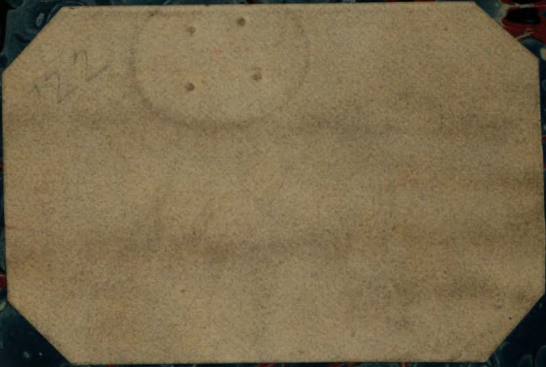


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The Rev. George ...

THE
VALIDITY
OF
PRESBYTERIAN ORDINATION
MAINTAINED,
IN A
LETTER .

TO
THE REV. WILLIAM SMITH, D. D.

OCCASIONED BY THE PUBLICATION OF HIS
SERMON,
PREACHED AT THE CONSECRATION OF
BISHOP JARVIS,
AT NEW-HAVEN, ON THE 18th OCTOBER, 1797.

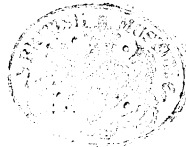
TOGETHER WITH
STRICTURES ON SAID SERMON.

By SAMUEL BLATCHFORD. A. M.
PASTOR OF A CHURCH AT STRATFIELD, CONNECTICUT.

“ Si quid hic dictum scriptumve contra veritatem, indictum,
“ inscriptumve esto.”

NEW-HAVEN: PRINTED BY GEORGE BUNCE.
M.DCC.XCVIII.

A 21



A
L E T T E R

TO THE

REV. WILLIAM SMITH, D.D.

REV. SIR,

PREVIOUS to the publication of your late Discourse, delivered before the Episcopal Convention of the State of Connecticut, so many and so various were the reports concerning it, that I confess my curiosity was sufficiently excited, to make me wish that it might be committed to the Press. It was doubtless deemed of importance, by the Convention of the Clergy and Laity of your Church, that it should be so; they requested a copy for the purpose, and have gratefully returned you thanks for the performance. It is now before the public. I have read it with considerable attention, and have my own opinion of its merits. You intended it, doubtless, as a defence of Episcopal Ordination and Government; and no man in the world will pretend to dispute your right of attempting to defend your own opinions;--for it is high time to give up an opinion when it becomes incapable of defence: And had you, sir, rested here, your Sermon would have passed without any animadversions, and have peacefully slept with its fathers " *in the hands of*
" *Epis.*

“*Episcopalians.*” But you invite an investigation of the subject, by an insinuation, at least, that all who differ from you are persons not in their “*sober senses,*” that they are influenced by “*pre-judice,*” and have neither “*diligence,*” nor “*candor,*” adequate to the importance of the inquiry. You tell us, that, in the judgment of the primitive Church, all the Presbyters on the face of the earth could not ordain one Deacon, nor one Presbyter, and, much less, a Bishop. You implicate in the charge of irregularity and madness almost all the illustrious Protestant Churches abroad; the Churches of *Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, France,* and your own country, *Scotland*; and candidly deprive them, together with all the *Presbyterian Churches* of this country, of all claim whatever to the Promise, “*LO! I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD;*” for these have none but Presbyterian Ordination amongst them:---their first founders and reformers were Presbyters; such as *Luther, Calvin, Melancton, Bucer, Bugenhagius,* and *Knox*; who ordained ministers amongst them, and from whose authority they ministered in holy things. They were *once* excommunicated, by the *Church of Rome*; and, a *second* time, by *Dr. Smith.*

You make your appeal to sources open to us all; and I am glad to hear you declare, “that it is just as easy for one man or any number of men to create a new world, as to institute a new church, different from that instituted by Christ.” If then, fit, Christ has instituted a Church, where are we to look for an account of it but in the Scriptures of the New Testament? Where shall we find

find an *authority* for the observance of any rules or orders respecting it if we do not find it here? For I cannot conceive of the Institution of a Church by JESUS CHRIST without supposing that the matter is not left so much at large, as to make it one thing in *Rome*, another thing in *England*, and a third thing in *Scotland*; for they are different from each other in their Constitution and Government. You say something, indeed, about "the existing records of innumerable Sees throughout the world." These may prove that Episcopal Government is no *new* thing, and that you, sir, are not the first abettor of it; but, they will by no means prove, if it hath not its warrant in Scripture, that Episcopal government was not an *human institution*, and that you may not have made some assertions, in the plenitude of your zeal, a little too bold and objectionable.

You have, doubtless, read Ecclesiastical History with an imagination filled with ideas of Patriarchs, Fathers, Pontiffs, Priests, Temples, Altars, Vestments, Governments, and Rituals; and have applied all these, with a thousand extravagancies connected with them, to the ancient primitive Church; and, indulging your fancy, amidst the witchcraft of words, you have luxuriously fed on *Ecclesiastical bombast*, and been fairly glutted with the luscious sounds of *High Priest, diocese, &c.* Indeed, you appear to have formed very imperfect notions of the manners of primitive times, and the simplicity of the first ages of Christianity. * "The Roman Catholics, and, together with them, some other Episcopalians, have been always fond of
" catalogues

* Vid. Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches. History of the Church of Rome.

6

“ catalogues of names, and all the labours of their
“ historians have been directed to one favourite
“ point; that of proving a regular succession,
“ The thirty-fourth upon the list is Sylvester, who
“ flourished in the reign of Constantine; but both
“ he and his predecessors were men of whom little
“ is known but their names. Many of them were
“ tinctured with the errors of judaizing Christians,
“ and they kept their eyes less steadily fixed on
“ the interest of the Redeemer's Kingdom, than
“ on *Aaron's Rod that budded*. An Hierarchy was
“ the object which lay nearest their hearts, and to
“ this attainment they chiefly directed their la-
“ bours. What the Bishop of Rome was in the
“ city, other Bishops were in other parts of Italy.
“ The churches were, all of them, independant of
“ each other, and might have continued so to this
“ day, had not their teachers inculcated a Jewish
“ Christianity, having in it the seeds of an hierar-
“ chy, which first produced a sacred order of men
“ in imitation of the old Levites; then *sunk* the
“ people to *elevate* the order: The order created
“ a master, like Aaron, whom each voter hoped
“ to succeed, and the whole issued in riots to de-
“ termine which of the pretended Aarons was the
“ true heir to the dignity. At length it was dis-
“ covered, that Jesus had given to *Peter* the Keys
“ of his Kingdom; That *Peter* had preached at
“ *Rome*; and that the Bishop of that City was,
“ therefore, the undoubted Christian Pontiff.”

THIS spirit was by no means peculiar to that
age; it has rolled along from Priest to Priest,
through succeeding generations: it went from
Rome to England, glanced at Scotland, and at
length it came to America. We have seen it, all
monstrous

monstrous as it is, in our own days; for you, fir, have represented the government of the Church of Christ, to be “*a rectified continuation of the Jewish,*” and we are still, it seems, under *High Priests, Priests, and Levites!*

THIS needed some proof, and you have given it. But I cannot tell whether it be meer artifice to blind the vulgar, or real unacquaintedness with your Bible, which led you to adduce it. As it is not however the only * instance of the kind which occurs in your sermon, I rather attribute it to the latter. In order to make a Christian Bishop synonymous with a Jewish High-Priest, you tell us, that “*in the English-Bible we read High-Priest; but in the Greek (and the same in the Hebrew Bible) it is Bishop.*” Thus in Numbers iv. 16. “*2 Kings xi. 18. and in Acts xx. 28, and in various other places both in the Old and New Testament.*” † But it happens very unfortunately for the cause you would support, that *we do not read HIGH PRIEST in either of the texts you quote.* And, what is still extraordinary, the Hebrew word in question, is not in any one instance, rendered *High Priest* throughout the whole English Bible.

THE Hebrew word is PEKUDATH, the plural of PEKUDAH, *custos, inspector, præfectura, visitatio*, and is evermore translated in one or other of these senses. It occurs twice in Numbers iv. 16. one of the passages to which you refer: in the first instance

* p. 13. The Doctor gravely informs us, “that Jehovah pronounced the Decalogue, i.e. the Ten Commandments, from the midst of the burning, but unconsumed bush on mount Sinai!!”

† Note, p. 8.

stance rendered *Episkopos*, and in the other *Epifkope* in the septuagint: and I think you cannot better the English translation of the verse, "And to the office of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, pertaineth the oil for the light, &c. and the oversight of all the tabernacle," &c. I write, however, with *submission*; for, if Eleazar must be a *Bishop*, would it not look a little awkward to make him a Bishop of oil for the light, and of the incense, and of the vessels of the sanctuary? for the honour of Prelacy, sir, would you not rather let him remain what he has always been considered, a superintendent or overseer of the tabernacle, and of the vessels of the sanctuary, &c.

Your second reference is to 2 Kings xi. 18; here we have the same Hebrew word, translated in the Greek version of the LXX. *Episkopous*; and in the English Bible "*Officers*;" * *qui excubias agerent pro Templo, ne forte Baalithæ illud violarent*. And were these men *Bishops*? If they were, there appears to have been always a necessity for such officers, to prevent the Temple of the Lord from being polluted by the destruction of its original beautiful simplicity, and the introduction of institutions unknown to the great founder of it.

To end however all dispute on this subject, I will refer you to the 2 Chron. xxxiv. 12, 17, where we have an account of certain Levites appointed to look after workmen. (Persons, according to your idea, not arrived to the dignity of a Gentleman in † *Priest's* orders in the Episcopal Church)
But

* *Poli Synopsis Criticorum*, in loc. Dr. Wilton's review.

† There seems to be great impropriety in the application of the

But seeing they were only Levites, perhaps you will not allow them the rank of Bishops. And yet it is the same Hebrew word which is here used, and which the Greek translators have rendered *Episkopoi*, and our English translators “overseers.”

BUT although the word *Episkope* signifies, in the general, oversight and inspection, and may apply either to a sacred or a civil office, yet, I acknowledge, that where it occurs in the New Testament, it denotes the ministerial office. The persons sustaining it preside in a particular congregation of Christians, and are distinguished from others by a variety of names and characters, all importing the same with what we now understand by a *Gospel Minister*, and amongst whom there is a *perfect equality*.

You

the term *Priests*, to any Ministers under the Christian dispensation. For this character had always a special reference to the slaying and offering up of sacrifices, which was the proper and distinguishing business of the Priests under the law. The office they sustained, and the sacrifices they presented, were merely typical of the priestly office and expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Since, therefore, He has once now actually offered up himself without spot to God, as the great Antitype of all the Jewish Sacrifices, and still sustains the character in Heaven, of the Great High Priest of our profession, there remaineth no farther occasion for any other sacrifices, and the office of *Priests* among men is no longer necessary, or to be considered as a *divine institution*. The New-Testament never speaks of ministers under this character, as distinguished from other Christians; and it is derogatory to the honour of our Lord for any to assume it. When indeed the consecrated Wafer came to be introduced as a real Sacrifice, by being transubstantiated into the real Body and Blood of Christ, the deluded Consecrator might with some plausibility fancy himself a *Priest*; but since the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass, and of a real sacrifice in the Eucharist, are both now generally rejected by Protestants; we may be well content to resign the sacerdotal character to others, neither any longer calling our ministers *Priests*, nor our Communion Tables *Altars*.

B

You remember the story of a fond Mother who had two Sons, James and John, persons of very amiable tempers, and one of them was the beloved Disciple of Jesus Christ. She anxiously wished the promotion of her Sons, and, mistaking the genius of Christ's Kingdom, interceded with him that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, i. e. that they might be elevated to some distinguished rank, and enjoy a pre-eminence over their brethren. Here a proper opportunity was presented, if any opportunity could have been proper to such a design, for the establishment of a superior order of Clergymen; but he absolutely refused to grant her request; and took an occasion to address all his Disciples in words which should ever live in our hearts, and make us cautious of going beyond our warrant; "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so amongst you; But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Jesus Christ was always consistent with himself: and we should never forget that command, which, as the great Legislator of his Church, he gave to his Disciples; "Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are Brethren." And accordingly, the first state of the Church was that of popular freedom, a simple system of fraternal order. This, sir, has been proved, beyond the power of dispute, by several * Authors of the first character for "diligence and candor," and who never

* vid. Robinsons Ecclesiastical Researches.

never wrote superficially upon any subject; amongst whom, the learned Boehmer, whose laborious investigations entitle him to universal respect, and whose excellent understanding gives him a claim to general credit, has fully proved, that the whole was a business of mutual esteem, implying no obedience of one to another, or any kind of political subjection, to which, adds he, the Court of Rome, AND EVERY OTHER HIERARCHY TEND.† He divides ancient Ecclesiastical History into three periods, and, to each, assigns a different system. In the first period, which includes the three first Centuries, the union of Christians was precisely *fraternal*, subsisting in every individual Congregation: that out of this external union arose one, which he calls *external*, uniting several Congregations together, and hence Communion, or Common-union: and the discipline was a confederate equality: no person was compelled to join a Church; each was admitted, at his own request, by the consent of the whole Society; and, in cases of removal from one Congregation to another, a letter of Testimony was the regular Introduction. Affairs were debated and transacted by all; whoever were excluded were excommunicated by joint consent, and if they repented and requested re-admission, they were re-admitted in the same manner. Church Officers were voluntarily selected for the sake of order.

In

† *Fraterno more inter se agebant, semet invicem fratres appellantes—Hæc interna unio facile producebat externam—quam catholicam dixerit—Unio hæc omnis in fide vivida et veritate divina, non etiam in subjectione quadam politica quaeritur, quam curia Romana, quam Episcopalis genius quam denique hierarchia quaeris intendit. &c. Boehmeri Jus ecclesiastic. Protestant. tom. 4. lib. 5. De scismaticis.*

IN the third century, Jewish Theology drew off the attention of Christians from the simplicity of Jesus and the Gospel, and fixed it on an hierarchy, particularly in the great and wealthy Churches of *Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Carthage*. This introduced, by degrees, a second period, and a new system of Ecclesiastical Government, named by Boehmer, "*the Episcopal System of Church Law*." This period extends from the latter end of the third Century to the time of *Charlemagne*. The trouble of consulting the people was now no longer necessary; sacerdotal authority was introduced, and as many principalities were set up as *Bishopricks*.

THE third system, called the *Papal*, was introduced when the Bishop of Rome arose above law, and became the sole arbiter of all Ecclesiastical affairs: when he claimed to himself authority over his Brethren, and all Spiritual Government was made to issue from him as from a common, though polluted source.† It is from this fountain, sir, you are ambitious of drawing your authority for the regular administration of ministerial offices: but you forget that you are a Protestant by profession; and are unwarily forward to give stability to the dying life of a Church you have renounced.

THAT there is a divine appointment to the office of the ministry, is an important truth; not at all the less evident because it has been exploded by some who pretend to greater freedom of thought and enquiry than others. It is a dictate of natural light and common reason; that there should be some

† Boehmeri Jus Ecclesiastic. Tom. 5.

some appointed to *lead* in the public offices of devotion ; to instruct, to admonish, to exhort, and comfort others. The circumstances of the Church require such assistance, and it is fit that proper persons should be chosen to the office, who are duly qualified for such service, and inclined to devote themselves to it. Nor can we, who believe the divine authority of the Scriptures, question whether it be agreeable to the divine will, for a particular order of men to be set apart for this purpose, whilst we find their distinct work specified and their qualifications described, the duties of the people towards them enjoined, and the continuance of the Office to the end of the world plainly declared and provided for ; and we rejoice in the condescending goodness of our divine Lord who “ * gave some, Apostles ; and some, Prophets ; and some, Evangelists ; and some, Pastors and Teachers ; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ :” He appointed both *extraordinary* and *ordinary* Officers in his Church : The former, viz. Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, who were furnished with extraordinary gifts and powers, for special purposes and seasons ; the latter, viz. Pastors and Teachers, for standing use and benefit ; and, as long as Christ has a Church in the world to be built up, so long there must be a set of men whose sacred employment is to attend that momentous affair. These Officers in the Church are frequently called *Bishops* or *Overseers*, *Presbyters* or *Elders* ; nor does any distinction between these two appear in the New Testament, nor do we find the latter represented as an order of

* Eph. iv. 11, 12.

of men subordinate and inferior to the former. So that to those who believe the word *Presbyter* to be a name of Office, the *identity* of the Office denoted by the names *Presbyter* and *Bishop*, one would think should be very evident. Perhaps, Sir, I am going over old ground when I suggest to you the following considerations; but they are so important and satisfactory, that I must not omit them; and I hope I shall not be deemed wanting either in *candor*, or *sanity of intellect*, if I view them to be unanswerable.

1st. IN the first of Timothy, 3d chapter, the Apostle lays down the qualifications of Bishops and Deacons, without saying any thing of Presbyters; whom it is not at all likely he would have omitted, had they been a different sort of persons from those intended by Bishops.

2dly. THE Church at Phillippi † had but two orders of Church Officers amongst them, viz. *Bishops* and *Deacons*.

3dly. THAT the name, work, office of a Presbyter and Bishop are the same appears from Titus i, 5, 7. *For this cause, I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst ordain Presbuterous, Presbyters in every city. If any (that is to be ordained a Presbyter) be blameless,---For a Bishop must be blameless.* What force, or pertinence, or sense, would there be, sir, in this reasoning, if Bishop and Presbyter signified persons of a *distinct order*? And how can it be supposed the Apostle would have expressed himself thus, if he had known any such disparity between them as you seem to imagine?

4thly.

† Philip. i. 1.

4thly. THE *Presbyters* of Ephesus are called *Bishops*, and to them the oversight of the Church in that place is committed. "Paul sent to Ephesus and called *Presbuteros*, the *Presbyters* of the Church, and, when they were come, he said, *Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you EPISCOPOUS Bishops.*" *

5thly. HOWEVER amusing your account may be of Jesus Christ, as holding the *Episcopate* during his continuance in the world, and of his disciples being elevated to that *superior order* after his ascension into Heaven, who, previous to it, were *Presbyters*, it appears that one of them at least was altogether unacquainted with it, or else had most unaccountably forgot it. 1 Peter v. 1, 2. (PRESBUTEROS) *The Presbyters among you I exhort SUMPRESBUTEROS, who also am a Presbyter; feed the flock of God among you, acting the part of Bishops EPISCOPOUNTES.* They were to discharge the Episcopal office, and to perform all the duties belonging to it.

6thly. AGREEABLY to which, we find that *Timothy* had the ministerial office conferred on him by the laying on of the hands of the *Presbytery*, or company of *Presbyters* or *Elders*, i. e. *Ministers*. And doubtless, *Presbyters* (who are the only Gospel Ministers and Pastors by Divine appointment) are in all succeeding ages empowered and authorized to set apart qualified persons to the sacred office, there being no one duty enjoined upon *Bishops* from which *Presbyters* are secluded.

7thly.

* Acts xx. 17, 28.

7thly. PAUL and Barnabas were themselves ordained by certain Prophets and Teachers in the Church of Antioch, and not by any Bishop, distinguished as such; and can you, sir, reconcile it to yourself that Paul and Barnabas were irregularly ordained? These considerations I submit to your most serious attention. They are taken from the highest authority; an authority which has always the precedence with me; before which my prejudices must bend, and from which, to be either a regular Christian, or a consistent Protestant, my opinions must be formed. It was the devout *Chillingworth*, I think, who exclaimed "*The BIBLE, the BIBLE, is the Religion of Protestants;*" admit this, sir, in connection with a declaration you have already made, "That it is just as easy for one man or any number of men to create a new world, as to institute a new Church different from that instituted by Christ;" and Fathers, Councils, Popes, the imperfect and obscure "records of existing Sees," will have but little comparative weight in forming your judgment.

You express some veneration for the Fathers, and have done us the favour of introducing Tertullian, as saying it would be accounted madness for any to attempt, in the primitive Church, Presbyterian Ordination. You would have doubled the favour by giving a reference to the passage; for really, sir, if you mean this as conveying an idea of what was the Apostolic practice, you must not be angry if *I doubt it*. This, perhaps, you will think should have some support besides conjecture: take it then as follows; * *Dr. Reynolds of Oxford*, whose extensive acquaintance with the Fathers

* Neal's hist. Purit. vol. 1. p. 497.

thers you may know, declares the sameness of Bishops and Priests, or *Presbyters*, or that they have equal authority and power by God's word, to have been the judgment of *St. Paul, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, Austin, Theodorus, Primasius, Theophilact, Occumenius, Aenselm, Gregory, Gratian, &c.* And, says *Mr. Towgood* in his letters to *Mr. White*, † “It is a well known, acknowledged, incontestible fact, that *Presbyters*, in the celebrated church of *Alexandria*, ordained even their own *Bishops*, for more than two hundred years, in the earliest ages of christianity.”

To which I will add the following from *Dr. Nathanael Lardner* ‡ “There were at the very forming such societies, or soon after, appointed in them officers and ministers, called *Bishops, or Elders, or Pastors, or Teachers; and Deacons; men who had been approved, as persons of integrity and capacity for the work to which they were appointed. The peculiar work of the former of whom was to preach the word and feed the flock of which they were overseers, with wholesome and sound doctrine and instruction, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering, and doctrine. Of the latter,* viz. *Deacons, the peculiar work, according to the primitive institution, was the serving tables, and making a prudent and faithful distribution of the stock of the society, and these societies were to be examples to the world around them.*”

C

THESE

† *Towgood's Letters*, p. 198.

‡ *Lardner's Credibility*. Introduction to vol. 1st. Part. 2d. first Edition.

THESE authorities, to which a great many more might be easily added, will authorize me to doubt of the truth of the sentence attributed to Tertullian, until I gain further evidence. Not that the sentiments of Fathers are of any weight with me, when they are expressly contrary to scripture: and it might be easily proved they were so in many instances.— The language, however, used by some persons on this head seems to intimate, that it is essential to the truth of christianity, to maintain all opinions held by them; but such persons forget, that, according to the * *fundamental principle* of Protestantism, we must bring the sentiments of every class of men to the same Test. And you Sir, would hardly be persuaded to hold as true every thing which Tertullian himself asserted; for it is certain he committed many *gross blunders*. Several of them were collected by *Dodwell* in his dissertations upon *Irenæus*; to which I refer you. † In matters of faith and Christian Government there is nothing certain but *Scripture* only. And had those who profess Christianity always taken its authority *only* for the rule of their practice, we should not now have had to lament the unhappy divisions which subsist in the Church; nor would Infidels have had any reason, on this account, to insult us by pointed Satire and profane Scoffs: nor should we have heard *you* invade the sacred prerogative of Jesus Christ in asserting the power which Bishops of *your* Church are said to possess, of communicating the *Holy Ghost* by the act of laying on their hands upon heads *frail* as their own; and of delegating an authority, to *dust and ashes* like them—

* Vid. Wilton's Excellent Review of the Articles of the Church of England.

† Vid. Also Tertul. Advers. Jud. cap. 8.

themselves, of forgiving and retaining the sins of whomsoever they please.

But, Sir, we will not be thought to mistake the matter. These then are your words--“The form by which they, i. e. the Apostles, ordained others, was that by which Jesus had ordained them. After having imparted to them his holy Spirit, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. So, in like manner, the Apostles and their successors *always* have done, do at *this* day, and will do to the end of the world; sayings, at the instant of laying on of hands--after the example and by the authority of Jesus their Lord, *Receive thou the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins thou dost remit, they are remitted; and whosoever sins thou dost retain, they are retained.*” “Profane beyond all profaneness (says Dr. Clark) is the doctrine of those who contend “that the Apostles themselves, much less that any of their fallible successors had a *discretionary* power of forgiving Sins.”* But really, Sir, I cannot discover whether, in the quotation I have just made from your discourse, the ignorance or the profanity of the thing be the most prominent. I can forgive you the former, but having never received *Episcopal Ordination*--I must refer you elsewhere for the pardon of the latter. The Jews had right notions of the matter when they said, *who can forgive Sins but God only.* Sin, you know, has been represented as the work of all evils--the prolific parent of all misery--It reduces us to compleat wretchedness in this life, and leaves us a prey to everlasting torments in the next.--O! the Horror of that worm which never dies, and of that fire

* Dr. Samuel Clark's Sermon, vol. 8. Sermon 17.

which is never quenched! Eternal burnings who can bear!--The apprehensions of mankind in all ages have been awfully excited by the dreadful consequences which attend it: hence repentant groans, and penitential tears; hence the most anxious enquiries, and the most fervent prayers; hence fastings and mortifications of the body. This made the Publican stand afar off; and, smiting upon his breast, exclaim, "*God be merciful to me a Sinner*"---this brought the Jailor before Paul and Silas when "he sprang in and came trembling, and fell down and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved,"---Now, this *Sin*, which has so much disturbed the tranquillity of the human soul, and broken the repose of the world---this *Sin*, can be easily remitted. God has invested Bishops with the transcendent power of forgiving it, and given to them authority to transmit the divine peculiarity to those on whom they shall lay their hands! Favoured mortals! What sacrifice can I make too great to enjoy your friendship! Like the ambassadors of *Palermo* at the feet of *Pope Martin IV.* behold me before you---adopting their language as well as their posture, thrice repeating---"*Thou that takest away the Sins of the World have mercy upon us.*" O shame to human nature! What idea must men form of a religion which gives even the shadow of encouragement to such actions as these? But, Sir, in your serious judgment do you believe your *Bishop Jarvis* can forgive Sin? or any or all the *Bishops* in the world can forgive, any, the least sin---and on your dying bed, would absolution from any mortal calm the perturbations of conscience, and possess your mind with a fortitude equal to the struggle?---Would you risque your acceptance with God another day on this ground? Has it virtue enough

enough to insure an acquittal *then*, and to stop the progress of an exact scrutiny into those things which have been done in the body?—I have too good an opinion of your *judgment* to suppose it—And if Bishops have *not this power* what is the ceremony of delegating the authority but an outrage upon the decency of common sense—a wilful trifling with the most sacred of all subjects—a profanity at which you should blush. Christianity turns aside her face and weeps.—Christianity! But Christianity has nothing to do with it—the Christianity taught in the Scripture knows nothing of such a power given to any but to the twelve Apostles, of remitting and retaining Sins, and in order hereto they were furnished with *ability of discerning Spirits and were inspired by the Holy Ghost*—these powers ceased with them—in these they have had no successors—and wherever the knowledge of the forgiveness of Sin is now communicated, it is by “*the Spirit of God witnessing with our Spirit that we are the Children of God.*”

The successors of the Apostles however, you say have always said at an Ordination “Receive thou the Holy Ghost &c.” Here, Sir, we should have been thankful for some proof—a bare assertion cannot be accepted where a circumstance of so much importance is involved—Are the Fathers silent upon the subject? Does Ecclesiastical History give you no information respecting it? must we receive it entirely on your own credit? It is roundly asserted that “*the Apostles and their successors have always done it*”—You can have no objection to prove it. And in order to assist you, I recommend to your perusal “*a vindication of the Ordination of the Church of England by*
Bp.

Bp. Burnet, printed 1688."--- * This form was never used; never known in the *Christian Church* for the first *thousand* years; was never attempted to be introduced, till the eleventh or twelfth Century, which every one knows to have been a period of the deepest darkness, stupidity and oppression the Church ever felt.

MORINUS, a learned Priest, has published *sixteen* of the most ancient rituals, or forms of *Ordination* used in the Church, from the earliest ages of Christianity in which any are found. In the several changes and additions under which these forms have successively past, is seen how the spirit of superstition gradually wrought: Every age adding some ridiculous rite or extravagant claim to the inventions of the former, till it grew to the present enormous mass in the *Roman Pontifical*. But it is extremely observable that, in not one of the first *fifteen rituals* (from the fifth to the twelfth Century) doth the form now used--- "Receive the *Holy Ghost*; whose sins, &c." appear. It is the *last* only, the *sixteenth*, (which Morinus takes to be about three hundred years old at the time he wrote) which assumes to itself this power. Yea, amidst the pride and intoxication of this corruptest State of the Church, there seems to have, so much sense and modesty remained, as to make it boggle at a claim so extravagant as this; for the learned Priest observes, that in *two other Pontificals* of the same age, this form--- "Receive the *Holy Ghost*, &c." was not found."

HAVING

* Mr. Towgoods Serious Thoughts on the present state of the Church.

HAVING gone thus far you will excuse me, Sir, if I notice another paragraph in your discourse as extraordinary as any. "Thus the *uninterrupted* succession in the line of Bishops, from the days of our Saviour down to the present day, is the great Palladium of the Apostolic Church, and nothing can overthrow it," "even the gates of Hell shall never prevail against it." "It was this Apostolic *uninterrupted* succession planted by Christ, watered by the Holy Ghost, and to which the Father hath promised abundant increase," &c. I hardly know what you mean by "*uninterrupted succession which Christ planted and which the Holy Ghost watered.*" I say, I hardly know, because you profess yourself a Protestant Clergyman. Was I remarking upon a Sermon of a member of the Romish Church, I should know how to understand you; but your Church can have no pretensions to authority from thence. However, I will suppose you mean that there has been a succession of *Romish Bishops*, from the days of our Saviour, or soon after, down to the present day; but, you mean more than this, when you intimate that this Line has been watered by the Holy Ghost, and planted by Christ, and received the promise of abundant increase from the Father. For, if either of those circumstances be necessary to the continuance of the Line (which, being of so high importance to the Church as to constitute its Palladium, must be a *pure one*) why then, Sir, it is a mere broken *rope of sand*; and all your ingenuity cannot unite the particles. It has been interrupted so often by Heresy---by immorality, and by usurpation, that it is very strange, that in this day, and in the character of a Protestant too, you should attempt to make any thing

of

of it. Have no circumstances of immorality and usurpation interrupted it?—

CAN YOU trace any thing of the planting of Jesus Christ, or the watering of the Holy Ghost, in the influence of the two sister-prostitutes *Marozia* and *Theodora*, who had, by their political and amorous intrigues, the Roman Mitre at their disposal, and rewarded with it the most strenuous of their lovers—a holy part of the Line truly, when the Bastard son, the Grandson, and the great Grandson of Marozia, *a rare genealogy*, were seated in the chair of St. Peter! At nineteen years of age, the second of these became head of the Latin Church; his youth and his manhood, says a celebrated Historian, were of a suitable complexion, and the nations of Pilgrims could bear testimony to the charges that were urged against him in a Roman Synod, and in presence of Otho the great. Is there no truth in his blasphemous invocation of Jupiter and Venus? In his open simony? In his licentious pursuits of gaming and hunting? In the blood which he shed, and the flames which he kindled? Did he not live in public adultery with the matrons of Rome, and was there any thing *Apostolic* in this? Was not the Lateran Palace turned into a school for Prostitution? Were not his rapes of virgins and widows so common that female Pilgrims were deterred from visiting the tomb of St. Peter, lest in the devout act they should be violated by his successor! And this sir is a part of that *Palladium* of the Apostolic Church of which you boast.

WITH the feelings of a man, and the virtue of a Christian, my heart sickens at the recollection of the

the characters of Benedict IX. Sylvester III. and Gregory VI. the history of whose lives, written by *Platina*, a Roman Catholic Biographer, contains the most monstrous things. * Indeed, sir, in tracing the line of Roman Bishops, their murders, their adulteries, their incest, and the most diabolic attempts at magic, increase so fast upon me; that I must refer you to the *Palladium* itself, begging you to excuse me from the task of detailing a series of crimes, of which *Nero* would be ashamed, and at which *Caligula* would blush!

HAVE no circumstances of heresy interrupted it? The XIX. article of the Church of England declares the true Church of Christ to be, "a Congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things, that of necessity, are requisite to the same," and has there not been, for ages, a departure from the pure word of God in the Church of Rome? Have those persons any claim to be a Church of Christ whose doctrines are a subversion of Christianity? Can that line of Bishops be worth your attention, which has maintained Image worship, Transubstantiation, Purgatory, and the lawfulness of praying for the dead, and to them; and, whatever may be his pretensions, can a Bishop, by whose authority such doctrines are taught, and such Idolatries practised, can such a Bishop be a *Christian Bishop*? Is he not an Apostate,

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* Ignavi canes et inutiles. Portenta a quibus ambitione Petri et largitione sedes occupata, potius quam possessa: monstra quædam; pothabito divino cultu: sævissimi Tyranni. *Platina, in vit. eorum.*

tate, and have you not broken Communion with him as such? can Ordination from such an one be valid? and, whatever powers he might originally possess, did he not lose them the moment he *changed the truth of God into a lie*? If not, sir, are you not a *wanton Scismatic* in protesting against a Church whose authority you acknowledge? Does not the homily which every Clergyman in the Church of England solemnly subscribes, declare "*that so far from the Church of Rome being a true Church that for nine hundred years past nothing can be more.*" Strange indeed! that you dare boast, that from this idolatrous, this antichristian Church, you derive, by Ordination, your ministerial powers, and talk of your descent in an *uninterrupted line* from this old withered Hag: this bloody and adulterous woman, who has been so often drunk with the blood of the Saints. But, if circumstances of acknowledged heresy in a Church which for a thousand years past has had nothing of the nature of a true Church, according to the declaration of your homily, if *such* circumstances could interrupt it, it is not that thing of continued perfection you would have us suppose; and your claims under it are mere chimæras, more fitting to the fancy of a recluse, all warped by superstition, in the darkest ages of Christianity, than to be gravely boasted of by a Clergyman in the close of the eighteenth century. You will believe me wishing to do you all possible justice; amongst then, a multitude of opinions of Divines of the Church of England to the same purport, I will beg leave to select the following from *Chillingworth* to shew you the sentiments and the reasoning of members of your own communion upon this subject. Chillingworth, you know, was a very famous champion for the
Church

Church of England ; but he knew better than to claim under the idea of an *uninterrupted line* of descent ; he saw the absurdities in which such a claim would involve him, and he *wisely* avoided them :

“ Take any one, says he, in the whole train and succession of ordainers, and suppose him, by reason of any defect, only a supposed, and not a true Priest ; then, according to your doctrine, he could not give a true, but only a supposed Priesthood ; and they that receive of him, and they that derive it from him, can give no better than they received ; receiving nothing but a name and shadow, can give nothing but a name and shadow ; and so, from age, to age, from generation to generation, being equivocal *Fathers*, beget only equivocal *Sons* ; no principle in Geometry being more certain than this, that the *un-suppliable defect of any necessary antecedent, must needs cause a nullity of all those consequences that depend on it*. In fine, to know this one thing, you must know ten thousand others, whereof not any one is a thing, that can be known, but only at best a high probability that it is so : so that the assurance hereof is like a machine composed of an innumerable multitude of pieces, it is strangely unlikely but some of them will be out of order, and yet if any one be so the whole fabric falls to the ground. And he that shall put them all together, and maturely consider all the possible ways of lapsing and nullifying a Priesthood in the Church of Rome I believe will be very inclinable to think, that it is an hundred to one, that among an hundred seeming Priests, there is not one true one : nay, that it is not a thing very improbable, that amongst

“ those

“ those many millions, which make up the Romish Hierarchy there are not TWENTY true.”*

BUT, if you will forgive the abuse of language, I will suppose that this *line* of succession of which you are so tender, was planted by Christ and has been watered by the Holy Ghost, through all the immoralities, usurpations and heresies that belong to it; that nothing has interrupted it, and that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. I will suppose it to be the Palladium of the Apostolic Church: I do not, I believe, misrepresent you by stating these as your Principles. Why then, sir, you are not *Ecclesiastically sprung*, you prove yourself and all your brethren, the Bishops, the Presbyters, and the Deacons of your Church, to be merely LAYMEN. The Church of Rome is right, in pronouncing you to be a company of *common unconsecrated persons*, and altogether unqualified for performing any holy office in the Christian Church. And every argument you bring in favor of the necessity of an ecclesiastical descent, in order to the right of ordaining ministers in Christ's Church, is an argument given to Rome to vindicate the propriety of her judgment respecting you. Have you forgotten that you were all excommunicated, and still remain in the same state. The year 1535 proved fatal to your claims under Apostolic descent; for it was then that excommunication was pronounced by the *lineal successor* of St. Peter upon King Henry VIII. and his whole kingdom: The line here was completely broken, and a disannulling of all powers and privileges, whatever they were, immediately took place.

* Chillingworth's reply to the Jesuit.

place. Those who *give*, you will allow have power to *take away*. Henry and his Clergy thought so, and, after some indecent squabbling between them, he assumed to himself all the supremacy of the Church of England, and the Bishops respectively took out commissions from the *crown* for their exercising of spiritual jurisdiction, within the realm; during the *King's pleasure*, "and in their commissions they acknowledge all sort of jurisdiction, as well ecclesiastical as civil, to have flowed originally from the regal power as from a supreme head, and a fountain and spring of all magistracy within his own kingdom."* Thus Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Bonner, Bishop of London, &c. took out commissions from the crown to sanction their engaging in what you deem the peculiarity of the Episcopal character; their commissions importing, that "because Cromwell the vicegerent (*a Layman*), could not personally attend the charge in all parts of the Kingdom, the King authorises the Bishop in his, (that is the vicegerent's,) stead, to ordain within his Diocese such as he judged worthy of holy orders, to collate to benefices, and to execute all other parts of Episcopal authority; and this during the King's pleasure only."† This, sir, is the foundation of your true claims: you claim under the authority of a *Layman*, and the line of succession is no more to you than to me, nor is it *necessary* to either. Henry's assumption of such unbounded power over religion, is a circumstance, to be sure, we can never vindicate, and his trampling upon the rights of

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* Burnet's Hist. Reform, Part. 2d. p. 91.

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

science places the *spring* of your Ecclesiastical authority in no very pleasant point of view: an anecdote will explain my meaning. "When Henry attempted to make himself head of the Church, for which it seems he was desirous of having the consent of the house of Convention, a sort of Parliament of Clergy, he sent some Noblemen to state the business, and to take their answer. The Bishop of Rochester objected to make the King head of the Church, and asked, "what if the King should alter religion, where is our remedy? What if he should oppress us, must we sue to the King against himself? What if a Woman, or an infant should succeed to the Crown, can they be heads of the Church? This would be to make the Church no Church, the Scripture no Scripture, and at last Jesus no Christ." The Clergy felt this, and sent the King word, that "they would agree to his being head of the Church *as far as was agreeable to the word of God.*" When the Noblemen returned with this answer to his Majesty, and told him, the Clergy would agree to his demand *as far as was consistent with Scripture,* the King fell into a violent passion, and said with an oath to the Noblemen, "Go back again, and let me have the business done without any *as fars* and *so fars*. I will have *no as fars* nor *no so fars* in the business: but let it be done,"* and it was done accordingly.

AFTER the death of Henry VIII. his successor, Edward VI. maintained the same jurisdiction in the Church; and, in the first year of his reign, all who held offices were required to come and re-
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* Robinson's Dis. XII.

new their commissions. Among the rest the Bishops came, and took out such Commissions as were granted in the former reign, viz. "To hold their Bishopricks during pleasure, and to empower them in the King's name, *as his Delegates*, to perform all the parts of the Episcopal Function, and Cranmer, the Arch-Bishop, set an example to the rest in taking out one of them."† What pretension to Divine Institution was there in all this? Yet upon this footing Prelacy was settled in England; and I challenge you, sir, or any man, to produce documents that its foundation hath ever been altered for the better, or settled upon the authority of Scripture or Divine Institution. Indeed, I have never met with any Protestants who have pleaded for Episcopacy in your sense of it, but such as neither understood the *subject* nor *themselves*. I could fill volumes with Testimonies against your Divine Prelacy from Episcopalians the most eminent for learning and piety; men who loved it as much as you can, but who, either honestly denied the necessity of it, or frankly confessed it was not founded on Scripture; such were *Cranmer, Therleby, Cox, Redman, Whitgift, Cofins, Low, Bridges, Hooker, Downham, Willet, Mason, Sutcliff, Chillingworth*, and a multitude of others. From Scripture, it is certain, you cannot bring one argument which will serve your cause: But perhaps you may from the Fathers: Tho' sir, I hold to the entire sufficiency of Scripture, yet I should have no objection to follow you into this ground; and I will prove that Clemens Romanus, (An. 66) Ignatius, (An. 116) Polycarp, (An. 117); Justin Martyr, (An. 150) Irenæus, (An. 180)

† History Reform.

(An. 180) Tertullian, (An. 200) Clemens Alexandrinus, (An. 204) Origen, (An. 226) Cyprian, (An. 240) Basilus Magnus, (An. 370) Jerom, (An. 385) &c. held the *identity* of the office of *Presbyter* and *Bishop* in the Apostolic ages; that some of them account for the rise of Episcopacy; speak of it as a Novelty; defend it for the honour of the King, and place its establishment to custom and not to divine institution. I have, sir, their authorities before me: and I will conclude this Letter, which is already drawn to a much greater length than I at first intended, with a quotation from one of them.

“ THE Apostles having discoursed concerning
 “ the Bishops, and described them, declaring what
 “ they ought to have, and from what they ought
 “ to abstain, omitting the order of Presbyters, de-
 “ scends to the Deacons; and why so, but be-
 “ cause between Bishops and Presbyters there is
 “ no great difference, and to them is committed
 “ both the Instruction and *Presidency* of the
 “ Church; and whatever he said of Bishops agrees
 “ also to Presbyters. In *Ordination* alone they have
 “ gone beyond, and in this only they seem to de-
 “ fraud the Presbyters.” *

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COULD a Presbyterian Minister say more?

I am, Rev. Sir,

With great sincerity,

Yours, &c.

* In prior Ep. ad Tim. Hom. XI. Chryostom.

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