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^A
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John XVIII. 36.

Jesus answered, my kingdom is not
of this world_____

It is a Principle, in which Christians are generally agreed, "That the Declarations of Christ and his Apostles, which we have in the new-testament, are of divine Authority;" tho' they are not so fully agreed that these are the only things, respecting Christianity, which are so.

The Church of Rome have added hereto many of their own Traditions, together with many Decrees of Popes and Councils, as infallible Interpreters of the word & will of God, to which they ascribe an equal degree of Divinity.

Protestants profess, indeed, to reject these, in the general, as groundless & unwarrantable Additions to the christian System; yet Protestants are not wholly without Dissentions among themselves.

Whether it be that some, who have rejected the grosser Corruptions of the romish Church, are still fond of retaining some of a smaller size, as less hurtful, or more to their taste; or that length of time, and the mutable nature of Language, have led

2. led them to affix different Ideas to the Same things, — from whatever cause it hath proceeded, so it is, that their conceptions of the christian Church, and particularly of the Officers Christ hath appointed in it, and of the powers with which they are vested, are, in some points, very different.

But as the Gospel continues the Same, — as the words of Christ & his Apostles, there recorded, remain unchanged, however mutable mens opinions or practice may be, it must be a good Rule, for determining what is of divine Authority, and what is not, to recur to this original Plan; and, by carefully examining things by it, to form & settle our own judgement.

By thus tracing back to its first Principles, any System of Religion, which pretends to be founded on the Gospel, or to have Christ for its Author, we are most likely to distinguish what is true & genuine, from what is spurious or apocryphal, — what is from heaven, and of divine Authority, from what is of this world, or the Inventions of men, — to separate one from the other, and to receive or reject accordingly.

It is agreeable to this method, that I shall attempt, from the passage of Scripture now read, as the foundation of my Discourse, to con-

consider the particular Subject which is, at this time, to engage our attention; I mean "The validity of Presbyterian Ordination". But what can be farther said upon a Subject so limited in its nature, and which has now been so often handled in the Rotation of this Lecture? It has been already so thoroughly and fully examined and discussed, both with respect to Scripture & Antiquity; and particularly by one of our venerable Fathers, whose Discourse has been made public, that little or nothing new can be added.

The next, it is hoped, that can now be expected is, that the Subject may be still held up in some new points of view, whereby farther light may possibly be cast upon it, and some additional weight given to the arguments already used to Support & vindicate the practice of these Churches.

It will be readily granted, I presume, that by the Kingdom of Christ mentioned in my Text, is intended the Church of Christ. He is a King, tho' not like earthly Princes. The King of Zion is meek and lowly. He claims no Dominion over the States of this world, as such, nor does he assume any thing of the outward Splendor & magnificence of earthly Potentates.

They

4. They who believe in him, as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, — who openly acknowledge him under that important character, & sincerely submit themselves to the Government of his Sacred Laws — all such, whether considered at large, or scattered thro' the world, — or as united together in distinct Societies, are his loyal subjects. Over these he reigns, & these are his Church or Kingdom.

As divinely commissioned & appointed to that important Business, he has founded this Kingdom. He is the Supreme head over it, and Sole Legislator in it. The Officers of this Kingdom are appointed, — their Qualifications and powers described and ascertained, and the duties of their Office pointed out by him: And to him alone the Subjects of this Kingdom are accountable in what relates merely to their religious Sentiments, and eternal Salvation.

These are things implied in the text, some of which I shall particularly notice, and consider, as

- I. The Being and Constitution of the Christian Church, are of divine original.
- II. Jesus Christ, as the Founder & Supreme head of this Society, hath the Sole Right and

and Authority of making & establishing laws,
and appointing Officers in it. And Therefore

III. No laws or officers in the christian Church,
are to be esteemed, as of divine Authority, any
farther than they are laws made & officers
constituted & appointed by Christ, or than as
they are conformable to that original and
divine Plan he hath left us.

The consideration of these things may lead to
Some proper view of the particular point before
us. — may set the evidence we have of the vali-
dity of presbyterian ordination in a just light,
and shew the weakness of some objections usually
brought against it.

I. The Being and Constitution of the christian
Church are of divine original.

The justness of this observation from the text ap-
pears from the manner in which our Saviour ex-
pressed himself — My kingdom is not of this world.

It took not its Rise from the craft & subtilty, or
from the ambition & power of men. It was not
founded by human Policy & wisdom, but origi-
nated from heaven, & is of a divine & spiritual
nature.

That the christian Church originated from hea-
ven, appears from the evidence we have of Christ's
divine mission into the world, who was the
Founder and Frammer of it. And of the suffi-
ciency of this evidence no one can reasonably
doubt, who, with a fair and candid mind,
shall

b. Shall examine this evidence, as it arises from the Prophecies that went before concerning Christ, compared with the corresponding events which happened, as to the time & place, and other circumstances of his birth, & the manner of his life. As it arises likewise from the many, & incontestible miracles which he ~~was~~ wrought, healing the Sick by a word, & raising the dead to life ^{&c} from the more than human wisdom & knowledge he discovered — from the predictions he delivered, & their exact accomplishment, & particularly as to his own Resurrection; and from some other things which might be mentioned to the same purpose. — No one, I imagine, who shall consider these things, with a mind free from prejudice, & open to conviction, can retain a reasonable doubt, but that Christ was what he pretended to be, — the Son of God & Saviour of the world. That he came down from heaven, as he declared, commissioned and sent by the Father; and that God was with him, — owned & approved of him in what he did.

And this being granted, it follows, that whatever Christ did in prosecution of his important ministry, was from divine Authority, agreeable to what he sometimes declared, that he spake the words, and did the works of God.

As acting by divine Authority, ^{then} we are to conceive of him, when he chose his Apostles, — appointed them to their important office, and sent

Sent them forth as his ministers; therefore ^{7.}
could he say with propriety, — As my Father
hath sent me, even so send I you. [†]

And the divine appointment & mission of these
prime ministers of the Gospel, was abundantly
authenticated and confirmed by their being in-
cluded ~~themselves~~ with the power of working mi-
racles themselves, to confirm the Doctrines they
should teach, & the Facts they should relate; and
particularly by their being, according to Christ's pre-
diction & promise, filled with the holy Ghost, on
the day of Pentecost, when they spoke a vari-
ety of languages, to the astonishment of those
who heard them.

Thus qualified ~~for~~ for spreading the Gospel
through the world, — for propagating & establish-
ing the Kingdom of Christ, they received this
Commission from their Master & Lord, introduced
with a declaration of his divine power and
Authority — All power is given unto me in
heaven & in earth. Go ye and teach all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father, and
of the Son, and of the holy Ghost. Teaching them
to observe all things whatsoever I have com-
manded you. [‡]

Thus commissioned the Apostles ~~came~~ set out
on their ministry; and the surprising success
which attended their labors, may be justly viewed
as an additional evidence of their heavenly
mission, & of the Divinity of that Religion they
taught. For tho' they appeared as sheep in the

8. midst of wolves, — Tho' they had to encounter the ignorance and Superstition, — the Bigotry and Malice of this world, and met with great opposition, — with hardships and sufferings, yet they triumphed over all, and soon spread the Gospel far and wide. Many believed & turned to the Lord, and, by Baptism, were gathered into the Church of Christ.

This Society, small at first, and as a Grain of mustard seed, presently enlarged & spread itself through the ~~world~~ nations. Particular Societies were formed in different places, — united under Jesus their common head, and furnished with proper officers for their religious Government, Instruction, and Edification.

Thus was the Kingdom of Christ first set up in the world. Not, as I said before, by human Policy & power, but in opposition to these. It had not its first Rise from, nor any dependence upon this world. Its Being & Existence were evidently from heaven. It was the work of God, — the Effect of divine wisdom, power, & Goodness.

And not only the first Foundation & Establishment of the Church of Christ, but its whole Frame & Constitution, and the great end for which it was erected, exhibit strong and convincing marks of its heavenly original. Of all this we must be sensible, if we examine the new-Testament, where the nature & design of Christ's Kingdom are represented.

Let us view there the Laws & Ordinances of this

King-

kingdom, - the Sacred Rules and maxims by which⁹ the Subjects of it are to be governed. They have nothing of this world in view. They are not calculated to advance men in earthly Riches & greatness, nor to elevate some above others, in worldly pomp and dignity; but they breathe a celestial Spirit & influence, and are manifestly designed to rectify the disorders of our minds - to improve & perfect our natures, - to make us like to the blessed God, & fit for those high & noble Enjoyments which are consonant to our rational & moral nature.

Let us view there the Sanctions of these laws.

They are not taken from this world. The Rewards promised to the obedient, are not any high & honorable offices in this life, & lucrative posts and employments; nor the punishments threatened, pecuniary mulcts, fines, imprisonment, or death.

The great motives by which the laws of Christ are enforced, lie above, & beyond the present State and Scene of things. They respect the favor or displeasure of Almighty God, & everlasting happiness or woe in a future world.

Nor are the officers Christ hath appointed in his kingdom, like the Rulers of this world.

They have no lordly power and authority over his Subjects, like what is exercised by the Princes of the Gentiles. In stead of tyrannizing over others, they are to be their servants, ministering to them in Acts of kindness & benevolence.

It is their Duty, indeed to endeavour the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, & to increase the number of his Subjects, but not by any of the hostile measures

10. -fers of this world — the weapons of their warfare are not carnal. But they are to endeavour this, by preaching up a crucified Saviour, and publishing the truths of his Gospel, in their purity and simplicity; — by enlightening mens minds & convincing & persuading their Judgements, not by the absurd method of bodily tortures, or any other motives taken from this world, but by arguments drawn from the Sacred Oracles, & suited to their intellectual nature.

The Business of Christ's ministers, who are Officers in his Kingdom, is to seek especially the spiritual welfare and happiness of his Subjects. To elevate their minds above this world; — to raise their views to heaven, as their proper home, & to endeavour their preparation for that blessed abode.

In a word. The whole Frame and Constitution of the christian Church, as delineated & set before us in the Gospel, as well as the manner in which it was first founded & set up, declare its divine original. From heaven it took its Rise, and the great design of it is, to bring men to that glorious & happy place. From this account of the Being & Constitution of the christian Church, I proceed to the Second thing noticed from the text.

II. Jesus Christ, as the Founder & Supreme head of this Society, hath the sole Right of making & establishing laws, & appointing Officers in it. Jesus answered my Kingdom &c He therefore is King of this ecclesiastical Society, which implies his Sovereign Dominion over it. And it seems
of

essential to his being possessed of such dominion¹¹ that the power of legislation & government should be wholly in his hands.

This is not the case, indeed, I mean, it ought not to be the case, in civil States, and cannot be, in free States, where Subjects have a proper Enjoyment of their just Rights. For as all human power must originally reside in, & proceed from the Community, Rulers, tho' elevated in Office, yet, strictly speaking, are the creatures and servants of the people.

And as the highest earthly Rulers, are but imperfect men, liable to misconduct thro' ignorance, avarice, ambition &c, it is reasonable they should never be possessed of absolute uncontrollable Authority. It is just, and tends to the good of Society, that the State should always have this check upon the legislative & governing powers, to resume that Authority which they have parted with, only for the common good, whenever such authority is abused.

But, in such respects as these, Christ's Kingdom is not of this world. None of his Subjects ever stood upon a level with him, nor contributed any thing to that Supreme power of which he is possessed. His Kingdom is of his own founding & establishing - It is his own Property.

And besides, that on this account, he may appear to have a natural Right to Sovereign Dominion, he is eminently qualified to exer-

12. - use such Dominion, without ever abusing it.

The absolute Rectitude of his nature, - the perfection of his wisdom and knowledge, & his consummate goodness, render it impossible but that his laws & government, should be always just & right, & calculated for the good & happiness of his Subjects.

And Christ being thus head over all things to the Church, a Supposition that any besides him, may have power of legislation & government in it, is wholly without foundation. For such must act either independently of him, & by an authority of their own; or else as his Delegates, and by ^a power derived from him; neither of which can be the case.

For to suppose they act independently of him, is most obviously inconsistent with his own Supremacy. This is, at once, to dethrone him, and take his kingdom out of his hands.

And as to any one's acting by delegation, or as having received power & authority from him, to make laws, & appoint officers in his kingdom, of this we have not the least intimation in the New-Testament. Christ has constituted no such law-makers & viceregents in his Church; and we have abundant reason to conclude, he never intended there should be any. He has given it in solemn charge to all his Subjects, not to assume or pretend to any such

13.

Such authority, nor to submit to it if usurpt, or
claimed by others. Call no man your Father upon
Earth — neither be ye called Masters. One is your Fa-
ther who is in heaven — One is your Master e-
ven Christ, and all ye are brethren. *

And this Supreme Dominion & authority of our
exalted Redeemer, must have respect, not only to
the simple Acts of making laws, and appointing
officers in his Kingdom, but to whatever will
have influence on the nature & operation of
laws, as for instance — The particular sense in
which they are to be understood & obeyed. — And
to whatever will affect the Business of Officers, —
as their rank and dignity, & the powers com-
mitted to them. This will be evident on a
moment's reflection.

For let it be supposed that any man, or body
of men, have authority to determine the sense
of certain doctrines or laws of Christ, so as to oblige
others to receive them in their particular sense,
it is obvious such men may, by virtue of their
own interpretation, alter the nature of these doc-
trines and laws, just as they please; and may
absolutely annihilate them, as to their original
intention. And these authoritative Interpre-
ters, would, in effect, be the legislators & rulers in
Christ's Kingdom, in contradiction to his own ac-
knowledgeed Supremacy & Dominion.

So likewise, if new officers should be added to these
* Matt. ~~XXII~~ XXIII. 8, 9, 10.

Christ
Prayer

14. Christ hath appointed in his kingdom, or, which amounts to much the same, if those he hath constituted, should be altered, and made different from what they were, — if, for instance, that equality which, 'tis supposed, the new-testament clearly points out between Bishops, & Presbyters or Elders — if this equality should be destroyed, — if some of these should be exalted above others in dignity & power, — should be raised to distinguished honors and privileges, & authorized to perform peculiar Acts, from which others are excluded, as incapable, it is manifest that by such changes and alterations in the christian Church, it would become quite a different thing from what it was when first constituted. It could be, but in part, the Kingdom of Christ; in part it must be a kingdom of this world; or the kingdom of those men, who made these changes and alterations in it.

But now, Christ being the Supreme & Sovereign Lord over his own Church or kingdom, — ~~his~~ being the Sole Legislator, & authoritative Ruler in it, must intirely & for ever exclude all others from any such authority & power. — from any Authority to make new laws, or appoint new officers in his kingdom, — from ~~any~~ ^{all} authority even to interpret any of his laws or doctrines, so as to oblige others to receive and obey them, in their particular sense. And, as intirely must this exclude all others from authority to make any
Dis

Distinctions among the Officers of his Kingdom⁵.
which he hath not made;—to give powers to
some which he has not granted, or to deprive
others of those with which he has invested
them.

And if this reasoning is just, it follows,
I conceive, as an undeniable consequence,

III. That no laws or officers now in the christi-
-an Church, are to be esteemed as of divine
authority, any farther than they are laws
made, & officers constituted & appointed by
Christ, or, than as they are conformable
to that original divine Plan he has left us.

This conclusion results from its being manifestly
inconsistent with the Supreme Dominion of Christ in
his own Kingdom, that any besides him, & independ-
-ent of him, should have authority to act as legi-
-slators and Rulers in it. Any laws therefore
or officers, which have taken place in the christi-
-an Church, and appear not, or so ~~far~~ far as they
appear not, to have been made & constituted by
Christ, we are not to look upon as properly belong-
-ing to his Kingdom, nor as of divine authority.

And this naturally brings us to consider and
examine the particular point we have in view,
viz "the Article of presbyterian ordination."

I cannot persuade myself, indeed, but that, if all con-
-troversy was out of sight, no one could reasonably
doubt the Validity of Ordination by Presbyters or El-
-ders, who, with a fair and honest mind, should examine
that

16. That Plan of the christian Church, the Gospel set before us.

We, as Dissenters from the Church of England, or rather, as forming our sentiments by the Sacred Scriptures, believe and assert this validity. The churches in this country, in general, with many elsewhere, practice upon this principle; and, we doubt not, God approves our practice;— has greatly blessed, & will continue to bless the ministrations of his servants thus ordained.

Episcoparians, as they are called, zealously oppose us in this point, and represent our ordinations as null & void. And it is opposition from this quarter, and not any doubtful circumstances, attending the subject itself, upon a Scripture view of it, which has rendered the defence of this Article important, and, 'tis likely, gave rise to this Lecture, in the mind of the honorable Founder.

It is an avowed principle of the Church of England, and no immaterial part of the foundation of its present grand Hierarchy, that Bishops & Presbyters are not the same, but two distinct Officers in the Church of Christ;— that Bishops are an order superior in Rank & Dignity, and have, in particular, the power of ordaining others, or separating them to the Gospel-ministry, which Presbyters have not.

In Support of these Sentiments, some Writers on that Side the question, have laid great weight on what they say, were the opinions and practice of the Church in the early Ages of it, and even from the Apostles days.

But any considerable acquaintance with the ancient history of the Church, must satisfy the unprejudiced, that no Argument of any force can be drawn from thence.

For it is manifest, and is acknowledged by some of the most learned & judicious of Episcoparians themselves, that, in the earliest ages, the words Presbyter and Bishop were used, as they were by the inspired writers, without any Discrimination; and intended persons of one & the same office.

In times more remote from the apostolic Age, when, thro' length of time, & the lusts of men, various corruptions had crept into the Church, it is readily acknowledged these words were used, by some Writers, to point out different officers; and the Bishop was then exalted above his Brother Presbyter.

But this was not the only innovation which took place in the Church, nor was the exalted Bishop, the only new officer who was constituted and set up in it.

There soon entered, and by the same Door, Subdeacons, Archdeacons, Archbishops, Patriarchs, &c with a long Catalogue of religious Rites & Ceremonies, which were introduced, not all at once, indeed, but gradatim et paulatim, to beautify & adorn the Church, and edify its members.

These all stand upon the same bottom with Bishops, as distinguished from Presbyters, and were created by the same power, i.e. human power. They all are the inventions & institutions of uninspired and fallible men.

Some of these might originate, 'tis probable, from pious views & designs, in the weak & injudicious; others from the pride & ambition of a corrupt

18. Clergy, who imposed on the ignorance & superstition of the vulgar; and others might spring from other causes.

But we mean not to settle the point before us by human authorities; and it seems, indeed, but a useless kind of Parade, to muster the Fathers, as they are called, - to marshall them on opposite sides, and play them off against ~~each~~ one another.

Having the inspired Writings for our Instructor and guide, it is of but very little consequence, in this controversy, what the Fathers or other fallible men, have wrote or practised, - what opinions or customs they have approved or condemned, especially since they have so often contradicted one another, and themselves too.

As to all innovations upon the Scripture Plan, our Saviour's Remark, respecting divorce, is a sufficient confutation of them. But from the Beginning it was not so. *

Our Appeal is to the Sacred Books of the New-Testament, where we have, from divine inspiration, the only account we can fully depend on, of the first foundation & Constitution of the Christian Church; - of its laws, ordinances, Officers &c. And there it appears, in a light sufficiently clear and strong, that Bishops, and Presbyters or Elders, were the same Officers in the Church of Christ; - that there was no difference in their qualifications, their powers, or employments.

* Matt. 19. 8.

It will not be expected I should mention all those¹⁹ passages in the Sacred Oracles, which might be pertinent on this occasion. I shall take notice only of two or three, which may be sufficient to the present purpose. The first is in Tit. I. 5, 7. where the Apostle Paul tells Titus he left him in Crete — to ordain Elders in every City. He then shews how these Elders were to be qualified. If any man be blameless &c and immediately adds this reason of his advice — For a Bishop must be blameless. The word for there is evidently causall, and shews the identity of office between an Elder or Presbyter, & a Bishop.

Titus was to take care that the persons he ordained Elders, were of blameless character, and for this reason because a Bishop must be so. But to what purpose could this be said, or with what propriety, unless an Elder and a Bishop were the same in office?

And from this passage it appears, not only that the office of a Bishop & Elder was the same, but that their qualifications were the same likewise.

The next place I shall mention is in Acts XX. 17. Where we read that Paul being at Miletus, sent to Ephesus for the Elders of the Church, to take his last leave of them, & to give them his solemn parting charge. To these Elders he thus addressed himself in the 28 verse.

Take heed^{un} to yourselves, & to all the flock over which the holy Ghost hath made you overseers (ἐπισκοπους Bishops) to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.

20. Here it is manifest, not only that Elders were Bishops, or that their office was one & the same, but that the work assigned them, in the execution of their office, was the same also, viz, to feed the Church of God. The word ποιμαίνειν here rendered to feed, is of somewhat extensive meaning, and may signify to preside over, and govern the Church by the laws of Christ, as well as to minister to it in other respects. Elders and Bishops had therefore the same power committed to them in the Church of Christ, and were authorized and directed to perform the same ministerial service.

And this may appear still farther evident from one passage more I shall mention, which is in I. Pet. V. 1, 2. The Elders which are among you I exhort, who are also an Elder & feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof [ἐπισκοπῶντες performing the office of Bishops] not by constraint, but willingly &c

I am not insensible that some objections have been offered, against the plain & obvious sense of the above passages of Scripture: but these have been so often considered, and so fully removed, that I shall take no notice of them; nor of attempts which have been made to prove a superiority of rank and power in Bishops above Presbyters, from the supposed Episcopacy of Timothy & Titus. The supposition that these two Evangelists possessed episcopal powers, which Presbyters did not, is so entirely with

- out any Scripture foundation, that it merits not^r our consideration, any more than the Doctrine of an uninterrupted Succession of Bishops, in the modern form, even from the time of the Apostles, and some other things which over-zealous & whimsical men have laid stress upon.

Our Appeal, as I said before, is to the Sacred Books of the New-Testament, where we have the words of divine inspiration, to determine our judgement and practice.

And it appears, I conceive, with sufficient evidence, from the passages above quoted, as well as from many others which might be mentioned, that according to the constitution & Pattern of the christian Church, left us by Christ and his Apostles, the names Bishop, and Presbyter or Elder, were used indiscriminately, to signify or point out persons of one and the same office:— that their qualifications, their authority, and the work assigned to them, were precisely the same.

They were equally authorized therefore to preach the word, to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, to ordain, or solemnly to separate other meet persons, to the Gospel-Ministry, and to perform any other service which belonged to their office as ministers of Christ. From all which we may very justly and safely conclude the Validity of ordination by Presbyters.

For if the office of these and of Bishops was the same, and the work appointed to each of them, as

22. minister of Christ, was the same, it will then follow, as a just conclusion, that ordination by Presbyters is Scriptural and valid, supposing that the Act of ordaining others, was a part of the work assigned them.

True, our opponents may say, supposing this—supposing the Act of ordaining others, to be a part of the work assigned to Presbyters, or even to Presbyters & Bishops in common, then this conclusion might be just; but this is denied.

We grant that a power of ordination existed in the first ordinary & standing ministers of the Gospel, and hath descended down from them to others, by Christ's appointment; but then this power was only in Bishops, as distinguished from Presbyters.

To this objection, which rests wholly upon an arbitrary distinction between the office and power of Bishops & Presbyters, it would be a sufficient answer, to observe, that we have instances, in the New Testament, of ordination performed by persons under the name of Presbyters^{*}, but not a single instance of any performed by persons under the name of Bishops; from whence we might fairly conclude, that if there was any distinction of office & power between these, Presbyters & not Bishops had power to ordain.

But I chuse to rest the point, at present,

* I Tim. IV. 13, 14. Acts XIII. 1, 2, 3.

upon that Identity of Office, of power, and of²³.
work or service we have fully proved between
Presbyters & Bishops.

There is no dispute between Episcoparians and
us, as to Bishops having, in the apostolic age,
a divine right to ordain others. ~~And~~ this we
believe and assert equally with them. And
it being evident to Demonstration, that at that
time, the words Bishop & Presbyter were conver-
-tible terms, and used indifferently for each o-
-ther; — that Bishops were Presbyters, and Presbyters
Bishops; — that their Qualifications, their office,
their power & Business were the same, the con-
-clusion is fair and just, that ordination by
Presbyters is scriptural & valid.

And it follows likewise, from what hath been
said above, of the equality and sameness of Bi-
shop and Presbyter, that whatever Distinction
between these, has taken place since the apos-
-tolic Age, — whatever Superiority in Rank,
& dignity of Office, or of power in the Church
of Christ, a Bishop is supposed now to have
above a Presbyter, is a distinction & Superi-
-ority without any foundation. A Bishop
thus distinguished and elevated, is no Officer
in the Church or Kingdom of Christ, but mere-
-ly of human Invention & creation.

And in the same light we justly view a
large number of others, as Canons, Deans, Arch-
-bishops, Chancellors &c of these, & of some other
of

24. Officers, tho' of high importance in the Church of England, we read nothing in the New-Testament. They have neither name, nor place, nor work assigned to them, in the divine constitution & Form of the Church of Christ which is there exhibited. They are all officers of men creating & setting up. Their existence & authority are not from Christ, the divine Founder & Supreme head of the Church, but wholly from this world.

But from this some may be ready to conclude, I am for cutting off the Church of England, from being any part of the Church of Christ; — for demolishing all her officers, and nullifying all her administrations.

But such conclusions as these, from what I have said, would not be strictly just. Nor do I mean to retalliate upon our episcopal Brethren, by any hard and uncharitable reflections.

I sincerely wish the Character of that Church may be ever supported, and appear respectable in the Eyes of all Christians, so far as it is built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner Stone.

I doubt not but great & good men, — Sincere Disciples of Christ, have, and still belong to that Establishment; and that some of its

most dignified clergy have been eminently^{25.}
serviceable in promoting the true interest of
the Redeemer's Kingdom: Nor do I doubt
its being a part of the Church of Christ, not-
withstanding the many human additions
which still adhere to it.

But then, these additions, — all its Deviations
from the Scripture Pattern, cannot be justly
ascribed any part of its Character, as a Church of
Christ, but so many corruptions it has unhap-
pily received, & still retains, and which, in stead
of adding to its true beauty and glory, really dis-
figure and deform it. These are not Gold, Sil-
ver & precious Stones, built on Christ, the only
foundation, but Wood, Hay & Stubble, which the
power of truth may, in time, purge and purify
it from.

And tho' the Church of Christ knows no such
officers as Bishops, of Superior Rank & power
to Presbyters, yet I charitably believe ordi-
nation by these may be valid. Not, indeed, as
they are Bishops, in ^{an episcopal} ~~the~~ sense of ~~the Church of~~
~~England~~, but as they are Scripture-Bishops,
and the same in rank & office with Presbyters.
For it is only in this view of them, that they can
justly be considered as officers in Christ's King-
dom, and as having any divine Right to or-
dain: In the other view, all their authority
is from this world, and is therefore, in reality,
no authority at all.

26. So that if our Ordinations by Presbyters, are not more valid, than those by Bishops, they certainly cannot be less so, unless an authority derived from men, — merely from this world, may be supposed greater & better, than an authority derived from heaven.

I shall now beg your farther patience, only till I offer a few Reflections upon, or Inferences from what hath been said. And

1. The christian Church being of divine original, we should ever look on its Constitution as sacred & inviolable.

Every work of God is perfect in its kind, nor are we able to improve upon, & mend, what was designed & executed by infinite wisdom.

The most pious views & motives will not justify us in attempting this, as we have neither Authority nor capacity for such business.

Corruptions in the Church, 'tis highly probable, were early introduced, by a Disposition to mend it, or make alterations to its advantage.

Good men, but weak & injudicious, imagined that an officer of higher rank and greater power, than a common Presbyter, would have more influence in correcting abuses, in the Church, keeping out heretics &c. Hence, 'tis likely, the office of a

Bishop, as distinguished from, & Superior to Pres-
-byters first took its Rise. Other alterations
might proceed from the same cause, & many
from other causes much less justifiable.

Corruptions once begun, were carried from
one degree to another, till, in some places,
what was called the Church of Christ, had very
little of its original form left, & became almost
intrinsically a Kingdom of this world.

Bishops, in particular, were not only raised
above Presbyters, but their elevation gradu-
-ally increased. They were made Archbishops,
Patriarchs &c. And, in some places, in addi-
-tion to their episcopal Dignities, they were
created Counts, Marquesses, Dukes, & have
sometimes claimed & possessed ^{all} the Regalia of
of Sovereign Princes. They have given law
to nations, and battle to their Enemies, at the
head of numerous Armies of their own raising.
This was making The Church of Christ, a Church
militant indeed.

But how unlike to the meek & benevolent
Son of God, who came not to destroy men's
lives, but to save them, must these military
Heroes appear, who pretended to be his Dis-
-ciples, and Officers in his Kingdom?

Now, as such gross corruptions, proceeded from
small alterations, at first, in the Scripture
Plan, how cautious should we be of ever at-
tempting any thing of this nature! How in-

28. - violable Should we hold the Institutions of heaven!

And it is by a close & Steadfast adherence to that divine Pattern left us by Christ and his Apostles, that we may hope the truth, as it is in Jesus, will, in time, prevail over error and Superstition, & by its powerfull efficacy, remove, by degrees, all those human alterations, which have so greatly mutilated & deformed the Church; - will restore it to its original purity & glory, when it will appear again, to its Friends, fair as the moon, & clear as the Sun, and to its enemies, terrible as an army with Banners. Again

2. The Supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ, over his own Church or Kingdom; - his being the Sole Legislator, & authoritative Ruler in it, as this should caution us against aspiring at any lordly Dominion over others, so it should guard us against submitting to the authority of any, who would usurp, & exercise such Dominion over us.

In all things which respect our religious Faith and practice, we are to recur to the Sacred Standard Christ hath left us. We are to compare all things with this, and to judge of all things by this.

It is of but little importance to us, what are the opinions or practice of this or that fallible man, unless we can find them agreeable to the Doctrines and Laws of Christ.

He only is our Master in what relates to con-²⁹-
science, and our eternal salvation. To him we
stand or fall. And if we approve ourselves
to him, we need not be greatly anxious as to
what men may judge or say of us.

3. Upon the principles which have been
now laid down & established, our dissent
from the Church of England, - our rejecti-
tion of her Form of Government, - of her
Rites & Ceremonies, must be for ever justified.
We dissent from her in no Article, but where
we are well persuaded She herself has dissent-
ed from the Scripture Plan. We reject no-
thing, but what we are well persuaded had
its Rise & establishment from the Inventions
& power of men. We separate from her, only
so far as we believe she has deviated from
the Form and Constitution of Christ's King-
dom, and is become a Kingdom of this world.
And thus far, even our Allegiance to Jesus
Christ, as our only Supreme head, our Lawgiver,
our Ruler & Judge obliges us to dissent.

In Stead therefore of imagining our fore-fathers
were guilty of Schism, of which they & their
followers have been often accused, in separa-
ting from The Church of England, & casting
of the yoke under which they had groaned
we ought to venerate & honor their memories
for that pious Zeal and fortitude they disco-
ver

30. - vered, in asserting the liberty where-
- with Christ had made them free: And
that from a Regard to their own Conscien-
- ces, and the honor of their divine Lord,
they submitted to hardships & sufferings,
in planting Churches in this Land, more
conformable to the Gospel Pattern.

And it certainly becomes us their Descen-
- dents, who reap the happy fruits of their
Trials, not to become again entangled with
the yoke of bondage; but to stand fast in
that liberty they have transmitted to us.

And from the same principles which jus-
- tify our dissent, in general, from the Episco-
- pal Form & Government of the Church, we
conclude, and with the greatest Reason, the
Validity of Ordination, by Presbyters, or Scrip-
- ture-Bishops.

For by examining the Constitution of the
Church, or Kingdom of Christ, - its Doctrines
& Laws, - the Officers he hath appointed in
it, - their qualifications, & powers, and the
work he has assigned to them, as these
things are placed before us in the New-Test-
- tament, - upon such examination, we find it
evident, beyond all reasonable doubt, that Bishops
and Presbyters had one and the same office, &
equal Authority to perform all ministerial Ser-
- vices, and therefore ordination among the rest.

And

32.
And the objections to this, from our opponents, being grounded mainly, on a supposed superiority of Bishops to Presbyters, & resting on unwarrantable alterations in the Church of Christ, - and receiving therefore all their force from human authority, ought not, in the decision of the present point, to have the weight of a feather.

And I cannot but recommend it to all, - to the young Gentlemen of this Society in particular, and especially to such of them as are designed for the Gospel-Ministry, to give close attention to the Sacred Scriptures in their examination of this subject. Your looking back into Antiquity, will, indeed, be no disadvantage to you, nor to the practice or cause of these Churches, if you can take a proper extensive view of what has been wrote relative to this controversy.

But then remember that after all your Researches, the Sacred Scriptures ought to be your guides. The words of Christ, & of his Apostles, are not only more ancient, than those of the Fathers, as they are called, & of later Writers, but they alone are of divine Authority, and ought to determine and settle our judgement, in all things of a religious nature.

And I am persuaded that the more the present point is viewed and examined by the light of Scripture, the evidence for the validity of presbyterian ordination, will appear brighter and stronger, and triumph over all objection.

To conclude.

Let it be the concern of all, that they are the true and real Subjects of the Kingdom of Christ. A religion so evidently divine as that which the Gospel teaches, and the great design of which, is so infinitely gracious, must, in the highest degree, deserve our attention; and greatly Solicitors should we all be, that we experience its Sanctifying and Saving influence.

But our beloved Sons, the Students in this place for whose ~~happiness~~ welfare, we feel a parental tenderness, will suffer me, in a particular manner, to recommend this to them.

Amidst all your Studies of the liberal Arts & Sciences, and to acquire those literary accomplishments, which may justly adorn your Character, and render you usefull members of Society, let me request it of you, not to neglect the Study of yourselves, and a proper cultivation of your own minds, in a moral view.

Converse much with the Sacred Classics.

Make the Doctrines & Laws of Christ familiar to you. Often compare yourselves with, and examine yourselves by them; & be concerned that every thing yet amiss in your Tempers or lives, be rectified by the Grace of the Gospel; — that you are daily improving in the true and solid virtues of Christianity, and ripening for that

State of endless Glory and Felicity, which
 shall be the portion of the righteous.

Believe me, my young Friends, all the
 glittering charms of this present world,
 so apt to engage and captivate the mind
 in early life, are but gilded dancing
 Bubbles, which vanish in a moment, com-
 pared with this.

And may we all so conduct thro' the pre-
 sent State, as to be accepted of our great
 Lawgiver, Ruler & Judge, and find our lot
 among his faithful Subjects, at that im-
 portant time, when having put down all
 Rule, and all Authority & power, & subdued
 all his & his Churches Enemies, he shall de-
 liver up the Kingdom to the Father, and
 God shall be all and in all.

