, as ever honoured the *British Isle*; in their address to the upper House, amongst *Gravamina Cleri* grievances to be redressed, they represent—“ The  
 “ increasing difficulties of the parochial *Clergy*,  
 “ about administering the holy Sacrament indiffe-  
 “ rently to all persons who demand it, in order  
 “ to qualify themselves for office; because they  
 “ see not how they could, in several cases, act  
 “ conformably to the *rubrics* and *canons* of the  
 “ Church, in repelling such persons as were un-  
 “ worthy, and particularly notorious *Schismatics*,  
 “ without exposing themselves to vexatious and  
 “ expensive suits at law\*.” — This was the *con-*  
*struction* which this learned body of *Clergy*, you see, put upon this *law*; but a *construction*, because  
 I had

\* *Tindal's Hist. of Eng. Vol. III. page 684.*

I had made it, which you, blessed with superior light, take upon you to pronounce——“*forced, unnatural, whimsical, unequitable\**.”——Happy 'tis nothing worse!

But, to conclude this point——If, as the law now stands, *the Priest has*, as you affirm, *a power to repel evil livers!* pray! what is the reason that the *rubrics* and *canons*, which so solemnly oblige him to it, are not only, not *faithfully* observed, but most *shamefully* violated, and quite trampled under foot? Why, amongst the swarms of *notorious* evil livers, *Heretics, Blasphemers*, and open *Unbelievers*, who continually come to the LORD'S TABLE, to qualify for a place; do we never hear of *one* rejected by the Priest; What! is there on conscience, no integrity or honour left amongst those who administer this holy rite of religion! seeing the *rubric* requires, and the *canons* oblige to *reject* these evil livers; and the *scandal* of receiving them (both to *Deists* without, and to *Christians* within) is so crying and flagrant; Why, in the *name of GOD*, whose *Ministers* and *Stewards* you profess yourselves to be, are these *enemies* to his government, these *aliens* from his family, these *Dispisers* of his Son, never rejected, but ever tamely received, as *his CHILDREN* to *his TABLE*——Why! but because the Priest *knows* there is a *LAW* which hangs heavily over him, and threatens to punish with severe penalty its breach: And this being the case, he chuses rather to throw himself upon the mercies of *GOD*, than upon the indignation of *man*.

And now, Sir, if with this dreadful and oppressive yoke upon your neck; whilst scoffing *Infidels* laugh,

\* Appen. page 20.

laugh, and discerning *Christians* mourn ; you are easy and well pleased ; and bless yourself, and your Church in the protection of *this law* : All I shall say, at present, is, that I envy not your felicity ; but heartily thank Heaven, I have neither lot nor share in this matter. Only, hear the *word*, which GOD sent by his *Prophet* to certain time-serving *Priests*. Ezek. xlv. 6, 7. *Thou shalt say to the rebellious house ; let it suffice you of all your abominations ; in that you have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it ; even MY HOUSE, when ye offer my bread— they have broken my covenant, because of all your abominations.*

I have said too much on your *first* topic, of *Church-power*, to have either room or occasion to add many things on your *last*, our *constitution in Church and State*. Here, indeed, I observe with pleasure, that amidst the shew you affect to make of confuting my account of the *regal supremacy*, and of our *constitution*, you hardly, in one single instance, presume to contradict it. My account, Sir, was founded upon *fact* and upon *law*. After close examination, I suppose you found it to be so ; and therefore though, to save appearances, you would seem to say something on this subject also ; yet in your whole 14 pages, there is scarce the shew of any opposition to what I had advanced.

As for the *form of speaking* in use amongst us — *Our constitution in Church and State* — That it is really an *impropriety*, as generally understood, I do not at all hesitate (with due submission to the great authorities by whom it is used) again to insist. It is a *form of speaking*, no doubt, drawn from the usage of *Popish* times ; before the *Reformation*  
of

of our religion took place. For *then* there, truly, was a *constitution in Church* distinct from, and independent of our *constitution in state*. The Church had, then, its laws, its rights, its officers and powers, and its sovereign or supreme head, *peculiar* to itself, and *apart* from the state. But, *now*, by the reformation all that *independency* and *distinction* is abolished; it is now become entirely and absolutely a *civil system*; There are *now* no laws in the Church (I mean none of *human* enactment) but what were made by the *civil Magistrate*, and receive all their obligation and authority from him: There are now no *officers* in the Church but what are constituted by the authority and direction of the *Magistrate*, and are all liable to be unmade and deprived again by him — But that our *constitution in Church*, is nothing really, but a *civil* or *parliamentary* constitution; has, with incontestible evidence, been shown in the preceding letters; and is a truth, indeed, so plain, that no intelligent or sober member of your Church will, I apprehend, so much as attempt to deny.

Our *constitution*, therefore, being now changed by the happy *reformation*; so, doubtless, would this *form of speaking* too; but seems to have been retained for reasons of policy, to sooth the *weakness* of those who were then the *weakest* of all the people, and the most averse to the reformation, I mean the *Clergy* \*. With the same condescending

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\* So because 'tis said——*The Lords Spiritual and Temporal*——Will any one therefore plead, that a *Bishop* is of higher rank than a *Duke*? 'Tis no more than giving a Lady the upper place; or, according to the apostolic precept, *honouring the weaker vessel*. What defect of argument does it shew, to lay such stress upon a mere *compliment*!

views, probably, it is still kept in use ; but in real strictness and propriety to talk of our *constitution in Church and State*, is not only to put the *body* before the *head*, the *effect* before the *cause*, the *handmaid* before the *mistress* ; but it is to convey an idea your authorities could not possibly intend to convey, because not founded in truth, *viz.* That the *Church* has a *constitution* distinct from, independent of, yea prior or superior to, our *constitution in State*.—By the way, you will remember also, that the *Presbyterian Church of Scotland* is as *essential, fundamental and unalterable* a part of our *present ecclesiastical CONSTITUTION*, as the *episcopal Church of England* can ever pretend to be.

My account of the **POWER** which our laws and constitution give to the *Kings* and **QUEENS** of this realm, in affairs *ecclesiastical* ; to instruct, over-rule, direct, controul, all the *Archbishops, Bishops, and Priests* of this kingdom, in all their *sacerdotal* and most *spiritual* concerns, &c. you do not pretend to *litigate*, but rather attempt to *vindicate* and *explain*. But you unhappily forget the one grand and material *point*, for which it was introduced ; and to which, above all other, it concerned you to speak ; and that is, to *reconcile* this constitution of the *Church of England*, with the constitution of the *Church of Christ* : And to shew, that *Dissenters* cannot separate from the *one*, without the *danger* and the *high crime* of renting themselves from the *other*. This was what you asserted, and flourished copiously upon ; but are now, I presume, too well instructed to endeavour to support. You now see them, Sir, to be two *distinct* and quite *different* societies : And will be henceforward eased of those *painful* commiserations over  
the

the souls of your *dissenting* brethren, with which your generous mind laboured ; and be terrified no more with direful apprehensions on account of our *Schism*, which seem all your life long to have held you in bondage.

There is a little *unhappy slip*, which, though not quite in place, I shall take notice of here — In page 13. of your *Appendix*, you charge me “ with “ *false play* in citing your XXXIVth *article*, as “ *declaring expressly that your Church ceremonies* “ *were ordained by the civil Magistrate*. And ask “ me — Did you find there any such words ? And yet, with agreeable surprize, I find you either so uncautious, or so honest, as within a few lines, to cite the very words of the *article*, which support, in the strongest manner, the sense I had given ; where *an open and wilful violation of these ceremonies is*, by the *article*, declared to be an *hurting the authority of the CIVIL MAGISTRATE*. Can a violation of these ceremonies violate the *Magistrate's* authority, if by *his authority* they had not been *ordained* ?

But these are small matters, in comparison with what follows. The affair of Mr. *Whiston*, I thought you would gladly have let sleep. The case, to be sure, wrung much : You have been once and again flinging to rid yourself of it ; but the manner in which you now do it, rather sorely wounds than gives you relief. “ You tax me with *mif-* “ *representation*, and with no mean talent that “ way\*.” Yea, have the courage to confront me, with a citation from Bp. *Burnet* to whom I had referred, as supporting my account. But what will the world say, Sir ! How will all your *friends*,  
A a 2 if

\* Appen. Page 39.

if not your *heart*, reproach you! and the *Learned*, amongst whom you rank, hold you in great derision! When they see you undertake to give the public an account of his Lordship's *history* of that case; but, either carelessly overlooking, or wilfully suppressing, the *material* and *important* passages, which clearly and irrefragably support my account.

“ His Lordship, say you, \* reports it thus —  
 “ That it seeming doubtful, whether the Convocation could, in the first instance, proceed against a man for heresy; and it being certain that their proceedings, if not warranted by law, might involve them in a *premunire*, the upper House, in an address, *prayed the Queen to ask the opinion of the Judges, and such others as she thought fit*, concerning these doubts, that they might know how the law stood in this matter.”  
 Here you stop short with the *Bishop's* narration: having either not *patience* to read, or not *honesty* to write further; and then, with flourish, ask —  
 “ Will these accounts now authorize you to represent, as you do, *the two Houses of Convocation*, as waiting upon her Majesty; and that too to be instructed by *her*, and to learn *her judgment*; and not that neither, how the law stood in relation to their proceedings, but how the gospel stood in relation to the opinions of *Mr. Whiston*, and the mystery of the Trinity? And do you not now perceive your misrepresentation of the case, and that I did not *talk without book*, when I spake of it as a *specimen* of your talent, which, indeed, is not mean that way.”

There

\* Appen. page 38.

There is one thing I here perceive, Sir ; which is, that if you do not *talk without book*, yet when *the book is before you*, you either want *capacity* or *integrity* to make a proper use of it. For besides the *partial* and *maimed* account which you have given of this matter, his Lordship expressly adds the *important passages* which follow ; whence the *public* will please to observe, with how little *fairness* and *truth* you treat this famous case ; and how great is both the *Church's* and *my own* infelicity ; she in having an *advocate*, and I an *opponent*, capable of such dishonourable and low methods of defence.

His Lordship says——“ That by the act of 1st  
 “ of *Elizabeth*, which defined what should be  
 “ judged heresy, *that judgment* was declared to be  
 “ in the *CROWN*——The Bishops in Convocation  
 “ drew out several propositions from Mr. *Whis-*  
 “ *ton's* books, which seemed plainly to be reviv-  
 “ ing of *Arianism*, and censured them as such.  
 “ The lower House ( excepting to one proposition )  
 “ *censured* them in the same manner. This the  
 “ *Archbishop*, being then disabled by the gout, sent  
 “ by one of the *Bishops* to the *QUEEN*, for her  
 “ *assent* ; ( *Page 1194, Approbation* ) who promis-  
 “ ed to *CONSIDER OF IT*. At their ( the Con-  
 “ vocation's meeting next winter, ) no answer  
 “ being come from the *QUEEN*, *two BISHOPS*  
 “ were sent to *ASK it*, and to *receive* her Majesty's  
 “ *pleasure* in it ; but *she* could not tell what was  
 “ become of the paper the *Archbishop* had sent her.  
 “ So an extract of the *censure* was again sent to  
 “ her ; but she *THOUGHT NOT FIT* to send  
 “ *any answer* to it. So *Whiston's* affair slept, and  
 “ all further proceedings against him were stop-  
 “ ped, *since the QUEEN did not CONFIRM*

“ the step that we had made ; tho’ he afterward  
 “ published a large work in four volumes oc-  
 “ tavo\*.”

Here let it be noted. 1. The judgment of what is, or is not, to be treated as *Heresy*, is, by our *apostolic* constitution lodged wholly in the CROWN. The QUEEN, when such wears it, is the *proper*; the *sole* judge, what doctrines and books shall be censured as HERETICAL: What principles and tenets are, or are not, contrary to the holy *ortho-dox* faith.

Note. 2. The two Houses, having extracted several passages from Mr. *Whiston's* books, and censured them as *heretical*†; deputed first one, then two Bishops to wait upon the QUEEN, to ASK her approbation and assent, to receive her Majesty's pleasure in this affair, and to desire her confirmation; without which, their *censure* was of not the least signification or validity in the Church.

3. Upon the receipt of this request the QUEEN, as *sole* Judge, promised to CONSIDER of it. The affair was of great importance, viz. “ What  
 “ the primitive *apostolic* doctrine was concerning  
 “ the *Trinity, Incarnation, Nature and Genera-  
 “ tion of the Logos?* Whether there were three  
 “ persons existing in one undivided substance: Or,  
 “ whether the *Logos* was distinct in essence from  
 “ the

\* *Burnet's* Hist. of his times, Vol. VI. pages 1133, 34, 35, 94. Edit. 12mo.

† The *Archbishops* and *Bishops* in their address to the Queen, say, that Mr. *Whiston* had advanced several DAMNABLE and BLASPHEMOUS assertions against the doctrine and worship of the ever blessed *Trinity*: And, in their *censure*, they earnestly beseech all *Christian* people, by the mercies of CHRIST, to take heed how they give ear to these false doctrines, as they tender the honour and glory of our Saviour, &c.

“ the Father ; not created, nor made, but in an  
 “ ineffable manner, begotten from eternity ? And  
 “ finally, whether the *apostolical constitutions* were  
 “ a genuine and inspired book ; and a true part  
 “ of the sacred canon ?” Her Majesty was now  
 applied to, by her two Houses of *Convocation*, and  
 requested, as **SOLE JUDGE**, to pronounce *authori-*  
*teratively* upon *these points, i. e.* to tell them whe-  
 ther Mr. *Whiston's* doctrine was to be received or  
 rejected ; to be considered as *Heresy*, or not ; in  
 this Church. The **QUEEN**, as became a wise  
*Judge*, refused to pronounce *rashly* : She took time  
 to **CONSIDER** of it ; to weigh sedately in her  
 mind the merits of the cause, lest she should con-  
 demn the innocent.

Note, *The Scriptures*, and the *four first general*  
*Councils*, are the measure *set by law*, to judge of  
*Heresy* : Her Majesty, therefore, being now re-  
 quested by her *Clergy* to judge *authoritatively* in  
 this important case, acted a worthy part in *defer-*  
*ring* her **JUDGMENT**, 'till she had *examined* care-  
 fully *the rule* by which she was to judge.

Observe, 4. After the **QUEEN** had taken time  
*maturely* to **CONSIDER** of these deep and mysteri-  
 ous points, she **THOUGHT NOT FIT** to *send any*  
*answer*. Upon her *Majesty's* **THOUGHTS**, the  
 issue of this great affair is seen absolutely to de-  
 pend. Finally,

'Tis worthy to be observed. 5. That her *Ma-*  
*jesty's* **THOUGHTS** and **JUDGMENT**, on this  
 weighty case, were quite **DIFFERENT** from those  
 of her learned *Bishops* and *Clergy*. They thought  
 Mr. *Whiston's* writings “ contained *damnable* and  
 “ *wicked* doctrines, and earnestly beseech all Chri-  
 “ stian people, by *the mercies of Christ*, to take  
 “ heed how they give ear, &c.” — and judged  
 them

them to deserve a public and solemn *censure* : Her Majesty THOUGHT OTHERWISE. She did not THINK FIT to confirm the Step the Convocation had made. In consequence of which, their proceedings were all stopped ; and the solemn *censure* they had passed with all their earnest *obtestations*, by the mercies of CHRIST, evaporate into air.— This is a fair and true state of the case— What improvements are here made, by the wisdom of later ages, in the primitive *apostolic* plan ! Behold the WOMAN now impowered, not only to teach, but to usurp authority over the man ; over all the Archbishops, Bishops, and Priests of this realm ; to vacate their most solemn censures ; to quash and stop at once their *spiritual* proceedings, in an affair where *blasphemous doctrines*, and *damnable* and *wicked errors*, were bringing danger of everlasting ruin to the souls over whom they watched ! See here, Sir, the *two scales*, that are to try doctrines and opinions in your holy *apostolic* Church : In one, is laid the united judgment of all the Bishops and Clergy in Convocation convened ; in the other, the QUEEN's alone : Lo, the former mounts, and kicks the beam ! The *single* judgment of the QUEEN, in the balance of the Church, weighs more than *that* of all the learned Bishops and Priests of the realm !

And is not this, now, exactly consonant to the account I had given ? “ Is not here, Sir, the very  
 “ comely and edifying sight (at which you ex-  
 “ cept) \* of the two Houses of Convocation wait-  
 “ ing upon the good Queen, to be instructed by  
 “ her Majesty, whether that gentleman's books  
 “ concerning the Trinity were to be condemned,

“ 23

\* Appen. page 37.

“ as heretical or not ? ” Do they tell us, “ you ask, of the Synod laying their censure before the Queen, to have her judgment upon it ? ” Yes—“ And of their waiting upon a WOMAN, who could be supposed to know as little of this matter as of the motion of the stars, to learn *from her mouth*, what the Church is to believe, and what to reject, as to this great mystery of faith ? ” Yes ; you see, with your own eyes, that this is really the case. Why, Sir, will you constrain me to expatiate upon things which reflect no honour upon the Church ; and by a rash and indiscreet defence *hurt* the cause you would support ! How much wiser is the part your *candid brethren* are now acting, who, like *dutiful and pious sons*, are taking a veil, and walking backward, to cover the nakedness which has been too long exposed to the jests of scoffing unbelievers\*.

As your Letters and defences breathe a noble *compassion* to the *straying souls* of Dissenters ; the extraordinary instance, with which you conclude the whole, ought not to be overlooked. You are concerned, it seems, “ that I have read, and in several instances agree in sentiment and reasoning—with the author of *the Rights of the Christian* ”

\* See a series of such exertions of *feminine* archiepiscopal, pastoral, *authority*, throughout the whole reign of Qu. Elizabeth ; particularly, the case of Archbishop Grindal : whom she sequestered, in great wrath, from his *archiepiscopal* functions, for refusing to obey a rash and tyrannical order of the Queen relating to Church-matters. Under this sequestration he continued many years. The two Houses of *Convocation* presented to the Queen a most humble and earnest petition for his restoration, but could not obtain it. Vid. *Fuller's Ch. Hist.* Book IX. page 120.—*Neal's Hist. Pur.* Vol. I. pages 358, 374.

“ *Christian Church* ; and appear to have much  
 “ studied and profited by that worthy author—  
 “ and are sorry to find dissenting Ministers and  
 “ Gentlemen dealing so much in books of this  
 “ sort. So long as this is the case, what hope of  
 “ a comprehension ! Or, indeed, who would wish  
 “ for it ! \* ” I have read, Sir, and I hope, profited  
 by *the Rights*, &c. As you profess to have read,  
 and I hope not without profit, *Bellarmin*, an au-  
 thor incomparably worse. As for *my agreement*  
 with *THE RIGHTS*, &c. as far as that author  
 agrees with *Truth*, with *Scripture*, with *Law*, you  
 must give me leave to say (without augmenting, I  
 hope, your sorrow) that I esteem it not the least  
 reproach. Nay for once, Sir, if you please, I will  
 make you my confessor, and frankly own, that in  
 many things I agree in sentiment and reasoning  
 with one far worse than either *Bellarmin* or *the*  
*rights*, &c. Who this may be, you will see, *Luke*  
*iv. 41. James ii. 19.*

Dissenting Ministers and Gentlemen, I presume,  
*deal in books of all sorts*, from whence they can  
 gather useful knowledge, and improve and enlarge  
 their minds. They have dealt in the writings of  
 the shrewdest *Deists* ( books much worse than the  
*Rights*, &c. ) as you see by the many noble defen-  
 ces of *Christianity* which their pens have produ-  
 ced. Your— *dealing in books of this sort*—is a bug-  
 bear, which may frighten *children in understand-*  
*ing* ; but Dissenters, you should have known, *have*  
*not so learned CHRIST*. They are command-  
 ed to *try the spirits* ; to *examine and prove all*  
*things* ; and remember the noble *Bereans*, who are  
 com-

\* Appen. pages 41, 44.

commended by St. Paul for *searching* carefully into the grounds and evidence of things before they gave their assent. And if this *liberty* of examination, and of speaking and writing freely upon subjects of religion, be a bar to a *comprehension*—very long may it remain! It is the glory of *Christianity* that it shuns not the severest search: 'Tis *bigotry* and *error* only that love to hide themselves in darkness, and grow touchy and alarmed if you seek to bring them into open fight.

We acknowledge, Sir, your goodness in bringing down to our understandings the mystery of CONSECRATIONS of Churches and Church-yards; and your kind attempt to illustrate the usefulness, edification, and comeliness of this ceremony. There are some *previous questions*, which I could wish to see answered, before we enter thoroughly into the grand debate—As, whether you think the Apostle Paul, in all his apostolic labours and travels through the Churches, ever *consecrated a plat of ground*? Whether any of the *twelve Apostles*, amongst the *miracles* and *mighty works* which they every where wrought, ever did this *wondrous thing*? Whether the *synagogues*, where our SAVIOUR preached; the *chamber* where he instituted, and first celebrated his sacred supper; the *upper room* where the Apostles met, when they actually received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; the *house of Aquila and Priscilla, Nymphas, &c.* in which were *Christian Churches*; had really any *other consecration* than our places of worship have? And, yet, whether *these* were not as much the *house of God*, and *places of his more immediate presence*, as any splendid Cathedral

*Arat*, now consecrated with all the pomp of *sacerdotal* device \* ?

You appeal to “ the forms which Bp. *Andrews* and *others* have used in their *consecrations*. And ask——What think you now ? Is there any thing “ *ridiculous* or *superstitious* in all this † ?” Yes ; extremely much of both, if they at all resemble that of A. B. *Laud* (the only one I have ever seen) when he consecrated the Churches of *St. Catherine Cree*, *St. Giles’s* and others in *London*. An intolerable piece of *ecclesiastical* foppery, sufficient to have made a *Popish Cardinal* blush, and which no protestant can read but with indignant concern ! The form has, in larger histories, been more than once published ; but having never seen it in any little tract, I shall beg leave to transcribe it, for the edification of our common readers. A striking instance of the *danger* of indulging *human invention* in things of religion ; and which shews, into what wilds of ridiculous superstition even *learned* minds are apt to run, when they leave the *simplicity of the Gospel of CHRIST*.

“ The *Bishop* came attended with several of the “ high commission, and some *Civilians*. At his “ approach to the west door of the Church, which “ was shut and guarded by halberdeers, some that “ were appointed for that purpose, cried with a “ loud voice ——*Open, open, ye everlasting* “ *doors, that the King of glory may come in !* Pre- “ sently the doors were opened, and the *Bishop*, “ with

\* You have forgotten, perhaps, the doctrine of your own *homily*, to which you have several times solemnly subscribed,—“ That in *Tertullian’s* time, 160 Years after “ *CHRIST*, Christians had no other *temples*, but *common* “ *houses*, whither for the most part they secretly resorted.” *Peril of Idol.* Part III. page 159.

† Appen. page 45.

“ with some Doctors and principal men, entered.  
 “ As soon as they were within the place, his  
 “ *Lordship* fell down upon his knees; and, with  
 “ eyes lifted up, and his arms spread abroad, said,  
 “ *This place is holy, the ground is holy; in the name*  
 “ *of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST,*  
 “ *I pronounce it holy.* Then walking up the mid-  
 “ dle isle towards the chancel, he took up some  
 “ of the dust, and threw it into the air several  
 “ times. When he approached near the rail of  
 “ the communion-table, he bowed towards it five  
 “ or six times; and returning, went round the  
 “ church, with his attendants, in procession;  
 “ saying first the hundredth and then the nine-  
 “ teenth *Psalms*, as prescribed in the *Roman Pon-*  
 “ *tifical.* He then read several collects, in one  
 “ of which he *prays* GOD to accept of that beauti-  
 “ ful building, and concludes thus—*We con-*  
 “ *SECRATE this Church, and separate it unto*  
 “ *THEE as HOLY GROUND, not to be prophe-*  
 “ *ned any more to common use.* In another he *prays*  
 “ —*That ALL who should hereafter be buried*  
 “ *within the circuit of this HOLY and SACRED*  
 “ *place, may rest in their sepulchres in peace, till*  
 “ *Christ's coming to judgment, and may then rise to*  
 “ *eternal life and happiness.*

“ Then the *Bishop*, sitting under a cloth of  
 “ state, in the isle of the chancel, near the com-  
 “ munion-table, took a written book in his hand,  
 “ and pronounced *curses* upon those who should  
 “ hereafter prophane that *holy place* by musters of  
 “ soldiers, or keeping prophane law-courts, or  
 “ carrying burdens through it: and at the end of  
 “ every curse he bowed to the east, and said, *Let*  
 “ *all the people say amen.* When the *curses* were  
 “ ended,

“ ended, which were about twenty, he pronoun-  
 “ ced a like number of  *blessings*  upon ALL that  
 “ had any hand in framing and building that  *sa-*   
 “  *cred*  and beautiful church ; and on those that  
 “ had given, or should hereafter give, any cha-  
 “ lices, plate, ornaments, or other utensils : And,  
 “ at the end of every  *blessing* , he bowed to the  
 “ EAST, and said,  *Let all the people say amen.*   
 “ After this came the sermon, then the sacra-  
 “ ment, which the  *Bishop*  consecrated and admī-  
 “ nistred in the following manner.

“ As he approached the  *altar* , he made five or  
 “ six low bows ; and coming up to the side of it,  
 “ where the  *bread*  and  *wine*  were covered, he  
 “ bowed  *seven times* . Then, after reading many  
 “ prayers, he came near the  *bread*  ; and gently  
 “ lifting up the corner of the napkin, beheld it,  
 “ and immediately letting fall the napkin, he re-  
 “ treated hastily a step or two, and made three  
 “ low obeisances. His  *Lordship*  then advanced,  
 “ and, having uncovered the  *bread* , bowed three  
 “ times as before. Then he laid his hand on the  
 “ cup, which was full of wine, with a cover up-  
 “ on it ; which having let go, he stepped back,  
 “ and bowed three times towards it ; then he  
 “ came near again, and lifting up the cover of  
 “ the cup, looked into it, and seeing the  *wine* ,  
 “ let fall the cover again, retired back, and bow-  
 “ ed as before. Then the elements were conse-  
 “ crated, and the  *Bishop*  having first received,  
 “ gave it to some principal men in their surplices,  
 “ hoods and tippets ; after which, many prayers  
 “ being said, the solemnity of the  *Consecration*   
 “ ended.”

This,

This, Sir, was the *sense*, and this the *manner* of that celebrated martyr and governor of your Church, in this business of CONSECRATION. And, what now think you? Was there nothing *ridiculous* or *superstitious* in all this? You seem, indeed, to have not quite so *exalted* an opinion of this solemnity as his Lordship; but as the Church has no where (that I know) explained herself as to this matter; nor *condemned* Laud's conduct; nor prescribed any set form in which this ceremony is to be done; any Bishop, I apprehend, at present, is at full liberty to use the same, and may now consecrate a Church after the manner of St. *Catherine Cree* Church. And pray! to whom shall I attend, as best knowing and expressing the Church's sense in this point, to the great Archbishop *Laud*; or, to the—Mr. *White*, sometime Fellow of St. *John's* College, *Cambridge*.

I have now done with your *Appendix*—There is another OFFICE of your *Liturgy*, alike liable to the severe exceptions of all well-instructed *Christians*, and to the sneers of insulting *Deists*, as any I have yet considered; and that is, your OFFICE for the *Ordination of Priests and Deacons*. This, if you call me forth again, I may more particularly shew. At present, I only ask—Whether to your *sober reason* it really appears a *fit* question, to be put to EVERY young Gentleman that comes from the *University* for orders to the Bishop; whether he trusts that he is INWARDLY MOVED BY THE HOLY GHOST to take upon him this office? And for EVERY such young Gentleman to declare solemnly as in God's presence, that he trusts that he is, SO INWARDLY MOVED. The gentlemen, and their communication; the manners, the taste,

and state of the *universities*; you, perhaps, better know, than I shall pretend. Tell me then, *before* GOD, is their *moral state* such that you can reasonably think EVERY *student* that comes thence, when he gets a *title* to a living, and applies for *orders* to the Bishop, doth really *feel himself inwardly moved by the HOLY GHOST* to make that application! How is it we are not afraid to *trifle* in an affair so exceedingly serious and important! Is it not coming too near to the sin of *Ananias*. viz. LYING to the HOLY GHOST?

And when, kneeling before the Bishop, he lays his hand on the student's head, is it not a strange saying—*Receive the HOLY GHOST—Whose sins THOU dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins THOU dost retain, they are retained; in the name of the FATHER, of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. Amen.* I make no reflections at present: but only say: that to me it appears quite amazing, that, in an age of such discernment and freedom of enquiry, *this form* is suffered to stand. And, in the language of your *collect*, I very heartily pray—*That Almighty GOD, who alone worketh great marvels, would send down upon our Bishops and Curates the healthful spirit of his grace, the spirit of wisdom and humility!* assured, that this *stone of stumbling*, in the way of sagacious *Infidels*, will then quickly be removed.

But to conclude. I have the pleasure, Sir, to be persuaded that your mind is not *now* filled with those *swelling* and *high* thoughts of the excellence of your *Liturgy*, as when our correspondence opened. *Dissenters*, you find, are not the only persons who except strongly against your forms. Many of your learned *Clergy*, have, in a candid and respectful

respectful manner, and yet with a becoming courage, expressed great dissatisfaction with them. What *effect* their attempt for the enlargement of the Church's bounds, and for a further *reformation* and *review* will produce ; time alone must shew. Upon the foot it at present stands, the Church's situation, to every discerning person, must appear extremely *critical* and uncertain.

It is *difficult* to defend it against the crafty attacks of **POPERY** on the one hand ; and, I think, actually *impossible* to support it against the assaults of **INFIDELITY** on the other, Betwixt these *two stones*, is there no room to apprehend its being quickly *ground to powder* ? To the *injurious* idea which many of your *forms* give of the *Christian Religion*, the unhappy increase of *Deism* is, undoubtedly in great measure owing. And increase it further will, there is the highest reason to believe, if *these forms* which are the just offence and ridicule of *Unbelievers*, are not timely dismissed. But, when those who now boast themselves the *Successors* of the Apostles, and the only regular *Pastors* and *Ministers* of Christ, shall give proof that they are possessed of a truly *apostolic* virtue, and shall no longer *seek their own*, but the things of **JESUS CHRIST** ; a review will be no distant, nor difficult event.

In the mean time, *Dissenters* have the satisfaction to reflect ; that amidst various discouragements, they have, by their *dissent*, approved themselves **LOYAL** to the only **SOVEREIGN** of the Church, and **FAITHFUL** to a *sacred trust* committed to them by **GOD**, for which they must give account. They rejoice in the *review*, that they have entered their protest against the *Impositi-*

ons and Inventions of men : which have corrupted the *Simplicity*, enervated the *Vigour*, deformed the *Beauty*, and broken the *Communion* of the body of *Christ*. And whatever rash censures they may happen to incur from the *prujudiced*, the *weak*, and the *interested* now : They, with great assurance and hope, to be not only *approved*, but applauded by their JUDGE ; and to receive, at his appearing, *Honour* proportioned to their present *Reproach*.

When it shall please the *Almighty Sovereign* to awaken in the *Christian* world a spirit of genuine CHRISTIANITY——When true HONOUR shall prevail over *Cowardice* and *Temporising* ; and INTEGRITY and TRUTH over *Falshood* and *Error*——When that slavish ignoble principle, that we are to conform to the established worship of the country where we dwell, whatever it be, shall be held in deserved reproach : a principle that debases greatly and corrupts the human soul ; puts out its intellectual eye ; chains up its noblest powers ; robs it of its highest glory, viz. the searching into *religious* subjects, and offering to its CREATOR a *reasonable service* ; in short, a principle that directly tends to banish every thing that deserves the name of *Religion* ; to drive all *Truth*, and *Honour*, and *Honesty*, from amongst men ; that will justify a man's professing himself a *Mahometan* at *Constantinople*, a *Pagan* at *Pekin*, a *Papist* at *Rome*——When this infamous and base principle, I say, shall be treated with just contempt ; and men shall be every where disposed, to seek with impartiality, and to practise without disguise RIGHTEOUSNESS and TRUTH——Then, Sir, will the character of a *rational* DISSENTER be had in universal honour. Then will such appear

pear to have been the only *consistent Protestants*; the true Patrons of Christian Liberty, Church Unity, and Catholick Communion; and the only body of *Christians* upon whom the guilt of *Schism* does not really rest; because they open their *Communion* to every sincere Christian; and require *no terms*, but what CHRIST and his *Apostles* have required in the Church. If you will not throw in your lot, and share with them in those honours, you must e'en take your own way. However, rest assured that I am, with due affection and esteem,

S. I. R.

Your's, &c.

A DISSENTER

[Faint, illegible text]

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SERIOUS and FREE  
**THOUGHTS**  
 ON THE  
 PRESENT STATE  
 OF THE  
**CHURCH,**  
 IN A  
 LETTER. to a BISHOP.

MY LORD,

**I**T is a very dark, but a just picture of the face of things around us, which a great *Prelate*\* has lately drawn, who thus paints and laments the complexion of the times.

“ An open disregard to *Religion* is become, thro’  
 “ a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing  
 “ character of the present age. This evil is grown  
 “ to a great height in the metropolis of the nati-  
 “ on ; is daily spreading through every part of it ;  
 “ bringing

\* Bishop of *Oxford*'s charge to his Clergy, p. 4. 5. 6.

“ bringing in such dissoluteness and contempt of  
 “ principle in the higher part of the world, and  
 “ such profligate intemperance and fearlessness of  
 “ committing crimes in the lower, as must, if this  
 “ torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fa-  
 “ tal : And God knows, far from stopping, it re-  
 “ ceives, through the ill designs of some, and the  
 “ inconsiderateness of others, continual increase.

“ *Christianity* is now ridiculed and railed at with  
 “ very little reserve ; and the *Teachers* of it with-  
 “ out any at all. — Disregard to public worship  
 “ and instruction hath increased : Many are grown  
 “ prejudiced against *Religion* ; many more indiffe-  
 “ rent about it. The emissaries of the Church  
 “ of *Rome* have begun to reap great harvests in  
 “ the field, which hath thus been prepared for  
 “ them.

“ This melancholy state of things (his Lord-  
 “ ship proceeds) calls loudly upon us (the *Clergy*)  
 “ to correct our mistakes ; to supply our defici-  
 “ encies ; and earnestly to beg of God, that he  
 “ would direct the hearts of those who preside o-  
 “ ver the public welfare, and humbly to represent  
 “ to them, on all fit occasions, the declining state  
 “ of religion, and the importance and the means  
 “ of preserving it. These things are unquestio-  
 “ nable duties. —”

It is from a deep sense of this duty, my Lord,  
 that I presume thus to address your Lordship ; and  
 humbly to suggest some *Occasions* of this spreading  
 evil, which seem not to have been so thoroughly  
 and so seriously adverted to, as their importance de-  
 serves. To know the cause of a disease, in the  
 body politic as well as natural, is the first step to its  
 cure. The causes of the present prevailing *Scepti-*  
*cism* are, no doubt, complicated and various. The  
strictness

strictness of the *Christian* morals, and the restraint which the *Gospel* lays upon the corrupt appetites of men, is, probably, a chief cause of some men's violent opposition to it. But there are, my Lord, I apprehend, a variety of inferior causes, *Offences* the *Gospel* calls them, which co-operate and help it on; *Offences*, which confirm greatly men's prejudices against CHRISTIANITY; and which strongly tempt, and seem to warrant, their treating things reputed sacred with much drollery and ridicule: *Offences*, which are found, not in it's professors only, but in those who are set for it's propagation and defence.

May I be permitted, my Lord, with the freedom of a *Christian*, to expostulate on this subject? Things evidently seems to draw, as his Lordship above observes, to a dangerous and important *Crisis*. When the exigency of affairs presses, a liberty of speech may with some confidence be claimed. Will your Lordship then indulge me, whilst with no greater freedom than the great danger of the cause seems plainly to require, I endeavour to point out *some things*, which hang as a portentous weight upon the cause of CHRISTIANITY, and are some of the *fatal stones*, at which the *Sceptics* of the present age stumble, dangerously stumble, and sometimes fall. *It is impossible*, we are told, *but offences will come*: but *woe to that man*, woe to that Church, *by whom the offence cometh*.

Great, it must be owned, is the felicity of this nation in having so many of its established Clergy, whose learning and whose lives reflect honour on their profession, and whose writings have bless'd the world with some of the noblest defences of virtue and religion. But, as matters are at present  
constituted,

*constituted*, are there not some things, which greatly abate the force of the strongest arguments they offer ? Some *Prejudices*, which too naturally and too justly arise, of which disaffected minds avail themselves not a little in their opposition to CHRISTIANITY ?

The *first* unhappy cause of the growth of *Infidelity*, which I beg leave to mention, is a general apprehension that the Clergy themselves are not thoroughly persuaded of the truth and importance of the *Christian Religion*, inasmuch as they solemnly subscribe *Articles*, which they do not *really believe* ; and declare publicly, in GOD'S presence, their *unfeigned Assent and Consent* to forms, in divine worship, which they *highly disapprove* ; perhaps, heartily condemn.

If this apprehension, my Lord, appears to be well founded : if there is good reason to think, that your Lordships, the *Bishops*, do rigorously impose, and that the *Clergy* subscribe, *Articles of Religion* which neither *you* nor *they*, do really believe ; and that, in the most solemn manner, your Lordships require, and they readily give, *unfeigned Assent and Consent* to certain matters and forms, which, at the same time, *you both* judge to be highly censurable and wrong.—What will, my Lord, what must a doubting enquirer naturally conclude ; but, that the profession of *Christianity* is all artifice and pretence ! That there is no such thing as conscience, integrity, or faith in transactions, relating to *ecclesiastical* concerns ! That the terrors, which the *Gospel* threatens to the hypocrite and unbeliever, are known, by those who preach them, to be all but an empty phantom ; as are the rewards also,  
which

which it promises to those who are courageous to confess and avow the truth \* !

The *Articles of Religion*, which your Lordships oblige every *Clergyman* to subscribe, and which every *Clergyman* does with great solemnity subscribe, it is notorious to the whole world are strongly, what is called, *Trinitarian* and *Calvinistic* : little less notorious is it, that the *Clergy* are, generally, gone far from the *religious Sentiments* which the articles express, and are many, or even most of them either *Unitarian* or *Arminian*. What, then, can any serious impartial Spectator judge ; when gentlemen in the *Unitarian* scheme subscribe solemnly, in GOD'S presence, (i. e. calling upon HIM to witness to the *Sincerity* and *Truth* with which they subscribe) the *First*, the *Second*, and the *Eighth* articles of the Church, which strongly assert—Art. I. *That there is but ONE living and true GOD—And in the UNITY of this GODHEAD, there be THREE PERSONS*

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OF

\* Bishop Burnet says—“ He is forced to declare : That  
“ having had much free conversation with many who have  
“ been fatally corrupted with *atheistic* and *infidel* principles ;  
“ they have very often own'd to him, that nothing so  
“ much promoted this in them as the very bad opinion  
“ which they took up, of all Clergymen of all sides.”

“ That they did not see in them that contempt of the  
“ world—that diligence and earnestness with relation to  
“ the great truths of the *Christian Religion*, which they  
“ reckoned they would most certainly have, if they them-  
“ selves *firmly believed* it. They therefore concluded ;  
“ that they whose business it was more strictly to enquire  
“ into the truth of their religion, knew that it was not so  
“ certain, as they themselves, for other ends, endeavoured  
“ to make the world believe it was : And that though,  
“ for the carrying on their own *Authority* or *Fortunes*, which  
“ in one word they called their *Trade*, they seem'd very  
“ positive in affirming the truth of their *Doctrines*, yet they  
“ in their own hearts did *not believe* it, since they lived so  
“ little suitable to it.” *Pastoral Care Preface* : p. 15, 16,

OF ONE SUBSTANCE, POWER AND ETERNITY, *The Father, Son and Holy Ghost.* Art. II. *That the SON is THE VERY and ETERNAL GOD of ONE SUBSTANCE with the FATHER*—Art. VIII. *And that the Creed of Athanasius ought thoroughly to be received and believed; for it may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture?*

In like manner the gentlemen who favour what is called the *Arminian* scheme, and reject the *Calvinistic*, stand forth before GOD, and subscribe, and declare that *they do it willingly and ex animo* (i.e. sincerely and from their heart,) *the Ninth, Thirteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth* articles, as likewise the *Twentieth*, which expressly affirm—Art. IX. *That ORIGINAL, or BIRTH-SIN is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man, that is naturally ingendered of the offspring of Adam; and in every person born into this world it DESERVETH GOD'S WRATH and DAMNATION.*—Art. XIII. *That works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to GOD, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace; yea,—we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.*—Art. XVII. *That PREDESTINATION to life is the everlasting purpose of GOD, whereby (before the foundation of the world) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. And as the godly consideration of Predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons; so for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of GOD's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil*

will doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living.

Art. XVIII. They also are to be held accursed, who presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature.— Art. XX. The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and Authority in controversies of faith.

THESE, my Lord, are *Articles*, which the Church represents as the plain and the undoubted doctrines of *Christianity*. This it declares to be the *true Gospel* of Jesus Christ: And *these* it obliges every one of its ministers to subscribe with his hand, in the presence of *Almighty God*, and solemnly to declare, that he believes them to be agreeable to the word of God\*, before he is admitted to officiate in that character.

Now if the generality of the *Clergy* † do in their consciences believe this (in some one, at least, or more points) to be a very *wrong* representation of

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the

\* Canon XXXVI.

† “ *Predestination*, (says a learned member of that body) a doctrine shocking, and manifestly contrary to all the notions men naturally have of GOD; as a wise, just, and good Being, was opposed by *Arminius*; who left behind him a man better qualified than himself, to carry on the cause he had espoused, I mean the great *Episcopius*; whose writings soon flew all over *Europe*, and were much read by the Divines of the Church of *England*, and to very good purpose; for soon after *Calvinism* vanished from amongst them quite and clean.” CLARKE’S *Essay on Study*, page 13, 16.

So the Bishop of *Winchester*, in his late excellent sermons, “ acknowledges it a thing beyond all contradiction, that the doctrine of the Church of *England*, delivered in its *Articles* relating to *Justification*, *GOD’S Decrees*, and what are called the *five Points*, hath undergone such alterations as to be entirely changed, in the Writings and Discourses of most of the members of that Church.” Sermon on *Contending for the Faith*.

the doctrines of CHRISTIANITY; a Representation injurious to the perfections of GOD; very highly dishonourable and repugnant to the *Gospel-scheme*; but do nevertheless consent thus solemnly to *subscribe* the articles abovementioned, and to *declare them agreeable to the Scriptures*.—What, my Lord, I again ask, with great astonishment and concern, will, not only sagacious *Deists*, but every attentive person, with good reason presume—But that *Honesty* and *Truth* are fled from the earth: at least, that the *Church* is no more the sacred temple, where these heavenly guests dwell! What, but that *the contempt of principle* complained of as brought into the higher part of the world, reigns not only there; but that it spreads, and reigns terribly in another order of men; an order, whose chief design, and whose only glory it is, to be *patterns*, as well as *preachers* of uncorrupted faith and integrity amongst men: who, no farther than they *act up* to this their primitive design, are of any benefit to society; and in what measure they *counteract* it, by shewing a *contempt of principle*, and exhibit patterns of *double-dealing* and *insincerity* to the world, they become of all men the most unworthy: and instead of meriting the esteem, deserve nought but the contempt and indignation of society. If the *salt bath* lost its saltness, the supreme judge hath expressly said, relating to this very point, *it is cast out to the dunghill, and trodden under foot*.

*Original Sin*, one of the most learned of our present *Bishops* § hath frankly declared “to be a *contradiction in terms*: For as the word *Sin* implies an act of the will, so the word *original* implies the direct contrary; and supposes the criminal act to have been committed by *another person*, to which act that person to whom the sin is imputed, neither contributed by thought, word, or deed.”

But,

§ Thoughts on Self-Love, innate Ideas, &c. p. 17.

But, besides the *contradiction in terms*, which the learned Bishop asserts; to affirm, my Lord, as the *article* (Art. IX.) is supposed to do, that every member of the human race, upon the account of *Adam's* sin doth really *merit* GOD's *wrath and damnation*: that is to say, that *Infants* are no sooner born than they become just objects of GOD's heavy anger, and *deserve to be DAMNED*: to be DAMNED for an *act* in which they had not the least share; an act committed *six thousand years* before they came into Being—That the all-perfect and blessed GOD is angry even to *wrath*, with the work of his own hands, who never have done, were never capable of doing the least thing to *offend* him—This, my Lord, will be pronounced a doctrine so abhorrent to nature, to justice, to truth, (may it not be said so *impious and profane*) that it is candidly presumed, that there is not one sensible and sober *Clergyman* in the kingdom who *believes it*: And yet, astonishing to consider! there is not one *Clergyman* in the kingdom, but hath solemnly *subscribed it*: Not one *Bishop* in the kingdom, but absolutely insists upon it, as an *indispensible* condition of admission to the *Christian Ministry*; even the learned *Bishops* not excepted, who are presumed to know and to acknowledge it to be a *contradiction in terms*.

Is there any virtue, my Lord, or honour; any prudence or discretion in such procedure as this? Does it not directly tend to violate and lay waste the conscience; to throw down every fence of integrity and truth; to open a way for all manner of licentiousness both of principle and of practice, to break in like a deluge, and to sweep from society all distinction betwixt right and wrong? For, why, it may be justly asked, should it be accounted more criminal to equivocate and collude on the *Exchange*, than in the *Church*? Yea, why more atrocious to kiss

the book in a *Civil Court* in attestation to a fact which I believe not to be true ; than to subscribe before *GOD* *articles of religion*, which I believe to be false ? To me, my Lord, I profess solemnly, the actions appear much the same in a moral estimation ; and *false swearing* in the state seems near as reconcilable to honesty and truth, as fallacious and insincere *subscribing* in the Church.

There are a variety of evasive shifts, I know, of mental reservations and forced explications, by which gentlemen endeavour to soften and extenuate their conduct in this matter : but if weighed in an impartial balance, these will be found to be of a nature unspeakably detrimental, and even destructive, to society ; tending utterly to defeat the use of *Language* amongst men ; to confound sentiments and ideas ; to banish all precision, and indeed all meaning, from words ; and to bring in everlasting darkness and ambiguity in their stead. In short, they are such, as if any man should presume to use in *commercial* or *civil* life, would he not for ever forfeit his honour upon the *Exchange*, or in a *Court of Justice* ; rouse a general indignation ; and deliver up his character to lasting infamy and reproach ?

There are, my Lord, I apprehend, no subterfuges or softenings, by which an *Arian* can subscribe the doctrines, and the curse of *Athanasius's* creed ; or an *Arminian* the article of *original sin* ; and declare solemnly that he believes them to be agreeable to the word of *GOD* ; but what would in like manner justify him, were a good revenue annexed, in subscribing also this *fortieth* article, viz. *That there is but one GOD, and that Mahommed is his prophet* : Yea, but what would justify him in eluding the strictest examination in a court of justice upon oath, and in disguising or concealing the truth in a cause of the greatest moment in *Westminster-hall*.

And

And is not this to give *occasion* to those who are too ready to seek occasion, not only to *disbelieve*, but to *reproach* and *vilify* our most holy RELIGION? Is it strange, if sagacious *Deists* ridicule the *Christian* Priesthood; insult a character and an office so surreptitiously obtained; and treat all their pretended zeal about *doctrines* and *truth* as most nauseous grimace! The temptation is exceeding strong; and no wonder it has had a very powerful effect.

And here, my Lord, might I be indulged, I would beg leave for a remark on the extreme *vanity* and *inutility*, not to say the prolific *mischiefs*, of thus demanding *subscriptions* to human articles and forms: And to express astonishment, that a measure so palpably absurd, should have gained for so long a time, so deep a footing in the Church.

The *holy Scriptures* your Lordship, and all Protestant Divines, acknowledge to be a *perfect rule of faith*: In them all needful and important doctrines, are *so plainly* revealed, in *words* dictated by the HOLY GHOST, that no *sincere* person can possibly mistake concerning them, so as dangerously to err. Subscription, therefore, to these *Scriptures*, is all that the interest of *truth* and of *religion* doth really require. Now, should any man upon earth, or any body of men, take upon them to draw up articles and formula's of faith, in words *different* from the holy Scriptures, & to propose them as a *rule of faith*, or a *test of truth* to others; what, my Lord, is the real nature, or the proper language of such an action? Is it not plainly this; that he thinks himself able to define the doctrines of *revelation* in apter and more proper terms than those of the *Holy Ghost*? Does he not in effect say, that the great truths of religion, as they stand revealed in the *Scriptures* (in words which not *man's wisdom*, but which the *wisdom of God* dictated) are not so distinctly

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ly and clearly expressed as *man's wisdom*, (yea, as *his own* wisdom) is able to express them? And is not this, my Lord, presumptuously to set himself up as a *corrector* of the HOLY GHOST? To declare himself capable of *mending* the revelation? And to profess himself *authorised* to dictate to the faith of others, and to interpret the Scriptures for them!

Will it be said—But crafty and corrupt men pervert the words of the *Holy Ghost*, and screen dangerous errors under scriptural forms. Let it be said: And will not crafty and corrupt men as easily pervert, and as lightly violate and break through all the articles and forms which *human skill* can devise, or *human prudence* prescribe? Does not the plainest reason and nature of the thing speak, that thus it will be? Has not the experience of *fourteen hundred* years put it beyond all doubt? Will any articles or forms of doctrine prove a fence against a man of an insincere and corrupt heart, or keep him out of the Church? No: He will ever swim with the Stream; he will declare or subscribe any thing, as his worldly interest directs. No, my Lord, it is men of *virtue* and *integrity* only, your Lordship well knows, that can possibly be affected here: it is men of *principle* and *conscience* only, that these *subscriptions* are ever capable of keeping out of the Church: So that, if rightly considered, it is not in their nature to be the least guard against *Error*, nor the least security to *truth*. And when withal it is remembered, how in all ages of the Church they have been most mischievously employed by the several parties of *Christians* as they alternately prevailed! What wrecks they have made of *conscience*! What sacrifices of *integrity* to human ignorance and pride! What engines they have proved in the hands of the *rulers of the darkness of this world*

*world* to torture and oppress good men, and to exalt and aggrandize the bad!—Scarce any thing can be more amazing, than that a measure so notoriously preposterous and absurd; a measure so directly tending to bring *corruption* into the Church, and to keep *integrity* and *conscience* out; should ever have been patronized, and even vehemently urged, by men, unquestionably both wise and good.

What has been above suggested with reference to *subscriptions* to articles of religion, is it not, my Lord, in great Measure applicable to the declaration of *unfeigned assent and consent to ALL and EVERY THING contained and prescribed in and by the book of common-prayer*, which every Clergyman is obliged, in the most solemn manner, to make! That there are a variety of things *contained* in that book, which a great number of the *Clergy*, of distinguished virtue and sense, consider as highly censurable, and wish earnestly to have reformed, your Lordship, it is presumed, and the world cannot but know\*.

But this *assent* and *consent*, which the law requires of them, obliges not to the bare *use* only (though to *use* forms in divine worship which in one's conscience are believed to be not agreeable to the divine will, and which are apprehended to give wrong and injurious representations of the great

\* The *order* for reading in public worship the apocryphal romances of *Tobit*, *Bell and the Dragon*—Sponsors introduced to the *exclusion* of the parents—The *questions* put to the infants, and the *answers* expected from it, in the office of baptism.—The *authoritative* absolution and forgiveness of *all sin*, directed to be pronounced in the visitation of the sick.—The expressions of strong hope of the happiness after death, of some of the vilest of men in the office for burial—The creed called *Athanasius's*; with the dreadful sentence of *damnation*; most certain, inevitable everlasting *damnation*; upon every soul of man that doth not thoroughly believe it.—*Vid. Candid Disquisitions. Appeal to the common sense of all christian people, &c.*

great things of *religion*, seems absolutely repugnant to that reverence of the *Deity* which is essential to his rational and acceptable worship) but this *assent* and *consent*, I say, obliges not to a bare *use* only (as the *Parliament* itself, after a solemn debate expressly determined) but to an *approbation*, as well as *use*, of the things contained in that book †. Accordingly, they are not only to declare, but to subscribe with their hands, that the *common-prayer-book* contains nothing in it contrary to the word of God ‡.

Now whether the *Clergy's* giving in this solemn manner, *unfeigned Assent and Consent* to things, which, it is notorious, many, if not most, of the wisest and most serious, greatly *disapprove*, does at all magnify their *character*; is for the honour of *Christianity*; or of any service to the cause of *virtue* and *truth*—rather, whether it has not had, and must not necessarily have, a contrary very *pernicious* and *fatal* effect?—Is with all humility submitted to your Lordship's serious consideration.

*Infidelity* gains ground: loose and immoral principles spread dangerously among all ranks: *Foundations* seem to shake: The generality of mankind, glad to be set free from the restraints of *religion*, have an ear always open to what can plausibly be said to weaken its authority, and to discredit *Revelation*. Should the conduct of its Ministers give ground for strong presumption, that, amidst all the zeal and solemnity of external appearances, they think *lightly* of these things themselves; and *subscribe & declare*, not according to the real sense and judgment of their own mind, but as worldly interest or party, or preferment invite.—What wonder, my Lord, if men of unsettled principles, or of  
vicious.

† Vid. an extract from the journal of the house of Lords. *Calamy's Life of Baxter*; Vol. I. page 205. And second *Defence*, page 119. ‡ Canon XXXVI.

Vicious and bad hearts, catch greedily at the *occasion*, and pour out all their stores of wit and ridicule, of contempt and execration on them; rave with little reserve against priests and their craft; call *religion* a cheat; and plunge into the deepest horrors of *scepticism* and *infidelity*.

What wonder, “if it brings in such dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world (as his good Lordship above observes) and such profligate intemperance and fearlessness of committing crimes, in the lower as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal.” Finally, what wonder, to hear the people trifling with *damnation* and *mutual curses* in the streets, when *thirteen* times a year they hear their leaders in religion trifling (much worse than trifling) with them in their solemn offices in the Church! It is certainly, my Lord, matter of very serious doubt, whether all the *curses* and *damnations* which are wantonly poured out by the army, the navy, and the lower classes of mankind, are really more offensive to Almighty God, or attended with greater guilt, or more threaten to draw down divine displeasure upon the land, than *those* which are denounced solemnly by the standing order of the CHURCH §.

The unhappy *divisions*, under which the *Christian* Church labours, the *sects* and *separations*, into which it is split, are, doubtless, to be considered as greatly prejudicial to the cause of *Christianity*, and as another fatal occasion of the growth of *infidelity*. May I be permitted, my Lord, to expostulate freely on this head; and to enquire—whether your Lordship has not *here* also a great deal to apprehend from the trial of a future day.

It is a sentiment of great weight with which his Lordship

§ Vid. Article IX. and XVIII. Canon 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. —And the Athanasian Creed.

ship of London, in his late excellent sermons, || presses *Unbelievers*, extremely applicable to the present subject — “*The case betwixt your Lordships, and those*  
 “ *Fellow-Christians you reject, must be once more*  
 “ *argued before the judgment-seat of GOD. Do you*  
 “ *reject them because—Consider well. Is this a*  
 “ *reason that will justify you to the face of GOD ?*”

The power of ordination, or of sending forth *ministers* to officiate in the Christian Church, is considered as a *trust* committed *solely* to your Lordships, by CHRIST the *supreme PASTOR* ; committed to your Lordships, *exclusive* of all others ; a *trust*, my Lord, of a nature extremely important : upon the right discharge of which, the interest of that Church, which *he hath purchased with his own Blood* ; its instruction and growth in knowledge and goodness, very greatly depends. A *trust*, therefore, most surely, to be accounted for with great strictness to Him the *supreme PASTOR*, from whom it was received.

But, suppose, my Lord, it should then be asked, as there is the highest reason to apprehend it will be asked. — “ How was it that you refused to  
 “ commit *this ministry* to any, but to those who  
 “ would *subscribe* and *declare unfeigned assent* to  
 “ certain *articles* and *forms*, which you knew to  
 “ be no *doctrines* nor *parts* of my religion ! Were  
 “ you not—*Charged, before GOD, and the Lord*  
 “ *Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels, to do nothing*  
 “ *in this matter by partiality, preferring one before*  
 “ *another, upon any secular considerations ! 1 Tim.*  
 “ *v. 21. Had you authority from GOD to put*  
 “ *this yoke upon the neck of my Disciples, and*  
 “ *thus to limit this trust ! Were you not convin-*  
 “ *ced that by this Limitation you excluded from the*  
 “ *Christian Ministry* many faithful and worthy  
 “ persons ;

“ persons ; men capable of great service, and duely  
 “ qualified for it, according to *my Law*, prescribed  
 “ in the *Scripture Canon* ?—By what *Authority*,  
 “ then, or by what *Law* did you deprive the *Christian*  
 “ *Church* of the ministrations of these persons, and  
 “ them of the opportunity of ministering therein ?”

In that critical and awful moment, my Lord,  
 will it be sufficient to reply, (yet what else can be  
 replied !) — It was by the authority of the *Civil*  
*Magistrate*, and by the *Act of Uniformity*, which  
 commanded *not to receive* them, to either the *Chri-*  
*stian ministry* or *communion*, but upon terms of their  
 devising : in obedience to *that authority* we reject-  
 ed them from both. —

With what a look of indignation will such a  
 plea be received by the surrounding army of *Mar-*  
*tys* ; who nobly sacrificed their lives, rather than  
 sacrifice their conscience to the authority of the  
*civil Magistrate* ! And how severe a frown must  
 it draw from the face of the JUDGE ! — “ Did the  
 “ *civil Magistrate* die for you ? Were you baptized  
 “ into *his* name ; or redeemed by *his* blood ? Can  
 “ the *civil Magistrate* now save you, or give you  
 “ admission into the kingdom of heaven ? He gave  
 “ you, indeed, the honours and emoluments of *his*  
 “ kingdom : And for *these* you paid him homage,  
 “ the homage of *conscience*, by acknowledging *his*  
 “ *authority* to make laws in *my* kingdom ; and by  
 “ imposing, at his pleasure, such terms of *Ordina-*  
 “ *tion*, and of *Communion* in the Christian Sacra-  
 “ ments, as I never enjoined : And thus to the no-  
 “ torious impeachment of *my* Authority, to the inju-  
 “ ry of *my* Disciples, and to the dividing of *my* Church,  
 “ you publickly *rejected* those whom you knew, or  
 “ might have known, that I *honoured* and *received*.  
 “ And *verily*, *insomuch as ye did it to these MY*  
 “ BRETHREN, *ye did it unto ME*. — Was it not my  
 “ express command that you should *call no man up-*

“ *on earth* MASTER ; that you should acknowledge  
 “ *no Authority* in matters of religion, but that of JE-  
 “ SUS CHRIST ! Was not *this Authority* a pre-  
 “ rogative, a glory, given in reward of my me-  
 “ ritorious death ? Is not *the LAMB* that was  
 “ *slain*, and is not he ALONE, *worthy to receive*  
 “ *this honour* ? But by submitting to another So-  
 “ *vereign* in things pertaining to religion, and en-  
 “ *forcing his laws* to the exclusion of *my servants*  
 “ from the Christian Ministry and Church, to  
 “ *that Sovereign* has your allegiance been unwor-  
 “ *thily transfered*. — See if he can now reward  
 “ the homage you have paid him ! — Whoever  
 “ *thus seeks to (Peitho) obey and please men*, he is  
 “ *not the servant of CHRIST : Gal. i. 10.*” —

The brethren, my Lord, whom you reject,  
 have lodged their appeal before a *supreme Court* :  
*there* you are to appear with them, and the cause  
 is to be reheard. — Consider well : (to resume the  
 words of the good Bishop) *Are the reasons* on which  
 you now reject them *such as will be sufficient to*  
*justify you to the face of GOD ?*

Being entered so far into this important subject,  
 will your Lordship permit me to advance a step  
 farther, and to observe —

That it is a mighty prejudice, with some men  
 of sense and consideration, against CHRISTIA-  
 NITY, that, as it stands exhibited in our *public*  
*Forms*, and the *Rituals* of the Church, it carries  
 in it what they think, at least, what *Unbelievers*  
 think, plain marks of *imposture* ; violent and strong  
*suspensions*, that it could not possibly come from  
 GOD. For it gives to all its Clergy such high and  
 transcendent *powers*, as a GOD of infinite wisdom  
 can never be supposed to give ; *powers* which set  
 the *Clergy* far above all *Kings* and *Potentates* of  
 this world ; which make it not the *duty* only, but  
 the *interest* of princes to bow down before them ;  
 and

and of the people to bring presents, and to lick the dust at their feet.

CHRISTIANITY, my Lord, as it is professed and practised by your Lordship, imparts to all its Bishops a power to give the HOLY GHOST: and to all its Priests, through your Lordships hands, it gives AUTHORITY either to FORGIVE, or to RETAIN the sins men commit against the MAJESTY and Laws of heaven. SIN, Divines have taught us, is ever to be considered as the greatest of all evils; far more to be dreaded than sickness, poverty, pain or death. This appears to have been the general sentiment of mankind, in all ages of the world. Accordingly, what sacrifices have not men made! what penances submitted to! what pilgrimages performed! to obtain forgiveness of their crimes; readily offering up, not hecatombs of beasts, only and rivers of oyl, but even their own beloved children, *the fruit of their body, for the sin of their soul*. Now this SIN, the object of men's so just and so direful apprehension, there is not a Priest your Lord ordains, but you give him full power and authority from God, even in the name of the HOLY TRINITY, either to forgive, or to retain: And to qualify him for so vast a trust: that he may exert properly this important power, (for which nothing less can suffice) you give him the HOLY GHOST.

Receive the HOLY GHOST—*Whose sins THOU dost forgive, they are forgiven: and whose sins THOU dost retain, they are retained: in the name of the FATHER, of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. Amen.*

These are the stupendous powers, my Lord, with which your Lordship invests, and sends forth into the world, every Priest you ordain. And in consequence of these powers, in the Visitation of the Sick, upon the person's confessing, and desiring Absolution, the Priest is directed to pronounce, as

from the mouth of *Almighty God*, this solemn sentence of REMISSION.

*By the AUTHORITY committed unto me, I ABSOLVE thee from ALL THY SINS; in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.*

The *Pope*, who is, I apprehend, the first *Clergyman* upon earth who claims to himself this power, and *from* and *through* whom all *Clergymen*, who assume it, must acknowledge it derived; his *Holiness*, I say, supposing him possessed of this power, *most rightly* demands homage of all secular *Potentates*, and declares himself *PRINCE of all the kings of the earth*: And all *Potentates* and *People*, who acknowledge this power, *most rightly* pay the ceremony of the stirrup and the slipper, and bow with veneration before *their Lord God the Pope*\*.

But *this Power*, my Lord, which gives the *Pope* this preheminance over all *Princes* (and which gives it *most justly*, if really possessed) is the *very same* (my Lord, I repeat it, is the *very same*) which your Lordship declares yourself to give to *every Priest* you ordain. For the power *to forgive*, or *to retain* the sins of men, is the very same as to *have the keys of the kingdom of heaven*; either to open or shut its gates. If therefore you Lordships, the *Bishops*, do, as you most solemnly profess, give this *transcendent power*; you really constitute so many *Delegates* and high *Commissioners* from heaven; and *authorise* them to dispense its *pardons*, or its *curses* amongst men. And what reverence or revenue will any man, who loves his soul, think too great to be given to such characters as these †.

But

\* This Title he assumes, and it is publicly given him.

† This doctrine, if believed by the Laity, ought to bring them at the Priests feet; as the ambassadors of *Palermo* at the feet of *Pope Martin VI.* repeating thrice these words—*Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!*  
 “ Profane

But if THIS, my Lord, be *Christianity*—is it any wonder that *Christianity* is ridiculed, is despised, is railed at, and reviled with very little reserve? But is not THIS, my Lord, *Christianity* (I appeal to your Lordship's impartial judgment, and to that of the whole world) is not THIS, *Christianity*, as it stands exhibited in the publick forms; and in the constant practice of a certain Church?

May I be permitted to add—But if to a judgment of the greatest candor there appears strong reason to presume, that their Lordships, the Bishops of that Church, know that they have no power from *Almighty God* to give the *Holy Ghost*, at the very time that they are professing, with great solemnity, to give him; and that they have no authority from the *sacred Trinity* to invest the Priests they ordain, with ability to *forgive*, or to *retain* the sins of men, at the very time that, in that *great NAME*, they are pretending to impart it to them; and finally, that the Priest; at the very time that, in the name of the *HOLY TRINITY*, he is *authoritatively* absolving a man from the guilt of *ALL HIS SINS*, knows in his own conscience, that he has no authority from *God* at all to absolve him from any *one Sin*; if to a judgment of the greatest candor, my Lord, there appears reason thus to think—What idea must men form of the *RELIGION* of such actions and such characters as these! What sentiments and reflections must naturally arise, when one sees their *Lordships* stand forth, in the presence of *Almighty God*, and before angels and men professing to confer gifts, and to impart spiritual and transcendent powers, if con-

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scious,

“*Profane* beyond all *profaneness* (says *Dr. Clarke*) is the doctrine of those who contend, that the *Apottles* themselves, much less that any of their fallible successors, had a discretionary power of *Forgiving* or *Retaining* whofe sins they pleased.” *Dr. Samuel Clarke's* Sermon. Vol. VIII. Sermon. XVII.

*scious*, at the very time, that the whole solemnity is mere parade, and that they have no ability at all to give them ! What marvel if, in the indignation such a sight must inspire, CHRISTIANITY be abhorred by persons, already not prejudiced in its favour, or at all kindly disposed to it ; and treated as an errant cheat ; and its *Ministers* and impostors, sent out with *mock-powers* to terrify, to delude, and to enslave the souls of men !

But *Christianity*, God be praised, *Scripture-Christianity* is quite free from this reproach. A power *to forgive or to retain Sins*, it gave only to the twelve *Apostles*, the founders of the Christian Church ; and, to qualify them for this trust, they were actually *inspired* and *filled with the HOLY GHOST* ; they had the gift of discerning spirits ; could miraculously smite incorrigible offenders with diseases or death, as they did *Elymas*, the forcerer ; *Ananias* and *Sapphira* ; and thus *retained* or *bound* their sins upon them : And they had power also miraculously to cast out Devils, and to heal all manner of diseases, and thus *forgave* or *released* men from the penalty of their sins.

But as *this power*, since the *apostolic* age, is ceased, (by all Protestants *acknowledged* to be ceased) from the Church ; and nothing but the *miraculous* operation of the HOLY GHOST can possibly impart it, or qualify a person for it ; how strange beyond expression, that amidst the great piety and learning, which its keenest adversaries must confess to subsist in the Church, a pretension so *extravagant*, not to say *profane*, should still maintain a place !

What adds, my Lord, exceedingly to the strangeness of the case, is ; that this form of ordaining priests — “ *Receive the HOLY GHOST — whose sins thou forgivest, they are forgiven, &c.* ” was never used, never known in the *Christian Church* for the first *thousand* years ; was never attempted to be introduced

roduced till the *eleventh* or *twelfth* century : which every one knows to be a period of the deepest darkness, stupidity and oppression the Church ever felt.

*Morinus*, a learned priest \*, has published *sixteen* of the most antient *Rituals*, or forms of *Ordinations* used in the Church, from the earliest ages of Christianity in which any such are found. In the several changes and additions under which these forms have successively past, is seen, how the spirit of *superstition* gradually wrought † : Every age adding some ridiculous rite, or extravagant claim, to the inventions of the former, till it grew to the present enormous mass in the *Roman pontifical*.

But it is extremely observable, my Lord, that in not one of the first *fifteen* (from the *fifth* to the *twelfth* century) doth the *form* now used—“ *Receive the HOLY GHOST, whose sins, &c.* appear. It is in the *last* only, the *sixteenth*, (which *Morinus* takes to be but about 300 years old) which assumes to itself *this power* : Yea amidst the pride and intoxication of this corruptest state of the Church, there seems to have so much sense and modesty remained, as to make it boggle at a claim so extravagant as this :

\* De Ordin. Sacr. See a vindication of the ordination of the Church of *England*, by Bishop *Burnet*. Print. 1688.

† In the ordination of a *Bishop*—The anointing the head, and hands, and thumb with oyl—The laying the Gospel on his head—The gloves—The sandals—The ring—The staff—The Dalmatica (a vestment like a cross)—The mitre—The inthronization, or seating him in his chair—most of which are attended with respective collects or prayers.—

In the ordination of a *Priest*—The blessing and consecration of his hands—The anointing them with oyl—Then anointing his head with prayer—Then the sacred vestment given with a solemn benediction—Then the sacred vessels, the patten with the hosties, and the chalice with the wine, are given with these words, *Receive thou power to offer sacrifice, &c.* Then the Bishop makes a cross in his hands with oyl and chrism : Then lays his hands on the *Priests*, and says, *Receive the Holy Ghost ; whose sins, &c.*

this : For the learned priest observes, that in *two* other *Pontificals*, of the same age, this form—*Receive the HOLY GHOST, &c.* was not found.

And is this *extravagant Pretension*, my Lord, which the Church of *Rome*, amidst all its pride and wontonness of superstition, from the *fifth* to the *twelfth* century, never presumed to make, now openly *avowed* and *adopted* by *OUR* Church ! This *Plant*, which sprung up from the most dreggy and polluted state which even the *Papacy* ever saw ; is it not only received into this enlightened, this reformed, this noble part of the *Christian* vineyard, but here suffered to take root, to flourish greatly, and to grow ! May *GOD* in mercy awaken a spirit of integrity and of fortitude in all whom it may concern : and wipe from the *Christian* name the deep Scandal and Reproach it unrighteously suffers !

Is there no room, my Lord, to apprehend the displeasure of *almighty GOD* at the representing *CHRISTIANITY* in so *injurious* a light ? Were the men of *Bethshemeth* smitten with death for looking presumptuously into the ark \* ; and *Uzza* for stretching out his hand to support it † ; and *Ananias* and *Sapphira* for lying to the *HOLY GHOST* ‡ ? And can the *name of GOD*, and the *ever-blessed TRINITY* ; and the doctrines, the rites and sacraments of *CHRISTIANITY* ; be trifled with, and profaned, and prostituted to purposes of *worldly* interest and ambition without danger of *divine* resentment ? Is there not a time coming, when *HEAVEN* will *visit for these things* || ? The

\* 1 *Sam.* vi. 19. † 2 *Sam.* vi. 7. ‡ *Acts* v. 5.

|| It was the complaint of the late excellent Bishop *Burnet*, (and there are many others, no doubt, of my Lords the Bishops, who can sincerely make the same,) that the *EMBER WEEKS* were the burden and grief of his life ; and that the things that he was then called to see and to perform, with regard to the candidates who came to be ordained, did often tear his heart, and pierced his soul, and made him cry out, Oh that I had the wings of a dove ! *Pastoral Care*. reface to the *third* edition.

The *signs of the times* seem strongly to prognosticate some approaching great events. *Christianity* is now passing a strict examination : it shuns not, but invites the most critical search. The consequence of this search, there is little question will be, that *Superstition* must totter ; and that all claims and pretensions of a *spiritual* kind, not founded on *Truth*, nor supported by *Right*, must fall before the *ax laid at the root*. But, whilst *the tares are plucking up*, there is danger lest the *wheat be also destroyed with them*.

The *freedom of thinking*, in which the *present* age glories, is, indeed, dissipating apace the charm of *spiritual sorcery*, by which the understandings and consciences of the *former* were enthralled : But it is too natural to the human mind to run into extremes ; and having broke from the chains of gloomy *superstition*, to rush headlong into the wilds of disconsolate *infidelity*. Into those desolate wilds multitudes of all ranks, both in high and low life, are seen crowding with haste. And it seems, my Lord, to require no *spirit of prophecy* to say—*WHETHER these things tend ! and what their end will be !* A small degree of foresight seems sufficient to see, that they hastily and directly tend to the utter demolition, not only of the present *ecclesiastical* system, but of all *established* forms and offices of religion ;— That the *sceptical* and *loose* principles which spread through the land are the dangerous artillery, which *the enemy* is playing upon the *high-places* and *strongholds* of the Church ; that, therefore, prudence strongly dictates, that we not only *desert*, but *level*, what are called the outworks, which we know to be *untenable* ; and call in every *friendly hand*, to unite as one body, in the common defence.

It was, perhaps, with little less than a *prophetic spirit* that a very learned and worthy *Prelate* has lately expressed his wish, “ That something was done to convince the world,  
“ that

“ that the Clergy of the Church are not averſe to a *Reformation* of ſome parts of her *Publick Service* : Since, otherwiſe, they may give offence by their obſtinacy and ſeeming infallibility ; and if a ſtorm ſhould ariſe, may run a riſque of having the tree torn up by the roots, which they might have ſaved by a little pruning\*.”

The period, my Lord, ſeems near approaching, in which *the angel is commanded to thruſt in his ſharp ſickle, and to gather the cluſters of the vine of the earth* (i. e. the mundane or worldly CHURCH) *becauſe her grapes are fully ripe* †. A diſpoſition ſeems moving in all nations around us, in nations where it could leaſt be expected to appear, to ſcrutinize and retrench the exorbitant claims and revenues of the CHURCH ; and to demand ſome of the immense ſuperfluous wealth of that opulent ally for the preſſing exigences of the STATE. And if in countries where *poperſy* reigns, in all its rigor, theſe retrenchments are made ; what may not juſtly be expected in ANOTHER, where *difſoluteneſs and want of principle* (as the pious Biſhop above obſerves) ſpreads widely amongſt *the higher ranks* ; whiſt *the lower* are divided into numerous ſects, not zealouſly attached to the pomp of the eſtabliſhed worſhip : and whiſt the emiſſaries from *Rome* are ſeducing *thouſands* into their tents ; all whoſe power and cunning will be exerted to the utmoſt, on the leaſt inviting occaſion, to demolish *the FORTRESS*, whoſe artillery hath ſeverely galled them, and upon whoſe ruins they hope to raiſe their *exploded ſuperſtition* to its antient grandeur again.

Is there any more likely way to procure *a lengthening of tranquility*, than, as the Prophet adviſes, *to break off iniquity by righteousneſs* : to correct miſtakes ; to ſupply deficiencies ; to remove *the rocks* upon which the integrity of thouſands hath been miſerably wrecked ; to demolish ſeparating walls ; and to extend the arms of the Church, as wide as thoſe of CHRIST and the *Apoſtles* were extended. That Church *alone* which is built upon this catholic and wide bottom is like to ſtand firm, and to ſuſtain the ſhock of riſing ſtorms.

Having trespaſſed, I fear, too far upon your Lordſhip's patience already, I add no more at preſent—But that as your Lordſhip has the glory of ſtanding in the firſt rank  
of

\* *Essay on Spirit, Preface, page 53.*

Rev. xiv. 14.

of the defenders of our *holy faith*; and with irresistible force hath pleaded the cause of CHRISTIANITY against its avowed enemies; so there is a service yet behind, to which GOD, and your *Country*, and the interest of *Religion* seem loudly to call you forth. CHRISTIANITY, my Lord, lies bleeding of wounds it hath received *in the house of its friends*; wounds by far the most dangerous of any it suffers: There are few persons living more able than your Lordship to close up these wounds, and to apply an healing hand. The high reverence and esteem in which your Lordship is justly held by all ranks of the *Clergy* will give a weight and success to any salutary counsels your Lordship may propose, not so easily to be obtained from any other quarter. Through the favour of heaven, we are blessed with a government, which, there is reason to believe, needs but to be petitioned by those who have the administration of *spiritual affairs* to ease them of any grievances, to supply any defects, and to alter or reform whatever in the present system may need to be reformed.

That your Lordship may have the unspeakable satisfaction in life, the consolation at death, and the glory in a future state of having exerted with all the resolution and zeal of a *Christian Bishop* the great power GOD hath given you—That when your Lordship shall soon stand (as it must, my Lord, be *very soon*) before the *supreme PASTOR*, to render an account of your high station in his Church, it may appear to your everlasting honour, that you were ready, not to *risque* only, but even to *sacrifice* every worldly interest, to rescue the *Christian name* from the reproach you saw it suffer,—prays with great sincerity,

Your Lordship's

most obedient, &c.

A CHRISTIAN,

## P O S T S C R I P T.

**D**R. *Stebbing*, in his late *Instructions of a parish Minister*, part II. owns,—That the doctrine of *sacerdotal absolution* has no foundation in Scripture.—“That some of the methods practised in the “ primitive Church, with regard to restoring penitents, have very much the *air of a farce*.—That for the first thousand years the forms of “ *absolution* ran all in the form of a prayer; and not in the “ form of a peremptory definitive sentence, as it now stands “ in the *popish* forms, and in one of *our own* forms, from “ them (*Vindication of the sick*.) The *popish* form of *ordination* also,” the learned Doctor observes, “ is retained “ in the Church of *England*. These two forms are relative “ to each other, and cannot stand separately: for the *one* “ conveys the power which the *other* exercised; and they “ are NOVELTIES alike—And it is very much to be wished “ that they were both properly altered. Dissenters “ would find less matter for censure, and infidels for profane rally.”

“ The late Bishop *Bull*, he says, who was one of the “ ablest scholars, the staunchest churchmen, and the best “ Christians of his time, when he was upon his death-bed, “ refused to have this form read: and ordered the minister “ that attended him, to use that form which stands in the “ office for the holy communion in its stead.”

The worthy *Doctor* “ freely blames those who grasp at “ the shadow of an *Authority*, which in truth and substance “ we must all renounce. What else do we, when we *pretend* “ to absolve conscience? We may use an hundred distinctions, if we please: We may say that the *absolution* “ is not *authoritative* but *declaratory*; or, that it is not “ *judicial* but *ministerial*: But if you would speak to be “ understood, you must say, that, with respect to any real “ internal effect, it is NOTHING; and you will speak “ *Truth* too: For all the rest, if you will preserve to GOD “ his *Prerogative* to forgive sin, are words without meaning.” Vid. pag. 37, 38, 39, 51, 52.

Yet at this *Shadow* every Clergyman in *England* presumptuously grasps! claiming publickly this *Authority* which is the *sole Prerogative* of GOD! But if the *Absolution*, as to any real effect, be acknowledged to be NOTHING; what must the public claim and avowal of it be, but infinitely *worse* than NOTHING!—What it is I forbear to say.—The enemies of *Christianity* will with insulting pleasure tell—







