

AN ANSWER
TO
DR. STILLINGFLEET'S BOOK
OF THE
UNREASONABLENESS OF SEPARATION;
IN DEFENCE OF THE
VINDICATION OF NONCONFORMISTS
FROM
THE GUILT OF SCHISM.

THE preceding discourse was written, for the most part, before the publishing of the treatise of the Rev. Dr. Stillingfleet, entitled the Unreasonableness of Separation. Yet was it not so without a prospect, at least a probable conjecture, that something of the same kind and tendency with the doctor's book, would be published in defence of the cause which he had undertaken. And I was not without hopes, that the whole of it might have been both finished and communicated unto public view, before any thing farther were attempted against our cause, whereby many mistakes might have been prevented. For as I was willing, yea, very desirous, if it were the will of God, that I might see before my departure out of this world, the cause of conformity, as things are now stated between us and the church of England, pleaded with judgment, moderation, and learning, with the best of those arguments whereby our principles or practices are opposed; so, considering on what hand that work was now like to fall, I thought, '*si pergam a dextra,*' &c. and am of the same mind still. But my expectation being frustrate, of representing our whole cause truly stated, for the prevention of mistakes, by the coming out of this book against all sorts of nonconformists, I thought it convenient to publish

this first part of what I had designed, and to annex unto it the ensuing Defence of the Vindication of Nonconformists, from the Charge of Schism. For although I do know that there is nothing material in the whole book of the Unreasonableness of Separation, but what is obviated or answered beforehand, in the preceding discourse; so as that the principles and demonstrations of them contained therein may easily be applied unto all the reasonings, exceptions, and pleas, in and of that book, to render them useless unto the end designed, which is to reinforce a charge of schism against us; yet I think it necessary to shew how unsuccessful, from the disadvantage of his cause, the doctor hath been in his laborious endeavour to stigmatize all Protestant dissenters from the church of England, with the odious name of schismatics. I have therefore altered nothing of what I had projected, either as to matter or method in this first part of the discourse designed on the whole subject of church affairs. For as I have not found either cause or reason from any thing in the doctor's book to make the least change in what I had written, so my principal design being the instruction and confirmation of them who have no other interest in these things, but only to know and perform their own duty, I was not willing to give them the trouble of perpetual diversions from the matter in hand, which all controversial writings are subject unto. Wherefore, having premised some general considerations of things insisted on by the doctor of no great influence into the cause in hand, and vindicated one principle, a supposition whereof we rely upon, namely, the declension of the churches in the ages after the apostles, especially after the end of the second century, from the primitive institution of their state, rule, and order, in the preface; I shall now proceed to consider and examine distinctly what is opposed unto the defence of our innocency as unto the guilt of schism. But some things must be premised hereunto. As,

1. I shall not depart from the state of the question as laid down by ourselves on our part, as unto our judgment of parochial churches, and our refraining from communion with them. Great pains is taken to prove the several sorts of dissenters to be departed farther from the church of England than they will themselves allow, and on such principles as

are disavowed by them. But no disputations can force our assent unto what we know to be contrary unto our principles and persuasions.

2. We do allow those parochial assemblies, which have a settled unblamable ministry among them, to be true churches, so far as they can pretend themselves so to be; churches, whose original is from occasional cohabitation within precincts limited by the law of the land; churches, without church-power to choose or ordain their officers, to provide for their own continuation, to admit or exclude members, or to reform at any time what is amiss among them; churches, which are in all things under the rule of those who are set over them, by virtue of civil constitutions, foreign unto them, not submitted willingly unto by them, and such for the most part as whose offices and power, have not the least countenance given unto them from the Scripture or the practice of the primitive churches; such as are chancellors, commissaries, officials, and the like; churches in which, for the most part, through a total neglect in evangelical discipline, there is a great degeneracy from the exercise of brotherly love, and the holiness of Christian profession: whatever can be ascribed unto such churches, we willingly allow unto them.

3. We do and shall abide by this principle, that communion in faith and love, with the administration of the same sacraments, is sufficient to preserve all Christians from the guilt of schism, although they cannot communicate together in some rites and rules of worship and order. As we will not admit of any presumed notions of schism, and inferences from them, nor allow that any thing belongs thereunto, which is not contrary to gospel love, rules, and precepts, in the observance of Christ's institutions; so we affirm and shall maintain that men, abiding in the principles of communion mentioned, walking peaceably among themselves, refraining communion with others, peaceably, wherein they dissent from them, ready to join with other churches in the same confession of faith, and in the defence of it, and to concur with them in promoting all the real ends of Christian religion, not judging the church-state of others, so as to renounce all communion with them, as condemning them to be no churches; continuing in the occasional ex-

ercise of all duties of love towards them and their members, are unduly charged with the guilt of schism, to the disadvantage of the common interest of the Protestant religion amongst us.

4. Whereas there are two parts of the charge against us, the one for refraining from total communion with parochial assemblies, which what it is, and wherein it doth consist, hath been before declared; the other for gathering ourselves into another church-order in particular congregations, as the reasons and grounds of the things themselves are distinct, so must they have a distinct consideration, and be examined distinctly and apart.

These things being premised, I shall proceed to examine what the reverend doctor hath farther offered, against our former vindication of the nonconformists from the charge of schism; and I desire the reader to take notice, that we delight not in these contentions, that we desire nothing but mutual love and forbearance; but we are compelled by all rules of Scripture and natural equity, to abide in this defence of ourselves. For whereas we are charged with a crime, and that aggravated as one of the most heinous that men can incur the guilt of in this world, and to justify men in severities against us; being not in the least convinced in our consciences of any accessions thereunto, or of any guilt on the account of it, I suppose the doctor himself will not think it reasonable that we should altogether neglect the protection of our own innocency.

In the method whereinto he hath cast his discourse, he begins with the reinforcement of his charge, against our refraining from total communion with parochial assemblies. If the reader will be pleased to take a review of what is said in the preceding discourse unto this head of our charge in several chapters, he will easily perceive, that either the reasonings of the doctor reach not the cause in hand, or are insufficient to justify his intention, which I must say, though I am unwilling to repeat it, is by all ways and means, to load us with the guilt and disreputation of schism.

That which I first meet withal directly unto this purpose is, part ii. p. 157. The forbearance of communion with the church of England in its parochial assemblies (that is, in the way and manner before described) he opposeth with two

arguments. The first respects those who allow occasional communion with parochial churches, but will not comply with them in that which is constant and absolute. For he says, 'If the first be lawful, the latter is necessary, from the commands we have to preserve the peace and unity of the church. And the not doing it,' he says, 'is one of the provoking sins of the nonconformists;' but whether it be a sin or no, is 'sub judice;' that it is provoking unto some is sufficiently evident. I shall not make this any part of my contest. Those who have so expressed their charity, as to give countenance unto this pretended advantage, will easily free themselves from the force of this inference. For it must be remembered, that this constant total communion doth not only include a conscientious observance of all things appointed to be done by the rules or canons in those assemblies, but a renunciation also of all other ways and means of edification by joint communion, as unlawful and evil. And it will be hard to prove that on a concession of the lawfulness of communion in some acts of divine worship, it will be necessary for men to oblige themselves unto total constant communion, with a renunciation and condemnation of all other ways and means of joint edification. It may also be lawful to do a thing with some respects and limitations, at some times, which it may not be lawful to do absolutely and always. It may be necessary from outward circumstances to do that sometimes which is lawful in itself, though not necessary from itself; it can never be necessary to do that which is unlawful. Of the first sort they esteem occasional communion, and the other of the latter.

Some time is spent in taking off an exception unto this inference from the practice of our Saviour, who had occasional communion with the Jews in the temple and synagogues, which he proves to have been constant and perpetual, and not occasional only, and that he prescribed the same practice unto his disciples. But I think this labour might have been spared. For there is nothing more clear and certain, than that our Lord Jesus Christ did join with the Jews in the observance of God's institutions among them, on the one hand; and on the other, that he never joined with them in the observance of their own traditions and pharisaical impositions, but warned all his disciples to avoid them

and refuse them, whose example we desire to follow; for concerning all such observances in the church, he pronounced that sentence, 'Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.'

But the doctor proceeds unto a second argument, p. 163. to the same purpose, from, as he calls it, the particular force of that text, Phil. iii. 16. 'As far as we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, mind the same things.' This is the text which gave the first occasion unto this whole dispute; the doctor's intention is so indefensible from this place, that I thought however he might persist in the defence of the cause he had undertaken, he would have forbore from seeking countenance unto it from these words of the apostle. But it is fallen out otherwise, and I am here in the first place called unto an account, for the exceptions I put in unto his application of these words of the apostle, in my Vindication of the Nonconformists.

I will spare the reader as much as is possible in the repetition of things formerly spoken, and the transcription of his words or my own, without prejudice unto the cause itself.

After a reflection of some obscurity and intricacy on my discourse, he repeats my sense of the words according unto his apprehension under four heads; about which I shall not contend, seeing whether he hath apprehended my mind aright or no, or expressed the whole of what I declared, belongs not unto the merit of the cause in hand. Nor indeed do I yet know directly, what he judgeth this text doth prove, or what it is that he infers from it, though I know well enough what it is designed to give countenance unto, and what is the application that is made of it. And therefore he issues his whole dispute about it in this inquiry, How far the apostle's rule hath an influence on this case. But whosoever shall come unto a sedate consideration of this text and context, without prejudice, without preconceived opinions, without interest in parties or causes, will judge it to be a matter of art to apply them unto the present controversy, as unto the imposition of an arbitrary rule of walking in churches, on all that are presumed to belong unto them.

But to clear these things, the doctor proposeth three things to be debated.

‘1. Whether the apostle speaks of different opinions, or different practices.

‘2. Whether the rule he gives be mutual forbearance.

‘3. How far the apostle’s rule hath an influence into this case.’

The two first of these belong not at all unto the present argument, and the last is but faintly proposed and pursued, though it be the foundation of his whole fabric. The reader, if he will put himself to so much trouble, as to compare my former discourse with what is here offered in answer or opposition unto it, he will easily see that nothing is pleaded, that may abate the force of what was insisted on; for indeed the discourse of these things consists for the most part in diversions from the argument in hand, whereby an appearance is made of various arguings, and the proof of sundry things, which belong not unto the case in hand.

Without any long deductions, artificial insinuations, or diverting reasonings, without wresting the text or context, these things are plain and evident in them:

1. A supposition of differences among believers, in and about opinions and practices, relating unto religion and the worship of God. So is at present between us and those of the church of England by whom we are opposed.

2. In this state, whilst these differences do continue, there is one common rule, according unto which those who so dissent among themselves, are to walk in the things wherein they are agreed. Such is the rule of faith and love, which we all assent unto and are agreed in.

3. This rule cannot consist in a precise determination of the things in difference, with an authoritative prescription of uniformity in opinions and practice, because it is directed unto, upon a supposition of the continuation of those differences between believers.

4. That during the continuation of these differences, or different apprehensions and practices, whilst on all hands they use the means of coming unto the knowledge of the truth in all things, that they should walk in love, mutually forbearing one another, in those things wherein they differed.

Until it be manifested that these things are not the design of the context, and to contain the sense of the words, they are not only useless unto the doctor’s design, but opposite

unto it, and destructive of it. But nothing is here attempted unto that purpose.

To draw any argument from these words applicable unto his design, it must be proved,

1. That besides the rule of faith, love, and worship, given by divine institution, and obligatory unto all the disciples of Christ or all churches, in all times and ages, that the apostles gave a rule concerning outward rites, ceremonies, modes of worship, feasts, and fastings, ecclesiastical government, liturgies, and the like, unto which all believers ought to conform, on the penalty of being esteemed schismatics, and dealt withal accordingly. For this only is that wherein we are concerned.

2. That because the apostles made such a rule (which we know not what it is, or what is become of it), that the guides of the church (and that in such a church-state as the apostles knew nothing of) have power to frame such a rule as that described, and to impose the observation of it on all believers, on the penalties before mentioned.

It is manifest that no advantage unto the cause of imposition and uniformity, as it is stated at present, can be taken from these words of the apostle, unless these two things be contained in them. But that either of them are so, our author doth not say, nor go about to prove, in his large discourse on this place. I might therefore forbear any farther examination of it, without the least disadvantage unto our cause. But that I may not seem to wave the consideration of any thing that is pretended material, I shall inquire into the particulars of it.

He proceeds therefore to answer his own queries, which he judged conducing unto his purpose. The first of them is, 'Whether the apostle speaks of different principles or of different practices.' And I find nothing in the discourse ensuing, that hath the least respect unto this inquiry, until towards the close of it, where he grants that different apprehensions are intended, such as were accompanied with different practices; but in order hereunto he gives us a large account of the scope of the place, and the design of the apostle in it. The substance of it is, That the apostle treats concerning Judaical seducers; that the things in difference were the different apprehensions of men about the law, its

ceremonies and worship, with the continuation of them, and the different practices that ensued thereon.

Be it so; what is our or his concernment herein? For it is most certain the apostle designed not the imposition of these things on the churches of the Gentiles, nor did urge them unto a uniformity in them, but declared their liberty from any obligation unto them, and advised them to stand fast in that liberty, whatever others did practise themselves, or endeavour to impose on them. What this conduceth unto his purpose I cannot understand.

But on the occasion of that expression, ‘being otherwise minded,’ he demands, ‘What sense can Dr. Owen here put upon the being otherwise minded; otherwise than what? As many as be perfect be thus minded, to pursue your main end; but if any be otherwise minded; did any think they ought not to mind chiefly their great end? that is incredible. Therefore the apostle must be understood of somewhat about which there were then very different apprehensions; and that it is certain there were, about the law, among Christian churches.’

Neither do I well understand these things, or what is intended in them. For,

1. I never gave occasion to him or any else to think, that I would affix such a sense unto the apostle’s words, as if they gave an allowance to men to be otherwise minded, as unto the pursuit of their main end, of living to God in faith and love, with mutual peace among themselves.

2. What then do I intend by being otherwise minded? even the same that he doth, and nothing else, namely, different apprehensions about some things in religion, and particularly those concerning the law and its ceremonies. For,

3. Let it be supposed that the apostle in particular intends dissensions about the law, and the observance of its institutions, yet he doth not determine the case from the especial circumstances of that difference, so adjudging the truth unto one of the parties at variance; but from a general rule how the disciples of Christ ought to deport themselves towards one another, during the continuation of such differences. But,

4. The truth is, the apostle hath dismissed the case proposed in the beginning of the chapter; ver. 1—3, &c.

and upon the occasion of his expression of his own voluntary relinquishment and renunciation of all the privileges which the Jews boasted in, and of his attainments thereon in the mysteries of the gospel, ver. 12—14. he gives a general direction for the walking of all Christians, in the several degrees and measures of their attainments in the same kind. And herein he supposeth two things. (1.) That there were things, all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel concerning the person, offices, and grace of Christ, which they had all in common attained unto. ‘Whereunto we have already attained;’ we, all of us in general. (2.) That in some things there were different apprehensions and practices amongst them, which hindered not their agreement in what they had attained; ‘if any one be otherwise minded;’ one than another. We that are perfect and those which are weak, let us walk by the same rule.

Wherefore, although I cannot discern how any thing in this discourse hath the least influence into the case in hand, yet to give a little more light unto the context, and to evidence its unserviceableness unto the doctor’s intention, I shall give a brief account of the Judaical teachers of those days.

The Jews were by this time distributed into three sorts:

1. Such as being obdurate in their unbelief and rejection of the person of Christ, opposed, persecuted, and blasphemed the gospel in all places. Thus was it with the generality of the nation. And the teachers of this sort advanced the excellency, necessity, and usefulness of the law, in contradiction unto Christ and the gospel. These the apostle describes, 1 Thess. ii. 13—15. The Jews, ‘who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God, and are contrary unto all men, forbidding us to speak unto the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway, for the wrath is come upon them unto the uttermost.’

2. Such as professing faith in Christ Jesus and obedience unto the gospel, yet were of the mind that the whole law of Moses, was not only to be continued and observed among the Jews, but also that it was to be imposed on the Gentiles who were converted unto the faith. They thought the gospel did not erect a new church-state with a new kind

of worship, but only was a peculiar way of proselyting men into Judaism; against which the apostle disputes in his Epistle unto the Hebrews, especially in the seventh and eighth chapters. The teachers of this sort greatly troubled the churches, even after the declaration of the mind of the Holy Ghost in these things by the apostles, Acts xv. Those who continued obstinate in this persuasion, became afterward to be Ebionites and Nazarenes, as they were called, wholly forsaking the Christian church of the Gentiles. These were generally of the sect of the Pharisees, and seem to be the least sort of the three; for,

3. There were others, who acquiescing in the liberty of the Gentiles, declared by the apostles, Acts xv. yet judged themselves, and all other circumcised Jews, obliged unto the observation of the law and its institutions. These legal observances were of two sorts :

(1.) Such as were confined and limited unto the temple, and unto the land of Canaan; and,

(2.) Such as might be observed any where among the nations; they acted accordingly. Those who lived at Jerusalem adhered unto the temple worship; the whole church there did so. Their judgment in these things is declared, Acts xxi. 20, 21. ‘Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law; and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying, That they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.’ They were not at all offended with Paul, that he did not impose the law on the Gentiles, ver. 25. but only that (as they had been informed) he taught the Jews to forsake the law, and to reject all the institutions of it. This they thought unlawful for them. And this they spoke principally with respect unto the temple service, as appears by the advice given unto Paul on this occasion, ver. 23, 24. Those who lived amongst the Gentiles, knew that there was no obligation on them, unto the sacrifices and especial duties of the temple; but continued only in the observance of such rites and institutions about meats, washings, days, new-moons, sabbaths, and the like, which the Gentiles were freed from.

Hence there were two sorts of churches in those days

(if not three) in separation, more or less, from the apostate church of the unbelieving Jews, which yet was not finally taken away.

1. The church of Jerusalem, and those churches of Judea which were of the same mind and communion with them. These continued in the observance of all the law, and of the services of the temple, being allowed them by the apostles.

2. Those of the Jews who lived in the nations, and observed all the rites of the law, which were not confined unto the land of Canaan. And,

3. The churches of the Gentiles which observed none of these things, forbearing only their liberty in one or two instances, not to give the other offence. Some differences and disputes happened sometimes about these things and the practice of them, whereon Peter himself fell into a mistake; Gal. ii. 14. And there seems to have been great disputes about them at Rome; chap. xiv. Yea, it is judged that according unto their different apprehensions of these things, there were two churches at Rome; one of the circumcision, the other of the Gentiles, walking in distinct communion each by themselves. However, the different rule of this kind that was between the churches of Jerusalem and Antioch is sufficiently declared, Acts xv. the one church continuing zealous of the law, and the other rejoiced for the consolation of being delivered from it; ver 31. Yet was there no schism between these churches, but a constant communion in faith and love. Such differences in opinions and practices were not yet formed into an interest, obliging men to condemn them as schismatics, who differ from them. For, not to speak of what orders and rules for decency, particular churches may make by common consent among themselves, to make the observation of arbitrary institutions, not prescribed in the Scripture, upon many churches, to be the rule of communion in them and between them, which whosoever observe not, are to be esteemed guilty of schism, which Victor, bishop of Rome, first attempted, is contrary to the rules of the Scripture, to the principles of Christian faith, love, and liberty, to the example of the apostles, hath no countenance given unto it in the primitive churches, and will certainly make our differences endless.

I judge that in the beginning of the chapter the apostle intends those of the first sort, and that as well because he calls them 'dogs' and the 'concision,' which answers unto the account he gives of them, 1 Thess. ii. 14, 15. as also because he speaks of them as those who advanced the pretended privileges of Judaism, absolutely against Christ, the gospel, and the righteousness of God revealed therein. Hereon, in opposition unto them, he declares that they had nothing to boast of, but what he himself had a right unto as well as they, and which he had voluntarily relinquished and renounced for Christ and the gospel, wherein he testifies what he had attained. If any one do judge, that he intend those of the second sort, I will not contend about it, because of the severity of expression which he useth concerning them; Gal. v. 12. But discharging the consideration of them, the direction in this place concerns those of the third sort only, answering unto that which was prescribed and followed by the apostles in all places, namely, that there should be mutual forbearance, in some difference of practice between them and the Gentile believers.

His second inquiry, p. 168. is, 'Whether the rule which the apostle lays down, be only a rule of mutual forbearance.' I do not find that I said any where that it was only a rule of mutual forbearance, but that the words of the apostle do enjoin a mutual forbearance among those who are differently minded; p. 26. And I must here say, which I desire to do without offence, that there is no need of any farther answer unto that part of the doctor's discourse, but a transcription of that which he pretends to oppose; for what is spoken unto that end, consists in a perpetual diversion from the argument in hand.

I did not before precisely determine, what was the rule which the apostle doth intend; only proved sufficiently, that it was not such a rule as is pleaded for by the doctor. But the meaning of the phrase and expression is plain enough; τῷ αὐτῷ στοιχεῖν κανόνι; it is directly used once more by the apostle, Gal. vi. 16. ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τοῦτῳ στοιχήσουσιν; 'as many as walk according to this rule;' and what rule is that? namely, what as unto the substance of it he lays down in the words foregoing, ver. 14, 15. 'God forbid that I should glory save in

the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; and as many as walk according unto this rule,' that is, the rule of faith in Christ alone for justification and sanctification, without trusting unto, or resting on, any of those things which were in difference among them. The places in scope, design, and manner of expression, are parallel. For this is plainly that which he pleads for in this context; namely, that justification and sanctification are to be obtained alone through Christ, and faith in him by the gospel, without the least aid and assistance from the things that were in difference among them. Wherefore, not farther to contend in so plain a matter, the rule here intended by the apostle, is no book of canons, but the analogy of faith, or the rule of faith in Christ as declared in the gospel, in opposition unto all other ways and means of justification, sanctification, and salvation, which we ought to walk in a compliance withal, and that with love and forbearance towards them that in things not corruptive or destructive of this rule, do differ from us.

But, saith our author, 'The sense, according to Dr. Owen, is this; that those who are agreed in the substantials of religion, should go on and do their duty, without regarding lesser differences.' Abate that expression of, 'without regarding lesser differences,' which is not mine, and supply in the room of it, 'mutually forbearing each other in lesser differences;' and be it so that it is my sense; at first view it looks as like the sense of the apostle as any man need desire. But, saith the doctor, 'This sense is uncertain, because it sets no bounds to differences, and supposeth the continuance of such differences among them, which he designed to prevent, by persuading them so often in this epistle to be of one mind. Besides, the differences then on foot were none of the smaller differences of opinions, but that which they differed about, was urged on the one hand as necessary to salvation, and opposed on the other as pernicious and destructive unto it.' And again, p. 169. 'Let Dr. Owen name any other smaller differences of opinions which might be an occasion of the apostle's giving such a rule of mutual forbearance.'

I answer briefly, 1. The sense is very certain, because it gives the due bounds unto the differences supposed; namely, such as concern not the substantials of religion.

2. It doth suppose the continuance of these differences, because the apostle doth suppose the same; 'if any one be yet otherwise minded;' which hinders no kind of endeavours to compose or remove them.

3. The differences intended were not those between them who imposed the observation of the law on the Gentiles as necessary unto salvation, and those by whom they were opposed; for the apostle gives no such rules as this in that case.

4. I do expressly assign those lesser differences which the direction here is applicable unto, namely, those between the blind sort of Jews mentioned before, and the Gentile believers; which the apostle states and applies the same rule unto, Rom. xiv. What remains in answer unto this second inquiry, doth proceed on mistaken suppositions, and concerns not the case under consideration.

Page 170. he proceeds unto his last inquiry, which indeed is alone pertinent unto his purpose; namely, 'How this rule hath an influence on our case.'

What this rule is, concerning which this inquiry is made, he doth not declare. Either the precise signification of the rule in this place, or the direction given with respect unto that rule, may be intended; that is, the general rule of our walking in our profession of the gospel, or the especial rule given by the apostle with respect thereunto, in the case under consideration, may be so intended. If by the rule in the first sense, he understands a rule, canon, or command, establishing a church-state, with rites and modes of worship, with ceremonies, orders, and government, nowhere appointed in the Scripture or of divine revelation, it is openly evident that there was no such rule then, that no such is here intended; but that only whereunto the grace of the gospel in mercy and peace is annexed, as Gal. vi. 16. which is not such a rule. If he intended by it, a direction, that where there are different apprehensions in matters of less importance, not breaking in on the analogy of faith, accompanied with different practices, so far as they are necessary from those different apprehensions, the major part of those

among whom the differences are, should compel the minor, to forbear their practice according unto their apprehensions, and comply with them in all things, on all sorts of penalties, if they refuse so to do, it will be hard to find such a direction in these words. Yet this must be the rule, and this the direction that can give any countenance unto the doctor's cause. But if by this rule, the analogy of faith, as before described, be intended, and the direction be to walk according to it, with mutual forbearance and love, as unto things of lesser moment, then this rule hath little advantageous influence into it.

But then saith the doctor, 'So far as men agree they are bound to join together, as to opinion or communion.' I grant it (though it be not proved from this place) where such a communion is required of them regularly, and in a way of duty. And,

(2.) Saith he, 'That the best Christians are bound to unite with others, though of lower attainments, and to keep within the same rule.' No doubt; howbeit the apostle speaks of no such things in this place, but only that we should all walk according unto the same rule, in what we have all attained. Yea, but,

(3.) 'This rule takes in all such orders, which are lawful and judged necessary to hold the members of a Christian society together.' What rule doth this? Who shall appoint the orders intended? Who shall judge of their necessity? Are they of the institution of Christ or his apostles? Are they determined to be necessary in the Scripture, the rule of faith? If so, we are agreed; but if by these orders he intends such as men do or may at any time, under pretence of church authority, invent and impose as necessary, making alterations in the original state and rule of the church, as also in its worship and discipline, it will be strange to me, if he can find them out, either in the rule here mentioned, or the direction given with reference unto it; seeing such a practice seems to be plainly condemned in the words themselves. And it is known that this pretended power of rule or canon making for the unity of the church, was that which at length ruined all churches in their state, order, and worship; if such a ruin be acknowledged to have befallen them in the Roman apostacy.

He therefore objects out of my discourse, p. 171. ‘Let the apostle’s rule be produced with any probability of proof to be his, and we are all ready to subscribe and conform unto it.’ To which he replies, ‘This is the apostle’s rule to go as far as they can, and if they can go no farther, to sit down quietly and wait for farther instruction, and not to break the peace of the church, upon present dissatisfaction, nor to gather new churches out of others, upon supposition of higher attainments.’

Ans. 1. Upon a supposition that those who make and impose these new unscriptural orders, are the church, and that as the church they have authority so to make and impose them; if this be not the rule of the apostle, I believe some men judge it ought so to have been. But,

2. The apostle’s rule is not, that we should go as far as we can, as though there were any thing of dispute and difficulty in the matter; but that so far as we have attained we should walk according to the same rule.

3. He doth not intimate any thing about breaking the peace of the church, but only what would do so, by an imposition on one another, in differences of lesser moment, whilst the general rule of faith and love is attended unto.

4. To be quiet and wait for farther instruction, is the direction given unto both parties, whilst the differences did continue between them; and that in opposition unto mutual impositions.

5. A church that is really so, or so esteemed, may break the peace with its own members, and others, as well as they with it; and where the fault is, must be determined by the causes of what is done.

6. For what is added about gathering of churches, it shall be considered in its proper place. But as unto the application of these things unto the present case, there lies in the bottom of them such an unproved presumption of their being the church, that is, according unto divine institution (for in their being so in any other sense we are not concerned) of their church-power and authority, by whom such orders and rules are made as we can by no means admit of.

I can more warrantably give this as the apostle’s rule, than that of our author; ‘What you have attained unto in the knowledge of the doctrine and mysteries of the gospel,

walk together in holy communion of faith and love ; but take heed that you multiply not new causes of divisions and differences by inventing and imposing new orders in divine worship, or the rule of the church, casting them out, who agree with you in all things of divine revelation and institution.'

He adds from my words, 'If the rule reach our case, it must be such as requires things to be observed, as were never divinely appointed, as national churches, ceremonies, and modes of worship ;' to which he replies, 'And so this rule doth in order unto peace, require the observation of such things, which although they be not particularly commanded of God, yet are enjoined by lawful authority, provided that they be not unlawful in themselves, nor repugnant unto the word of God.'

Ans. 1. Let the reader, if he please, consult the place whence these words are taken in my discourse, and he will find this evasion obviated.

2. What is intended by this rule ? is it the rule given by the apostle ? Who that reads the words can possibly pretend unto any such conception of their meaning ? If he understand a rule of his own, I know not what it may or may not include.

3. I deny, and shall for ever deny, that the rule here intended by the apostle doth give the least countenance unto the invention and imposition of things not divinely instituted, not prescribed, not commanded in the word, on the pretence that those who so invent and impose them, judge them lawful, and that they have authority so to do.

He objects again unto himself out of my discourse, that 'The apostles never gave any such rules themselves about outward modes of worship, with ceremonies, feasts, fasts, liturgies,' &c. Whereunto he replies, 'What then ?' I say then,

1. It had been happy for Christians and Christian religion, if those who pretended to be their successors, had followed their example, and made no such rules at all ; that they would not have thought themselves wiser than they, or more careful for the good of the church, or better acquainted with the mind of Christ in these things than they were. For that multiplication of rules, laws, canons, about the things

mentioned, and others of an alike nature, which the apostles never gave any example of, or encouragement unto, which afterward ensued, hath been a principal means of altering the state of the church from its original institution, of corrupting its worship, administering occasion unto scandal and endless strifes.

2. If the apostles gave no such rules themselves, it may be concluded safely, that it was because in their judgment no such rule was to be given. Other reason hereof cannot be assigned; for if it might have been done, according to the mind of Christ, and by virtue of the commission which they had from him, innumerable evils might have been prevented by the doing it. They foresaw what differences would arise in the church, what divisions the darkness and corrupt lusts of men would cast them into, about such things as these, and probably knew much whereunto the mystery of iniquity tended; yet would they not appoint any arbitrary rules about things not ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, which might have given some bounds unto the inclinations of men, in making and multiplying rules of their own, unto the ruin of the church.

3. Then, I say, we beg the pardon of all who concern themselves herein, that we scruple the complying with such rules, in religion and the worship of God, as the apostles thought not meet to appoint or ordain.

But he adds, 'It is sufficient that they gave this general rule, that all lawful things are to be done for the church's peace.'

Ans. What is to be done for the church's peace we shall afterward consider. 'To be done,' is intended of acts of religion in the worship of God. I say, then, the apostles never gave any such rule as that pretended. The rule they gave was, that all things which Christ hath commanded, were to be done and observed, and for the doing of any thing else, they gave no rule. Especially they gave not such a large rule as this, that might serve the turn and interest of the worst of men, in imposing on the church, whatever they esteemed lawful, as (not by virtue of any rule of the apostles, but in an open rejection of all they gave) it afterward fell out in the church. This is a rule, which would do the work to the purpose of all that have the reputation of governors

in the church, be it the pope, or who it will. For they are themselves the sole judges of what is lawful; the people, as it is pretended, understand nothing of these things. Whatever therefore they have a mind to introduce into the worship of God, and to impose on the practice of men therein, is to be done by virtue of this apostolical rule, for the church's peace, provided they judge it lawful; and surely no pope was ever yet so stark mad, as to impose things in religion, which he himself judged unlawful. Besides, things may be lawful in themselves, that is, morally, which yet it is not lawful to introduce into the worship of God, because not expedient, nor for edification; yea, things may be lawful to be done sometimes, on some occasions, in the worship of God, which yet it would be unlawful to impose by virtue of a general binding rule for all times and seasons. Instances may be multiplied in each kind. Therefore I say the apostles never gave this rule; they opened no such door unto arbitrary imposition; they laid no such yoke on the necks of the disciples, which might prove heavier, and did so, than that of the Jewish ceremonies which they had taken away; namely, that they were to do and observe all that should by their rulers be imposed on them as lawful in their judgment. This sovereignty over their consciences was reserved by the apostles unto the authority of Christ alone, and their obedience was required by them, only unto his commands. This is that which I see some would be at. To presume themselves to be the church, at least the only rulers and governors of it; to assume to themselves alone the judgment of what is lawful, and what is unlawful to be observed in the worship of God; to avow a power to impose what they please on all churches, pretended to be under their command, so that they judge it lawful, be it never so useless or trifling, if it hath no other end but to be an instance of their authority, and then assert that all Christian people must without farther examination submit quietly unto this state of things, and comply with it, unless they will be esteemed damned schismatics. But it is too late to advance such principles a second time.

He adds from my paper, or as my sense, 'The apostles gave rules inconsistent with any determining rule, viz. of mutual forbearance;' Rom. xiv. 'But then,' saith he, 'the

meaning must be, that whatever differences happen among Christians, there must be no determination either way. But this is directly contrary to the decree of the apostles at Jerusalem, upon the difference that happened in the Christian churches.' But they are not my words which he reports. I said not, that the apostles gave rules inconsistent with any determining rule; but with such a rule, and the imposition of the things contained in it, on the practice of men in things not determined (that is, whilst differences about them do continue) as he contends for. And,

(1.) Notwithstanding this rule of forbearance given by the apostle expressly, Rom. xiv. yet as unto the right and truth in the things wherein men are at difference, every private believer is to determine of them so far as he is able in his own mind, every one is to be fully persuaded in his own mind in such things, so far as his own practice is concerned.

(2.) The church wherein such differences do fall out, may doctrinally determine of the truth in them, as it is the ground and pillar of truth; supposing them to be of such weight, as that the edification of the church is concerned in them. For otherwise there is no need of any such determination, but every one may be left unto his own liberty. There are differences at this day in the church of England, in doctrine and practice, some of them, in my judgment of more importance than those between the same church and us; yet it doth not think it necessary to make any determination of them, no not doctrinally.

(3.) If the church wherein such differences fall out be not able in and of itself to make a doctrinal determination of such differences, they may and ought to crave the counsel and advice of other churches, with whom they walk in communion in faith and love. And so it was in the case whereof an account is given us, Acts xv. The determination or decree there made concerning the necessary observance of the Jewish rites by the Gentiles converted unto the faith, by the apostles, elders, and brethren, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost as his mind was revealed in the Scripture, gives not the least countenance unto the making and imposing such a rule on all churches and their members, as is contended for.

For, (1.) It was only a doctrinal determination, without imposition on the practice of any.

(2.) It was a determination against impositions directly. And whereas it is said, that it was a determination contrary to the judgment of the imposers, which shews, that the rule of forbearance where conscience is alleged both ways, is no standing rule; I grant that it was contrary to the judgment of the imposers, but imposed nothing on them, nor was their practice concerned in that erroneous judgment. They were not required to do any thing contrary to their own judgment; and the not doing whereof did reflect on their own consciences. Wherefore, the whole rule given by the apostle, and the whole determination made, is, that no impositions be made on the consciences or practice of the disciples of Christ, in things relating to his worship, but what were necessary by virtue of divine institution. They added hereunto, that the Gentiles enjoying this liberty, ought to use it without offence; and were at liberty by virtue of it, to forbear such things, as wherein they had, or thought they had, a natural liberty, in case they gave offence by the use of them. And the apostles who knew the state of things in the minds of the Jews, and all other circumstances, give an instance in the things which at that season were to be so forborn. And whereas this determination was not absolute and obligatory on the whole case unto all churches, namely, whether the Mosaical law were to be observed among Christians, but some churches were left unto their own judgment and practice, who esteemed it to be still in force, as the churches of the Jews, and others left unto their own liberty and practice also, who judged it not to oblige them, both sides or parties being bound to continue communion among them in faith and love, there is herein a perpetual establishment of the rule of mutual forbearance in such cases; nothing being condemned but impositions on one another; nothing commended but an abstinence from the use of liberty in the case of scandal or offence. I had therefore reason to say, that the false apostles were the only imposers, that is, of things not necessary by virtue of any divine institution. And if the author insinuate, that the true apostles were such imposers also, because of the determination they made of this difference, he will fail in his

proof of it. It is true they imposed on, or charged the consciences of men with the observance of all the institutions and commands of Christ ; but of other things none at all.

The last things which he endeavours an answer unto on this occasion lies in these words. ‘The Jewish Christians were left unto their own liberty, provided they did not impose on others ; and the dissenters at this day desire no more than the Gentile church did, viz. not to be imposed on to observe those things which they are not satisfied it is the mind of Christ should be imposed on them.’ So is my sense, in the places referred unto, reported. Nor shall I contend about it, so as that the last clause be changed ; for my words are not, ‘they are not satisfied it is the mind of Christ that they should be imposed on them ;’ but ‘they were not satisfied it is the mind of Christ they should observe.’ This respects the things themselves, the other only their imposition. And one reason against the imposition opposed is, that the things themselves imposed, are such as the Lord Christ would not have us observe ; because not appointed by himself.

But hereunto he answers two things.

1. ‘That it was agreed by all the governors of the Christian church, that the Jewish Christians should be left unto their own liberty, out of respect unto the law of Moses, and out of regard unto the peace of the Christian church, which otherwise might have been extremely hazarded.’ But,

(1.) The governors of the Christian church which made the determination insisted on, were the apostles themselves.

(2.) There was no such determination made, that the Jews should be left unto their own liberty in this matter ; but there was only a connivance at their inclination to bear their old yoke for a season ; the determination was only on the other hand, that no imposition of it should be made on the Gentiles.

(3.) The determination itself was no act of church government or power, but a doctrinal declaration of the mind of the Holy Ghost.

(4.) It is well that church governors once judged that impositions in things not necessary were to be forbore for the sake of the peace of the church ; others, I hope, may in due time be of the same mind.

2. He says, 'The false apostles imposing on the Gentile Christians had two circumstances in it, which extremely alter their case from that of our dissenters.' For,

(1.) 'They were none of their lawful governors, but went about as seducers, drawing away the disciples of the apostles from them.' It seems then,

(1.) That those who are lawful governors, or pretend themselves so to be, may impose what they please without control, as they did in the papacy, and the councils of it. But,

(2.) Their imposition was merely doctrinal, wherein there was no pretence of any act of government or governing power; which made it less grievous, than that which the dissenters have suffered under. Were things no otherwise imposed on us, we should bear them more easily.

(2.) Saith he, 'They imposed the Jewish rites as necessary to salvation, and not merely as indifferent things;' and the truth is, so long as they judged them so to be, they are more to be excused in their doctrinal impositions of them, than others are, who by an act of government, fortified with I know not how many penalties, do impose things which themselves esteem indifferent; and those on whom they are imposed, do judge to be unlawful.

Whereas he adds, 'That he hath considered all things that are material in my discourse which seem to take off the force of the argument drawn from this text;' I am not of his mind, nor I believe will any indifferent person be so, who shall compare what I wrote therein, with his exceptions against it; though I acknowledge it is no easy thing to discover wherein the force of the pretended argument doth lie. That we must walk according unto the same rule in what we have attained; that wherein we differ, we must wait on God for teaching and instruction; that the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, determined from the Scriptures, or the mind of the Holy Ghost therein, that the Jewish ceremonies should not be imposed on the Gentile churches and believers; and that thereon those churches continued in communion with each other, who did, and did not observe those ceremonies, are the only principles which in truth the doctor hath to proceed upon. To infer from these principles and propositions, that there is a national church

of divine institution, for what is not so, hath no church-power properly so called; the nature of its power, being determined by the authority of its institution or erection. That this church hath power in its governors and rulers to invent new orders, ceremonies, and rites of worship, new canons for the observation of sundry things in the rule of the church and worship of God, which have no spring nor cause but their own invention and prescription, and is authorized to impose the observation of them on all particular churches and believers who never gave their consent unto their invention or prescription; and hereon to declare them all to be wicked schismatics, who yield not full obedience unto them in these things, it requires a great deal of art and skill, in the managers of the argument.

SECT. II.

PART ii. sect. 21. p. 176. our author proceeds to renew his charge of schism or sinful separation against those, 'who though they agree with us,' saith he, 'in the substantials of religion, yet deny any communion with our church to be lawful.' But apprehending that the state of the question here insinuated will not be admitted, and that it would be difficult to find them out, who deny any communion with the church of England to be lawful; he adds, that he doth not speak of 'any improper acts of communion, which Dr. Owen calls communion in faith and love; which they allow to the church of England.' But why the acts hereof are called 'improper acts of communion,' I know not. Add unto faith and love, the administration of the same sacraments, with common advice in things of common concernment, and it is all the communion that the true churches of Christ have among themselves in the whole world. Yea, this church communion is such, as that,

1. Where it is not, there is no evangelical communion at all. Whatever acts of worship or church-order men may agree in the practice of, if the foundation of that agreement be not laid in a joint communion in faith and love, they are neither accepted with God, nor profitable unto the souls of men. For,

2. These are the things, namely, faith and love, which enliven all joint duties of church-order and worship, are the life and soul of it; and how they should be only improperly that, which they alone make other things to be properly, I cannot understand.

3. Where there is no defect in these things, namely, in faith and love, the charge of schism on dissenting in things of lesser moment, is altogether unreasonable. It is to be desired, that an overweening of our differences, make us not overlook the things wherein we are agreed. This is one of the greatest evils that attend this controversy. Men are forced by their interest, to lay more weight on a few outward rites and ceremonies, which the world and the church might well have spared, had they not come into the minds of some men, none know how, than upon the most important graces and duties of the gospel. Hence communion in faith and love, is scarce esteemed worth taking up in the streets, in comparison of uniformity in rites and ceremonies. Let men be as void of, and remote from, true gospel faith and love as is imaginable; yet if they comply quietly with, and have a little zeal for, those outward things, they are to be approved of, as very orderly members of the church. And whatever evidences on the other hand, any can or do give of their communion in faith and love, with all that are of that communion, yet if they cannot in conscience comply in the observance of those outward things mentioned, they are to be judged schismatics, and breakers of the church's unity; whereas no part of the church's unity doth or ever did consist in them.

In his procedure hereon, our author seems to embrace occasions of contending, seeking for advantages therein, in things not belonging unto the merit of the cause, which I thought was beneath him. From my concession, that some at least of our parochial churches are true churches; he asks, 'In what sense? Are they churches rightly constituted, with whom they may join in communion as members?' I think it is somewhat too late now, after all this dispute about the reasons of refraining from their communion, and his severe charges of schism upon us for our so doing, to make this inquiry. Wherefore he answers himself, 'No, but his meaning is,' saith he, 'that they are not guilty of any such

heinous errors in doctrine, or idolatrous practice in worship, as should utterly deprive them of the being and nature of churches,' which I suppose are my words. But then comes in the advantage; 'Doth,' saith he, 'this kindness belong only unto some of our parochial churches? I had thought that every parochial church was true or false according unto its frame and constitution, which among us, supposeth the owning the doctrine and worship established in the church of England.' I answer briefly, It is true, every church is true or false according unto its original frame and constitution. This frame and constitution of churches, if it proceed from, and depend upon, the institution of Christ, it is true and approvable. If it depend only on a national establishment of doctrine and worship, I know not well what to say unto it. But let any of these parochial churches be so constituted, as to answer the legal establishment in the land, yet if the generality of their members are openly wicked in their lives, and they have no lawful or sufficient ministry, we cannot acknowledge them for true churches. Some other things of the like nature do ensue, but I shall not insist on them.

He gathers up in the next place, the titles of the causes alleged, for our refraining communion with those parochial assemblies, which he calls our separation from them. And hereon he inquires, 'whether these reasons be a ground for a separation from a church, wherein it is confessed there are no heinous errors in doctrine, or idolatrous practice in worship;' that is, as he before cited my words, 'as should utterly deprive them of the being and nature of churches.' And if they be not, then, saith he, 'such a separation may be a formal schism, because they set up other churches of their own.'

The rule before laid down, that all things lawful are to be done for the church's peace, taking in the supposition on which it proceeds, is as sufficient to establish church tyranny, as any principle made use of by the church of Rome, notwithstanding its plausible appearance. And that here insinuated of the unlawfulness of separation from any church in the world (for that which hath pernicious errors in doctrine, and idolatry in worship, destroying its being, is no church at all), is as good security unto churches, in an obstinate refusal of reformation, when the souls of the people are

ruined amongst them for the want of it, as they need desire. And I confess I suspect such principles as are evidently suited unto the security of the corrupt interests of any sort of men.

I say, therefore, 1. That though a church, or that which pretends itself on any grounds so to be, do not profess any heinous error in doctrine, nor be guilty of idolatrous practice in worship, destroying its nature and being, yet there may be sufficient reasons to refrain from its communion in church-order and worship, and to join in or with other churches for edification. That is, that where such a church is not capable of reformation, or is obstinate in a resolution not to reform itself, under the utmost necessity thereof; it is lawful for all or any of its members to reform themselves, according to the mind of Christ, and commands of the gospel.

2. That where men are no otherwise members of any church, but by an inevitable necessity, and outward penal laws, preventing their own choice, and any act of obedience unto Christ in their joining with such churches, the case is different from theirs, whose relation unto any church is founded in their own voluntary choice, as submitting themselves unto the laws, institution, and rule of Christ in that church; which we shall make use of afterward.

3. The doctor might have done well to have stated the true nature of schism, and the formal reason of it, before he had charged a formal schism, on a supposition of some outward acts only.

4. What is our judgment concerning parochial assemblies, how far we separate from them or refrain communion with them, what are the reasons whereon we do so, hath been now fully declared, and thereunto we must appeal on all occasions; for we cannot acquiesce in what is unduly imposed on us, either as unto principles or practice.

‘To shew,’ as he saith, ‘the insufficiency of our cause of separation, he will take this way, namely, to shew the great absurdities that follow on the allowance of them;’ and adds,

‘These five especially I shall insist upon;

‘1. That it weakens the cause of reformation.

‘2. That it hinders all union between the Protestant churches.

‘3. That it justifies the ancient schisms, which have been always condemned by the Christian church.

‘4. That it makes separation endless.

‘5. That it is contrary to the obligation that lies on all Christians to preserve the peace and unity of the church.’

Now as I shall consider what he offers on these several heads, and his application of it unto the case in hand, so I shall confirm the reasons already given of our separation (if it must be so called) from parochial assemblies, with these five considerations:

1. That they strengthen the cause of reformation.

2. That they open a way to union between all Protestant churches.

3. That they give the just grounds of condemning the ancient schisms that ever any Christian church did justly condemn.

4. That they give due bounds unto separation.

5. That they absolutely comply with all the commands of the Scripture for the preservation of the peace and unity of the church.

I shall begin with the consideration of the absurdities, charged by him on our principles and practice.

The first of them is, ‘That it weakens the cause of the reformation.’ This he proves by long quotations out of some French divines. We are not to expect that they should speak unto our cause, or make any determination in it, seeing to the principal of them it was unknown. ‘But they say that which is contrary unto our principles.’ So they may do, and yet this not weaken the cause of the reformation. For it is known that they say somewhat also that is contrary to the principles of our episcopal brethren, for which one of them is sufficiently reviled; but yet the cause of reformation is not weakened thereby.

The first testimony produced is that of Calvin; a large discourse he hath, *Institut. lib. 4. cap. 1.* against causeless separations from a true church; and by whom are they not condemned? No determination of the case in hand can be thence derived; nor are the grounds of our refraining communion with parochial assemblies, the same with those which he condemns as insufficient for a total separation; nor is the separation he opposed in those days, which was abso-

lute and total, with a condemnation of the churches from which it was made, of the same nature with that wherewith we are charged, at least not with what we own and allow. He gives the notes of a true church to be, the pure preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments according unto Christ's institution. Where these are, he allows a true church to be, not only without diocesan episcopacy, but in a form and under a rule opposite unto it, and inconsistent with it. And if he did at all speak to our case, as he doth not, nor unto any of the grounds of it, why should we be pressed with his authority on the one hand, more than others from whom he differed also on the other? Besides, there is a great deal more belongs unto the pure preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments according unto Christ's institution, than some seem to apprehend. They may, they ought to be so explained, as that from the consideration of them, we may justify our whole cause. Both these may be wanting in a church, which is not guilty of such heinous errors in doctrine, or idolatry in worship, as should overthrow its being. And their want may be a just cause of refraining communion from a church, which yet we are not obliged to condemn as none at all.

Calvin expresseth his judgment, N. 12. 'I would not give countenance unto errors, no not to the least; so as to cherish them by flattery or connivance. But though I say, that the church is not to be forsaken for trifling differences, wherein the doctrine (of the gospel) is retained safe and sound, wherein the integrity of godliness doth abide, and the use of the sacraments appointed of the Lord is preserved;' and we say the same.

And this very Calvin, who doth so severely condemn separation from a true church as by him stated, did himself quietly and peaceably withdraw and depart from the church of Geneva, when they refused to admit that discipline which he esteemed to be according to the mind of Christ. It is certain, therefore, that by the separation which he condemns, he doth not intend the peaceable relinquishment of the communion of any church, as unto a constant participation of all ordinances in it, for want of due means of edification, much less that which hath so many other causes concurring therewith.

For the other learned men whom he quotes unto the same purpose, I see not any thing that gives the least countenance unto his assertion, that our principles weaken the cause of the reformation. It is true they plead other causes of separation from the church of Rome, than those insisted on by us, with respect unto the church of England; and indeed they had been otherwise much to blame, having so many things as they had to plead of greater importance. Did we say that the reasons which we plead, are all that can be pleaded to justify the separation of the reformed churches from the church of Rome, it would weaken the cause of reformation. For we should then deny that idolatry and fundamental errors in faith, were any cause or ground of that separation. However we know that the imposition of them on the faith and practice of all Christians, is more pleaded in justification of a separation from them, than the things themselves. But allowing those greater reasons to be pleaded against the Roman communion as we do, it doth not in the least follow that our reasons for refraining communion with parochial assemblies, doth weaken the cause of the reformation.

However, let me not be misinterpreted as unto that expression of destroying our faith, which the communion required with the church of England, as unto all the important articles of it, doth not do, and I can subscribe unto the words of Daille, as quoted by our author out of his apology: 'If,' saith he, 'the church of Rome hath not required any thing of us, which destroys our faith, offends our consciences, and overthrows the service which we believe due to God; if the differences have been small, and such as we might safely have yielded unto; then he will grant their separation was rash and unjust, and they guilty of the schism.'

He closeth his transcription of the words of sundry learned men, who have justified the separation of the reformed churches from the church of Rome, wherein we are not in the least concerned with an inquiry, 'What triumph would the church of Rome make over us, had we no other reasons to justify our separation from them, but only those which (as is pretended) we plead in our cause?' I say, whereas we do plead, confirm, and justify all the reasons and causes pleaded for the separation of the reformed churches from

them, not opposing, not weakening any of them, by any principle or practice of ours, but farther press the force of the same reasonings and causes in all instances whereunto they will extend, I see neither what cause the Papists have of triumph, nor any thing that weakens the cause of the reformation. He adds farther, 'How should we be hissed and laughed at all over the Christian world, if we had nothing to allege for our separation from the Roman church, but such things as these?' I answer, that as the case stands, if we did allege no other reasons but those which we insist on for our refraining communion with our own parochial assemblies, we should deserve to be derided, for relinquishing the plea of those other important reasons which the heresies and idolatries and tyranny of that church do render just and equal. But if we had no other causes of separation from the church of Rome, but what we have for our separation from our parochial assemblies at home, as weak as our allegations are pretended to be, we should not be afraid to defend them against all the Papists in the world; and let the world act like itself in hissing.

Whereas therefore the cause of reformation is not in any thing weakened by our principles, no argument, no reason solidly pleaded to justify the separation from the church of Rome being deserted by us, neither testimony, proof, nor evidence being produced to evince that it is weakened by us, I shall in the second place, as was before proposed, prove that the whole cause of the Protestants' separation from the church of Rome, is strengthened and confirmed by us.

There were some general principles on which the Protestants proceeded in their separation from the church of Rome, and which they constantly pleaded in justification thereof.

1. The first was, that the Scripture, the word of God, is a perfect rule of faith and religious worship; so as that nothing ought to be admitted which is repugnant unto it in its general rule or especial prohibitions, nothing imposed that is not prescribed therein, but that every one is at liberty to refuse and reject any thing of that kind. This they all contended for, and confirmed their assertion by the express testimonies of the writers of the primitive churches.

To prove this to have been their principle in their separation from the church of Rome were to light, as they say, a candle in the sun. It were easy to fill up a volume with testimonies of it. After awhile this principle began to be weakened, when the interest of men made them except from this rule, things of outward order, with some rites and ceremonies, the ordaining whereof, they pleaded to be left unto churches as they saw good. Hereby this principle, I say, was greatly weakened. For no certain bounds could ever be assigned unto those things that are exempted from the regulation of the Scripture. And the same plea might be managed for many of the popish orders and ceremonies that were rejected, as forcibly as for them that were retained. And whereas all the reformed churches agreed to abide by this principle in matters of faith, there fell out an admirable harmony in their confessions thereof. But leaving the necessity of attending unto this rule, in the matter of order, ceremonies, rites, and modes of worship, with the state of churches, in their rule and polity, those differences and divisions ensued amongst them, which continue unto this day. But this persuasion in some places made a farther progress, namely, that it was lawful to impose on the consciences and practices of men, such things in religious worship, provided that they concerned outward order, rites, rule, and ceremonies, as are nowhere prescribed in the Scripture, and that on severe penalties ecclesiastical and civil. This almost utterly destroyed the great fundamental principle of the reformation, whereon the first reformers justified their separation from the church of Rome. For whereas it is supposed the right of them who are to be the imposers, to determine what doth belong unto the heads mentioned, they might under that pretence impose what they pleased, and refuse those whom they imposed them on the protection of the aforesaid principle, namely, that nothing ought to be so imposed that is not prescribed in the Scripture. This hath proved the rise of all endless differences and schisms amongst us, nor will they be healed until all Christians are restored unto their liberty, of being obliged in the things of God, only unto the authority of the Scripture.

The words of Mr. Chillingworth unto this purpose are

emphatical, which I shall therefore transcribe, though that be a thing which I am very averse from.

‘Require,’ saith he, ‘of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no man master but him only; let those leave claiming of infallibility who have no right unto it, and let them that in their words disclaim it, disclaim it likewise in their actions; in a word, take away tyranny which is the devil’s instrument to support errors and superstitions and impieties in the several parts of the world, which could not otherwise long withstand the power of truth; I say, take away tyranny, and restore Christians to their just and full liberty of captivating their understandings to the Scripture only; that universal liberty thus moderated may quickly reduce Christendom to truth and unity;’ part i. chap. iv. sect. 16.

This fundamental principle of the first reformation we do not only firmly adhere unto, rejecting all those opinions and practices whereby its force is weakened and impaired, but also do willingly suffer the things that do befall us, in giving our testimony thereunto. Neither will there ever be peace among the churches of Christ in this world, until it be admitted in its whole latitude; especially in that part thereof wherein it excludes all impositions of things not prescribed in the Scripture. For there are but few persons who are capable of the subtlety of those reasonings, which are applied to weaken this principle in its whole extent. All men can easily see this, that the sufficiency of the Scripture in general, as unto all the ends of religion, is the only foundation they have to rest and build upon. They do see actually, that where men go about to prescribe things to be observed in divine worship, not appointed in the Scripture, that no two churches have agreed therein; but endless contentions have ensued; that no man can give an instance in particular of any thing that is necessary unto the rule of the church, or the observance of the commands of Christ in the worship of God, that is not contained in the Scripture; and hereon are ready to resolve to call no man master, but Christ; and to admit of nothing in religion, but what is warranted by his word.

2. The second principle of the reformation, whereon

the reformers justified their separation from the church of Rome, was this, 'That Christian people were not tied up unto blind obedience unto church guides, but were not only at liberty, but also obliged to judge for themselves, as unto all things that they were to believe and practise in religion and the worship of God.' They knew that the whole fabric of the papacy did stand on this basis or dung-hill, that the mystery of iniquity was cemented by this device, namely, that the people were ignorant, and to be kept in ignorance, being obliged in all things unto an implicit obedience unto their pretended guides. And that they might not be capable of, nor fit for, any other condition, they took from them the only means of their instruction unto their duty, and the knowledge of it, that is, the use of the holy Scripture. But the first reformers did not only vindicate their right unto the use of the Scripture itself, but insisted on it as a principle of the reformation (and without which they could never have carried on their work), that they were in all concerns of religion to judge for themselves. And multitudes of them quickly manifested how meet and worthy they were to have this right restored unto them, in laying down their lives for the truth, suffering as martyrs under the power of their bishops.

This principle of the reformation, in like manner, is in no small degree weakened by many, and so the cause of it. Dr. Stillingfleet himself, pp. 127, 128. denies unto the people all liberty or ability to choose their own pastors, to judge what is meet for their own edification, what is heresy or a pernicious error, and what is not, or any thing of the like nature. This is almost the same with that of the Pharisees concerning them who admired and followed the doctrine of our Saviour, ὁ ὄχλος οὗτος ὁ μὴ γινώσκων τὸν νόμον; John vii. 49. 'This rabble which knows not the law.' Yet was it this people whom the apostles directed to choose out from among themselves persons meet for an ecclesiastical office; Acts vi. the same people who joined with the apostles and elders in the consideration of the grand case concerning the continuation of the legal ceremonies, and were associated with them in the determination of it; Acts xv. the same to whom all the apostolical epistles, excepting some to particular persons, were written, and unto whom such directions

were given, and duties enjoined in them, as suppose not only a liberty and ability to judge for themselves in all matters of faith and obedience, but also an especial interest in the order and discipline of the church; those who were to say unto Archippus (their bishop), 'Take heed unto the ministry thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it;' Col. iv. unto whom of all sorts, it is commanded that they should examine and try antichrists, spirits, and false teachers; that is, all sorts of heretics, and heresies, and errors; 1 John ii. iii. &c. that people who even in following ages, adhered unto the faith and the orthodox profession of it, when almost all their bishops were become Arian heretics, and kept their private conventicles in opposition unto them, at Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and other places, and who were so many of them burnt here in England by their own bishops, on the judgment they made of errors and heresies. And if the present people with whom the doctor is acquainted be altogether unmeet for the discharge of any of these duties, it is the fault of somebody else, besides their own.

This principle of the reformation, in vindication of the rights, liberties, and privileges of the Christian people, to judge and choose for themselves in matters of religion, to join freely in those church duties which are required of them, without which the work of it had never been carried on, we do abide by and maintain. Yea, we meet with no opposition more fierce, than upon the account of our asserting the liberties and right of the people in reference unto church-order and worship. But I shall not be afraid to say, that as the reformation was begun and carried on, on this principle; so when this people shall, through an apprehension of their ignorance, weakness, and unmeetness to discern and judge in matters of religion for themselves and their own duty, be kept and debarred from it; or when through their own sloth, negligence, and viciousness, they shall be really incapable to manage their own interest in church affairs, as being fit only to be governed, if not as brute creatures, yet as mute persons, and that these things are improved by the ambition of the clergy, engrossing all things in the church unto themselves, as they did in former ages, if the old popedom do not return, a new one will be erected as bad as the other.

3. Another principle of the reformation is, 'That there was not any catholic, visible, organical, governing church, traduced by succession into that of Rome, whence all church-power and order was to be derived.' I will not say that this principle was absolutely received by all the first reformers here in England; yet it was by the generality of them in the other parts of the world. For as they constantly denied that there was any catholic church, but that invisible of elect believers, allowing the external denomination of the church unto the diffused community of the baptized world; so believing and professing that the pope is antichrist, that Rome is mystical Babylon, the seat of the apostatized church of the Gentiles, devoted to destruction, they could acknowledge no such church-state in the Roman church, nor the derivation of any power and order from it. So far as there is a declension from this principle, so far the cause of the reformation is weakened, and the principal reason of separation from the Roman church is rejected, as shall be farther manifested, if occasion require it.

This principle we do firmly adhere unto; and not only so, but it is known, that our fixed judgment concerning the divine institution, nature, and order of evangelical churches, is such, as is utterly exclusive of the Roman church, as a body organized in and under the pope and his hierarchy, from any pretence unto church-state, order, or power. And it may be hence judged who do most weaken the cause of reformation, we or some of them at least, by whom we are opposed.

A second absurdity that he chargeth on our way is, 'That it would make union among the Protestant churches impossible, supposing them to remain as they are;' sect. 24. p. 186. To make good this charge, he insists on two things:

'1. That the Lutheran churches have the same and more ceremonies, and unscriptural impositions than our church hath.

'2. That notwithstanding these things, yet many learned Protestant divines have pleaded for union and communion with them, which upon our principles and suppositions, they could not have done.' But whether they plead for union and communion with them, by admitting into their churches, and submitting unto those ceremonies and un-

scriptural impositions, which is alone unto the doctor's purpose; or whether they judge their members obliged to communicate in local communion with them, under those impositions, he doth not declare. But whereas neither we nor our cause are in the least concerned in what the doctor here insists upon, yet because the charge is no less, than that our principles give disturbance unto the peace and union of all Protestant churches, I shall briefly manifest that they are not only conducive thereunto, but such as without which that peace and union will never be attained.

1. It is known unto all, that from the first beginning of the reformation, there were differences among the churches, which departed from the communion of the church of Rome. And as this was looked on as the greatest impediment unto the progress of the reformation, so it was not morally possible that in a work of that nature, begun and carried on by persons of all sorts, in many nations, of divers tongues and languages, none of them being divinely inspired, that it should otherwise fall out. God also in his holy wise providence suffered it so to be, for causes known then to himself, but since sundry of them have been made manifest in the event. For whereas there was an agreement in all fundamental articles of faith among them, and all necessary means of salvation, a farther agreement, considering our sloth, negligence, and proneness of men to abuse security and power, might have produced as evil effects as the differences have done; for those which have been on the one hand, and those which have been on the other, have been and would have been from the corrupt affections of the minds of men, and their secular interests.

2. These differences were principally in or about some doctrines of faith, whereon some fiery spirits among them, took occasion mutually and unjustly enough, to charge each other with heresy, especially was this done among the Lutherans, whose writings are stuffed with that charge, and miserable attempts to make it good. There were also other differences among them, with respect unto church-order, rites, ceremonies, and modes of worship. The church of England, as unto the government of the church and sundry other things, took a way by itself, which at present we do not consider.

3. Considering the agreement in all fundamental articles of faith between these churches thus at difference, and of what great use their union might be unto the Protestant religion, both as unto its spiritual and political interest in this world, the effecting of such a union among them hath been attempted by many. Private persons, princes, colloquies or synods of some of the parties at variance have sedulously engaged herein. I wish they had never missed it, in stating the nature of that union which in this case is alone desirable and alone attainable; nor in the causes of that disadvantageous difference that was between them. For hence it is come to pass, that although some verbal compositions have sometimes by some been consented unto, yet all things continue practically amongst them, as they were from the beginning. And there are yet persons who are managing proposals for such a union, with great projection in point of method for the compassing of it, and stating of the principles of agreement, some whereof I have by me. But the present state of things, in Europe, with the minds of potentates not concerned in these things, leave little encouragement for any such attempt, or expectation of any success.

4. After the trial an experience of a hundred and fifty years, it is altogether in vain, to be expected that any farther reconciliation or union should be effected between these Protestant churches by either party's relinquishment of the doctrines they have so long taught, professed, and contended for, or of their practice in divine worship, which they have so long been accustomed unto. We may as well expect that a river should run backwards, as expect any such things.

In this state of things, I say, the principles we proceed upon are the most useful unto the procuring of peace and union among these churches, in the state wherein they are, and without which it will never be effected. I shall therefore give an account of those of them, which are of this nature and tendency.

1. And the first is, the absolute necessity of a general reformation in life and manners of all sorts of persons, belonging unto these churches. It is sufficiently known what a woful condition the profession even of the Protestant re-

ligion is fallen into. How little evidence is there left of the power of evangelical grace, working in the hearts of men! What little diligence in the duties of holiness and righteousness! What a deluge of all sorts of vices hath overwhelmed the nations! And what indications there are of the displeasure of God against us, on the account of these things! Who doth not almost tremble at them? Calvin, unto whom I was newly sent by our reverend author, in answer to them who pleaded for a separation from a true church, because of the wickedness of many of its members, or any of them, adds unto it, 'It is a most just offence, and unto which there is too much occasion given in this miserable age. Nor is it lawful to excuse our cursed sloth, which the Lord will not let go unpunished, as he begins already to chastise us with grievous stripes. Woe, therefore, unto us who by our dissolute licentiousness in flagitious sins, do cause that the weak consciences of men should be wounded for us.' And if it were so then, the matter is not much mended in the age wherein we live. The truth is, sin and impiety are come to that height and impudence, sensuality and oppression are so diffused among all sorts of persons, conformity unto the fashion of the world become so universal, and the evidences of God's displeasure, with the beginnings and entrances of his judgments, are so displayed, as that if the reformation pleaded for be not speedily endeavoured, and vigorously pursued, it will be too late to talk of differences and union; destruction will swallow up all. Until this be agreed on, until it be attempted and effected in some good measure, all endeavours for farther union, whatever there appearing success should be (as probably it will be very small), will be of no use unto the honour of religion, the glory of Christ, nor good of the souls of men. In the mean time individual persons will do well to take care of themselves.

2. That all these differing churches, and whilst these differences do continue, be taught to prefer their general interest in opposition unto the kingdom of Satan and anti-christ in the world, before the lesser things wherein they differ, and those occasional animosities that will ensue upon them. It hath been observed in many places, that the nearer some men or churches come together in their profession, the more distant they are in their affections; as the Lu-

therans in many places do more hate the Calvinists than the Papists; I hope it is not so among us. This makes it evident, that the want of necessary peace and union among churches, doth not proceed from the things themselves wherein they differ, but from the corrupt lusts and interests of the persons that differ. This evil can no otherwise be cured, but by such a reformation as shall in some measure reduce primitive simplicity, integrity, and love, such as were among the churches of the converted Jews and Gentiles, when they walked according unto the same rule in what they had attained, forbearing one another in love, as unto the things wherein they differed. Until this also be effected, all endeavours for farther union, whilst these differences continue (as they are like to do, unless the whole frame of things in Europe should be changed by some great revolution), will be fruitless and useless.

Were this conscientiously insisted on, out of a pure love unto Jesus Christ, with zeal for his glory, it would not only be of more use than innumerable wrangling disputes about the points in difference, but more than the exactest methods in contriving formularies of consent, or colloquies, or synodical conferences of the parties at variance, with all their solemnities, orders, limitations, precautions, concessions, and orations. Let men say what they will, it must be the revival, flourishing, and exercise of evangelical light, faith, and love, that shall heal the differences and breaches that are among the churches of Christ; nor shall any thing else be honoured with any great influence into that work.

3. That all communion of churches, as such, consists in the communion of faith and love, in the administration of the same sacraments, and common advice in things of common concernment. All these may be observed, when for sundry reasons the members of them cannot have local presential communion in some ordinances, with each church distinctly. If this truth were well established and consented unto, men might be easily convinced, that there is nothing wanting unto that evangelical union among churches which the gospel requires, but only their own humble, holy, peaceable Christian walking in their several places and stations. But where men put their own interests and possession of

present advantages, clothed under the pretence of things necessary thereunto, into conditions of communion, or divest it of that latitude wherein Christ hath left it, by new limitations of their own, it will never be attained on the true evangelical principles, that it must proceed upon. For however any may be displeased with it, I must assert and maintain, that there is nothing required by our Lord Jesus Christ, unto this end of the communion of churches, nor to any other end of church-order or worship whatever, but that only in whose observance and performance there is an actual exercise of evangelical grace in obedience unto him.

4. That all private members of these several churches which agree in the communion before mentioned, be left unto their own liberty and consciences, to communicate in any of those churches, either occasionally or in a fixed way and manner. Neither orders nor compulsory decrees will be useful in this matter, in comparison of their own declared liberty. And so it was among the primitive churches.

5. Where men are invincibly hindered from total communion with any church, by impositions which they cannot comply withal without sin, or by continuing in it, are deprived of the due means of their edification, the churches whereunto they did belong refusing all reformation; it is lawful for them, in obedience unto the law of Christ, to reform themselves, and to make use of the means appointed by him for their edification, abiding constantly in the communion of all true churches before described. I confess this is that which we cannot digest; namely, an imagination that the Lord Jesus Christ hath obliged his disciples, those that believe in him, to abide always in such societies, as wherein not only things are imposed on their obedience and observance which he hath not commanded, but they are also forced to live in the neglect of expressed duties which he requireth of them, and the want of that means of their own edification, which, without the restraint at present upon them, they might enjoy according unto his mind and will. Believers were not made for churches, nor for the advantage of them that rule in them; but churches were made for believers and their edification, nor are of any use farther than they tend thereunto.

These are the premises whereon we proceed in all that we do; and they are so far from being obstructive of the peace and union of the Protestant churches, as that without them, they will never be promoted nor attained. And I do beg of this worthy person that he would not despise these things, but know assuredly, that nothing would be so effectual to procure the union he desireth, as a universal reformation of all sorts of persons, according unto the rule and law of Christ, which it may be, no man hath greater ability and opportunity in conjunction for, than himself. For woe be unto us, if whilst we contend about outward peace in smaller things, we neglect to make peace with God, and so expose ourselves and the whole nation unto his desolating judgments, which seem already to be impendent over us.

The third absurdity which he chargeth on our practice is, 'That it will justify the ancient schisms which have been always condemned in the Christian church;' and in the management of this charge, he proceedeth, if I mistake not, with more than ordinary vehemency and severity, though it be a matter wherein we are least of all concerned.

To make effectual this charge, he first affirms in general, 'That setting aside a few things, they pleaded the same reasons for their separation, as I do for ours;' which how great a mistake it is shall be manifested immediately. Secondly, He gives instances in several schisms, that were so condemned by the Christian church, and whose practice is justified by us.

In answer hereunto, I shall first premise some things in general, shewing the insufficiency of this argument to prove against us the charge of schism, and then consider the instances produced by him. I say,

1. In times of decay, the declining times of churches or states, it cannot be, but that some will be uneasy in their minds, although they know not how to remedy what is amiss, nor it may be fix on the particulars which are the right and true causes of the state which they find troublesome unto them. And whilst it is so with them, it is not to be admired at, that some persons do fall into irregular attempts for the redressing of what is amiss. The church, where the

instances insisted on happened, was falling into a mysterious decay from its original institution, order, and rule, which afterward increased more and more continually. But all being equally involved in the same declension, the remedies which they proposed who were uneasy either in themselves, or in the manner of their application, were worse than the disease; which yet lying uncured and continually increasing, proved in the issue the ruin of them all. But here lay the original of the differences and schisms which fell out in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries; that having all in some measure departed from the original institution, rule, and order of evangelical churches, in sundry things, and cast themselves into new forms and orders, their differences and quarrels related all unto them, and could have had no such occasion, had they kept themselves unto their primitive constitution. Wherefore those schisms which were said to be made by them that continued sound in the faith, as those of the Andeans and Meletians, as by some is pretended, and Johannites at Constantinople, with sundry other, seeing they dissented not any order of divine institution, but another which the churches were insensibly fallen into; no judgment can be made upon a mere separation, whether of the parties at difference were to blame; I am sure enough that sometimes neither of them could be excused. Whether the causes, reasons, ends, designs, and ways of the management of those differences that were between them, on which schisms in their present order did ensue, were just, regular, according to the mind of Christ, proceeding from faith and love, is that whose determination must fix aright the guilt of the divisions that were among them. And whereas we judge most of those who so separated from the church of old, as is here alleged, to have failed in these things, and therein to have contracted guilt unto themselves, as occasioning unwarrantable divisions, and missing wholly the only way of cure for what was really blameworthy in others; yet whereas we allow nothing to be schism properly, but what is contrary to Christian love, and destructive of some institution of Christ, we are not much concerned who was in the right or wrong, in those contests which fell out among the orthodox themselves, but only as

they were carried on unto a total renunciation of all communion whatever; but only that which was enclosed unto their own party.

2. To evidence that we give the least countenance unto the ancient schisms, or do contract the guilt with the authors of them, the thing aimed at, there are three things incumbent on him to prove.

1. That our parochial churches, from whom we do refrain actual presential communion in all ordinances, where it is required by law, which cannot be many and but one at one time, do succeed into the room of that church, in a separation from which, those schisms did consist. For we pass no judgment on any other church, but what concerns ourselves as unto present duty, though that in a nation may be extended unto many or all of the same sort. But these schisms consisted in a professed separation from the whole catholic church, that is, all Christians in the world, who joined not with them in their opinions and practices, and from the whole church-state then passant and allowed. But our author knows full well, that there are others, who long before our parochial churches, do lay claim unto the absolute enclosure of this church-state unto themselves, and thereon condemn both him and us, and all the Protestants in the world, of the same schism that those of old were guilty of; especially they make a continual clamour about the Novatians and Donatists. I know that he is able to dispossess the church of Rome from that usurpation of the state and rights of the ancient catholic church, from whence those separations were made, and it hath been sufficiently done by others. But so soon as we have cast that out of possession, to bring in our parochial assemblies into the room of it, and to press the guilt of separation from them, with the same reasons and arguments as we were all of us but newly pressed withal by the Romanists, namely, that hereby we give countenance unto them, yea, do the same things with them, who made schisms in separating from the catholic church of old, is somewhat severe and unequal.

Wherefore, unless the church from which they separated, which was the whole catholic church in the world, not agreeing and acting with them, and those parochial assemblies from whose communion we refrain, are the same and

of the same consideration, nothing can be argued from those ancient schisms against us, nor is any countenance given by us unto them. For if it be asked of us, whether it be free or lawful for believers to join in society and full communion with other churches, besides those that are of our way and especial communion, we freely answer, that we no way doubt of it, nor do judge for their so doing.

2. It must be proved unto the end proposed, that the occasions and reasons of their separation of old, were the same, or of the same nature only, with those which we plead, for our refraining communion from parochial assemblies. Now, though the doctor here makes a flourish with some expressions about zeal, discipline, purity of the church, edification (which he will not find in any of their pretences), yet in truth there is not one thing alleged, wherein there is a coincidence between the occasions and reasons pleaded by them, and ours.

It is known that the principal thing in general which we insist upon is, the unwarrantable imposition of unscriptural terms and conditions of communion upon us. Was there any such thing pleaded by them that made the schisms of old? Indeed they were all of them imposers, and separated from the church because they would not submit unto their impositions. Some bishops, or some that would have been bishops but could not, entertaining some new conceit of their own, which they would have imposed on all others, being not submitted unto therein, were the causes of all those schisms which were justly esteemed criminal. So was it with the Novatians and Donatists in an especial manner. Even the great Tertullian (though no bishop) left the communion of the church on this ground. For because they would not admit of the strict observance of some austere severities in fasting, abstinence from sundry meats, and watching, with the like, which he esteemed necessary, though no way warranted by Scripture rule or example, he utterly renounced their communion; and countenanced himself by adhering unto the dotages of Montanus. It is true, some of them contended for a severity of discipline in the church, but they did it not upon any pretence of the neglect of it in them unto whom the administration of it was committed; but for the want of establishing a false principle, rule, or

erroneous doctrine which they advanced; namely, that the most sincere penitents were never more to be admitted into ecclesiastical communion; whereby they did not establish, but overthrow one of the principal ends of church discipline. They did not therefore press for the power or the use of the keys, as is pretended, but advanced a false doctrine in prejudice both unto the power and use of them. They pretended indeed unto the purity of the church, not that there were none impure, wicked, and hypocritical among them, but that none might be admitted who had once fallen, though really made pure by sincere repentance. This was their zeal for purity. If a man were overtaken, if they could catch him in such a fault, as by the rules of the passant discipline he was to be cast out of the church, there they had him safe for ever. No evidence of the most sincere repentance could prevail for a readmission into the church. And because other churches would admit them, they renounced all communion with them, as no churches of Christ. Are these our principles? are these our practices? do we give any countenance unto them by any thing we say or do? I somewhat wonder that the doctor, from some general expressions, and casting their pretences under new appearances, should seem to think that there is the least coincidence between what they insisted on, and what we plead in our own defence. He may see now more fully, what are the reasons of our practice, and I hope thereon will be of another mind; not as unto our cause in general, which I am far enough from the expectation of, but as unto this invidious charge of giving countenance unto the schisms condemned of old in the church. And we shall see immediately, what were the occasions of those schisms which we are as remote from giving countenance unto, as unto the principles and reasons which they pleaded in their own justification.

3. It ought also to be proved, that the separation which is charged on us, is of the same nature with that charged on them of old; for otherwise we cannot be said to give any countenance unto what they did. For it is known they so separated from all other churches in the world, as to confine the church of Christ unto their own party, to condemn all others, and to deny salvation unto all that abode in their communion, which the Donatists did with the greatest fierce-

ness. This was that which if any thing did truly and properly constitute them schismatics; as it doth those also, who deny at this day church-state and salvation unto such churches as have not diocesan bishops. Now there is no principle in the world that we do more abhor. We grant a church-state unto all, however it may be defective or corrupted, and a possibility of salvation unto all their members, which are not gathered in pernicious errors, overthrowing the foundation, nor idolatrous in their worship, and who have a lawful ministry with sufficient means for their edification, though low in its measures and degrees. We judge none but with respect unto our own duty, as unto the impositions attempted to be laid on us, and the acts of communion required of us, which we cannot avoid; nor can any man else, let him pretend what he will to the contrary, avoid the making of a judgment for himself in these things, unless he be brutish. These things are sufficient to evidence that there is not the least countenance given unto the ancient schisms by any principles of ours; yet I shall add some farther considerations, on the instances he gives unto the same purpose.

The first is, that the Novatians, whose pretences were the discipline and purity of the churches, wherein he says, ‘There was a concurrence of Dr. Owen’s pleas; zeal for reformation of discipline, the greater edification of the people, and the asserting of their right in choosing such a pastor as was likely to promote their edification.’ I am sorry that interest and party should sway with learned men, to seek advantages unto their cause so unduly. The story in short is this; Novatus, or Novatianus rather, being disappointed in his ambitious design to have been chosen bishop of the church of Rome, Cornelius being chosen by much the major part of the church, betook himself to indirect means to weaken and invalidate the election of Cornelius. And this he did by raising a new principle of false doctrine, whereunto he as falsely accommodated the matter of fact. The error he broached and promoted was that ‘there was no place for repentance’ (such as whereon they should be admitted into the church) ‘unto them who had fallen into sin after baptism;’ nor, as some add, any salvation to be obtained by them who had fallen in the time of persecution. This

the ancient church looked on as a pestilent heresy; and as such was it condemned in a considerable council at Rome with Cornelius; Euseb. lib. 6. cap. 43. where also is reported the decree which they made in the case, wherein they call his opinion cruel or inhuman, and contrary to brotherly love. As such it is strenuously confuted by Cyprian, Epist. 82. ad Antonianum. But because the church would not submit unto this novel false opinion of his, contrary to the Scripture and the discipline of the church, he and all his followers separated from all the churches in the world, and rebaptized all that were baptized in the orthodox churches, they denying unto them the means of salvation. Cyprian ad Julian, Epist. 73. Euseb. lib. 7. cap. 8. That which was most probably false also in matter of fact when this foolish opinion, which Dionysius of Alexandria in his epistle to Dionysius of Rome, calls 'a most profane doctrine, reflecting unmerciful cruelty on our most gracious Lord Jesus Christ,' Euseb. lib. 7. cap. 8. was invented to be subservient unto, was that many of those by whom Cornelius was chosen bishop, were such as had denied the faith under the persecution of Decius the emperor. This also was false in matter of fact. For although that church continued in the ancient faith and practice of receiving penitents after their fall, yet there were no such number of them, as to influence the election of Cornelius. So Cyprian testifieth, 'Factus est Cornelius Episcopus, de Dei et Christi ejus judicio, de Clericorum pœne omnium testimonio, de suffragio plebis,' &c. Epist. 52. On that false opinion and this frivolous pretence they continued their schism. Hence afterward, when Constantine the emperor spake with Acesius the bishop of the Novatians at Constantinople, finding him sound in the faith of the Trinity, which was then impugned by Arius, he asked him why then he did not communicate with the church; whereon he began to tell him a story of what had happened in the time of Decius the emperor, pleading nothing else for himself; the emperor replying only, 'O Acesius, set up a ladder and clime alone by thyself into heaven,' left him. Socrat. lib. 1. cap. 7.

This error endeavoured to be imposed on all churches, this false pretence in matter of fact, with the following pride in the condemnation of all other churches, denying unto

them the lawful use of the sacraments, and rebaptizing them who were baptized in them, do, if we may believe the doctor herein, contain all my pleas for the forbearance of communion with parochial assemblies, and have countenance given unto them by our principles and practices.

Of the Meletians, whom he reckons up in the next place, no certain account can be given. Epiphanius reports Meletus himself to have been a good honest orthodox bishop; and in the difference between him and Peter bishop of Alexandria to have been more for truth, as the other was more for love and charity. And according unto him, it was Peter and not Meletus that began the schism. *Hæres.* 68. N. 2, 3. But others give quite another account of him. Socrates affirms that in time of persecution he had sacrificed to idols, and was for that reason deposed from his episcopacy by Peter of Alexandria; lib. 3. cap. 6. Hence he was enraged against him, and filled all Thebais and Egypt with tumults against him, and the church of Alexandria, with intolerable arrogance, because he was convicted of sundry wickednesses by Peter. *Theod. Hist.* lib. 1. cap. 8. And his followers quickly complied with the Arians for their advantage. The error he proceeded on, according to Epiphanius, was the same with that of Novatus; which how it could be, if he himself had fallen in persecution, and sacrificed, as Socrates relates, I cannot understand. This schism of bishop Meletus also it is thought meet to be judged, that we should give countenance unto.

All things are in like manner uncertain concerning Audus and his followers, whom he mentions in the next place. The man is represented by Epiphanius to have been a good man, of a holy life, sound in the faith, full of zeal and love to the truth. But finding many things amiss in the church, among the clergy and people, he freely reprov'd them, for covetousness, luxury, and disorders in ecclesiastical affairs. Hereon he stirred up the hatred of many against himself, as Chrysostom did for the same cause afterward at Constantinople. Hereupon he was vexed, persecuted, and greatly abused, all which he bare patiently and continued in the discharge of his duty, as it fell out also with Chrysostom. Nevertheless he abode firmly and tenaciously in the communion of the church; but was at length

cast out, as far as it appears by him, for the honest discharge of his duty ; whereon he gathered a great party unto himself. But Theodoret and others, affirm him to have been the author of the impious heresy of the Anthropomorphitæ, his principal followers being those monks of Egypt which afterward made such tumults in defence of that foolish imagination ; and that this was the cause why he was cast out of the church, and set up a party of the same opinion with him ; lib. 4. cap. 10. Yea, he also ascribes unto him some foolish opinions of the Manichees. What is our concernment in these things I cannot imagine.

Eustathius the bishop of Sebastia in Armenia, and his followers, are also instanced in, as orthodox schismatics, and as such were condemned in a council at Gongræ in Paphlagonia. But indeed before that council, Eustathius had been condemned by his own father Eulanius and other bishops, at Cæsarea in Cappadocia. And he was so for sundry foolish opinions and evil practices, whereby he deserved to be so dealt withal. It doth not unto me appear certainly whether he fell into those opinions before his rejection at Cæsarea, where he was principally if not only charged with his indecent and fantastical habit and garments. Wherefore at the council of Gangræ, he was not admitted to make any apology for himself, nor could be heard, because he had innovated many things, after his deposition at Cæsarea ; such as forbidding of marriage, shaving of women, denying the lawfulness of priests keeping their wives, who were married before their ordination, getting away servants from their masters, and the like. Socrat. Hist. lib. 2. cap. 3. These were his pretences of sanctity and purity, as the doctor acknowledgeth ; and I appeal unto his ingenuity and candour, whether any countenance be given unto such opinions and practices thereon, by any thing we say or do.

This instance, and some others of an alike nature, the doctor affirms that he produced in his sermon, but that ‘ they were gently passed over by myself and Mr. B.’ I confess I took no notice of them, because I was satisfied that the cause under consideration was no way concerned in them. And the doctor might to as good purpose have instanced in forty other schisms, made for the most part by the ambition

of bishops, in the churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Rome, and sundry other places ; yea, in that made by Epiphanius himself at Constantinople, upon as weighty a cause, as that of those who contended about, and strove for and against, the driving of sheep over the bridge, where there were none present.

The story of the Luciferians, is not worth repeating ; in short, Lucifer the bishop of Caralli in Sardinia, being angry that Paulinus, whom he had ordained bishop at Antioch, was not received, fell into great dissension with Eusebius bishop of Vercells in Italy, who had been his companion in banishment, because he approved not what he had done at Antioch. And continuing to contend for his own bishop, it occasioned a great division among the people, whereon he went home to his own place, leaving behind him a few followers, who wrangled for a time about the ordination of bishops by Arians, by whose means Lucifer had been banished, and so after awhile disappeared.

I had almost missed the instance of the Donatists. But the story of them is so well known, that it will not bear the repetition. For although there be no mention of them in Socrates or Zozoman, nor the History of Theodoret, yet all things that concerned them are so fully declared in the writings of Austin and Optatus against them as there needs no other account of them. And this instance of an heretical schism, is that which the Papists vehemently urge against the church of England itself, and all other Protestants. Here their weapon is borrowed for a little while, to give a wound unto our cause, but in vain. Yet I know full well, that it is easier for some men on their principles, to flourish with this weapon against us, than to defend themselves against it in the hands of the Papists. In brief, these Donatists were upon the matter of the same opinion with the Novatians ; and as these grounded their dissension on the receiving those into the church who had fallen and sacrificed under Decius, so did these on a pretence of severity against those who had been Traditors, under Maximinus. Upon this pretence, improved by many false allegations, Donatus, and those that followed him rejected Cecilianus, who was lawfully chosen and ordained bishop of Carthage, setting up one Majorinus in opposition unto him. Not suc-

ceeding herein, on this foolish unproved pretence, that Cæcilianus had been ordained by [a] Traditor, they rejected the communion of all the churches in the world, confined the whole church of Christ unto their own party, denied salvation unto any other, rebaptized all that came unto them from other churches, and together with a great number of bishops that joined with them, fell into most extravagant exorbitances.

Upon the consideration of these schisms the doctor concludes, ‘That on these grounds there hath scarce been any considerable schism in the Christian church, but may be justified upon Dr. Owen’s reasons, for separation from our church.’ Concerning which I must take the liberty to say, that I do not remember that ever I read in any learned author, an inference made, or conclusion asserted, that had so little countenance given unto it by the premises whence it is inferred, as there is into this, by the instances before insisted on, whence it is pretended to be educed.

All that is of argument in this story is this, That there were of old some bishops, with one or two who would have been bishops and could not, who to exalt and countenance themselves against those who were preferred to bishoprics before them, and above them, invented and maintained false doctrinal principles, the confession whereof they would have imposed on other churches; and because they were not admitted, they separated at once from all other churches in the world but their own, condemning them as no churches, as not having the sacraments or means of salvation; for which they were condemned as schismatics: therefore, those who own not subjection to diocesan bishops, by virtue of any institution or command of Christ, who refrain communion from parochial assemblies, because they cannot, without sin to themselves, comply with all things imposed on them in the worship of God, and ecclesiastical rule, without judging their state, or the salvation of their members, are in like manner as they, guilty of schism.

But we have fixed grounds whereon to try, examine, judge, and condemn all schisms that are justly so called, all such as those before mentioned. If separations arise and proceed from principles of false doctrine and errors, like those of the Novatians and Donatists; if they are occasioned

by ambition and desire of pre-eminence, like those that fell out among the bishops of those days, when their parishes and claims were not regulated by the civil power as now they are; if they do so from a desire to impose principles and practices not warranted in the Scripture, on others, as it was with Tertullian; if for slight reasons they rend and destroy that church-state and order which themselves approve of, as it was with all the ancient schismatics, who were bishops, or would feign to have been; if those that make them or follow in them deny salvation unto all that join not with them, and condemn all other churches as being without God's covenant, and the sacraments, as did the Donatists and those do, who deny these things unto all churches who have not diocesan bishops; if there be not a sufficient justifiable cause pleaded for it, that those who make such a separation cannot abide in the communion which they forsake, without wounding their own consciences, and do give evidences of their abiding in the exercise of love towards all the true disciples of Christ, we are satisfied that we have a rule infallibly directing us to make a judgment concerning it.

Our author adds, sect. 26. p. 197. 'Another argument against this course of separation is, that these grounds will make separation endless; which is to suppose all the exhortations of the Scripture to peace and unity among Christians, useless.' But why so? Is there nothing in the authority of Christ, and the sense of the account which is to be given unto him, nothing in the rule of the word, nothing in the works of the ministry and exercise of gospel discipline, to keep professed disciples of Christ unto their duty, and within the bounds of order divinely prescribed unto them, unless they are fettered and staked down with human laws and constitutions? Herein I confess I differ, and shall do so whilst I am in this world, from our reverend author and others. To say as he doth (upon a supposition of the taking away of human impositions, laws, and canons), that 'there are no bounds set unto separation but what the fancies of men will dictate unto them,' is dishonourable unto the gospel and somewhat more. To suppose that the authority of Christ the rule of the word, and the work of the ministry, are not sufficient to prescribe bounds unto separation effi-

caciously affecting the consciences of believers ; or that any other bounds can be assigned as obligatory unto their consciences, is what cannot be admitted. The Lord Christ hath commanded love and union among his disciples ; he hath ordained order and communion in his churches ; he hath given unto them and limited their power : he hath prescribed rules whereby they and all their members ought to walk ; he hath forbidden all schisms and divisions ; he hath appointed and limited all necessary separations, and hath truly given all the bounds unto it, that the consciences of men are or can be affected withal. But then it is said, ‘ If this be all, separation will be endless :’ if such a separation be intended as is an unlawful schism, I say, it may be it will, even as persecution and other evils, sins, and wickednesses will be, notwithstanding his severe prohibition of them. What he hath done is the only means to preserve his own disciples from all sinful separation, and is sufficient thereunto. Herein lieth the original mistake in this matter ; we have lost the apprehension that the authority of Christ in the rule of his word, and works of his Spirit, is every way sufficient for the guiding, governing, and preserving of his disciples, in the church-order by him prescribed, and the observance of the duties by him commanded. It hath been greatly lost in the world for many ages ; and therefore, instead of faithful ministerial endeavours to enforce a sense of it on the consciences of all Christians, they have been let loose from it, through a confidence in other devices, to keep them unto their duty and order. And if these devices, be they ecclesiastical canons or civil penalties, be not enforced on them all, the world is made to believe, that they are left unto the dictates of their own fancies and imaginations, as if they had no concern in Christ or his authority, in this matter. But for my part, I shall never desire, nor endeavour to keep any from schism or separation, but by the ways and means of Christ’s appointment, and by a sense of his authority on their own consciences.

The remainder of his discourse on this head, consists in a lepid dramatical oration, framed and feigned for one of his opposers ; wherein he makes him undertake the patronage of schism before Cyprian and Austin. The learned person intended is very well able to defend and vindicate himself,

which I suppose also he will do. In the mean time I cannot but say two things.

1. That the imposition on him of extenuating the guilt of any real schism, is that which none of his words do give the least countenance unto.

2. That the doctor's attempt in his feigned oration to accommodate his principles or ours, unto the case of the Donatists for their justification (the weakness whereof is evident to every one who knows any thing of the case of the Donatists), is such an instance of the power of interest, a design to maintain a cause, causelessly undertaken, by all manner of artifices and pretences, prevailing in the minds of men otherwise wise and sober, as is to be lamented.

We come at length in the fifth place, sect. 28. p. 209. unto that which is indeed of more importance duly to be considered, than all that went before. For as our author observes, it is that, 'wherein the consciences of men are concerned.' This argument, therefore, he takes from the obligation which lies upon all Christians to preserve the peace and unity of the church. For the confirmation of this argument, and the application of it unto the case of them who refrain from total communion with our parochial assemblies, which alone is the case in hand, he lays down sundry suppositions, which I shall consider in their order, although they may be all granted without any disadvantage unto our cause. But they will be so the better, when they are rightly stated.

1. His first supposition is, 'That Christians are under the strictest obligations to preserve the peace and unity of the church.'

This being the foundation of all that follows, it must be rightly stated. And to that end three things may be inquired into.

1. What is that church, whose peace and unity we are obliged to preserve. For there are those who lay the firmest claim unto the name, power, and privileges of the church, with whom we are obliged to have neither peace nor unity in the worship of God.

2. What is that peace and unity which we are so obliged to preserve.

3. By what means they are to be preserved.

- (1.) We are obliged to 'follow peace with all men,' to 'seek

peace and pursue it,' and 'if it be possible to live peaceably with all men.'

(2.) There is a peculiar obligation upon us, to seek the peace and prosperity of the whole visible church of Christ on earth, and therein as we have opportunity to do good unto the whole household of faith. And considering what differences, what divisions, what exasperations there are among professors of the name of Christ all the world over, to abide steadfast in seeking the good of them all, and doing good unto them as we have opportunity, is as evident an indication of gospel love, as any thing else whatever can be.

(3.) As unto particular churches, there is an especial obligation upon us, to preserve their peace and unity from our own voluntary consent, to walk in them in obedience unto the commands of Christ. Where this is not, we are left unto the general obligation of seeking the peace of all men, and of the whole professing church in an especial manner, but have no other peculiar obligation thereunto. For being cast into churches of this or that form, merely by human constitutions and laws, or by inveterate traditions, lays no new obligation upon any to seek their peace and unity; but whilst they abide in them, they are left unto the influence of other general commands which are to be applied unto their present circumstances. For into what state or condition soever Christians are cast, they are obliged to live peaceably whilst they abide in it.

2. It may be inquired, what is that peace and unity of the church, that we are bound to preserve. There may be an agreement with some kind of peace and unity in evil. They are highly pretended unto in the church of Rome, but they are so in idolatry, superstition, and heresy. There may be peace and unity in any false and heretical church; the unity of Simeon and Levi, brethren in evil. But the peace and unity which we are obliged to observe in particular churches, is the consent and agreement of the church in general, and all the members of it, walking under the conduct of this guide in a due observation of all the institutions and commands of Christ, performing towards the whole and each other, the mutual duties required by him, from a principle of faith and love. This, and this alone, is that unity and peace, which we are peculiarly obliged to preserve in

particular churches ; what is more than this, relates unto the general commands of love, unity, and peace before mentioned.

3. Wherefore, this states the means whereby we are to preserve this peace and unity ; for we are not to endeavour it,

(1.) By a neglect or omission of the observance of any of the commands of Christ. Nor,

(2.) By doing or practising any thing in divine worship, which he hath not appointed. Nor,

(3.) By partaking in other men's sins, through a neglect of our own duty. Nor,

(4.) By foregoing the means of our own edification which he commands us to make use of. For these things have no tendency to the preservation of that peace : and his third supposition, is, ' That nothing can discharge a Christian from the obligation to communion with his fellow-members, but what is allowed by Christ or his apostles, as a sufficient reason of it.' It is fully agreed unto, where a man is a member of any church of divine institution by his own consent and virtual consideration, nothing can discharge him from communion with that church, but what is allowed by Christ as a sufficient reason for it.

But a little farther inquiry may be made into these things. It was before asserted, that all things lawful were to be done for the preservation of the peace of the church. Here it is pleaded that there are many obligations on us to preserve its peace and unity. I desire to know, unto whom these rules are obligatory ? who they are that ought to yield obedience unto them ? If it be said, that these rules are not prescribed unto the rulers and guides of the church, but unto them only who are under their conduct, I desire a proof of it, for at the first view it is very absurd. For as the preservation of the peace and unity of the church, is properly incumbent on them who are the rulers of it, and it is continually pleaded by them that so it doth, so all the rules given for that end, do or should principally, and in the first place, effect them and their consciences. And these are the rules of their duty herein which are laid down by the doctor. I desire therefore to know, that since there are such obligations on us to preserve the peace and unity of the

church, that for that end we must do what we lawfully may ; whether the same rule doth not oblige us to forbear the doing of what we may lawfully forbear, with respect unto the same end. Nay, this obligation of forbearing what we may do, and yet may forbear to do without sin, for the peace and unity of the church, especially when any would be offended with our doing that which we may lawfully forbear to do, is exemplified in the Scripture, confirmed by commands and instances, is more highly rational, and less exposed unto danger in practice, than the other of doing what we can.

Now things that are not necessary in themselves, nor necessary to be observed by a just scandal and offence in case of their omission, are things that may be lawfully forborn. Suppose now the rules insisted on to be given principally and in the first place unto the rulers of the church ; I desire to know whether they are not obliged by them, for the preservation of the peace and unity of the church, to forbear the imposition of such things on the practice of the whole church in the worship of God, as being no way necessary in themselves, nor such whose omission or the omission of whose imposition, can give scandal or offence unto any ; if they are obliged by them so to do, it will be evident where the blame of the division amongst us must lie. To say they are not obliged hereunto by virtue of these rules, is to say, that although the preservation of the peace and unity of the church be incumbent on them in a particular manner, and the chief of them can assign no other end of the office they lay claim unto, but only its expediency, or, as is pretended, its necessity unto the preservation of the peace and unity of the church ; yet they are not by virtue of any divine rules obliged thereunto. But it seems to me somewhat unequal, that in this contest about the preservation of the peace of the church, we should be bound by rules to do all that we can, whatever it be, and those who differ from us be left absolutely at their liberty, so as not to be obliged to forbear, what they may lawfully so do. But to proceed.

Upon these suppositions and in the confirmation of them, the doctor produceth a passage out of Irenæus, whose impartial consideration he chargeth on us with great solemnity, as we love our own souls. Now although that passage in that great and holy person, be not new unto me,

having not only read it many a time in his book, but frequently met with it urged by Papists against all Protestants; yet, upon the doctor's intimation, I have given it again the consideration required. The words as they lie in the author are to this purpose.

'We shall also judge them, who make schisms being vain, *'qui sunt immanes,'* or *'inanes,'* not having the love of God, rather considering their own profit, than the unity of the church; who for small or any causes, rend and divide the glorious body of Christ, and as much as in them lies destroy it; speaking peace, but designing war, straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel. For there can be no rebuke of things by them, to equal the mischief of schism; lib. 4. cap. 62.

I know not why he should give us such a severe charge for the impartial consideration of these words; that as we love our souls, we should impartially and without prejudice consider them. We hope that out of love to the truth, the glory of Christ, and care of our own souls, we do so consider, and have long since so considered, whatever belongs unto the cause wherein we engaged, and the oppositions that are made unto it. Nor will we be offended with any, that shall yet call on us to persist and proceed in the same way. But why such a charge should be laid on us with respect unto these words of Irenæus, I know not. For although we greatly value the words and judgment of that holy person, that great defender of the mystery and truth of the gospel, and of the liberty of the churches from unwarrantable impositions, yet it is the word of Christ and his apostles alone, whereby we must be regulated and determined in these things, if we love our own souls.

Besides, What are we concerned in them; is every separation from a church a schism? Our author shews the contrary immediately. Is refraining communion in a church-state not of divine institution, and in things not prescribed by the Lord Christ in the worship of God, holding communion in faith and love with all the true churches of Christ in the world, a damnable schism, or any schism at all? Hath the reverend author in his whole book once attempted to prove it to be so, though this be the whole of the matter in difference between us? Is our forbearance of communion

in parochial assemblies, upon the reasons before pleaded, especially that of human impositions, of the same nature with the schism from the whole catholic church, without pretence of any such impositions? Doth he judge us to be such as have no love unto God; such as prefer our own profit before the unity of the church? I heartily wish and pray, that he may never have a share in that profit and advantage which we have made unto ourselves by our principles and practice. Poverty, distress, ruin to our families, dangers, imprisonments, revilings with contemptuous reproaches, comprise the profit we have made unto ourselves. Is our refraining communion in some outward order, modes, and rites of men's institution, our want of conscientious submission unto the courts of chancellors, commissaries, officials, &c. a rending and destroying of the glorious body of Christ? Is it cemented, united, and compacted or fitly framed together by these things? They formerly pretended to be his coat, and must they now be esteemed to be his glorious body, when they no way belong unto the one or the other? Is the application of these things unto us, an effect of that love, charity, and forbearance which are the only preventive means of schism, and whereof if men are void, it is all one upon the matter whether they are schismatics or no? for they will be so when it is for their advantage. Wherefore we are not concerned in these things. Let whosoever will declare and vehemently assert us to be guilty of schism, which they cannot prove, we can cheerfully subscribe unto these words of Irenæus.

It may not be impertinent on this occasion to desire of some others, that as they love their own souls, and have compassion for the souls of other men; they would seriously consider, what state and condition things are come unto in the church of England; how much ignorance, profaneness, sensuality, do spread themselves over the nation; what neglect of the most important duties of the gospel; yea, what scoffing at the power of religion doth abound amongst us; what an utter decay and loss there is of all the primitive discipline of the church, what multitudes are in the way of eternal ruin, for want of due instruction and example from them who should lead them; how great a necessity there is of a universal reformation, and how securely negligent of it,

all sorts of persons are. What have been the pernicious effects of imposing things unnecessary and unscriptural on the consciences and practices of men in the worship of God, whereby the church hath been deprived of the labour of so many faithful ministers, who might have at least assisted in preventing that decay of religion which every day increaseth among us; how easy a thing it were for them, to restore evangelical peace and unity amongst all Protestants, without the loss of their ministry, without the diminution of their dignity, without deprivation of any part of their revenues, without the neglect of any duty, without doing any thing against their light and consciences, with respect unto any divine obligation; and thereon set themselves seriously to endeavour the remedy of these and other evils of the like nature, under a sense of that great account which they must shortly give before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ.

He proceeds to consider the cases wherein the Scripture allows of separation, which he affirms to be three.

The first is in case of idolatrous worship. This none can question, they do not see, from whom yet we all separate as from idolaters.

The second is in case of false doctrine being imposed instead of true; which he confirms with sundry instances. But there is a little difficulty in this case; for,

1. It is uncertain when a doctrine may be said to be imposed. Is it when it is taught and preached by the guides and governors of the church, or any of them, without control? If so, then is such preaching a sufficient cause of separation, and will justify them who do at present separate from any church, whose ministers preach false doctrine. How false doctrine can be otherwise imposed I know not, unless it be by exacting an express confession of it as truth.

2. What false doctrine it is, which is of this importance as to justify separation, is not easily determinable.

3. If the guides and governors of the church do teach this false doctrine, who shall judge of it, and determine it so to be, and that ultimately, so as to separate from a church thereon? shall the people do it themselves? are they meet? are they competent for it? are they to make such a judgment on the doctrine of their guides? do they know what is heresy? have they read Epiphanius or Binius? How

comes this allowance to be made unto them, which elsewhere is denied?

This third is, In case men make things indifferent necessary to salvation, and divide the church on that account. But,

1. I know not which is to precede or go before, their division of the church, or the just separation, nor how they are to be distinguished; but it was necessary to be so expressed.

2. There are two things in such an imposition; first, the practice of things imposed; secondly the judgment of them that impose them. The former alone belongs unto them who are imposed on; and they may submit unto it, without a compliance with the doctrine, as many did in the apostles' days. For the judgment of the imposers, it was their own error and concernment only.

3. Why is not the imposing of things indifferent, so as to make the observation of them necessary unto men's temporal salvation in this world, so as that the refusal of it shall really affect the refusers with trouble and ruin, as just a cause of separation, as the imposing of them as necessary unto eternal salvation, which shall never affect them?

4. This making things indifferent necessary unto salvation, and as such imposing of them on others, is a thing impossible, that never was, nor ever can be. For it is the judgment of the imposers that is spoken of, and to judge things indifferent in themselves, to be in themselves necessary to salvation, is a contradiction. If only the judgment of the imposers, that such things are not indifferent but necessary to salvation, be intended, and otherwise the things themselves may lawfully be imposed, I know not how this differs from the imposition of indifferent things, under any other pretence.

In his following discourse concerning miscarriages in churches, where no separation is enjoined, we are not at all concerned, and therefore shall not observe the mistakes in it, which are not a few.

But may there not be other causes of peaceable withdrawing from the communion of a church, besides these here enumerated?

1. Suppose a church should impose the observation of Judaical ceremonies, and make their observation necessary,

though not to salvation, yet unto the order and decency of divine worship; it may declare them to be in themselves indifferent; but yet make them necessary to be observed. Or,

2. Suppose a church should be so degenerated in the life and conversation of all its members, that being immersed in various sins, they should have only a form of godliness, but deny the power of it; the rule of the apostle being to avoid and turn away from them.

3. Suppose a church be fallen into such decays in faith, love, and fruits of charity, as that the Lord Jesus Christ by his word, declares his disapprobation of it, and in that state refuses to reform itself, and persecutes them who would reform themselves; Or,

4. Suppose the ministry of any church be such as is insufficient and unable to dispense the word and sacraments unto edification, so as that the whole church may perish as unto any relief by or from the administration of the ordinances of the gospel; I say, in these and such other cases, a peaceable withdrawing from the communion of such churches, is warrantable by the rule of the Scripture.

SECT. III.

THE third part of the doctor's discourse he designs to examine the pleas, as he speaks, for separation. And these he refers to four heads, whereof the first respects the constitution of the church. And those which relate hereunto are four also.

1. That parochial churches are not of Christ's institution.

2. That diocesan churches are unlawful.

3. That our national church hath no foundation.

4. That the people are deprived of their right in the choice of their pastors.

The first of these, namely, that our parochial churches are not of Christ's institution, he begins withal, and therein I am alone called to an account. I wonder the doctor

should thus state the question between us. The meaning of this assertion, that our parochial churches are not of Christ's institution, must be either, they are not so because they are parochial, or at least in that they are parochial. But is this my judgment; have I said any thing to this purpose? yea, he knows full well, that in my judgment there are no churches directly of divine institution, but those that are parochial or particular churches. We are not therefore to expect much in the ensuing disputation, when the state of the question is so mistaken at the entrance.

If he say, or intend, that there are many things in their parochial churches observed, practised, and imposed on all their members, in and about the worship of God, which are not of divine institution, we grant it to be our judgment, and part of our plea in this case. But this is not at all spoken unto.

Wherefore the greatest part of the ensuing discourse on this head, is spent in perpetual diversions from the state of the case under consideration, with an attempt to take advantage for some reflections, or an appearance of success, from some passages and expressions, belonging nothing at all unto the merit of the cause; a course which I thought so learned a person would not have taken, in a case wherein conscience is so nearly concerned.

Some mistakes occurring in it, have been already rectified; as that wherein he supposeth that my judgment is for the democratical government of the church; as also what he allegeth in the denial of the gradual declension of the primitive churches from their first original institution, hath been examined.

I shall therefore plainly and directly propose the things which I assert and maintain in this part of the controversy, and then consider what occurs in opposition unto them, or otherwise seems to be of any force towards the end in general of charging us with schism; and they are these that follow.

1. Particular churches or congregations, with their order and rule, are of divine institution, and are sufficient unto all the ends of evangelical churches. I take churches and congregations in the same sense and notion as the church of England doth, defining the church by a congregation of

believers; otherwise there may be occasional congregations that are not stated churches.

2. Unto these churches, there is committed by Christ himself, all the ordinary power and privileges that belong unto any church under the gospel, and of them is required the observance of all church duties which it is their sin to omit.

3. There is no church of any other form, kind, nature, or constitution, that is of divine institution. Things may be variously ordered in and amongst Christians; or their societies may be cast, or disposed of, into such respective relations to, and dependance on one another, in compliance with the political state, and other circumstances of times and places, as may be thought to tend unto their advantage. That which we affirm is, that no alteration of their state from the nature and kind of particular churches is of divine institution.

4. Such churches whose frame, constitution, and power, are destructive of the order, liberty, power, privileges, and duties of particular churches, are so far contrary unto divine institution, and not to be complied withal.

Hereon we affirm, that whereas we are excluded from total communion in our parochial assemblies, by the imposition of things unto us unlawful and sinful, as indispensable conditions of their communion, and cannot comply with them in their rule and worship on the reasons before alleged, it is part of the duty we owe to Jesus Christ, to gather ourselves into particular churches or congregations, for the celebration of divine worship, and the observation, doing, or performance of all his commands. These are the things which in this case we adhere unto, and which must all of them be overthrown, before any colour can be given unto any charge of schism against us, and what is spoken unto this purpose in the doctor's discourse, we shall now consider. Only I desire the reader to remember, that all these principles or assertions are fully confirmed in the preceeding discourse.

That which first occurs in the treatise under consideration unto the point in hand, is the exception put in unto a passage in my former discourse, which is as follows :

‘ We do not say that because communion in ordinances should be only in such churches as Christ hath instituted,

that therefore it is lawful and necessary to separate from parochial churches; but if it be on other grounds necessary so to separate or withhold communion from them, it is the duty of them that do so to join themselves in or unto some other particular congregation.'

I have not observed any occasion wherein the doctor is more vehement in his rhetoric, than he is on that of this passage, which yet appears to me to be good sense and innocent.

1. Hereunto he says, (1.) p. 221. 'That this is either not to the business, or it is a plain giving up the cause of independency.' If he judge that it is not to the business, I cannot help it, and he might, as I suppose, have done well to have taken no notice of it; as I have dealt with many passages in his discourse. But if it 'be a giving up of the cause of independency,' I say, whatever that be, let whoso will take it, and dispose of it as it seems good unto them: but in proof hereof he says,

(1.) 'Wherefore did the dissenting brethren so much insist upon their separate congregations, when not one of the things now particularly alleged against our church was required of them?'

I answer,

(1.) If any did in those times plead for separate congregations, let them answer for themselves, I was none of them. They did indeed plead for distinct congregations, exempt in some few things from a penal rule, then endeavoured by some to be imposed on all. But there was no such difference nor restraint of communion between any of them, as it is at present between us and parochial churches.

(2.) It is very possible that there may be other reasons of forbearing a conjunction in some acts of church-rule, which was all that was pleaded for by the dissenting brethren, than those which are alleged against total communion with parochial churches in worship, order, and discipline.

2. He adds, secondly, 'But if he insists on those things common to our church with other reformed churches, then they are such things as he supposes contrary to the first institution of churches,' &c.

I fear I do not well understand what this means, nor

what it tends unto, but according as I apprehend the sense of it, I say,

(1.) I insist principally on such things as are not common unto them with other reformed churches, but such as are peculiar unto the church of England. These vary the terms and practice of our communion, between them and it.

(2.) The things we except against in parochial churches, are not contrary to their first institution as parochial, which as hath been proved is the only kind of churches that is of divine institution; but are contrary unto what is instituted to be done and observed in such churches; which one observation makes void all that he would infer from the present suppositions; as,

3. He inquireth hereon, 'What difference there is between separating from our churches, because communion in ordinances is only to be enjoyed in such churches as Christ hath instituted, and separating from them, because they have things repugnant unto the first institution of churches.'

The doctor, I fear, would call this sophistry in another, or at least complain that it is somewhat oddly and faintly expressed. But we shall consider it as it is.

(1.) Separation from parochial churches, because communion in ordinances is only to be enjoyed in such churches as Christ hath instituted, is denied by us; it is so in the assertion opposed by him; and I do not know whether it be laid down by him, as that which we affirm or which we deny.

(2.) There is great ambiguity in the latter clause; of 'separating from them, because they have things repugnant unto the first institution of churches.' For it is one thing to separate from a church because it is not of divine institution, that is, not of that kind of churches which are divinely instituted, and another to do so, because of things practised and imposed in it contrary to divine institution, which is the case in hand.

4. But he after saith, 'Is not this the primary reason of separation, because Christ hath appointed unalterable rules for the government of his church, which are not to be observed in parochial churches?'

I answer no, it is not so, for there may be an omission,

at least for a season, in some churches, of some rules that Christ hath appointed in the government of his church (and we judge his rules as unto right unalterable), which may not be a just cause of separation. So the church of the Jews continued a long time in the omission of the observance of the feast of tabernacles. But the principal reason of the separation we defend is, the practising and imposing of sundry things in the worship of the church not of divine institution, yea, in our judgment contrary thereunto, and the framing of a rule of government of men's devising, to be laid on all the members of them; this is the primary cause pleaded herein.

But because the doctor proposeth a case on those suppositions, whereon he seems to lay great weight, though indeed, however it be determined, it conduceth nothing unto his end, but argues only some keenness of spirit against them whom he opposeth, I shall at large transcribe the whole of it.

'Let us then,' saith he, '(1.) suppose that Christ hath by unalterable rules appointed that a church shall consist only of such a number of men as may meet in one congregation so qualified; and that those by entering into covenant with each other,' (whereof we shall treat hereafter) 'become a church and choose their officers, who are to teach and admonish and administer sacraments, and to exercise discipline by the consent of the congregation. And let us, (2.) suppose such a church not yet gathered, but there lies fit matter for it dispersed up and down in several parishes. (3.) Let us suppose Dr. Owen about to gather such a church. (4.) Let us suppose not one thing peculiar to our church, required of these members, neither the aerial sign of the cross, nor kneeling at the communion, &c. I desire to know whether Dr. Owen be not bound by this unalterable rule, to draw these members from communion with parochial churches on purpose that they might form a congregational church according to Christ's institution? Either then he must quit these unalterable rules and institutions of Christ,' (which he will never do whilst he lives) 'or he must acknowledge, that setting up a congregational church, is the primary ground of this separation from our parochial churches,' &c.

The whole design hereof is to prove, that we do not with-

hold communion from their parochial assemblies, because of the things that are practised and imposed in them in the worship of God and church-rule; but because of a necessity apprehended of setting up congregational churches. I answer,

1. We know it is otherwise, and that we plead the true reason and that which our consciences are regulated by, in refraining from their communion; and it is in vain for him or any man else to endeavour so to birdlime our understandings by a multiplicity of questions, as to make us think we do not judge what we do judge, or do not do what we know ourselves well enough to do. If we cannot answer sophisms against motion, we can yet rise up and walk.

2. These things are consistent, and are not capable of being opposed one to the other; namely, that we refrain communion on the reasons alleged, and thereon judge it necessary to erect congregational churches; which we should have no occasion to do, were not we excluded from communion in parochial assemblies, as we are.

3. The case being put unto me, I answer plainly unto the doctor's last supposition whereon the whole depends, that if those things which we except against, as being unduly practised and imposed in parochial assemblies, were removed and taken away, I would hold communion with them, all the communion that any one is obliged to hold with any church, and would in nothing separate from them. This spoils the whole case. But then he will say, I am no Independent: I cannot help that, he may judge as he sees cause; for I am '*nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri*,' designing to be the disciple of Christ alone.

4. But yet suppose that in such churches all the things excepted against being removed, there is yet a defect in some unalterable rule, that concerns the government of the churches, that they answer not in all things the strictness laid down in the doctor's first supposition (although it is certain, that if not all of them absolutely, yet the most of them, and of the most importance, would be found virtually in parochial assemblies, upon the removal of the things excepted against), the inquiry is, what I would do then, or whether I would not set up a congregational church, gathered out of other churches. I answer, I tell you plainly what I would do.

(1.) If I were joined unto any such church, as wherein there were a defect in any of the rules appointed by Christ for its order and government, I would endeavour peaceably, according as the duties of my state and calling did require, to introduce the practice and observance of them.

(2.) In case I could not prevail therein, I would consider whether the want of the things supposed, were such, as to put me on the practice of any thing unlawful, or cut me short of the necessary means of edification; and if I found they do not so do, I would never for such defects separate or withdraw communion from such a church. But,

5. Suppose that from these defects should arise not only a real obstruction unto edification, but also a necessity of practising some things unlawful to be observed, wherein no forbearance could be allowed, I would not condemn such a church, I would not separate from it, would not withdraw from acts of communion with it, which were lawful; but I would peaceably join in fixed personal communion with such a church as is free from such defects; and if this cannot be done without the gathering of a new church, I see neither schism nor separation in so doing. Wherefore, notwithstanding all the doctor's questions and his case founded on as many suppositions as he was pleased to make, it abides firm and unshaken, that the ground and reason of our refraining communion from parochial assemblies, is the practice and imposition of things not lawful for us to observe in them. And it is unduly affirmed, p. 223. that upon my grounds, 'Separation is necessary, not from the particular conditions of communion with them, but because parochial churches are not formed after the congregational way.' For what form of churches they have, be it what it will, it is after the congregational way. And it is more unduly affirmed, and contrary unto the rules of Christian charity, that this plea of ours is a necessary piece of art to keep fair with the Presbyterian party. For as we design to keep fair, as it is called, with no parties, but only so far as truth and Christian love require, and so we design it with all parties whatsoever; so the plea hath been always insisted on by us, and was the cause of nonconformity in multitudes of our persuasion, before they had any opportunity to gather any congregational churches according to the rule of the

gospel. Such things will never help nor adorn any cause in the issue.

But he presseth the due consideration of this art (that, as I suppose, they may avoid the snare of it), on the Presbyterians, by minding them what was done in former times, 'in the debate of the dissenting brethren, and the setting up of congregational churches in those days.' For saith he, 'Have those of the congregational way since altered their judgment? Hath Dr. Owen yielded, that in case some terms of communion in our church were not insisted on, they would give over separation? Were not their churches first gathered out of Presbyterian congregations; and if presbytery had been settled upon the king's restoration, would they not have continued in their separation?'

Ans. 1. There is no difference that I know of, between Presbyterians and those whom he calls independents, about particular churches. For the Presbyterians allow them to be of divine institution; grant them the exercise of discipline, by their own eldership in all ordinary cases, and none to be exercised in them, without them or their own consent, as also their right unto the choice of their own officers; so that there could be no separation between them on that account.

2. When they begin in good earnest to reform themselves, and to take away the unsufferable conditions of communion excepted against, they may know more of my judgment if I am alive (which I do not believe I shall be), as unto separation; though I have spoken unto it plainly enough already.

3. It cannot be said, that the churches of the Independents were gathered out of Presbyterian churches, for the Presbyterian government was never here established; and each party took liberty to reform themselves according to their principles, wherein there was some difference.

4. Had the Presbyterian government been settled at the king's restoration, by the encouragement and protection of the practice of it, without a rigorous imposition of every thing supposed by any to belong thereunto, or a mixture of human constitutions, if there had any appearance of a schism or separation continued between the parties, I do judge they would have been both to blame. For as it can-

not be expected that all churches, and all persons in them, should agree in all principles and practices belonging unto church-order, nor was it so in the days of the apostles, nor ever since among any true churches of Christ; so all the fundamental principles of church communion would have been so fixed and agreed upon between them, and all offences in worship so removed, as that it would have been a matter of no great art absolutely to unite them, or to maintain a firm communion among them, no more than in the days of the apostles and the primitive times, in reference to the differences that were among churches in those days. For they allowed distinct communion upon distinct apprehensions of things belonging unto church-order or worship, all keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If it shall be asked then, why did they not formerly agree in the assembly? I answer, (1.) I was none of them, and cannot tell. (2.) They did agree in my judgment well enough, if they could have thought so; and farther I am not concerned in the difference.

It is therefore notorious, that occasion is given unto our refraining free communion with parochial churches by the unwarrantable imposition of things, not lawful for us to observe, both in church-order and worship; nor is it candid in any to deny it, though they are otherwise minded as unto the things themselves.

His second exception is unto a saying which I quoted out of justice Hobart's reports, who saith, 'We know well that the primitive church in its greatest purity was but voluntary congregations of believers, submitting themselves to the apostles and other pastors, to whom they did minister of their temporals as God did move them.' Hereunto, with a reflection on a dead man, I know not why, he replies, that this is 'not to the purpose, or rather, quite overthrows my hypothesis.' But why so? He will prove it with two arguments.

The first is this, 'Those voluntary congregations over which the apostles were set, were no limited congregations of any one particular church; but those congregations over which the apostles were set are those of which justice Hobart speaks, and therefore it is plain he spake of all the

churches which were under the care of the apostles, which he calls voluntary congregations.'

Ans. 1. Whereas this argument seems to be cast into the form of a syllogism, I could easily manifest how asylogistical it is, did I delight to contend with him or any else. But,

2. The conclusion which he infers is directly what I plead for, namely, that all the churches under the care of the apostles were voluntary congregations.

3. There is a fallacy in that expression, 'no limited congregations of any one particular church;' no such thing is pretended, but particular churches are congregations. Such were all the churches over which the apostles were set, and therefore justice Hobart speaks of them all. This then is that which he seems to oppose, namely, that all the churches under the care of the apostles were particular voluntary congregations, as justice Hobart affirms, and this is that which, in the close, he seems to grant.

His second argument, which is no less ambiguous, no less a rope of sand than the former, is this, 'Those voluntary congregations over whom the apostles appointed pastors after their decease, were no particular congregations in one city. But those of whom justice Hobart speaks were such, for he saith they first submitted unto the apostles and afterward to other pastors.' What then? Why 'justice Hobart could not be such a stranger to antiquity as to believe that the Christians in the age after the apostles, amounted but to one congregation in a city.'

Ans. 1. What this is designed to prove, or disprove, or how it doth either of them I do not understand; but I deny the proposition. 'The voluntary congregations over whom the apostles appointed pastors were all of them particular congregations,' either in one city or more cities, for that is nothing unto our purpose.

2. Not to engage justice Hobart or his honour, I do confess myself such a stranger unto antiquity (if that may be esteemed the reason of it), as not to believe that the Christians in the age after the apostles amounted to any more than one church or congregation in a city; and shall acknowledge myself beholden to this reverend author, if he

will give me one undoubted instance where they so did. Only let the reader observe, that I intend not occasional meetings of any of the church with or without their elders, which were frequent; they met in those days, in fields, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, in burying places, in houses hired or borrowed, in upper rooms, or cellars, whereof a large story might easily be given, if it were to our present purpose. Dionysius of Alexandria sums them up briefly *χώριον, ἀγροῖ, ἐρημία, ναῦς, πανδοχεῖον δεσμοτήριον*, a field, a desert, a ship, an inn, a prison, were places of our meetings; Euseb. lib. 7. cap. 22. but I speak of stated churches with their worship, power, order, and rule. But whether there were more such churches in any one city is a matter of fact that shall be immediately inquired into. All that I here assert and confirm from the words of justice Hobart is, that the churches in the days of the apostles were particular voluntary congregations. And the doctor will find it a difficult task to prove that this overthrows my hypothesis.

Our author in the next place opposeth what I affirmed of the gradual deviation of the churches after the apostles from the rule of their first institution; which hath been already accounted for.

Sect. 4. p. 224. Upon an occasional expression of mine, about the church of Carthage in Cyprian's time, he gives us a large account of the state of the church of Carthage at that time, wherein we are not much concerned. My words are, Vindic. p. 41. [vol. xix. p. 604.] 'Though many alterations were before that time introduced into the order and rule of the churches, yet it appears that when Cyprian was bishop of the church of Carthage, that the whole community of the members of that church did meet together to determine of things that were of their common interest, according unto what was judged to be their right and liberty in those days.'

I thought no man who is so conversant in the writings of Cyprian as our author apparently is, could have denied the truth hereof, nor do I say it is so done by him; only he takes occasion from hence to discourse at large concerning the state of the church at Carthage in those days, in opposition to Mr. Cotton, who affirms that there was found in that church the 'express and lively lineaments of the very

body of congregational discipline.' Herein I am not concerned, who do grant that at that time there were many alterations introduced into the order and rule of the church; but that the people did meet together unto the determination of things of their common interest, such as were the choice of their officers, and the readmission of them into the fellowship of the church who had fallen through infirmity in time of persecution, or public offences and divisions, is so evident in the writings of Cyprian, wherein he ascribes unto them the right of choosing worthy, and of rejecting unworthy officers, and tells them that in such cases he will do nothing without their consent, that it cannot be gainsayed. But hereon he asketh, where I had any reason to appeal to St. Cyprian for the democratical government of the church; which indeed I did not do, nor any thing which looked like unto it: and he adds, that they have this advantage from the appeal, that we do not suppose any deviation then from the primitive institution, whereas my words are positive, that before that time there were many alterations introduced into the rule and order of the church; such things will partiality in a cause, and aiming at success in disputation, produce.

Mr. Cotton affirms, that the lineaments of the congregational discipline are found in that church; that there is therein a just representation of an episcopal church; that is, I presume, diocesan, because that alone is unto his purpose. It is not lawful to make any church after the time of the apostles the rule of all church-state and order; nor yet to be absolutely determined in these things by the authority of any man not divinely inspired, and yet I cannot but wish that all the three parties dissenting about church-order, rule, and worship, would attempt an agreement between themselves, upon the representation made of the state of the church of Carthage in the days of Cyprian (which all of them lay some claim unto), although it will be an abridgment of some of their pretensions. It might bring them all nearer together, and, it may be, all of them in some things nearer to the truth: for it is certain,

1. That the church of Carthage was at that time a particular church. There was no more church but one in that city. Many occasional meetings and assemblies in several

places for divine exercises and worship there were. But stated churches with officers of their own, members peculiarly belonging unto them, discipline among them, such as our reverend author doth afterward affirm and describe our parochial churches to be, there were none, nor is it pretended that there were.

2. That in this one church there were many presbyters or elders, who ruled the whole body or community of it by common advice and counsel, whether they were all of them such as laboured in the word and doctrine, with the administration of the sacraments, or attended unto rule only, it doth not appear but that they were many, and such as did not stand in any peculiar relation unto any part of the people, but concurred in common to promote the edification of the whole body, as occasion and opportunity did require, is evident in the account given of them by Cyprian himself.

3. That among those elders, in that one church, there was one peculiarly called the bishop, who did constantly preside amongst them in all church affairs, and without whom ordinarily nothing was done, as neither did he any thing, without the advice of the elders and consent of the people. How far this may be allowed for order's sake is worth consideration; of divine institution it is not. But where there are many elders, who have equal interest in, and right unto, the rule of the whole church and the administration of all ordinances, it is necessary unto order, that one do preside in their meetings and consultations, whom custom gave some pre-eminence unto.

4. That the people were ruled by their own consent, and that in things of greatest importance, as the choice of their officers, the casting out and the receiving in of lapsed members, had their suffrage in the determination of them.

5. That there was no imposition of liturgies, or ceremonies, or any human invention in the worship of God, on the church or any members of it, the Scripture being the sole acknowledged rule in discipline and worship.

This was the state and order of the church of Carthage in those days, and although there were some alterations in it from the first divine institution of churches, yet I heartily wish that there were no more difference amongst us, than what would remain upon a supposition of this state.

For what remains of the opposition made unto what I had asserted concerning congregational or particular churches, I may refer the doctor and the reader unto what hath been farther pleaded concerning them in the preceding discourse, nor am I satisfied that he hath given any sufficient answer unto what was before alleged in the vindication, but hath passed by what was most pregnant with evidence unto the truth, and by a mistake of my mind or words diverts very much from the state of the question, which is no other but what I laid down before; yet I will consider what is material in the whole of his discourse on this subject.

Sect. 5. p. 234. He says, I affirm that as to the ‘matter of fact concerning the institution of congregational churches, it seems evidently exemplified in the Scripture;’ for which I refer the reader unto what is now again declared in the confirmation of it. And he adds, ‘The matter of fact is that when churches grew too big for one single congregation in a city, then a new congregational church was set up under new officers, with a separate power of government,’ that is, in that city. But this is not at all the matter of fact. I do not say that there were originally more particular churches than one in one city; I do grant, in the words next quoted by him, that there is not express mention made, that any such church did divide itself into more congregations with new officers. But this is the matter of fact, that the apostles appointed only particular congregations, and that therefore they did not oblige the Christians about in a province or diocess to be of that church which was first erected in any town or city, but they founded new churches, with new officers of their own, in all places where there were a sufficient number of believers to make up such a church. And this I prove from the instance of the church of Jerusalem, which was first planted; but quickly after there were churches gathered and settled in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. They planted churches, *κατὰ πόλεις καὶ χώρας*, in the cities and villages, as Clemens speaks. But what, saith he, is this to the proof of the congregational way? this it is, namely, that the churches instituted by the apostles were all of them congregational, not diocesan, provincial or national; but saith he, ‘the thing I desired was, that when

the Christians in one city multiplied into more congregations, they would prove that they did make new and distinct churches.' He may desire it of them who grant that the Christians did multiply in one city into more congregations than one (which I deny), until the end of the second century; although they might and did occasionally meet, especially in times of persecution, in distinct assemblies. Neither will their multiplication into more congregations, without distinct officers, at all help the cause he pleadeth for; for his diocesan church consisteth of many distinct churches with their distinct officers, order, and power, as he afterward describes our parishes to do under one bishop. Yet such is his apprehension of the justice of his cause, that what hath been pleaded twenty times against it, namely, that speaking of one city, the Scripture still calls it the church of that place; but speaking of a province, as Judea, Galilee, Samaria, Galatia, Macedonia, it speaks of the churches of them, which evidently proves, that it knows nothing of a diocesan, provincial, or national church; he produceth in the justification of it, because he saith, 'that it is evident then, that there was but one church in one city, which was never denied. There were indeed then many bishops in one church; Phil. i. 1. Acts xx. 28. And afterward when one church had one bishop only, yet there were two bishops in one city, which requires two churches, as Epiphanius affirms, οὐ γὰρ πότε ἡ Ἀλεξανδρεία δύο ἐπισκόπους ἔσχεν ὥς αἱ ἄλλαι πόλεις. Hæres. 68. s. 6.

'For Alexandria never had two bishops as other cities had.' Whether he intend two bishops in one church, or two churches in one city, all is one to our purpose.

But the doctor, I presume, makes this observation rather artificially to prevent an objection against his main hypothesis, than with any design to strengthen it thereby. For he cannot but know how frequently it is pleaded in opposition unto any national church-state, as unto its mention in the Scripture. For he that shall speak of the churches, in Essex, Suffolk, Hertfordshire, and so of other counties, without the least intimation of any general church unto which they should belong, would be judged to speak rather the independent than the episcopal dialect.

But, saith he, p. 236. 'I cannot but wonder what Dr. Owen

means, when after he hath produced the evidence of distinct churches in the same province, he calls this plain Scripture evidence and practice for the erecting particular distinct congregations; who denies that?' (I say then, it is incumbent on him to prove, if he do any thing in this cause, that they erected churches of another sort, kind, and order also.) 'But,' saith he, 'I see nothing like a proof of distinct churches in the same city, which was the thing to be proved, but because it could not be proved, was prudently let alone.'

But this was not the thing to be proved, nor did I propose it to confirmation, nor assert it, but have proved the contrary unto the end of the second century. This only I assert, that every church in one city was only one church; and nothing is offered by the doctor to the contrary, yea, he affirms the same.

But, saith he, sect. 6. p. 237. 'Dr. Owen saith, That the Christians of one city might not exceed the bounds of a particular church or congregation, no, although they had a multiplication of bishops or elders in them, and occasional distinct assemblies for some acts of divine worship. But then,' saith he, 'the notion of a church is not limited in the Scripture to a single congregation.' Why so; for, saith he, if occasional assemblies be allowed for some acts of worship, why not for others? I say, because they belong unto the whole church, or are acts of communion in the whole church assembled, and so cannot be observed in occasional meetings; do this, saith the apostle, 'when you come together in one place.' 'And if,' saith he, 'the number of elders be unlimited, then every of those may attend the occasional distinct assemblies for worship, and yet altogether make up the body of one church,' and so say I, they may, and yet be one church still joining together in all acts of communion, that are proper and peculiar unto the church. For as the meetings intended were occasional, so also was the attendance of the elders unto them, as they found occasion, for the edification of the whole church.

It may be the doctor is not so well acquainted with the principles and practice of the congregational way, and therefore thinks that these things are contrary unto them. But those of that way do maintain that there ought to be

in every particular congregation, unto the completeness of it, many elders or overseers ; that the number of them ought to be increased, as the increase of the church makes it necessary for their edification, that the members of such a church may and ought to meet occasionally in distinct assemblies, especially in the time of persecution, for prayer, preaching of the word, and mutual exhortation ; so when Peter was in prison after the death of James, many met together in the house of Mary to pray ; Acts xii. 12. which was not a meeting of the whole church. And that there were such private meetings, of the members of the same church in times of persecution, among the primitive churches, may be proved by a multiplication of instances ; but still they continued one church, and joined together in all acts of church communion properly so called, especially if it were possible every Lord's day, as Justin Martyr declares that the church did in his time. For all the Christians, saith he, then, in the city and villages about, gathered together in one place for the ends mentioned. But still these distinct occasional assemblies did not constitute any distinct societies or corporations, as the distinct companies do in a city. ' But,' saith he, ' grant one single bishop over all these elders, and they make up that representation of a church, which we have from the best and purest antiquity.' I say we would quickly grant it, could we see any warrant for it, or if he could prove that so it was from the beginning. However, this is no part of our present contest, namely, whether some while after the days of the apostles, in churches that were greatly increased, and many elders in them, there was not one chosen (as at Alexandria), by those elders themselves, to preside among them, who in a peculiar manner was called a bishop. But, if I mistake not, that alone which would advantage his cause is to prove, that there were in one city, or any where else, many, not occasional assemblies of Christians or church members, but many stated, fixed churches, with officers of their own, peculiarly related unto them, entrusted with church power and privileges, at least as much as he afterward pleads to be in our parochial churches, all under the government of one single bishop, making up a new church-state beyond that of particular congregations, by their relation unto him as

their common pastor. This, I take it, is that which should have been proved.

All the difficulty wherewith our assertion is accompanied, ariseth from the multiplication of believers, and the increase of churches, in the apostles' time or presently after. For this seems to be so great, as that those in one city could not continue in one church, notwithstanding the advantages of occasional assemblies. The church of Jerusalem had five thousand in it at the same time; the word grew and prevailed at Ephesus and other places; whereto I shall briefly answer as hastening unto a close of this displeasing labour. I say, therefore,

1. Whatever difficulty may seem to be in this matter, yet in point of fact, so it was; there was no church before the end of the second century of any other species, nature, or kind, but a particular congregational church only, as hath been proved before; let any one instance be produced of a church of one denomination, national, provincial, or diocesan, or of any other kind than that which is congregational, and I will give over this contest. But when a matter of fact is certain, it is too late to inquire how it might be. And on this occasion I shall add, that if in that space of time, namely, before the end of the second century, any proof or undoubted testimony can be produced, of the imposition of the necessary use of liturgies, or of stated ceremonies of the practice of church discipline consistent with that now in use in the church of England, it will go a great way in the determination of the whole controversy between us.

2. The admirable prevalency of the gospel in those days, consisted principally in its spreading itself all the world over, and planting seminaries for farther conversions in all nations. It did indeed prevail more in some cities and towns than in others; in some places many were converted, in others the tender of it was utterly rejected; howbeit it prevailed not unto the gathering of such great numbers into any church solely, as might destroy, or be inconsistent with its congregational institution. For not all, not, it may be, half, not sometimes a third part, of them who made some profession of the truth, and attended unto the preaching of the word, and many of whom underwent martyrdom, were

admitted as complete members of the church, unto all the parts of its communion. Hence there were many who upon a general account were esteemed Christians, and that justly, where the churches were but small.

3. It doth not appear that in the next age after the apostles, the churches were any where so increased in number as to bear the least proportion with the inhabitants of the cities and towns wherein they were. The church of Smyrna in the days of Polycarpus may justly be esteemed one of the greatest in those days, both from the eminency of the place and person who was justly accounted the great instructor of all Asia, as they called him when he was carried unto the stake. But this church giveth such an account of itself in its epistle unto the churches of Pontus about the martyrdom of Polycarpus, as manifest the church there to have been a very small number, in comparison of the multitude of the other inhabitants, so as that it was scarcely known who or what they were; Euseb. lib. 4. cap. 15. So in the excellent epistle of the churches of Vienna and Lyons, unto the churches of Asia and Phrygia, concerning the persecutions that befell them, as they declare themselves to have been particular churches only, so they make it evident that they bore in number no proportion unto the inhabitants of the places where they were, who could scarce discover them by the most diligent search. Euseb. lib. 5. cap. 1.

4. As for the church of Jerusalem in particular, notwithstanding the great number of its original converts, who probably were many of them strangers occasionally present at the feast of Pentecost, and there instructed in the knowledge of the truth, that they might in the several countries whither they immediately returned be instruments of the propagation of the gospel, it is certain that many years after it consisted of no greater multitude than could come together in one place, to the management of church affairs; Acts xv. 20, 21. Nor is it likely that Pella, an obscure place, whose name probably had never been known but on this occasion, was like to receive any great multitudes; nor doth Epiphanius say, as our author pretends, that they spread themselves from thence to Cœlosyria and Decapolis and Basanitis. For he affirms expressly, that all the disciples which went from Je-

rusalem dwelt at Pella. Only he says, that from thence the sect of the Nazarenes took its original, which spread itself (afterward) in Cœlosyria, Decapolis, and Basanitis. Ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ, ἡ ἀρχὴ γέγονε (speaking of that sect) μετὰ τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων μετάστησιν; πάντων τῶν μαθητῶν ἐν Πέλλῃ οἰκηκότων; they dwelled all at Pella.

Sect. 7. p. 239. He quotes another saying of mine, namely, that I ‘cannot discern the least necessity of any positive rule or direction in this matter, seeing the nature of the thing, and the duty of man, doth indispensably require it.’ And hereon he attempts to make advantage, in opposition unto another saying, as he supposeth, of mine; namely, ‘that the institution of churches, and the rules for their disposal and government throughout the world are the same, stated and unalterable;’ from whence he makes many inferences to countenance him in his charge of schism. But why should we contend fruitlessly about these things? had he been pleased to read a little farther on the same page, he would have seen that I affirm the institution itself to be a plain command, which, considering the nature of the duties required of men in church relation, is sufficient to oblige them thereunto, without any new revelation unto that purpose, which renders all his queries, exceptions, and inferences, of no use. For I do not speak in that place of the original institution of churches whose laws and rules are universal and unalterable, but our actual gathering into particular churches, for which I say the necessity of duty is our warrant, and the institution itself a command. No great advantage will be made any way of such attempts.

The like I must say of his following discourse, p. 241. concerning churches in private families, wherewith I am dismissed. I do grant that a church may be in a family. There was so in the family of Abraham before the law. And if a family do consist of such numbers as may constitute a church meet for the duties required of it, and the privileges intrusted with it; if it hath persons in it furnished with gifts and graces fit for the ministerial office, and they be lawfully called and set apart thereunto, I see no reason why they should not be a church, although they should be all in the same family. But what is this to the imprisoning of all religious worship

in private families, that never were churches, nor can so be, with the admission of some other which our author would justify from this concession, I know not. But it is easy to see what our condition should always be, if some men's power did answer their desires.

But the will of God be done.

I shall not farther concern myself to consider things charged but not proved, repeated but not confirmed, depending on a misunderstanding, or misapprehension of words, wherein the merit of the cause is not concerned.

That which I first undertook was a vindication of the nonconformists from the charge of the guilt of schism. And this I engaged in for no other reason, but to remove, as far as in me lay, the obstruction that seemed to be cast by the doctor's sermon unto the uniting of all Protestants in the same common interest against popery. For although the design might be good, as I hope it was, and he might judge well of the seasonableness of what he proposed unto its end; yet we found it (it may be from the circumstances of it, as unto time and place) to be of a contrary tendency, to the raising of new disputes, creating of new jealousies, and weakening the hands of multitudes, who were ready and willing to join entirely in opposition unto popery, and the defence of the Protestant religion. For if a party of soldiers (as the doctor more than once alludes unto that sort of men) should be drawing up in a field, with others, to oppose a common enemy, some persons of great authority and command in the army should go unto them, and declare that they were not to be trusted, that they themselves were traitors and enemies, fit to be destroyed when the common enemy was dispatched or reconciled, it would certainly abate of their courage and resolution in what they were undertaking, with no less hazard, than any others in the army.

I have here again unto the same end vindicated the principles of the former vindication, with what brevity I could. For the truth is, I meet with nothing material in the doctor's large discourse as unto what he chargeth on those of the congregational persuasion, but what is obviated in the foregoing treatise. And if any thing of the same nature be farther offered in opposition unto the same principles, it shall (if God

give life and strength) be considered in and with the second part of it, concerning the matter, form, rule, polity, offices, officers, and order of evangelical churches, which is designed ; and it is designed not for strife and contention with any, which if it be possible, and as far as in me lieth, I shall always avoid, but for the edification of them by whom it is desired.