

A LETTER

TO Sandeman (R.)

Mr. WILLIAM WILSON,

One of the Ministers of PERTH,

CONCERNING

ORDAINING ELDERS.

1. 5,---9. For this Cause left I thee in Crete, that thou
couldst set in Order the Things that are wanting, and ordain
Elders in every City, as I had appointed thee. --- For a
Bishop must be blameless, as the Steward of God, --- able,
by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and convince the Gain-sayers.
1th. 15. 13. --- Every Plant which my heavenly Father
hath not planted, shall be rooted up.
1et. 4. 1. For as much then as Christ hath suffered for us in
the Flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same Mind. ---



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P R E F A C E.

THE following Scribbles, as Mr. Wilson calls them, occasioned a Conversation betwixt him and me, wherein, after admonishing me for Self-conceit, he offered his Endeavours to deliver me from the Snare of the Devil.

First then, he call'd me to Account, for questioning his Right to the Title of Ambassador †, which he strenuously asserted. After some Jangle on this Head, when he insisted for the Title on very low Terms, as I myself could claim it, at length I granted it: For, I could say, That I was call'd, commission'd and sent, to say all that I had to say from the Word of God, in Defence of my Principles; and so far as he rejected any of the Words of Christ, that I laid before him, so far he rejected Christ; and no more could I say of him.

He was mighty confident of his being sent a Minister of the Gospel; that is, as I take it, of his being exactly described in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and enquired at me, what I had to object?

I told him, That tho he were otherways well qualified, I could not hold him as a Minister, if his Doctrine were not squared by the Doctrine of the Apostles; who only and properly were the Ambassadors from God that I owned.

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† This was occasioned by a few Lines sent to a Friend, for Advice on that Subject, lately published in a Letter on the Usefulness of Catechisms considered.

He enquired what Fault I found with his Doctrine?

I took Notice of the general Strain of it, as tending to establish a worldly Kingdom to Jesus Christ.

But he enquired what I had to object in Particular? Had I not sometime heard his Doctrine? And had not he preached, If any Man will be Christ's Disciple, let him deny himself, and let him take up his Cross and follow him?

I put him particularly in Mind of his haranguing the Magistrates, endeavouring to stir them up to exercise their Authority against this People (at their first coming to Town) whom He has since persecuted under the Names of Sectarians, Deluded, &c. His Manner of arguing, at that Time, was thus; If any Person or Persons shall come into this City, having it for their Opinion, That Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, if they keep this their Opinion to themselves, and do not teach others the same, the Magistrate, in that Case, is not concerned to punish them: But, if they declare this their Opinion in any publick Place of the City, so that others might hear, and be misled thereby, it is full Time for the Magistrate to restrain them, and exclude them the City. Accordingly, he made the Application to the aforesaid People.

When I put him in Mind of this, he enquired, Was not the Magistrate to punish Blasphemers? Was not Blasphemy a heinous Sin?

I answered, It was undoubtedly a heinous Sin; but, that Matters purely religious, came not under the Magistrate's Cognizance, who was only to be a Terror to the Evil Doer, who worketh Ill to his Neighbour.

He then told me, That I was so self-conceited, as to think, that an Injury done to God, was not so great a Sin, as an Injury done

me to me; and that I was for having the Magistrate to avenge my Quarrel, and not the Cause of God.

Whereupon I took Occasion to tell him, That I was as little for calling on the Magistrate to avenge my Quarrel, as he was: That I was neither for avenging my Person nor my Religion, leaving Vengeance wholly to God. He supposed several Cases wherein I might be attack'd or injured. I still told him what the New Testament commands me in General, with respect to every Case, That when I was injured, I ought not to injure again; That I ought not to resist Evil, nor to avenge myself, which is being overcome of Evil; but to overcome Evil with Good. And that it was the same Thing, as to the Disposition of my Mind, whether I aveng'd my self, or employ'd the Magistrate to do it for me.

O, said he, Perhaps you are like the Quakers, for holding that Text in a literal Sense, If a Man smite thee on the one Check, turn to him the other.

Yes, said I, I'm of the Mind that this Text binds me, when injured, to be so far from thinking to injure again, as to be ready to receive more Injuries; or, can you give me a better Sense of it.

This Text, replied he, only forbids us to be of a revengeful Spirit, still asserting, that it was his Duty to defend (as he called it) while it was in his Power; That is, as I take it, to resist while Resisting is good; To take Eye for Eye, and Tooth for Tooth, and to give Blow for Blow; Just such another Sense as I have heard his Followers give of that Text, Lay not up for yourselves Treasures on the Earth, &c. This Text, say they, forbids us not to lay up Treasures on the Earth; this Sense is too literal, it only forbids us to set our Hearts on them; that is, forbids us to set our Hearts where our Treasure is! In which two Cases, we have a flagrant Instance of the Corruption of human Nature, deceit-

deceitfully resisting the Evidence of God's Word, when speaking me clearly.

When we had done with our Digression, returning again to speak of the Magistrate's Duty, with Respect to Blasphemy, he enquired at me, how I came to limit his Power, as I had done? I cited him the first Institution of Magistracy to Noah, He that sheddeth Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed. Then we turned over to Rom. 13 Chap. where the Magistrate is said to be the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil. I alledged this Doing of Evil spoken in the General, believed undoubtedly to be explain'd and limited by the Context which evidently makes it appear to be working Ill to our Neighbour against the second Table of the Law, which the Apostle there makes Mention of; and, with respect to the Subject in Hand, speaks as if there were no other Commandment; and he that loveth his Neighbour according to this second Table, is said to have fulfilled the Law; and that it seem'd pretty strange, if Blasphemy or Heresy be the greatest Evil that comes under the Magistrate's Cognisance; nothing like it is insinuated in the whole Passage. He again contended, that under Evil was contain'd every Thing that could be said to be Evil, and said, that I was limiting the Words of the Holy Ghost; for this I had his Assertion, which was not to be answered, but by another Assertion.

Here then we have an Instance of the true Spirit of ambitious Clergymen, who will suffer none, but when they can no longer resist, and when in Power, would persecute every Body that differs from them, as the punishing of Blasphemers, in Mr. Wilton's own Sense, will easily import: For, when he instanced the above mention'd Case of Blasphemy, to the Magistrates, it was evident to all that heard him, the Application was to a certain Party who differ'd from him, and from whom he could expect no great

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Homage, or spiritual Subjection; and from this Case it may be easily applied to every Thing that the Clergy think fit to call Heresy or Blasphemy.

Should it not strike Amazement in all who read the New Testament, and find Jesus condemned to Death by Churchmen, under Pretext of Blasphemy, to see them who pretend to be the Servants and Followers of Jesus, so far forget themselves, as to plead for Persecution under the same very Title. Might it not have been expected, that, at least, they would have chosen another Word for it? However, we may learn this from it, that the same Spirit of Persecution, in the Jewish Rulers, assisted by the Heathens, and handed down to the Popish Persecutors, hath at length prevail'd in full Strength among Protestants, without losing the very Title, notwithstanding all their Protestations against it in the former.

Now then, when Mr. Wilson exhorts us to deny our selves, and take up our Cross and follow Christ, if his Meaning be, that we should grasp at Power, in order to persecute, or persecute when we have Power, and that we should resist to our Power, when undermost, which is the only Opportunity we have for bearing the Cross, we know how to understand him for the Future, and let his Followers judge how these two consist together.

For my Part, if I must hold such an One for a Minister of Jesus Christ, then must I say the same of that Arch-Clergyman, the Pope, who, I'm perswaded, could not insist for Persecution in broader Terms, than to have every Thing punished by the Magistrate, which he can call Evil, or even Blasphemy; then must I say, that the crowned Locusts, whose King is Abaddon, are the Servants of Jesus, who came not to destroy Mens Lives, but to save.

But here, he'll say, I misrepresent him vastly, when I speak of destroying Mens Lives, for he is only for Half Persecution. I
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enquired at him, if the least Degree of corporal Punishment do not suppose the greatest, upon the utmost Obstinacy. He said he, it only supposes a greater; and so he was for contriving Methods to shut Men out of Society, by some other Way than immediate destroying of their Lives, viz. by perpetual Imprisonment, and utter Exclusion from any Conversation with the Fellow-creatures.

For my Part, I cannot see the Difference to be great, between putting a Man to Death, and letting him rot in Prison, shut out from all the Comforts of Life. It might also seem a modest Request in Mr. Wilson, to desire the Magistrates to exclude the City those whom he pointed out as Sectarians, Blasphemers, and spreaders of Delusion; yet he is very short sighted, who does not see, that this very Request tends to the destroying of their Lives: For, whatever Harm they would do to this City, they would do the same to whatever Place or City they should enter into; and if this City ought to exclude them, so ought every other where they came, till at last they should be excluded the World.

But I need not insist on the Folly and Inconsistency of Half-persecution, seeing it is now every where laugh'd at. Only we may learn this much by it, that the Clergy's Power and Authority is much to the Decay, when we see them making their Demands lower, because their Market is somewhat fallen, for the Merchandise they have made of the Souls of Men is ready to sink. From which we may observe, That if Clergymens Horns were cut as short as their Fellow-subjects, they would grow very tame Creatures, and in a short Time become as sociable as the rest of Mankind.

Seeing they argue like the Disciples in the Days of Christ's Flesh, from the Old Testament, in Favour of their persecuting Principles; how come they to have the Impudence to charge and dispence with the Divine Law, which condemned Blasphemers

Persecutors to Death in the Jewish Church, by substituting lesser Degrees of Punishment in Room thereof.

Hence it appears they would act most consistently, if, either renouncing Judaism, they would comply with the Spirit of the New Testament, and turn Christians, or patient Bearers of their Crois after Christ; or else fairly profess themselves Jews, and walk up to the Jewish extirpating Covenant they have come under, as true Children of that same Covenant.

On this Subject of Persecution, our Clergyman differs nothing from the Popish, but in Words; for Instance, he owns he is not infallible, but he is no less than a Blasphemer who openly differs from him: He allows Men to read the Scriptures, but he is deicided, and ought to be expell'd the Place or City, who differs from his Sense of it.

He is not for destroying Mens Lives who differ from him, only he is for punishing, and utter suppressing all such as he shall think fit to call Blasphemers and Hereticks; and I cannot see what more the Roman Church intended, when they set up for Infallibility, and discharged the common People to read the Scriptures, and when they push'd Persecution to the highest Degree.

As an Instance of the happy Decay of the Clergy's Influence and Authority, we see Mr. Wilson's Designs of violent Persecution against the People he aim'd at, have hitherto fail'd, by the kind Providence of him who hath now put it into the Hearts of the Kings of the Earth, to hate the Whore, and make her desolate; all his Complaints getting but little Ear from the Magistrate, have fail'd of the wish'd-for Success, being followed only with a Noise and Cry of Delusion among the Mob, who are the next Engine Clergy-men usually work by, when the Magistrate will not execute their Wrath; and that People, by the Protection of their Head and Lord, still continue an Eye-sore to him and his Followers, the Mob

All this while I received no Answer to my Letter, unless what may be gathered from such Expressions as these, You are full Self-conceit, you are in the Snare of the Devil, &c. and that is all he has done to bring me out of it: Only he says, I have Mispresented him in two Instances, which I shall take Notice of their proper Place.

Having then lost all Hope of an Answer, either in publick or private Conversation, I have given him this last Opportunity of answering for himself. If, instead of an Answer, he shall be found either instigating the Magistrate, or spiring up the Mob against me, I'll have it proven to a Demonstration, that he cannot answer me, and that my Arguments stand good still, for ought he has to say against them.





A
LETTER

TO

Mr. *WILLIAM WILSON.*

SIR,



YOU know, that some Time ago, I proposed a Scruple to you, against your Ambassadorship; and the Treatment I met with, might have induced One to think, you set up for Infallibility, or rather something above it, and would fain play the like Game here, as *His Holiness* does at *Rome*; but not to make such a Conclusion too rashly, I'll try you once more.

I heard you lately discourse at the Occasion of ordaining your Ruling Elders and Deacons, on *Rom. 12. 6, 7, 8.* and what Things occur'd in your Sermon, that I could not easily reconcile, either with one another, or the Texts of the New Testament you brought to prove them, I thought very proper, as well as fair and equitable, to lay before you, so far as I could remember them, that hereby you might have an Opportunity to rectify me, wherein I might mistake you thro' Ignorance or Inattention, or further instruct me, if I be in an Error, which would indeed be the Part of One that

had not a Mind to dictate, but to teach and persuade; and I may the rather use this Freedom, that you are pleased to reckon the whole Town or Parish your Flock, and yourself a Pastor or Doctor thereof.

FIRST then, speaking of the Church and its Government you told us, That the visible Church, (as compared in the Parable with the Field of Wheat and Tares, and the Net that was cast into the Sea, which gathered of every Kind consisted of Good and Bad, of Wheat and Tares; yea, such as are *visible to the Servants of the Householder to be Tares.*

I easily perceive how the Church may be likened unto Draught of Fishes, which, by the Net of the Gospel, are gathered from every Kind, which, when drawn ashore, or (as the Interpretation runs) in the End of the World, are found to consist of Good and Bad. But how you came to say That the visible Church on this Earth, consists of a Company of *Good and Bad visibly so*, I cannot understand, unless you mean, that the visibly Bad, make up such a considerable Part of the *National Church*, that if they were removed, it would scarce any more be *visible*.

I am still at a greater Loss to understand, how you applied the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, in a Consistency with your self; I have thought this Parable afforded no contemptible Argument against your Principles of *extirpating Heretics* seeing the Field here mentioned is declared to be the World, the Tares are called the Children of the *wicked One*, a Designation I no where find in the New Testament, given to any Members of a visible Church, that are to be tolerated therein, as the Tares must be among the Wheat, according to the Direction, *Let both grow together.* For if this Rule were observed in a Christian Congregation, it would intirely set aside such a Thing as Excommunication, which national Churches own to be lawful in some Cases: Yet after all, I find none in this Parable, but the Wheat, the good Seed, declared to be the Children of the Kingdom, of the New Testament Church.

HOWEVER, seeing you will have it so, that the Field in the Parable, instead of the World, signifies your visible, or
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national Church, I'll easily grant it, because I have not yet learn'd the Difference, nor will I deny but it consists of visible Tares in Plenty.

HERE I understand you pretty well: But the Thing that most astonish'd me, was, to hear you, in the Close of your Sermon, homologate a Complaint of promiscuous Communion, and confessing, for your own Part, in particular, that there was too much Ground for it, telling your Ruling Elders, withal, to take care who were to be admitted to the Communion Table, seeing there were many in your Congregation, whose Lives were little influenced by the Word; by this Time, thinks I, *your visible Tares* must be fearfully alarm'd, who scarce an Hour ago were sooth'd with a Toleration to grow together with the Wheat, and now are threaten'd with being pluck'd up; and to assure them the better, see an Order of Men before them, ready to be set a Part for the Purpose. Here, I confess, I was at a Stand, incapable to solve the Difficulty, unless I should suppose, that it was neither the visibly Bad, nor the visible Tares, that defiled your Communion, but some other Sort of Persons worse than either.

2. THE next Thing I took Notice of, was, That you told us, the Government of the Church was not committed to the whole Community of the Faithful, but to the Office-bearers, whom the God of Order had appointed for that End; for, otherways, the Government of the Church would be full of Confusion and Disorder. The Texts of the New Testament you brought to prove this, were, so many as I remember, *Heb. 13. 17. Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give Account. 1 Pet. 5. 5. Likewise ye younger, υποταξασθε, submit yourselves to the elder, ως οβυταξοις. And 1 Thes. 5. 12. We beseech you Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are ever you in the Lord, and admonish you. Matth. 18. 18. Whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.*

Do you think, that in the three first cited Texts, the Apostles are commanding a more blind Obedience and Subjection to be paid to the ordinary Officers of the Church
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than they demanded to themselves from the Church at *Jerusalem*, Acts 15. 22. *Then pleased it the Apostles and Elders, with the whole Church, &c.* If you would then reckon it such a Breach of Order, to be degraded to the Station of *Apostles*, I must understand, that your beautiful Order, of which you are not ashamed to call God the Author, would be inverted and quite confused, if you should be reduced to the Rank of an ordinary Bishop or Elder, and obliged to take the second Place after the Apostles, with the Elders of the Church in *Jerusalem*.

IF, in *Matth.* 18. 18. Christ is speaking to the Apostles only, as representing the Office-bearers of the Church, whom you was pleased to call their Successors, he is undoubtedly speaking to the same Persons, in the same Capacity, in the three foregoing Verses, where he says, *If thy Brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his Fault between thee and him alone, &c.* and if you shall once fix this Point, I think you may safely say, the Government or Discipline of the Church is not committed to the Community of the Faithful: Yet, however much the Apostles contended among themselves, who should be greatest, I cannot find, either in their Practice, or Writings, that they seem to have smell'd any Piece of Honour, or lordly Superiority over the Flock, arising to them from this Passage. It seems the Emblem of the *little Child*, in the foregoing Part of the Chapter, had remained fresher in their Minds, than in the Minds of them who afterwards set up for their Successors.

FURTHER, to support your Argument, you cite 1 Cor. 12. 16. *If the whole Body were an Eye, where were the hearing, &c.* from which you infer, that it belongs not to that Part of the Body, the Flock, or Community of the Faithful, to observe the Christian Discipline, or Laws of brotherly Love; that the whole Charge of this, is devolved upon the Office-bearers.

IF then you are one of these Office-bearers, who are capable to observe the Laws of brotherly Love for the whole Flock, so as to give Account for them at Christ's Appearing, your Flock will be very much obliged to you, and undoubtedly, you will have a just Claim to all the Obedience, and
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subjection you are asking; and they again will have no less Ground to give it, and to proclaim *your Holiness and Worthiness* to the highest Degree; and still the more, if it be true, that you entertain'd your Communicants at the Table, with a Discourse on *your own Death and Sufferings*, from that Text, *Until I desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you, before I suffer*, Luke 22. 15. Until I be periwaded, that the Clergy are capable to give a sufficient Account, upon this Head, at Christ's second Coming, I confess I cannot see, how the Community of the Faithful, or the least Member of it, can be excusable in the Neglect of any of the Laws of Discipline Christ has appointed, and delivered to his Church, in the New Testament

3. You also told us, That the Number and Order of the Office-bearers of the Church, was fix'd and founded in the Word of God: That they were all contained under the two general Heads of *Prophecy* and *Ministry*, or (as I hope you'll own) the Offices of the *Bishop* and *Deacon*, the Minister of the *Word*, and the Minister of *Tables*, in the fixing of which two Orders of Church-Officers, and no more, not a little of the Strength of your Argument against *Prelacy*, has been reckoned to consist. Here you said the *Prelate* was no Officer of God's Appointment, but merely a *Creature* of Man's making, seeing there was no mention of him in the Scripture: All this was very fair, and might serve to show us, you was much aware of admitting any Church-Officer, that was not well founded in the Word of God; but alas! you had not gone far, when I observed you mighty intent upon *forming* a *Creature* of your own, full as distinct from the two above-mentioned Orders, as the *Prelate*, on which you was pleas'd to bestow the Name of *Ruling Elder*; nor was you less eager, by all Means, if possible, to father him upon the Word of God; the first Place you sought to find him, was in your Text, Rom. 12. 6, 7, 8. *Having then Gifts differing according to the Grace that is given to us, whether Prophecy; let us Prophesy, according to the Proportion of Faith; or Ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on Teaching; or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation; he that governeth, let him do it with Simplicity; he that ruleth, with Diligence; he that sheweth Mercy, with Cheerfulness.*

To establish your Point, you fixt upon that Clause, *that ruleth, with Diligence.* The original Word $\delta\ \omega\sigma\iota\sigma\alpha\mu\epsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon$ here used, you said, signifies *President, Ruler, Governour* &c. being the same as in *1 Thes. 5. 12. 1 Tim. 3. 4, 5. 12.* You noticed likewise, that he was distinctly mentioned by himself, aside from either the Teacher or Exhorter, and had his particular Direction by himself.

By this Time, your Ruling Elder was ready to take Foot if you had not cut him short in the Birth, and metamorphos'd him into a Deacon, by ranking him under that general Head, the *Ministry, εν τῇ Διακονίᾳ, the Order of Deacons* as this and the Word $\Delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\omicron\iota\varsigma$, undoubtedly signifies, so oft as they stand in a distinguished Sense, to point forth a Distinction of Church-Officers in the New Testament.

Now, whether is it better to rank him that ruleth under *Prophecy*, and so make him a *Bishop* or *Elder*, or under the *Ministry, Διακονία*, and so make him a *Deacon*, and consequently *no Elder*, for no other Reason, but the Order of the Words, because he is mentioned among the Deacons in the particular Enumeration.

But we need not wonder much to see you change your Elder into a Deacon, if we reflect, that you also changed your Deacon into a Bishop, or Elder, by allowing him a Part, or, as you called it, a *consultative Vote*, in the Government of the Church; for, when you excluded the Community of the Faithful, from acting any Part in the Government, or Discipline of the Church, assigning it wholly to the Office-bearers, a Word (I suppose) chosen to include the Deacon among the rest, you cited only such Scriptures as spake of the Bishop or Elder, such as, *Obey them that have the Rule over you, &c. Heb. 13. 17. Likewise ye Younger submit yourselves to the Elder, &c. 1 Pet. 5. 5.* By which

|| *Mr. Wilson now denies, that he then said, the original Word signified President, tho he owns, that it may be so translated, and indeed so he may, for it can scarce properly be otherwise translated.*

which we must understand, that your Deacon is a Ruler and an Elder.

HOWEVER, to follow you through all the rest of your Proof, you cited 1 Cor. 12. 28. *And God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles; secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers, after that Miracles, then Gifts of Healings, Helps, Governments, Diversities of Tongues.* Now, I find nothing here that I could prove to mean the ordinary Offices of the Church, but *Helps* and *Governments*, nor any Thing else that looks like them, but the Teachers mentioned in the third Place; and I doubt, I would not get it well denied, but that, by Teachers, is here understood *Evangelists*; ~~and~~ seeing they are not mentioned under any other Designation in this Passage, and 'tis difficult to suppose; that, in a Passage designed chiefly to enumerate the extraordinary Gifts, that of *Evangelists*, none of the least considerable among them, should be intirely omitted; and it seems the more probable, that in *Eph. 4* Chap. Verse 11. *Evangelists* possess the third Place after the Apostles and Prophets, the same which Teachers have here; and seeing it is the chief Design of the Passage, to treat of the extraordinary Gifts only, which are said, in the *Sixth Verse* of the following Chapter, to fail and to cease, the ordinary Offices are mentioned only by the *By*, in as short and cursory a Manner as possible, as may appear from the omitting of them in *Verse 29th* and *30th* following, where the rest, the Teachers not excepted, are repeated.

So, not finding any particular Distinction of the Elders Office here, I cannot see how it can properly support the Argument in Hand; for, taking *Helps* to be the *Deacons*, *Governments* must include all *Elders* in general, all that govern the Flock, *γυβερνησεις*, so that, unless you exclude your exhorting and teaching Elders, from acting any Part in the Government of the Church, I cannot see how your Ruling Elder can gain any Ground from this Text.

You cited also 1 *Thes. 5. 12.* *And we beseech you Brethren, to know them that are over you, ἀγοισαμενους, in the Lord, and admonish you.* Well, this Verse says no more, but what your Text says, that there is he that *presideth*, ἀγοισαμενος, and so is there he that *teacheth*, διδασκων, whom, if you please,
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you may exclude from ruling and exhorting, by the same Rule that you restrain your *Ruling* Elder from teaching and exhorting.

BUT, let us see the Force of your last Argument, which you intend to be the greatest, from 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. *Let the Elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double Honour, especially they who labour in the Word and Doctrine.* Hence you would infer, that there are Elders here spoke of, whose Business it is only to *Rule* or *Preside*, distinct altogether from the Exhorter and Teacher, and who have nothing to do with the Exhortation and Doctrine: But, might you not, by the same Rule, distinguish the Exhorter and Teacher from the Ruler and allow them no Part in the Ruling; yea, and make the Exhorter as distinct an Officer from the Teacher, as you do the Ruler from both.

THAT there is a Distinction of Elders pointed at in this Text, is undeniable; but it will be the better understood that we first consider wherein all Elders are *One*. According to 1 *Tim.* 3. 2. *Tit.* 1. 9. 1 *Pet.* 5. 2. all Elders must be apt to teach, able, by sound Doctrine, to exhort and convince the Gain-sayers, capable to feed or rule the Flock; yet some of them excel most in one Branch, and some of them in another of that same Gift, which is, in some Measure, common to them all: So the above cited Text in the Epistle to *Timothy*, gives double Honour, not to them that *Rule*, but to them that *Rule well*, or excel chiefly in Ruling; and a more especial Honour, not to the Exhorter, or Teacher, but to them that labour, or exert themselves chiefly in the Word of Exhortation and Doctrine. This Text then does not make distinct Orders of Officers, but only distinguishes Elders, according to the different Branches of the same Gift they severally excel in; and your Text, *Rom.* 12. 8. enjoins them to attend and bestir themselves chiefly that Way for which they are particularly fitted by Jesus Christ, and wherein, of Consequence, they most excel; and this View will appear the more native, if you will allow, that the common Engine whereby they all work is the Word of God, and *that* only; and since the Teacher has to do with the *Understandings*, and the Exhorter with the *Will and Affections* of the Flock, why may not the Ap-
plication

Application of the Word to the Walk and Conversation of the Flock be called *Ruling*.

AFTER you had gone thro' what you intended as a Proof of your Ruling Elders being founded on the Word of God, you told us, that all the Arguments *Seſtarians* had to object, were so very *weak* and *frivolous*, that they were not worth taking up our Time to discuss. However, to keep up some Shew of Equity, you was pleas'd to instance on an Objection, which you said carried the greatest Shew of Force in it; And it was this, *If the Ruling Elder be an Office Bearer in the New Testament Church, why have we not this Institution in the New Testament.*

How ever *weak*, and *frivolous* an Objection this may seem, I was somewhat surpris'd to see what Shifts you made to escape the Force of it.

In your Answer, you granted the Supposition on which the Objection was founded, but denied the Objection to be conclusive. *First*, you said, Tho' his Institution was not found in the New Testament, yet the Example of the Primitive Church, was a sufficient Warrant in the Case: If you mean the Example of the Primitive Church, as pointed out in the above cited Scriptures, we have already considered what it is.

To support your Argument here, you tell us, we have no other Reason but this, for observing the first Day of the Week as the Christian Sabbath; and undoubtedly the Reason is good; but perhaps you might observe it more expressly enjoin'd, if you would see Dr. Owen on *Heb. 4th. Ch.* whom you may the rather be pleas'd to glance on this Head, that he is so great an Advocate for your Ruling Elder. Then you refer'd us to the Institution of the *seventy Elders* by *Moses*, called the Jewish Sanhedrim, telling us, this was the true Precedent for the Institution of your Ruling Elders, and that there was no Occasion for instituting them again in the New Testament, more than the Christian Sabbath, which (as to what was material of it) was clearly instituted and enjoin'd in the Old.

WHAT inclines me to think your reasoning from the Example of the Primitive Church, but a Shift to serve the Turn, is, that I have too much Ground to believe, you do not hold this Argument universally binding in all Cases. I heard you once, a considerable Time ago, speaking of the *Kiss of Charity*, which is no less than *five Times* expressly enjoyn'd in the New Testament; after you had endeavoured to blunt the Force of the Command, you condescended to tell us, if I rightly remember, That this was indeed an *Usage* among the *first Christians*, but, on account of the *profane and lascivious Use* that came to be made of it, was justly and wisely laid aside †.

Now, as you treat this *Kiss of Charity*, which was neither profaned nor laid aside, till Christianity became national, might you not have done the like with the Observation of the first Day of the Week, *as the Christian Sabbath*, which was indeed an *Usage* among the first Christians, which, according to you, is all the Reason we have for observing it still. Might you not have said, that seeing the *Christian Sabbatism*, or keeping of a Sabbath, remains, or is only left to the People of God, for whom alone it was design'd, it was high Time to lay it aside, and that most justly and wisely, when it come to be so horridly profaned, as to be prostitute to the common World, to be troden under Foot of the Nations, even by a People who were no more to be made willing by the Power of Christ, who were so destitute of the Fear of God, as nothing could bind them to observe it, but the Fear of the secular Power. The keeping of it must be enjoyn'd by the Laws of the Nation, and connected with all *Posits of Profit and Honour*; yea, with a Man's very *Living and Being* in the World; yet it is evident from the Nature of the Thing, that all this Zeal for the keeping of the Sabbath, cou'd never proceed from a
 Regard

† Mr Wilson now denies (tho I pretty well remember it) it. He said the *Kiss of Charity* was an *Usage* among the *first Christians* and alledges he only said, that the *Apostle's* only Drift in the *Passages*, was to dissuade Christians from the *profane Manner* of *Sabbatism* then among the *Heathens*.

regard to the true Christian Rest, and could as little be a Motive to stir up Men to seek after it. We must understand the Wisdom of the Clergy thought fit to lay aside this, when they laid aside the Kiss of Charity, and the rest of the Faith that was at first delivered to the Saints, and they brought in another Rest in the Room of it, still keeping the same Day, whereon, injoying a worldly Rest, they had also the Satisfaction to see whole Nations and Kingdoms brought under that glorious *Uniformity* they had brought about by their Influence with the Kings of the Earth, and to see the People coming together, not to break Bread, after the Example of the first Christians, but to pay *Honour* to them.

BUT to have done with this Digression, we must next enquire, by what Rule you lead us back to the Old Testament, for the Institution of a New Testament Church Officer; for, while you thus ward off the *Sectarians*, you are not aware of the *Prelatists*, who will immediately tell you, the *High Priest*, the *Inferior Priests*, and the *Levites*, exactly point forth their Church Officers; and if you should tell them, that the New Testament fixes only two Orders of Church Officers, the Bishop and the Deacon, the Minister of the Word, and the Minister of Tables, they'll retort your Argument with equal Force, and enquire, why you yourself go about to establish an Order of Officers, distinct from both?

If the Sanhedrim, the supreme Court of the *Jews*, point forth your inferior Sort of Elders, whom you call Ruling Elders, who neither teach, preach nor exhort, I must profess myself so blind, as not to perceive, in any Shape, how, or why; nor do I remember, that you was at any Pains to distinguish these *seventy Elders*, from any other Order of Elders, if there were such among the *Jews*, who taught and exhorted, and received a more especial Honour than they.

THE Reason I enquire by what Rule you lead us back to the Old Testament, for the Institution of a New Testament Church Officer, is, that I do not remember that you cited any Text in the New Testament, that speaks of your
Ruling

Ruling Elders, with Reference or Allusion to any Passage in the Old, that speaks of the seventy Elders or Sanhedrim of the Jews; and if you thus assume the Liberty to explain the Old Testament, without a Text in the New to support you, this will be to recede from the publick Standards, the Confession of Faith, and Book of Discipline of the New Testament Church, and to take up with a private Interpretation, which would be enough to prove you a Heretick: Or, if after the New Testament Revelation is compleated, you shall, in any Shape, take up with the Types or Figures of it in the Old, the Question that next occurs, will be, *Whether or not do you believe, that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh.*

IF, after all, there were any such Elders in the first Churches, as neither taught, preached, nor dispensed Sacraments, I think I may be pretty sure, it was not with the Apostles Consent: For, when *Paul* bids *Titus* ordain Elders in every Church, he allows him to ordain none, but such as might be Stewards of God, and so fit to dispense the Ordinances of the House of God: None but *such as held fast the faithful Word, as they had been taught, that they might be able, by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and convince the Gainsayers,* *Tit. 1. 7, 9.* And *Peter* acknowledges no Elders but such as were Bishops, and did all the Work of the Bishop, *1 Pet. 5. 2. επισκοπωντες.* And *Paul* allows *Timothy* to ordain none but such as were *apt to teach.*

BUT what need I object from the New Testament, since you will not allow his Institution to be there.

WHEN you came to speak of the Duties peculiar to his Office, you cited something from *your* Book of Discipline, which I remember not; and since it was not from the publick Standards I mentioned above, I am not concerned with it.

BUT I was most of all surprized, when you told us, That it did not belong to the Ruling Elder to *Preside* in any Ecclesiastical Court: In the Beginning, you said he was a *Presider*, *πρεσβυτερος*; but if he be debar'd from presiding, what must become of our President? What must become of our *supreme Court, the Sanhedrim*, if none of them dare *Pre-*
side?

He? After *He* underwent the Change from an *Elder* into a *Deacon*, all the View I kept of him, was under the Notion of a President; and if he must not preside in any Ecclesiastical Court, I've lost Sight of him entirely: I hope you do not mean that *He* is to preside in any Civil Court, and if neither in Civil nor Ecclesiastical Court, where then? At this Rate, you would seem to annihilate the Creature you was at so much Pains in forming, or else to swallow him up; for, you said it belong'd only to the *Teaching Elder*, or Bishop, to preside.

AND so we have come again to our two ancient Orders of Bishop and Deacon; and as for the Ruling or Presiding Elder, the Deacons have robb'd him of his *Eldership*, and the Bishops of his *Presideniship*, and HE IS NO MORE.

Now, Sir, before I have done, I cannot but notice how you reflect upon those whom you *stigmatize* by the Name *Sectarians*, and how you treat their Arguments; you cannot be ignorant, that your very calling the Objectors *Sectarians*, and their Arguments weak and frivolous, without naming them, is, with the Bulk of your Auditory, a sufficient Confutation of them, and your attacking them thus in Lump, saves you the Trouble of entering fairly into the Merits of the Cause. Is not this the Method the ancient Opposers of Christianity used with the *Apostle Paul*, when they accused him as the *Ring-leader* of a Sect, yet *Paul* was not ashamed to confess, *That by the Way which they call'd Heresy, or Sect, he worshipp'd the God of his Fathers*; and this Answer very well suited the first Christians, until their *εκλησια. παροικουσα. sojourning Church*, became the Church by Law establish'd, and it will as well suit their *sojourning Followers* to the End.

THE Way you treat their Arguments, might have come off with a better Grace, a few Centuries ago; but, to be sure, you are not insensible of the different Humour that prevails in the World now, from what was then; Men begin to perceive they have been too long *Priest-rid*, growing weary of the Yoke, and incline to give Clergymen the Trouble of documenting what they assert, and to make them stand only on the Strength of their Argument. This is, no Doubt, a heavy

heavy Grievance they labour under, and very grievous
evil in the Day we live in; such, perhaps, as they have
heard of since they ruled the World: But 'tis Pity that so
remarkable Mean of filling their Kingdom with Darts
should move them to gnaw their Tongues for Pain, and
repent of their Deeds.

As I hinted in the Beginning; I say again, If I
mistaken you any where, your Answer can only rectify
me; and if you condescend to give none, I must take
for granted, that I have no where mistaken you, and
my Arguments, however weak and frivolous, are yet
you unanswerable.

If you have no other Answer, but your usual
DELUSION, none other I expect; But, if you have
Force of TRUTH to bring forth, I hope it will not
hid, for the Truth scorns to be ashamed.

I am,

S I R,

Your humble Servant,

Perth, June 15.
1736.

ROBERT SANDEMA

