

*The Ministry of the
Dissenters Vindicated.*

by

Edmund Calamy



The MINISTRY *of the* DISSENTERS
Vindicated:

In an ORDINATION

S E R M O N

Preach'd at

AILSBURY,

IN THE

County of *BUCKS;*

On *June* II. 1724.

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of the Ministers that heard it.

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THE
PREFACE.



THE Discourse here published, (which was delivered at the ordination of three dissenting ministers, two of which are employed in the county of Bucks, and the third in the county of Oxon,) relating to episcopacy and presbytery, about which there have been debates of a considerable standing, I think it not improper to introduce it by a few remarks.

IT has long with me been a subject of lamentation, that when the christian faith and doctrine, and a suitable life, (wherein we generally agree) are things of so much greater consequence than matters relating to church-order and

government, the latter should have so much diverted many from that close application to the former, as would have been likely to have turned to the best account: And yet in some circumstances, touching upon these things it is needful, that it cannot well be avoided. In the present case I did but comply with the request of a number of my brethren, in the subject insisted on.

FOR my own part, I have long been of the opinion that Bp Stillingfleet declared for in his *Irenicum*, viz., that no one particular form of church-government, is of divine appointment. I can freely leave it to others, to act in these matters, as they are perswaded in their own minds; best approving, in the mean time, of those, (be they of one denomination or another) that are most for truth and purity, liberty and charity: And I cannot but account it a very melancholy consideration, that so many among us should take pains to set these at variance, and be for shewing their zeal for any one of them, by opposing any of the other three.

IT has oft equally surprized and grieved me, to find any (especially men of sense and learning) that pretend to have a regard to the christian religion, and the credit of the writings of the New Testament (which are the main support of it) of opinion, that there is equal proof for episcopacy, in the ecclesiastical sense of that word, as for the genuineness or divinity of those sacred composures. This, upon the closest consideration, appears to me, a notion of truly dangerous consequence, and that gives a great advantage, to those that are bent upon doing all the prejudice they can,

can, to the case of christianity, and the Holy Scriptures. But the best of it is, it is a notion that is as weak and groundless, as it is preposterous.

FOR besides that our religion is not any thing near so much concerned in the method in which the church is modelled, as in the faith and manners of the disciples of a crucified JESUS, (which the New Testament was chiefly designed to regulate) it may be safely said as to our sacred writings, that (besides collateral confirmation) they are attended with an intrinsick evidence, in their inimitable majesty and authority, and their peculiar aptness to spread truth and purity, liberty and charity amongst mankind; and a superadded evidence also, in the exact fulfilling the predictions they contain, and in their being so punctually verified (from age to age) by his dealings who was the main Author of them; and that both in his ways of providence and grace; and in their admirable effects and consequences, as to the inlightning and sanctifying a degenerate world; nothing like to which could be ever pleaded, with respect to ecclesiastical episcopacy.

OUR Christian Faith stands upon the Scriptures as its bottom: And had but diocesan episcopacy a like foundation, 'tis freely owned 'twould be unreasonable for any that profess a value for our sacred writings, not readily to fall in with it: But till that is made evident, the obligation to it is not so clear, from any other Methinks 'tis high time we should return back to our Bibles, and use and value them more, and lay more stress upon them.

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THE testimony of the fathers of a few of the first centuries is commonly appealed to: But it is but a vain thing to pretend, that that is any thing near so general, clear, or full, for diocesan episcopacy, as for the inspiration of our sacred penmen. Often indeed do they mention bishops, but then they are of another sort from those that were afterwards introduced, as Mr. Boyse has fairly proved, with respect to those of them on whom the greatest stress is commonly laid: And in my opinion no greater service could be done to modern episcopacy, as support is fetched for it from the first writers of the Church, than by returning a candid Answer to his laboured Performance.

WHEN the fathers signify to us, that such and such sacred Books of the New Testament were written by such and such persons, they declare bare fact, and such as is uncontradicted; nay, not disowned in many instances, even by the greatest enemies of Christianity: And when they certify us, that the persons aforesaid wrote by inspiration, we (besides the satisfaction we may get by consulting their writings themselves, and comparing them with other books that were owned to be given by inspiration of GOD in the Jewish Church,) may upon good grounds be the more induced to regard them, because they intimate no more than what the Christian Church not only generally agreed in, but reckoned their safety and happiness to depend upon: Whereas, when they speak of bishops and their powers and rights, in a way that manifestly differs from the account given us of them in the
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sacred Scriptures, we are upon no account obliged to regard them, because of their therein differing from those, whose writings ought to have been a standard to them, as well as to us.

WE have been told over and over, that the Apostles settled episcopacy, and that the Fathers declare as much with one consent: But supposing this true, before any convincing argument could be drawn from thence, it is requisite it should be fairly shewn, what sort of episcopacy they meant, which is far from being self-evident. 'Tis true of a pastoral, but not a diocesan episcopacy. And when 'tis positively asserted, that the Apostles settled the latter of these, not at the first foundation of Churches, but at the latter end of their days, we may very well desire better evidence than is given of it by bishop Pearson, which is merely conjectural, and therefore not to be boasted of in a matter of such importance.

BUT when evidence in such a case as this falls short, to have it insinuated as if certainty about all past matters is affected, and in danger of being destroyed, incredulity likely to be supported, and scepticism to be introduced, if the cause is not yielded, is I think a little hard: At least it would be thought so by any men in their own case. As for Deists and Infidels, I cannot see how they can gain any thing by our questioning the antiquity of this diocesan episcopacy, till it is better proved: Tho' in the mean time there is but too flagrant proof, that it is the matter of their triumph and boasting that our
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holy religion should be represented as standing or falling, with that which they are sensible has so precarious a foundation.

*I am as well satisfied in my own ordination by half a dozen worthy presbyters, as if I had had the hands of as many of the greatest bishops upon the occasion, and cannot see why others may not be well satisfied with it too: And I cannot help thinkingt the great Mr. Howe was much in the right, who being ordained by Mr. Charles Herle at Winwick in Lancashire, with the assistance of those ministers who officiated in the several Chappelries that belonged to his large Parish, was used to say, that this Mr. Herle was a primitive bishop, and the assistants in his several Chappels were his clergy; and that they joyning in laying hands upon him, he thought few in modern times had so truly primitive an ordination as he **.

MAY *truth and purity, liberty and charity,* prevail and abound among all parties in this land, and in all the *Protestant Churches,* and it will be sufficient to make us exceeding happy.

* See the Life of Mr. *John Howe*, prefixed to his Works, pag. 4.

ROMANS X. 15.

— *And how shall they preach, except they be sent?*



WHEN the disciples of CHRIST and their companions, went up and down the world, preaching the gospel to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, it was enquired of them wherever they came, Who it was that sent them? A question of the very same nature was also by the zealous partisans of the church of put to our forefathers, when they contended for a reformation from those corruptions with which christianity had been overspread. The common cry was this, Who was it that sent you to give such disturbance in the christian church, which could do well enough without you? And since this land has been reformed from popery, the church that has been established by law among us, affecting to engross sacred offices and ministrations to her self, and those of her own stamp, has from time to time enquired of those

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that have not been so free to acquiesce in her settlement as was wish'd for; Who sent you forth to preach the gospel, when there is so good provision made by law, of persons to officiate in the sacred ministry, and take care of the several services of it? And as it must be owned that the first preachers of the gospel could not reasonably have expected any regard in their ministrations, if they could not have answered that question; nor the reformers from popery have had any reason to have expected success in their design, if they could not have given a good account of their *mission*: So neither should we, that take upon us to be ministers in such a protestant country as ours, where so much is done towards making provision for the people in a ministerial way, be backward to give an account of the grounds we go upon; that so standers by, as well as they with whom we are concerned, may have reasonable satisfaction given them, that we do not *preach* without being *sent*.

I HAVE been desired to offer somewhat at this time in a narrow compass, in justification of the ministerial *mission*, among those who dissent from the national establishment: And in order to it, shall set myself to give you an account,

- I. Of the absurdity of pretending to *preach* without being *sent*:
- II. Or the chief *Sender* from whom a *mission* in such a case should come;
- III. Of the proper nature of the *mission* that is requisite: And
- IV. Of the evidence of a *divine mission*, that may upon good grounds satisfy the conferences both of ministers and people.

AND when I have gone thro' these things, shall touch upon a variety of particulars, and shew you that we that are *Dissenters*, have that to return in answer to the most material charges that are brought against us, by
those

those that are opposers of our ministry, as may very well be allowed to be satisfactory, to such as will give themselves leave to weigh things fairly and impartially. I begin,

I. WITH the absurdity of pretending to *preach*, without being *sent*. Undoubtedly men may if they will, take upon them to be preachers, without any proper *mission*. There is nothing impossible in the supposition; for it has been done often: And considering how men are disposed, it may be done again, at any time. That which is meant is, That except in cases of extreme necessity this is a thing that is weak and foolish, unreasonable and absurd, hazardous and dangerous: Tho' when a real necessity occurs, that very necessity will justify the mission of those who take upon them to act as ministers; as has been generally owned in the case of *Fruventius* and *Ædesius*, that is mentioned by several of our ecclesiastical historians *.

THE apostle speaking of the priesthood, says, *No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of GOD, as was Aaron.* No man could do it regularly; no man could do it, that considered what he did, and would hope to give a good account of himself: Or else, any man might do it, that swelled with self esteem, and made nothing of order and regularity. He in effect says the same in my *text*, with respect to the gospel ministry, that no man took this honour to himself, without being called of God. *How shall they preach, except they be sent?* that is, With what face can men offer to do it, if there be no real necessity? Or how, if they should, could they expect to do any real service to Religion now, or to be able to give an account of themselves hereafter? Both the priests and the prophets were sent of GOD, under *Moses's* settlement, all along the *Old Testament*: And for any one to venture on the one office or the other, without being called and sent, to such as duly consider things, must appear highly criminal.

* Socrat. Hist. Ec. l. 1. c. 19. Soz. l. 2. c. 24.

WE read of *John Baptist*, who came as it were in the middle space between the *Old Testament* and the *New*, that he was *a man sent from GOD*. And the apostles who were trained up for the gospel ministry by our Lord himself, yet did not preach till he said to them, *Behold, I send you forth*. And GOD complains of it as no small grievance, by his prophet of old, That there were some that he *had not sent, yet they ran; he had not spoken to them, yet they prophesied:* As to whom he declares, *That they should not profit the people at all*. In like manner in the christian church, he that takes upon him the office of a preacher or teacher, without being *called or sent*, has very little reason to expect a blessing. Most heartily therefore, do we that are *Dissenters*, agree with the *Church of England*, in that part of her *XXIII^d Article*, that is thus expressed; *It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of publicly preaching, or ministring the sacraments, in the congregation, before he be lawfully called to execute the same*. And by so doing, we shew that we are as much inclined out of principle, to guard against irregular intrusions into the ministry, and as free to own that an usurpation of the pastoral authority without a *Mission* is blameable, even as themselves: And the truth of it is, we cannot see what satisfaction, either they that are preachers or they that are preached to, can have without it. Both must necessarily be at a wretched loss, and bewildred in confusion.

'TWAS of such only as had a *divine mission*, that our Lord says, *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me*. And it was such only that the apostle had in his eye, when he gave that charge *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account*. And these are the only persons that can in *CHRIST's stead*, *pray men to be reconciled to GOD*.

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THERE are a great many things that are in themselves most certainly very good and proper, and highly needful too, which yet it belongs not to all men to do, and which become improper and irregular, when a man thrusts himself into them of his own head, without any lawful call to be concerned in them. In is very requisite, and altogether necessary for the peace and good order of the community, that flagitious persons should be punished; and yet all that come to the knowledge of their crimes, have not a right to punish them. In like manner it is requisite, that divine offices should be discharged in the christian church; and yet he that takes upon him to do it in the name of GOD, without being *called* and sent, acts without authority, and is a meer intruder; and he is justly liable to be treated as such, if he is not able to give proof of his being authorized thereto, either by a fair call, or a flagrant necessity.

EVERY man indeed has a call from GOD to make religion his business; and all are required to *exhort one another daily*, Heb. iii. 13. *lest any be hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.* Every one is called and bound by his christian baptism, to promote the truth, and set himself against errors that are opposite to the purity of the faith; and to be urgent with his neighbours to do the same. But every one is not *called* to preach the gospel publickly to others, or to administer the sacraments, or exercise discipline. This is a sort of service upon which no man should thrust himself, but everyone that is that way inclined should wait till he is called to it: And when he has a lawful *call*, he may, warrantably expect a blessing, but not before.

AND yet I must own, I dare not say with some, that none can believe, but under the preaching of a regular ministry. It is true it is queried, in the very clause preceding that on which I am now discoursing, *How shall they believe, without a preacher?* And it is plain, there is but little reason for it ordinarily to be expected, that persons should believe unto salvation
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without the help of a gospel ministry: And yet upon supposition persons should be any way brought to true faith, without any help from ministers; we have no occasion as I know of to be apprehensive, that that is any such defect as will be a bar to their salvation. I go on,

II. To consider the *Sender*, from whom the *Mission* in such a case as this should come. This all agree, is the Lord JESUS CHRIST. To him it belongs to six ordinances to be administred in his church, to send and authorize persons to administer those ordinances, to give rules to be followed in their ministrations, to specify the qualifications that are requisite in the ministerial office, to furnish with suitable gifts and abilities for it, and to crown faithful labourers with success in it. He is *Lord of the harvest*, and to him are we ordered to *pray*, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. He is given to be *head over all things to the church*: And it becomes us to take things as he has fixed and managed them, for the benefit of the church which is his body. 'Twas he that *gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers*, (but it is observable no *bishops* are mentioned distinct from these) *for the work of the ministry*, &c: And none come with authority, whom he does not send. He has told us expressly that he is *the door*, and that *he that entreth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber*. It is true we are elsewhere told, that *the Holy Ghost makes men bishops or overseers to feed the church of God*: But he acts but as our SAVIOUR's deputy in this affair, and supplies his place. All true ministers in any part of the church, are properly CHRIST's ministers, and of his sending, and act by his authority. The *vineyard is his*; and to him it belongs to *send labourers into it*; And none can have a right

Matth. ix. 38.

Eph. i. 21.

Eph. iv. 11,
12.

John x: 1, 9.

Acts xx, 28.

Matth. xx. 2.

right to officiate in holy things that have it not from him.

AND it may very well, be allowed to be a most comfortable thought to such as give way to consideration, that ministers are of CHRIST'S sending, because of a double character (among others) which he has belonging to him. He is one that we may be assured, will *have mercy and not sacrifice*; and he is one that *lays very little stress upon circumstances, so the end that is aimed at be but secured*.

HE is one I say, that *will have mercy and not sacrifice*; and herein the scripture is exceeding plain. He is more for compassion than any outward rites, and has made no settlement that has any tendency to insnare mankind. Never can he (whatever it may have been as to some of his followers) be for excluding men from his favour, or sending them to hell, for want of a formality that has no tendency to make them a jot the better.

AND then, he is also one that *lays very little stress upon circumstances, so the end that is aimed at be but secured*. When his disciples, while he was yet with them, *saw one casting out devils in his name, they were presently for forbidding them, because he followed not with them*.

But he said unto them, Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us. They were for discouraging the poor man, and running him down, notwithstanding, that what he did was plainly to our Saviours honour, and beneficial to mankind, and tended to weaken Satan's kingdom. They disowned him, because he did not bear the same stamp, and was not off just in the same mold with themselves: But our Lord JESUS declared himself of another mind, and blamed them for their over officiousness, and narrow-spiritness, and charged them not to offer to discourage one that was carrying on the very same design with themselves, tho' in a different way; and that would not fail of meeting them in the same end. *He, says he,*

Matth. ix. 13.
xii. 7.

Luke ix. 49,
50.

he that is not against us, is for us; and therefore ought to be countenanced by us. We have no need (says he) to cast off any of our friends, that are embarked in the same interest with us, when they are comparatively so few in number; while at the same time our enemies are so numerous and subtle, and so vehemently set against us. And at another time, when the *Pharisees*, who in external things were much more nice and strict than our Lord himself, quarrelled with his disciples, for going contrary to their traditions in the way of observing the sabbath, he plainly laid unto them, *The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*: thereby intimating, that mans real good was more to be minded, than any positive institution, tho' it had a divine original.

FROM hence I think we may very warrantably conclude, That tho' our Lord was for sending ministers into his church, yet he designed the ministry for the church, and not the church for the ministry; and that he had more regard to the end for which the ministry was designed, than to any formality in the *mission* of such as were called to it. And upon his scheme, (as far as we can judge of it by the writings of the *New Testament*) it would be better by far, to have persons officiate as ministers that are well qualified for it, tho' no ministers at all were concerned in separating them to that office, than to have no ministers at all. And if so; 'tis certainly much better to have well qualified persons separated to the ministerial office, by inferior ministers, that have no superior character, than to have no ministers at all. The main end of the ministry is the saving the souls of men. 'Tis in order to this, that he has appointed that some shall be pastors and teachers to others. And he must be of a quite different mind from our Blessed Saviour, that does not think it much better to have pastors duly qualified without formalities, than to have poor sinners to be left to perish without instruction, because such formalities either cannot be had, or are neglected.

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AND since it is CHRIST that is the Sender of ministers into his church, we may I think easily gather, that he will send none that are unqualified, as too many bishops have done in our established church, as well as in other churches. He will send no blind guides, that are incapable of leading men in the ways of truth and holiness, tho' others may do if, pretending to act by his commission. When he sends labourers, he fits them for the harvest he has prepared: And if any that pretend to be ministers are altogether unfit for service, we may be assured they were not of his sending. He will send none but such as he inclines to the work of the ministry, and to choose it (with all its difficulties and discouragements) before any employment whatsoever: He will send none, but he will give some evidence that 'tis he that sends them, and enable them to give some evidence of it also to others. And then, he will send none but such as he will favour in some measure with his presence, and be ready to own and bless. For he has given his word, that he; will be with his ministers whom he sends, *always even to the end of the world.* And Mat. xxviii. 20. if he is but with them, and does but own them with his gracious preference, it comparatively matters but very little, who disowns or slights them, or pours contempt upon them.

'TIS true, they that are very well qualified for ministerial service, may sometimes unhappily meet with such usage, as may tend to abate and lessen the fruit of their labours, as well as the comfort of their service: But CHRIST'S approbation at the last, upon which they may depend, if it was he that sent them, and they are but faithful in his service, will not fail of making them an abundant amends. And now,

III. Let us consider the nature of the mission that is needful. This imports a warrant for undertaking the ministry, and discharging the several services of it. To this a man should be *lawfully called*. And that *Article of the Church of England*, that I cited under the first head says, that *those we ought to judge lawfully*

called and sent, which he chosen and called to this work, by men who have publicly authority given unto them, in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard. And in this also, we readily concurr with them. But then, that we may avoid confusion, we are for distinguishing not only between an *immediate* call or *mission*, and one that is but *mediate*; but also, between mens having authority given them in the congregation, to send ministers into the LORD'S vineyard, *by the law of CHRIST*, and according to scripture rule and precedents, and by the law of the land, or according to ecclesiastical usage.

I. WE are here for distinguishing, between an *immediate*, and a *mediate* call or *mission*. Our blessed Lord JESUS in his own person sent his apostles directly into the ministry, delivered their commission to them with his own hands, and gave them orders about their service with his own mouth.

Joh. xx. 21. As my Father, says he, hath sent me, even so send I you. This was plainly an *immediate mission* and none had any thing to do in it, but the person sending, and the persons sent. After he had left this earth, and committed the care of his concerns

here, to his apostles, under the SPIRIT'S conduct, they *ordained elders in every church*, where they published the christian faith, and gained converts. And they gave it in charge to those whom they ordained,

Acts xiv. 23. to commit the things which they heard from them among many witnesses, to faithful men, that were able to teach others also. And this was a *mediate mission*; that is, our Lord JESUS, in these cases, conveyed his commission to his ministers, through the hands of others: And he continues doing so, to this very day.

As to St. Paul, who was the great apostle of the Gentiles, his case was peculiar. He had an *immediate mission*, and one that was *mediate* too. He had an *immediate mission* from CHRIST himself; and therefore begins one of his celebrated Epistles in this manner:

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ner: *Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by JESUS CHRIST.* Galat. i. 1. CHRIST called him to ministerial work and service directly from heaven. For we are told he appeared to him in his way to the city of *Damascus*, and said to him, *I have appeared to thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear to thee, delivering thee from the people, and the Gentiles unto whom I now send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light.* And then he had a mediate mission too. For whereas there were in the church that was at *Antioch*, certain prophets and teachers, we have an account that as they ministered to the LORD and fasted, the HOLY GHOST said, *separate now unto me Barnabas and Saul, for the work, whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.* We see the ordinary teachers of the church at *Antioch*, concurred with the prophets in this ordination, and that by the direction of the HOLY GHOST. And if they could send forth and ordain an apostle, I think, by the way, 'tis highly absurd for any to pretend that they were incapable of ordaining such ordinary teachers as themselves. I am very sensible that some are backward to allow this to be a proper instance of ordination, because St. *Paul* was ordained before by our LORD himself. But others think * it was GOD's design hereby to give a pattern or model of ordination, to the churches of the *Gentiles* that would afterwards arise. And in such a case as that, it was no more improper, for St. *Paul* to submit to be ordained by prayer and imposition of hands, notwithstanding his being ordained before, than it was for our Lord JESUS himself to be baptized, notwithstanding that the great end of baptism could not be answered in his case. However it is observable, that both St. *Chry-*

Galat. i. 1.

Acts xxxvi.
15, &c.Acts xiii.
1, 2, 3.

* See Dr. *Lightfoot*, Vol. I. p. 289.

and *Oecumenius*, do assert that St. *Paul* was ordained to the apostleship at *Antioch*, and *Bellarmino* † take it from them, *Alapide* and *Clarius* are of the same mind. Dr. *Hammond* also falls in with them; and so doth Dr. *Allestree* ‡ and many others.

No man can question, but that they that had an *immediate mission* from CHRIST JESUS, were *lawfully called and sent* into his vineyard. And there is in reality, as little reason to question, that they who can pretend to no more than a *mediate mission* are yet as *lawfully called*, if they are invented by those whom he has authorized to be ordainers of ministers. For he having in his word signified his pleasure that there should be ministers in his church, fixed the necessary qualifications, and pointed to the way in which they shall be separated for that work and service; when they whom he hath appointed to be ordainers, do set any persons apart for that office, who have the needful qualifications, they may as much be said to be *sent* by CHRIST into the ministry, as if he had called them to it by a voice directly from heaven: And if any oppose or obstruct them, in the execution of their office-according to the rule of the gospel, they interpretatively oppose and fight against CHRIST himself. But then,

2. WE are also for distinguishing in this case, between mens having authority given them in the congregation, to send ministers into the LORD's vineyard, *by the Law of CHRIST*, and according to scripture rules and precedents, and their having authority given them for the same purpose, *by the law of the land*, or according to ecclesiastical usage. Having this authority from CHRIST, by the significations of his will in the writings of the *New Testament*, is most certainly sufficient to all christian ends and purposes. But to have publick authority given in this case, by the laws of the several countries in which they

† De Rom. Pont. L. 1. c. 23. †See his Consecration Sermon, *Jan.* 6. 1660, on *Acts* xiii. 2.

they that are called to be ministers are to exercise their office; is also desirable. To say 'tis necessary, is to leave the church in an utter incapacity of having ministers, without the countenance of the magistrate. But tho' to have the law of the land, approving or confirming ministers in their office or call, must be owned to have its advantages, yet is it not necessary, either to the truth and divinity of their call, or the validity of their ministrations. They that have a *legal mission* (or a legal confirmation rather, of their *mission*) may have emoluments and preferments secured to them, they may have more followers, be treated more honourably, and more plentifully provided for: But they that have a *scriptural mission*, have all that is necessary to the approving themselves to GOD, and warranting their ministerial actions.

WHEN bishop Burnet; speaks of the definition given in the XXIII^d *Article* forementioned, of those that are *lawfully called and sent*, he says, That *this it put in very general words, far from that magisterial stiffness in which some have taken upon them to dictate in this matter* * Which is an argument of the wisdom of the compilers. But then when he comes to explain the matter, he by *lawful authority*, is for understanding *that rule which the body of the pastors or bishops and clergy of a church, shall settle, being met in a body, under the due respect to the powers that GOD shall set ever them*, This is *stiff* enough in all conscience, and is far from leaving the same latitude as the *Article* it self does. That says, *Those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work, by men who have publicly authority given unto them, in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the LORD's vineyard*. And this must most certainly hold true, of those to whom, CHRIST *gives authority in the congregation* by his word, as well as of those, to whom men *give authority in the congregation*, either by their laws or canons, or both together. And more than this amounts to, do not desire. And now

IV. LET

* Burnet's Expos. of the XXXIX *Articles*. pag. 257, 258.

IV. Let us go on to consider what evidence of a divine *mission* may upon good grounds satisfy the consciences both of ministers, and of those that attend upon their labours. The celebrated Monsieur Claude writing in defence of the *reformers*, against a noted popish treatise, intituled, *Just prejudices, against the Calvinists*, gives it as his judgment, † That a call to the ministry, is but a relation that results from the agreement of three wills, viz. that of GOD, that of the church, and that of the person called. For, he says, the consent of these three make all the essence of the call; and the other things that may be added to it, as examination, election, and ordination, are preambulatory conditions or signs, and external ceremonies, which more respect the manner of the call, than the call itself. Where there is good evidence that all these three concur, there can be no reason for any remaining dissatisfaction: And therefore I shall touch upon each distinctly.

As to the will of those that are called to ministerial work and service, that is plainly necessary, and it is sufficiently declared, both in the established church, and among us that dissent from it. That no one can or ought to be forced, to enter into the ministry, without his full consent, we readily, agree: And perhaps it would be no easy thing to vindicate the proceedings of some of the fathers, who were for constraining some persons to submit to be ordained, whether they

would or no. A man *should desire*
1 Tim. iii. i. *the office*, before he is put into it.

And I must own, I take our method with respect to this, to be more clear, and satisfactory, and unexceptionable, than that which is used in the established church. Among them, it is demanded of the person to be ordained, *Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the HOLY GHOST, to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve GOD, for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people?*

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† *Defence of the Reformation.* Part pag. 59, 60.

A question, that I doubt some that it is put to, find if no easy thing to answer with a good conscience. Whereas with us, 'tis only queried of the party to be ordained, *Whether his intentions and ends in desiring to enter into this calling are sincere, and such as they ought to be?* Which question is not so captious as the other, and may be answered with much less difficulty.

As to *the will of the church*, and their desire and consent that such persons should be ordained, (on which the learned *Blondel* * shows us, so great a stress was laid in the primitive times) there is this provision made under our establishment, That it is signified publickly to all the people that are present upon such occasions, that *if there be my that know any impediment or notable crime in persons presented, for the which they ought not to be admitted, they should come forth in the name of GOD, and shew what the crime or impediment is.* Whereas among us, the desire of the people among whom the persons that offer themselves to be ordained, have with acceptation officiated for a longer or shorter time, as candidates, is often signified and expressed: And this is as plain a proof of the consent of the church in the case, as can be pretended to be found in the other method; and perhaps upon some accounts it may be preferable.

AND then, as to *the will of GOD* in the case, we agree on both sides, that that is nor now any more immediately and expressly made known to the parties concerned, but other men are intrusted with signifying it. And for our part, we must acknowledge, we cannot see why that will is not sufficiently notified in such a case as this, when persons have their commission delivered to them, by any such as were themselves ministers, and have kept their character unearned. With us, these are the men, *that have publick authority given them in the congregation, by him that called them into the ministry, to call and send ministers into the LORD's vineyard.*

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* De Jure Plebis in Regimine Ecclesiastico.

As to the established church, we condemn them not for ordaining persons to the ministry by superior bishops, to whom the law of the land has confined them, if they would partake of the benefits and emoluments of the establishment. In the mean time, we (expecting no share in these) are content to be ordained by *the presbytery*; which is therefore the more satisfactory to us, because we find it was the practise even of the apostolick church, according to the idea of it with which the scripture furnishes us; as appears from St. *Paul's* saying concerning *Timothy*, That he received his ministry by *the laying*
¹ *Tim. iv. 14.* *on the hands of the presbytery.* This we take for a sufficient notification of the will of God in such a case, and they that refuse to own it such, as far as we can judge, are very unreasonable.

'Tis true, the very same apostle, who in the *text* cited, speaks of the *laying on of the hands of the presbytery*, says to *Timothy* in another place,
² *Tim. i. 6.* *Stir up the gift of GOD which is in you, by the putting on of my hands.* Many think it was the gift of the HOLY GHOST which the apostle meant here; and therefore are willing to suppose, the same also might be meant in the other *Text*. But the different connexion of the two passages, seems to give another view. For in the latter place, the apostle is speaking of *Timothy's* descent and good education, with the advantages that attended it, of which the gift of the HOLY GHOST after his baptism, must be owned one of the most remarkable. Whereas in the former place, he is speaking of his ministerial work and service; and then mentioning a *gift given him by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*, it is most natural to understand it, of his ordination to the ministerial office.

HOWEVER the two *texts* may be fairly enough accommodated, by saying, That both St. *Paul* and the presbytery, (that is, all the elders and pastors that were present) laid their hands on *Timothy* when he
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was ordained: *St. Paul* as president in the adtion, and the other pastors as collegucs. And from hence the learned *Daillé* on the place, gathers two things:

1. THAT a *presbyter* and a *bishop* were of the same office, order, and ministry, in the apostolick church; as is also evident few many other passages in the New Testament. For the laying on of hands, which is the chief advantage that those of the Hierarchy reserve to a bishop above a presbyter, is here expressly ascribed to presbyters; *St. Paul* declaring that the society of presbyters or elders laid hands upon *Timothy*, and that together with himself, he associating them to himself in this action. And therefore he cries out, *Who are you, O men, who of your own authority, have taken this right from those to whom St. Paul left the enjoyment of it? And who judge those hands that had the honour to be joyned with those of the apostle upon the head of Timothy, unworthy to come near you? Be you what you will in other respects, your authority is too short, to deprive them of a right which this great minister of JESUS CHRIST ascribed to them. Timothy was mre than any of you bishops are, and yet the company of presbyters had a part in his ordination, and laid hands upon him. Say then what you will, there is no bishop in the church, but what a company of presbyters may lawfully consecrate by laying on of their hands. And as for the contrivance, says he, of some of your hierarchichal men, who to avoid this blow, change the presbyters spoken of here and elsewhere in the New Testament, into bishops of their own sort, that is to say, prelates that have jurisdiction over presbyters, 'tis a fiction of their own minds, which they lend to the sacred writers, against all appearance of reason and truth.*

2. He gathers also, That there was a great simplicity in the ordination of the first ministers of the church, which was managed only with the laying on of hands and prayer, in opposition to the great heap of ceremonies, that are partly vain, and partly superstitious, and unworthy of christian gravity, all derived either from Paganism or Judaism, which are used in the church

of Rome, in consecrating bishops and ministers, according to the direction of the pontifical. And for this reason also, a lover of true primitive simplicity, may very well be amazed, that there should be any that call themselves Protestants, (and much more that it should be so in that which is boasted of as the best constituted church in the world) that should give the preference to such ordinations as theirs, that are so justly exceptionable, before such ordinations as ours, in which as there is nothing foreign that is added, so there is nothing can be pretended to be wanting, except it be the hand of a superior bishop, which never yet was proved from scripture to be necessary or expedient, where there is the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

IN a late dissertation upon *the Validity of the Ordinations of the English* *, written in *French*, by a divine of the church of *Rome*, and published the very last year, it is over and over asserted, That *in order to judge of the validity of ordination, we must distinguish between what is essential to ordination, and what is not so*. Tho' this is a thing very plain in itself, and that has been oft asserted before, and not without reason, yet I the rather choose to cite this author, because I find several of the established church, have a good opinion of his performance, and considerable expectations, as to the effects it may produce. Now according to this maxim, our *mission* and *ordination* as far as I can judge is clear: For we want nothing that the scripture represents as essential, either to a *valid mission*, or a *regular ordination*.

THE things on which the scripture lays most stress in ordination, and which therefore must be most essential to it, relate either to *the qualifications of the persons ordained, or the circumstances of their ordination, or the character of the ordainers*.

* Dissertation sur la Validite des Ordinations des Anglois; en 2 Vol. Oct. à Bruxelles 1723.

As to the qualifications of the persons that are ordained, in which St. *Paul* is very particular, we are free that all the world should there judge between the established church and us. Without any undue assuming, we therein pretend to take as much care as they do, so that there is not any remarkable or scandalous deficiency among us: At least there is nor any such cause of complaint, as is made by the late bishop of *Sarum*, in his *Discourse of the Pastoral Care*, with respect to those that are of the national church. Companions I am sensible are apt to grate; and yet sometimes they may be needful. St. *Paul* thought so, when to check his *Jewish* antagonists, who reproached him with contemptible weakness, he compares himself with them, and cries out, Are they so and so? *so am I*; and in some things, he even gives himself the preference. In like manner, we that are forced to dissent from the national establishment, with respect to the characters of those that are ordained for the ministry both among them and us, may say with safety: Are they regular and sober in their lives and conversations, apt to teach, and likely to be examples to the flock? so are we. Have they had a good education, and behaved themselves well in the whole course of it? so have we. Have they gotten a competent knowledge of the tongues, of rational learning, of the Holy Scriptures, and of doctrinal and practical Divinity? so have we. Are they pretty generally in the interest of the Civil Government under which we live, and likely to prove firm in their adherence to the Proreastant Succession, for the settlement of which, we have all so much reason to be unfeignedly thankful? so are we; and that universally, and without exception. Thus far I hope we stand our ground.

¹ *Tim.* iii.
7, &c.

² *Cor.* ix.
22, 23.

To come then to *the circumstances of ordination*; we know of none on which the Scripture lays any stress, but *imposition of hands*, and *prayer*, with *fasting*: And these are not neglected by us, and we hope we are as careful in them, as those who reckon them-

selves so much above us; excepting some few among us, that question the warrantableness of retaining the rite of laying on of hands, since those extraordinary gifts which at the first rise of Christianity, were commonly bestowed upon the use of that outward sign, have been withdrawn: And these for my part, I dare not condemn, or disown for brethren, tho' I look upon them as herein under a mistake, which I should be glad they could rectify.

THERE is yet another circumstance which some lay stress upon, and that is, That we meet with no Ordination in Scripture, in which there was not a concern of some one superior to pastors and Teachers. And in reality, that the apostles and evangelists, and prophets too, should be concerned in an affair of this nature, when it was managed where and while they were present, was most certainly natural and proper: But that I: follows from thence, that either apostles, prophets or evangelists, must be continued in the Church to perpetuity; or that pastors and teachers might not ordain others alone, when such extraordinary temporary officers were either absent, or wholly withdrawn and no longer remaining in the Church, has never (as I know of) been proved as yet.

AND now, nothing remains to be spoken to, but *the character of the ordainers*; my enlarging upon which seems needful, because of the controversy that hangs upon it, in which our brethren have not dealt so friendlyly with us, as (all things being considered) might I think have been expected.

THEY tell us, The ordainers should be bishops: In which we readily concur with them, if they thereby mean scriptural bishops, that is pastors of christian congregations, or worshipping assemblies: But if they thereby mean, such bishops as have many churches or congregations under their government, we must confess we know of no necessity of it, either from Scripture or the most primitive antiquity: Nor can we find bishops of that sort, for some ages, in any of the Churches of CHRIST. When they tell us

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over and over, That episcopacy was the primitive government of the Church, and of apostolical institution, we own it as to *pastoral*, but not as to *diocesan episcopacy*, which are widely different: And we are therefore the less inclined to the latter, because it bids fair for the justling out the former. We can't see how from the bare names of bishops in scripture times, any thing can be concluded in favour of prelacy, till the power of those bishops, the extent of their dioceses, and the quality of their under officers are adjusted.

WE are indeed for a concern of the pastors of christian congregations in the affair of ordination, both because they are reasonably to be supposed competent judges of the qualifications of the candidates; and also because they are to act in concert with them afterwards in matters of common concernment; and also because the Scriptures don't mention any as laying on of hands to ordain, who were not themselves dignified with the ministerial office, when they inverted others with it. But as to an higher character, where's the need of it?

AMONG the *Jews* every one that was himself ordained, had the power of ordination; and I cannot see why it should be otherwise amongst us *Christians*; Nor would it be an easy thing to give a good reason, why he that is authorized to teach in the Church, may not commit that doctrine that has been intrusted with him, to others; or why he that is himself empowered to administer the Sacraments, may not ministerially invert others with the same power.

As for the commission to *go and teach all nations, &c.* that makes no difference at all, between ordination, and other parts of the ministerial office. If we judge by that, presbyters have as real a power to ordain, as to preach the gospel, baptize, or administer the LORD's supper. Nor are preaching, and administering the Lord's-supper, offices that are really inferiour to ordination. Had that been the chief part
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Mat. xxviii.
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of the work of ministers, it is but reasonable to suppose it would have had some particular notice taken of it in the commission; whereas neither that, nor administering the LORD's supper is so much as mentioned: And yet we may safely affirm, that neither the one nor the other of them are greater ministerial acts, than the teaching and baptizing that are particularly mentioned: And therefore, I think we may gather, that they that are impowered for the one, are so also for the other.

WHEN therefore, they that are of the established church, tell us that we have usurped the ministry; our answer is, that we have only made use of a lawful right which GOD gave to his church, of ordaining ministers by ministers; and we plead the ministerial commission as our warrant, which is given to ministers as such, and not to apostles or evangelists, or any superior order only: And here we think ourselves safe notwithstanding their clamours. And when they go to frighten us, by comparing us with *Corah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram*, whom the earth swallowed up alive for revolting against *Moses* and *Aaron*, as some have done, insinuating that we can reasonably expect no other than to be dealt with as they, we conceive they strangely forget themselves, carry the matter much too far, and instead of laying any foundation for our conviction, really make themselves ridiculous.

WHEN they object, that by this course we bid defiance to the episcopal order, which was for a long time in sole possession of the power of ordination; we answer, that we never yet could see it proved that this confinement of the power of ordination, to bishops as a superior order, is founded on any divine right.

WHEN they in proof of that, alledge the epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, as appropriating the office of ordination to persons superior to presbyters; we answer that the argument drawn from those epistles depends wholly upon their dates, in which bishop *Pearson* widely differs from all the learned men that went before him. And since his sentiment upon that head was so
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singular, and wholly made up of conjectures, we must be excused if we the less regard it, and take it for but a weak support of a matter on which so great a stress is laid. * And besides, the rules themselves that are given in those epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, about ordination, are far from confining that service to persons of their superior character of *evangelists*, that were to supply the place of the apostles in their absence. They were indeed to do this as to ordination, at *Ephesus* and in *Crete*, while they continued there; but it no way from thence appears, but that when superiour officers were withdrawn, any ministers had a right and warrant to ordain others to the sacred ministry, when they found the needs of the church required it.

WHEN they talk to us of a clear *succession*, and the necessity of it, which is exceeding common with them, we freely tell them, that we have among us a *succession of doctrine* as well as they, and I hope we shall be careful to keep it from one age to another. And as to a *succession of persons*, we have that also, as far as it is any way needful. For when by the *Act of Uniformity* that took place in 1662, 2000 ministers were at once ejected and silenced, they thought themselves in duty bound, to ordain others to the same office with themselves, that so they whose consciences would not allow them wholly to acquiesce in the pastoral care of those that succeeded them, might not remain without ministers. And a good number of the ministers then ejected, had episcopal ordination.

PERHAPS it will be said, that the bishops by whom they were ordained, did not give them power to ordain, tho' they did give them power to preach and administer the sacraments. But to that we answer, that ordainers do not properly give power to those on whom they lay their hands, either for the
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* See Mr. *Omen's* Defence of Scripture-Ordination, against the Exceptions of T. G.

one or for the other, but the power is from CHRIST; And if CHRIST when they were ordained, gave them a power to ordain, it matters not what was the design or intention of the ordainers, who had nothing to do to withhold it, nor could they hinder their having it, when they set them apart to the work and office of the ministry.

AND then as for those among the ejected ministers that had not episcopal ordination, but were ordained after bishops were put down, they had such for their ordainers, as did themselves receive orders from bishops. And therefore our succession is as clear as theirs. But how the episcopal character, as meant of diocesan bishops, can be so essential, as to invalidate or nullify, or lessen the value of orders given without it, we cannot imagine.

IT must I confess be owned that from the time of the council of Nice, ordination was reserved to superiour bishops: But from the beginning it was not so. *Jerom* says, that in his days, (that is threescore years after when superior episcopacy was got to its height) the bishop did nothing which a presbyter did not, (or was reckoned not to have power to do,) excepting ordination. But then he proves that bishops and presbyters were formerly the same, (that is were so, not only in name and title, but office too, without saying which he says nothing to the purpose:) And in proof of it he urges the very same arguments as we commonly draw from *Phil. i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. Acts xx. 28.* and *Tit. i. 7*: And then he adds, that the choosing of bishops to set them above presbyters, after the times of the apostles, was to hinder the Schisms that might arise from the equality of presbyters, each drawing the church of CHRIST after him *. So that the distinction between bishops and presbyters, not being founded on the word of GOD, and the canon or regulation that reserves the ordination of presbyters to superiour bishops only, being but humane, and not divine, is
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* Epist. ad Evagr.

immutable: And there may be good reasons for varying from it. And such reasons we dissenters have in this case, as we think cannot easily be answered, and ought not to be slighted.

NOT being able to satisfy our consciences, after the best inquiries we can make, to be wholly confined to the worship of the national church, (which has several things attending it. the lawfulness whereof appears to us to be questionable) we have a right to form separate assemblies for divine worship. For we must not live without divine worship, nor must we *forsake the assembling of ourselves together. That is, indeed, the manner of some, and of but too many:* But we are freely warmed against it by the apostle, as a thing of most pernicious consequence. And yet much less are we to acquiesce in what our consciences are not satisfied in upon enquiry, which would be the way to be self-condemned. We have therefore both a natural and scriptural right, to assemblies by ourselves for the worship of the Great GOD. And at length, after other methods had been tried, and great severity used for many years to little purpose, we have also the allowance of the law of the land, and our legislators have in this practise kindly taken us under their protection; which our fathers that went before us would have esteemed a great mercy: And if we do not endeavour to express our gratitude for it both to GOD and men, we shall be inexcusable. And if we have a right to assemblies by ourselves for the worship of Almighty GOD, we have a right also to ministers to carry on that worship among us, according to the gospel rule. And since we cannot expect to have ministers to *preach* to us, *except they be sent*, we must take the method to which the word of GOD directs us, in order to the having some *lawfully called and sent*, that is, *chosen and called to this world, by men who have publick authority given unto them, in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's Vineyard.* Heb. x. 25.

IT is indeed grievous to many of us, that a number of our countrymen, who have a great fondness for
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superior bishops, should be prejudiced against us in our ministerial service, for want of their laying on hands upon us in our ordination: And for that reason, tho' we are far from thinking their concurrence necessary, we yet gladly should have applied ourselves to their Lordships, (who Bp. *Burnet* says, *keep the Doors of the Sanctuary*) and been thankful for their laying hands on us in ordination, had they but been free to have given us orders without any unscriptural clogs and impositions, any *oath* or *subscription*: But when that could not be hoped for, we think we may very warrantably desire to be excused, if we took that liberty which our SAVIOUR left us. of receiving ordination from such pastors of churches as were free to lay hands upon us, without requiring our compliance with such terms as were unscriptural. And we humbly conceive that the very Act of Parliament which allows us our worshipping assemblies, leaves us also free liberty to provide ourselves with ministers to officiate in those assemblies, according to the direction of the sacred Scriptures: And therefore out of respect to the legislature, methinks our brethren whose sentiments differ from ours, should be the more sparing in their reflections upon us upon these Occasions.

THE generality of the dissenters are not however, such enemies to episcopacy, as they that are under the establishment commonly represent them. For besides that our fathers at the time of the *Restoration* in 1660, would have freely submitted to Bishop *Usher's Reduction*, and have acquiesced in such an episcopacy as should not have overthrown the pastoral power of presbyters, so neither would most of those that are risen up in their room, scruple the ordinarily restraining ordination to presidents amongst presbyters, or bishops, provided they pretended not to assume it by divine right, nor clog it with impositions that are unscriptural. And to speak the plain truth, presidents among presbyters were all the bishops which the church had for several ages, even after some difference was brought in between bishops and presbyters: Nor did they any farther differ than Rectors of Parish-Churches and their Assistant Curates, as Mr. *Boyse*, has proved

I think unanswerably, in his *Clear Account of the Ancient Episcopacy*, in the time of *Clement, Ignatius, Irenæus, Cyprian* and *Jerem*, and the rest of the fathers *. After that bishops were distinguished in the church from presbyters, they for some time were no more than the senior pastors of single congregations, that claimed only a primacy of order in the council of presbyters, and first laid on their hands in ordination. And superiority of bishops above presbyters was not generally esteemed a superiority of order and office; and it was ascribed to no higher original than human constitution, by *Jerom, Austin, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Sedulius, Primasuis*, and *Ambrose* among the ancients, as well as by *Cranmer* † and others among our first reformers.

AND in fact, presbyters have ordained as well as bishops. *Euty chius* patriarch of *Alexandria*, who flourished about the year 933, gives us an account that *Sr. Mark* setting up *Ananias* to be patriarch of that church, established twelve presbyters with him to the end, says he, that when the See should become vacant, it should be filled by one of them, and that the eleven that remained should lay their hands on him, and bids and create the patriarch: And that afterwards they should choose and make another presbyter in his room, that so the number of twelve might remain always complete. And *St. Jerom* who was more ancient than *Euty chius*, tells us, that in the church of *Alexandria*, down from *St. Mark* the evangelist, unto the bishops *Heraclas* and *Denis*, the presbyters always took out one from among themselves, whom they placed in the highest seat, and called him bishop: After the same manner says he, as an army makes an emperor; or as if the deacons should choose one out of themselves, and call him their archdeacon. *Cassian* also relates a story of a certain young man named *Daniel*, who lived among the monks of *Egypt*, about

* Printed in *London* in 8vo. An. 1712. † See *Bp. Stillingfleet's Works*. Vol. II. pag. 402. ‡ *Vid. Seld. Euty ch. Alex. Eccl. Suæ Orig. in Comment. p. 29, 30.*

the year 420, who was first ordained deacon, and afterwards presbyter, by his abbot: called *Paphnuis*, who was himself but a presbyter *. And *Baronius* tells us after *Anastasius* †, that after the death of pope *Vigilius*, in the year 555 *Pelagius* his Successor received his ordination at the hands of two Bishops and a presbyter of *Ostia*, named *Andrew*. Which shews that even then, presbyters were not wholly excluded from the right of ordination. Nor were they absolutely excluded in the 7th century, since we learn from *Bede's* history, that the monks and presbyters in the Isle of *Hy* in *Scotland*, ordained presbyters or bishops and sent them into *England*. ‡

DR. *Sherlock* not disputing this fact, says, || That the church of *Rome* allows the ordination of abbots sovereign, who are only presbyters, to be both valid and regular ††. But Bp. *Floyd* of Worcester †‡ disowns the fact, and positively asserts, that the sense of *Bede* is mistaken, and that what the *Saxon Chronicle* has about this matter is a late addition. And yet as zealous as that great man is to confute this which he calls *the modern fiction of a Scottish ordination by presbyters, which, he says, being formed by popish monks for the honour of their way, has been caught up by some amongst us, to give a colour of antiquity to their innovations,* he yet it seems could with great patience bear *abbesses electing monks to be ordained, and giving them a mission to go forth upon the work, of the ministry, and sitting in Synods,* (which certainly is a much greater innovation than that which he inveighs against) and discover no resentment or uneasiness |||| which I think deserves observation. And after

* Cassiani Collat. 4. cap. 1. † Anastas. de vit. Pontif. pag. 53. ‡ Bed. Hist. Eccl. Gent. Angl. Lib. 3. || Vindic. of some Prot. Princ. pag. 102. †† Abbas si est Presbyter, conferre potest Ordinem Clericalem. Decret. Greg. Lib. 1. Tit. 14. c. 11. Innocent. 3. †‡ Historical Account of Church Government, as it was in *Great-Britain* and *Ireland* when they first received the Christian Religion, |||| See pag. 170, 171, 172.

ter all, there is no such evidence, either that there was a bishop constantly resident at *Hy*, or that they that were sent out of *Scotland* into *England* were ordained by that bishop, as the assurance with which bishop *Floyd* affirms it, would have led us to have expected *. And Sir *James Dalrymple* †, who was no contemptible antiquary, still asserts, that *Aidan's* ordination at *Jcolmkil*, must have been by presbyters and not by bishops.

BUT tho' we should entirely drop these *scottish* ordinations, we have good evidence that since the time referred to with respect to them, the Lollards ‡ here in *England*, and the *Vaudois* in *Piedmont* ||, (those genuine remains of the primitive christians) had no ministers among them, but what were ordained by mere presbyters. And upon the whole, I think we may justly conclude, that the laying on of hands in ordination, is a right that originally belongs to presbyters as such; and that they cannot be altogether deprived of it by human constitution; and that no ecclesiastical canons, or civil laws, can hinder that right from remaining annexed to their, office, or deprive them of making use of it, when the necessities of the Church require them so to do-

It is therefore much to be lamented, that we should have any among us that should run such a length, as to own no church, no ministry, no sacraments, no salvation, without episcopal ordination, in their confined sense. I will here give you the words of Monsieur *Claude*, who was perhaps as great a man as most that the reformed Churches were ever blessed with. *To speak my thoughts*, says he, *it seems to me, that this confident opinion, of the absolute necessity of episcopacy, that owns no church, or call, or ministry, or sacraments, or salvation*

* See Mr. *Owen's* Plea for Scripture Ordination, pag. 153, 154. † Collections concerning the Scottish History. pag. 86. ‡ *Walsing. Hist. Ang. ad An. 1339.* p. 339. || *Perrin. Hist. of Waldens. L. 1.* cap. 13. p. 62.

salvation in the world, where there are no episcopal ordinations, altho' there should be the true doctrine, the true faith and piety there, which would makes all religion depend upon a formality, and on such a formality as is of no other than human institution, cannot be looked upon otherwise, than as the worst character and mark of the highest hypocrisy; a piece of Pharisaism all over: And I cannot avoid having at least a contempt of those kind of thoughts and a companion for those that fill their heads with them *. I the rather cite this worthy divine in this case, because time has been, when he has been pompously produced in opposition to the *English dissenters*. I would hope indeed, that the number of men of this high principle is by this time on the decreasing hand; and that there are not so many that condemn the dissenting ministry, as there has sometimes been. And yet I have some things to offer to the consideration of such as are still inclined that way, and of others also who have less affection for us than they ought to have, tho' they don't run their length: And I shall propose them promiscuously, leaving it to you to make your own use of the hints given, as opportunities may present.

LET it then be considered, That they that appear to beset against us that are *Dissenters*, are much more severe upon us, than either our principle or our temper will allow us to be upon them; or than we can perceive the rule of doing as we would be done unto would justify. As canonical as they pretend to be in their proceedings, we want not for objections against their ordinations, if the canons be regarded †. To us we must own it appears a little too assuming, for their ordainers to pretend to say to those on whom they lay hands, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. Nay, if we were so disposed, we could make more objections than they could easily answer, against a number of those whom they ordain, both as to their
intellectuals

* Defence of the Reformation, part 4. p. 97.

† See Owen's Plea for Scripture Ordination. p. 162
&c.

intellectuals and morals; and also against their common way of managing their examinations, and letters testimonial, and other particulars; (and it is scarce possible it should be otherwise with any than have but read bishop *Burnet's Discourse of the Pastoral Care*;) And yet we are far from condemning them in the lump, as they too commonly do by us. We freely own their *mission*, if they are but suitably qualified; we heartily rejoice in their usefulness; we bid them God-speed; and as truly pray for their success as for our own.

LET it be farther considered, That many of these gentlemen not a little expose themselves and religion too, by laying their main stress under the head of orders, on a thing which they never can prove, and that is, an *uninterrupted succession* from the days of the apostles. This succession has in fact been oft interrupted; and yet they talk of it with as much assurance, as if nothing were more plain and evident. Persons that observe this, are naturally the less apt to regard them in any thing else that they advance; and I doubt some are driven into *scepticism*, and shaken in their foundations. This is very unhappy, and the more so, because it may upon good grounds be asserted, that upon this principle, it is not possible for any minister that is, to know himself, or for another to know him, to be a true minister of JESUS CHRIST. Religion cannot but differ by such things as these.

WITH all; when these unkind brethren of ours, take a liberty to run-down us that are dissenters, and make our *mission* contemptible, they seem quite to forget what is necessary to the defending of their own *mission*, in opposition to those of the church of *Rome*. When it is objected against them by the *papists*, that they have not the inferior orders of *subdeacons*, *acolyths*, *exocists*, *readers* and *porters*, all the answer they have to return is, That *these were only of ecclesiastical institution* *, And when they object against us, that we

* *Burnet's Preface to his Defence of the Ordinations of the Church of England.*

we have not superior *bishops*, we make the very same answer, and say, That they are only of ecclesiastical institution, and we meet not with them in Scripture. Now if their answer be sufficient, ours must be so too; which they seem altogether to forget. Bishop *Burnet* speaking of the objection which *Bonner* made against the ordinations of the *Church of England* in the days of *Q. Elizabeth*, is forced to bring in a distinction, between the validity of ordinations, *as they are sacred performances*, and *as they are legal actions*, with relation to the national constitution *. And if this distinction will bring them off, (as I must own I think it will) it will do us equal service. The *papists* as much run-down their *mission* as they can do ours; and tell them that their ministers have no call, no ordination no succession: And methinks their meeting with such treatment themselves, should learn them to treat others with more candor.

AND yet it is easy to be observed, that they are commonly more favourable to the *papists* than they are to us, notwithstanding that they know we so entirely agree with them, in the same *rule* and *articles of faith*, and the same *substantials of worship*; whereby they give to them who so widely differ from them both in *faith* and *worship*, great matter of boasting. This is plain from their ordaining afresh those that were ordained among us, when they go over to them; whereas if any can prove their being in orders in the *church of Rome*, no farther ordination is insisted on, upon their coming over to the *church of England*. This is touched on with a great appearance of satisfaction, by Abbot *Renaudot* in the *Memorial* he published about the ordinations of our English church †, which he intirely nullified; which *Memorial* is answered, in the late *Dissertation on the Validity of the Ordinations of the English*, which I mentioned before

* See *Burnet* on the XXXIX Articles, p. 377.

† Voyez le Livre de M. L'Abbè *Gould*, intit. *La véritable Croissance de l'Eglise Catholique*, &c. imprimé à Paris chez J. B. *Coignard*. Edit. de 1720. pag. 183.

fore. This abbot in the last *article* of his *Memorial* expresses himself thus; *But*, says he, *it is remarkable, that the very same reproaches that we cast on these gentlemen, (meaning those of the Church of England) on the head of the nullity of their ordinations, they also cast on the French Calvinists, since they allow not their ministers to preach among them, nor discharge any other ecclesiastical function, till they are ordained anew, as being before without any character. They don't*, says he, *take the same method with the apostate priests and monks of the catholick church, (meaning the church of Rome) whom they receive with joy, and with open arms, ordaining them anew, provided they shew them their in good form.* This, as the abbot observes, is remarkable indeed, and we have as much reason to take notice of it as he: But then at the same time it is very shameful and scandalous. Shall they that come as ministers from the sworn enemies of the Reformation be owned, and they that are ordained ministers among *protestants* be disowned? Shall they that spring out of the very loins of Antichrist, (which name the *Homilies* give to the pope) be caressed, and they that had hands laid on them by faithful Gospel-ministers in the mean time be rejected? This methinks does not discover any great zeal for truth, purity, or reformation: This is the ready way to cut ourselves off from the body of the foreign *protestants* to the gratification of such as are intent upon extirpating the northern heresy!

It is methinks .a little hard, that the ordination of persons condemned as *hereticks*, of *arians*, *messalians*, *nestorians*, *pelagians*, *eutychians*, and *monothelites*, should have been all along owned in the Church *, because they retained the essentials of ordination, and ours be rejected as worse than any of them: But for the orders of the most bigorted papists to meet with approbation, and ours in the mean time to be contemned, as far as we can perceive, neither shews judgment nor candour, prudence nor charity in those concerned.

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AGAIN,

* Morin. de Ordin. cap. 10. 11. Exercit. 5.

AGAIN, as for those that: are of the stamp fore-mentioned, let them pretend what they will, they appear not to have that true value for faith, and piety, and real religion, that would become them. If we carefully observe them, we may perceive that many of them while they strain at a gnat can yet swallow a camel. Thus the author of the *Regale & Pontificate*, appears as concerned as if all his religion was going, if an ace was to be abated in the *uninterrupted succession* from the apostles, which seems to have been a fundamental point with him: And yet he could take no small pleasure in the thoughts of a fancied union with the *Gallican Church*, tho' it must have had the worship of images, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, and other errors and impurities attending it. And our famous Mr. *Dodwell* with all his learning, while he left those that were not within his *peculium*, and could not pronounce his *Shibboleth* to the uncovenanted mercy of God, stood up for an immortalizing spirit conferred in Baptism, and so left the rest of mankind, to stand upon a level with the beasts that perish.

FOR my part, tho' I am too sensibly convinced, that the Dissenters are far from being so good as they should be, and I could wish they had not lost much of that spirit of piety, for which they from whom they spring were so eminent and remarkable, yet I am intirely of opinion that had they failed, and had not a succession of well-qualified ministers been kept up among them, real religion would have suffered very considerably all over the land, and I am very well satisfied I am far from being singular in that sentiment. Had we had no ministers among us, but those of the *Established Church*, 'tis with me past question, we had long e're this pretty generally bid *adieu* to afternoon sermons; nay, for ought I know, *Homilies* might have bid fair for the thrusting our preaching, and reading of prayers might by this time have been the only divine-service in many of our churches; and seeking after preferment would almost-universally, have justled out concern for religion,

ligion, and the salvation of the souls of men. And if the Dissenters have in this respect been a preservative, and the publick has the benefit, I think they deserve thanks, and a little regard, from those that have the interest of religion at heart.

BUT why should men that in other things value themselves much upon their improvements beyond those that have gone before them, in sacred matters, (which if they have any reality in them, are certainly the most momentous of any) lay a stress upon little niceties, to the neglect of much greater matters! Bishop *Burnet* owns, that *the true touchstone of a Church, must be the purity of her Doctrine, And the conformity of her Faith with that which CHRIST and his Apostles taught.* And he adds, *That in this the Scriptures are clear and plain, to every one that will read and consider them sincerely and without prejudice* *. And indeed the thing speaks for itself. Certainly it much more concerns all that love and value their souls, to be satisfied that that which is preached to them is truly the word of GOD, than that they by whom it is preached unto them are set apart to the ministerial office with any particular formality. If a man was ordained by the greatest bishop in the universe, nay, by the hands even of an apostle, if he brought another gospel than that which we have received from CHRIST and his disciples, whoever it was that sent him we should have no reason to regard him, we might warrantably turn our backs upon him, and St. *Paul's* caution would therein bear Gal. i. 8. us out. Whereas if a man was ordained but by inferior ministers, if it be the real Gospel of CHRIST which he preaches, it would be ar our peril to refuse to listen to him. Tho' persons may seem to have ever so clear a *mission*, if instead of preaching the truth that is deliv-

* Vindication of the Ordinations of the Church of England. pag. 106.

1 Cor. iii. 12. vered in the sacred Scriptures, they oppose it; if with *gold, silver, and precious stones*, they intermix *wood, hay, and stubble*, which is the way of too many, they have no authority, therein to require our regard: But if it be truth that they deliver, tho' perhaps not in the way that might to us be the most agreeable, we should do well to consider that saying of our SAVIOUR's that I have touched upon before, *He that is not against us, is for us.*

CAN any thing .of that kind, in reality be more senseless, than for men, to lay more stress on the character of the ordainers, than the qualifications of the ordained? and yet this is done by a number among, us, who with open arms receive *arians* and *pelagians* if, episcopally ordained, while they reject the most *orthodox*, and best qualified persons that are, if ordained by presbyters. Let it be counted eyeey so strange, it is yet a great truth, that there are several to be met with that are of such a temper, that if a man has had only presbyterian ordination, let him be ever so well furnished, ever so faithful in the discharge of his office, or ever so careful that it is truth that he delivers, they will yet run him down as an usurper, and all his administrations shall with them be null and void,, meerly because he had not a legal bishop to lay hands upon him when he was ordained. Whereas on the other hand, let a man be ever so deficient in his qualifications, ever so weak in his intellectuals, of irregular in his life, the hands of a prelate having been upon his head, makes amends for all; he shall be courted and caressed, and all his administrations relished and applauded. This is unaccountable! And it is equally so, to suppose that a superiour bishop that has little of real religion in him, (which may sometimes prove the Case) should have it in his power, to keep one from being of the number of the ministers of JESUS CHRIST, who is endowed by the SPIRIT with excellent ministerial gifts and graces, tho' he devotes himself to that service, and is solemnly set apart for it: Or that he should have power to make a minister of another person,

person, that was never designed by GOD for that office; as is plain by his not being furnished with any suitable abilities for it, or nor being disposed in such a manner as to be any way likely to prove a credit to it. These are such gross absurdities, that it is really an amazing thing, they should ever be admitted by men of common sense. And it were no difficult thing to reckon up a great many more, to which such sort of notions are exposed, but that I think it needless, and have already exceeded bounds.

FOR a close of all then, I move, that we should heartily beg of GOD to diffuse wisdom and a better spirit among us on all hands. Let us (my brethren) take heed of running into any of the faults we condemn others for. Let us, both ministers and people, be satisfied with defending and clearing our own *mission*, and evidencing that it is truth that is published and owned among us, without censuring or condemning our brethren. Should any of them *preach Christ of envy and strife*; should they take pleasure in defaming and reproaching us, and ever and anon fill their discourses with spleen and bitterness, seeking to turn the hearts of the people against us and our ministry, let us not return them like for like: But let us on the contrary imitate St. Paul, *in rejoicing that Christ is preached*. There most certainly is room enough for any that are willing to take pains to demolish the strongholds of satan, and promote the Interest of serious piety. No hands can well be spared. For *the harvest truly is great, but the Labourers are few* in proportion. Let us therefore do our endeavour to strengthen their hands in their service, tho' they should do what they can to weaken ours. Let us *provoke them to love and to good works*. And tho' three most glorious opportunities for a coalition of the church and dissenters have been most unhappily lost, I mean the time of the *Restoration*, the discovery of the *Popish Plot*, and the *Revolution*, yet b: us live in hope, that a time yec may come, when
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Phil. i. 15.

17.

Luke x. 2.

Heb. x. 24.

an uniting and healing spirit may prevail: And let us do what we can to promote it by our prayers.

AND in the mean while, let us take what care we can that vital religion may not suffer by our differences. Let us pursue truth, purity, and love, with an equal ardour. Let us remember, ^{1 Joh iv. 8.} that GOD *is Love*, and carry it as persons fully satisfied that they that have the truest, the most generous, and the most extensive love, have the most of GOD in them. And then, tho' it should so fall out that our eyes should be closed by death, and we be laid in the dust with our fathers, before our prayers for a definable accommodation are answered; we might depend upon meeting not only those that were faithful, who acted upon the same principles with ourselves, but as many also of those of different sentiments, as loved the Lord JESUS CHRIST in sincerity, in the blessed life above, it; which there will be nothing like clashing or interfering, but perfect Union, love and harmony will reign for ever and ever.

AND *may* GOD of his infinite mercy bring us all safe to the happy and glorious celestial world, through the merits and intercession of our Blessed REDEEMER, who with the FATHER and the Eternal SPIRIT, liveth and reigneth, one GOD, through Everlasting Ages. Amen.

F I N I S .