



SPECIAL NOTE

**ITEM SCANNED AS SUPPLIED
PAGINATION IS AS SEEN**

THE 23C 22 (a)
Interest of Churches :
OR, A
SCRIPTURE PLEA
FOR
Stedfastness in GOSPEL ORDER.
BEING A
DISCOURSE
CONCERNING

The Duty of a Church-Member, *viz.* stedfastly
to continue in the *Communion* of a particular Church of
Christ, to which he hath joined himself.

The substance of which was preached to a Congregation
in *London*, and now published, with some Enlargement, for the
benefit of that and other Churches of Christ.

By ISAAC CHAUNCEY.

God is not the God of Confusion, but of Order ; as in all the Churches of the Saints,
1 Cor. xiv. 33.
I beseech you Brethren mark them that cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the
Doctrine which you have learned ; and avoid them. For they that are such, serve
not the Lord Jesus, but their own Belly ; and by good Words and fair Speeches deceive
the hearts of the simple, Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

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1690.



T H E

Interest of Churches :

O R, A

SCRIPTURE PLEA

F O R

Stedfastness in GOSPEL ORDER.

A C T S ij. 42.

They continued stedfastly in the Apostle's Doctrine, and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer.

TH E One hundred and twenty were met together in Jerusalem, unanimously in one place, at the time of *Pentecost*, in obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus before his Ascension, *That they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the Promise of the Father*; the Baptism with the Holy Ghost; which accordingly was performed. The sacred History whereof is in the beginning of this Chapter. The immediate effect of the miraculous Appearance of the Cloven-Tongues like fire, sitting upon each of them, was, their speaking with other Tongues, in all Languages, *as the Holy Ghost* (with which they were filled) *gave them utterance*. This being noised abroad, *vers. 6.* and there being many Jews and Profelytes devout Men now at the Feast, from all Nations assembled to Worship, a great multitude soon flocked into the Church of One hundred and twenty thus assembled to see this extraordinary Appearance. And whilst they were astonished and variously affected therewith, *Peter* preacheth that excellent Sermon, wherein he gives a full account of this Miracle, and convinceth the Jews of their great Sin of Crucifying Jesus of Nazareth. The Effects of which Sermon were very great,

1. That they where pricked at the heart, in a deep sight and sence of their most horrid Sin.
2. They enquire of the Apostles, what they should doe to

be saved? 3. They being advised, and encouraged by *Peter*, are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, *vers.* 38, &c. 4. They that gladly received the Word, were added to the Church, *vers.* 41. προσεθηκεν; were joined in Society as Members of that Church, which was before but One hundred and twenty, and became now a body of Three thousand one hundred and twenty. 1. *Obs.* Whence observe, It is the duty of every Believer to join himself to a particular Church. 2. That such as offer themselves to the Fellowship of a particular Congregation, are to give a credible Evidence that they have gladly received the Word unto Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus these did. 3. Lastly, We have this commendable Character given them, *vers.* 42. That they continued stedfastly in the Communion of the same Church, in all the Ordinances and Institutions of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Text the Spirit of God gives us a high commendation, or Encomium, of the Spirit and Practice of this great and numerous Congregation, and particularly of these new Converts, that they continued stedfastly and firmly in the Faith and Order of the Gospel, *ἡ οὖν ἐκκλησία ἡ αὕτη, Erant perseverantes, incumbentes, semper adstantes.* The word is of great Emphasis and Significancy to the purpose, for which it is used here, and in other places, as shall be shewed by and by, it signifying the persisting and abiding in and by a practice with all the heart, and might. 2dly. We have the particulars mentioned of the Faith and Order wherein they did stedfastly and heartily continue or persist. 1. In the Apostle's Doctrine, to which their Faith is to be referred. 2. Of Fellowship. 3. Breaking Bread. 4. Prayer. i. e. in Faith and Order of the Gospel. That Point of Doctrine and Duty here plainly offering it self to us is this.

Doct. That they that are added to, or made Members of a particular Gospel Church or Congregation, ought firmly and stedfastly to abide in all the Ordinances and Institutions appointed by Christ, for their Edification, and spiritual Advantage in the said Church.

That this Primitive Church at Jerusalem was a particular Congregation, I think is sufficiently beyond all dispute. For, 1. it was the single and only true visible Church, which Christ had upon Earth, for the Church of the Jews was but pretendedly only the Church of God at this time; and that Church Constitution and whole Oeconomy was actually and really dissolved at the death of Christ, which was abundantly manifested by the rending the Vail between the Oracle and the holy Place. Likewise this Church fell into its final Apostacy, by Crucifying the Lord of Glory, under the guilt whereof these new Converts lay before their Conversion by *Peter's* Sermon, otherwise devout; many, it may be, such as *Cornelius*. And therefore this One hundred and twenty were the only true Church, which Christ, when he ascended, left here on Earth. And this Three thousand Believers (its said) were added and joined to it in one Congregation, and so continued in a firm and stedfast Communion. And as they met before the addition, so they did afterward; for these returned from Mount Olivet (where Christ ascended) to Jerusalem, *Ch.* 1. v. 12. and when they were come, they went up into an upper-room, εἰς τὸ ὑπερῶν, where the Apostles did abide, i. e. met together frequently and constantly, *vers.* 4. all continued with Prayer and Supplication with one accord.

cord. The same Expression is there as here used, after this great addition ; [*ἔτι μετὰ ταῦτα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ μετὰ πάσης ἀπορίας*] they persevered stedfastly with one accord, &c. and in the same place, as is manifest till the effusion of the Gifts of the Spirit at Pentecost, Ch. ij. 1. Thus the same Church only encreased and multiplied, continued till Stephen's Martyrdom; after which, by Saul's Rage and Persecution, it was scattered, and many arose out of one, through the preaching of the Gospel by the Disciples in Samaria, and the Coasts round about. But here they were intent in this Church Communion as one Church or Congregation, for they unanimously assembled daily in the Temple, v. 46.

It is vain and illogical there to talk of a Catholick visible Church; for a Catholick visible Church supposeth many Churches, as were afterward; but this was but one individual Church at present: but not long after there were many Churches gathered and constituted after the Order of this, which is proposed in this Text, as an Example to all Gospel Churches in after Ages, the following whereof, and other Churches of Judea after, the Apostle Paul commends in the Thessalonians, Ep. i. Ch. ij. v. 14. Ye, Brethren, became followers of the Churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ.

In the handling this Point, I shall take this method,

1. To shew what are the Ordinances and Institutions of Christ, in which Church Members are to continue stedfast?

2. What it is to continue stedfast in the said Institutions?

3. Why are they thus to continue stedfast in them?

Quest. 1. What are the great Ordinances and Appointments of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which Church Members are to persist, for the maintaining Church Communion?

Ans. We shall in Answer hereunto keep our selves confined to the Text, wherein Four are mentioned, *The Apostles Doctrine, Fellowship, Breaking Bread, and Prayer.*

First, They persisted in the Apostle's Doctrine, and thereby I conceive these things are to be understood.

1. As they received Gospel Truths at first, ἀκούσας, gladly, chearfully, with delight, so they continued to believe and doe. Here is their stedfastness in the Faith, 1 Thes. i. 5. Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in Power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. The Word preached had a powerful, spiritual, and establishing Effect upon them; and see how welcome the Word was, how gladly received, v. 6. Ye became, μιμηταί, imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost. Notwithstanding all the outward afflictions they met withal, the word preached was most welcome to them, it was most sweet and relishable to them, as it was to David, Psal. cxix. 103. How sweet are thy words unto my taste: sweeter than honey to my mouth. And the Apostle further thanks God, 1. Thes. ij. 13. without ceasing; because, saith he, when ye received the Word of God which you heard of us, ye received it not as the word of Men; but (as it is in truth) the word of God, ὡς ἐνεργεῖται, works inwardly and effectually (the word used comprehends both senses) in those that believe. And in this, vers. 14. he saith.

faith, *They became the Followers of the Churches of Judea.* The first of which we see in the Text, were stedfast and permanent abiders in the Apostle's Doctrine, receiving from time to time the truth in the love of it, they continued in constant exercise of Faith and Obedience, and the word was always a quickening life unto them; *a savour of life unto life.*

2. I conceive by persisting in the Apostles Doctrine, is meant a constant attendance on the Ministry of the Church for their Edification; the Apostle's Ministry was then the Ministry of that Church, the Flock is to attend on the Shepherd that feeds them, as the Shepherd to the feeding of them, *Acts xx. 28.* The Duty is relatively to be performed, and if Pastors and Teachers, as well as the Apostles themselves, were given for the perfecting the Saints, and edifying body of Christ, *Ephes. iv. 11, 12.* Then the Saints must attend the teaching of Church Officers in their respective Charges, for the attaining the same end. And certainly, by Christ's appointing Ministry and Officers in each Congregation, he intended the Accompanying his Churches with his peculiar Blessing and Presence for Edification, in their constant attendance on a standing Ministry, and Ordinances amongst them. And we find by woeful Experience, that Erratick scampering Hearers have usually itching Ears, that regard more Rhetorical Haranges than sound and spiritual Preaching, and go oftner to see than to hear Preachers; whereas if Men have Ears to hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches, they will with a great deal of delight wait upon God under a fixed Gospel Ministry.

3. By continuance in the Apostle's Doctrine, I judge is to be understood a persistence in obedience to all Gospel Commands and Institutions, as taught by the Apostles, whose peculiar Office-charge was to settle the Churches in Gospel Order, and therefore did doctrinally deliver it unto them. *2 Thes. ij. 15.* Brethren, stand fast, and hold the Traditions which you have bin taught, whether by Word, or by our Epistle. The *μαρτυρίας* there mentioned, I take to be Rules of Order, as our Interpreters have well rendered the word, *1 Cor. xi. 2.* Now I praise you, Brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the Ordinances, as I delivered them unto you. And its not a little observable what these *μαρτυρίας*, Orders or Institutions were, if we mark well what he speaks to the Thessalonians, *2 Thes. iij. 6.* I declare unto you, Brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw [*ἐκκλίνετε* devitare, subducere ab aliquo] from every Brother that walketh, *ἐκτὸς*, disorderly, [without Rule or Order] and not according to the Ordinance or Institution [*μαρτυρίαν*] which he received of us. Now this was one of the Apostle's Ordinances, that Churches should avoid every Brother, as not fit for Communion, that was disorderly in his walk, not agreeable to Gospel Rule or Order, *i. e.* obstinately or unreclaimably so. It being therefore manifest, that Gospel Rules of Church Order were delivered to us in the Apostle's Doctrine; and that continuing in obedience to the Practice of those Rules and Directions, is continuing in the Apostle's Doctrine.

The following particulars do refer more especially to Churches Order.

Secondly, Communion [*κοινωνία*] or Fellowship, is a second particular here mentioned, wherein Gospel Order doth consist. Communion is used often in the

the largest sence for Church Fellowship in any Ordinance or Duty, as Communion in the Lord's Supper ; or Prayer, but here, I apprehend, it's taken in discrimination from the other particulars mentioned, and therefore hath its proper sence.

1. It importeth an Associating together, and mutual Society of one person with another. So 1 John i. 7. a single person cannot be said, as such, to have Fellowship, while he abides alone. That hereby intended, I judge, to be frequent assembling together of the Church Members. Hence we have in the *Acts*, ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ, and ὁμοθυμαδὸν so often used, *Acts* i. 14. *Ch.* ij. 1, 46, &c. on purpose to denote the assembling together of the Church in one place, *Rom.* xv. 6. He prayeth the God of all patience and consolation, that they be like minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind, ὁμοθυμαδὸν, with sameness of mind, or minds, brought together in unanimity, and one mouth (as in a Congregation) glorifie God, where one speaks, and all join in heart with him, *Heb.* x. 25. The Apostle strictly prohibits their forsaking the assembling themselves together ; ἐκπορεύωντες ἐκείνων, the gathering themselves together into an Assembly. A Church is, ἐκκλησία, a Congregation or Assembly, a Company of Saints called so from their meeting together ordinarily, and at stated times for communion together in the Ordinances of Christ, for the Worship of God, and for their own spiritual mutual Comfort and Edification, and so all Churches are to be performed.

2. Hence Communion in the sence before us is not only an external bodily Associating our selves together, but it is of a spiritual Nature, and communion in Heart and Mind. It's called αὐτοφροσύνη, an agreeing, thinking, and minding the same thing in united Judgments, Affections, and Designs. *Phil.* iij. 14. Paul tells the *Philippians* what he designed, He pressed towards the mark [for τὸ σκοπὸν, i. e. his great end and design] the prize [βραβεῖον, premium, or palmam] of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus ; and let as many as are perfect [i. e. of right Minds and Principles] be thus minded to have the same scope and end. And vers. 16. Whereunto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule ; [ἡ αὐτὴ σοκὴν κατένυσεν, be grounded fundamentally in the same Laws or Principles of uniform Communion.] And that was the Rule that he promoted in the Church and others, is manifest. Consider but how pathetically he presseth it, *Chap.* ij. 1, 2, 3. If there be any consolation in Christ, any comfort of Love, any fellowship of the Spirit, &c. Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, one mind. And from this knitting together of Minds and Affections in the same Principles, Rules and Designs, which is constantly kept up and maintained in Communion ; (Union being always the foundation of Communion and bond the of it.) There doth arise a participation, which is double, 1. Mutual. 2. Common. 1. Mutual, which is communication of good things to each other, of spiritual and temporal good Things, as the Members of one Body ; each communicates and receives both in respect of the whole, and every particular part. So *Rom.* xij. 4. the Apostle shews, that as we are many members, so one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. And as all members have not the same office, ἑκάστη, the same Function

or Employment, so we have, *vers. 6.* gifts differing, or diversified, according to the grace that is given to us. And he shews how all is to the benefit and advantage of the whole; and this Doctrine he insists at large on to the *Corinthians*, *1 Cor. xij. 4, 5, 6.* where he tells us there are different gifts; *διαφόροις χάρισμασι*, diversity of gifts graciously bestowed; *διαφορίαις, διακονίαις*, of Ministrations or Church Offices; and also, *ἐμπνεύματων*, of inward effectual operations; but yet the same Spirit, the same Lord Jesus, one and the same God that worketh all these in all; and for what end it's Edification in a way of communion, *vers. 7.* The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal: Which profiting in a way of harmonious agreement and communion, in supplying each other, according to their several Qualifications and Endowments; as likewise sympathizing one with another in case of suffering, is abundantly illustrated and set forth unto us in that Chapter. This mutual Communion in Church Members, is visible in two respects also; first, in mutual restauration in case of falls, *Ecc. iv. 9.* Two is better than one; for if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, *Rom. xv. 1.* by helping, succouring, relieving, and restoring; *Gal. vi. 1.* If any one be overthrown with a fall, restore such a one with a spirit of meekness. And here I could tell you, that all Church Government and Discipline, in correcting Offenders by Censures, belongs to this Fellowship here spoken of.

But, 2. There is communion in giving and receiving. This Church shewed an extraordinary and exemplary Spirit in this kind, they all sold their Possessions, and put them into a common Stock. The Apostle speaketh of communicating to the necessities of Saints; and that to doe good and communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased, *Heb. xiii. 16.* And he bids Timothy to tell the Rich, i. e. Professors, that they should be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, *1 Tim. vi. 18.* And the Churches were so well satisfied of their Duty in this kind, that Paul saith to the *Corinthians*, *2 Cor. ix. 1.* Touching the ministry to the Saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; for I know the forwardness of your mind. *Vers. 7.* Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, either to the necessity of their own Church, or to the necessities of other Churches, as the *Corinthians* to those of *Macedonia*. And this is not all in communication, as to outward things. There is another kind of Communication, which Church Members are to perform, not in an Elomofinary way, but as due debts, which is supporting the Ordinances and Officers of the Church. No publick Society can be managed and maintained without charge, *Gal. vi. 6.* Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things, in a liberal, generous, honourable way; not as he distributes to the Beggars at his Door, nor to treat them in so servile a base manner, as Gentlemen usually doe their Trencher Chaplains; for it is a spiritual Debt, as the Apostle Paul argues, *1 Cor. ix. 7.* Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? I am sure when Christ sent out his Disciples, he bid them take no Money in their Purses (supposing they had it) but tells them, The labourer is worthy of his hire. Likewise the Apostle proceeds, and argues thus, Who plants a Vineyard, or feedeth a Flock, and is not fed from them? And

is it not amoral Law, even natural Justice, *Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the Ox*? And v. 11. *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?* i. e. its a small thing incomparifon. Professors now a-days reckon it a very great thing to allow just Bread to their poor labouring Ministers; and he that will labour hard, and take much pains, shall be sure to be kept poor and lean enough. They know full well how to muzzle the Ox, that he shall get but little of their Corn. But, v. 14. *Even so* (saith he) *hath the Lord ordained, that he that preacheth the Gospel should live of the Gospel.*

I shall but name the other thing in Communion, though of greatest concern, That Communion is a *Participation in common*, wherein many participate of one and the same good things. Thus the Saints in Church Communion partake of the one Grace and Love of God, of one Covenant, of one Spirit, of one Christ not divided. They all share according the measure of Grace given unto them. Hence the Cup in the Lord's Supper is called, *The Communion of the blood of Christ*, and the Bread, *The Communion of the body of Christ*, 1 Cor. x. 16. Because all the Members partake of this Ordinance in Communion, and by Faith duly exercised on the Body and Blood of Christ; but I shall not enlarge any further on this Head, it having just brought me to the next General, which is breaking of Bread.

Thirdly, The Third appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which the Members of this famous Congregation did persist, was breaking of Bread. By this we are to understand the Ordinance of the *Lord's Supper*. It is called the *Supper*, John xii. 2. and Chap. xxi. 20. but it's called the *Lord's Supper*, 1 Cor. xi. 20. from the time of its first Administration, and the Lord's Institution thereof, and the great end and reason thereof, is, to shew forth the Lord Jesus his Death, to remember it till he come. Here it's called, *κλάσις ἁρτῶν*, breaking of Bread, called so by a *Synecdoche*, a part for the whole; and it's called so in another place, *Acts* xx. 7--11. where *Paul* administred this Ordinance on the Lord's Day late at Night, after he had preached long. There was another breaking of Bread which is spoken of, and was no Institution of Christ, called their *Love-Feasts*, which was probably began, and came in fashion among them soon after they sold their Possessions and Goods, having all things common, it's like they divided themselves into Companies, each Company had its allowance, and did daily eat and drink together from House to House by turns. Which practice of this Church dividing thus into Companies became a custom in other Churches (where there was not the same reason for it as here, where all their Estates were put into a common Stock) so it was practised corruptly in the Church of *Corinth*, as is noted and reprehended by the Apostle *Paul*, 1 Cor. xi. and the corruption there reprov'd is, that they did eat their Love Feasts in one place, where the Church did usually assemble, and there divided themselves into several parts for eating and drinking together, but did not break Bread from House to House as here. And therefore he saith, *Have ye not houses to eat and drink in? but doe you despise, or contemn, or offer contempt to the Church Assembly, when all the Church comes into one place?*

place? Which contempt was this, *To divide themselves into parcels for eating and drinking, and this before the Lord's Supper; for that, vers. 21. everyone, ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~prepared~~ ^{prepared} ~~drives~~ ^{drives}*, takes his Supper before-hand. There is no ground to render it one before another, as if they that came first fell on rudely before others came; but that some would eat little and others too much, before they came together to the Lord's Table. And therefore he rebukes that irreverent approaching to this great Ordinance, and shews the right Institution of it, the danger of unprepared approaching thereto, what ill effects it had among them, and the way to prevent such for the future.

But to return to our purpose. This is appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ, as one of the greatest standing Ordinances of Church Communion, wherein this Primitive Church did persist, and all the Members, as the Text abundantly manifests, and as their participation thereof did denote and imply their professed Union to the Lord Jesus Christ. So hereby was from time to time shewed forth their Communion with Christ, their Head and Copartnership in him as one body. For, 1 Cor. x. 16. the Apostle saith, *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the body of Christ? i. e.* as it is a significant sign to every one of his eating the Body, and drinking the Blood of Jesus Christ by Faith, *i. e.* living on the Merits and Virtue of Jesus Christ in his Death and Satisfaction. So it is a sign significant, that all these Church Members that thus eat and drink together at the same Table, do allow and acknowledge each other to have visible right and interest in Jesus Christ. And the repeating and continuing in attendance on this Ordinance in the Church, is not only a significancy of maintaining their Right to, and claiming an Interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is also a publick Test and Demonstration of Love and Charity to each other, and an expresse Obligation thereto. Neither can any part of Church Communion be enough to doe this without Fellowship in this Ordinance; for if any Member of such a Congregation persist not in this part of Communion, the whole Community cannot be but offended and grieved, as if he deemed them not worthy of the Body and Blood of Christ. He by this Act of wilful persisting in withdrawment from this sacred Communion, cuts off himself from that particular part of the Body of Christ, whereof he is a professed Member, all being *Members in particular one of another*, Rom. xij. 5. So the Apostle saith, 1 Cor. x. 17. *We being many, are one bread and one body; that is, all the Members eating and drinking the same spiritual drink, are as one body in Christ: For, saith he, we are all partakers of that one bread, the Lord Jesus Christ.* In this great appointment is therefore most lively set forth, the constant Communion which we have with Christ, and one with another, whereby covenant Mercies are frequently sealed unto us, for the confirmation of those eminent Graces of *Faith* and *Love*, and for the shewing them forth to one another.

Fourthly, The fourth and last thing wherein they stedfastly did continue was in Prayer to, and Praising God continually. This was one end of their frequent Assembling and meeting together; and thus they began presently after the Ascension

Ascension of our Lord, *Acts i. 14.* They all continued with one accord, in prayer and supplication, with the Women, &c. And as then before the effusion of the Spirit at Pentecost, so here we see afterward, Prayer was one of the great Ordinances of Communion; yea, we find the Church was praying when the Spirit came upon them. Again, *Acts iv. 23, 31.* For, v. 24. they lift up their voice with one accord, v. 31. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they assembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; vers. 32. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart. The Apostle Paul exhorting the Romans to relative and mutual Graces and Duties to be exercised in way of Communion, saying, *Rom. xij. 5.* We being many are but one body in Christ, and every one members one of another, shews how the differing Gifts and Graces in Officers and Brethren, according to the Grace given, might be exercised for the Profit and Advantages of the whole, and would have them kindly affectionated one towards another, in Love, &c. And amongst other Graces and Duties, vers. 12. would have them continue instant in Prayer. And because it's the same word (*παρασπαστες*) that is used in the Text, and because the things he insists upon before and after, are Duties referring to Church Edification. I conceive his Eye is most upon the Prayers in the Church Assemblies, where he would have them constantly and instantly attend; and so for the Praises of God in his Church, *Rom. xv. 5, 6.* Now the God of all patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded [*τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν*] one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, (i.e. the Example and Gospel Rules of Christ) that you doe with one mind [*ἐμὸθυμαδὲν*, the word so frequently used in the *Acts*, and applied to the Churches meeting together] and one mouth glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Quest. 2. What is imported by the continuing stedfastly, as in the Text and Doctrine Expounded?

Ans. The Greek word here used [*ἵνα παρασπαστες*] is of as great Significancy and Emphasis as any word in Scripture applied to matter of Duty.

The words meaning lieth in Two things.

First, The doing a thing with all our might.

Secondly, The continuance in it, with an unshaken Perseverance.

First, The doing a thing with all our might; as it is expressed, *Eccles. ix. 10.* and this doth certainly imply,

1. The making a thing our great business; as the Apostles, when they had proponnded to the Church the choice of Deacons for the serving of Tables, i. e. for the taking in and delivering out of the Church Stock, for the supplying every one as they had need, to take off that great care and burthen from themselves; say, they would give themselves [*παρασπασθησόμεθα*] to Prayer, and Preaching the Word; i. e. they would make Preaching and Prayer the main of their study, work, and business, to doe it, *ἐν σπουδῇ*, as it's spoken of him that Rules, *Rom. xij. 8.* as the Church Officers are to attend their Ministration with all diligence; so the Ruled are to attend on their Ministry.

The word is used for waiting upon, or being always in readines to serve another, and making it our business so to doe, *Mark iij. x.* There its used where Christ Orders his Disciples, that a Ship should attend him; so it im-

ports here, that they who were added, did wait upon and attend the Communion of the Church, in this way of waiting on, or attending. The word is also used, *Acts* x. 7. when the Angel that spake unto *Cornelius* departed, he called two of his Household Servants, and a devout Soldier, part of them that waited on him continually. So the People of God are such as wait on the Lord in the ways of his appointment, for their Edification, and growth in Grace. And saith the Psalmist, *Psal.* cxxij. 2. *Behold, as the Eyes of servants are unto the hands of their Master, and the Eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her Mistress: so our eyes wait upon the Lord.* It implies a continual readiness, and watching for all opportunities to attend the Communion of the Church; as also setting aside other incumbrances that might lett and hinder.

There are wights that doe easily hang upon us, the Cares and Affairs of this Life, as also fears and obstructions by reason of Persecution, and Opposition from the World. It's observable that these resolved upon keeping up the Church Communion as much as it was possible, by casting off incumbrances in regard of their Estates; for no doubt but many or most of those had Estates and Possessions, which they sold, putting all into a common Stock, and committed it to the care of the Apostles, to distribute to every one as they had need. The Church was as it were one Household and Family, the Ministry and Ordinances sustained, the poor plentifully provided for.

2. To doe a thing with all a Man's might, is to doe it heartily, as the Apostle speaks, *Colos.* ij. 23. *Whatever you doe, doe it heartily, [ἐν ᾧ, from your Soul,] as to the Lord, and not unto Men.* And this doing a thing heartily as to the Lord, is to doe it in the fear of God, from a Principle, that it is the Mind and Will of God, that we should be found in such Acts of Obedience: Hence it's practised with Love and Chearfulness, which makes up Sincerity of the Heart, as the Apostle Phraisseth it, *Rom.* xij. 8, 9. *Shewing mercy with chearfulness. Let your love be without hypocrisie or dissimulation.* It's plain by the Text, that the very hearts of these Church Members was in this matter, for they laid aside as much as possibly their worldly distractions, that they might attend the Ordinances and Communion with God, and one with another, to their Edification; and this they did not grudgingly, *Acts* ij. 46. they did strenuously assemble together, and took their food with joyfulness, and singleness of heart; which produced great zeal, resolution, and fervency of Spirit, as appears by their joint, unanimous, and chearful withstanding all Opposition, *Acts* iv. 32, 34, &c. And accordingly we have the word used for the Church's instancy and fervency in Prayer, one of the great forementioned Ordinances of Communion, *Rom.* xij. 12.

Secondly, It abundantly imports Perseverance, and so it's expressed, *Eph.* vi. 18. *Praying with all Prayer and Supplication at all times* [or in every opportune time and season] *in the Spirit, and watching thereto, [ἐν ᾧ καὶ μετὰ συνέσεως, in all instant or intent perseverance]* and supplication for all Saints. So that this word principally intends continuance and perseverance, and is here mentioned to shew how industriously, constantly, and conscientiously they did perform their first Obligation, when added to this Congregation; and to give us to understand

derstand that they were no Starters, sometimes here, and sometimes there ; nor the Church an occasional Church, as many now a-days are. The Apostle Rom. xij. speaking particularly of the Gifts and Graces which a Church ought to be found in the Exercise of, he saith, *vers. 11. They should not be sloathful in business, but fervent in Spirit.* And, *vers. 12. Continuing instant in Prayer ;* ~~μεγαλυνήσας~~, continuing, or persevering with all Life, Zeal, and Industry in Prayer.

Quest. *Why is it a Duty in Church Members thus to continue in the attending on the Ordinances and Institutions of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Church ?*

Reas. 1. Because it appears to be the Mind and Will of the Lord Jesus Christ, that Church Members should thus walk. Christ hath recommended the Practice of this Church for the Example of other Churches in future Ages. And that which is commended in them by the Holy Ghost, so far as it can be expected other Churches are to be obliged, was to ordinary practice. That selling their Goods, and bringing all into a common Stock, was extraordinary upon the account of the hazardous Circumstances that the first Gospel-Church stood invironed with, to which also they were led by the extraordinary Spirit the Apostles and this Church was conducted. But as to things ordinary, and necessary Practice in all Ages, where can we have a clearer President presented to us, with the great approbation of the Holy Ghost ?

Reas. 2. From the Nature of a Church : It is a spiritual, compact, and fixed Society, and therefore represented to us by such natural or artificial Bodies, as doe not easily fall a-sunder ; such as the Body of Man, that hath all the Members fitly joined, or knit together by joints and bands, Eph. iv. 16. And thence, *Psal. cxxij. 3. the Church is prophetically compared to a City that is compact.* It is represented in *John's Revelation* by a golden Candlestick, a vessel of the best matter furnished with diversity of Parts. Now Churches being Communion, they necessarily require abode and continuance of their Members with them, each Member with the Church to whom he belongs, and particular Members breaking and forsaking Communion, necessarily tends to the dissolving the whole Society. A Society of rational Men cannot be made without a voluntary conjunction of the particular Members, whereby they are brought into one Body, in which they are bound to continue, according to the Laws of the said Society ; from which they cannot forcibly depart without the violation of the said Community. Now Churches being Societies of the highest Nature, there is not only an Obligation that binds the Members one to another in a politick Body, but all and each of them to Christ the Head. So the Apostle *John* tells us, *1 John i. 3. there is a double Fellowship ; This we write that your Fellowship may be with us ; for our Fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Christ Jesus.* Hence is its continuance in the Fellowship of the Gospel, *Phil. i. 5. making request with joy for your Fellowship in the Gospel, from the first day until now : Which Fellowship is continuance in the Faith and Order of the Gospel : Colos. ij. 4. Rejoicing to behold your Order, and the stedfastness of your Faith in Christ Jesus.*

Reas. 3. From the particular regard the Lord Jesus Christ hath had to confirm the Hearts and Spirits of his People in this stedfast continuance ;

by instituting and ordaining an Ordinance for that end and purpose, next to the remembrance of his Death and Communion with him therein ; yea, in so doing, the Holy Ghost tells us, *we eat and drink into one body*, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the body of Christ ? For we being many are one body, and one bread.* So that in the repeated participation of this Ordinance, in a particular Congregation, is denoted their firmness and permanency of visible Union, and Communion one with another : And for Men to plead that they depart not from the Communion of a Church, when they depart from participation of the Lord's Supper in that Congregation, is to say light and darkness, Christ and Belial are the same. For this is the only sealing Ordinance of visible Communion ; yea, Members Excommunicated are only actually and visibly removed from this Ordinance, not from the Word nor Prayer, therefore he that withdraws himself in this kind, doth certainly renounce the Communion of the Church, or at least forsake it, and cannot be said to return to the Communion of the Church, till he sits down with them in that Ordinance ; for till then he owns not the Church to be fit partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ ; but owns himself fit, because he goes to partake with another Church. And his whole Action and Profession tends to decry the right of the said Church, to any Institutions or peculiar Ordinances of Jesus Christ.

Reas. 4. From the great End and Advantage of Church Membership, and the marvellous Benefits accrues unto us thereby, and they are all contained in the Edification of the Saints in Faith and Love. Therefore Members are to be added to Churches, that their Faith may be strengthened, their Love encreased, that they may grow up in these Graces, and by them in all Grace and Spiritual Gifts. Now this End hath bin often attained by attending constantly on the Communion of Saints, dwelling in the House of the Lord all the days of our Lives ; the Ordinances of Christ are Wisdom's Gates and Posts. The Apostle makes a great protestation unto the *Corinthians*, among whom we find as much of a Spirit warping from this Rule, as in any Church, which appears by his frequent reprehensions upon this account. He saith, 2 Cor. xij. 19. *We speak before God in Christ : we doe all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. For I fear lest when I come I shall not find you such as I would, &c. lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults, [ἀνεκτακταία, inconsistencies] all which are certain disturbances unto this permanent Communion and Edification thereby.* In such a fixed way of Communion were the Churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, Acts ix. 31. It's said they were edified ; and walking in the fear of God, and comforts of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. Hence it is, the Church was compacted by that which every part supplieth, according to the office or energy of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying it self in love, Eph. iv. 16. Particular Parts are encreased by Union and Communion with the body ; for if the Communion be cut off, the Part decays ; so the growth and encrease of the body is in the particular Parts, *for the body is not one member, but many*, 1 Cor. xij. 14. and

and *vers.* 20. Now are they many members, but one body, neither can the body spare one without detriment, nor it the body: But if a member go from the body, the body may live, though the member cannot. Besides a member cannot unduly depart from the body, but there is a breach of the joint and band of love, so that it ceaseth any longer to be edified in love, but all those evils presently spring up in it, that gradually eradicate that excellent Grace of Love; and if any part wither and decay, as to that eminent grace, Faith will soon make but a little figure. And what if it be said, a withdrawing Member is an old Professor, eminent for Strictness and Holiness, but abides not in the Union: I say, the visible Body of Christ, and the Grace of Charity, is withered and dried up. What saith the Apostle of such an one, *1 Cor. xij. 1, 2, 3.* If he hath never so rare, and to be admired Vertues, if he hath not Charity he hath nothing. But such an one will say, I leave not the Body of Christ the Catholick Church, yea, I can join to another Church. Will the finger say, I can leave the hand, the part to which it is joined, and be put on to the body in another place? Its place and use is there where God hath placed it. What a useles, monstrous, and troublesome thing would it be to have the finger fastned to the body, at the foot, knee, side, nose, &c. Besides, if the member be taken from the next part where it is joined, will it cement and close in any other part? as an amputed hand can it be fixed on the thigh? will it grow there? No, it will die, wither, and stink; and if it would receive nourishment, of what use would it be, nay, would it not be a grent burthen to the body? Thus it is in Spirituall, and it's by woeful Experience found, that Members that unjustly forsake the Communion of Churches, at long run prove dead and withered Branches, or are feign to return back again.

I speak not of a Members due translation from Church to Church, but of a violent schismatick Departure.

Reas. Refr. 5. The maintaining and keeping up a constancy and fixedness of Communion in the Church, is one of the great Ends and Use of Church Officers and Rulers; their Charge is, *Acts xx. 28.* Take heed unto your selves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers (or Bishops) to feed the Church of God, &c. Christ the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, hath committed his Churches to their respective Pastors and Elders, and they are to take care of all and every one. [*μου ποιῶν*, Is to rule and govern, as to feed by teaching.] Besides, how can he feed the Flock that scatters, and wanders in the Mountains, nay, are they not to bring back such Sheep? See *Ezek. xxxiv. 2.* Should not the Shepherd feed the Flock? And what is to be done in this feeding, among other Duties to the Flock? They ought to bring again that which is driven away, and to seek that which is lost, *vers. 4.* And the Complaint of the Lord is against the foolish Shepherds, *vers. 6.* My sheep wandered through all the mountain, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search out and seek after them. What Duty is more incumbent on Shepherds, than to bring home the Sheep that are Diseased, *vers. 4.* and to see that he brings home his whole Tale to the Fold from time to time? Did not our Lord Jesus, *John xvij.* the great Shepherd, upon this account, plead his faithfulness.

of all that thou hast given me (*i. e.* in charge as a Pastor) have I lost none, but the son of perdition; who would incorrigibly break out of my Fold by final Apostacy. So every good Pastor must give an account of Christ's Sheep committed to his Charge, and woe be to him if through his Negligence any be wandered away and lost. If some, notwithstanding all faithful Endeavours be lost, he can say at last, I have lost none but such unruly Sheep, that have departed to their own destruction.

Pastors do not feed their own Sheep but Christ's, and are to seek them out, though broke into a neighbouring Shepherds Pasture or Fold, seeing his Mark he may challenge him, and it's no better than Felony in the neighbouring Shepherd to detain it from such; yea, every Pastor knows his Sheep, or should, and is known of his. And it's suspicious that a Shepherd hath a Felonious Mind that sees a Neighbours Sheep wandring into his Flock, and will not immediately return it back. It's true, neighbouring Shepherds will be kind to each other, and give a Sheep, or two, or more, some hours grasing, or a Nights lodging in his Fold; but when it comes to make its abode there, he will send it home to the Owner, and bid him look after his own Sheep, its not the matter of his care. I need not tell you what all this means, the Similitude is abundantly teaching and illustrating, it hath its Original from the Spirit of God laying a great stress upon it. Idle Shepherds also Sheep-stealers will have a great account to make, *for if the one must answer for being a Fool, the other must for being a Knave.* Well then if Pastors are to maintain their Watch, that their Sheep straggle not away from them, the duty of the Sheep is, for every one to keep his Fold, Pasture, and Shepherd, under whom God hath placed him, *Heb. xiii. 17. Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves to them; for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give an account: that they may doe it with joy,* [which they shall doe, if you walk according to the Rule and Order of the Gospel,] *and not with grief,* [which they must needs doe, if you walk like unruly scattered Sheep] *for that will be unprofitable for you,* [*i. e.* in the day of Christ; when all your Actions shall be tried, and that by fire. *Every mans work shall be made manifest* (whatever your present pretensions are) *the day shall declare it,* 1 Cor. iij. 13.

Having thus plainly opened and proved the Doctrine, *That it is the Duty of all that are added unto a true constituted Church of Christ, to continue steadfastly in the attendance on all the Ordinances and Institutions of Christ, for their Edification and Advantage.* Then the contrary practice is hereby condemned.

First, In a careless neglect of the Communion of the Church. Professors now a-days look upon themselves as well enough, if they have but the name and reputation of Church Membership. I fear the foretold poisonfom Temper of the latter Days that hath grown up into the Antichristian Apostacy, hath insinuated it self very far into many reformed Protestants of the more refined sort; *i. e.* to have and content themselves with a form of Godliness, denying the Power thereof. May not Christ say, He hath this against our Churches, *That they have left their first Love, Life and Zeal for Christ, his Ordinances and*
 Appoint.

Appointments. Have not many a name only that they live? Luke-warm Professors, *Laodiceans*: If such a Spirit be not, what means the thinness of Church Assemblies appointed for Communion, in the Apostle's Doctrine, Fellowship, breaking Bread, and Prayer? though, indeed, most will be Communicants, *i. e.* in breaking Bread, but scarcely hold any other Communion with the Church. Some are Communicants, and upon any other account you can hardly tell that they are Church Members; and others would be accounted Church Members, but will not be Communicants. *Oh that you had Ears to hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches?* Will your corrupt Prejudices, your worldly Minds and Affections, your cold and formal Spirits, let you hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches? Doth not Christ walk in the midst of the golden Candlesticks? Are not his Eyes as a flame of Fire? Is it not he that hath the sharp two-edged Sword? Think you not that he is jealous over his Churches, and his Honour there? Doth he not mark the walking and wandering of every Member? Can you slight thus his rich Grace and Presence in the Church? You little think when you stay from the Communion of the Church, you are absent from Christ walking there; doe but consider this when you are buesied in the Shop, to save or get a Penny, now the Church of Christ (where I am engaged to wait upon God for my Edification) is Assembled together, Christ hath promised to be with them, if there be but two or three met together, there being liketo be no more, if others doe as I. Oh, what may I lose for my Soul! It may be such an enriching quickening Presence of Christ, that they there present may bless God for it all their days. Think but upon what a Spirit was in these Primitive Christians, that they presently threw up their worldly Incumbrances, that they might instantly and constantly attend the Communion of the Church. Consider what our blessed Lord said unto *Martha*, Luke x. 42. *Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things; there is one thing necessary. Mary hath chosen the better part, which cannot be taken away from her.* You see what a Rebuke here was of *Martha*, whose mind was incumbered and disturbed with worldly Concerns, and what an Encomium is given *Mary*, who threw off these worldly Distractions, and came and sate down at Jesus's Feet, hearing his Word; Who doe you think gained most? Who had the Advantage of the other? Christ tells us. Oh, what Mistakes are in the World, yea, among true-hearted Christians, about Gain and Loss; for *Martha* was a great lover of Christ, and Christ loved her, as is expressly spoken, *John xi. 5. Jesus loved Martha and her brother Lazarus.* And you see a time when *Martha* out-did *Mary*, when Jesus was coming to raise *Lazarus*, *vers. 20. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming she arose to meet him, whilst Mary sate in the House.* A worldly or dedolent Frame is too apt to fall upon us.

As Christ did, so his Churches and Ministers ought to Exercise much Charity, Love, and Tenderneſs towards those that Offend, yet not to justify or abet the best in the things wherein through Ignorance, Carelesſneſs, or Wilfulneſs, they err from the Truth. It's a very ill way of Reasoning, Such a Man is a good Man, therefore his Actions are good; a good Man hath fallen, therefore

there he must lie, he knows well enough what he doth, no body must offer to help him up again, for fear such endeavours should reflect upon him, or be a disparagement to him. This way of Arguing may serve to justify all the Sins of *Noah, David, and Peter, &c.* and condemn the Spirit of God in a contrary way of dealing with the best of Men, and enjoining us by strict Rules to act accordingly. But to proceed on the Point in hand, I cannot but make my Remark upon some Practises of Professors among us, which are very prejudicial to Church Communion (though as to particular Cases and Reasons, much may be allowed) and that is in the first place. That Church Members order so their concerns in the World, as that their Habitations are at so great a distance from the Churches to which they belong, that there is little Communion to be held with those Churches; and besides that the Church Watch to which the Officers are called, is made unpracticable. There seems in this Primitive Church to be another Spirit, for they plainly made their Estates subservient to their Communion; for whereas these were devout Persons, that came up now from remote and circumjacent Regions about *Judea*, to Worship at the Feast: Upon their Faith in Christ, and addition to the Church, they put off their Estates in the Country, that they might sit down in uninterrupted Communion with the Church. Undoubtedly Church Members should make their worldly concerns subservient to the promoting their spiritual Enjoyments, and not order them so as to be necessarily and unavoidably letts, hindrances, and clogs unto them, laying aside every weight that hangs upon them, not putting on more weights. There is another Practice also of very ill note and consequence, and that is, That many join themselves to Churches, and when they have the name of Relation to such a Church, they remove their Habitation to some place many Miles distance, and there they live without any Church Communion, and from under any Church Watch: or it may be in only transient Communion in another Church, with or without Letters of Recommendation, so that hereby there is no Church Inspection exerted towards them, and they walk at large. Whereas if God's Providence hath removed a Church Members Abode to remote places, he ought not to live in this manner, but seek out a Dismission to the next Congregation, and accordingly put himself under their Watch and Care; this Benefit being one of the main Ends of Church Membership. *It Reproves and Condemns, and that highly, dividing from the Communion of the Church, and not stedfastly continuing therein, i. e. through Temptation, Weakness, and Obstinacy.*

First, *Such who through much Temptation divide.*

Such as keep off from the Lord's Supper, from the Plea of their own unworthiness, and say, They are unworthy, and therefore if they approach the Lord's Table, they shall eat and drink Damnation to themselves, very much misunderstanding that place, *1 Cor. xi. 29.* whereas the Apostle doth not understand by [*νεῖμα*] inevitable eternal Damnation, so that the Sin is an unpardonable Sin, but he means this, that he brings a condemning Conscience upon himself, and hath, in his undue approach to so great and solemn an Ordinance of Christ, committed a great Sin, that he must be deeply humbled for, and

sincerely

sincerely repent of. And the Sin that the Apostle seems to aim chiefly at in the *Corinthians*, is, That they came so rashly, unpreparedly, and irreverently unto such a great and sacred Ordinance, as appears by verse 20. compared with the 30. and he seems to understand such an approaching, viz. in an unprepared manner without due Examination, and in an ignorant manner not discerning the Lord's Body, and in a common way as we come to our ordinary repast, to be the unworthiness here meant. But a poor doubting tempted Believer is affrighted from this Ordinance by Satan's improving his mistakes against him, and herein it usually lies; I cannot find my self worthy of Christ, my Sins are great, my Duties are very lame and imperfect, I look over my Evidences in my own Heart, and I can find nothing in me to render me worthy, and therefore I dare not approach the Lord's Table, on the pain of eternal Damnation; and if it be a sin to withdraw, yet it's a greater to come, and the consequence is tremendous unto me. Under this spiritual Sickness and Temptation some are prevailed with to stay off from time to time, and others coming have been so far prest with it, that they suffered the Elements to pass them, and have not received.

I shall only speak a word or two to such a poor tempted Believer. That the worthiness thou lookest after is such as will make thee unworthy, for thou wouldst fain see some Excellency and Fullness in thy self, in which thou wouldst rejoice and satisfie thy self; but God will hide thine own Graces from thee, or rather his, that thine Eye of Faith may be carried directly unto Christ and his Fullness. A true frame of Heart, in approaching to this spiritual Feast, is Poverty of Spirit, Self-emptiness, whence ariseth true hungering and thirsting after the Lord Jesus and his Fullness. Many Believers are too mindless of the true Gospel working of Faith in their Hearts, for it casts down all high Thoughts, all strong Holds, all Imaginations, and every high Thing that Exalteth it self against the Knowledge of God. It is one of the greatest Weapons of our Warfaring, mighty through the Grace of God; and when it is thus emptying us of our selves, and casting out all that we would call our own, whereby we might dress up our selves that Christ might be inamour'd with us; then it is in its proper work and business, which we are too apt, through the strength of our Corruption, to be highly troubled at. What, have we bin so long in the Household of Faith, in the Service and School of Christ, done and suffered so much for him, and now must come to him in Rags, come as ungodly Ones, with no Righteousnes, or commendable goodness in our Eyes, come under the consideration of our vain Hearts, pitiful Duties, corrupt Affections, as Poor, Wretched, Miserable, Blind, Naked? Yes, so it must certainly be always whilst here, when Christ comes in with the greatest Fullness and Glory; and the Spirit doth this for the higher and greater Advantage, though Satan would misrepresent it, and belye this great Work, as if thou wert greatly robbed; and stirs up spiritual Pride and Sullenness in thee, and presently thou art ready to say, If it be so, that I am such a despicable unworthy Creature, I am not fit for Christ, I am ashamed to come into his Presence, till I can become more adorned with Righteousness and Holiness

ness. But, I beseech thee, who are more acceptable to Christ a Saviour than poor Sinners? Came he not to save the Sick, the Lost, the wandering Soul? How was it at first, when thou didst believe, when Christ embraced thee in thy Blood; dost thou think thou hast a jot more Righteousness of thine own than at first Conversion, not the one hundredth part of a grain, not one doit more? Christ's Righteousness must be the same to thee after Forty Years Believing, as it was at the first Day. Nay, thou hast not one Grace of the Spirit, whose merit is pleadable with God for Justification. Neither canst thou exert one Grace or Duty acceptably without being covered and clothed with the Righteousness of Christ, and hence this spiritual Pride must down, and Christ will have none of this tricking and trimming of thy self, I mean setting up and priding thy self in this or that Qualification of what Nature soever, and therefore thou runnest upon a Delusion of the Devil, and gratifiest him in casting off this work of Faith with power, it's no discouragement but encouragement. Because thou art nothing, nor hast nothing, Christ is willing to keep thee, to be at the charge of thy Food and Rayment. When thou camest to him first, thou camest as naked as born, hadst nothing, and didst thou ever lack any thing? And, I pray, what Estate hast thou got? Hast thou any thing that was worth ought but from him, done any thing but by him? Why then dost thou set up thy self, and for thy self, to vie, as it were, with Jesus Christ himself, and he must part with somewhat of his Glory to set up thy spiritual Pride? And thus Satan and thy own sinful Heart would have it. There's much more might be said in shewing the greatness of the Sin, and disadvantage that accrues to such an one, with the advantage Satan gets by drawing him thus off from Church Communion, but my present design will not admit of so large a Discourse.

Secondly, Some out of weakness are driven away from Communion with the Church in the Supper, because some Brother or other hath offended them by some Carriage or other, whereby they apprehend he hath sinned against Christ, or wronged them, or both, and now the whole Church must be rejected. Observe this, That when Jesus eat this Supper with his Disciples, Judas was one, a professed Disciple, but to Christ a known Hypocrite. Know this, that an Hypocrite, before discovered, hath the same visible right to the Ordinances as a sincere Professor, therefore we are not to break Communion, because we suppose there may be a Hypocrite, and one fallen into Sin, which thou art apt therefore to judge so and it may not be so. But suppose such an one sinned and greatly, and thou knowest it, it's not thy first duty (if ever at all) to withdraw from the Church; because thy Brother hath sinned wilt thou wrong the Church and thy own Soul? But thy first work is to discharge thy Duty, as a Brother, according to the several degrees required, *Matth. xviii. 15.* if the case will bare it, and thou may'st have comfort enough in Communion with him, in the discharge of thy Duty, in order to his Conviction and Recovery. And if the Church cannot put him out of its Communion before he be (in their Judgment) convicted, and appear incorrigible; [for I understand not Suspension, or the lesser Excommunication] much less canst thou Exclude him the
right

right of Communion with thee, before he hath forfeited it by Impenitency. Thou art secure enough as to thy own Conscience in the discharge of thy Duty. Neither, because he hath sinned, art thou justified to sin in withdrawing from the Church. Shall the Hand fly off from the Body because the Foot is lame? Is it not better to abide in the Body till the whole Body hath used all means for the Healing and Recovery of the lame Member, and if after the use of all due means it be incurable and mortified, the whole body consents together to part with it, *Immedicabile vulnus ense rescindendum est ne pars sincera trahatur.*

Let it be duly considered, That all that withdraw in any of these Cases from the Communion of the Church, they do it unwarrantably and sin against God, and give great way to the Temptations of the wicked One, and give great and just Offence unto the Church of God.

Thirdly, I come now to speak to the third Branch, which is, That this Doctrine doth highly condemn those who doe not only neglect or withdraw from the Communion of the Church, but doe stedfastly continue and persevere in that withdrawal, notwithstanding all means used for the Reduction of them, they sin in withdrawing, and aggravate it to a great measure by persistence therein. That undue departure and withdrawalment is a sin, and condemned by the Spirit of God, I shall endeavour to Evince it by the following Arguments.

Arg. 1. If a stedfast abide in the Communion of a particular Church, to which a Member is joined, be approved by the Holy Ghost, and commended to us as our Duty, then the contrary Practice, viz. an undue withdrawalment or separation from that Communion, is an undoubted Sin; but this stedfast abode of Church Members in the Church Communion to which they are added, is here recommended to us an undoubted Duty; therefore the contrary acting is an undue withdrawalment and a Sin. For it's an unquestionable Rule in understanding Scripture, that where a Duty is required, there a Sin is forbidden; and where a Sin is forbidden, there the contrary Vertue or Duty is required. And it's in all Rules of Practice, that the Rules commanding Virtue determine the Vice and prohibit it, as the Breach of the positive or affirmative Precept, unto the Practice of Obedience.

Arg. 2. A work of the Flesh is Sin, but a Members undue departing from the Communion of the Church to which he is joined is a work of the Flesh, therefore it is Sin. That a work of the Flesh is Sin in the Scripture Sense there's none doubts, and that this departing from the Communion of the Church is a work of the Flesh is manifest, if the thing it self be considered, or the next moving cause of it. For the thing it self is called by the Spirit of God Schism and Division, there can be no more superlative Schism and Division in the Sense of the Spirit of God, than the dividing a true constituted particular Church of Christ into Parts. I look upon Schism, as the Apostle to the *Corinthians* means, rather to be less than this, and but something of Faction carried on in that Church, tending immediately to Division, for which he condemned the *Corinthians* as carnal. The Faction carrying on is mentioned, 1 Cor. iij. 1, &c. where he begins very roughly with them, *I could not speak to you as unto spiritual,*
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but as unto carnal, and babes in Christ, weak froward Children. I have fed you with milk, and not strong meat; for I find you are very Children by your quarrellsomneis, and crying up one Minister above another, upon carnal and sinister accounts; for is there not envyings, strife, and divisions into parties. And 1 Cor. xi. I hear there are Schisms among you: One saith he is for Paul, and another he is for Apollo, are you not carnal upon this account? Though you be Believers, yet you are carnal, in that such corruptions prevail, as strife and contention, upon a carnal reason; some crying up Cephas, others young Apollo's Eloquence and fine Gesture, in which he excelled Paul. They said, 2 Cor. x. 10. His Letters are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. What would they offer to say thus of Paul, the Aged, the Learned, the Spiritual, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and cry up Apollo above him; a good young Man that was Eloquent and Zealous, had a good presence, was instructed in the best part of his Divinity by Aquila and Prescilla; but there was such among them that said, we had rather hear Apollo than Paul; and others, more solid grounded Christians, chose rather to hear Paul, and others Cephas; but why such Divisions and such Parties, saith the Apostle? Apollo is a good Man and a good Preacher, let him have his due, and Paul his, and both as no more than Ministers of Christ. I, saith Paul, planted, I first preached to you and laid the foundation, Apollo also watered, and what of all this? He that plants is nothing, and he that watereth is nothing. The profound Learning of one, nor the smoth Eloquence of the other is nothing, but it's God that gives success and increase; we are but labourers under God, yea, are his Husbandry and Building. I was a wise master builder and laid the foundation, but according to the Grace of God given me, &c. Apollo or any other builds on it; and if he build gold, silver, precious stone, &c. his work will remain; but if wood, hey, or stubble, his work will be burnt. And thus he shews, that in this dividing into Factions they were carnal, and walked as men, i. e. as men of the world, as men that had no knowledge of Christ in this way of judging and dividing. For so they judge of Preaching, just by the Man's volubility of Tongue, and comelineis of Action; both which were not affected, but natural to Apollo. And it's observable, while Paul knocks down this carnal dividing Spirit, he here, and elsewhere in these Epistles to the Corinthians, vindicates his own Honour, and the Honour of his Ministry, against the reproachful Tongues of the Apollonites.

Likewise I find the same word used by the Apostle, 1 Cor. iij. 3. for the Divisions of the Church of Corinth, *ἰσχυρισμὸν*, and condemn'd as carnal, it is enumerated among the works of the Flesh, Eph. v. 20. it's rendred *seditions* indeed (which may be implied in the Signification, for all Divisions in polittick Bodies are Seditious) but the Interpreters hath rendered it Divisions in That of the Corinthians, and, Rom. xvi. 17. where it is yoaked with Scandals. yea, I take both the words there joined, *Divisions and Scandals*, to be, *ἐνδοξασθῶσιν*, to shew us, that Divisions in Churches are Scandals, and they that make them, and are actual Instruments in them, doe not serve the Lord Jesus Christ (though pretending that) but their own Bellies, i. e. ^{their} ~~your~~ own carnal Lust

Lust, that have stirred them up thereto, *and by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple*; viz. pretending how they are offended at the Sins and Faults of this and that person, and how the Church lies under Sin, &c. which is unpardoned, and therefore they doe what they doe out of Conscience, and for the Service of Christ. This is excellent Conscience to set themselves with all their might to doe the utmost that lies in them, to break in pieces a Church of Christ, turn their backs with contempt upon his Ordinances there; and to justifie their irregular and sinful Proceeding, cast all the dirt they can upon the Ministry and Members thereof, and all this must be looked upon (*i. e.* by the Simple) as a great part of their Holiness, and the wonderful Service of the Lord Jesus Christ, when all this while they served the Pride, Prejudice, and Revenge that is in their Bellies; and to which Satan, through his subtle Temptation (by God's permission) hath captivated them.

Moreover, we see that to be in the Flesh and in the Spirit are opposed, *Rom. viij. 9.* and not only in regard of a Man's State but Actions. Good Men themselves when they transgress the Rules of the Gospel, are not in the Spirit, for the Spirit leads no Man to Sin; and it were prophane to ascribe *David's* and *Peter's* Sin to the conduct and guidance of the Spirit; and so it is to ascribe good Mens Divisions and Seditions to the Spirit, when God permits them to fall into them. And the Apostle *Jude* saith expressly, *That they that separate themselves, walk after their ungodly lusts, (i. e. their prevailing corrupt Wills and Affections) not having the Spirit,* vers. 19. And as to the cause of this dividing, what is it? is it not that which is carnal? Are other things pretended any more than to palliate their own Consciences for a while, and to set a good face on it before the World? Let but their own Hearts be impartially examined before God, is there not Pride and Prejudice in the bottom? Are not these the prevailing motives? Can Divisions, condemned always by the Spirit of God for a corrupt Fruit, be born by any thing, but some evil Root or Plant, which God never planted.

Arg. 3. Is it not the breach of a solemn Obligation before God and his People, of walking with them according to the Rules of the Gospel? Church Members are much mistaken to think that they are hereby no further bound than to acts of mere Morality and Gospel walking in their private and family capacities, they are bound to walk in Fellowship as Brethren actually, under the Gospel oeconomy in a Church of Christ, they are to walk as Brethren in Church Communion. They doe actually, willingly, and solemnly put themselves under the immediate Watch of the Officers and Members of that Congregation, there to abide and stedfastly to continue till God by his Providence removes them by Death, or calls them to join themselves to some other Congregation. If they walk not according to the Rules of the Gospel, they have submitted themselves to the Admonition and Judgment of the Church, which they are bound to abide by, even to the utmost Censure when they Sin. Besides this kind of departure is not only the breaking of this explicite Obligation (which, it may be, in some Churches is not in practice) but it is the Violation of it under that great Seal of the Lord's Supper; for as we have shewn, and all (but those
that

that are very ignorant) doe allow it to be instituted for this purpose, as one of the great Ends, to bind them together in one body politick, or Society who are partakers thereof under the same Ministry and Administration. Else what is the meaning of that, *1 Cor. x. 17. We being many, are one bread and one body?* Now by this sin which is hereby highly aggravated, they break off themselves from that one visible Body which they have ssolemnly eat and drank into, and taken the Body and Blood of Christ to witness, that they are all one visible Body, spiritually united together, by Joyns and Bands, which in this Congregation they again and again vowed and promised to pay.

Arg. 4. This is an Act of high Usurpation of Power in particular Members assuming the Keys of Government. The Keys are to open and shut, the greatest part of Church Power lies here, in receiving in, and letting or putting out Members and Officers; for the same Power that lets and receives in, can also put out. Now for a Member to let himself out, is to take the Keys of Church Power into his hands, which was never committed to any particular Member, or to the lesser part of the Church. [How far they belong to Officers, and how far to the Majority of Brethren, I will not now dispute, I think that may be adjusted to satisfaction enough to all Parties, that truly tender the Order of the Gospel, and the honour of Christ in the Church.] For the putting the Keys of Power into the hands of the Minority, is contrary to the New Testament Practice, also destructive to all Communities. But for a particular Member, or the Minority, to let out themselves from the Communion without the Church's consent, is to usurp the Keys, and they might as well have come into Communion without the Church's consent. Besides for Women to take this Power to themselves it is to assume that to themselves that becomes neither their Sex nor Church Relation. *It's a shame for Women to speak in the Church, 1 Cor. xiv. 35.* the reason you see, *vers. 33, 34.* its the way to brawling and confusion, much more when they will be meddling with the ruling Power of the Church, take the Keys to let in or let out, or determine who shall and who shall not. I have always observed, that there is never such Brawls, Divisions, and Confusions raised in Churches, as when Women are engaged in it; besides, its Usurping Authority over the Men, *1 Tim. ij. 11, 12. Let the Women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not the women to teach, [i. e. in the Church, nor to teach and direct the Church muchless,] nor usurp authority [αὐθεντεῖν, to vaunt it] over the man;* a word no where else used in the Scripture, to describe a practice that ought not to be found in the Church of Christ, and it signifies an impoling and imperious behaviour. Now for Women to meddle with the ruling Power in the Church, to chuse Officers, hold up their hands or the like, to undertake in Elections, or in the decisive Power, to controul Officers and Brethren, and at last to make actual use of the Keys to let out themselves or others, this is to usurp Authority over the man by meddling with that Power in the Church, which Christ hath committed to Men only, and expressly excluded Women from. What have a Sister nothing to doe? *vers. 11. She must learn in silence with all subjection, &c.* Exercise her self in all good Works, as become Women that profess

profess Godliness, and that's not by domination over the Man, either in Family or Church Capicity.

Lastly, This withdrawing is not only Usurping Authority, in respect of the withdrawing Member, but in regard of the whole Church besides; for it tantamounts to an Excommunication of the whole Church. Excommunication is but putting out of Communion. Such Members puts the Church out of their Communion, and therefore judge the Church not fit for Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, it's as much as one or a few can doe against a Society, to think it unworthy of them, and therefore divide it from his or their Society. If this be not Usurping with a witness, I know not what Usurpation is.

Arg. 5. To give Offence to the Church of God is a Sin, and a great one, but this way of practice and walking is with great Offence to the Church of God, so a great Sin; if the Action be but of an indifferent Nature, yet done with Offence, it is a Sin. *All things* [speaking of Meats and the Creatures, which are all good, being used with Thanksgiving, and without Offence] *indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man that eateth with Offence, Rom. xiv. 20.* And we are particularly charged upon this account, *1 Cor. x. 22. Be without offence* [*ἀνεγκλιαντες* *ζητετε*] *to Jew, and Gentile, and to the Church of God.* Supposing that in respect of our Morals, we may be without just and blameable Offence to Jew or Gentile. But there is other ways of offending the Church of God, *viz.* in the matters of Gospel Order in Church Relation. Now that this is a just Offence in such Members, to the Church is abundantly manifest, for it carries with it both the Senses of Scandal or Offence; it is both a *grieving and a sin causing offence*; for the Action we have shewed is sin in it self, therefore a root of bitterness that infects many. Doth not this Action provoke their Spirits and Passions, transporting them to shew their Zeal against such corrupt Practices? Are not others tempted by Satan upon mistakes and partiality, to take the part of such Persons, and defend their Faction, whereby their comes, *αἱρέσεις*, seditious Parties or Factions, *1 Cor. xi. 18, 19.* which, *Paul saith, must be that they that are approved, might be made manifest.* It's evident enough that he meaus there the confounding Parties or Factions, because he useth the word exegetically to *ἡμετέρας*, in the Verse before which he saith, will be in Churches, that thereby persons approved in their Principles of true Gospel Obedience and Loyalty unto the Lord Jesus Christ, might be manifested. And indeed the Spirits of Church Members are never thoroughly tried, till such Factions arise, no not by Persecution it self, where Satan appears in his proper Colours, here as an Angel of Light. Many stand the day of Temptation by Persecution, who fall in the fray of Church Faction. What undertaking in a Church is more contrary to the expresse prohibition of the Spirit of God? *Gal. v. 26. Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, and envying one another.* Are not these the Fruits that naturally grow on Church dividing? What is a greater provocation unto any Society, than that its own Members divide from them, condemning, if not contemning their Communion, their Rule and Government, declaring to the World practi-

cally, That that Church is no fit Church to hold Communion in sacred Things with themselves, when they would have all Men account them the most Eminent and Conscientious of Professors? Would it not provoke a Church to hear themselves reproached and reviled as the worst of Men to all other Professors? And this they must and will doe to justifie all their unwarrantable Proceedings, being desirous of vain-glory before the World; hence comes Emulations and Envyings upon this account, Contentions, Whisperings, Back-bitings, &c. Such things as these Paul feared he should find when he came to this divided Church of the *Corinthians*, 2 Cor. xij. 20. *I fear that when I come I shall find you such as I would not, &c. lest their be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, back-bitings, [αἰσχρολογία, i. e. speaking against one another] whisperings, [devulging the Faults of one another for the common Chimney-corner Discourse, especially among the female Sex] swellings, [puffings up by spiritual Pride, magnifying themselves, Exalting and Justifying themselves and Actions from Vain-glory] tumults, [ἀνταρσύναι, inconsistencies, multitude of false inconsistent Stories and Relations. Now these are the true product and crop, that grows on this Evil Tree. I might tell you how it's a scandal, αἰσχρολογία, a stumbling sinning Offence to Jews and Gentiles, for it hardens them in their Sins, to see Judah vex Ephraim, and Ephraim Judah, to expose the Ways and Institutions of Christ (which hath bin asserted against Antichristian Impositions, and humane Inventions, by long and great sufferings) to the greatest scorn and contempt, and it's prodigious in my Mind to think, that a poor captivated Creature (it may be one that shall be saved at last) shall be so far tempted (and left of God so far to be prevailed on) as to Sacrifice all the honour of God in the Profession and Practice of Religion to one base Lust of his own; yea, and which is more horrid this base Malice, Envy, Revenge, &c. a very Fiend of the Devil shall be justified against all the current of Scripture and born up with a high hand against all the severe checks of Conscience; it must be very kindness unto the Lord Jesus Christ to wound his Members, to trample upon his Interst in the World. I need not tell you how the World, Jew and Gentile resents such acting, how it confirms them in their Alienation from, and Enmity to the Ways of Christ, whereby it may be many a poor Creature, seeing and beholding such Actings in Churches, perish in their Sins; others kept off from adding themselves, it may be, to any Church of Gospel Institution, at least from joining to that Church, so that it comes into a declining State, and is not multiplied.*

I might enlarge very much to tell such People how such Actings are grieving Offences unto a Church of Christ. When the Body hath a Member violently torn off from it, how unwilling it is to part with an Eye, Hand, or Foot, &c. how they are grieved to see the Members of the same Body heardned in Sin, justifie themselves against all Admonitions and Reasonings, tread upon all Condescensions, and go on still to reproach and undermine that Society where-in they ought to be most concerned, for the honour of Christ in the World. But I have often observed, that this part of the Argument little prevails with such as are apt to such Practises [which is part of their Temptation] to
grieve,

grieve, vex, and trouble them that they separate from, and therefore it never satisfies them to sit down and exercise Charity and Peace towards them, or to take any way of Peace and Composure, but that way which may mostly tend to grieving, vexing, and afflicting the hearts and mind of them with whom they have to doe. And these are such, that all the Arguing from the clearest Grounds of Scripture Proof will little prevail with, till God by the great Power of his Spirit takes them off from the Energy of Satan's Delusions, under which they stand bound, *Prov. xviii. 19. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong City; and their contentions are like [for premanency] to the bars of a Castle.*

Arg. 6. That Carriage and Acting which doth necessarily in the very nature of it undermine and destroy the Kingdom of Christ in the World, is hainously sinful; but dividing a Church of Christ less or more, doth undermine and destroy the Kingdom and Interest of Christ in the World, therefore is hainously sinful; for the major it's most evident from the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Matth. xij. 25. Mark. iij. 24, 25. Luke xi. 17.* And the Apostle saith, to convince the *Corinthians* of their Church Divisions, *1 Cor. i. 13. Is Christ divided?* And thence the minor is evident to sence, that the going off of an individual Member by a violent act of his own, is a hideous Rent and Dicoftacy, and therefore doth as much as in the Divider and Separater lies, to undermine and destroy the Kingdom, Interest, Name, and Honour of Jesus Christ in that place. They will say, They divide not from Christ's body, *i. e.* the Catholick Church, but from one Church. I say also, I hope they may not be divided from the mystical Body, if they were, they were never of it truly, and little hopes of their being of it, but by more thorow Conversion than yet ever they had; but in regard of their visible Profession, I must tell them the truth in Christ, I lye not, I look upon them under a dangerous degree of Apostacy, wherein if God leaves them without Repentance, their Condition and State is very suspicious, and it's not braving of a thing out before Men, that will give us boldness in the day of the Lord Jesus.

And as to the Plea it self I only say this, That if the Finger be cut off from the Hand to which it is by a Joint immediately annexed, it is cut off from the whole Body, the other Hand may take it and make much of it for a while, and keep it warm in the Man's Bosom or Pocket, but it never becomes a vital useful Member of the Body again. This Similitude is easily applied, and therefore I leave it to the Understanding Reader.

The last Branch of this Use should be to condemn such who (as they term it) are Enlargers of their Communion, they depart from the stricter Rules of Gospel, Order, and Churches constituted and walking according thereto, to the Communion of false Churches of Antichristian Matter and Form; and because Christ's true constituted Churches will not mix Communion with them, they utterly desert and forsake their first avowed standing. These I shall leave ranked with those that *John* speaks of, who began the Antichristian Apostacy at first in the Primitive Times, *1 John ij. 19. They went out from us, but they were not of us; if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they*

went out, that it might be manifest, they were not all of us; [some returned by Repentance] and the other are the many Antichrists, vers. 18. which were gone forth. An evidence that these Apostates from the true Churches, and Worship of Christ, would grow up into the great Antichrist. No better than these are the Deserters of the true constituted reformed Churches, that join themselves to false corrupt Churches and Worship.

And least any should mistake or pervert our true meaning, let me Answer some seeming Objections.

Object. You reckon then Separation a Sin and a Schism, what is the reason then that there are Separate Churches?

Ans. I say not that a separate Church in the true Nature of it is a schismatical Church, but according to the true meaning of the Spirit of God, who commands all particular Churches of Christ to be separate according to the true Sense of 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. which place will justify the Separation of Christ's Churches, from visible Unbelievers of any Sort whatsoever, and from all Heathenish and Antichristian Worshipers in the World.

2. Again, a Church's gathering into a select Body for Enjoyment of Christ in the purest Administration, according to what Light they have, is no Unchurching of such which Christ will allow to be true Churches, though they walk not up to so explicate Practice of Gospel Rules.

3. I say, and shall be ready to make it good, That all the Schism and Dicoftacy condemned by the Spirit of God, belongs to particular Congregations; there is none in the mystical Body of Christ; and the variety of gathered Churches are no Schism, each walking according to the light of Truth which Christ hath given them.

4. If a Man allow not a Church to be a true constituted Church of Christ, and never voluntarily submitted and joined to it, or if after implicate submission he finds himself in a false Church, and in the Snare of the Devil, he is required to come out as others have done, and no longer touch and have Communion with so Unclean a thing; and it's no Schism, but a justifiable Separation.

5. If a Church Member, departed from a particular Congregation, acknowledge the said Congregation to be a true Church of Christ, and avow himself a rightful Member thereof, by the same Profession he declares himself a plain Schismatick, according to his present standing, wherein he hath cut off himself from the Communion of such a Church.

Object. But is there no cause wherein a Church Member may go from the Church where to he is joined? must the Church be a Prison?

Ans. I Answer, There are cases wherein Members may go from the Church to which they have joined themselves, and that regularly, according to Gospel Rule. As in case of removal of Habitation, or in case of conveniency of Communion of a Wife with her Husband, or Husband with Wife in the same Congregation, if they desire it. Or in case it be desired for better Edification, upon approved Grounds it may be so. Other causes may occur, I would not exclude any just cause. But then,

1. The departing must not be to the World, or a false Church, but to a true Church of Christ, in the Judgment of the Church from whence you go.

2. You must not wrench your self off from the Church by your own power, or renounce its Communion as unlawful for you to join with, but you must go with the leave and consent of the Church; so it may be able to dismiss you without denying it self. And you must not depart with reflection on the Church.

3. Going in an orderly way, and allowed manner from Church to Church, is not a deserting the Church's Communion; for such a Member is always ready on occasion to own it.

And as to the last part of the Objection, it's answered, That a true Church of Christ, that walks in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, the mutual exercise of Peace and Love among themselves, hath sufficient Reason to suspect such a Member that talks at that rate; and I know no reason, how good soever he is otherwise, that they should be fond of keeping him if he will depart friendly by the Prison Door, but if he breaks Prison and runs away, Justice requires the taking him, and bringing him back again; or if he cannot be brought back, to Out-law him as a Felon. But it's more desirable to any Society to part with an uneasie Member, if it may be done without abandoning the fundamental Laws thereof, than to keep him. And to speak according to a common Saying and true, *A. B.* may be a good Man, but is of so ill a quarrellsome exceptionable Temper, that he will make an ill Husband, no Wife will be able to please him. So of *M. C.* she may be good in the main, but make an ill Wife; she is so censorious, froward, humourfome, she will be always scolding, and that religiously too, as she saith, &c. So it is in our case, some that are good People in the main, have Grace covered with much Rubbish, of most ungrateful contentious humourfome Tempers and Dispositions, and therefore are very uncomfortable and troublesome Church Members. I say of such, if they will depart in any thing like an orderly way, and any other Churches will be so kind to the Church as to receive them: Let them depart with an orderly Dismission.

Object. *But now we have broke Prison, and that many months, and we look upon our selves belonging to you as Members, we desire we may have a Dismission to another Church, without Communion with yours.*

Ans. The Law of Man dischargeth none till they return to their due Obedience, and I doe not find the Law of God doth. And now such must needs think, where it not for the Honour of God, and the Authority of the Laws of any Society, without which the Society can never subsist, this demand would be easily granted; but it cannot be, because, 1. it's an allowance of their proceeding, in departing so abruptly from the Church, and encouragement to others when occasion shall offer to bid defiance to the Church, it's Communion, it's Government, for many Months, yea, years, and when after long obstinate withstanding the greatest means of Conviction, to come and demand a Dismission, and why may not those that the Church is dealing with for other Offences, doe the like.

Again, to dismiss a Member that renounceth their Communion, is positively to condemn themselves, as guilty of all he chargeth them with, for they allow him to be a fit Member of another Church, which will not allow them to be a Church fit for his Communion; for if the separated Member judges himself he can communicate with another Church, and not with them, he cuts them off from the Communion of other Churches, so hereby they sign their own Excommunication. I might add many things which for brevity sake I will but name, yea, some omit.

To dismiss a Member standing in present capacity, is to send forth a Diseased Sheep into another Flock. It's unfaithfulness in respect of Christ not to feed his Sheep, *i. e.* not to exercise that power that is in their hands, for the recovery of a fallen Member for Edification, and not Destruction. It's Unfaithfulness to the Member himself, for it hardens him in his Sin, for letting him alone, and not doing him that good whilst it's in the power of my hand to doe it, but putting it away, is great Unfaithfulness.

Lastly, It may be gratifying some Church or Officer that is a constant Abettor to all the Dissentions and Divisions that do arise, I will be bound to say, that Church, or the Officers thereof, walk very Uncharitably, that will countenance the offending Members of another Church, yea, doth by its Act judge and condemn the said Church; for what is it other than to renounce the Communion of the said Church, when they doe actually receive those that they know have disclaimed the Communion thereof? If Churches will not deal with one another as they would be done by (walking by the Rules of Christ) they may soon bite and devour one another.

Again, that Member that hath rejected the Communion of the Church to which he is joined, hath virtually renounced the Communion of all Churches; for it was by vertue of his Communion with that Church that he hath right of Communion with other Churches. His Right being there abolish'd by his own Act, or the Church's, he is cut off every where, unless some will be Lawless, and keep no Rules of Communion of Churches; for by admission into that Church, he claims a right of Communion into all Churches, and so by self-Excommunication from thence, cut off from all. It's according to the fore-named Similitude of the Finger being joined to the Body, *medianti manu*, and no longer; if this be not enough, there's more to be said.

Object. *But to ask a dismission is to own the Church.*

Ans^r. It's to own but in words, and for a corrupt End, while he denies it in Practice and Words too, when he refuseth to own the Communion of the Church.

Likewise to own the Church, and return to the Communion of the Church are two distinct things. An Excommunicate Person may own a Church to be a Church of Christ, and yet not reconciled or return.

Lastly, This owning, as I said before, is but declaring himself a Scismatick.

2. It's a Use of Instruction and Exhortation to all those that are Members of a true constituted Church of Christ, to continue stedfast in all the Ordinances and Appointments of the Lord Jesus Christ for their Edification. There hath bin

bin enough said to evince, that it is a Duty, and to convince the Disobedient of their Sin. The Apostle Paul rejoiced to behold the order and stedfastness of the Faith of the Colossians, Chap. ij. 5. And he puts great stress upon it, 1 Cor. xiv. 10. *Let all things be done decently and in order.* If Christians are to walk as it becomes the Gospel, surely the orderly walking in Church Fellowship is that among other things that becomes the Gospel; it doth mightily Adorn our Profession; it's an eminent part of a Man's ordering his Conversation aright, to continue stedfastly in Gospel Communion; it's his Gospel Conversation, to which is promised *the seeing the Salvation of God*, Psal. l. 23. *i. e.* a great Presence of God, and Communion with him. David promised himself Goodness and Mercy *all the days of his life*: But how? *I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever*, Psal. xxij. 6. And this, he said, *he desired, and would seek after*, Psal. lxxij. 4. And why? *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his Temple.* Church Communion is no useleſs ſapleſs matter of meer name and form, as ſome would have it, it's of a high, great, and ſpiritual Nature for Chriſt's Glory, and our Advantage, Psal. lxxxiv. 1. *How amiable are thy Tabernacles?* His Soul longeth and panteth, is reſtleſs for the Courts of God, and even he grudgeth the Felicity of the Sparrow and Swallow, that had their Neſts nigh to the Altar, dwelling always there. He ſaith, *verſ. 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy Houſe, they will be ſtill praiſing thee*: for if they have hearts for it, they will ſtill ſee more and more cauſe for it. I wonder the cxxxij. *Pſalm* dwells with no greater impreſſion on the Hearts of Church Members, that they can ſo eaſily violate that brotherly Unity, deſace that unparralleled Beauty, forfeit and triſle away thoſe transcendent Bleſſings ſpoken of, that holy Unction from the Head of our Goſpel Aaron, that celeftial Dew that deſcends on our Zion in Goſpel Worſhip, where the Lord hath commanded a bleſſing, *even Life for ever-more.* It was the great Exhortation of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto the Church of Philadelphia, Rev. iij. 11. *Hold faſt what thou haſt; i. e.* both in Faith and Obedience, continue ſtill ſtedfaſt therein, for ſhe is commended before, for keeping the Word of Chriſt's Patience, *i. e.* both in Profeſſion and Praſtice, now bid to hold faſt, and let none take away this Crown of ſtedfaſtneſs by removing her there-from; and it's promiſed her in the keeping this command, ſhall be great Reward; for, ſaith he, that Church Member *that overcomes, i. e.* perſeveres in this Obedience, *I will make him a pillar in the Temple of my God; i. e.* He ſhall not only ſtand in the Church himſelf, but ſhall ſupport and hold up others, be inſtrumental to confirm many, and to keep up the Rules of the Goſpel, Miniſtry, Ordinances, and Worſhip in the Church. And what followſ? *He ſhall go no more out. i. e.* He ſhall never be a Deſerter of the Church, nor of the Ordinances of Chriſt, but ſtand fixed as a pillar againſt all Temptations to Peeviſhneſs, Prejudices, or to any corrupt Affections or Actions that may ſeduce him, and carry him out. And then ſeriously conſider the great encouraging Promiſes of the new Name, and the new Jeruſalem right, and that they are the Words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who next ſaith, *He that hath an Ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith to the Churches.* And let me tell you a few things which the Spirit ſaith, and I ſhall wind up
this

this Discourse, the Lord give Ears to hear them, and therein I beseech you be Followers of the Churches of God in Judea, 2 Thes. ij. 14.

First, *Take heed of forsaking the assembling your selves together.* Consider that great Exhortation of the Apostle, Heb. x. 23, 24, 25. *Vers. 23.* He Exhorts to stedfast continuance in our Faith, which is there taken for all Religion, even Faith and Holiness, and *let us consider one another, i. e.* one anothers Weaknesses, Failings, Infirmities, and not presently, upon every huff and disgust, reject one another, and cast off all our Love and Charity to each other, *but provoke one another to Love and good Works,* endeavour by a holy Emulation to be before each other in all practising Examples, not provoke one another to Wrath and Strife, and then rejoice in thy Brothers Nakedness when thou hast uncovered it. And *vers. 25.* *Forsake not the assembling your selves together; i. e.* Forsake not Church Communion as some was wont in those days to doe; *but exhorting one another, i. e.* stirring and exciting one another mutually to the Duties required by our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I pray mark what immediately follows, pressing home the same Exhortation, *vers. 26.* *If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin;* as much as if he should say, This Sin is a dangerous Sin of Apostacy, at least a beginner of it, and leads as often to wilful Sinning, and so to final Apostacy, as much as any in the World. *John* tells the same as before noted. The leaving Ordinances and Church Communion began Antichristianism, I am sure many that have left the Churches of Christ in our remembrance, have by degrees left strictness of Religion, fell to damnable Error or Profaneness. When we begin to forsake Christ and his Ways, we cannot tell how far Christ will leave us. Oh! continue stedfastly, *and forsake not assembling your selves together,* least you fall by this Sin, and fall so as never to arise more. And let such as are noted for strict Professors take heed of it, for it was such the Apostle spake to. The general Plea for a Church Deforter is, he is a good Man, and very strict. This makes his Sin the greater, and of the more pernicious Nature to others.

Secondly, Let Churches and Elders doe their utmost to prevent this great mischief, Christ hath provided remedies, else he were not Faithful over his own House. I tell you it is one of the greatest dangers of the Church. Prevent or secure this, and you will secure its standing, growth, and encrease in an ordinary way. A scandalous Sin breaking forth in a Church seldom causeth so ill Symptoms or Effects as these dividing Maladies, unless in a Church greatly infected with those of this nature, there the most scandalous moral Criminals shall find Advocates to plead their Cause, and promote Contentions on their account, though merely to keep on foot the Spirit of Opposition; but our business is here to enquire how to prevent and to cure.

For Prevention. Briefly, 1. Let a Spirit of Love and the Bond of Peace be strenuously maintained by Pastors and Members. 2. Keep close to Gospel Rules in maintaining the decisive Power of the Church, in Elections of Officers, Admissions, Dismissions, Exclusion of Members, or in final determination of any Matter of weight, here lies the Keys. The Keys are one thing, the Management

agement of them another ; one the Church Power, the other the Elder's. The right and due management of the Key is committed to the Elders by the Lord Jesus, in a Church so Organized, before which in the choice of a Pastor or first ruling Elder, the decisive Power must arise from the Brethren, and be the consent and agreement of the majority, where it is fundamentally placed by Christ, to which the whole is bound to submit, and by which to be concluded. And if any one or more in Judgment or Conscience disagree from the majority, he is sufficiently discharged before Christ, by declaring himself otherwise minded with his Reasons. If upon any weighty consideration he or they dissenting, cannot sit down satisfied with this Act of the Church, it's orderly to ask a Dismission, and for the Church to grant it. If the minority be any competent number and will not yield, they may by the consent of the major part go off together in Brotherly Love, and become a distinct Church, giving each other the right hand of Fellowship. A Church is better peaceably divided into two, than continue in perpetual Animosities, Strifes, and Contention.

Secondly, As to the Cure. If any be unruly, *ῥηθύνετε αὐτοὺς*, admonish and reprove those that will be disorderly, and brought under no Rule, *1 Thes. v. 14.* And this he speaks to the Brethren, which includes Officers principally, though it belongs to the whole Brotherhood. And what if after all patience and convincing means he will not submit to Gospel Rules, either to stay in Peace, or depart regularly in Peace? *2 Thes. iij. 14.* *If any one will not obey our word by Epistle, [i. e. the Apostolick Rules for Order in the Church ; for as for scandalous Walking, they had appointed a direct Excommunication ;] note that man, [ὁ κεραιῶν, mark him as a contentious unruly Man] and have no Company with him, that he may be ashamed. Vers. 15. Yet count him not as an Enemy, [hope better of him, than that he is a Child of Belial, so as that he will cast off all yolk] but admonish him as a Brother.* The same Carriage as is required to an Excommunicate Person, admonish him as one that was in Communion, that now should have bin, and returning may be again: Besides admonish him as a Brother; that is, under a Gospel Remedy, for his Recovery and Restauration; for the utmost Censure of the Church is but for the attaining this End. Likewise the Apostle is expresse as to this Disorder, *Rom. xvi. 17. I beseech you, Brethren, mark those that cause dissensions and scandals, contrary to the Doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.* If Divisions and Offences be understood to be the same, then Divisions are Scandals; if it be a distribution of those things that are anewfance to the Church, then it shews there should be the same way of dealing with one as with the other. Likewise the Apostle seems to be very expresse upon this account, *Heb. xij. 14.* He exhorts them to follow Peace and Holiness, i. e. both together: Peace, so far as it's consisting with or promoting to Holiness, for without the latter none shall see God by Faith here, or Vision hereafter, therefore it's of indispensable necessity to maintain Holiness; but get Peace with it if you can, *ἐπιμαρτυροῦντες*, supervising or overseeing one another [in Church Fellowship every one is to watch, and to be a Keeper to his Brother, so that there's a Church Watch of Brethren as well as of Elders] and what is to be Watched against? *least any one fail of the Grace of God, i. e. least*

any one fall into any palpable sinful Practice or Error, for the Grace of God teacheth to deny all Ungodliness. &c. So Men fall of it when they fall into ungracious Practices, and live in Sin, which they should be most watchful against, least any root of bitterness spring up; i. e. a Spirit of Division from Bitterness, Prejudice, and Implacableness, that at last will leaven Mens Spirit so far as to depart from the Communion of the Church. That this is the true Sense, appears, 1. from the use of the Word *μῆλα*. By the same Apostle it's the malcontent of the Mind, a malicious or envious Disposition, Eph. iv. 31. Let all bitterness, *μῆλα*, wrath, anger, &c. be put away. Vers. 32. And he shews what the contrary Affections required, Be kindly affectionated, compassionate, *καὶ ὡς υἱοὶ*, forgiving one another; it is dealing graciously with one another as God, for Christ's sake, hath dealt graciously with us. 2. It appears because it is that that troubles; the word is, *makes a tumult*, *ἐνοχλᾷ*, for nothing makes a greater Tumult and Combustion than the Spirit of Division. 3. Because, he saith, Least it infect many; there is no such danger that a fall of a Member into scandalous Acts of Sin should infect many; i. e. that many others will doe the like: But in this case of Bitterness many Spirits may come to be affected with it. 4. He gives Instances to unfold his meaning of both these sorts of Church grievances. See there be no Fornicator, no one that by committing scandalous Sins falls short of the Grace of God; i. e. falls from the profession or practice of Holiness, such as Drunkards or Fornicators, and see that there be no one of so profane a Spirit as Esau, What was that? That cares not what spiritual Things he parts with, for the gratifying his Appetite or Lust. The meaning is plainly, such an one that will sell the Peace and Communion of a Church of Christ, for the gratifying the Pride and Emulation of his own Spirit. Esau sold his Interest in the Blessing and Church of Christ for a Mess of Pottage; such an one saith, What good will the Blessing of Communion with Christ in this Church doe me, so long as I cannot satisfie my corrupt Appetite.

Objt. Well then you will say, How should a Church of Christ discharge it self in this sad Case, here is a Root of Bitterness sprung up, it shews it self in the highest degree of Contempt to the Church, the Ordinances and Worship of Christ in that Congregation; it also goes on to Infect more and more, but the persons are morally unblameable, and therefore cannot be proceeded against by Excommunication as scandalous Walkers, in what way are they to be proceeded with?

Ans. I must confess the Case is very sad, and would be a deplorable State of a Church, if there were no due Remedy to be Administred, it would be manifest, that Christ was not so faithfull in his House as Moses, Heb. iij. 5, 6. For under Moses Administration, every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence and reward. And is it not so under Christ, who is faithful as a Son over his own house, whose house we are? Hath Christ proceeded to cast out Goats, and not reduce unruly Sheep, that will not abide in his Fold or Pasture where he hath placed them?

Wherefore, 1. whereas it's said the Persons are not morally Scandalous, I apprehend there are other Scandals under Gospel Dispensation, besides those of a mere moral Nature, viz. such as strike at any Gospel Truth, especially known

known, and fundamental, as to the Natures and Offices of Christ, in professed Judgment, or contrary Practice to the most known Rules of Gospel Obedience in Practice. As to know of the Sin of another, and to connive at it, and not doe our Duty to him in that kind as Brethren. That connivance and neglect of Duty being known to the Church, and incorrigibly persisted in, becomes Scandalous. So I might instance in the doing an Action indifferent in it self to the Offence of another, *i. e.* for his hardning in Sin; as for a good Man to eat Meat sacrificed to an Idol, when the Idolater tells him it is so. This Action the Apostle looks upon as highly Scandalous, in respect of the influence it hath upon the Weak.

2. But, Secondly, a Sin committed by a Person under reputation of Strictness of Conversation, is ten times more pernicious, than in him that hath no Reputation for Religion, in respect of the Honour of God and Religion that suffers, and the Injury done to others by his Example.

3. The Sin we are speaking of, it is of a scandalous Nature, for it is a Scandal to the *Jew, Gentile, and Church of God*, as hath been proved, and therefore I know no reason but such may and ought upon incorrigibleness be proceeded against by direct Excommunication, and I could confirm this by many forcing Arguments, but I find this Practice cannot be reached unto as yet in our Churches, till the times of further Reformation shall come.

But, Fourthly, I distinguish of Excommunication (it being but the putting a Man out of Church Communion in the essential Nature of it) it is direct or indirect; direct when the Church is the Agent to cast out an Offending Brother from the Communion thereof; indirect, when a Church Member is the Agent to put out himself from the Communion of the Church, there the very nature of the offending Brother's Sin is to Excommunicate himself. He is *Felo de se*, he Excommunicates himself; for cutting himself off from Communion, is Excommunication, though he sins in so doing. *O Israel thou hast destroyed thy self in Jeroboam Schism, your iniquities, your iniquities have separated between you and me*, immediately politically, and ecclesiastically, as well as spiritually. Now the Church in this Case, after the use of all means to reduce such, hath nothing to doe but to animadvert on their own Act, mark them as such who have in a sinful or disorderly manner withdrawn and divided themselves from the Communion of the said Church, which is as much as to say, they are censured by the Church as such who have Excommunicated themselves. And so having discharged their Duty towards them, discharge themselves of all further debate about them, and trouble with them, and then the main Root of Bitterness is plucked up, though some little Sprigs may be left behind, which will be more easily Eradicated. This proceeding is abundantly grounded on the very Nature of any Society, Civil or Ecclesiastical, and on the many before-noted Rules, which the Apostle hath given concerning Causers of Schisms and Dicoftacies; and I think it is so necessary, that the Peace of Churches can no way be secured without it, and it's so Evident, that there is no unprejudiced rational Christian but doth presently see how agreeable it is to all Gospel Rules of Order.

Object. But Members are at pleasure to go where, and when they please.

Ans. I suppose the Objector means Catholick and Occasional Members, and so the Pastors also are Catholick and Occasional Officers, and may leave any particular Flock, over which they are Overseers, without giving them any Reason, or if he doth, its upon Courtesie, and may betake to another People. For there's the same reason and more, that the Pastor should claim his Liberty in this kind, than that particular Members should.

2. This Assertion will destroy all Government in any particular Congregation, whither you suppose the decisive judging Power, or the Keys, as it's called, to be committed to Elders and Brethren, or to the Elders only; for as soon as a Church Member is conscious to himself of a Sin committed by him, for which he is likely to be dealt with as an Offender, he is gone to another Church before the Church of which he is, hath time to charge him; and he will tell them when they send after him, he is none of them, he is a Member of another Church.

Object. A Dismission is a prudential Thing, and no scripture Ground for it.

Ans. 1. I Answer, If it were so only, it's such a prudential Thing as is founded in the very Nature and Constitution of any Society of that Nature, as a Church is, that a Member by voluntary Obligation and Submission to the Watch and Care of a Society, should go to another of the same Nature, with approbation and consent. And, 2. There is sufficient scripture Ground for it, in what Paul wrote to the Church of the Romans concerning Phebe, for it was a dismission with recommendation for continuance and abode. He saith, *συνιστάω*, I doe join Phebe unto you; for it signifies (saith Stephen) *Simul sto*, or *Sisto*, *constituo*, as well as *commendo*, and if the word *commendo* were insisted on, it's usual in that sence of making a good thing over to another. So Rom. v. 8. God commended his love to us; i.e. he bestowed it on us, and elsewhere, so that Paul doth as it were say, I resign up Phebe to you, as a most excellent and worthy Servant of Christ, and I pray receive her in the Lord; i.e. in the Order of the Gospel as a Member with you. And here is no reason to think that she was any other than a stated Member for continuance. Dismission is but our English word for the orderly translation of a Member from one Church to another, for continuance of abode, and is such a Letter which Phebe had. A bare Letter of Recommendation is but a certification under the Elders hands, That that Member is in Communion in such a Church, and walks orderly, that so a neighbour Church may not refuse occasional and transient Communion with him, by virtue of Communion of Churches.

Object. It will be further objected: Such an one cannot in Conscience return to the Communion of the Church, and therefore ought to be born with.

Ans. Therefore how can he in Conscience expect to be esteemed as a Church Member? and how can the Church doe otherwise than esteem him one withdrawn and divided from their Communion, who declares he doth conscientiously doe it? They let him have his Conscience to be no Member of them, and it's fit the Church should have their Conscience in declaring him a disorderly

a disorderly Walker and Divider from them, and say, that his withdrawalment is scandalous, when they are offended at it, and call a Spade a Spade.

2. There is none dealt with in a Church for any Sin, of what degree soever it is, but if he prove obstinate, he will plead Conscience, he will find something or other to say for himself, in Justification; and to stave off the Church's Censure, he will say, he cannot in Conscience acknowledge his Sin, for he is not convinced that it is so, or the Evidence of Fact is not clear enough, or the Church's method of proceeding hath some flaw or other in it, and the Church can do nothing till the Offender is convinced in Conscience, which never is found in an obstinate Offender. So that this Supposition that a Church Member pleading Conscience for his disorderly Walking, must put a stop to all further Proceedings against him, will destroy all Church Order and Discipline, contrary to *Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17.* But the Spirit of God really and expressly disallows the Objection, *Rom. xvi. 17, 18.* where he saith, that *such dividers serve not the Lord Jesus* (in all their Pretences and Practices) *but their own bellies, i.e.* their Lusts of Malice, Prejudice, Pride, &c. shew where Christ hath made the Offender's Conscience a Rule for the Church to proceed by.

Object. *But is it not in the Power of a Church Member, not under the charge of Scandal, to translate himself to another Church without a Dismission?*

Ans. 1. A disorderly Divider from a particular Communion to which he hath solemnly and voluntarily given up himself in the Lord, is a scandalous Walker, as hath been proved, and therefore under the Charge of Scandal. 2. Supposing this Power in any Member, though he doth never withdraw before, doth infer, that no particular Church is invested with a Power over their Members, but every single Member hath a Key in his Pocket to open the Church Door when he pleaseth. 3. A Man may with as good right go into another Church when he pleaseth, and stay as little while as he pleaseth, insomuch it will be hard to know of what Churches Men are.

Obj. But it will be further alledged, *To what purpose will this proceeding be?* for, 1. *they will go on still in their peremptory refusal of Communion with the said Church.* 2. *Other Churches will receive them to their Communion?*

Ans. For Answer to the first Allegation, I say, 1. That it's not in the power of a Church to prevent or cure the persevering Obstinacy of any Offender, even such as are proceeded against by a direct Excommunication, they can but administer the remedy according to the Rule that Christ hath given, and leave the success to him. 2. The Church hath done their Duty towards their dividing Member, and done what they could to keep him from parting from the Body; but seeing it can by no means be kept on and healed, then. 3. it's a great ease and comfort to it to be rid of such, not only useless but painful Members, as a Finger that is cut almost off and hangs but by the Skin, a Man would clap it up into its place, and endeavour its closing again by all probable means; but if it will not close and heal, he will rather cut the little Skin it hangs by, than be troubled with the disfight of it, and its hanging always in his way.

As to the other Allegation, *That other Churches will receive them*, I shall only say a few things, 1. That any a Church that receives such a divided Member is highly guilty of his Sin, for it's the greatest encouragement unto him in it. 2. The Church that receives such a divided Member had as good receive one that is directly Excommunicated ; for the thing is the same in its true Nature to be cut off from Communion by the Church's Act and by his own, especially when the Church hath proceeded to this censure, judicially to denounce a Man Excommunicated by himself. As the Crowner and Jury sitting upon a dead Man, and finding he had slain himself, denounce him *Felo de se*, and the Law looks upon him as an executed Murtherer, and the worst of such, and deals with him so far as it's capable accordingly. 3. The Church that receives such an one to Communion, doth thereby judge and condemn the Church to which he did belong ; for receiving a Member that declared Non-Communion with the Church, doe thereby declare no Communion with it also, and so highly condemn it. 4. Such a Church opens a Gap to all Confusion, and to the rendering all means and rule of Order ineffectual ; for what one Church may doe, another may also, and so one Church will still be receiving and countenancing the Offending Members of another, whereby all manner of Contentions and Divisions will be fostered in Churches ; yea, at last profaneness too, that all Church Discipline will be rendered useles and contemptible. 5. Upon what Right doth a Church receive a Member to Communion, that hath divided or Excommunicated himself from the Communion of that Church to which he did first belong ? For if a Church receive such a Member to Communion, it must be upon claim of Right, which he pretends by virtue of his Relation as a Member in Communion with the Church to which he joined himself ; but he can have no just claim of Right upon that account, having upon his own Act professedly disclaimed and renounced Communion with the said Church, and being adjudged by the Church so to have done ; after all due means used for to reduce him, there can be no colour of Reason to allow him that Plea, being doubly cut off from it, first by his own Act, and secondly by the Church's Censure, adjudged one that hath sinfully or disorderly withdrawn himself from the said Congregation. 6. This manner of proceeding to admit a censured Member of one Church to the Communion of another, most certainly violates all Communion of Churches ; for that Church is manifestly wronged, being judged by such a Church, and cannot but protest against the proceedings of such a Church, and will be necessitated upon non-Reformation to declare non-Communion with it, *i. e.* not to admit their Members to occasional or permanent Communion, and to refuse to dismiss Members to them, having in a readiness to revenge all Disobedience ; for there is materially the same way of dealing with Churches that walk disorderly as with particular Members, and by the degrees mentioned, *Matth. xvij. 15, 16, 17.* 7. It's the way to bring either all confusion into Churches, or necessarily to abandon congregational Churches ; for if Churches will undertake to judge one another upon the complaint of censured Members, then there must be some way of redress for each others wrongs, by appealing to some higher Power,

Classical or Diocesan, and thus, I believe, the mystery of Iniquity first began and wrought from Divisions in particular Churches, and the undue Carriages of Churches in judging one another, whereupon ensued Appeals to Foreign Ecclesiastical Jurisdictions.

It cannot indeed be supposed but there will still be some Churches or others, that will receive the censured Members of other Congregations, whose Principles of Government are most clearly and amicably adjusted in the Exercise of a co-ordinate Jurisdiction; especially in so great and large a City as this is, because where there is many Streets, there will be a great discharge still of dirt and filth into some no better than Common Shores. There are and will be yet Brokers in Religion, that will take off any breyded Commodities.

But let all Churches that seek Peace and Purity of Holiness, walk by the same Rules and Principles of Faith and Order, and therein be like-minded one towards another in Christ Jesus, and receive one another as Christ hath received them all to the Glory of God, *that they may with one mind and mouth glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* All the Law of Christ is one word of Command to particular Churches, as well as to individual Members. *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self,* but if ye bite and devour one another, by rashly censuring, animating each others offending Members, and breaking down each others Hedges of Government, you will certainly be *consumed one by another*; and if some Churches will walk disorderly, let not others. *Though Israel play the harlot, let not Judah offend,* Hof. iv. 15.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 7. line 22. for performed read formed. p. 7. l. 32. for ἡ r. τῷ . p. 8. l. 4. for στασεως r. στασεως r. στασεως r. στασεως . p. 8. l. 32. for Macedonia r. Judea. p. 15. l. 28. for Resp. r. Reas. p. 19. l. 23. for opproaching r. approaching. p. 22. l. 23. for yea r. ye. p. 22. l. ult. for your r. their. p. 29. l. 36. for where r. were.

