

COUNTRY ESSAY

FOR THE

PRACTICE OF CHURCH-GOVERNMENT THERE.

READER,

THIS, be it what it will, thou hast no cause to thank or blame^a me for. Had I been mine own, it had not been thine. My submission unto others' judgments being the only cause of submitting this unto thy censure. The substance of it is concerning things now doing, in some whereof I heretofore thought it my wisdom modestly *hesitare* (or at least not with the most peremptorily to dictate to others my apprehensions), as wiser^b men have done in weightier things; and yet this not so much for want of persuasion in my own mind, as out of opinion that we have already had too many needless and fruitless discourses about these matters. Would we could agree to spare perishing paper;^c and for my own part, had not the opportunity of a few lines in the close of this sermon, and the opportunity of not a few friends urged, I could have slighted all occasions, and accusations, provoking to publish those thoughts which I shall now impart. The truth is, in things concerning the church (I mean things purely external, of form, order, and the like), so many

^a Laudatur ab his, culpatur ab illis.

^b See August. Ep. 7. 28. 157. de orig. anim.

^c Deferri in vicum vendentem thus et odores,
Et piper, et quicquid chartis amicitur ineptis.
Occidit miseros crambe repetita magistros.
Semper ego auditor tantum?

ways have I been spoken, that I often resolved to speak myself, desiring rather to appear (though conscious to myself of innumerable failings) what indeed I am, than what others incuriously suppose. But yet the many, I ever thought unworthy of an apology, and some of satisfaction; especially those, who would make their own judgments a rule for themselves and others, impatient that any should know what they do not, or conceive otherwise than they, of what they do; in the meantime, placing almost all religion in that, which may be perhaps a hinderance of it; and being so valued, or rather overvalued, is certainly the greatest. Nay, would they would make their judgments, only so far as they are convinced, and are able to make out their conceptions to others, and not also their impotent desires, to be the rule; that so they might condemn only that, which complies not with their minds, and not all that also, which they find to thwart their aims and designs. But so it must be. Once more conformity is grown the touchstone (and that not in practice, but opinion) amongst the greatest part of men, however otherwise of different persuasions. Dissent is the only crime,^d and where that is all that is culpable, it shall be made all that is so. From such as these, who almost hath not suffered? but towards such the best defence is silence. Besides, my judgment commands me, to make no known quarrel my own; but rather if it be possible, and as much as in me lieth, live peaceably with all men: *Ἱερὸν πόλεμον* I proclaim to none, but men whose bowels are full of gall: in this spring of humours, lenitives for our own spirits may perhaps be as necessary, as purges for others' brains. Farther, I desire to pro-

^d Immortale odium et nunquam sanabile bellum,
Ardet adhuc, Ombos et Tentyra, summas utrinque,
Inde furor vulgo, quod numina vicinorum,
Odit uterque locus. Juven.

Græce scire, aut polite loqui, apud illos hæresis est. Eras. de Scholiast.

voke^e none ; more stings than combs are got at a nest of wasps : even cold stones, smitten together, sparkle out fire : ‘ the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood.’ Neither do I conceive it wisdom, in these quarrelsome days, to intrust more of a man’s self with others, than is very necessary. The heart of man is deceitful ; some that have smooth tongues, have sharp teeth : such can give titles on the one side, and wounds on the other. Any of these considerations would easily have prevailed with me ‘ stultitia hac caruisse,’ had not mine ears been filled, presently after the preaching of the precedent sermon, with sad complaints of some, and false reports of others, neither of the lowest rank of men, as though I had helped to open a gate for that which is now called a Trojan horse ; though heretofore counted an engine likelier to batter the walls of Babylon, than to betray the towers of Sion. This urged some to be urgent with me for a word or two about church-government, according to the former suggestions, undermined, and a toleration of different persuasions, as they said asserted. Now truly to put the accusers to prove the crimination, for so it was, and held forth a grievous crime in their apprehensions (what is really so God will judge), had been sufficient.^f But I could not so evade ; and, therefore, after my sermon was printed to the last sheet, I was forced to set apart a few hours,^g to give an account of what hath passed from me in both these things, which have been so variously reported ; hoping that the reading may not be unuseful to some, as the writing was very necessary to me. And here at the entrance, I shall desire at the hands of men that shall cast an eye

^e Noli irritare crabrones. Si lapides teras nonne ignis erumpit? Ambros. lib. 1. cap. 21. Prov. xxx. 53. Job xxxiii. 21. Prov. xxv. 18. Vid. Remed. contra gravam nationis Germanicæ. Luth. præfat. ad lib. de concil. Protest. 34. ministrorum. 4. Conclus. That generally all writers at the beginning of the Reformation.

^f Si accusasse sufficiet, quis erit innocens?

^g Nec nos obniti contra, nec tendere tantum
Sufficiamus

on this heap of good meaning, these few, as I suppose, equitable demands.

First, Not to prosecute men into odious appellations; and then themselves, who feigned the crime, pronounce the sentence: like him, who said of one brought before him, If he be not guilty, it is fit he should be: involving themselves in a double guilt, of falsehood and malice; and the aspersed parties in a double misery, of being belied in what they are, and hated for what they are not. If a man be not what such men would have him, it is odds, but they will make him what he is not: if what he really is do not please, and that be not enough to render him odious, he shall sure enough be more. Ithacius will make all Priscillianists, who are any thing more devout than himself.^b If men do but desire to see with their own eyes, presently they are enrolled of this, or that sect; every mispersuasion being beforehand in petitions, sermons, &c. rendered odious and intolerable: in such a course, innocency itself cannot go long free. Christians deal with one another in earnest, as children in their plays clap another's coat upon their fellow's shoulder, and pretending to beat that, cudgel him they have clothed with it. 'What shall be given unto thee, oh thou false tongue?' If we cannot be more charitable, let us be more ingenuous. Many a man hath been brought to a more favourable opinion of such as are called by dreadful names, than formerly, by the experience of false impositions on himself.

Secondly, Not to clothe our differences with expressions, fitting them no better than Saul's armour did David: nor make them like a little man in a bombast coat upon stilts, walking about like a giant. Our little differences may be met at every stall, and in too many pulpits, swelled by unbefitting expressions, into

^b Sulp. Sever. Epist. Hist. Eccles.

such a formidable bulk, as poor creatures are even startled at their horrid looks and appearance: whilst our own persuasions are set out *ρήμασι βυσσίνοις*¹ with silken words, and gorgeous apparel, as if we sent them into the world a wooing. Hence, whatever it is, it must be temple building; God's government; Christ's sceptre, throne, kingdom; the only way, that, for want of which, errors, heresies, sins, spring among us, plagues, judgments, punishments come upon us. To such things as these all pretend, who are very confident they have found out the only way. Such big words as these have made us believe, that we are mortal adversaries (I speak of the parties at variance about government), that one kingdom, communion, heaven cannot hold us. Now truly if this course be followed so to heighten our differences, by adorning the truth we own with such titles as it doth not merit; and branding the errors we oppose with such marks, as in cold blood we cannot think they themselves, but only in their (by us supposed) tendance do deserve; I doubt not, but that it will be bitterness unto us all in the end. And, query, whether by this means, many have not been brought to conceive the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which himself affirms to be within us, to consist in forms, outward order, positive rules, and external government. I design none, but earnestly desire, that the two great parties, at this day litigant in this kingdom, would seriously consider, what is like to be the issue of such proceedings; and whether the mystery of godliness, in the power thereof, be like to be propagated by it. Let not truth be weighed in the balance of our interest. Will not a dram of that turn the scale with some against many arguments? Power is powerful to persuade.

Thirdly, Not to measure men's judgments by their

¹ Plut. Apophtheg.

subscribing, or refusing to subscribe petitions in these days about church-government. For subscribers, would every one could not see, with what a zealous nescience, and implicit judgment many are led. And for refusers, though perhaps they could close with the general words, wherewith usually they are expressed; yet there are so many known circumstances, restraining those words to particular significations, directing them to by and secondary tendencies, as must needs make some abstain. For mine own part, from subscribing late petitions about church-government, I have been withheld by such reasons as these.

1. I dare not absolutely assert, maintain, and abide by it (as rational men ought to do every clause, in any thing owned by their subscription) that the cause of all the evils, usually annumerated in such petitions, is the want of church-government, taking it for any government that ever yet was established amongst men, or in notion otherwise made known unto me. Yea, I am confident that more probable causes in this juncture of time might be assigned of them. Neither can any be ignorant, how plentifully such evils abounded, when church discipline was most severely executed.^k And, lastly, I am confident that whoever lives to see them suppressed by any outward means (when spiritual weapons shall be judged insufficient), will find it to be, not any thing either included in, or necessarily annexed unto, church discipline that must do it; but some other thing, not unlike that, which in days of yore, when all the world wandered after the beast, suppressed all truth and error, but only what the arch enemy of Jesus Christ was pleased to hold out to be believed. But of this afterward.

2. I dare not affirm that the parliament hath not established a government already, for the essentials of

^k Vid. catal. hæret. apud Tertul. de præscript. Epiphani. Aug. Vincent.

it, themselves affirming that they have,¹ and their ordinances about rulers, rules, and persons to be ruled (the 'requisita' and materials of government) being long since extant. Now to require a thing to be done by them, who affirm that they have already done it, argues either much weakness, or supine negligence in ourselves, not to understand what is effected; or a strong imputation on those that have done it, either fraudulently to pretend that which is false, or foolishly to averse what they do not understand. Yet though I have learned to obey, as far as lawfully I may, my judgment is exceedingly far from being enslaved, and according to that, by God's assistance, shall be my practice; which if it run cross to the prescriptions of authority, it shall cheerfully submit to the censure thereof. In the mean time, all petitioning of any party about this business, seems to thwart some declarations of the house of commons, whereunto I doubt not but they intend for the main inviolably and unalterably to adhere. Add hereunto, that petitioning in this kind was not long since voted breach in privilege, in them who might justly expect as much favour and liberty in petitioning, as any of their brethren in the kingdom; and I have more than one reason to suppose, that the purpose and design of theirs and others, was one and the same.

3. There are no small grounds of supposal, that some petitions have not their rise from amongst them by whom they are subscribed; but that the spring and master wheels giving the first motion to them, are distant and unseen: myself having been lately urged to subscription upon this ground, that directions were had for it from above (as we use to speak in the country), yea, in this I could say more than I intend, aiming at nothing but the quieting of men's spirits,

¹ Ego ancillæ tuæ fidem habui: nonne tu impudens, qui nec mihi ipsi credis? Philos. apud Plut. apophth.

needlessly exasperated; only I cannot but say, that honest men ought to be very cautious how they put themselves upon any engagement, that might make any party or faction in the kingdom; suppose that their interest in the least measure doth run cross to that of the great council thereof, thereby to strengthen the hands or designs of any, by occasioning an opinion that upon fresh or new divisions (which God of his mercy prevent), we would not adhere constantly to our old principles, walking according to which we have hitherto found protection and safety. And I cannot but be jealous for the honour of our noble parliament, whose authority is every day undermined, and their regard in the affections of the people shaken, by such dangerous insinuations, as though they could in an hour put an end to all our disturbances, but refuse it. This season also for such petitions seems to be very unseasonable, the greatest appearing danger impendent to this kingdom being from the contest about church-government, which by such means as this is exceedingly heightened, and animosity added to the parties at variance.

4. A particular form of church discipline is usually in such petitions, either directly expressed, or evidently pointed at, and directed unto, as that alone which our covenant engageth us to embrace. Yea, as though it had long since designed that particular way, and distinguished it from all others, the embracing of it is pressed under the pain of breach of covenant, a crime abhorred of God and man. Now truly to suppose that our covenant did tie us up absolutely to any one formerly known way of church discipline, the words formally engaging us into a disquisition out of the word, of that which is agreeable to the mind and will of God, is to me such a childish, ridiculous, selfish conceit, as I believe no knowing men will once enter-

tain, unless prejudice begotten by their peculiar interest hath disturbed their intellectuals. For my part, I know no church government in the world already established amongst any sort of men, of the truth and necessity whereof, I am convinced in all particulars; especially if I may take their practice to be the best interpreter of their maxims.

Fourthly, Another 'postulatum' is, that men would not use an over zealous speed, upon every small difference, to characterize men (otherwise godly and peaceable) as sectaries, knowing the odiousness of the name,^m among the vulgar, deservedly or otherwise imposed, and the evil of the thing itself, rightly apprehended, whereunto lighter differences do not amount. Such names as this I know are arbitrary, and generally serve the wills of the greater number. They are commonly sectaries, who, 'jure aut injuria,' are oppressed. Nothing was ever persecuted under an esteemed name. Names are in the power of many, things and their causes are known to few. There is none in the world can give an ill title to others, which from some he doth not receive; the same right which in this kind I have towards another, he hath towards me; unless I affirm myself to be infallible, not so he. Those names which men are known by, when they are oppressed, they commonly use against others, whom they seek to oppress. I would therefore that all horrid appellations, as increasers of strife, kindlers of wrath, enemies of charity, food for animosity, were for ever banished from amongst us. Let a spade be called a spade, so we take heed Christ be not called Beelzebub. I know my profession to the greatest part of the world is sectarism, as Christianity; amongst those who profess the name of Christ, to the greatest number I am a sectary,

^m Nunc vero si nominis odium est, quis nominum reatus? quæ accusatio vocabulorum? nisi aut Barbarum sonat aliqua vox nominis, aut maledicum, aut impudicum? Tertul. Apol.

because a Protestant;ⁿ amongst Protestants, at least the one half account all men of my persuasion, calvinistical, sacramentarian sectaries; amongst these again, to some I have been a puritanical sectary, an Arian heretic, because anti-prelatical; yea, and amongst these last, not a few account me a sectary, because I plead for presbyterial government in churches; and to all these am I thus esteemed, as I am fully convinced, causelessly, and erroneously. What they call sectarism, I am persuaded is ‘*ipsissima veritas*,’ the ‘very truth itself,’ to which they also ought to submit; that others also, though upon false grounds, are convinced of the truth of their own persuasion, I cannot but believe; and therefore as I find by experience, that the horrid names of heretic, schismatic, sectary, and the like, have never had any influence or force upon my judgment, nor otherwise moved me, unless it were unto retaliation; so I am persuaded it is also with others, for ‘*homines sumus*,’ forcing them abroad in such liveries, doth not at all convince them, that they are servants to the master of sects indeed, but only makes them wait an opportunity to cast the like mantle on their traducers. And this usually is the beginning of arming the more against the few with violence, impatient of bearing the burdens, which they impose on others’ shoulders; by means whereof Christendom hath been made a theatre of blood, and one amongst all, after that by cruelty and villany he had prevailed above the rest, took upon him to be the only dictator in Christian religion. But of this afterward.

Now by the concession of these, as I hope, not unequitable demands, thus much at least I conceive will be attained, viz. That a peaceable dissent in some

ⁿ Acts xxiv. 14. xxviii. 22. *Hæresis christianorum*. Tertul. *Secta Christ.* Id. *Hæresis catholica*, et *hæresis sanctissima*, Constant. *Epist. Chr. Syrac.* *mislenta systema*: quo probare conatur Calvinianos esse hæreticos. Hun. *Calv. Tur.* Andrews *Epist. ad Molin.*

smaller things, disputable questions, not absolutely necessary assertions, deserves not any rigid censure, distance of affections, or breach of Christian communion and amity. In such things as these, '*veniam petimusque damusque vicissim*;' if otherwise, I profess I can hardly bring my mind to comply and close in with them, amongst whom almost any thing is lawful but to dissent.

These things being premised, I shall now set down, and make public that proposal, which heretofore I have tendered, as a means to give some light into a way for the profitable and comfortable practice of church government; drawing out of general notions what is practically applicable, so circumstantiated, as of necessity it must be. And herein I shall not alter any thing, or in the least expression go off from that which long since I drew up at the request of a worthy friend, after a discourse about it; and this, not only because it hath already been in the hands of many, but also because my intent is not, either to assert, dispute, or make out any thing farther of my judgment in these things, than I have already done (hoping for more leisure so to do, than the few hours assigned to the product of this short appendix will permit), but only by way of a defensative, to evince, that the rumours which have been spread by some, and entertained by others, too greedily about this matter, have been exceeding causeless and groundless; so that though my second thoughts have, if I mistake not, much improved some particulars in this essay, yet I cannot be induced, because of the reason before recounted (the only cause of the publication thereof), to make any alteration in it; only I shall present the reader with some few things, which gave occasion and rise to this proposal. As,

(1.) A fervent desire to prevent all farther division and separation, disunion of minds amongst godly men,

suspicious and jealousies in the people towards their ministers, as aiming at power and unjust domination over them, fruitless disputes, languishings about unprofitable questions, breaches of charity for trifles, exasperating the minds of men one against another; all which growing evils, tending to the subversion of Christian love, and the power of godliness, with the disturbance of the state, are too much fomented by that sad breach and division, which is here attempted to be made up.

(2.) A desire to work and draw the minds of all my brethren (the most I hope need it not) to set in for a thorough reformation, and for the obtaining of holy communion, to keep off indifferently the unworthy from church privileges, and profaning of holy things. Whereunto, I presumed, the discovery of a way whereby this might be effected, without their disturbance in their former station, would be a considerable motive.

(3.) A consideration of the paucity of positive rules in the Scripture for church government, with the great difficulty of reducing them to practice in these present times (both sufficiently evidenced by the endless disputes, and irreconcilable differences of godly, precious, and learned men about them), made me conceive, that the practice of the apostolical churches, doubtless for a time observed in those immediately succeeding, would be the best external help for the right interpretation of those rules we have, and pattern to draw out a church way by. Now truly after my best search and inquiry into the first churches and their constitution, framing an idea and exemplar of them, this poor heap following seems to me as like one of them, as any thing that yet I have seen; nothing at all doubting, but that if a more skilful hand had the limning of it,^o the proportions, features, and lines, would be very exact, equal,

^o Ἀμεραι δ' ὕστεραι μάρτυρες σοφάτατοι, Pind. Od. 1. Olym.

and parallel; yea, did not extreme haste now call it from me, so that I have no leisure, so much as to transcribe the first draught, I doubt not but by God's assistance, it might be so set forth, as not to be thought altogether undesirable, if men would but a little lay aside beloved pre-conceptions. But the printer stays for every line; only I must entreat every one that shall cast a candid eye on this unwillingly exposed embryo, and rude abortion, that he would assume in his mind any particular church mentioned in the Scripture, as of Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, or the like, consider the way and state they were then, and some ages after, in respect of outward immunities and enjoyments; and tell me, whether any rational man can suppose, that either there were in those places sundry particular churches, with their distinct, peculiar officers, acting in most pastoral duties severally in them, as distinguished and divided into entire societies, but ruling them in respect of some particulars loyally in combination, considered as distinct bodies; or else, that they were such single congregations, as that all that power and authority which was in them, may seem fitly and conveniently to be intrusted with a small handful of men, combined under one single pastor, with one, two, or perhaps no associated elders. More than this I shall only ask, whether all ordinary power may not, without danger, be asserted to reside in such a church as is here described, reserving all due right and authority to councils and magistrates? Now for the fountain, seat, and rise of this power, for the just distribution of it, between pastors and people, this is no place to dispute; these following lines were intended merely to sedate and bury such contests, and to be what they are entitled.

A COUNTRY ESSAY,

§c.

OUR long expectation of some accommodation^a between the dissenting parties about church government, being now almost totally frustrate; being also persuaded partly through the apparent fruitlessness of all such undertakings, partly by other reasons, not at this time seasonable to be expressed, that all national disputes tending that way, will prove birthless tympanies; we deem it no ungrateful endeavour, waving all speculative ideas, to give an essay in such expressions, as all our country friends, concerned in it, may easily apprehend, of what we conceive amongst us may really be reduced to comfortable and useful practice: concealing for awhile all arguments for motives and inducements unto this way, with all those rocks and shelves, appearing very hideous in former proposals, which we strive to avoid; until we perceive whether any of our giants in this controversy will not come and look and so overcome it, that at first dash the whole frame be irrecoverably ruined.

Neither would we have any expect our full sense to each particular imaginable in this business; it being only a heap of materials, most what unhewed, that we intend, and not a well compacted fabric; and if the main be not condemned, we are confident no difference will ensue about particulars, which must have their latitude. However, if it be received as candidly as it is offered, no inconvenience will ensue. Now that the whole may be better apprehended, and the reasons, if not the necessity of this undertaking intimated, we shall premise some things concerning the place, and persons, for whose use is this proposal.

First, For ministers. The place having all this while, through the goodness of God, been preserved in peace and quietness, and by the rich supply of able men sent hither by

^p The form being given to this essay at the first, I thought not good to alter any thing about it.

parliament, there are in many parishes, godly, orthodox, peace-loving pastors.

Secondly, For the people.

1. Very many, as in most other places, extremely ignorant, worldly, profane, scandalously vicious.

2. Scarcely any parish where there are not some visibly appearing, of all ages, sexes, and conditions, fearing God, and walking unblameably with a right foot, as beseemeth the gospel: though in some places, they are but like the berries after the shaking of an olive-tree.

3. Amongst these very few gifted, fitted, or qualified for government.

4. Many knowing professors, and such of a long standing, inclined to separation, unless some expedient may be found for comfortable communions; and in this resolution seem to be settled to a contempt of allurements and threatenings.

5. Seducers everywhere lying in wait to catch and deceive well-meaning souls, any thing discontented with the present administration of church affairs.

6. Upon all which it appears, that comfortable communion is not to be attained, within the bounds of respective parishes.

Farther to carry on our intentions, we would desire of authority,

1. That our divisions may not be allotted out by our committees, who, without other consideration, have bounded us with the precincts of high constables; but be left to the prudence of ministers, and other Christians, willingly associating themselves in the work.

2. That men placed in civil authority may not, by virtue of their authority, claim any privilege in things purely ecclesiastical.

In the several parishes let things be thus ordered.

1. Let every minister continue in his station, taking especial care of all them that live within the precincts of his parish; preaching, exhorting, rebuking, publicly, and from house to house, warning all, using all appointed means to draw them to Jesus Christ, and the faith of the gospel, waiting with all patience on them that oppose themselves, until God give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and in so doing, rest upon the calling he hath already received.

2. Let the respective elders of the several parishes, to be chosen according to the ordinance of parliament (annually, or otherwise) join with the ministers, in all acts of rule and admonition, with those other parts of their charge, which the parochial administration doth require.

3. Let all criminal things, tending to the disturbance of that church administration which is amongst them, be by the officers orderly delated to such as the civil magistrate shall appoint, to take cognizance and determine of such things.

And thus far have we proposed nothing new, nothing not common; neither in that which follows is there any thing so indeed, may it be but rightly apprehended.

For the several combinations of ministers and people.

1. Let the extremes of the division not be above eight or ten miles distant, and so the middle or centre not more than four or five miles from any part of it, which is no more than some usually go to the preaching of the word, and in which space Christians are generally as well known to one another in the country, as almost at the next door in cities; but yet this may be regulated according to the number of professors fit for the society intended, which would not be above five hundred, nor under one hundred.

2. In this division let there be, in the name of Christ and the fear of God, a gathering of professors (visible saints, men and women of good knowledge, and upright conversation, so holding forth their communion with Christ) by their own desire, and voluntary consent, into one body uniting themselves, by virtue of some promissory engagement, or otherwise, to perform all mutual duties, to walk in love and peace, spiritual and church communion, as beseemeth the gospel.

3. Let every one so assembling have liberty, at some of the first meetings, to except against another, whether minister or others, so it be done with a spirit of meekness, and submission of judgment; or to demand such questions for satisfaction as shall be thought fit to be propounded.

4. When some convenient number are thus assembled, let the ministers, if men of approved integrity and abilities, be acknowledged as elders respectively, called to teach and rule in the church, by virtue of their former mission, and be

assumed to be so to this society, by virtue of their voluntary consent and election.

5. Let the ministers engage themselves in a special manner to watch over this flock, every one according to his abilities, both in teaching, exhorting, and ruling, so often as occasion shall be administered, for things that contain ecclesiastical rule and church order; acting jointly and as in a classical combination, and putting forth all authority that such classes are intrusted with.

6. If it be judged necessary that any officers be added to them for the purpose before named, let them be chosen by the consent of the multitude.

7. If not, let the ministers have the whole distributed among themselves, respectively according to the difference of their gifts; reserving to the people their due and just privileges.

8. Let this congregation assemble at the least once in a month for the celebration of the communion, and other things them concerning; the meeting of the ministers may be appointed by authority, for those of a classis.

9. If any one after his admission be found to walk unworthily, let him, after solemn repeated admonition, be by joint consent left to his former station.

10. Let any person, in any of the parishes combined as before, that is desirous to be admitted into this society, as is thought fit, be received at any time.

11. If the number in process of time appear to be too great, let it be divided, and subdivided according to convenience.

12. Any one of the ministers may administer the sacrament, either to some, or all of these, in their several parishes, or at the common meeting, as opportunity shall serve.

13. Let the rules of admission into this society and fellowship be scriptural, and the things required in the members only such as all godly men affirm to be necessary for every one that will partake of the ordinances with profit and comfort, special care being taken that none be excluded, who have the least breathings of soul in sincerity after Jesus Christ.

Now beyond these generals for the present we judge it

needless to express ourselves, or otherwise to confirm what we have proposed, each assertion almost directly pointing out unto what, in that particular, we do adhere, which being sufficiently confirmed by others, were but a superfluous labour to undertake; neither shall we trouble you with a catalogue of conveniences, whereof men are put upon an express annumeration when otherwise they do not appear, but commit the consideration of the tendence of the whole to every one's judgment; and conclude with the removal of a few obvious objections, being resolved hereafter, by God's assistance, to endeavour satisfaction about this way unto all; unless to such as shall be so simple or malicious as to ask, whether this way be that of the Presbyterians or Independents.

Obj. 1. By this means parishes will be unchurched.

Ans. 1. If by churches you understand such entire societies of Christians, as have all church power, both according to right and exercise, in and amongst themselves, as Independents speak of congregations, then they were never churched by any.

2. If only civil divisions of men that may conveniently be taught by one pastor, and ruled by elders, whereof some may be fit to partake of all the ordinances, some not, as Presbyterians esteem them, then by this way they receive no injury, nor are abridged of any of their privileges.

Obj. 2. This is to erect churches amongst churches, and against churches.

Ans. No such thing; but a mere forming of one church with one presbytery.

Obj. 3. It is against the parliament's ordinance to assume a power of admitting and excluding of church members, not exactly according to their rule, nor subordinate to the supervising of such as are appointed by them.

Ans. 1. For the rules set out by ordinance, we conceive that the church officers are to be interpreters of them, until appeal be made from them, unto which we shall submit; and if it be so determined against us that any be put on our communion, 'ipsi viderint,' we shall labour to deliver our own souls.

2. Though the parliament forbid any but such authoritatively to be excluded, yet it doth not command that any be admitted but such as desire it; and we shall pray for such

a blessing upon the work of our ministry, as will either prepare a man for it, or persuade them 'pro tempore' from it; unless they bestubbornly obstinate, or openly wicked, against whom we hope for assistance; unto objections arising from trouble and inconvenience, we answer, it cost more to redeem their souls.

The God of peace and unity give the increase.

‘ ——— Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti, si non, his utere.’

And this is all which for the present I shall assert in this business, and this also is my own vindication: time and leisure may give me advantage hereafter (if God permit) to deal seriously in this cause; in the mean time, it is not unknown to many, that so much as this was necessary for me to do, and I will not add now any thing that is not necessary.

Now for the other head of the accusation about toleration of errors, 'philosophare volo, sed paucis,' something I shall add of my own present judgment in this matter, but with willing, express submission unto those, whom the use and experience of things, with knowledge of foreign parts, skill in the rules of commonwealths, acquaintedness with the affections and spirits of men, have enabled to look punctually into the issues and tendencies of such a toleration. The main prejudice against it arising from the disturbances which it naturally (they say) produceth in civil states. I conceive no sort of men more unfit to judge of this, than those, whose abilities of learning do properly put them upon the discussing of this, and other controversies, as far as they are purely ecclesiastical; no men more frequently betraying narrowness of apprehension, and weakness in secular affairs. For other consequences, I shall not be much moved with them, until it be clearly determined whether be worse, heretics, or hypocrites; to maintain an error, or counterfeit the truth; and whether profession upon compulsion be acceptable to God or man:^a laying those aside, let the thing itself be a little considered.

Peace ecclesiastical, quiet among the churches (which without doubt would be shaken by a universal toleration), is that which most men aim at and desire. And truly he that doth not, scarcely deserves the name and privilege of

^a Hostiæ ab animo libenti accipiuntur. Tertul.

a Christian; unity in the Scripture is so pressed, so commanded, and commended, that not to breathe after it argues a heart acted by another spirit than that which moved the holy penmen thereof. But yet every agreement and consent amongst men, professing the name of Christ, is not the unity and peace commended in the Scripture: that which some think to be Christ's order, may perhaps be antichristian confusion: the specious name of unity may be a cloak for tyranny. Learned men have reckoned up a sevenfold unity^r in the papacy, all which notwithstanding are far enough from that true evangelical unity, which we are bound to labour for. Again, that which is good, must be sought in a right manner, or it will not be so to us: peace and quiet is desirable; but there must be good causes and very urgent, to make us build our habitations out of others' ruins, and roll our pillows in their blood: I speak of things ecclesiastical. The historian^s makes it a part of the oration spoken by Galgacus the chieftain of the British forces, to stir them up against the Roman insolency, that when they had finished their depopulations, then they said they had peace: the same men have set up bishoprics in the Indies, as their forefathers did colonies here and elsewhere, with fire and sword. I know not how it comes to pass, but so it is, this proceeding with violence in matters of religion hath pleased and displeased all sorts of men, however distinguished by a true or false persuasion, who have enjoyed a vicissitude of the supreme power in any place, in supporting or suppressing of them: '*ure, seca, occide,*' is the language of men backed with authority: '*quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris,*' say the same men under oppression: to give particular instances, were to lay open that nakedness, which I suppose it my duty rather to cover. What then, you will say, shall every one be suffered to do what he pleaseth? You mean, think or believe what he pleaseth, or that which he is convinced to be a truth. Must all sorts of men and their opinions be tolerated? These questions are not in one word to be resolved: many proposals are to be confirmed,

^r 1. Satanica. 2. Ethnica. 3. Belluina. 4. Iscariotica. 5. Tyrannica. 6. Herodiana. 7. Ventris causa. Illiricus, de variis sectis ap. papistas.

^s Solitudinem ubi faciunt, pacem appellant. Tacitus vita Agr. cap. 10.

^t Humani juris, et naturalis potestatis est, unicuique quod putaverit colere. Tertul. Quis imponet mihi necessitatem aut credendi quod nolum, aut quod velim non credendi. Lactan.

many nations distinguished and retained, before a positive answer can be given: take them in their whole latitude, and they may serve all men's turns. A negative universal resolution may tantamount unto: The many intrusted with authority, or having that to back them, ought not to tolerate any of different persuasions from them, if they suppose them erroneous. Now truly for my part, were I in Spain or Italy, a native of those places, and God should be pleased there to reveal that truth of his gospel unto me, which he hath done in England, I believe those states ought to tolerate me, though they were persuaded that I were the most odious heretic under heaven; and what punishment soever they should impose on me for my profession, would be required at their hands, unless they can convince me, that God allows men to slay his servants for professing the gospel, if they believe them to be heretics: and so also excuse the Jews in crucifying his dear son, because they esteemed him as an impostor. Christ was once crucified amongst thieves: he may be again, in them that are so supposed. I shall therefore summarily set down what I conceive in answer to these questions, premising a few things, if I mistake not, universally granted.

And yet a word or two concerning toleration itself, that some guess may be given at what we aim and intend must interpose. Much discourse about toleration hath been of late days amongst men, some pleading for it, more against it, as it always must be. Toleration is the alms of authority, yet men that beg for it, think so much at least their due: some say it is a sin to grant it, others that it is no less to deny it: generally the pleaders of each side have their interest in the cause. I never knew one contend earnestly for a toleration of dissenters, but was so himself; nor any for their suppression, but were themselves of the persuasion which prevaieth: for if otherwise, this latter would argue a circumcellion fury, wilfully to seek their own ruin; the former so much charity, and commiseration of the condition of mortality, as in these days would procure of the most no other livery but a fools-coat. Who almost would not admire at such new discovered antipodes, as should offer to assert an equal regiment of Trojans and Tyrians,* a like re-

* Tros, Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur.

gard and allowance from authority for other sects, as for that whereof themselves are a share? Now amongst these contesters, few (nay, not any) have I found, neither on the one side or the other, clearly and distinctly to define what they mean by toleration, or what is the direct purpose, signification, and tendence of non-toleration (a word in its whole extent written only in the forehead of the man of sin), what bounds, what terriers are to be assigned to the one, or to the other; unto what degrees of longitude,* or latitude their pole is to be elevated. Some perhaps by a toleration understood a universal, uncontrolled license '*vivendi ut velis*,' in things concerning religion; that every one may be let alone, and not so much as discountenanced, in doing, speaking, acting, how, what, where, or when he pleaseth, '*in agendis et credendis fidei*,' in all such things as concern the worship of God, articles of belief, or generally any thing commanded in religion; and in the mean time the parties at variance, and litigant about differences, freely to revile, reject, and despise one another, according as their provoked genius shall dispose their minds thereunto. Now truly, though every one of this mind pretends to cry for mercy to be extended unto poor afflicted truth, yet I cannot but be persuaded that such a toleration would prove exceeding pernicious to all sorts of men, and at last end in a dispute, like that recounted by Juvenal, between two cities in Egypt about their differences between their garden and river deities;^{*} or like the contest related by Vertomannus in his travels, amongst the Mahometans, about Haly and Homar, the pretended successors to their grand impostor, where every one plied his adversary, '*Hastique clypeisque et saxis grandibus*,' cleaving their skulls, and making entrance for their arguments by dint of sword: and I wish experience did not sufficiently convince us, that the profession of Christianity, where the power of godliness is away, will not prevent these evils: '*Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*.'

Others there are that press for a non-toleration of any thing that opposes or contradicts the truth in any part, themselves being in their own judgments fully possessed of

^{*} Late sibi summovet omnes,
—Ut in vacua regnet Basilicus arena.

^{*} Sanctas gentes quibus hæc nascantur in hortis Numina.

all, their tenets being unto them the only form of wholesome words: moreover (for these things recounted make not the difference, for it is so with all sects of men) the magistrates, or those who are intrusted with all the power over men, which for the preservation of human society, God hath been pleased to make out from himself, are also of the same persuasion with them: these they supplicate that an effectual course may be taken (asserting not only that they are intrusted with power from above so to do, but also that it is their great sin if they do it not) whereby all sectaries and erroneous persons may not only not be countenanced, or kept within bounds, and not be forborn in any disturbing, insolent miscarriage; but also, that all that doctrine which is not publicly owned, may be sure to be supplanted by the restraint and punishment of the dissenters, whether unto imprisonment, confiscation of goods, or death itself; for they must not cease, nay (if the thing is to be effected) they cannot rationally assign where to stay in punishing, before they come to the period of all, death itself, which is the point and centre wherein all the lines of this sentence meet: wherein, to me truly there is nothing but 'luctus ubique, pavor, et plurima mortis imago.' I know it is coloured with fair pretences;² but 'quid ego verba audiam, facta cum video?' It is written with red letters, and the pens of its abettors are dipt in the blood of Christians. Doubtless between these extremes lies the way.

Again, some by a toleration understand a mutual forbearance in communion, though there be great differences in opinion; and this the generality of the clergy (as heretofore they were called) did usually incline unto, viz. that any men almost might be tolerated, whilst they did not separate. And these lay down this for a ground, that there is a latitude in judgment to be allowed; so that the communion may be held by men of several persuasions, in all things, with an allowance of withdrawing in those particulars, wherein there is dissent amongst them; and this the Belgic remonstrants pressed hard for, before they were cast out by the synod of Dort.

¹ Inventus, Chrysippe, tui finitor acervi.

² Ἐχθρὸς γὰρ μοι καὶ νῦν ὁμῶς αἰδῶ πολησιν.

Ὅς χ' ἑτέρον μὲν καὶ ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ βαΐει.

Others plead for a toleration out of communion, that is, that men renouncing the communion of those whose religion is owned and established by authority, may yet peaceably be suffered to enjoy the ordinances in separation.

Moreover, by communion some understand one thing, some another. Some think that is preserved sufficiently, if the dissenters do acknowledge those from whom they do dissent to be true churches, to enjoy the ordinances of Christ, to have the means of life and salvation in them, closing with them in all substantials of doctrine; but yet, because of some disorders in and amongst them, they dare not be as of them, but yet only separate from those disorders.

Others again think that communion is utterly dissolved, if any distinctions of persons be made, more than all acknowledge ought to be, any differences in the administration of the ordinances, any divisions in government at all.

Now all these things, and many more that might be added, must clearly be distinguished and determined by him that would handle his matter at large and exactly, that we may know what he means by those ambiguous words, and in what acceptation he owns them. Until this be done, a man may profess to oppose both toleration and non-toleration, without any contradiction at all, because in their several senses they do not always intend the same.

For my part, as on the one side if by toleration you mean 'po-testatem vivendi ut velis' (as the stoics defined liberty), a universal concession of an unbounded liberty,^a or rather bold unbridled licentiousness, for every one to vent what he pleaseth, and to take what course seems good in his own eyes, in things concerning religion and the worship of God, I cannot give my vote for it. So if by non-toleration you mean that which the gloss upon that place, 'Hæreticum hominem de vita,' intended by adding 'suppletolle,'^b to make up the sense; as if they were not to be endured in any place, who dissent only in not-fundamentals, from that which is established, but to be hated, 'ad furcas et leones,' as the Christians of old, or to have their new derided lights extinguished in that light, 'Qua stantes ardent, qui fixo guttore fumant,' in a Nero's bonfire; into the secrets of them that are thus minded let not my soul descend. 'In their anger they will slay a man.

^a Εξουσία αὐτοπαρίας. Cicero. Parad.

^b Tolle de vita.

and in their self-will they dig down a wall; cursed be their anger for it is fierce, and their wrath for it is cruel.' These things then being so ambiguous, doubtful, and uncertain, we dare not be too peremptorily dogmatical, nor positively assert but only what is certainly true; as are these following.

1. That heresies and errors ought not to be tolerated; that is, men ought not to connive at, or comply with those ways and opinions which they are convinced to be false, erroneous, contrary to sound doctrine, and that form of wholesome words which is delivered unto us as (next unto Christ) the greatest treasure of our souls, especially if credibly supposed to shake any fundamentals of the common faith; but with all their strength and abilities, in all lawful ways, upon every just call, to oppose, suppress, and overthrow them, to root them up, and cast them out, that they may not as noxious weeds and tares overgrow and choke the good corn, amongst which they are covertly scattered. All predictions of 'false christs, false prophets, false teachers to come,' and, 'to be avoided,' all cautions to 'try spirits, avoid heretics, beware of seducers, keep close to the truth received, to hate the doctrine of Nicolaitans, to avoid endless disputes, strife of words, old fables, languishing about unprofitable questions;' the epithets given to, and descriptions made of, heresies, that they are 'pernicious, damnable, cankers, works of the flesh,' and the like, are all incitations and encouragements for the applying of all expedient means, for the taking out of the way these stumbling-blocks. Let then the Scriptures be searched, and all ways embraced which the gospel holdeth forth, for the discovering, convincing, silencing, reproofing, confuting of errors, and persons erring, by admonitions, reproofs, mighty Scripture convictions, evidencing of the truth, with fervent prayers to Almighty God, the God of truth, that he would give us one heart and one way; and if these weapons of our warfare do not prevail, we must let them know, that one day their disobedience will be revenged with being cut off, and 'cast out as unprofitable branches, fit to be cast into the fire.'

2. That any doctrine tending undeniably in its own nature (and not by strained consequences) to the disturbance of the civil state may be suppressed, by all such means as are lawfully to be used, for the conservation of the peace and safety

of the state. Jesus Christ, though accused of sedition, taught none, practised none, his gospel gives not control to magistracy, righteous laws, or any sort of lawful government established amongst men; and therefore they whose faith is faction, and whose religion is rebellion, I mean Jesuits, and jesuitical Papists, some of the articles of whose creeds are directly repugnant to the safety, yea, being of any commonwealths, wherein themselves and men of their own persuasion, do not domineer and rule, may be proceeded against by them who bear not the sword in vain. The like may be said of men seditious under any pretences whatsoever, like the Anabaptists at Munster.

3. That such heresies or mispersuasions as are attended with any notorious sin in practice (I mean, not in consequences, but owned by their abettors, and practised accordingly, beyond Epicurus, whose honest life was not corrupted by his foul dishonest opinion) like the Nicolaitans, teaching, as most suppose, promiscuous lust; and the Papists express abominable idolatry, may be in their authors more severely punished, than such crimes not owned and maintained do singly deserve. To pretend conscience in such a case will not avail; 'the works of the flesh are manifest,' easy to be discerned, known to all. Apologies for such argue seariness, not tenderness: such 'evil communication' as 'corrupteth good manners,' is not to be tolerated.

4. No pretences whatsoever, nor seeming colour, should countenance men dissenting from what is established, to revile, traduce, deride, or otherwise expose to vulgar contempt, by words or actions, the way owned by authority (if not evidently fallen off from Jehovah to Baal), or fasten bitter uncharitable appellations on those who act according to that way; that is, the public ministers and ministry, acknowledged, owned, and maintained by the supreme magistrate where they both are. Where, by the way, I cannot but complain of want of ingenuity and candid charity in those men, who having a comfortable maintenance arising another way, do yet, 'ad faciendum populum,' continually in pulpits, and other public places, inveigh against that way of maintenance which is allowed by the magistrate, and set apart for that labour in the word and doctrine; unto whom I wish no farther evil, but only forced patience when their neighbour-

ing tradesmen shall have persuaded the people about him that preachers of the gospel ought to live by the work of their hands, and so the contribution for their maintenance be subducted.

Such men as these do shew of what spirit they are, and what they would do if they were lions; seeing they bark so much, being but snarling dogs. And therefore truly, if some severe course were used for the restraint of those, who in our days strive to get themselves a name, and to build up their reputé, by slighting, undervaluing, and by all uncharitable malicious ways, rendering odious those from whom they dissent, I should not much intercede for them: these are evil works, fruits of the flesh, evident to all. Now these, and such things as these, are acknowledged by all even spirited men. Some few I shall now add, I hope not unlike them. As,

5. That it is a most difficult undertaking to judge of heresies and heretics, no easy thing to shew what heresy is in general; whether this or that particular error be a heresy or no, whether it be a heresy in this or that man; especially if such things as stubbornness, and pertinacy upon conviction, with the like, be required to make a man a heretic; for such things cannot be evidenced or made out, but only (for the most part) by most obscure conjectures, and such as will scarcely satisfy a charitable judgment. Papists indeed, who have laid it down for a principle, that a contradiction of the doctrine of the church known to be so, and continued in after admonition, doth infallibly make a man a heretic, are very clear, uniform, and settled in that which they have made the ground, warrant, and foundation of slaying millions of men, professing the name of Christ: but for all other Christians, who acknowledge an infallibility in the rule, but no infallibility in any for the discovery of the truth of that rule (though exceeding clear and perspicuous in things necessary), for them I say, understanding and keeping close to their own principles, it is a most difficult thing to determine of heresy; with an assurance, that they are so out of danger of erring in that determination, as to make it a ground of rigorous proceedings against those of whom they have so concluded. Some things indeed are so clearly in the Scripture laid down and determined, that to

question or deny them, bespeaks a spirit self-condemned, in that which he doth profess: that twice two makes four, that he that runneth, moveth; are not things more evident to reason, than many things in the Scripture are to every captivated understanding: a wilful deviation in such merits no charity. But generally errors are about things hard to be understood, not so clearly appearing, and concerning which it is very difficult to pass the sentence of heresy. No judge of heresy since the apostle's days, but hath been obnoxious to error in that judgment; and those who have been forwardest to assume a judicature, and power of discerning between truth and error, so as to have others regulated thereby, have erred most foully. Of old it was generally conceived to be in councils. Now I should acknowledge myself obliged to any man, that would direct me to a council, since that Acts xv. which I may not be forced from the word to assert, that it, in some thing or other, went astray.

Luther feared not to affirm of the first and best of general synods, that he 'understood not the Holy Ghost to speak in it;' and that the canons thereof were but plain hay and stubble.^c Yea, and Beza, that such was the 'folly, ignorance, ambition, wickedness of many bishops in the best times, that you would suppose the devil to have been president in their assemblies:^d insomuch as Nazianzen complained, that he never saw a^e good end of any; and affirmed, that he was resolved never to come at them more. And in truth, the fightings and brawls, diabolical arts of defamation and accusing one another, abominable pride, ambition, and affectation of pre-eminence, which appeared in most of them, did so far prevail, that in the issue they became (as one was entitled) dens of thieves, rather than conventions of humble and meek disciples of Jesus Christ; until at length the holy dove being departed, an ominous owl overlooked the Lateran fathers; and though with much clamour they destroyed the appearing fowl, yet the foul spirit of darkness and error wrought as ef-

^c Hic prorsus non intelligo sanctum Spiritum in hoc concilio: hi omnes articuli fœnum, stramen, ligna, stipulæ fuerunt. Luth.

^d In optimis illis temporibus, ea fuit nonnullorum, episcoporum, partim ambitio, partim futilitas et ignorantia, &c. Beza. præfat. ad Nov. Testa.

^e Ego, si vera scribere oportet, ita animo affectus sum, ut omnia episcoporum concilia fugiam, quoniam nullius concilii finem lætum faustumque vidi: nec quod depulsionem malorum potius quam accessionem et incrementum habuerit. Greg. Naz. Ep. ad Procep.

fectually in them as ever. But to close this discourse; ignorance of men's invincible prejudices, of their convictions, strong persuasions, desires, aims, hopes, fears, inducements, sensibleness of our own infirmities, failings, misapprehensions, darkness, knowing but in part, should work in us a charitable opinion of poor erring creatures, that do it perhaps with as upright, sincere hearts and affections, as some enjoy truth. Austin^f tells the Manichees, the most paganish heretics that ever were, that they only raged and were high against them, who knew not what it was to seek the truth, and escape error; with what ardent prayers the knowledge of truth is obtained. And how tender is Salvian^g in his judgment of the Arians? 'They are,' saith he, 'heretics, but know it not; heretics to us, but not to themselves: nay, they think themselves so catholic, that they judge us to be heretics, what they are to us, that are we to them: they err, but with a good mind, and for this cause God shews patience towards them.'

Now if any should dissent from what I have before asserted concerning this particular, I would entreat him to lay down some notes, whereby heresies may infallibly be discerned to be such, and he shall not find me repugning.

6. That great consideration ought to be had of that sovereign dictate of nature, the sum of all moral duties, '*quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*;' do not that unto others, which you would not have done to you, were you in the same condition with them. In the business in hand, we are supposed by others to be in that estate, wherein we suppose those to be of whom we speak; those others being to us, what we are to them. Now truly if none of the former inconveniences and iniquities which we recounted, assertion 2, 3, 4, or the like, do accompany erring persons, it will be something difficult to make it appear, how we may, if enjoying authority over them, impose any coercion, restraint, or punishment on them, which we would not acknowledge to be justly laid on us by others (supposing it should be laid) having authority over us, convinced that our persuasion differing from them, is false and erroneous. No

^f Illi in vos sæviunt, qui nesciunt cum quo labore inveniatur, et quam difficile caveantur errors, &c. Aug.

^g Apud nos sunt hæretici, apud se non sunt: quod ergo illi nobis sunt, hoc nos illis. &c. Salv. de prov. &c.

sort of Christians but are heretics and schismatics to some Christians in authority; and it may be their lot to live under the power and jurisdiction of men so persuaded of them, where they ought to expect, that the same measure will be given unto them, which in other places they have consented to mete out to others.

But men will say, and all men pleading the cause of non-toleration in its full extent do say, that they are heretics, and erroneous persons whom we do oppose: we ourselves are orthodox, and no law of nature, no dictate of the Scriptures requires, that we should think it just to render unto them that are orthodox, as unto them that are heretics, seducers, and false teachers. Because thieves are punished, shall honest men fear that they shall be so too? But a thief is a thief in all the world, unto all men: in opinions it is not so: he is a heretic, that is to be punished, but to whom? in whose judgment? in his own? no more than we are in ours: but he is so to them that judge him: true. Put the case a Protestant were to be judged by a Papist, as a thousand saints have been: is he not the worst of heretics to his judge? These things turn in a circle: what we are to ourselves, that he is to himself: what he is to us, that we are unto others that may be our judges. But however, you will say, we are in the truth, and therefore ought to go free. Now truly this is the same paralogism: who says we are in the truth? others? no, ourselves: who says erroneous persons (as so supposed) are heretics, or the like? they themselves? no, but we: and those that are to us, as we are to them, say no less of us. Let us not suppose that all the world will stoop to us, because we have the truth, as we affirm, but they do not believe. If we make the rule of our proceedings against others to be our conviction, that they are erroneous; others will, or may make theirs of us, to be their rule of proceeding against us. We do thus to them, because we so judge of them: will not others, who have the same judgment of us, as we of them, do the like unto us? Now here I profess that I do not desire to extend any thing in this discourse, to the patronizing of any error whatsoever, I mean any thing, so commonly esteemed in the reformed churches, as myself owning any such; much less to the procuring of a licentious immunity, for every one in his way; and least of all to coun-

tenance men walking disorderly in any regard, especially in the particulars before recounted; but only to shew how warily, and upon what sure principles, that cannot be retorted on us, we ought to proceed, when any severity is necessarily required, in case of great danger; and how in lesser things, if the unity of faith may in some comfortable measure be kept, then to assert the proposition in its full latitude, urging and pleading for Christian forbearance, even in such manner to be granted, as we would desire it from them, whom we do forbear; for truly in those disputable things, we must acknowledge ourselves in the same series with other men, unless we can produce express patents for our exemptions. But some perhaps will say, that even in such things as these Gamaliel's counsel is not good; better all go on with punishing that can; truth will not be suppressed, but error will. Good God! was not truth oppressed by anti-christian tyranny? was not outward force the engine that for many generations kept truth in corners? But of this afterward.

Now I am mistaken, if this principle, that the civil magistrate ought to condemn, suppress, and persecute every one that he is convinced to err, though in smaller things, do not at length, in things of greater importance, make Christendom a very theatre of bloody murders, killing, slaying, imprisoning men round in a compass; until the strongest becomes dictator to the rest, and he alone be supposed to have infallible guidance, all the rest to be heretics, because overcome and subdued (when I speak of death and killing in this discourse, I understand not only forcible death itself, but that also which is equivalent thereunto, as banishment, or perpetual imprisonment), I had almost said, that it is the interest of mortality, to consent generally to the persecution of a man maintaining such a destructive opinion.

7. That whatsoever restraint, or other punishment may be allowed in case of grosser errors, yet slaying of heretics for simple heresy, as they call it, for my part I cannot close withal; nor shall ever give my vote to the burning, hanging, or killing of a man, otherwise upright, honest, and peaceable in the state, merely because he misbelieveth any point of Christian faith. Let what pretences you please be produced, or colours flourished, I should be very unwilling to pro-

nounce the sentence of blood in the case of heresy. I do not intend here to dispute: but if any one will, upon protestant principles, and Scripture grounds, undertake to assert it, I promise (if God grant me life) he shall not want a convert, or an antagonist. I know the usual pretences: such a thing is blasphemy: but search the Scripture, look upon the definitions of divines, and by all men's consent you will find heresy, in what head of religion soever it be, and blasphemy properly so called, to be exceedingly distant. Let a blasphemmer undergo the law of blasphemy: but yet I think we cannot be too cautious how we place men in that damnable series, calling heaven and earth to witness the contrary. But again: to spread such errors will be destructive to souls; so are many things, which yet are not punishable with forcible death: let him that thinks so go kill Pagans and Mahometans. As such heresy is a canker, but a spiritual one, let it be prevented by spiritual means; cutting off men's heads is no proper remedy for it: if state physicians think otherwise, I say no more, but that I am not of the college, and what I have already said I submit to better judgments.

8. It may be seriously considered, upon a view of the state and condition of Christians, since their name was known in the world, whether this doctrine of punishing erring persons with death, imprisonment, banishment, and the like, under the name of heretics, hath not been as useful and advantageous for error, as truth; nay, whether it hath not appeared the most pernicious invention that ever was broached: in the first, second, and third ages, we hear little of it; nothing for it; something against it: much afterward against it, in Austin and others.⁶ Marlinus, the famous French bishop, rejected the communion of a company of his associate bishops, because they had consented with Maximus the emperor, unto the death of the Priscillians, as vile heretics as ever breathed. At the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century, when the Arians and orthodox had successively procured the supreme magistrate to join with them, men were killed and dismembered like beasts: banishments, imprisonments, plunderings, es-

⁶ Τοὺς μισοῦντας τὸν Θεὸν μισεῖν Χρῆ καὶ ἱμάς, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἔχθροῖς αὐτοῦ ἐκτίκεσθαι, οὐ μὲν καὶ τύπτειν αὐτοὺς καὶ διάκειν, καθὼς τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότες τὸν κύριον καὶ Θεόν· ἀλλ' ἐκθροὺς μὲν ἠγείσθαι, καὶ χωρίζεσθαι ἀπ' αὐτῶν. Ignat. Epist. ad Philad.

pecially by the Arians were as frequent, as in new subdued kingdoms. But never was this tragedy so acted to the life, as by the worshippers of images on the one side, and their adversaries on the other:^b which difference rose about the year 130, and was carried on with that barbarous outrage on both sides, especially by the Iconolatræ (as the worst were ever best at such proceedings), as is wonderful to consider. Now excepting only those idolatrous heretics in the last, who were paid home in their own coin, for a thousand years together, this doctrine was put in practice against none almost, but the martyrs of Jesus. The Roman stories of the killing of heretics, are all martyrologies; thousands slain for heretics now lie under the altar, crying for vengeance, and shall one day sit upon thrones, judging their judges. So that where one man hath suffered for an error, under the name of a heretic, five hundred under the same notion have suffered for truth: a principle would seem more befitting Christians to spare five hundred for the saving of one guiltless person. Truth hath felt more of the teeth of this scorpion, than error; and clearly it grew up by degrees with the whole mystery of iniquity. In the gospel we have nothing like it: the acts of Christ purging the temple, Peter pronouncing the fate of Ananias, and Paul smiting Elymas with blindness, seem to me heterogeneous. The first laws of Constantine speak liberty and freedom.ⁱ Pecuniary mulcts afterward were added, and general edicts against all sects, and so it is put over into the hands of the Arians, who exceedingly cherished it: yet for a good while pretences must be sought out, Eustachius of Antioch must be accused of adultery, Athanasius of sedition, magic, and I know not what, that a colour might be had for their persecution.^k The Arian kings in Africa, were the first that owned it, *γυμνῇ κεφαλῇ*, and acted according to their persuasions. Methinks I hear the cries of poor dismembered, mangled creatures, for the faith of the holy Trinity! Next to these, through a few civil constitutions of some weak emperors, it wholly comes to reside in the hands of the pope; kings and princes are made his executioners, and he plays his game to the purpose. Single persons serve not this Bel and Dragon, whole

^b Theophanes. histor. Miscel. lib. 22. cap. 30.

ⁱ Euseb. vit. Const. lib. 2. cap. 27.

^k Socrat. Evag. Rufinus. Sozom.

nations¹ must be slaughtered, that he may be drunk with blood. He sends whole armies to crucify Christ afresh, he gives every one of his soldiers a cross; hence followed cruel sights, bloody battles, wasting of kingdoms, raging against the names, ashes, sepulchres of the dead, with more than heathenish cruelty: such evil fruits hath this bitter root sent forth, the streams of this fountain have all been blood; so that it cannot be denied, but that a judicature of truth, and the contrary assumed, with a forcible backing of the sentence, was the bottom stone in the foundation, and highest in the corner of the tower of Babel: and I believe upon that search it will appear, that error hath not been advanced by any thing in the world so much, as by usurping a power for its suppression. In divers contests that the pope had with others, the truth was on his side (as in the business of Athanasius, and others in the east deposed by the Arians^m); now who would not have thought, that his standing up with all earnestness for the truth, would not have been the ruin of the devil's kingdom of darkness, and almost have spoiled the plot of the mystery of iniquity; when the truth is, the largest steps that ever the man of sin took towards his throne, was by usurping of power to suppress errors and heresies. It would be a great encouragement to use that way for the extirpation of errors (if any such be, besides the preaching of the gospel, and convictions from thence), which, any one could produce and give assurance that it hath not been tried, or been tried and proved ineffectual for the supplantation of truth; and if such a way be not produced, what if both should grow together until harvest?

9. Let us not be too hasty in pressing any opinion arising and divulged with odious consequences of sedition, turbulence, and the like, because tumults and troubles happen in the commonwealth, where it is asserted: a coincidence of events is one of the principal causes of error and misjudgings in the world: because errors and tumults arise together, therefore one is the cause of the other, may be an argument, 'a baculo ad angulum.' It is a hard thing to charge them with sedition, who protest against it; and none can make it appear, that it is 'contraria factis,' by any of their actions, but only because it is fit they should bear the blame of what

¹ Albigenes, Waldenses, Bohemians.

^m Socrat. lib. 2. cap. 11.

happeneth evilly in their days. Upon every disaster in the empire, the noise of old was, ‘*Christianos ad leones*:’^p for our parts we ought to remember, that we were strangers in Egypt; it is but little more than a hundred years since all mouths were opened and filled with reproaches against that glorious reformation, wherein we rejoice. Was it not the unanimous voice of all the adversaries thereof, that a new religion was brought in, tending to the immediate ruin of all states and commonwealths, attended with rebellion, the mother of sedition? Have we not frequent apologies of our divines for the confutation of such false, malicious, and putid criminations? It is true indeed, the light of the gospel breaking out, was accompanied with war and not peace (according to the prediction of our Saviour), whereof the gospel was no more the cause, than John Diazius was of that horrible murder, when his brains were chopped out with an axe by his brother Alphonsus,^o because he professed the gospel. Hence Luther, the vehemency of whose spirit gave no way to glosses and temporizing excuses, plainly affirms those tumults to be such necessary appendixes of the preaching of the gospel, that he should not believe the word of God to be abroad in the world, if he saw it not accompanied with tumults, which he had rather partake in, than perish under the wrath of God in an eternal tumult:^p the truth must go on, though thereby the world should be reduced to its primitive chaos and confusion. Were it not a perpetual course for men of every persuasion to charge sedition, and the like, upon that which they would have suppressed, knowing that no name is more odious unto them who have power to effect their desire; and did I not find that some, who have had much ado, whilst they were sheep, to keep off that imputation from themselves, within a few years, becoming lions, have laid it home upon others, as peaceable as they; I might perhaps be more rigid than now these discoveries will suffer me to be: far be it from me to apologize for truth itself, if seditious; only I abhor those false, malicious criminations, whereby God’s people in these days wherein we live, have exceedingly suffered. It hath pleased God so to order

^p Arnob.^o Sleid. Com.

^p Ego nisi tumultus istos viderem, verbum Dei in mundo non esse dicerem. Præ-
eligimus temporali tumultu collidi, quam æterno tumultu sub ira Dei conteri. Luth.
de Ser. Art. cap. 32—34.

things in this kingdom, that the work of recovering his worship to its purity, and restoring the civil state to its liberty, should be both carried on at the same time by the same persons. Are there none now in this kingdom, to whom this reforming is an almost everting of God's worship? And are there none that have asserted that our new religion hath caused all those tumults and bloodshed? And doth not every unprejudiced man see, that these are hellish lies, and malicious accusations, having indeed neither ground nor colour, but only their coincidence in respect of time? Is any wise man moved with their clamours? Are their aspersions considerable? Are we the only men that have been thus injuriously traduced? Remember the difference between Elijah and Ahab; what was laid to the charge of Paul; see the apologies of the old Christians, and speak what you find.

Much might here be added concerning the qualifications, carriages, humility, peaceableness, of erring persons; all which ought to be considered, and our proceedings towards them to be, if not regulated, yet much swayed by such considerations. Some I have known myself, that I dare say the most curious inquirer into their ways, that sees with eyes of flesh, would not be able to discover any thing but mere conviction and tenderness of conscience, that causeth them to own the opinions which different from others they do embrace. Others again so exceeding supercilious, scorning, proud, selfish, so given to contemning of all others, reviling and undervaluing of their adversaries, that the blindest pity cannot but see much carnalness and iniquity in their ways. These things then deserve to be weighed, all passion and particular interest being set aside. And then, if the die be cast, and we must forward, let us take along with us these two cautions.

(1.) So to carry ourselves in all our censures, every one in his sphere (ecclesiastical discipline being preserved as pure and unmixed from secular power as possible) that it may appear to all that it is the error which men maintain which is so odious unto us, and not the consequent or their dissent from us, whether by subducting themselves from our power, or withdrawing from communion; for if this latter be made the cause of our proceeding against any, there must be

one law for them all, all that will not bow to the fiery furnace; recusancy is the fault, and that being the same in all must have the same punishment, which would be such an unrighteous inequality as is fit for none but antichrist to own.

(2.) That nothing be done to any, but that the bound and farthest end of it be seen at the beginning, and not leave way and room for new persecution upon new pretences. ‘*Cedo alteram et alteram,*’ one stripe sometimes makes way for another, and how know I that men will stay at thirty-nine? ‘*Principiis obsta.*’

All these things being considered, I cannot so well close with them who make the least allowance of dissent to be the mother of abominations: words and hated phrases may easily be heaped up to a great number, to render any thing odious which we have a mind to oppose; but the proving of an imposed evil or absurdity, is sometimes a labour too difficult for every undertaker. And so I hope I have said enough to warrant my own hesitancy in this particular. Some might now expect that I should here positively set down what is my judgment concerning errors and erroneous persons, dissenting from the truth received and acknowledged by authority, with respect unto their toleration: unto whom I answer, That to consider the power of the magistrate about things of religion, and over consciences; the several restraints that have been used in this case, or are pleaded for; the difference between dangerous fundamental errors, and others; the several interests of men, and ways of disengaging; the extent of communion, and the absolute necessity of a latitude to be allowed in some things: with such other things as would be requisite for a full handling of the matter in hand; ask a longer discourse, and more exactness, than the few hours allotted to this appendix can afford. Only for the present I ask, if any will take the pains to inform me: 1. What they mean by a non-toleration? Whether only a not countenancing, nor holding communion with them; or if crushing and punishing them, then how? to what degree? by what means? where they will undoubtedly bound? 2. What the error is concerning which the inquiry is made? the clear opposition thereof to the word of God? the danger of it? the repugnancy that is in it to peace, quietness, and the power of godliness? 3. What, or who are the erring per-

sons? how they walk? in what manner of conversation? What is their behaviour towards others, not of their own persuasion? What gospel means have been used for their conviction? What may be supposed to be their prejudices, motives, interests, and the like? And then, if it be worth asking, I shall not be backward to declare my opinion. And truly without the consideration of these things, and other such circumstances, how a right judgment can be passed in this case I see not.

And so hoping the courteous reader will look with a candid eye upon these hasty lines, rather poured out than written; and consider that a day's pains in these times may serve for that, which is but for a day's use; the whole is submitted to his judgment by him who professeth his all in this kind to be, the love of truth and peace.