

great weight and importance. It is no small thing to fall into mistakes, when Men act *in the Name of Christ*, and so engage his Authority in what he will not own. And the best of Men, the best of Churches, are liable unto such mistakes, where they are not under the guidance of the holy Spirit, which is to be obtained by Prayer only. (2.) *In, or together with the Administration* of it; that what is done on Earth may be ratified in Heaven, by the approbation of Christ, and be made effectual unto its proper End. (3.) It must be followed with the *Prayer of the Church* unto the same purpose; all with respect unto the Humiliation, Repentance, Healing and Recovery of the Offender.

2ly, IT is to be accompanied with *Lamentation* or *Mourning*. So the Apostle reproving the Church of *Corinth* for the omission of it when it was necessary, tells them, *That they had not mourned; that the offender might be taken away from among them*, 1 Cor. 5. 2. It is not to be done without *mourning*: And himself calls the Execution of this Sentence from this Adjunct, his *bewailing* of them. *I shall bewail many that have sinned already*, 2 Cor. 12. 2. *Compassion* for the person offending, with respect unto that dangerous condition whereinto he hath cast himself; the Excision of a Member of the same Body with whom they have had Communion in the most holy Mysteries of Divine Worship, and sate down at the Table of the Lord, with a due sense of the Dishonour of the Gospel by his fall, ought to ingenerate this *Mourning* or *Lamentation* in the Minds of them who are concern'd in the Execution of the Sentence. Nor is it advisable for any Church to proceed thereunto, before they are so affected.

3ly, IT is to be accompanied with a *due sence of the future Judgment of Christ*. For we herein Judge for Christ, in the matters of his House and Kingdom. And woe to them who dare pronounce this Sentence without a perswasion on good grounds, that it is the *Sentence of Christ himself*. And there is a Representation also in it of the *future Judgment*, when Christ will Eternally cut off and separate from himself all Hypocrites and impenitent Sinners. This is well expressed by

Tertullian,

Tertullian, Ibidem etiam Exhortationes, Castigationes & Censura Divina (speaking of the Assemblies of the Church) *nam & judicatur magno cum pondere, ut apud certos de Dei conspectu; summumque futuri judicii præjudicium est, si quis ita deliquerit ut a Communicatione Orationis & Conventus, & omnis sancti commercii relinquetur, Apol. cap. 39.* Were this Duty observed, it would be a preservative against that inter-mixture of corrupt Affections, and corrupt Ends, which often impose themselves on the Minds of Men, in the exercise of this Power.

Lastly, THE *Nature and End* of this Judgment or Sentence being *Corrective*, not *Vindictive*; for Healing, not Destruction, what is the Duty of the Church, and those principally concerned in the pursuit of it to render it effectual, is plainly evident. Of what use a *Significavit* and *Capias* may be in this case I know not; they belong not unto Christian Religion; much less do *Fire and Faggot* do so. *Prayer* for the person cut off; *Admonition* as occasion is offered; *Compassion* in his distressed Estate, which is so much the more deplorable, if he know it not; *forbearance* from common Converse, with *readiness* for the Restauration of Love, in all the fruits of it, contain the principal Duties of the Church, and all the Members of it towards them that are justly Excommunicate.

WHAT farther belongeth unto this Head of *Church-Rule or Order* shall be spoken unto in the Resolution of some *Cases or Enquiries*, wherein also some Things only mentioned already, shall be more fully explained.

I HAVE made some enquiry before, whether Excommunication be an act of *Authority* and *Jurisdiction* in the Officers of the Church, or an act of *Power* in the *Fraternity* of the Church. But for the sake of some by whom it is desired, I shall a little more distinctly enquire after the Truth herein; though I shall alter nothing of what was before laid down. And,

1. IT is certain, it hath been proved, and I now take it for granted, That the Lord Christ hath given *this Power unto the Church*. Wherefore in the exercise of this Power, both the Officers and Members of the Church are to act according un-

to their *respective* Interests. For that Exercise of Power in the Church towards any, which is not an act of Obedience unto Christ, in them that exercise it, it is in it self *null*. There is therefore no Distinction or Distribution of Power in the Church, but by the interposition of especial Duty.

2. THE Institution of Christ, with respect unto a Church as it is a *peculiar Society* for its *especial Ends*, do not deprive it of its natural Right, as it is a *Society*. There is in every *Community*, by voluntary Confederation, a natural Right and Power to *expel* those from its Society, who will not be ruled by the Laws of its Constitution. And if the Church should, by the Institution of a Power, new as unto the way, manner and ends of its Exercise, be deprived of its *Original*, radical Power, with respect unto the general End of its own Preservation, it would not be a gainer by that Institution. It may be easily understood, that the Lord Christ should in particular appoint the Way and Manner of the Exercise of this Power or Administration of this Sentence, committing the care thereof unto the *Officers* of the Church. But it cannot be well understood, that thereby he should deprive the Church of its *Right*, and forbid them their Duty in preserving their Society entire and pure. Neither can it be so in an especial manner committed unto any, as that upon their neglect, whereby those who by the Law and Rule of Christ, ought to be cast out of the Churches Communion, are continued in it unto its Sin and Defilement, the Church it self should be free from guilt. Wherefore the Apostle expressly chargeth the *whole Church* of *Corinth* with Sin and neglect of Duty, in that the incestuous person was not put away from among them: This could not be, if so be the Power of it were so in the Hands of a *few of the Officers*, that the Church had no Right to act in it. For none can incur a Guilt merely by the defect of others in the Discharge of their Duty.

3. THE Church *essentially* considered is before its ordinary Officers; for the Apostle *ordained Officers in every Church*. But the Church in that State hath Power to put away from among them and their Communion an obstinate Offender. They have it

it, as they are a Society, by voluntary confederation. Wherein this comes short of Authoritative Excommunication, will immediately appear.

4. WHERE a Church is compleat and *Organized* with its stated Rulers, as the Church of *Corinth* was, yet Rules, Instructions and Commands are given expressly unto the *Fraternity* or *Community* of the Church, for their Duty and Acting in the Administration of this Sentence, and the cutting off an Offender, 1 *Cor.* 5. 2, 4, 6, 7. 2 *Cor.* 2. 7, 8. Yea, the *execution*, or infliction of the Sentence, is ascribed unto them, *Ver.* 5. All these things do suppose a *Right* and *Duty* thereon to Act according to their Interest in Excommunication, to reside in the whole Church: Wherefore,

5. THERE are *some Acts* belonging hereunto, that the Church it self in the Body of the Fraternity, cannot be excluded from without destroying the nature of the Sentence it self, and rendring it ineffectual. Such are the *previous cognizance of the Cause*, without which they cannot be blamed for any neglect about it; *preparatory Duties* unto its Execution, in Prayer, Mourning and Admonition, which are expressly prescribed unto them; and a Testification of their consent unto it, by their common Suffrage. Without these things, Excommunication is but a Name with a noise; it belongs not unto the Order appointed by Christ in his Church.

6. HENCE arise the *Duties* of the Church towards an Excommunicated Person, that are consequential unto his exclusion from among them. Such are *Praying* for him, as one *noted* by the Church, and under the Discipline of Christ; *avoiding Communion* with him in publick and private, that he may be ashamed, and the like; all which arise from their own voluntary actings in his exclusion; and such, as without a judgment of the cause, they cannot be obliged unto.

7. YET on the other side, unto the formal compleateness of this Sentence, an *Authoritative Act of Office-Power* is required. For, (1.) There is in it such an Act of Rule, as is in the hands of the Elders only. (2.) The *Executive Power* of the Keys in binding and loosing, so far as it comprizeth

prizeth *Authority* to be acted in the Name of Christ, is entrusted with them only.

8. WHEREFORE I shall say no more in answer unto this Enquiry; but that *Excommunication* is an act of Church-Power in its Officers and Brethren, acting according unto their respective Rights, Interests, and Duties particularly prescribed unto them. The *Officers* of the Church act in it as Officers with *Authority*, the *Brethren* or the Body of the Church with Power; yet so, as that the Officers are no way excluded from their Power, Consent and Suffrage in the acting of the Church, but have the same Interest therein with all other Members of the Church; but the Community of the Church have no Interest in those Authoritative actings of the Officers which are peculiar unto them. Where either of these is wanting, the whole Duty is vitiated, and the sence of the Sentence rendred ineffectual.

I. IT is Enquired, *Whether Excommunication, justly deserved, may and ought to be omitted in case of trouble, or danger that may ensue unto the Church therein.*

IT is usually granted that so it may and ought to be; which seems in general to have been the judgment of *Austin*.

THE Troubles and Dangers intended, are three-fold. (1.) From the Thing it self. (2.) From the *Persons* to be Excommunicated. (3.) From the *Church*.

1. TROUBLE may arise from the *Thing* it self. For there being an exercise of Authority or Jurisdiction in it over the Persons of Men, not granted from the *Civil Magistrate* by the Law of the Land, those that execute it may be liable unto Penalties ordained in such cases.

2. THE *Persons* to be Excommunicated may be *Great*, and of great Interest in the World, so as that if they receive a provocation hereby, they may occasion or stir up Persecution against the Church, as it hath often fallen out.

3. THE Church it self may be *divided* on these considerations, so as that lasting differences may be occasioned among

among them, which the *omission* of the Sentence might prevent.

FOR Answer hereunto, some things must be premised. As,

1. HERE is no supposition of any thing *sinful* or *morally* evil in the Church, its Officers, or any of its Members, by refusing to omit the pronouncing of this Sentence. Whether there be any Sin in giving occasion unto the *troubles* mentioned, to be avoided by an omission of Duty, is now to be enquired into.

2. WE must suppose, (1.) That the *cause* of Excommunication be clear and evident, both as unto the merit of the Fact, and the due Application of it unto the Person concerned; so as that *no Rational indifferent Man* shall be able to say, that it is meet that such an one should be continued a Member of such a Society; as it ought to be, where-ever Excommunication is administered. (2.) That *sufficient Time* and space of Repentance, and for giving satisfaction unto the Church (whereof afterwards) hath been allowed unto the Person after Admonition. (3.) That the Church doth really suffer in Honour and Reputation by tolerating such a scandalous Offender among them.

I ANSWER, On these suppositions I see no just Reason to countenance the *omission of the Execution of this Sentence*, or to acquit the Church from the guilt of Sin in so doing. For,

1. THE first pretence of *Danger* is vain. There is not the least *shadow of Jurisdiction* in this Act of the Church. There is nothing in it that toucheth any thing which is under the Protection and Conservation of *Humane Laws*. It reacheth not the *Persons* of Men in their *Lives*, or *Liberties*; nor their *Estates* or the least *Secular Privileges* that they do enjoy; it doth not expose them to the *Power* or *Censures* of others, nor pre-judge them as unto Office or Advantage of Life. There is therefore no concernment of the *Law of the Land* herein, no more than in a Parents disenheriting a Rebellious Child.

2. AS unto *danger of Persecution*, by the means of the Person provoked, I say, (1.) The same may be pleaded as unto all other Duties of obedience unto Jesus Christ wherewith the World is provoked; and so the whole profession of the Church should

should give place to the *fear of Persecution*. To testify against Sin in the way of Christs appointment, is a case of Confession.

(2.) The Apostles were not deterred by this consideration from the Excommunication of *Simon Magus*, the *seducing Jews*, *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, with others. (3.) The Lord Christ commandeth and reproveth his Churches, according as they were *strict* in the observation of this Duty, or neglective of it, notwithstanding the fear of Persecution thereon, *Revel. 2. 3.* And, (4.) He will take that care of his Church in all their obedience unto him, as shall turn all the consequents thereof unto their advantage.

3. AS unto danger of *Differences in the Church*, there is nothing to be said; but that if Rule, Order, Love and Duty will not prevent such Differences, there is no way appointed of Christ for that end: And if they are sufficient for it, (as they are abundantly) they must bear their own blame who occasion such Differences.

II. BUT it may be said, *What if such an Offender as justly deserves to be Excommunicated, and is under admonition in order thereunto in case of Impenitency, should voluntarily withdraw himself from, and leave the Communion of the Church, is there any necessity to proceed against him by Excommunication?*

Ans. v. 1. SOME say it is enough, if it be declared in the Church that such an one hath *cut off himself* from the Church, and is therefore no longer under their watch or care, but is left unto himself and the World. And this is sufficient with them who own no *Act of Office-Power* or Authority in Excommunication, but esteem it only a noted cessation of Communion, which destroys a principal Branch of the Power of the Keys. Wherefore,

2. WHERE the offence is plain, open, scandalous, persisted in; where Admonition is despised or not complied with, it is the Duty of the Church to denounce the Sentence of Excommunication against such a Person, notwithstanding his voluntary departure: For,

I. NO

1. NO Man is to make an *Advantage* unto himself, or to be freed from any *Disadvantage*, Censure or Spiritual Penalty, by his own Sin; such as is the *voluntary Relinquishment* of the Church, by a Person under Admonition for scandalous Offences.

2. IT is necessary unto the Church, both as unto the Discharge of its Duty, and the *vindication of its Honour*; as also from the Benefit and Edification it will receive by those Duties of Humiliation, Mourning and Prayer, which are necessary unto the Execution of this Sentence.

3. IT is necessary for the *good and benefit* of him who so deserves to be Excommunicated. For, (1.) The end of the *Institution* of the Ordinance, is his *Correction*, not his *Destruction*, and may be effectual unto his Repentance and Recovery. (2.) It is to be followed with *sharp Admonition* and *Prayer*, which in due time, may reach the most profligate Sinner.

4. IT becomes not the *Wisdom* and *Order* of any Society entrusted with Authority for its own preservation, as the Church is by Christ himself; to suffer Persons obnoxious unto Censure by the fundamental Rules of that Society, to cast off all respect unto it, to break their Order and Relation, without Animadverting thereon, according to the Authority wherewith they are intrusted. To do otherwise is to expose their Order unto contempt, and Proclaim a Diffidence in their own Authority, for the Spiritual punishment of Offenders.

5. ONE end of the Appointment of the Power and Sentence of Excommunication in the Church, is to give Testimony unto the *future final judgment* of Christ against impenitent Sinners, which none of them can run away from, nor escape.

III. A THIRD Enquiry may be, *Whether in case of any great and scandalous Sin, the Church may proceed unto Excommunication, without any previous Admonition.*

Ans. 1. PERSONS may be *falsely accused of*, and charged with great Sins, the greatest of Sins, as well as those of a lesser Degree, and that both by particular Testimonies and publick

publick Reports, as it was with the *Lord Christ* himself; which daily Experience confirms. Wherefore, all haste and precipitation like that of *David* in judging the Case of *Mephibosheth*, is carefully to be avoided, though they are pressed under the pretences of the greatness and notoriety of the Sin.

2. THERE is no *individual actual Sin*, but it is capable of great Aggravation or Alleviation from its *Circumstances*: These the Church is to *enquire into*, and to obtain a full knowledge of them, that all things being duly weighed, they may be affected with the Sin in a due manner, or *after a goodly sort*; which is essential unto the right administration of this Ordinance.

3. THIS cannot be done, without *Personal Conference* with the Offender, who is to be allowed to speak for himself. This Conference, in case guilt be discovered, cannot but have in it the nature of an *Admonition*, whereon the Church is to proceed, as in case of previous solemn admonition, in the Order, and according to the Rule which shall be immediately declared.

IV. FOURTHLY, *Whether on the first knowledge of an Offence or scandalous Sin, if it be known unto the Church, that the offending Party is penitent, and willing to declare his Humiliation and Repentance for the satisfaction of the Church, may the Church proceed unto his Excommunication, in case the Sin be great and notorious?*

Ans. 1. IT is certain, that in an orderly Progress, as unto more private Sins, a compliance by Repentance with the First or Second Admonition, doth put a stop unto all further Ecclesiastical procedure.

2. BUT whereas the Enquiry is made concerning Sins, either in their own Nature or in their Circumstances, *great and of disreputation* unto the Church: I Answer,

IF Repentance be evidenced unto the Consciences of the Rulers of the Church to be *sincere*, and proportionable unto the Offence in its outward Demonstration, according unto the Rule

Rule of the Gospel, so as that they are obliged to judge in Charity, that the Person sinning is pardoned and accepted with Christ, as all *sincerely penitent Sinners are undoubtedly*; the Church cannot proceed unto the Excommunication of such an Offender. For,

1. IT would be publickly to *reject* them whom they acknowledge that *Christ doth receive*. This nothing can warrant them to do; yea, so to do is to set up themselves against Christ, or at least to make use of his Authority against his Mind and Will. Yea, such a *Sentence* would destroy it self; for it is a Declaration that Christ doth disapprove them, whom he doth approve.

2. THEIR *so doing* would make a *misrepresentation of the Gospel*, and of the Lord Christ therein. For, whereas the principal design of the Gospel, and of the Representation that is made therein of Christ Jesus, is to evidence that *all sincerely Penitent Sinners*, that *Repent according unto the Rule of it*, are and shall be *Pardoned and Accepted*; by the Rejection of such a Person in the face of his *sincere Repentance*, there is an open contradiction thereunto. Especially it would give an undue sense of the *Heart, Mind, and Will* of Christ towards Repenting Sinners; such as may be dangerous unto the Faith of Believers, so far as the Execution of this Sentence is Doctrinal: For such it is, and declarative of the Mind of Christ according unto the judgment of the Church. The Image therefore of this Excommunication, which is set up in some Churches, wherein the Sentence of it is denounced without any regard unto the Mind of Christ, as unto his Acceptance or Disapprobation of those whom they Excommunicate, is a *Teacher of Lyes*.

3. SUCH a procedure is *contrary unto the nature and end of this Sentence*. For it is *Corrective and Instructive*, not properly punishing and vindictive. The sole end of it, with respect whereunto it hath its Efficacy from Divine Institution, is the *Humiliation, Repentance and Recovery* of the Sinner. And if this be attained before, the *infliction of this Sentence* is contrary to the nature and end of it.

IT

IT will be said, that it hath another end also; namely, the preservation of the purity of the Church, and the vindication of its Honour and Reputation, wherein it suffers by the scandalous offences of any of its Members. Whereunto, I say, (1.) No Church is or can be made *impure* by them whom Christ hath purged; as he doth all those who are truly penitent. (2.) It is no Dishonour unto any Church to have Sinners in it, who have evidenced sincere Repentance. (3.) The present offence and scandal may be provided against by an Act of Rectoral Prudence, in causing the offending Person to abstain from the Lords Table for a Season.

V. IT is Enquired, (Fifthly) *Whether such as voluntarily, causlessly and disorderly, do leave the Communion of any Church whereof they are Members, though not guilty of any scandalous immoralities, may and ought to be Excommunicated?*

Ans. 1. WHERE Persons are esteemed Members of Churches by *external causes without their own consent*, or by Parochial cohabitation, they may remove from one Church unto another by the Removal of their Habitation, according unto their own Discretion. For such cohabitation being the only formal Cause of any Relation to such a Church in particular, upon the ceasing of that cause, the Relation ceaseth of its own accord.

2. WHERE Persons are Members of Churches by *mutual confederation*, or express personal consent, causless departure from them is an *evil* liable unto many Aggregations.

3. BUT whereas the principal end of all particular Churches is *Edification*, there may be many just and sufficient Reasons why a Person may remove himself from the *constant Communion of one Church* unto that of another. And of these Reasons he himself is judge, on whom it is incumbent to take care of his own Edification above all other things. Nor ought the Church to deny unto any such Persons their Liberty desired peaceably and according unto Order.

4. IT was declared before, that where any Persons guilty of,

of, and under Admonition for any *scandalous Sin*, do withdraw from the Communion of any Church, their so doing, is no impediment unto a farther procedure against them.

5. WHEREAS there are amongst us Churches, or those who are so esteemed in the Consciences of Men, so far differing in Principles and Practices, as that they have not entire Communion with one another in all parts of Divine Worship, it may be Enquired, *Whether if a Man leave a Church of one sort to join with one of another; as suppose he leave a select Congregation to join in a Parochial Church constantly and totally, he may be justly Excommunicated for so doing, without the consent of the Church whereunto he did belong.*

Answ. 1. IT is certain on the one hand, that if any Man leave the Communion of *Parochial Assemblies* to join himself unto a *Select Congregation*, those who have Power over those *Parishes*, will make no question whether they shall *Excommunicate* him or no in their way. But,

2. SUPPOSING Persons so departing from particular Congregations, (1.) To be free from *scandalous Sins*. (2.) That they depart *quietly* without attempting Disorder or Confusion in the Church. (3.) That they do *actually join themselves* unto the Communion of some Church, whose Constitution, Principles and Worship they do approve, whereby their visible Profession is preserved; the Church may not justly proceed unto their Excommunication: It may suffice to declare, that such Persons have on their own accord *forsaken the Communion* of the Church, are no more under its *Watch* or *Care*; neither is the Church further obliged towards them, but as unto Christian Duties in general.

6. AS for those whose departure is as *voluntary and causeless* so accompanied with other evils, such as are *Revilings*, *Reproaches* and false *Accusations*, as is usual in such Cases, they may be proceeded against as obstinate Offenders.

VI. THE Sixth Enquiry is, *What Time is to be given after solemn Admonition before actual Excommunication?*

Answ. 1.

Answ. 1. THE manner of some to run over the Words, *I Admonish you a First, Second, and Third time*, so immediately to make way for the Sentence of Excommunication, is that wherein Men are greatly to be pitied for their Ignorance of the nature of those things which they take on themselves to Act, Order, and Dispose of, that we ascribe it not unto worse and more evil Causes.

2. THE nature of the thing it self, requires a considerable Season or *space of Time*, between solemn Admonition and Excommunication. For the end and design of the former is the Repentance and Recovery of the Offender. Nor doth its Efficacy thereunto depend on, or consist in the actual giving of it; but as other moral Causes which may Work *gradually*, upon occasional Advantages. Want of Light, some present Exasperation and Temptation, may seem to frustrate a present *Admonition*, when they do but suspend its present Efficacy, which it may afterwards obtain on the Conscience of the Offender.

3. IT being a *Church Admonition* that is intended; it is the Duty of the Church to abide in Prayer and waiting for the Fruit of it according to the appointment of Christ. And herein the case may possibly require some *long time* to be spent.

4. NO present *appearance of Obstinacy* or impenitence under Admonition, (which is usually pleaded) should cause an immediate procedure unto Excommunication. For, (1.) It is contrary unto the *distinct Institution* of the one, and the other; wherein the former is to be allowed its proper Season for its Use and Efficacy. (2.) It doth not represent the *patience and forbearance of Christ towards his Church* and all the Members of it. (3.) It is not suited unto the Rule of that *Love which hopeth all things, beareth all things, &c.* (4.) All grounds of hope for the Recovery of Sinners by Repentance, are to be attended unto, so as to defer the ultimate Sentence.

Nulla unquam de morte hominis cunctatio longa est.

5. IF *new Sins* are added of the same, or any other kind, unto former

former *scandals*, whilst Persons are under Admonition, it is an Indication of the necessity of a procedure.

VII. IT may be farther Enquired, *Whether a Man may be Excommunicated for Errors in matters of Faith, or false Opinions about them?*

Answ. 1. THE Case is so plainly and positively stated, *Rev.* 2. 2, 6, 15, 16, 20. *1 Tim.* 1. 19, 20. *Tit.* 3. 10, 11. and other places, that it needs no farther Determination. Wherefore,

2. IF the Errors intended, are about or against the *Fundamental Truths* of the Gospel, so as that they that hold them, cannot hold the Head, but really make *Shipwrack of the Faith*, no pretended usefulness of such Persons, no peaceableness as unto outward deportment, which, Men guilty of such Abominations, will frequently cover themselves withal, can countenance the Church in forbearing after *due Admonition*, to cut them off from their Communion. The nature of the evil, the danger that is from it unto the whole Church, as from a *Gangrene* in any Member, unto the Body, the Indignation of Christ expressed against such *pernicious Doctrines*, the opposition of them to the building of the Church on the Rock, which in most of them is opposed, to render a Church altogether inexcusable, who omit their Duty herein.

3. *FALSE Opinions* in lesser things, when the foundation of Faith and Christian Practice are not immediately concerned, may be *tolerated in a Church*, and sundry Rules are given unto this end in the Scripture, as, *Rom.* 14. 1, 2, 3, &c. *Phil.* 3. 15, 16. Howbeit, in that low ebb of Grace, Love and Prudence, which we are come unto, it is best for Edification, that all Persons peaceably dispose themselves into those Societies with whom they most agree in *Principles and Opinions*; especially such as relate or lead unto practice in any Duties of Worship. But,

4. WITH respect unto such Opinions, if Men will, as is usual, *wrangle and contend* to the disturbance of the peace of the Church, or hinder it in any Duty, with respect unto its own Edification, and will neither peaceably abide in the Church,

nor

nor peaceably *depart* from it, they may and ought to be proceeded against with Censures of the Church.

VIII. *WHETHER persons Excommunicated out of any Church may be admitted unto the hearing of the Word in the Assemblies of that Church?*

Answ. 1. *THEY may be so*; as also to be present at all Duties of Moral Worship; for so may *Heathens* and *Unbelievers*, 1 Cor. 14. 23, 24.

2. *WHEN* persons are under this Sentence, the Church is in a state of *expecting* of their Recovery and Return; and therefore are not to prohibit them any Means thereof, such as is preaching of the Word.

IX. *HOW far extends the Rule of the Apostle towards persons rejected of the Church*, 1 Cor. 5. 11. *With such an one no not to Eat*; as that also, *Note that Man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed?* 2 Thess. 3. 14.

1. *TO Eat* comprizeth all *ordinary Converse* in things of this Life; *Give us our daily Bread.* (2.) *To Note*, is either the act of the Church, setting the *Mark of its Censure* and Disapprobation on him; or the *Duty of the Members* of the Church, to take notice of him, as unto the End of not keeping company with him. Wherefore,

2. *HEREIN* all ordinary Converse of *Choice*, not made necessary by previous occasions, is forbidden. The Rule, I say, forbids, (1.) All *ordinary Converse of Choice*; not that which is occasional. (2.) Converse about *Earthly secular Things*, not that which is *Spiritual*; for such an one may, and ought still to be admonished, whilst he will hear the word of Admonition. (3.) It is such Converse as is not made *previously necessary*, by Mens mutual Engagement in Trade and the like. For that is founded on such Rules of Right and Equity, with such Obligations in point of Truth, as Excommunication cannot Dissolve.

3. *NO*

3. NO *suspension* of Duties antecedently necessary by virtue of *natural* or *moral Relation*, is allowed or countenanced by this Rule. Such are those of *Husband* and *Wife*, *Parents* and *Children*, *Magistrates* and *Subjects*, *Masters* and *Servants*, *Neighbours*, *Relations* in propinquity of Blood. No Duties arising from or belonging unto any of these Relations, are released, or the Obligation unto them weakened by Excommunication. *Husbands* may not hereon forsake their *Wives* if they are Excommunicated, nor *Wives* their *Husbands*; *Magistrates* may not withdraw their Protection from any of their *Subjects*; because they are Excommunicate; much less may *Subjects* withhold their Obedience on any pretence of the Excommunication of their *Magistrates*, as such. And the same is true as unto all other *natural* or *moral Relations*.

4. THE *Ends* of this prohibition are, (1.) To testify our *Condemnation* of the Sin, and disapprobation of the person guilty of it, who is Excommunicated. (2.) The *Preservation* of our selves from all kinds of participation in his Sin. (3.) To make him *ashamed* of himself, that if he be not utterly profligate and given up unto total Apostasie, it may occasion in him thoughts of returning.

X. *HOW* ought persons Excommunicated to be received into the Church upon their Repentance?

Ans. 1. AS unto the *internal manner*; with all readiness and chearfulness; with, (1.) *Meekness*, to take from them all Discouragement and disconsolation, *Gal. 6. 1.* (2.) With *Compassion*, and all means of Relief and Consolation, *2 Cor. 2. 7.* (3.) With *Love* in all the demonstrations of it, *Vers. 8.* (4.) With *Joy*, to represent the Heart of Christ towards Repenting Sinners.

2. THE *outward manner* of the Restauration of such a person consists, in, (1.) His *Testification* of his Repentance unto the satisfaction of the Church. (2.) The *express Consent* of the Church unto his Reception. (3.) His *renewed Ingagement* in the Covenant of the Church, whereby he is re-instated, or jointed

joined again in the Body, in his own proper place. In all which the Elders, by their Authority, are to go before the Church.

ALL sorts of persons do now condemn the Opinions of the *Novatians*, in refusing the *Re-admission* of lapsed Sinners into the Church upon Repentance. But there may be an Evil observed amongst some, leading that way, or unto what is worse: And this is, that they seek not after the *Recovery* of those that are Excommunicated, by Prayer, Admonition, Exhortation in a spirit of Meekness and Tenderneſs; but are well ſatisfied that they have *quitted* themselves of their Society. It is better never to *Excommunicate* any, than ſo to carry it towards them when they are Excommunicated. But there is a ſort of Men, unto whom if a Man be *once an Offender*, he ſhall be ſo for ever.

XI. OUR laſt Enquiry ſhall be, *Whether Excommunication may be regular and valid, where the matter of Right is dubious and diſputable?* As many ſuch caſes may fall out, eſpecially with reſpect unto the occaſions of Life, and mutual Converſe; or when the matter of Fact is not duly proved by poſitive Witneſſes, on the one hand, and is denied on the other.

Anſw. I. THE foundation of the *Efficacy* of Excommunication, next and under its Divine Inſtitution, lies in the *Light* and Conviction of the Conſciences of them that are to be Excommunicated. If theſe are not affected with a ſenſe of Guilt, as in *dubious caſes* they may not be, the ſentence will be of no Force nor Efficacy.

2. A CASE wherein there is a difference in the judgment of *good and wiſe Men* about it, is to be eſteemed ſuch a *dubious* Caſe as is exempted from this Censure. Nothing is to be admitted here to take place, but what is reprobable by natural Light, and the concurrent Judgment of them that fear God.

3. IF the caſe be about ſuch a Right or Wrong, in pretended Fraud, Over-reaching, or the like, as is determinable by Civil-

Civil-Laws, the Church is no judge in such Cases; unless it be by way of Arbitration, 1 Cor. 6.

4. IF the Question be about *Doctrines* that are not in Points fundamental, so as those who dissent from the Church do carry it peaceably and orderly, there can be no procedure unto Ecclesiastical Censures: But if Men will *do at on their own Opinions*, wrangling, contending, and breaking the Peace of the Church about them, there are other Rules given in that case.

5. IF the *matter of Fact* be to be determined and stated by Witness, it is absolutely necessary by virtue of Divine Institution, that there be *Two or Three* concurrent Testimonies; one Witness is not to be regarded. See *Deut. 19. 15. Numb. 35. 30. Matth. 18. 16, &c.* Wherefore the ensuing Rules or Directions are to be observed in the matter of Excommunication.

1. NO Excommunication is to be allowed in *cases Dubious* and Disputable, wherein Right and Wrong are not easily determinable unto all unprejudiced persons, that know the Will of God in such things. Nor is it to be admitted when the matter of Fact stands in need of Testimony, and is not proved by *Two Witnesses* at the least.

2. ALL Prejudices, all Partiality, all Provocations, all Haste and Precipitation, are most carefully to be avoided in this Administration; for the Judgment is the Lords. Wherefore,

3. WE are continually, in all things that *tend unto this Sentence*, and eminently in the Sentence it self, to charge our Consciences with the Mind of Christ, and what he would do himself in the case; considering his Love, Grace, Mercy and Patience; with instances of his Condescension which he gave us in this World.

4. THERE is also required of us herein, a constant Remembrance, *that we also are in the Flesh*, and liable to Temptation, which may restrain and keep in awe that forwardness and confidence which some are apt to manifest in such cases. In all these things, a *watchful Eye* is to be kept over the *methods of Satan*; who by all means seeks to pervert this Ordinance unto the Destruction of Men, which is appointed for their Edification;

Edification ; and too often prevails in that Design. And if by the Negligence of a Church in the management and pursuit of this Ordinance, he gets advantage to pervert it, unto the Ruine of any, it is the fault of that Church, in that they have not been careful of the Honour of Christ, therein. Wherefore,

1. AS Excommunication by a *curfed Noife and Clamor with Bell, Book and Candle* (such as we have instances of in some Papal Councils) is an horrible Anti-christian Abomination. So,

2. IT is an undue Representation of Christ and his Authority, for persons openly guilty of *profaneness in sinning*, to Excommunicate them who are *blameless* in all Christian Obedience.

3. ALL Excommunication is *Evangelically* null where there is wanting an *Evangelical frame of spirit* in those by whom it is Administred ; and there is present an Anti-evangelical Order in its Administration.

4. IT is sufficiently evident, that after all the Conteſts and Diſputes about this *Excommunication* that have been in the World, the Noife that it hath made, the horrible Abuses that it hath been put unto, the wresting of all Church-Order and Rule to give countenance unto a corrupt Administration of it, with the needless Oppositions that have been made against its Institution ; there is nothing in it, nothing belongs unto it, nothing required unto its Administration, wherein Mens outward Interests are at all concerned, and which the smallest number of sincere Christians in any Church-Society, may not perform and discharge unto the Glory of Christ, and their own Edification.

IT is the *Mystery of Iniquity* that hath traversed these things into such a state and posture, as is unintelligible unto spiritual Wisdom, unpracticable in the Obedience of Faith, and ruinous unto all Evangelical Order and Discipline.

C H A P. XI.

Of the Communion of Churches.

CHURCHES so appointed, and established in Order as hath been declared, ought to *hold Communion among themselves*, or with each other, as unto all the ends of their Institution and Order: For these are the same in all. Yea, the *general end* of them, is in Order of Nature considered antecedently unto their Institution in *particular*. This end is the *Edification* of the Body of Christ in general, or the *Church Catholick*. The promotion hereof is committed jointly and severally unto all *particular Churches*. Wherefore, with respect hereunto, they are obliged unto *mutual Communion* among themselves, which is their *consent, endeavour and conjunction in and for the promotion of the Edification of the Catholick Church, and therein their own, as they are Parts and Members of it.*

THIS Communion is incumbent on *every Church*, with respect unto all other Churches of Christ in the World equally. And the Duties and Acts of it in all of them, are of the same kind and nature. For there is no such *disparity* between them, or *subordination* among them, as should make a difference between the Acts of their mutual Communion; so as that the Acts of some should be Acts of *Authority*, and those of others Acts of *obedience* or subjection. Where-ever there is a Church, whether it be at *Rome* or *Egubium*, in a *City* or a *Village*, the Communion of them all is *mutual*, the Acts of it of the same kind; however one Church may have more *Advantages* to be useful and helpful therein than another. And the abuse of those *Advantages* was that which wrought effectually in the beginning of that disorder, which at length destroyed the *Catholick Church*, with all Church-Communion whatever. For some Churches, especially that of *Rome*, having many

Advantages,

Advantages, in *Gifts, Abilities, Numbers* and *Reputation* above many, above most Churches for *usefulness* in their mutual Communion; the *Guides* of it insensibly turned and perverted the *Addresses* made unto them, the *Advices* and *Assistances* desired of them in way of Communion, or their pretences of such *Addresses* and *Desires*, into an Usurpation, first of a *primacy of Honour*, then of *Order*, then of *Supremacy* and Jurisdiction, unto the utter overthrow of all Church-Order and Communion, and at length of the whole nature of the *Catholick Church*, as stated and subsisting in *particular Churches*, as we shall see.

ALL Churches on their first institution, quickly found themselves indigent and wanting, though not as unto their *Being*, *Power* and *Order*; yet as unto their *well-being*, with their preservation in Truth and Order, upon extraordinary Occurrences, as also with respect unto their *usefulness* and *serviceableness*, unto the general end of furthering the Edification of the *Church Catholick*. The care hereof, and the making provision for this defect, was committed by our Lord Jesus Christ unto the *Apostles* during their Lives, which *Paul* calls *πρόνοια πάντων τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν*, 2 Cor. 11. 28. *The care of all the Churches*. For what was only a *pressing care* and burden unto them, was afterward contended for by others, as a matter of *Dignity and Power*; the pretence of it in one especially being, turned into a *curfed Domination*, under the Stile and Title of *Servus Servorum Dei*.

BUT if a Thousand pretences should be made of supplying Churches defects after the decease of the Apostles, by any other Order, Way or Means, besides this of the equal *Communion* of Churches among themselves, they will be all found destitute of any Countenance from the Scripture, Primitive Antiquity, the nature, use, and end of Churches, yea, of Christian Religion it self. Yet the pretence hereof is the sole foundation of all that disposal of Churches into *several stories of Subordination*, with an Authority and Jurisdiction over one another, which now prevails in the World. But there is no place for such Imaginations, until it be proved, either that

our Lord Jesus Christ hath not appointed the *mutual Communion of Churches among themselves* by their own consent ; or that it is not sufficient for the preservation of the *Union*, and furtherance of the Edification of the *Church Catholick*, whereunto it is designed.

WHEREFORE, our Lord Jesus Christ, in his *infinite Wisdom*, hath constituted his Churches in such a State and Order, as wherein none of them are able of themselves, always and in all instances, to attain all the ends for which they are appointed, with respect unto the *Edification of the Church Catholick*. And he did it for this end, that whereas the whole *Catholick Church* is animated by *one spirit*, which is the bond of Union between all particular Churches, (as we shall see) every one of them may Act the Gifts and Graces of it unto the Preservation and Edification of the whole.

HEREIN then, we acknowledge, lieth the great difference which we have with others about the state of the Church of Christ in this World ; we do believe that the *mutual Communion of particular Churches amongst themselves*, in an equality of Power and Order, though not of Gifts and Usefulness, is the only way appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ after the Death of the Apostles, for the attaining the general end of all particular Churches, which is the *Edification of the Church Catholick*, in Faith, Love and Peace. Other ways and means have been found out in the World for this end, which we must speak unto immediately. Wherefore, it behoveth us to use some Diligence in the consideration of the *Causes, Nature and Use* of this Communion of Churches.

BUT it must be moreover premised, that whereas this *Communion of Churches* is *Radically* and *Essentially* the same among all Churches in the World, yet, as unto the ordinary *actual exercise* of the Duties of it, it is confined and limited by Divine Providence, unto such Churches, as the natural means of the discharge of such Duties may extend unto. That is unto those which are planted within such *Lines of Communication*, such precincts or boundaries of Places and Countries, as may not render the mutual performance of such Duties insuperably.

perably difficult. Yet is not the World it self so wide, but that all places being made pervious by Navigation, this Communion of Churches may be *visibly professed*, and in some instances practised among all Churches, *from the rising of the Sun even unto the going-down of the same, where the Name of Christ is known among the Gentiles*; wherein the true nature of the Catholick Church and its Union doth consist, which is utterly overthrown by the most vehement pretences that are made unto it, as those in the Church of *Rome*.

WHEREFORE such a *Communion of Churches* is to be enquired after, as from which no true Church of Christ is or can be excluded; in whose actual exercise they may and ought all to live, and whereby the general end of all Churches in the Edification of the Catholick Church may be attained. This is the true and only *Catholicism* of the Church, which whoever departs from, or substitutes any thing else in the room of it, under that Name, destroys its whole nature, and disturbs the whole *Ecclesiastical Harmony*, that is, of Christs Institution.

HOWEVER therefore we plead for the *Rights of particular Churches*, yet our real Controversy with most in the World, is for the Being, Union and Communion of the *Church Catholick*, which are variously perverted by many, and separating it into Parties, and confining it to Rules, Measures and *Canons* of their own finding out and Establishment. For such things as these, belong neither to the *internal* nor *external* Form of that *Catholick Church*, whose *Being* in the World we believe, and whose *Union* we are obliged to preserve. And whoever gives any Description of, or Limitation to the *Catholick Church*, besides what consist in the Communion of particular Churches intended, doth utterly overthrow it, and therein an *Article* of our Faith.

BUT this *Communion of Churches* cannot be duly apprehended, unless we enquire and determine wherein their *Union* doth consist. For *Communion* is an Act of *Union*, that receives both its Nature and Power from it, or by virtue of it. For of what Nature soever the *Union* of things distinct in themselves be, of the same is the *Communion* that they have among themselves.

IN

IN the Church of *Rome*, the *Person of the Pope*, as he is *Pope*, is the Head and Center of all Church Union. Nor is there allowed any *Union of particular Churches* with Christ or among themselves, but in and through him. An Universal subjection unto him and his Authority, is the original spring of all *Church Union* among them. And if any one Soul fail herein, if as unto things of Faith and Divine Worship, he do not depend on the *Pope*, and live in subjection unto him, he is reputed a Stranger and Foreigner unto the *Catholick Church*. Yea, they affirm, that be a Man never so willing for, and desirous of an *Interest in Christ*, he cannot have it but by the *Pope*.

THE Communion of Churches *congenial* and suited unto this Union, proceeding from it, and exercised by virtue of it, ariseth from a various *contignation* of Order, or the erection of one story of Church Interest upon another, until we come to the Idol placed on the top of this *Babel*. So is this Communion carried on from the obedience and subjection of the lowest rubbish of Ecclesiastical Order, unto *Diocesans*, of them to *Metropolitans*, of them to *Patriarchs* or *Cardinals*, of them to the *Pope*; or an ascent is made from *Diocesan Synods*, by *Provincial* and *National*, to those that are called *Oecumenical*, whose Head is the *Pope*.

YET Two things must be farther observed to clear this *Communion of the Roman Catholick Church*; as, (1.) That there is no *ascent* of Church-Order or Power by a *vital Act of Communion* from the lower Degrees, Orders or Conſociations, and by them to the *Pope*, as though he should receive any thing of Church-Power from them; but all the *plenitude* of it being originally vested in him, by these several Orders and Degrees, he communicates of it unto all Churches, as the Life of their Conjunction and Communion. (2.) That no Man is so jointed in this Order, so compacted in this Body, but that he is also personally and immediately subject to the *Pope*, and depends on him as unto his whole profession of Religion.

AND this is that which constitutes him formally to be what he is, that is *Antichrist*; and the Church-State arising from its Union

Union unto him, *holding him as its Head*, subsisting in a Communion by virtue of power received through various Orders and Constitutions from him, to be *Anti-christian*. For he and it, are set up in the room of, and in direct opposition unto the Lord Christ, as the Head of the Catholick Church, and the Church state thereon depending. This we have described, *Ephes. 4. 15, 16. Speaking the Truth in Love, may grow up, &c.* As also, *Col. 2. 19.* Where there is a Rejection of them who belong not unto the *Church Catholick*, taken from its Relation unto Christ, and the nature of its dependance on him; *not holding the Head, &c.*

WHEN Men shall cease to be wilfully blind, or when the powers of the *strong Delusion* that begin to abate shall expire, they will easily see the direct Opposition that is between these two Heads and two Churches, namely *Christ* and the *Pope*, the *Catholick Church* and that of *Rome*.

I KNOW well enough all the Evasions and Distinctions that are invented to countenance this *Anti-christianism*. As that there is a double Head, one of *internal influence* of Grace which Christ is, and the Pope is not; the other of *Rule and Authority*, which the Pope is. But this also is two-fold; *Supream* and *Remote*; or *Immediate* and *Subordinate*; the first is Christ, the latter is the Pope. And there is yet farther a two-fold Head of the Church, the one *invisible* which is Christ; the other *visible* which is the Pope.

NOT to insist on these gross and horrible Figments of a *twofold Head of the Catholick Church* in any sence, which are foreign to the Scripture, foreign to Antiquity, whereof never one word was heard in the Church for Six hundred Years after Christ, deforming the beautiful Spouse of Christ into a Monster; we will allow at present, that the Pope is only the *immediate, visible, subordinate Head of all Rule and Authority to their Church*, which is what they plead for. Then I say that the Church whereof he is the *Head* is his *Body*; that it *holds him as its Head*; that it is *compact together* by the Officers and Orders that depend on him, and receive all their influence of Church-Power and Order from him, which though

though he communicates not by an *internal influence* of Grace and Gifts (alas poor wretch) yet he doth it by *Officers, Offices, Orders and Laws*; so giving Union and Communion unto the whole Body by the effectual working of every joint and part of the *Hierarchy* under him, for its Union, Communion and Edification. This, I say, is the *Anti-christ*, and the *Anti-christian Church-State*, as I shall be at any time ready to maintain.

LET any Man take a due prospect of this *Head*, and this *Body* as related and united by the Bond of their own *Rules, Constitutions and Laws*, acting in worldly Pomp, Splendor and Power with horrid bloody Cruelties against all that oppose it, and he will not fail of an open view of all the Scriptural Lineaments of the *Apostate Anti-christian State of the Church*.

I SAY again, This assigning of the *original* of all Church Order, Union and Communion unto the *Pope of Rome*, investing him therewith as an *Article of Faith*, constituting him thereby the *Head of the Church*; and the Church thereon his *Body*, as it must be if he be its *Head*; so as that from him all power of Order, and for all Acts of Communion, should be derived, returning all in Obedience and Subjection unto him, doth set up a visible, conspicuous *Anti-christian Church State*, in opposition unto Christ and the Catholick Church. But with this sort of Men we deal not at present.

THERE is a pretence unto an *Union of Churches* not derived from the *Papal Headship*. And this consists in the *Canonical subjection of particular Churches* unto a *Diocesan Bishop*; and of such *Bishops* to *Metropolitans*; which though *de facto* it be at present terminated and stated within the bounds of a Nation; yet *de jure* it ought to be extended unto the whole *Catholick Church*.

ACCORDING unto this Principle, the *Union of the Catholick Church* consists in that Order, whereby particular Churches are distributed into *Deanaries, Arch-Deaconries, Exempt Peculiars*, under *Officials*; *Diocesses, Provinces*, under *Metropolitans*, and so by or without *Patriarchs* to avoid the Rock of the *Papacy*, issuing in a *General-Council*, as I suppose. But,

I. TO

1. TO confine the *Union and Communion of the Catholick Church* hereunto, is at present absolutely destructive both of the Church and its Communion. For all *particular Churches*, when they are by a coalescency extended unto those, which are *Provincial or National*, have both *Politically and Ecclesiastically* such bounds fixed unto them, as they cannot pass to carry on Communion unto, and with the Church as *Catholick*, by any Acts and Duties belonging unto their Order: And hereby the Union and Communion of the Church is utterly lost. For the Union of the *Catholick Church*, as such, doth always equally exist, and the Communion of it is always equally in exercise, and can consist in nothing but what doth so exist and is so exercised. Where-ever is the *Catholick Church*, there is the *Communion of Saints*. But nothing of this can be obtained by virtue of this Order.

2. WE enquire at present after such an *Union* as gives particular Churches *Communion* among themselves; which this Order doth not, but absolutely overthrows it; leaving nothing unto them but subjection to *Officers* set over them, who are not of them, according to Rules and Laws of their appointment; which is foreign to the Scripture and Antiquity.

3. THIS Order it self, the only bond of the pretended Union having no *Divine Institution*, especially as to its extent unto the whole *Catholick Church*, nor any intimation in the Scripture, and being utterly impossible to be put in execution or actual *exercise*, no Man can declare what is the *Original or Center* of it, whence it is deduced, and wherein it rests.

HAVING removed these pretences out of our way, we may easily discern wherein the *Union*, and consequently the *Communion* of all particular Churches doth consist, and in the due observation whereof, all that Church-Order which the Lord Christ hath appointed and doth accept, is preserved.

I SAY then, that the *true and only Union* of all particular Churches, consists in that which gives Form, Life and Being unto the *Church Catholick*, with the Addition of what belongs unto them as they are *particular*. And this is, that they have

all *one and the same God and Father, one Lord Jesus Christ, one Faith and one Doctrine of Faith, one hope of their calling or the promised Inheritance, one Regeneration, one Baptism, one Bread and Wine; united unto God and Christ in one Spirit, through the bond of Faith and Love.*

THIS Description, with what is suited thereunto, and explanatory of it, is *all the account* which is given us in the Scripture of the constituting form of the *Catholick Church*, and of the *Union* of particular Churches among themselves. What Church soever fails in the *essential parts* of this Description, or any of them, it is separated from the *Catholick Church*, nor hath either Union or Communion with any true Churches of Christ.

TWO things concur unto the compleating of this *Union* of Churches. (1.) Their *Union* or *Relation* unto Christ. (2.) That which they have *among themselves*.

1. THE Lord Christ himself is the *Original and Spring* of *this Union*, and every particular Church is united unto him as its Head, besides which, with or under which, it hath none. This Relation of the Church unto Christ as its Head, the Apostle expressly affirms to be the foundation and cause of its Union, *Ephes. 4. 15, 16. Col. 2. 19.* the places before quoted. Hereby it is also *in God the Father, 2 Thes. 1. 1.* Or hath God as its Father. And unless this Union be dissolved, unless a Church be *disunited* from Christ, it cannot be so from the *Catholick Church*, nor any true Church of Christ in particular; however, it may be dealt withal by others in the World.

FROM Christ, as the Head and Spring of Union, there proceedeth unto all particular Churches, a *bond of Union*, which is his *Holy Spirit*, acting it self in them by Faith and Love, in and by the ways and means, and for the ends of his appointment.

THIS is the *Kingly, Royal, Beautiful Union* of the Church. Christ, as the only head of Influence and Rule bringing it into a Relation unto himself as his Body, communicating of his *Spirit* unto it, governing it by the *Law of his Word*, enabling it unto all the Duties of Faith, Love and Holiness.

FOR

FOR unto the *compleating of this Union* on the part of the Church, these things are required. (1.) Faith in him, or *holding him as the Head*, in the sincere belief of all things concerning his Person, Office and Doctrine in the Gospel, with whatever belongs thereunto. (2.) *Love unto him* and all that is his. (3.) That *especial Holiness*, whose foundation is Repentance and Effectual Vocation. (4.) The *Observance of his Commands*, as unto all Duties of Divine Worship. These things are essentially requisite unto this Union on the part of the Church. The Reality and Power of them, is the *internal form* of the Church; and the profession of them is its *external form*.

2. THERE concurrerth hereunto an *Union among themselves*, I mean all particular Churches throughout the World, in whom the *Church Catholick* doth Act its Power and Duty. And the Relation that is between these Churches, is that which is termed *Relatio equiparentiæ*, wherein neither of the *Relata* is the first foundation of it; but they are *equal*. It doth not arise from the *Subordination* of one unto another, they being all equal as unto what concerns their Essence and Power. And the bond hereof is that *especial Love* which Christ requirerth among all his Disciples, acting it self unto all the ends of the Edification of the whole Body.

TAKE in the whole, and the Union of Churches consists in *their Relation unto God as their Father, and unto Christ as their only immediate Head of Influence and Rule, with a participation of the same Spirit, in the same Faith and Doctrine of Truth, the same kind of Holiness, the same Duties of Divine Worship, especially the same Mysteries of Baptism and the Supper, the observance of the same Rules or Commands of Christ in all Church-Order, with mutual Love, effectual unto all the ends of their Being and Constitution, or the Edification of the Church Catholick.*

THERE may be *failures* in them or some of them, as unto sundry of these things; there may be *differences* among them about them, arising from the Infirmities, Ignorance and Prejudices of them of whom they do consist, the best knowing here but in part; but whilst the *substance* of them is preserved,

the Union of all Churches, and so of the Catholick Church is preserved.

THIS is that blessed *oneness* which the Lord Christ prayed for so earnestly for his Disciples, that they might be *one in the Father and the Son, one among themselves*, and *made perfect in one*, Joh. 17. 20, 21, 22, 23. without any respect unto that horrid Image of it, which was set up in the latter days of the Church, which all Men were compelled to bow down unto, and Worship, with the fire of *Nebuchadnezzars* Furnace. Of any other Union there is not the least mention in the Scripture.

THIS Union of the Catholick Church in all particular Churches, is always the same, inviolable, unchangeable, comprehending all the Churches in the World at all times; not confinable unto any State or Party, not interruptible by any external form, nor to be prevailed against by the *Gates of Hell*; and all such Disputes about a *Catholick Church*, and its *Union*, as can be so much as *questionable* among them that profess to believe the Gospel, are in direct opposition unto the Prayers and Promises of Jesus Christ. Whilst *Evangelical Faith, Holiness, Obedience unto the Commands of Christ*, and *Mutual Love* abide in any on the Earth, there is the *Catholick Church*; and whilst they are professed, that *Catholick Church is visible*; other *Catholick Church* upon the Earth I believe none; nor any that needs other things unto its Constitution.

THESE things being premised, I proceed unto that which is our present Enquiry, namely, *Wherein the Communion of particular Churches among themselves doth consist*.

THE Communion of Churches, is *their joint actings in the same Gospel Duties towards God in Christ, with their mutual actings towards each other, with respect unto the end of their Institution and Being, which is the Glory of Christ in the Edification of the whole Catholick Church*.

AS unto the actings of the first sort, the ground of them is *Faith*, and therein is the *first Act* of the Communion of Churches. And this Communion in Faith among all the Churches of Christ is two-fold. (1.) *General* in the belief of the same Doctrine of Truth, which is according unto
 Godliness,