

*A Letter to a Divine in Germany*

*by*

*Edmund Calamy*



Layout © Quinta Press 2021

A  
L E T T E R  
TO A  
DIVINE in *Germany*,

Giving a BRIEF, but TRUE.

*Account of the* PROTESTANT DISSENTERS  
*in* ENGLAND.

---

By *EDMUND CALAMY*, D. D.

Reprinted from his SERMON at the Ordination of  
the Reverend Mr. SAMUEL CHANDLER.

---



---

LONDON:

Printed for RICHARD HETT, at the *Bible and Crown* in  
the *Poultry*, near *Cheapside*. MDCCXXXVI.

[Price Two-Pence.]





A  
L E T T E R

TO A  
DIVINE IN *Germany*,

Giving a BRIEF, but TRUE,  
*Account of the PROTESTANT DISSENTERS*  
*in ENGLAND.*

SIR,



N Compliance with your repeated Request, and my own Promise, I transmit the following Account, which you may (I think) depend on as faithful and impartial.

EVER Since the first Reformation of this Land from Popery, there has been a Number of pious Persons of all Ranks, who have been desirous that the Worship and Government of the Church might be more agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and the Methods of other Protestant Churches: And they are Still as desirous of it as ever, tho' they have not hitherto been able to obtain it.

IN the Days of King *Edward VI.* several of the Reformers own'd in their Writings, that they rather got what they could obtain, than fix'd Things as they apprehended they should be; and they intended to go much farther in Conformity to Scripture, rather than design'd their Settlement for a Continuance: But the immature Death of that Excellent Prince hindered the further Reformation intended.

Dr. *Peter Heylin* therefore declares. That he could not reckon that Prince's Death an Infelicity to the *Church of England.*

THE Severities of Queen *Mary's* Reign drove our Learned Men in great Numbers beyond the Seas into Germany, where they were kindly received and entertained, but sadly divided among themselves. Some were fond of all the Particulars of King *Edward's* Settlement, without allowing of any Alterations \*, while others were zealous for a more plain and serious Way of Worship, and a Method of Discipline that had a greater Aptness to secure the Purity of the Church and its Members.

WHEN they return'd Home in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, that Party that were for Diocesan Prelacy, and the old Liturgy, and against any considerable Alterations either in Worship or Government, prevailed, and were preferr'd, and had the Queen's Favour. The other Party petition'd, and hop'd, and waited, but were discountenanced and rebuked, and by Law restrained. The discountenanced Party were fervent Preachers, and of holy Lives; and so were the first Bishops also of that Reign: But when *Jewel, Pilkington, Grindal, &c.* were dead, they who succeeded them were of another Stamp, and grew fond of securing Uniformity by rigorous Methods. The silenc'd Disciplinarians did by their Writings, secret Conferences, and Preaching, and their godly Lives, work much upon such as were inclin'd to serious Religion: But the Bishops and their Courts had the Power  
in

in their Hands, and sometimes made life of it in such Ways, as not a little exasperated the Sufferers.

IN the Reign of King *James* I. the Clergy fawn'd upon that Prince, and engaging to advance his Prerogative, he, in Return, made it his Business to confirm and advance their Power. There was a Conference between the two Parties appointed for Form's Sake, at *Hampton-Court*, but without Effect: No Alterations of any Moment could be obtain'd. The Ruling Clergy put Episcopacy, and the Liturgy, and Ceremonies together, into the Subscriptions which they impos'd on all that would be Ministers or School-Masters, and so cast, and kept out, many worthy Men. Three hundred pious Ministers were at once silenc'd, suspended, and deprived. *Anno* 1603. And many that conform'd, and took Pains to promote serious Piety, being uneasy under the Ceremonies, were stigmatiz'd as Puritans, and many Ways discourag'd and Brow-beaten; while but little was done to check or discountenance Impiety and Irreligion.

IN the Reign of King *Charles* I. under the Influence of Bishop *Laud* the strict Use of the Ceremonies in every Punctilio was press'd to the utmost height, and new Things were introduced, a Conformity to which was infilled on with great Vehemence. Many were suspended for not reading in the publick Churches a Declaration, allowing all Manner of Sports and Pastimes on the Lord's Day, and several were driven into *New-England*, that they might there enjoy their Liberty, who could not at Home have Freedom to worship God according to their Consciences, without being many Ways molested. A Design of a Coalition with the *Galilean Church* was set on foot, and the Prerogative advanced to such an Height by many of the Clergy, as not a little endanger'd Liberty and Property: And an Oath to the Church-Government that obtain'd, without any Alterations, was impos'd

impos'd by the Convocation, without the Consent of the Parliament: And Things were driven to that Extremity, that a General Confusion was the Consequence, which at last issued in the Overthrow of the Hierarchy, and the whole Ecclesiastical Constitution, notwithstanding that we are assured by the Lord *Clarendon*.\* That at the Beginning of the Civil War, there were not more than Five in both Houses of Parliament, that were Enemies to the Church of *England*.

At the Restoration of King *Charles II.* there were fair Promises, and great Hopes of more Lenity, and an Accommodation: But it appeared at a Conference held at the *Savoy*, by Virtue of a Royal Commission. *An.* 1661, that the Spirits of the ruling Clergy were too much heated; for no Abatements could be obtain'd, and a most moving Petition for Peace was made light of. A Law passed in 1662. that made Conformity to the Ecclesiastical Establishment in some Respects heavier than before. Above Two Thousand Ministers † were ejected the publick Churches, tho' generally Men of good Worth, and valuable Abilities. Many of the People adhering to them, and valuing their Labours, which they had found profitable and advantageous, met privately for Worship, in separate Assemblies; upon which, severe Laws were made both against Ministers and People, to restrain and punish them: And they were executed with great Rigour, (excepting that now and then a little short-liv'd Indulgence, or breathing Time, was granted them; and that rather by Connivance, than any just Authority) till the Nation grew pretty generally sensible, that there was no small Danger of a common Ruin from the *Papists*.

THIS was so plain in the Reign of King *James II.* that the Clergy who had been so vehement in using  
Rigour

\* *History of the Rebellion*, Book III.

† A distinct Account of them may be seen in the second Volume of *The Abridgment of Mr. BAXTER's Life*.



Rigour to promote Uniformity, profess'd to see their Error and be ready to make Abatements, and lay aside Bigotry and Persecution, and come to a Temper towards them, and treat them as Brethren.

BUT after the *Revolution*, under King *William*, of glorious Memory, they too generally forgot their Promises in the Time of their Distress and Fear, and tho' they were earnestly press'd by that Prince and his Royal Consort, (they being both of them zealous to promote an Union which had long been desired) would yield to no Alterations. The Parliament gave Liberty to all that were not satisfied to fall in with the *Church of England*, (provided they own'd the Doctrine of the Trinity, as they of whom I am giving here an Account did, and do universally) to act according to their Consciences in Matters of Religion; the Benefits of which Law they still enjoy.

IN the Reign of Queen Anne, tho' the Dissenters were as firm in the Principles upon which King *William's* Revolution was bottom'd, and as zealous for the Protestant Succession in the Illustrious House of *Hanover* as any Men whatsoever, they yet were so unkindly used, as to be by Law incapacitated from holding any Place of Profit or Trust under the Government; tho' at the same Time they are not only exposed to such Offices as are chargeable in common with others, but continued liable to severe Pecuniary Mulcts, for not serving some Offices, which yet the Law leaves them in no Capacity of serving. They have also been by Law denied the Liberty of educating their own Children, than which they could not well have been exposed to a greater Hardship, or been brought under a more disheartening Mark of Distinction.

FOR their Objections against the Terms of Conformity required by Law, I shall refer to the Learned Mr. *Hickman's Apologia pro Ministris in Angliâ Vulgò Nonconformistis*, printed in 1664. And their Pleas against the Hierarchy and Ecclesiastical Constitution,  
are

are opened at large, and strenuously inforced, in a Book printed long since, call'd *Altare Damascenum*, which was reprinted in *Quarto at Leyden, An. 1708*. And their Vindication of themselves from the Charges that are brought against them, may be found in *Vindiciæ Fratrum Diffidentium in Angliâ: Auctore Jacobo Piercio, 8vo. Lond. 1710*. Which three Books I therefore mention to you, that I may not trouble you with the Titles of the many Tracts and Volumes that are written in our own Language upon the same Subjects.

THEIR common Principles may be considered, either with Respect to the Civil Government, or in Reference to Religion.

As to Civil Government; They thankfully own it an Ordinance of Almighty God, for the Good of Mankind. They readily acknowledge a conscientious Subjection to the Government they live under (be it in one Form or another) to be the Duty of all Christians; and pay such a Deference to the Magistrate, even in Ecclesiastical Matters, as to be ready to give him Satisfaction, that they take no Methods that are destructive to the Civil Peace. Nor have they any Notion's opposite to Absolute Passive Obedience and Non-resistance, but such as are common to them with the best Friends both to the Government of King *William*, and the Protestant Succession.

As to Religion; They agree in making the Holy Scriptures the Standard of Faith, Worship, and Discipline, disowning any Power of Men, under any Pretence whatever, of framing or imposing any new Articles of Faith, or new Modes of Worship, or of making any Settlements as to the Government of the Church, to the Detriment of that Purity in Worshipping Assemblies and their several Members, which all in their respective Stations are by the Gospel Rule bound to be studious to promote and secure. That God has appointed Government in his Church, they  
freely

freely own: And it is an Opinion that prevails much among them, That no one particular Form of Church-Government is of Right Divine. But its being managed by more or fewer Persons, with more or less of Superiority and Subordination, they look upon as comparatively indifferent, so that the End, which is Christian Purity, be but subserved. And such Friends are they to that Christian Charity upon which the Writings of the *New Testament* lay so great a Stress, that while those of the Established Church are generally for confining their Communion to such as are of their own Way only, a Number of the Dissenters have from the first (tho' they declar'd they foresaw the Dis-service it would do to their particular Interest) own'd themselves free for *Occasional Conformity* with Christians of all Forms, who agree in the Essentials of Religion, in Testimony of their esteeming them Brethren, notwithstanding their Differences in lesser Matters.

In the mean Time, there are some Things in which they differ among themselves. For some of them are most desirous of the Presbyterian Form of Church-Government, as it is Legally establish'd in *North-Britain*: Others are rather for the Congregational Form of Government, by each Worshipping Assembly within itself, having no other Reference to Classes or Synods, than for Advice in Cases of Need, according to the Way which obtains in *New-England*: Others are rather for a Superintendency .For Life (unless great Irregularities should prohibit) over all the Pastors and Churches, divided into larger or smaller Districts, according to Convenience: And there are yet others, who think a Mixture of the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational Method together, might best answer the End, and most effectually secure Unity and Peace. And the Number of this latter Sort seems to grow and increase. There are some also who have particular Sentiments as to the Subjects

and Mode of Baptism. They are for deferring it, till People are of Age to receive Instruction, and personally give their Consent to the Christian Covenant; and for Baptizing by Plunging, while in other Things they differ not from their Brethren.

BUT notwithstanding these, and some other such Differences among themselves, they generally agree in the Doctrinal Articles of the *Church of England*, (which they subscribe) the Confession of Faith, and larger and smaller Catechisms compil'd by the Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*, and the Judgment of the *British* Divines at the Synod of *Dort*, about the *Quinquarticular Controversies*.

THEIR Number is far from being inconsiderable; They have above an Hundred several Places of Worship, (larger and smaller) in and about the Cities of London and Westminster and Borough of Southwark: And in other Cities and Corporations, and Trading Parts of the Kingdom, their Number is proportionable.

THEY are denied the Advantage of educating their Youth either at *Oxford* or *Cambridge*, by Oaths and Subscriptions that are imposed: And therefore besides private Seminaries, where Philosophical and Theological Lectures are read, they send their Children to *North-Britain* and *Holland* for Academical Education.

THEY are zealous for a learned Ministry. And therefore after several Years spent in preparatory Studies, young Men are carefully examin'd amongst them, before they are allow'd to enter upon Preaching in publick: And upon their being in time called to take the Pastoral Charge of any Christian Society, or after they have continued fo long Candidates, as to have Evidence of the Acceptableness of their Gifts, and to be able with Freedom to make Choice of the Ministry for the Employment of their Lives, they are solemnly ordained, by Falling, and Prayer, and  
Imposition

Imposition of Hands, after making a publick Confession of that Faith, in which they engage to make it their Business to instruct others; And this Examination, and Ordination, is managed according to the Rules laid down in the *Directory* published by the *Westminster* Assembly, about the Year 1644, which also gives Direction about the several Parts of Publick Worship, which are generally approved among us.

THEIR Ministers meet together for Consultation about Matters of common Concernment, in greater or smaller Numbers, as Occasions require. In such Meetings, without pretending to exercise Authority, they give their Judgment in such Matters as come before them, or are referred to them. And they keep up a Correspondence with their Brethren in *North-Britain* and in *Ireland*, and in the *American* Plantations; in all which Places the Number of those that are of the same Sentiments with them, is very considerable.

THEIR Hated publick Worship on the Lord's Days (which they conscientiously devote wholly to religious Purposes) is thus managed. The Minister in each Christian Society, offers up to Almighty God the common Requests of the whole Society, in the aptest and most Scriptural Expressions he is able. He publishes the Will of GOD both as to Truth and Duty in two distinct Discourses each Lord's Day, the one in the Forenoon, and the other in the Afternoon, Each Sermon is about an Hour's Length, and begun and closed with Prayer. The *Psalms* are sung in *Metre* by the whole Assembly. In some Congregations there are Evening Lectures, besides the forementioned forenoon and Afternoon Sermons. In some, the Youth are Catechized on the Afternoons of the Lord's Days, in others on the Evenings, and in others on some Week Day. Some Ministers use the Lord's Prayer constantly, others frequently, others; seldom or never, as reckoning it rather given for a

Directory, than to be used as a Form. Some Ministers, besides their stated Preaching, do ordinarily expound a Chapter, or some lesser Portion of Scripture, at the Beginning of the Morning Service, while others only read two or three Chapters, or a Psalm and a Chapter. In these and some other Things, several Ministers and Christian Societies act variously, and as they are most inclin'd: Which Diversity of Practice creates no Difference in Affection, among Persons of Understanding.

THE Sacrament of Baptism is administred among them in the publick Congregation, where it is desir'd, or Persons can be prevail'd with to yield to it: Which is not so usually as were to be wish'd, private Baptisms having by Custom much prevailed among Dissenters, as well as in the Establish'd Church. In the Administration of this Ordinance, they give a brief Explication of the Nature and Grounds of it, and offer up a suitable Prayer. An explicit Consent to the Apostles Creed, or some other short Summary of the Christian Covenant, is required either of the Parties baptized, or their Parents, if they are Infants: And then Water is poured in the *Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, without any signing with the Cross, or any other Addition, saving a Charge to the Parties baptized about an Holy Life, or to their Parents about their Education, &c. and a serious Thanksgiving to Almighty GOD, for his rich Mercy and Grace to sinful Man, through Jesus Christ his Son: And they baptize them not into a Party, but into Christianity, as it is delivered in the Holy Scriptures.

THE other Sacrament of the *Eucharist* is ordinarily administred amongst them once a Month. Their Administration of it consists in breaking of Bread, and pouring out the Wine, and distributing these Elements among the Communicants, after reading the Account of our Blessed Saviour's Institution of that Solemnity, either out of one of the Evangelists, or  
out

out of St. *Paul's* first Epistle to the *Corinthians*; and a serious and devout imploring the Blessing of the great Master of the Feast. During the Time of Receiving the Minister usually endeavours to stir up the Devotion of the Communicants by some suitable Suggestions; and after Participation closes with some serious Admonitions tending to excite to Holiness of Life; and with affectionate Thanksgivings and Praises to God for his rich Mercy and Grace, and singing a Psalm or Hymn. This Sacrament is by some administred in the Evening, but by most at Noon. The Communicants are at Liberty to use their own Posture in the Time of Receiving, tho' a Table-Gesture is most commonly us'd, in Conformity (as is apprehended) to the Practice of our Saviour and his Apostles.

It is commonly pressed upon all baptized Persons, if they stand to their Baptismal Covenant, to come to the Communion publickly, to testify as much, when they arrive at Years of Discretion. Conversation with the Pastor of each Christian Society is expected before the first Communicating, that Satisfaction may be given that such as come to partake of the Holy *Eucharist*, do understand the Nature of their Baptismal Obligation, and are willing to stand to it, and are also sufficiently acquainted with the Nature and Design of the Lord's Supper. The Names of such as desire to join in stated Communion with any Christian Society, are ordinarily first mentioned amongst them, some time before their Admission, that so if any thing unsuitable to a Christian Profession be known in the Life or Conversation of such as offer themselves. Notice may be given, that they may be kept from the Communion, till they have given Satisfaction as to their Regularity and Sobriety. And if any that are Communicants fall into any scandalous Practices, which are well attested, they are in a Brotherly Manner admonished, and suspended from Communion,  
till

till such Time as they are Reformed, when they are readily again receiv'd.

COLLECTIONS are made for the Poor, at the Close of every Communion, and often at other Times of publick Worship; and what is collected is distributed among such as are in Want, by some that are deputed for that Purpose.

THEIR Ministers are supported by the voluntary Contributions of their People, and so are maintained more liberally, or more sparingly, according to the Ability and Affection of their respective Flocks. They visit their People in Time of Sickness or Distress, without expecting Gratuities for their Pains. They pray with them, exhort, and admonish them, according to their Circumstances, when they are under Affliction, or observe their End approaches. They endeavour at such Times to deal with them very closely and faithfully, that they may assist them in building their Hopes upon right Scriptural Foundations; but are fearful of encouraging People to look upon the Eucharist as a *Viaticum*, or certain Pass-port to Heaven, by administring it to the Sick, *in articulo mortis*.

THE Body of the Dissenters look upon themselves to have as clear and full a Right to choose their own Pastors to take care of their Souls, as their Physicians to take care of their Bodies, or their Lawyers to mind their Estates: And therefore they choose their own Ministers within such a Compass, as that they can attend upon their Labours with Convenience, without infilling upon any Limitation not to attend upon others as there may be Occasion, or as may be found to be advantageous.

WHEN Ministers prove scandalous, their People look upon themselves as at Liberty to desert them; and the Neighbouring Ministers taking Cognizance of such Matters, are ready to admonish them so to do, and to encourage them in it, if there be no Reformation,



formation, or if the Scandals were of such a Nature, as not to be repair'd without a remaining Blemish to the Sacred Ministry.

DAYS of Fasting and Prayer, and also of Thanksgiving, are readily observ'd among them, upon the Call of Authority, or upon any particular Emergencies, at their own voluntary Motion, when they apprehend any religious Purposes may be thereby ferv'd.

THEY joyfully own the Ministry of all the Protestant Churches, of whatever Denomination, and look upon their Members as their Brethren. They embrace not only *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*, but all others that hold the Essentials of Christianity, with a Brotherly Affection. They are ready to hold Communion with them as Opportunity shall offer, in token of their Brotherly Love. And they earnestly long and pray for the Time, when Heats upon the Account of lesser Matters being laid aside, it may be hoped there will be a stricter Union, and a stronger Affection among all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity, and are desirous of the common Salvation.

BESIDES those above mention'd, there is a Party of Dissenters who are called *Quakers*, who are a considerable, numerous, well-compacted Body of People, who very much confine their Dealings to those of their own Sortment, and have their stated Yearly Meetings from all Parts: But I am not so well acquainted with them, as to be able to give a just Account of their Principles or Practices.

If there be any Thing else in which I am capable of serving you, you may freely command.

SIR,

*Your Affectionate Brother*

*And Humble Servant,*

Edmund Calamy.

Printed for RICHARD HETT.

1. LAY Nonconformity justified: In a Dialogue between a Gentleman of the Town in Communion with the Church of *England*, and his Dissenting Friend in the Country. The eighth Edition. Price 6 *d.*

2. A Defence of the Dissenting Ministry, and Presbyterian Ordination; being an Answer to two Pamphlets: The one intitled, The Invalidity of the Dissenting Ministry the other. The Rational and Moral Conduct of Mr. *Peirce* examin'd, &c. By JAMES PEIRCE: In two Parts; the first Part Price 1 *s.* the second 1 *s.* 6 *d.*

3. The Arraignment and Trial of the late Rev. Mr. *Thomas Rosewell*, for High-Treason; before the Lord Chief Justice *Jefferies*, at the Court of King's-Bench, *Westminster*, in the Year 1684. And the Arguments offer'd in Arrest of Judgment by his learned Council. To which is prefix'd an Account of his Life and Death. Published by *Samuel Rosewell*, A. M.

4. Sermons against Popery, preach'd at *Salters-Hall*, in the Year 1735. in two Volumes: By the following Ministers, *viz.*

JOHN BARKER.

SAMUEL CHANDLER.

Daniel Neal, *M.A.*

GEORGE SMYTH, *M.A.*

SAMUEL WRIGHT, *D.D.*

WILLIAM HARRIS, *D.D.*

OBADIAH HUGHES, *D.D.*

JEREMIAH HUNT, *D.D.*

| JOSHUA BATES.

| JOSEPH BURROUGHS.

| JOHN NEWMAN.

| JABEZ EARLE, *D. D.*

| MOSES LOWMAN.

| BENJAMIN GROSVENOR, *D. D.*

| THOMAS LEAVESLY.

To which is added,

The Absurdity of Persecution for Conscience-sake, in all its Kinds and Degrees. Consider'd in a Sermon preach'd at *Northampton*. By P. DODDRIDGE, *D. D.* Recommended by the Rev. Mr. *Some*, as a proper Appendix to the late Lectures at *Salters-Hall*.