

**AN ANSWER TO THE
REV. E.A. STOPFORD'S
"WEAPONS OF SCHISM"**

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An answer to the rev. E.A. Stopford's "Weapons of schism" by Thomas Powell

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THOMAS POWELL

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REV. E. A. STOPFORD'S

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BY THE

REV. THOMAS POWELL,

WESLEYAN MINISTER,

AUTHOR OF AN "ESSAY ON APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION."

"Tela prævisa minus feriunt."—GROTIUS.

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AN ANSWER, ETC.

INTRODUCTION.

ALL who attend with serious earnestness to the welfare of the church of Christ, must know that the settlement of the Question of APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION, is a matter of the utmost importance to her unity and peace. Papists and high churchmen *so teach* it as to make it an instrument of division, intolerance, and persecution. To expose the baselessness of that system, to confound and frustrate its purposes, and to promote the unity and peace of all the branches of the Catholic Church, the present writer published an "Essay on Apostolical Succession." That Essay has been received in a very favourable manner by large portions of the Christian public. In England its circulation has been extensive; it has entered into the British Colonies, and America; and in IRELAND it is making some impression in favour of peace in the church of Christ, and in opposition to exclusiveness and intolerance. One demonstrative proof of this, is, that a high church clergyman in that country has been driven, by the impression which the book has made in his parish, to publish a "Reply" to it. This he denominates, "The Weapons of Schism." The object of his book, he emphatically states, is, *not argument*, (for a very good reason no doubt,) but it is professedly to destroy the credit of the Essay by a violent attack upon the character of its author. It has been often remarked, that no persons are against reason, except when reason is against them; so it may be said as truly, that no persons are against argument except when argument is against them. To substitute railing for reason, and personal abuse for proofs, is not the best evidence of a good cause. But even if all that Mr. Stopford says against Mr. Powell were true, the argument of the Essay would hardly be touched; for Mr. Stopford's observations are confined to "the authorities from the early church," chiefly as found in the "*sixth section* of the Essay." In commencing that section, Mr. Powell's first

observation is, "We are now coming upon ground of *no essential* importance to our cause. DIVINE RIGHT can only be proved by DIVINE AUTHORITY. The Fathers are *mere human* authority; they never expected to be received in any other light," p. 86, second edition. Mr. Stopford has, however, spent his strength on these human authorities; and it will be shown that he has laboured in vain: or, perhaps, not in vain, for the credit of the Essay. For, if it should appear, as we have no doubt it will, that his malicious diligence fails to detect misinterpretation or misapplication in *one single* important authority, then even the *unlearned* reader will have the testimony, *the unwilling testimony*, of a bitter enemy to that book, that its authorities are substantially unimpeachable. Such a result will be a sufficient reward to the writer, and the reader too. But why has Mr. Stopford taken this *one-eyed* view of the Essay, avoiding all the gist of the argument? The section he has fixed upon is only *a part* of the proof of *one point*. Why did he not grapple with the argument from the *Scriptures*, the *Scriptures* alone, the only and sufficient rule of faith and church government in *all essential* matters to a truly Protestant church? Why did he blink the evidence against his intolerant notions from the venerable REFORMERS, both English and foreign, and from *all the Christian* churches in the world? What does he say to the "*Historical Evidence*" against the high church succession scheme, in section 10 of the Essay? Perhaps he thought it better to say nothing on that section, than to confess, with his coadjutor, the Rev. A. P. Perceval, that "if nothing will satisfy men but actual demonstration," (sufficient historic evidence was the question,) "I YIELD AT ONCE." A still tongue, they say, makes a wise head. Better say nothing, than say, "I yield at once." What answer does Mr. Stopford give to the argument against the high church succession scheme from the *schisms, heresies*, and the MONSTERS of vice, in the popedom and popes, *Mr. Stopford's beloved PROGENITORS*?—to the ordination of English bishops *by these "monsters,"* (as their own historians call them,) many of them being *false Popes*, and neither popes *nor bishops* at all? Why does not Mr. Stopford fairly meet these points? No, no, says Mr. Stopford, "I do not therefore *attempt to argue* with him," p. 19. "I will not be induced to change the subject of discussion, *by any art that can be used*—they will find me INEXORABLE," p. 192. All the above subjects, therefore, Mr. Stopford is inexorably determined to avoid, and to choose a section of which a common English reader is necessarily the most incompetent to judge, as he confesses himself, p. 18, in order, no doubt, to convince them by what they cannot fully understand, to determine against evidence which they can fully understand. This, I hope, is not

Irish logic, to *illuminate what is clear by what is obscure*, and to measure straight lines by crooked ones. It is, indeed, exactly the logic of Popery; and perhaps Mr. Stopford, like many others of his Reverend brethren, has studied so long in that school that he has lost the way of truth and reason, and is ready to believe that even the senses on their proper objects are fallible, dangerous guides, and that all the monstrous principles of Popish transubstantiation are to be swallowed blindfold. Popery will jesuitically tell a Protestant, that, *as a Protestant, he is to judge* what is the rule of faith; the interpretation of the Scriptures; which is the true church; and who is judge in controversies; *but when he becomes a Papist, he is not to believe that black is not white*, except the priest tells him to believe it; for he is then to believe, that, though the word of God solemnly forbids him to make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above or on the earth beneath, and to fall down before or to worship it; yet, at the bidding of the priest, he may do the very thing the word of God forbids, and believe that he is all the while obeying that word:—he is to believe, that what the Scriptures tell him are bread and wine, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and what his senses tell him, in accordance with the Scriptures, ARE bread and wine; yet, at the bidding of the priest he is to believe that they are *not bread and wine at all*, but that they are ONLY "truly, really, and substantially the *body* and *blood*, together with the *soul* and *Divinity* of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the doctrine of the Council of Trent, which decrees that "if any one shall say that the substance of the bread and of the wine *remains, TOGETHER WITH* the body and blood of Christ, &c.—let him be *anathema*." This is putting a person's eyes out to teach him to see clearly! Something like this is Mr. Stopford's plan of teaching his Irish parishioners what they do understand, by what they do *not* understand! Good tactics! no doubt, for a bad cause. *Argument*, then, being *professedly discarded*, Mr. Stopford is determined to try his hand at the moral assassination of the character of the author in the matter of authorities from the early church. The charges are serious ones, and ought, for the sake of the argument of the Essay, to be fully examined. The author of the Essay is so confident of his own integrity in the composition of that work, and of his possession also of the confidence of those who know him, that he feels very little personal alarm from the charges of Mr. Stopford. On this account, perhaps, it is, that the perusal of Mr. Stopford's book rather excited his pity than his anger; such an exhibition of wrath, bigotry, and slander, in a person professing to be a Christian minister, being rather a matter of melancholy regret than any thing else to a Christian mind.

Having made these introductory observations, we will now proceed to the examination of Mr. Stopford's book.

SECTION I.

Mr. Stopford's CONCESSIONS as to the Essay and its Argument.

As Mr. Stopford intimates his anxiety to prevent the possibility of any thing that he says being construed into any the least "compliment" to the author of the Essay, or "to the importance of his work," p. 22, the following character of the Essay by him is a powerful testimony to its worth. "It is certainly," says he, "*the most plausible book that has yet appeared on that side of the question; the most plausible, because the most unscrupulous as to the truth of its statements; this is all the merit it possesses,*" p. 21. Perhaps it would do for a prize-essay on Popish "merit!" Again, at page 180, "Mr. Powell's book is certainly the most plausible looking book that has yet appeared upon that side of the question. Before it is examined, it certainly carries the appearance of the most extensive learning, and, to unsuspecting readers, the proofs appear most conclusive." Now if, after Mr. Stopford's examination, the book really is what it appears to be, Mr. S. may be taken as a most unsuspected and most decided witness for the excellence and unanswerable nature of the work. And, however it would grieve Mr. Stopford to be thought by any possibility to pay the author or the work the least "compliment," yet, he will then, in spite of himself, pay them both a very high one; such an one, indeed, as none of the author's own friends could pay him. The praise of an enemy cannot be suspected of partiality.

In addition to this advantage, another may be here noticed, viz.—that Mr. Stopford has yielded up the whole argument maintained in the Essay. Mr. S. resolutely determined not to "argue" with Mr. Powell; yet the force of truth has extorted a confession from him which decides the whole question at issue, and utterly overturns the whole scheme of high church Episcopacy. After quoting my remark on the Epistle of Clement, that "Clement knew no difference between a bishop and a presbyter; that he uses the names as different denominations of the same office;" Mr. Stopford confesses, "ALL THIS IS TRUE, and the passages he (Mr. P.) quotes, PROVE THIS," p. 26. Now, Mr. Powell argues from this concession as follows:—Clement wrote about A. D. 93 or 96. If Clement "knew no difference between a bishop and a presbyter" in A. D.

93 or 96, then, *at that time, there was no difference* between them. That this consequence is just, is plain from the utter absurdity of the contrary supposition. For to suppose that a difference should then exist, either by Divine right or by ecclesiastical arrangement, and that Clement, who is said to have been the companion of the apostles, Peter and Paul, and, at the time he wrote, bishop of Rome,—that a difference, we say, should then exist, and he not know it, is utterly absurd. But Mr. Stopford confesses that “Clement then knew no difference;” ergo, no difference then existed. Again, further, as no difference existed between a bishop and a presbyter in A. D. 93 or 96, and as all the sacred writings had then been finished, none, by DIVINE RIGHT, *ever can exist* between them, without a new revelation on the subject. When that is given we shall willingly receive it. In the mean time, we treat all pretences to Divine right for high church bishops, as intolerable arrogance and assumptions of spiritual tyranny. Bishops and presbyters, then, are, on the grounds of Mr. Stopford’s own admission, one and the same office and order; possessing EQUAL AUTHORITY IN ALL THINGS in the church of God. All *ordinations, &c.*, by presbyters, are, by full consequence, equally as valid as *what are called* Episcopal ordinations; and all the sacraments administered by presbyters, and such as have ordination by presbyters, are equally as valid, *even on the ground of order alone*, as the sacraments administered by the *so called* Episcopalians; whilst, in point of the proofs of a Divine call to the ministry, of personal piety, and of the power of the Holy Ghost attending their ministrations, the churches usually denominated Presbyterian, as the Scotch Church, the Lutheran Church, the Wesleyan Church, &c., vastly excel the self-styled Episcopalians. Consequently the high church scheme of apostolical succession, which pretends that no ordinations but their *so called* Episcopal ordinations, and that no sacraments, except administered by the *so called* Episcopalian ministers, are valid, is a FABLE, invented and supported for the purpose of priestly domination over all the churches of the living God.

One more point we will notice here, and then proceed. Mr. Stopford pretends that Jerome refers the appointment of bishops over presbyters for the cure of schism, “to the period commencing at the Corinthian schism, which happened about the year (A. D.) 56,” p. 138. Now, first, if Clement “knew no difference between a bishop and a presbyter,” in A. D. 93 or 96, the consequence of which, as we have seen, is, that there *was* no difference at that time, then how could this difference have been established in A. D. 56, about forty years before? But, secondly, Jerome, in his note on Titus, chap. i., expressly refutes the supposition of Mr. Stopford, by showing that the