

Life and Death do declare. I conclude then, he of whom these things may be said, is man by Nature. The short is this.

Jesus the Saviour of the World was before all things, and he that made all things, therefore he is God by Nature, Jesus the Saviour of the World was born in time, and suffered death, or was slain; therefore he is man by Nature,

Yet more shortly
This Jesus is Immanuel, or God-Man in one Person.

The Third Part.

SHowETH that our Brethrens rejecting and opposing the fourth principle of Christs Doctrine, enforces a distinction in Communion (at least in part) between them, and the Churches which walketh in the Religious observation of it; and that all divisions which happen in the Church are not properly, but accidentally against her: as also that it is no absurdity to refuse to communicate with a people who may be allowed the appellation of a Church.

As

As it must ever be granted that a Kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation : and is very true when apply'd to the Church of God, where Divisions are as Epidemical as in any Societies of men whatsoever : So also it must be denyed that all manner of divisions which happen within the pale of the Church are properly against her self.

For seeing it cannot be denyed, but that she may be and hath been corrupted divers ways from her first integrity, both in respect of the form and power of godliness, even hence is enforced, a necessity that

she be * reformed. Where- * Which seldom
upon divers worthy men can be done without
in all ages have laboured division, by reason
to restore the decayed parts of of Pride on the one
Christianity, as well as to hand, and Ignorance on the other.

root out such things as have been obtruded by innovation. And surely what was the duty of some, was (more or less) the duty of all : and consequently the sin of such as put not their shoulder to the work, Neh. 3. 5. But much more theirs, who not only would not do it themselves, but hinder and discourage them that would. Saying in effect, as the corrupt part of the Church of old did in the days of the Prophet Jer. 44. 16, 17.

As for the word which thou hast spoken unto us in
the

the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee, but we will certainly do as we have done; we and our Fathers, &c. Putting the mark of Antiquity upon their own ways, and the note of novelty upon the Doctrine of the Prophet of God. Something like to which is that saying of the Searchers where they tell us, *They can well remember when Laying on of Hands was not esteemed a Fundamental Doctrine*. which yet I have reason to question, when I consider that themselves do hold (and say they ever did hold) Laying on of Hands, *Hel. 6.* to be a part of the Foundation; And I think none of its Assertors ever had less esteem of it, then they. Neither doth the Moderation of its Assertors in the point of communion (which it seems they held with those that did not receive that Doctrine, for some time after themselves had owned it) argue, that those who received the Doctrine of Laying on of Hand, did not esteem it the same which now they do. Sith reason wills that when any part of the Church of God attains to the knowledge of any principles of truth, which by the corruption of the times, hath been obscured they should exercise all long-suffering and forbearance, to see if by any means the contrary minded may be enlightened.

But

But now, if after all endeavours used, and patience extended, some part of the Church remain wholly averse to Reformation, and that in such weighty matters as the principles of Religion, it cannot be reasonable (nor is it Scriptural) * that those

1 King. 18. 21.

whom God hath enlightened, should be bound to continue with the obstinate in their by-paths; but must at length declare themselves in manner of speech like that of Josuah, *If it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, in this principle of his Doctrine, chuse you what you will do, but as for us we are resolved herein to serve the Lord*: Agreeable whereunto

is that direction of the Lord to the * Remnant that held to the truth with their whole heart, *Jer. 15.*

* For it cannot be thought but that Jeremiab had some that stood with him.

19. Let them return to thee, but return not thou to them.

ver. 11.

Whence I note four things, considerable to our present occasion.

1. That the parties here spoken of, were both of the Church of God.

2. That there was a difference between them, touching some necessary part of Religion.

3. That the Lord allows this division, and encourageth the continuation of it on the part of

of those that served him perfectly, or according to his Word.

4. That the Church-state of neither part is (as yet) taken wholly away or destroyed; And therefore hence I infer this conclusion:

* It is not so much an error, as the pertinacious continuance in an error, that destroyeth the Church-state of those that are under the appellation of Christians, by true Baptism according to Mat. 28.

That in a time of the Churches defection in the principles, or any necessary part of Religion, there may lawfully be held a distinction in communion, between the part defective, and that which is sound or reformed, and yet the Church state of neither wholly destroyed. And by how much the principles or points of Faith are greater or lesser, by so much this distinction is to be maintain'd with greater or less severity.

This I might confirm by the consideration of the state of the Jewish Church, under those great distractions which happen'd among them sometimes about principles of truth, referring immediately to the Majesty of Heaven, Hos. 11. 12.

And otherwhiles about those which being neglected, would greatly impair the power of godliness among men, Judg. 19. 20. chap. In which distractions the Faithful laboured as it

were

were in the very fire to reform the part distempered, without destroying their Church-state, *Judg.* 20. and 21. Chapters, *Jer.* 17. 12. to 17. during which combustions, there must needs be a demur in the point of communion between the parts contending, as may easily be gathered from their bitter and sanguinary conflicts, if our very reason did not convince us.

But leaving the many and convincing Allegations which might be brought from the state of the Jewish Church, who were not denyed that Appellation, though under such defilements as rendred them unfit to Celebrate the holy Rites and Mysteries of the Law, and therefore consequently very unfit for communion with those who withstood their pollutions, which may sufficiently satisfy reasonable men (and therefore the Searchers themselves) that it is no absurd thing to grant a people the Appellation of a Church, and yet hold them incapable of communion with such of the Churches or Congregations of Christ as are free from these corruptions. I will descend to those grounds which are more familiar to us, and then see how it may reach the case depending between the Searchers and their Brethren.

And first from *Acts* 15. 2. It appeareth that there was not only great disputation, but dis-
sension

sension also in the Primitive Churches about matters of Doctrine, which word * *dissention* doth imply the discontinuance of communion between *Paul*, *Barnabas*, with those which did adhere to them, and that part of the Church which were zealous for Circumcision and the Law. And yet we do not finde that they did one unchurch another, but used the most effectual means that might be to put an end to the strife. And very remarkable it is, that though the Assembly at *Ferusalem* did plainly determine the point of Doctrine, yet did they forbear their censure against the persons who erred in that case; chusing to exercise all *Longanimity*, rather than severity; knowing that their power was given more for Edification, then for destroying any mans attainments in the paths of Christianity. Howbeit, when this lenity would not effect the Reformation of the ill manners of those corrupters or depravers of the Gospel, then did the Apostle lay greater weight upon them, who

would

* The word *sensus* here used, is rendred by *Montanus*, *Seditione*. And so it is by our Translators in *Gal. 5. 20.* which being considered, must needs suppose (at least) a demur in point of Communion.

Hence let the Christians of this age learn Moderation. Moderation. Moderation.

would not cease to trouble the Churches, *Gal.* 5. 12.

Nor is there any reason to doubt but that the *Judaizers* had (generally) been held at some distance in point of Communion, or privileges in the Churches before *Paul* wrote to the *Gallatians*. For seeing that Epistle written by *Paul*, *Silvanus*, and *Timotheus*, did empower the Church at *Thes-*

salonica to note such as dis- 2 *Thef.* i. 1.

obeyed it, with a note of distinction from the rest of the Christians who conform'd themselves to its directions; Then doubtless that Epistle, *Acts* 15. written in the name of the great Assembly at *Jerusalem*, did every way as much empower all Churches to put the like note of distinction upon all that did not obey the same; which note of distinction, howsoever it might lie as a bar against their present Communion, yet did it not destroy their *Brether-hood*, 2 *Thef.* 3. 14, 15.

So that it is further evident, that a people may be esteemed *Brethren in Christ*, or a Church of *Christ*, and yet justly be denied communion with other Churches, or *Brethren in Christ*. For the matter in short lyeth thus. As a Brother is a member, in respect of that Congregation or Church to which he is immediately related. So, a particular Congregation is but a member in respect

respect of the Church universal. As therefore a man may be called a *Christian Brother*, and yet justly (for some cause) be denied present communion with his fellow *Brethren*; So, a *Congregation* may be accounted a *Church of Christ*, and yet justly be denied communion by her *Sister Churches*, and chiefly when she is such a Church as *causes divisions and offences*, contrary to the *Doctrine* which the *Primitive Churches* received from the *Apostles*. All which being considered, may well serve to satisfie our *Brethren*, that we commit no absurdity in refusing to communicate with them, though we grant them the Appellation of the Church of Christ, and *Brethren* in particular as before we have said.

Division against
unsufferable errors,
and corruptions are
not against the
Church, but for the
Church.

Having shewed that all manner of Divisions which happen in the Church, are not properly against her, they being after a sort rather necessary for her Reformation, then to bring her to desolation, when corruption in Doctrine or manners have made in vasions upon her. (Though it must needs be granted that even these divisions are accidentally against the Church, and that as for other causes, so chiefly, for that they are a scandal to the World, and

and a stumbling to weak Christians.) It be-
hoveth that we briefly shew what we mean by
divisions which are properly against the
Church, and they are such as these.

1. *When both parties contending strive to set up
some sinful thing, or their own devices.*

2. *When they divide about that which is not ne-
cessary, but indifferent only.*

3. *When the point in question is not so much the
thing sought for as revenge upon the persons against
whom the controversie is held.* Those and such
like tend only to the ruine of Churches, having
no tendency at all to Edification.

The first of these shewed it self among the
Corinthians, when they strove to set up men;
some this man, and others that, and this in op-
position one unto another, 1 Cor. 1. 12. Which
folly hath been the overthrow of Congregati-
ons, where mens persons have been admired,
and truth neglected.

The second is rebuked, Rom. 14. *But why
dost thou judge thy Brother, or set at nought thy
Brother? (meaning for things indifferent)*
*Therefore who art thou that judgest another mans
Servant? to his own Master he stands or falls, yea
he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him
stand.*

The third is detected, Gal. 5. 15. for what-
soever the question was, this was their sin, they

did bite one another. Thus men may hold the truth in unrighteousness, and without Charity, preach Christ merely of envy to add thereby some affliction to the bonds of their brethren. Those kind of divisions in the ages bordering upon the Apostles became the Heathens sport (and the Christians shame) upon their open Theaters.

Let us therefore now return to consider the Nature of that distemper which hath befallen our body about the fourth principle of Christ his Doctrine, *Heb. 6. 2.*

The Searchers have declared it to be the sin of Schism; and the part distempered to be only the Congregations under the practice of Laying on of Hands, as is evident from the whole Contexture of their search, and the direction of the Epistle prefixed to it, as if there were nothing amiss in this matter on their part who (if I may so speak) have made (and defended) a Schism in the principles of the Doctrine of our Lord, and therewithall divided themselves from a principle thereof.

And this word SCHISM is taken by the Searchers not in a mild sense, such as wherein it may be taken by propriety of Speech to signify division in some lower consideration, as the word is translated, *1 Cor. 1. 10.* But they have hoysed it in their application of it to the Congregations, professing the fourth principle

to the most extreame signification, even that of *Sedition*; yea to such a degree, as if we *un-churched* * all Churches but our selves. As if it were a light matter to brand all those Churches for *Schismatics*. But they should have considered that bare abstaining from communion, chiefly at the Table of the Lord (which is all that hath been done *generally*, if so much have been done) and that upon such *imminent* occasion, as hath (at least in the time of hot contention) been given for it, is far from being sufficient to bear them out in this their *rash charge* against their Brethren. Seeing our Saviour himself puts a bar for coming to the Altar, while differences between Brother and Brother, only remains undecided, which being duly considered, may justly cause the sober Christian to be afraid of such a communion as (I perceive) the Searchers would (*hand over head*) involve us into.

Now, what hath been done by some particular persons among us in respect of Church-rendings,

* Which how untrue that is, their own Search doth testify, for there they confess that we own them for Churches at some turns, (they say) but surely, (to let go this taunt) what, we confess them to be at any time, we confess them to be at all times, and that is a Church of Christ, though irregular in point of Constitution.

ings, or unchurching other Churches through ignorance or preposterous zeal, as I do not perfectly know, so I will not in any wise go about to justify. But sure I am, it is no good ground for you to asperse all our Congregations with such mens actions; no more then the like preposterous actions by some among you (for such there hath been, both particular persons and Congregations) will justify us to fasten the like reproach upon you, which hitherto we have not done, nor intend to take the advantage of your procreation to do it now.

And what though there hath been (during the time of these contentions and oppositions) a distinction in communion between the Congregations aforesaid, held to be needful, at least in some things (wherein Christians communicating one with another, cannot be very comfortable without unity in their Doctrine and practice) yet sure this hath been done (generally) without contracting the guilt of *Schism* on either side, in respect of all such as in the midst of all these *dissensions*, have maintain'd the great engagement of *Charity* towards one another. And for those that have not so done, its justly feared the guilt hath been as great on the one side, as on the other.

This

This *distinction in communion*, hath been held (I presume) by all wise Christians, rather of necessity, then for any delight they have had in it, partly for that the truth in question would otherwise have been slighted *as a thing but at most indifferent*; And there is no readier way to destroy any truth, then to let it pass with such an estimation. And partly, for that contention would ever have been rising between Members of the same particular community, and no means remaining to pacifie those divisions. For, what pious Pastor of the Church can justify his admitting some to the Lords Table without imbracing (nay though opposing) the fourth principle of Christianity, and yet with the same breath deny another that liberty? The truth is, this disparity in judgment and practice must admit of one thing out of two (at least so long as the Spirit of contradiction worketh,) *viz.* either that the parties dissenting may sit down in distinct Congregations, without the offence or grudging one against another, or else it must admit of dispensing with most of the principles of our Religion, one by one till indeed we have none left intire; as will appear by singling them apart, and yielding to each opinionist the plea which our Brethren do use in the case depending, which in effect is this.

Why should we not sit down at the Lords Table with you; Seeing we own all the principles of Christs Doctrine as you do (which yet I fear, &c.) except the fourth? and as touching that, we say and believe, that *the Laying on of Hands* in Heb. 6.2. is a principle of Christs doctrine, and a part of the *fundation*; yet we deny that Laying on of Hands, which you hold to be that principle. This plea being admitted, a second comes and pleads thus,

Let us build with you, for we own all the principles of Religion, *Heb. 6.1,2.* as you do, except that of Faith, and yet we say Faith is a principle according to *Heb. 6.1.* but we deny that faith which you say is there meant to be that principle.

A third comes and says, we have right to sit down in communion with you, for we do own all the principles, *Heb. 6.* only the Doctrine of Baptisms which you say is there meant, we deny to be a principle of Christs Doctrine, and do say that it is your own *innovation* or *tradition*, yet we own the Doctrine of Baptisms.

A fourth pretends they own all the principles, &c. only that Resurrection of the dead, which we say is a principle of Christianity, they term an *Humane innovation*, yet they profess to believe the Resurrection.

Finally

Finally, there comes others and professes that they own all the principles of Gods Oracles, *Heb. 6. &c.* but withall they deny with *Origen*, that eternal judgment which we hold, and say that there shall be an universal Salvation; and yet they own with him a judgment which is eternal. And upon these pretensions they demand the priviledges of Christians among us in all things.

Now admitting laying on of Hands (as we hold) to be as undoubtedly a principle of Christs Doctrine, as any of the rest (as that is our case.) Let our Brethren resolve us how we shall dispense with them in rejecting and opposing that principle, and yet do nothing at all to the prejudice of any other principle, or part of the Foundation?

Certain it is (as before we have hinted) there is no Artifice of Sathan so likely to wear out this or any other truth, as to make it subject to the wills of men, *viz.* to admit men to the same degree of Estimation and fitness for communion in the Church, though they deny this truth, as if they owned it. And whilst our Brethren are labouring with all their might to bring the fourth principle of Christs Doctrine to this state of subjection, others are as busily tampering with the Doctrine of Baptism. and have prevailed to the great reproach of those

those Christians who have suffered themselves and the truth to be thus abused.

Open opposition though too bad, yet is more advantagious to the truth, then such pretended friendship; for truth being opposed, hath strength and Authority to withstand its greatest Adversary. *But if once subtil men creep into the Church under a specious pretense of waiting for the knowledge of such truths as they have a design to overthrow; these prove the greatest prophaners and subverters of the ways of God in the world. And what devourer shall we be able to keep out (that hath but craft to get in) if once this door of dispensing with principles of Religion be opened?*

Assuredly had those persons, *Acts the 10.* (the remission of whose sins was evidenced from Heaven very eminently) been admitted to communion, without submitting to the Baptism of Repentance for remission of sin (as *Peters* question, *can any man forbid water, that these should not be Baptized, which received the Holy Ghost?* seems to intimate that some such thought might possibly dart it self into the breasts of some.) It had certainly made null that ordinance almost totally, for who doth not now a-days pretently suppose himself to be baptized with the Spirit?

Our

Our Brethren demand of us, *whether those qualifications which gives right to Baptism, do not give right to the Lords Table?* The answer is easie, for Faith and Repentance (as they say) gives right to Baptism, but not so for the Lords Table, for though Baptism be no qualification for it self, yet it is a very necessary qualification for the Lords Table. But that we may reach the utmost that can lie in this question, we answer further: And first,

By granting that those that are rightly baptized, have thereupon a general right to all the priviledges and holy Ordinances in the Church of God; and so to the Lords Table among the rest: But then secondly, we must distinguish between this *general right*, and a *regular capacity* for the immediate participation of these priviledges. The children of Ephraim, &c. 2 Chron. 30. 18, 19, 20. had a right to the Passeeover in general with the rest of the Israelites, because they were Circumcised, &c. yet sith they were not cleansed according to the Purification of the Sanctuary, they were not in a regular capacity to eat the Passeeover with the rest of the Israelites, therefore *Hezekiah* made supplication for them, and it was permitted in that strait, (for they could not do what they would because of the shortness of the time) that they should eat the Passeeover otherwise then

as

as it was written in the Law, but this was an extraordinary case as we have shewed before. Again, suppose I know that my Brother hath something against me, when I am going to the Lords Table; this doth not take away my right from the Table of the Lord which I have in general with other Christians, only now I am not in a regular capacity to participate. And what though those, that are baptized according to Christs command have right to the Lords Table as aforesaid, yet may they not be *preposterous* in taking their right; for there is an orderly way to partake of our privileges. And we say and have proved that

* Let no man here object, prayer and hearing the word, which as they are of necessity antecedent to our Membership, so they are of perpetual use in the Church.

the next step* or principle in Christianity to holy Baptism, is, *that we wait upon God in prayer with the imposition of Hands for the holy Spirit of promise.* This our Brethren do not only neglect, but they oppose it as an *humane innovation.* Upon this, not a brother only, but the Church hath something against them, they refuse to be reconciled, unless we allow them in their disobedience, at least so far as to leave undone that which is their duty to do: hence it appeareth, that whatsoever our Brethren may say for them-

themselves in respect of their right to the Lords Table, yet we find that in them, which puts them into an incapacity for their *immediate participation*; at least with those Congregations, who religiously observe that order wherein the truths of God are proposed to be observed.

But here peradventure our Brethren will say, *they do not remember that we have ought against them in this case*; To which it may be answered, that makes the case never the better in respect of them that do know their error; no more then my Brothers justifying himself in his trespass against me, doth lessen his trespass, which is so far from that, that in truth it makes it greater, and there is now a necessity that these two be reconciled before they sit down at the Lords Table *together*.

If yet it should be said, *we take for granted the chief thing denied, viz.* That our Brethren are offenders in the case depending. The answer is, first, this objection will help those that deny the Baptism of Repentance against our Brethren, for denying them communion in their Congregations, as much as it will help our Brethren against us, for though our Brethren say they offend in omitting that part of Christs Doctrine, yet they deny it. 2. Though our Brethren will needs suppose the case to be doubt-

doubtful whether what we hold in the case depending be true or no, it is out of doubt with us, and so much the more as by how much our Brethren labour to raise new doubts and scruples about it, according to that true saying

*When Black is rightly posited with White,
Then black's most dark, and white doth shine
most bright.*

The Searchers insist much upon their offers in order to the accommodating the difference depending. To which I answer, had they persisted in that candour and condescending temper which lately some of them pretended to. It is not doubted, but the end might have been happy, provided that their hearts were upright according to those pretensions. But to be plain, by all that we can as yet understand, some of them were more politick than pious in such their endeavours, of which let this their Search be an evidence to Posterity. For, even when we were busily endeavouring to answer their condescending proposals, with the greatest compliance, which with a good conscience we could, even then comes our Brethren forth with a fire-brand of Schism and Sedition, and claps it on the backs of our Congregations. And therewithall arms themselves with the most

Clan-

Clandestine and subtil opposition against the principle under consideration, wherewith they have at any time (so far as I know) as yet advanced themselves against it, which yet will make as little for their *Credit*, or the Churches *Comfort*, as their former attempts of this kind have done (unless God whose wisdom can bring good out of evil, turn it to our advantage) *for no weapon formed against the truth shall prosper.*

And though it is true there was some unhappy obstructions of our peace before they Printed their Search, so it is as true that the hypocrisie of some of the Searchers was the cause thereof.

Nor need they make so much of their permitting the Countrey Elders to preach up Laying on of Hands among them, when they consider the hot opposition which some of them met with, as soon as they had done. And its known from some of the most plain-hearted among them, that though we have been desired to preach the Doctrine of Laying on of Hands among them, yet *

it is more to please our humours (which our souls abhor) than that they have any expectation to see the truth by such preaching.

* *Ex ore judicium.*

Nei-

Neither is the complaint of our Brethren just at this time, how that they, or many of them would have submitted to Laying on of Hands, did we not prohibit them communion with those, with whom they formerly walked. For they know that what ever hath been, when contention was in the highest about this matter; yet there hath been as much forbearance that way of late, as could reasonably be desired, and this condescension (perhaps) might still have encreased had you as you promised, ceased your opposition against the truth by us professed. But now you have revived the whole Controversie, in most of the Congregations in *England*: And therefore as the cause of our division at the first was much on their part, who divided the principles of Christianity and themselves from a principle thereof, so the revival, and aggravation (with the prevention of our concurrence at least in many things) will be found at the door of the Searcher, when he searcheth well his own Habitation.

When we consider *Paul's* charge to *Timothy*, to withdraw from such as had a form of Godliness, denying the power thereof. And his command to the Church at *Thessalonica*, to withdraw from every Brother that walketh disorderly; we cannot but dislike the tendency of your 19th. demand, as if it would follow, that because there

were

were some sinfully suffered in some Churches of old, *who taught Gods people to commit fornication, and to eat meats offered to Idols, and to hold a community of Women* (a thing so beastly as scarce fit to be named) therefore we may not withdraw from such Churches as suffer such things. Now! when yet its evident that the Lord charges those sins so deeply upon those that suffered those Abominations, that without speedy Repentance their Church-state must be removed. But surely our Brethren cannot be ignorant that the Lord commends such of the Churches in *Asia*, as could not bear, but *unbaptized* those that were evil, *who said they were Jews, and Apostles, and were not, but were the Synagogue of Sathan*: and how vehemently he reproves those that did not thus separate from such evil workers, whether Congregations, or particular Members, for sure there is but one Law for few or for many in this case.

True it is, That God had mercy for great offenders upon repentance, and there must be admonition before they be spewed out of the mouth. But what will this avail their case, who being intreated and exhorted to turn from the error of their way, and diligently taught concerning the truth, yet persist in their opposition.

The slight exposition which the Searchers gives us of 2 John 7. 9. Verses, is no more to be commended (as I conceive) then their Adversaries unwary syllogism from thence: Seeing it is not all that confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, that hath fellowship with the Father and the Son. For that is the sense of the Searchers, or else they must tell us how many of Christs Doctrines or teachings must be owned as necessary to mens communion with God and Christ; which will puzzle the Searchers as much as any body else, their flourishes and reflexions against others notwithstanding. Nor need we say much to our Brethrens demands, which they ground on a *supposition of the truth of our opinion*, considering what we have said already, for if that we hold *be the truth, it is such a truth as* may not be dispensed with or neglected without manifest danger to the rest of the principles of Religion, as hath been shewed; It shall therefore now suffice for the tryal of the consciences of our Brethren in this matter, that we appeal to them touching the like service in another case, namely, the *Laying on of Hands in the Ordination of Officers in the Church*, which some of them will have to be that principle, Heb. 6. though others of them *reject that as erroneous*, so that our Brethren had little cause to upbraid us about

about some differing apprehensions about the end of that *Ministration*, sith themselves are divided both about the end and the principle it self. I say, put ease now, that some among you should deny the Laying on of Hands on Officers to be *instituted of God*, and tell you it is an *innovation of man* (to say no worse) and that you have no command from God for it; and thereupon they bring all the Arguments against you which you devise against us. And not only so, but they carry on all the Affairs of the Church without any regard had to that orderly way of ordaining men to Office by prayer with the Laying on of Hands. Only, because its your *humour* to have men so ordained, therefore in condescension to your *weakness*, and that they may the better bring you off that usage they permit you once, twice or thrice, &c. to preach up such a thing in their Congregations. Do you now make so little conscience of that Laying on of Hands which you practice, and that as a part of the Foundation (say some of you) as that you could maintain a free and chearful communion with such persons? Howsoever you may shuffle in this case, considering the liberty which you encline to in the other, yet surely were you free from that temptation, you would find no small difficulties to hold such communion with those who should not only

make void, but even despise (for 'tis no better) that wholesome and Divine order which God hath left for the Government of his House.

As for *general Assemblies*, which are ordained for general Controversies, and which through the blessing of God are the best expedient under the Sun, for composing divisions in the Churches. Here the liberty of Christians should be; yea, must be maintain'd, though they differ right much in their opinions in matters of Religion, and therefore we have (indeed) very Christianly admitted the Searchers to such our Assemblies; knowing well, that not only the Christians in the *ages bordering upon the Primitive*, but even the *Apostles of our Lord* did allow Christians of very different perswasions, freely to deliberate on things propounded in such Assemblies. But yet we little thought that our Brethren would have abused us in the sight of the World, for this our Christian respect towards them, as if we were inconsistent with our principles in such our condescensions, unless we also communicate with them at the Lords Table. Surely this kind of dealing is unlikely to effect the peace and concord of our too much divided Congregations.

For my part, I could heartily wish that all the Congregations of Christians in the World
that

that are baptized according to the appointment of Christ, *Math. 28. 19. Mark 16. 16. Acts 2. 38.* would make one *Consistory* (at least sometimes) to consider of the matters in difference among them. For, if this be not admitted, there is no means under Heaven remaining (as I conceive) to heal their divisions, and consequently to obtain that peace which should rule in the hearts of all Gods people, because they are thereunto called in one (universal) body.

And herein (I conceive) an union in the main may be held, though in our particular communities, for the avoiding (otherwise inevitable) inconveniencies, we are constrained to hold some distinctions. For, it is one thing to forsake the Church of Christ, and another to cease communicating with such a particular Congregation, as in the time of Reformation, will needs stay behind in the steps of irregularity. The first can be no other than Schism, sith there can be no cause to forsake the Church of God, though there may be cause to forbear communicating with some particular Members or Congregations thereof. The other is so far from *Schism*, that it is more truly called *Reformation*, nor doth it follow that because we refuse to communicate with our Brethren in their irregular proceedings in the matters of

Religion, that therefore we reject them in those principles of truth which they do religiously observe, and zealously profess: neither is our distinguishing our Congregations from theirs, so much a *separation* from them, as a *Reformation* of our selves, so that the 10. and 11. demands of the *Searchers* might well have been spared, sith as things stand among us, they are not only unnecessary, but I fear may prove very pernicious to the peace of our Churches.

Let me now conclude with a free Word to the Brethren of both persuasions; And that is, to beseech you to consider one another as Brethren, and not as Adversaries, and as Brethren to put on Charity one towards another; and chiefly you that are **zealous** for the principle under debate; the **more** you walk in the truth, the more it concerns you to shew forth your works with meekness of wisdom, and to abound in that gift of the Spirit which hopeth and believeth all things, which doubtless will teach you to believe this of your Brethren in general, that if they saw the truth as you do, they would be nothing less zealous for it than your selves, and consider in the mean time as they are erroneous in our judgments (and certainly erroneous they are) so we seem to be to them. And though the consequence of their rejecting one principle of Religion, do indeed

endan-

endanger the rest, yet let us believe, that if they were awar of this, they would abhor such an opinion as doth so prejudice the Doctrine of Christ.

Our Brethren do err, it is true, but they err with a conscience void of error, because (as may be hoped) they know not that they err. Now Charity suffereth long, and is kind, is not puffed up against any that zealously serve the Lord, though perhaps they err from many of his Precepts. Charity is not the companion of that *excess of indiscreet zeal* which abounds in some men, for it knoweth that temperance is as necessary in our zeal, as mercy is in judgment, violent Spirits seldom or never doth the Church service without disservice; And let us consider that the truth we stand for, hath no need of our passions to defend it; no, its own authority will support it against the strongest opposition, therefore *let your moderation appear to all men.*

To the Brethren on the other side, Let me thus speak, beware that you despise not your Brethren especially you that are men of parts, because you being taken for Brethren of high degree, must now if you own the truth which you have opposed, seem to be abased. You that have been Instructors of the simple, must now learn of Babes, or at least such things as per-

tains to Babes. Whereupon if you ask your consciences, I am perswaded you (or at least some of you) have met with such reasonings, as once a Wise man met with upon an occasion like to this, when he reasoned with his friend after this manner. *Because others are gone before, is it a shame for us to come after? or is it not rather a great shame not at all to go after them.* Aug. Confess. 1.8.c 8.

And let it be considered how upon the discovery of the right manner of Baptizing (for men had forsaken the way of God both in the subject and manner of that Ordinance) there was found a kind of necessity for Christians of ancient standing, as it were to begin again. And yet some then, (as you now) was by no means to be prevailed with, but would (at least) have the way of baptizing left to every mans liberty (as you would have the 4th principle) and now the Lord hath pleaded that cause, when no other endeavour could prevail, for those that stumbled at that truth, are in a manner wholly extinct in this Nation, whilst those that imbraced it are blessed with great encrease. And what shall befall you if to your disobedience you shall add pertinacity, a little time may determine.

By that which hath been said you may perceive (Brethren) how the case stands between
us,

us, gladly would we have communion with you in all Christian priviledges, but your willful want (as of some may be feared *) of one principle of Christian Religion, and therewithall your en-

* At least some of of you.

deavours to deprive our Churches of it (as is too evident to be denyed) puts a stop to that which is so much desired, and how it shall be obtain'd is the business for time to determine, and O that the set time were come. Mean while we must leave the Searchers, and their search; our selves, and our Sigh, to him that will cause all the Churches to know that it is he that searcheth the heart, and tryeth the Reins, and will give to every man according as his work shall be.

A