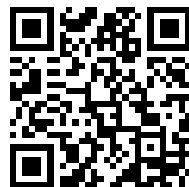

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April 18

A
LETTER
FROM A
Country Divine
TO HIS
FRIEND in LONDON
Concerning the
EDUCATION.
OF THE
DISSENTERS
IN THEIR
Private Academies,

In several Parts of this Nation.

Humbly offer'd to the Consideration of the
Grand Committee of PARLIAMENT for RE-
LIGION.

The THIRD EDITION.

LONDON,

Printed for *B. Clavel* at the *Peacock*, and *R. Knaplock* at
the *Angel* and *Crown* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*. 1706.

S I R,

I Am very sensible, should the Contents of these following Papers, and the Author of 'em be publickly known; he would thereby undergo the sharpest Re-
sentments of a sort of people who are none of the best-natur'd in the World. But if thereby any small Service may be done to the Church of *England*, of which I have been now for some years past an unworthy Member; I shall think this more than sufficient to balance against the Disrespect, and Frowns I may meet with from my Relations and Acquaintance; All, or most of Whom, are unhappily Dissenters from it.

There were two Reasons more, over which I could not so easily prevail, and which had indeed, almost stop't my Design in committing these Observations to Writing: An Apprehension of being thought ungrateful to those people, who had so much Obliged me; and from whom for some Years I have received my Bread, by disclosing what might possibly be not a little to their prejudice: And besides that a fear lest the Knowledge of some things here should increase Animosities, and thereby injure the common Interest of the Church and Kingdom.

I have since satisfy'd my self as to the first of these Objections, after an acknowledgment of the Kindness receiv'd whate'er were the Principles and Motives thereof, professing that I am not prejudic'd against those persons whose Party I have left; but honour some of 'em, and pity others; without hating any; by considering that my new Obligation to that Communion I have since Embrac'd, supersedes, and drowns the Old One; especially when at the same time my discovering some of the unwarrantable Practices of my Old Friends, may probably, some way or other, conduce to their Conviction; and so to their Advantage and Amendment.

For the latter Objection; These Papers are submitted to the scrutiny of those, who know how to make a prudent Use of them, and such, as I might well hope, by seeing the Resolution of others to perpetuate a Schism, would be as resolute and earnest, on the contrary, to Dissolve or Heal it.

For these Ends, Sir, I shall relate what'er Material I can recollect, after the Interval of some Years, concerning the Methods used by the Dissenters, while I lived amongst 'em, to propagate a Ministry in opposition to that establish'd by Law, and the publick Universities: What different Places, and kind of Colleges they had for the Education of Youth to this purpose; how these generally were maintain'd, and whence, with the Principles commonly Embraced and Defended by those who were of 'em, as well as most other Dissenters: (To which I wish I could yet say, I found not such of them as I converse with, too constant.) And lastly, what Arguments they generally made use of to dissuade any they suspected from embracing the Communion of the Church of *England*, or confirm others in their Dissent from it: All of which shall be what I either was personally Witness to, and engag'd in; or in things less material, am as morally certain of by the Notoriety of the Fact, and uncontradicted Reports among us. For the Truth of whate'er I shall advance, appealing (if occasion be) to the Consciences of those concerned, and in the mean time, to my Own, and One who is greater than my Conscience.

Being born of Dissenting Parents, my Father dying early while I was at a Country-School, and almost fit for the University, I was taken notice of by that Party, and without my Mother's Application or Charges, sent by their direction to *London*, in order to my being entred at one of their private Academies, and so for their Ministry. Dr. G. who then lived somewhat near the Town, and had the care of One of the most considerable of those Seminaries, had promis'd me my tuition, in expectation of which I came to *London* on the 8th of *March An. Dom. 1678*. But at my Arrival found him newly deceased. On which I was continu'd some time longer at a Grammar School, from whence my Master would have had me gone to the University, having there provided a handsome Substittence for me; But the forementioned party

party offering my Relations greater advantages, they being also, as has been intimated, inclin'd the same way, I was dispos'd of by them, at one Mr. V. of *Stepney*, who there kept a private Academy, having the *Sum* of 30*l.* per an. settled upon me while I was there, by way of an Exhibition, which was raised, with much more by Collections and Subscriptions at a certain dissenting Congregation: There I remain'd for the space of about two years, in which time my Tutor read to me a Course of *Logick* and *Ethicks*, but being prosecuted by the neighbouring Justices, he broke up his House, and quitted that Employ; not long before which I had 10*l.* per an. more allowed me, which whence gathered, I know not; but 'twas dispos'd of by Dr. O. whom I waited upon a little after, with my thanks for that favour, and was received very civilly by him, excepting'd in the prosecution of my Studies, and advised to have a particular regard to *Critical Learning*; and besides, obliged when Convenience would permit, to get my self entred at one of the Universities, without which none was to enjoy this Exhibition, which as I understood, several others had besides my self, to the number of ten (as near as I can remember at such a distance.) The reason of the Drs. willingness to have us entred at the *Publick Universities*, though educated at these *private ones*, was, as I learnt from him and others, because they expected times would then speedily alter, and look more favourably on 'em, when they doubted not to have all our time allowed, and Degrees granted in the Universities, as if he had been all the while actually resident there. To which end we were directed to go thither, and get entred at some College or Hall, as if with an intention to tarry, which we might do some time, if we could avoid Matriculation, or the Oaths therein required, as I have heard of some who did for several years, tho' their Names do not occur, and knew one who attempted the same at *Oxford*, after I went thither in earnest: But these Oaths, the Subscription and other things required, we were by no means to take without forfeiting our Exhibition; and accordingly I lost mine after I staid in the College. And this same Notion of having all our times and Degrees allow'd of sometime or other in the Universities, I afterwards found went thro' all these our Petit Academies, tho' the Doctor was for making surer work, that we might with the more facility attain it when our Names should be already found entred.

But to proceed, when this Tutor had left off, I was recommended to another, one Mr. M. of *Newington-Green*, formerly Fellow of *Wadham College* in *Oxford*, I think, for he was a great Acquaintance of Bp. W. an ingenious and universally learned Man, but his chiefest Excellency lay in *Mathematicks*, and especially the *Mechanick* part thereof: There I continued near two years more with my former Exhibitions, and my Age encreasing, began now to make some more Observations of things than while with my first Tutor, and the more I saw into what was about me, the more, I confess, I dislik'd it, and began to doubt whether I was in the right. Some of the most remarkable passages which remain in my memory are these following:

For my Tutor himself, I must and ever will do him that Justice to assert, that whenever the young Men had any discourse of the Government, and talk'd disaffectedly or disloyally, he never fail'd to rebuke and admonish 'em to the contrary, telling us, I remember, expressly, more than once, That 'twas none of our business to censure such as God had placed above us. That small Miscarriages ought not to be magnified, nor severely reflected on (especially by those who had other business to mind) there never having been a Government so exact, or perfect, but had some of those *Navi* in it: And further, he particularly cautioned us against *Lançons*, or scandalous Libels against Superiors, and that from the Immorality, as well as Danger of being the Authors or Dispersers of them. Thus much I think my self obliged in Truth, Gratitude and Honour, to witness of that (I really believe) Good, tho' mistaken Man, who was I think, the most considerable of any in *England* in that way, for the number of his Pupils, and politeness of his Learning. But tho'

I have acknowledged this of him, and in his, as far as possible, just Vindication, yet that Character will reach but very few others. The Examples of almost a Whole Party prevailed much more on most of us, than his single Precept. The Genius of a Faction was express too lively in our Discourse and Actions. We almost universally entertain'd a mortal Aversion to the *Episcopal Order*, and very few but equally abhor'd *Monarchy* it self, on either of which, notwithstanding our Tutor's contrary Advice and Commands, nothing too Satyrical or Reflecting could, we thought, be spoken. The *King-killing Doctrines* were generally received and defended: Once particularly, I remember, (tho' our Tutor not there) when but One person in all the Company oppos'd it, and had all the rest about him for the same; the *BARBAROUS MURDER* of *K. Charles I. of Blessed Memory*, I have heard till I confess my Ears tingled. Since from the first time I read the Account on't I detested and abhorred it, avowedly and frequently Undicated; and tho' who did it, very rarely oppos'd: But the Memory of his *Murderers* generally, by the party, treated at least with the greatest tenderness imaginable. The *Established Clergy, Liturgy, Discipline*, treated with the height of disgrace and ridicule; once among the rest, some of our Company went out at Midnight to a little Hill not far from *Newington Town*, getting a speaking Trumpet with 'em, in which after they had alarm'd and affrighted the Town, they divulged some scandalous Stories of the then Minister of the place, the Reverend *Mr. S.* I was not there my self, but 'twas at their return, reported by the Actors, and by the rest received with Applause and Satisfaction. Nothing more common than to hear the *Publick Prayers and Establish'd Liturgy* ridiculed, and the Words and Expressions therein, as well as the Persons officiating, made the constant subject of all the bad Jest could be invented; and those who had the best Talent this way, or for the bitterest and most scandalous and ill-manner'd *Sarcasms* in Prose or Verse, carest, hugg'd, encourag'd, and commended by the *Heads and Body of that party*: In some of which abuses, as I must own, I my self had too large a share, so I have, and still do heartily ask God's and the Church's pardon.

Here 'twas, by common Discourse and Correspondence, that I learnt the Names and Places of the other *Seminaries* of this kind in several parts of *England*; this, as before-hinted, was indeed the most considerable, having annex a fine Garden, *Bowling-Green, Fish-pond*, and within a Laboratory, and some not inconsiderable Rarities, with *Air-Pumps, Thermometers*, and all sorts of *Mathematical Instruments*. We had a List of all those who had been entred of our Society, some hundreds it amounted to, but I cannot be precise in the Number, with a Distinction of the Faculties, and Employments of every one, whether Law, Divinity, Physick, or what else: Among the rest, I remember the Names of several Persons of Quality, *Sir C. M.* a Kinsman of *Sir I. M's*, as I am inform'd, sent thither by his Order: *Sir Charles P.* afterwards kill'd at *Fish-street-hill*, not a few Knights and Barons Sons, and (at the former place) one Lords Son who were sent thither to avoid the *Debaucheries* of the Universities, tho' some of 'em (particularly *Sir W. W. H. W.* and others) made themselves sufficiently remarkable while they were with us. For our Tutors having no Power, could use but little Discipline, we having besides, for what Order we had, a sort of *Democratical Government* among us, any one having power to propose a Law, and all Laws carry'd by the Balot, as the greater Number determin'd, and pains and pecuniary Mults accordingly inflicted, as it seem'd best to our own Discretion; We had two Houses at *Newington*, our Number 40 or 50, over or under.

Besides this, we had two other Nurseries of the same Nature in or about *London*; *Mr. D.* who might have about 20 or 30 if not upwards; he lived at *Islington*, and afterward removed somewhat on the other side of the Water.

Mr. R. he was successor to *Dr. G.* who had been his Tutor, and left ten or twenty Exhibitions, I am not certain which, of 10 *l. per annum* each to so many young Scholars design'd for Ministers, most or all Independents; the three former *Presbyterians*.

This Mr. R. lived, when I first knew this People, at *Hackney*, after that removed with his Pupils to *London*, and Lodg'd in *Bowse's* House, who was executed in *West's, &c.* Plot for High-Treason, whither his Pupils used to come daily; and he read to them, as well as afterwards in other Parts of the Town. Since my return from *Oxford*, I hear he lived in *Jewen-street*, and now, or very lately, in *Rope-makers Alley* in *Moor-Fields*.

There was another in *Suffolk*, near *Newmarket*, whose Name I have forgot, but think either Mr. C. or Mr. C. both which Persons I know, were this way employed.

One Mr. W. too I have heard named on the same Occasion, Dr. B. somewhere in the West of *England*, a learned Man, he is represented among us; he write something or other of the Being of God, I think 'twas for which we much valued him: Another near *Salisbury*; and another at *Taunton Dean* in *Somersetshire*, both whose Names I have lost, tho' the Pupils of the last have been numerous.

One Mr. S. at *Lyme-Regis* *Dorsetshire*; now at *Bishops-Hall* near *Bednal-Green*, 1693. Mr. J. now near *Sheffield*, 1698. And I believe several others, if I could remember them: But most of the Lads maintained in all those places designed for Ministers; which were every where the far greater Number, and upon the matter all (except those Gentlemen with us) their Exhibitions failing when the Dissenters were severely prosecuted, that they could not meet in such frequent Numbers as they were wont, where they used to make those Collections which maintained them, were forced either Home to their Parents and Friends, e're they finished their studies, or sent very callow abroad to some Gentleman's House, Chaplains or Tutors, Mr. D's School, boasting they could cram up a Minister in two years; or else betake themselves to some other Employments.

Ours indeed, stood one of the longest in *England*, the reason whereof I conceive to be this: We having several Gentlemen of Estates who paid well; our Tutor designing what he thought the Glory of God more than his own private Profit, proposed no more than just to save himself harmless. And if therefore he had little for some, valued it not, so 'twas barely made up by others, whence we had still new Ministers sent out, and ordained by Presbyters, of which sort there are a pretty considerable Number in all parts of *England*.

I have almost in the Crowd forgot one thing very remarkable: 'Tis their *Silvo* for their Oath in the University, when they engage not to take Pupils, read Lectures, &c. I have seen a Manuscript handed about amongst us in explication of this Oath, which those in this Employment have been often accused for the Breach of. The main thing I remember, they insist on, are those Words wherein they plead the force of the Oath lies; that they are not to read Lectures, &c. *Inquam in Academia*, that is, they say, in such manner as is done in the University, taking and giving Degrees in opposition thereunto, as was once attempted for some years at *Stanford*; mentioned in the Oath, which they plead is a direction or Key to the Sense thereof.

But tho' we had long weather'd it out, the Shock at length came so fiercely, our Tutor could not stand it: He had once before been Excommunicated, and a *Capias* issued out against him on which he was taken, but while in Custody of an Officer, before he was actually committed to Prison, the Officer in whose House he lay, accidentally Died during his stay there, on which there being none to detain him, he returned home again; attributing the thing, as is usual with that sort of People, to a particular Providence; He was now in danger of a second *Capias*, on which he used the Mediation of my Lady R. to get some Respite, and lent his Sister several times to *London-House* on the same Errand: My Lord of L. as we are told, promis'd him all reasonable Favour, if he'd leave that Place and Employment which he could not suffer in him, so much to the Detriment and Prejudice of the e-

stablish'd Church, and affront to the Laws and Universities; on which he absconded some time at a Friend's, absenting himself from us, and leaving the *Senior Pupils* to instruct the *Junior*.

'Twas in this Juncture of time, my Tutor being removed, for whom I had so great a Respect and Veneration, as hardly to dare doubt what he affirmed, that I began to enquire more closely than I had formerly done, into the grounds of those Differences, for which I saw our People suffer so much, and so severely, and whether I was sufficiently satisfy'd in the Truth and Import of those Principles I had been Educated in, to endure the same which they did, if it should happen to be my Lot.

I enquired as well as I could, into their Arguments for dividing from an establish'd Church, some of which appeared weak and others worse: One of 'em particularly did at not all like me, it being so Ill-natur'd a one, tho' very often urged by them: You say obey, because commanded; we say, because 'tis commanded we will not obey, which to me appear'd an odd sort of a Conscience: For I found the Churches of all Nations had different Customs, which tho' not Essential to Salvation, were so to Communion; That they themselves had such Constitutions in their private Church-Government; nor methought was there any reason why the whole Nation should not leave as much Power as a smaller Body. I then look'd a little farther into Church History, as much as lay within my reach, and found, to my Surprise, Bishops in all Ages and Places all the World over, tho' perhaps not altogether constituted in the same manner that ours are, yet visibly differing from Presbyters, whether *Gradu* or *Ordine*, it did not then appear of so much concern, since they denied both; I earnestly implor'd the Divine Direction in a Business of so weighty a Concern, and on which so much of my whole Life depended: I examin'd things over and over, as calmly and unpassionately as possible; and the further I look'd, still the more the Mist cleared up, and things appeared in another sort of a Light than I had seen 'em all my Life before. And so far were the Sufferings of that People at that time, from Influencing my Resolution to leave 'em, that I profess 'twas a thing which retarded me the most of any: The Ungenerosity of quitting 'em in their meaner Fortunes, when I had been a Sharer in their better, I knew not how to get over; tho' I at last perceived this was more a Pique of Honour than any solid Reason, and not weighty enough to stand against a certain Duty. These I remember were some of the uppermost of my Thoughts about that time; and on the whole, I began to have some Inclinations to the University, if I knew how to get thither, or live there when I came: Not being acquainted, to my Knowledge, with one Soul of the Church of *England*, at least with none of any Figure or Interest, to whom I might address for Assistance or Advice.

I was now offer'd Employment among the Dissenters (having been with 'em near four Years) either in a *Gentleman's House*, or *Chaplain to an East-India Ship*, but my Inclinations were more for *Oxford*, where I might have, I thought, Opportunity, more fully to study the Point, which I was now almost resolv'd in; Some rubs however, there still lay in my way thither, which our People generally urged to prevent us from such Intentions; That the *Universities were debauched so scandalously*, there was no breathing for a sober Man in them, representing them as meer *Sodom and Gomorrah's*. The Second, That the *Church of England* was so far from encouraging Dissenters to close with their Communion, that those who did so, were generally frown'd upon, and suspected all their Lives, and never ever Lov'd or Truited. The Third, That the Nation was so unanimously against 'em, that the *Bishops and Hierarch* would certainly have a speedy Fall, and even Rats and Mice are wise enough to quit a Tumbling House, not run into it.

For the last of these Reasons, I must confess, I had been so long among those sort of People, who were for *Root and Branch-work with Episcopacy*, and converted with no other, that I began indeed to think they were all *England*; for which

Reasons

Reasons, so high and rampant still were the Expectation of the Party, how low soever their Fortunes, I was possessed with an intire Belief, tho' God be praised a false as well as a groundless one, that what they said was true; and that *Episcopacy* would not stand long; and this I can appeal to God, was my real Opinion, even when I went to *Oxford*, and some time after I had been there. But was notwithstanding so far from discouraging me from going, that I therefore went the rather; this also serving to ballance against what might seem base in leaving the Dissenters; I went accordingly, and found, I thank God, I was mistaken, and so were those that led me into that Error: I am sorry I must add, I doubt not but they are still so, for some of the self-same Persons to my own Knowledge continue in the same fond Fancy they were then in, expecting the Ruin of what every Good Man hopes and prays may stand firm as long as the Sun and Moon endures.

Their Second Argument from the unkindness of the Church, to those who forsook the Camps of their Enemy, look'd so unlikely, that whatever may have happened since, I was resolv'd I wou'd not then believe it, attributing want of Encouragement in those Cases, either to want of Merit, or Acquaintance, or Patience, or altogether; and every Day confirms me more in the Reasonableness of my Apprehension on that particular.

For their other Argument, Debauchery, I resolv'd too, not to believe a word of that till I saw it, and found the truth with my own Eyes, for which now a very happy Opportunity offer'd: I was called upon by the Trustees of the ten Pound Exhibitions (Dr. O. himself was now dead) to delay no longer, but enter at the University with all speed, or else no more payment to be made. To which End I went down, Staid there some time, found there many sober and Religious Men, as well as some Rakehells, which we our selves did not want: Discour'd several points in which I yet did a little Hesitate, and received Satisfaction in them: But not being willing to be Over-hasty in such a Concern, returned to *London* to consider a little longer, and a little after my return had 20*l.* given me, part of a Considerable Sum left by some Dissenter, whose Name I forget, to be distributed among Ministers; He was, I believe, an Independent; for Mr. Gr. obtained it for me, and Mr. M.— paid it me; with this I discharged what debts I had Contracted as far as I could, paying it all away, and then resolving for *Oxford* as soon as possible, whither accordingly I went, in the Name of God, and entred there the of *August*, in the Year 1683. a Servitor of *E. College*, to which Place some few Months after, several Letters having first pass'd between us, follow'd me a young Gentleman, one of my Fellow-Pupils at my first Tutors, who is now Fellow of that Colledge, and in Priests Order: Here I tarry'd, tho' I met with some Hardships I had before been unacquainted with, till I was standing sufficient, and then took my Batchellors Degree, and not being able to subsist there, afterwards came to *London*, during the time of my Lord Bishop of *London's* Suspension by the high Commission, and was initiated in Deacons Orders by my Lord Bishop of *R.* at his Palace at *B.* Aug. 7. 1688. and on 24th of *February* following, in *St. Andrew's Church Holborn*, was ordained by the Lord Bishop of *L.* a Priest of the Church of *England*; in whose Communion, as I have lived now comfortably and happily these six years past; so I hope to continue in it all my Life, and by the Grace of God to die in the same.

P O S T S C R I P T.

A Bout a Twelve Month after I left *Oxford*, Mr. M. left *Newington* and *England* too, embarking for *New-England*, where he lives still, or lately did so. One thing deserves not to be forgotten, That when the Right Reverend the Lord Bi-

shop of *L.* under Suspension by the illegal Court of High Commission, several of Mr. *M.*'s Friends and Pupils were heard to say, and some by my self, That it was a just Judgment of God upon him, for having been formerly so Cruel and Unkind to that good Man.

My Acquaintance with the Dissenters being now almost worn out, I have no good Account where, or how many Schools they have at present. But this I hear, that Mr. *G.* Son to *Dr. T. G.* had about a year since opened one of 'em at a place beyond *Hampsted* or *Highgate*, the Name of which I do not remember, I think it is *Harrow on the Hill*.

As for what you desire concerning the Books we generally used to read, you may easily believe that the space of almost 20 years blots many things out of our Minds; but what little Scatterings remain, I'll freely give you: We had several of us *Lucius Junius Brutus* among us; *Milton's* Apology was in *Delicis* with most of us; I am apt to believe poor *W. F.* formed his Latine Stile very much by reading him, for he had a very good one. We had also *Eiconoclastes*; some of the Lads had *Maurfi Elegantiæ*, *Alouisa Sigea Terentia*, and *Octavia*, and the most lewd abominable Books that ever blasted Christian Eye: These you'll believe our Tutors knew not of, nor did they direct us to the former. All the Reports since spread about the King's Book were then common among us, and Bishop *Gauden's* Son was quoted as their Author; we all esteemed very meanly of the Father, and I knew none that read them among the Dissenters besides Mr. *Clarkson*, who was the most Charitable and best Tempered Independent that ever I met with, *Ame's Medulla*, and *Bellarminus Enervatus*, the *Altare Damascenum*, and such like, were what we much traded in, and were recommended to us, together with *Baxter's* Books of Controversies and Devotion. Tho' I have heard he was inclined to the Universities, and did not much approve our private Academies, and has been blamed for it amongst us, *Charnock* was held in great Esteem.

I am, Good Sir,

Your most Obliged Friend

and Humble Servant.

K. Ch. I. His Divine Meditations, p. 232.

The Religion established in the Church of *England* I have tried, and after much Search, and many Disputes, I have concluded it to be the best in the World.

Archbishop Tillotson his 3d Vol. of Sermons, p. 403.

We have the best Religion in the World, the very same which the Son of God revealed; which the Apostles planted and confirmed by Miracles, and which the noble Army of Martyrs sealed with their Blood.

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