

power himself has given; when its exercise is regulated by his own directions. It was not an arbitrary power—a power to do as they pleased, that was given to the Apostles, consequently not to their legitimate successors, pious Christian Ministers, truly called of God, in all ages. It was power to declare the rules, by which it was the will of Christ that themselves, their Churches and successors should be governed, and to see that those rules, so far as it respected their own time should be observed. According to these rules the Apostles acted, but farther they went not; nor do we find in any of their writings, the most distant allusion to any other method of explaining the passage before us. Ministers of the Gospel may see that the laws of Jesus are observed in their congregations: and they may—it is a part of their office to do it, and in the proper exercise of it they may not be hindered—so apply general rules to particular cases, that all things may be done decently, and in order; but farther than this they may not go. They are not Sovereigns in the Church, and no one of them, not all of them together, no Christian congregation, nor assemblage