The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England

by

John Cotton
(1584–1652)

Quinta Press
Weston Rhyn
THE WAY OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN NEW ENGLAND.

OR

THE WAY OF CHURCHES walking in Brotherly equality. or co-ordination, without Subjection of one Church to another. Measured and examined by the Golden Reed of the Sanctuary.

Containing a full Declaration of the Church-way in all Particulars.

By Mr J Cotton, Teacher of the church at Boston in New-England.

1 Thessalonians 5:22,23.

‘Prove all things; hold fast that which is good; Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Published according to Order.

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1645
The Epistle to the Reader,

SATISFYING HIS DESIRE OF A FULLER DECLARATION OF THE CHURCH-WAY.

Although our Brethren of a different judgement from that way, have not all this while, held forth unto us what discipline they intend; nor yet have pointed us to any Platform settled in adjacent Kingdoms; but rather have lured off our eye, with intimations that they intend some variation: yet how many, how long, have even dulled our ears with * expostulations for a fuller declaration of ourselves? Whose hands (they know are much bound up, and our single selves in an incapacity to be representative of others. The unwillingness of Licencers to licence our tracts, and the earnest endeavours of some, to move complaints against two or three of our most moderate books, that with hard travel got a convoy of Licences, to cut through the Presses, are not dumb witnesses how much our way is barred, and our hands tied short. * And for Plaintiffs to burn records, or to lock up records, and then to importune the Defendants to produce those records, are two things that cannot

* So that School Master Effiastasti quotid ano convito libros emittere, &C. Quintil. lib. 1.
* Whites way to the Church. Bernards look beyond Luther.
not in our apprehension be said to hold no analogy. Yet with much sweat, and wiles, some messengers have got through that Court of Guard, to anticipate, or satisfy (and if it might be) those clamourers for a larger Narration.

1. The 32 Questions, or Church-government, and Church-Covenant, done by some Elders of N.E. they have had; with seconds of frequent intimations, that we hold with the Churches of New England.

2. The Apologetical Narration they have had, with our general approbation of it.

3. Mr Cotton of the Keys of the Kingdom of heaven they have had, with our Brethren's Epistle to it, how far they approve it.

4. The Reasons of the dissenting Brethren are in Print.

5. We have been informed that those our Brethren formerly have tended themselves, that in case they might be put into a Committee, or like meet posture for such a work, they would bring in the whole frame of their judgements in a body, with their grounds and reasons.

6. That now very lately they gave in seven Propositions to be discussed, with promise of more. But neither of them was debated. Which we allege rather to vindicate our selves of that particular charge, than to blame men whose reasons we know not.

7. With much ado we have presented you with a fuller declaration of all our way according to the Scriptures, in this learned, yet modest treatise of The Way Of The Churches of Christ in New England, &c. Written and sent over by Mr Cotton. And we do in this epistle certify our percent thereunto, saving that we do not yet fully close with some expressions passing in that the Book, before some of which we minded it to note a* in the
Margin. This we could not but say and do (pace tanti authoris) or we could not assert the Book. If all things in this Treatise, as now printed, do not answer punctually word for word, to the first written Copy, let the Rev Author, and the candid Reader pardon us, because we had not the fairest Copy, nor new way, until the Book was, near done, that there was better to be had, nor to this day yet ever saw it.

Therefore we were forced to shift with this, so as to keep the mind of the Author, make it constare sibi, and by an interpretative leave in his absence, not only to do as we would be done by, but also as he himself would have done (we are confident) if he had been in our case, or present here.

Least any should imagine, that everything in the Keys doth not fit all the wards in this Treatise to an hair, we will he insert Mr Cotton’s own words, in his Letter coming from him in New-England to our hands in the very nick of time, while this Epistle lay under the Press; viz. “If you think the draft of church discipline, which was sent over in your ship, various from that of the Power of the Keys, sent over the year after; you may have some occasions so to conceive from some difference of expression in Logical Terms, but not a jot in any Doctrine Of Divinity, or Church Practice. So Mr Cotton in his letter to Mr R. M.

Diverse Objections formally laid against the Printing of this Book (to the saddening of the Author.) Some whereof are now answered by the late season of printing it. Others, by the necessity of them, that conscientiously and candidly cry out for information. Others by the foreprinting of the keys, to open the full mind and a whole
sphere of the Author's judgement in this. Others, by that putting forth in print of an answer to this Book, before this was mid-wifed to buy the press into the world. All reason therefore (now it can speak) that it should answer for itself.

We hope we have satisfied the mind of the Author as well as our own, and of others too, on the other Judgement; especially of those that call for fuller Declarations. The Lord root out all our hearts the spirit of contradiction; that we call not for Books, with the resolution, rather to confute them (as we imagine) then to throw down ourselves humbly under the power of truth.

We are now fighting Modo militari, for reformation; let us not therefore fight against it more ecclesiastical. With how much gravity, solidity, and modesty, have Mr Cotton, the Apologists, the Authors of 32 Questions, or Church Covenant, and other mild and judicious Authors written in our cause? But with what a difference spirit have the adverse part replied; as if personal invectives, and in bettering a style, were God's way of bettering a cause, or battering an opinion?

Here is a Book so grave, and solid, that it cannot be justly despised by ingenuous learned men. So full of necessary cases and truths, that it cannot but be desired of those that would be knowing then. And so mild and gentle, that it cannot but be causeless leave quarrelled, if quarrelled by Choleric men. Had we not been persuaded, that it would prove a welcome Tract on all hands, for the reasons intimated, we could with our enjoyment of the written Copy, well have saved this great travel. If you fall out otherwise, as it hath with a diverse
of the like nature; Golden Lavers, or Vessels made Common-shores and receptacles to be filled with all filthy content; we shall then clearly and fully discern men's spirits, and describe their intense and challenging us for larger Narrations; and shall be wear for time to come, how we anger them with kindnesses. But if this speak candidly entertained of them, then have they encouraged us in due time to impart (if God permit) a fuller Treatise of the same subject, with an clear demonstrations, by joint consent of the Churches of Old and New England: and meanwhile, they have abundantly recompensed the labour of love, of theirs in the Lord.

N. H. I. H.
THE Way of the Churches of Christ in NEW-ENGLAND, Measured by the Golden Reed of the SANCTUARY.

Chapter 1.

The Order of gathering dispersed Christian into a Church.

Proposition 1. Section I.

Hat the Church which Christ in his Gospel hath instituted, and to which he hath committed the keys of his kingdom, the power of binding and loosing, the tables and seals of the Covenant, the Officers and censures of his Church, the administration of all his public Worship and Ordinances, is, Cætus fideli-um, a Communion of Saints, a Combination of faithful godly men, meeting for that end, by common and joint consent, into one congregation; which is commonly called a particular visibIe Church. For the church to the which Christ committed the power of binding and loosing, was a company of such (as whereof Peter was one). Believers professingthat faith on Christ, whereon (as on a rock) the Church is built, Matthew 16:18–19, and such as unto whom Peter, or any brother offended, might (in due order) tell the offence which any brother had given him, & persisted in, Matthew 18:17. And
17. And the Church of Corinth which the Apostle commendeth the calling out of the Incestuous Corinthian, (1 Cor. 5.) was such a Church, of which the Apostle saith, They were Saints by calling, sanctified by Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 1:2. and all of them, even the whole Church, did meet together every Lords day, in one place, for the Administration of the holy Ordinances of God, to public Edification, 1 Cor. 14:23. & 16:1, 2. Which frequent meeting every Lord’s day in one place, to such ends, cannot possibly be compatible to any Diocesan, Provinciall, or Nationall Assembly.

**PROPOSITION 2.**

It is the part of all Christians, who look for salvation by Christ Jesus, to join themselves (if God give them opportunity) to some one or other such a particular visible Church of Christ; for of such a Church as continued in such Church-fellowship (Acts 2:42), it is written, The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved, Acts 2:47. And seeing there is no holy Ordinance of Christ, but every Christian standeth in need thereof for his spiritual edification in holy fellowship with Christ Jesus (or else Christ ordained them in vain) and seeing withall Christ hath committed all his public holy Ordinances to his Church, it will be needful for every good Christian, to whom God giveth opportunity, to join himself to some one or other Church of Christ, that so he may not deprive himself of the benefit and comfort of any of God’s holy Ordinances.

**PROPOSITION 2.**

For the joning of faithful Christians into the fellowship and estate of a Church, we find not in Scripture that God hath done it any other way than by entering all of them together, (as one man) into an holy Covenant with himself, To take the Lord (as the head of his Church) for their God, and to give up themselves to him, to be his church and people; which implieth their submitting of themselves to him, and one to another in his fear; and their walking in professed subjection to all his holy Ordinances: their cleaving one to another, as fellow-members of the same body, in brotherly love and holy watchfulness to mutual edification in Christ Jesus: For thus the Lord accepted and entered
Abraham’s family into Church estate, by receiving them and their children into such a Covenant with himself, though in general terms, yet such as imply the substance both of Christians and Church duties, Gen. 17:7. And after that when the posteritie of Abraham had violated this Covenant in Ægypt, the Lord again made another Covenant with them, whereby he took them to be a peculiar people unto himself in the Wilderness and Mount of Sinai, Exod. 19:1, 5. Whence they were called the Church in the Wilderness, Act. 7:38. And by reason of this Covenant, God calleth the whole body of that people as his owne Spouse; I entered (saith he, speaking of that time) into a Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine, Ezek. 16:8. Moreover, the next generation after them, he established them to be his Church and people, by entering them againe into a Covenant, according to the Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Deut. 29:10. to 13. By vertue of which Covenant, as well as by the former, they were joyned, not only to the Lord, and to the Officers (the Priests and Levites) which he had given them, Deut. 12:19. but also to mutual watchfulnessse over one another, Levit. 19:17. Deut. 29:18. In so much that through their neglect thereof, the sinne of one Achan, was the sin of all Israel. Josh. 7:11.

Which kind of Covenanting with God, we find diversely translated in Scripture, and every way sufficient for the constituting of a godly society or company to become a Church unto God: Sometimes God, or his Messengers in his stead, propoundeth and giveth a Covenant unto a people, and they accept it, though not in express words, yet by fluent consent. Gen. 17:7. Deut. 29:10. to the end of Chapter 30. Sometimes the people declare their consent, and restipulation by express words, Exod. 19:8. Deut. 5:27. and Josh. 24:16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25. Sometimes they writing and sealing, Neh. 9:38. In all which Covenants, sometimes they make no express terms of cleaving to their brethren, but onely in general terms of submitting themselves to every Ordinance and Covenant of God, (as in the places allledged) sometimes they expressly declare their stedfast cleaving to their Brethren also, and to their Officers, Neh. 10:28, 29, & ver. 35. to the end the rest of the people every one might have knowledge they cleave to their Brethren, and entred into an Oath, &c. In some we account it all one, and
of like value, when a Covenant of God is propounded and given on God’s part to a people, whether they receive it by silent consent, or by express terms, either by word of mouth, or by writing and seale, and whether their cleaving to their Brethren and Officers, and mutual watchfulness over one another, be expresly mentioned, or included onely in their general profession of subjection to all Gods holy Ordinances and Covenant; For we see it evident by comparing the former Scriptures, that by any one of these ways a people is received and established to be a peculiar people and Church unto the Lord, and each of them lay hold of the same spiritual priviledges and hold forth the same holy duties.

Neither is there any colour to conceive this way of entering into Church estate by Covenant, to be peculiar to the Pædagogy of the old Testament; for it is evident by the light of nature, that all civil Relations are founded in Covenant. For, to passe by natural Relations between Parents and Children, and violent Relations between Conquerours and Captives; there is no other way given whereby a people (sui Juris) free from naturall and compulsory engagements can be united or combined together into one visible body, to stand by mutual Relation, fellow-members of the same body, but onely by mutual Covenants as appeareth between husband and wife in the family, Magistrates and subjects in the Common-wealth, fellow Citizens in the same Citie: and therefore in the New Testament, when a people whom the Apostles by their ministry had converted, were to be gathered by them into Church estate, what did the Apoliles else but combine them into one body, as one chaste Virgin and Spouse unto Christ 2 Cor. 11. 2. And how could that (not universall, but particular) Church of Corinth be offered up in one body, not as many Spouses, as all the particular members of that Church were by their conversion but as one Spouse unto Christ, but onely by joyning all together in one Covenant, or Espousage, to worship the Lord Jesus, according to all the Ordinances of his house?

PROPOS. 4.

We conceive it cannot seeme unreasonable that in the same way by which particular godly persons do enter into the fellowship of the Liberty of those holy Ordinances which Christ hath appropriated
riated to his Church; in the same way it were meet that an whole company of Christians should enter into Church estate; for in entering of them into Church estate, the Lord calleth as well whole companies, as particular persons, to enjoy the like liberty of all his holy Ordinances; the enjoyment of like libertie requireth preparation thereunto by the like dutie. In the times of John the Baptist, such as were received into Baptisme, they did first make confession of their hones, and therewith of their repentance, and of their faith also in him who was to come after him, Matth. 3:6. Act. 19:4, 5. And in the times of the Apostles, Philip received the Eunuch unto Baptism, not until he had made profession of his Faith in Christ Jesus, Act. 8:37. But now for as much as we all who are borne in Christian Churches, are baptized in our infancy, and such as are baptized infants, are not admitted to the Lord’s Table in well ordered Churches, till they have approved, and in their own persons publicly confirmed that profession of repentance and faith, which their parents, or others in their stead professed, and promised for them at their Baptisme; it cannot be thought unreasonable, that such a company of godly Christians, having been baptized infants, should now make the like profession of their repentance, before they are admitted into Church estate, which others made in the primitive times before Baptism, and all grown up to ripe yeares are wont publicly to make, (or at least ought to make) before their admittance to the Lord’s Supper. Besides when upon Peter’s confession of his faith in Christ Jesus, Christ said that upon that rock, or foundation, he would build his Church, Mat. 16:16, 18. doth he not plainly hold forth, that every Christian Church is founded, as on Christ; so on Christ in this way, to wit, on Christ believed on by faith, and that faith publicly confessed before God and men?

Propos. 5.

To the erecting of a Church, as the presence of Christ is necessary for the acceptance of it, so the pretence of neighbouring Churches and Brethren, is requisite to cry, Grace, Grace unto it; For if David’s advertisement be (as it is) necessary, and of important weight, Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it, Psal. 127:1. how much more important is it that the Lord (who
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(who alone buildeth his own Jerusalem, Psal. 147:2.) be sought unto with unfeigned humiliation and fervent prayer, for his presence with his people, and acceptance of them in such a work; and if the Apostle Paul thought it requisite to communicate with the Apostles at Jerusalem about his Apostolicall doctrines and proceedings, partly to prevent suspition of dissent between him and them, left by any meanes he should run in vaine; partly to hold forth mutual communion with them, in giving and taking the right hand of fellowship, Gal. 2:2, 9. How much more requisite will it be, for such as goe about to gather together scattered Christians into a Church estate, to communicate with the Elders and Brethren of other Churches, craving their presence, and counsell, and communion in so great a work? And seeing Christian Magistrates being also Brethren and members of Churches, are called of God to be Nursing Fathers unto the Church, Isa. 49:23. it can not but encourage them to take the more speciall notice and care of every Church, and to provide and assigne convenient allotments of land for the maintenance of each of them, when in times of peace they are made acquainted with the persons and proceedings of such as gather into Church-fellowship, under the wing of their Government: And yet seeing the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, nor regulated by the wisdome of this world, we do not doubt but that a Church may be clearly gathered, and rightly ordered, though they want opportunitie, or omit to acquaint the Magistrates with their proceedings, especially when Magistrates are not acquainted with the Lawes of Christs kingdom.

SECTION II.

Now then to apply all these Propositions to our present order and practice, in the gathering of a Church; thus it is, when many Christians are come over into these parts, they desire to join themselves unto some Church or other, according to the second Proposition, professing that it was the principall end of their comming, to enjoy the presence of the Lord in the liberty and purity of his Ordinances: And if the company of such as come together, be so well known one to another, that they are loathe to part company, and yet so great that they cannot well join in any one
one Church already established without too much impeachment of their outward estate and livelihood, the chiepest part of the lands belonging to each Church, being prepossessed by others before them, they then take that course which other companies took before them, they consider of entering into a Church estate and fellowship amongst themselves: And for that end, first commending themselves to the Lord, they enquire out some one or other of Eminent gifts, usually such as have been Preachers of good esteem in England, who may guide and goe along with them in so great an Action, and if God see good, may afterwards be called to place and Office amongst them; And then such whole hearts God toucheth to goe along with them in this worke, they often meet together about the things of God, and perform some duties of Prayer and spiritual conference together, till a sufficient company of them be well satisfied in the spiritual good estate of one another, and so have approved themselves to one anothers consciences in the sight of God, as living stones fit to be laid in the Lord’s spiritual Temple, which is his Church, according to the first Proposition.

Now because (through the grace of Christ) our Christian Magistrates are nursing Fathers to the Church, and the Churches already established, are carried not onely with a pious desire to enlarge the kingdom of Christ, but also with brotherly love to such as intend so good a worke; those Christians therefore that desire to enter into Church-fellowship together, do acquaint the Governor, and some of the neerest Magistrates, and those Churches which are next adjoyning to them, with their intentions to enter into Church-fellowship, and crave the presence of some from amongst them (at the day appointed, some few weeks after) to help them with their prayers, and with their counfell, (if need should be) in so weightie a business, as being themselves for the most part, lesse experienced in the ways of Christ’s Kingdom, then those who have gone before them in such a worke; as also desiring to approve themselves and their course, to the consciences of the Brethren of other Churches, that they may more freely give them the right hand of fellowship, and so receive them to all Brotherly communion in the Lord, amongst the rest of the Churches; and this agreeth with the last part of the fift Proposition.

So.
So when the day appointed for the Church-gathering is come, the persons deputed from the neighbouring Churches are present, (who commonly be the teaching and ruling Elders) and as many also of all sorts as are willing to partake with them at that time, the whole day is kept as a day of humiliation, especially the former part of it, in seeking the face of God in prayer, and preaching the Word, (according to the former part of the fifth Proposition) the Brethren of the Church to be gathered, selecting some chief one among themselves to be their mouth for those services: which done, then on the latter part of the day, one of them appointed and chosen by themselves to order the work of the day, standeth up and addresseth himself, with the rest of his Brethren, to make profession of their faith, and repentance, before the Lord, and before the whole Assembly according to the fourth Proposition.

This done with the silent approbation of the whole Assembly, he propoundeth the Covenant of promise, *Eph. 2:12.* denying also any sufficiency in themselves to keep Covenant with God, (as having been transgressors from their youth up) they profess in the name of Christ their acceptance of the Lord for their God, and the Lord Jesus (the head and Saviour of his Church) to be their King, Priest, and Prophet; and give up themselves in professed subjection unto all his holy Ordinances, according to the Rule of the Gospel; with all they profess their full purpose of heart, to cleave one to another in Brotherly love, and mutual subjection, according to God; not forsaking their Assembly, (but as the Lord shall call) and ministering one to another (as become good Stewards of the manifold graces of God) till they all grow up to a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Having thus, or to the like purpose propounded the Covenant himself, with the rest of the Brethren, who are to join in Church-estate, they all declare their joint consent in this Covenant, either by silence, or word of mouth, or writing.

Then the Brethren of other Churches finding the presence of God accepting them, by the heavenly fire of his Spirit come down amongst them in their performance of their holy duties, they appoint some from amongst them, in the name of all the Churches from whence they come to reach forth unto them the right hand
of fellowship, testifying their proceedings to have been according to God, and the Churches acceptance of them into brotherly fellowship, and exhorting them to stand stedfast in the Lord, and to grow up in holy fellowship with him, and one with another, and with the rest of the Brethren of all the Churches, according to these beginnings: And to prayers being made unto God for the pardoning and acceptance of this people, and of all the duties of the day; as also for his blessing upon themselves, and all the Churches, both in this Country, and throughout the world, especially in England; a Psalm of praise is sung.

Quest. What could be done more, if a Church were to be gathered out of Infidels?

Answ. 1. If a Church were to be gathered out of Infidels, they were first to be converted, that they might become believers, and so fit materials or Church-fellowship, before any of these could be done by them; whereas these here spoken of, are persons converted already.

If it be said again; But are not all Baptized persons fit for Church-fellowship, as all Circumcised persons were admitted to the Passeover?

Answ. There is a difference between the Passeover, whereto all Jews were admitted, young and old, unless defiled with some pollution, and the Lord's Supper, whereto persons of growner years, and fit to examine themselves, are invited; and therefore neither children, nor ignorant persons, nor prophanous, nor scandalous persons, are admitted to the Lord's Table, nor into Church-fellowship.

If it againe be Objected; But are not all Baptized persons Church-members already by their Baptism?

Answ. No.

1. Papists and other notorious Heretics are Baptized.

2. And many in other Churches have cut themselves off from the Covenant by their notorious wickedness and prophaneness, Psalm. 50:16.

3. A Church Relapsed, with all the members of it, before they can be accepted with God in their Church-fellowship, are bound to renew their Covenant; which is, as it were, a new entering into Covenant the same which in effect is done with us.

4. Though
4. Though godly men Baptized members of a pure Church, are to be accounted Church members as long as they continue their habitation and election to that Church; yet several Baptized persons broken off from their several Churches, to which sometimes they did belong, and now meeting accidentally in one place, are not therefore one Church anew amongst themselves, unless they will imagine that Chimæra of an universal visible Church.

**Chap. II.**

*Touching Church. Officers, with their election and ordina-
tion.*

**Sect. I.**

The Church being thus gathered, as hath been described, our next care is that it may be supplied with all those Officers and members which Christ hath ordained to continue in his Church until his second comining, for they are all given for the edifying and perfecting of his body, untill we all grow unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, *Eph. 4:11, 12, 13.* The Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists, they still continue in their writings, to be Master-builders of the Churches in all ages, and therefore the Church is said to be built upon their foundation, that is, upon the foundation which they by their writings have laid, *Eph. 2:20.* but in their Successors in the same eminent calling they continue not: whence the Apostle speaketh of himself and Barnabas, as the Last Apostles, *1 Cor. 4:9.* And when the new Jerusalem (the Church of the Jews) commeth to be planted, it is not said to be planted by new Apostles, but by the former twelve Apostles of the Lambe, *Rev. 21:19.* to wit, by them, in respect of their Doctrine still left behinde them in their writings.

It remaineth therefore, that the ordinary Officers of the Church which are to continue to the coming of Christ Jesus, are either Elders, (whom the Apostle calleth also Bishops, *Tit. 1:5, 7. Act. 20. 27, 28.*) or Deacons; of Elders he maketh two sorts, one sort he calleth
calleth them that rule, the other them that labour in the Word; whether of Exhortation as the Pastors, or of Doctrine, as the Teachers, 2 Tim. 5:17. For the two sorts of ordinary preaching Elders, the Apostle calleth Pastors and Teachers, Eph. 4:11. And such several kinds of labouring in the Word, by the one in a word of Exhortation, by the other in a word of Doctrine, the Apostle expressly holdeth forth, Rom. 12:7, 8. He that teacheth (saith he) let him waite on teaching, and he that exhorteth on exhortation; which argueth a difference of their functions by the distinction of their proper or especial actions.

If it be said, the difference of those actions do not argue a diversity of functions, but both teaching and exhorting are co-incident to one and the same Office, as being several actions of several gifts, not of several Officers:

Answ. The contrary is evident from the Text, as may appear by three several reasons from the words of the Text.

Reas. 1. From the words which the Apostle useth, εἰτε διακονίαν, εἰτε ὁ παρακάλων, which do not distribute several gifts only, but several persons, to whom those several gifts are severally committed, according as the same Apostle distributeth the same divers sorts of gifts to the same divers sorts of persons, 1 Cor. 12:8. To one (saith he) is given a word of wisdom, (to wit, for direction of practice, whereto the Pastor attendeth) to another the word of knowledge (to wit, for direction of the judgement) whereto the teacher attendeth, and, both by the same Spirit, who distributeth to every man severally, ver. 11.

Reas. 2. Though office be one thing, and gift to discharge an office another, and the actions or exercise of every several gift doth not always argue a several office; yet in this place it is the scope of the Apostle to express the different offices, or functions of Pastors and Teachers by their different and proper acts; for here he speaketh of the divers members of the Church as of divers members of the naturall body, who having divers offices, or functions in the body, are to performe different proper actions, according to their different functions; as we having on my members (faith he) in one body (ver. 4, 5.) an all the members have not one office, (as the translator turneth it when the Originall saith, have not one action, or practise, but both expressing the same meaning;)

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so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another, having then (saith he, ver. 6.) different gifts (gifts comprehending both offices and grace) whether Prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith, or ministry, let us wait on our ministry, whether he that teacheth on teaching, or he that exhorteth on exhortation. And look then, as in the natural body, it being the action of the tongue to speak, it is his function and office to speak, and not to see: and it being the action of the eye to see, it is his function to see, and not to heare; So it is in the members of the body of Christ, it being the action of the teacher to teach, he is to attend unto teaching, not unto exhortation; and it being the action of the Pastor or Exhortor to exhort, he is to attend on exhortation, not on teaching.

Reas. 3. If the Apostle speak here onely of several actions or exercises of several gifts, but both co-incident to the same person and officer in the Church; why then doth he command the Teacher to wait on teaching? and the Exhorter to wait on exhortation? for he that performeth an action according to this gift, which is not peculiar to his office, but common to him with men of other offices, is never commanded, nor is it his duty to attend or wait on such an action. As if a man have a gift of love, or mercy, or liberalitie, and according to that gift be fit to performe an action of giving Almes, yet he is not commanded to attend or wait upon Almsgiving, unless it be his office as well as as gift?

Object. Attending, or waiting, is not expressed in the Original, but in the translation onely.

Answ. Though it be not expressed in the Original, it is necessarily intended, for either such a word as expresseth waiting, or at least the verbe substantive must needs be understood, which holdeth forth the same sense; He that teacheth, let him be teaching; he that exhorteth, let him be in exhortation; which is all one, as let him attend to it, let him make it his proper and constant work. So a like example in 1 Tim. 4:15. [[GREEK]], which is the same phrase, and which is fitly translated, Give thy self, wholly to them; the same with [[GREEK]], ver. 16. Continue or dwell in them.

And indeed experience sheweth, that teaching and exhorting are so far different one from another, and flow from such different gifts, that they are seldom found, at least in any eminency, both
both of them in one and the same person and therefore require several officers for the dispensing of them: you have many men of eminent dexterity for clear opening of a Text, for judicious gathering and handling sound Doctrine from it; and also acute and strong for conviction of a contrary error and heresie, who yet are very cold in exhortation; and on the other side, you have some very fervent in exhortation, who are very confused and general and common in teaching.

But besides this, the need of the Church, and the weight of both, the works of teaching and exhorting, calleth for several officers to attend to both, the explication of Scripture, and of the Principles and Doctrine of Religion solidly and distinctly, with the discussion of controversies, which are included in (\[\text{GREEK}\]) Doctrine and Reproof (2 Tim. 3:16.) well attended too, will take up the whole time and talents of a most judicious Divine; and on the other side, the direction and instruction of the people in matters of practice, the reformation of their manners, both in their private carriage, and in their families; as also in the Church and Commonwealth; and the stirringly up of men thereto, with the reproof of all disorders and abuses in life and conversation, which are included in \[\text{GREEK}\], instruction and correction, 2 Tim. 3:16. these well attended to, will take up the vigour and strength of the most prudent and vigilant Pastor of any Congregation. All which things considered, we have thought it needful to make use of the bounty of the Lord Jesus, to finish our Churches, (as we bless his Name, most of them be) with both these sorts of preaching Elders, Pastors and Teachers; nevertheless, he that is gifted for both these in any good measure, let him use both; yet attend principally on that, to which he is most eminently gifted and called.

Sect. II.

As for ruling Elders, the same Text of Scripture (Rom. 12:8.) speaketh as expressly for their distinct office also; for there speaking of the several members of the body of Christ (which is his Church) he directing them to attend to their proper work: as the Teacher to teaching, the Pastor to exhortation, the Deacon to give with
with simplicity, he directeth also the Ruler to rule with diligence: and who is that Ruler in the Church, but the ruling Elder? of whom the Apostle saith to Timothy, *The Elders that rule well are worthy of double honour, 1 Tim. 5:17.* But, as the wisdome of man is enmity to God; so the wisdom and wit of man hath found out many inventions and exceptions again every Scripture that holdeth forth this Ordinance.

"Object. 1. The Elders the Apostle here speaketh of, may be "rulers in the family, as Parents are rulers to children, husbands “to wives, Masters to servants.

Answ. The Church and family are two distinct bodies: the Apostle speaketh here not of the members of the families, (as such) nor of the functions and duties of family-members, but of the family of the Church, and of their functions and duties one towards another: His words are plain,(vers. 4, 5.) As we (saith he) have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. One body in Christ is not one family (in Scripture phrase) but one Church; and of this body of the Church, the members they be, whom Paul directeth to the due dispensing of their several functions and gifts; namely the publique officers of the Church, (Teachers, Pastors, Deacons and Elders,) to attend upon their proper work, teaching, exhausting, giving, ruling, vers. 6, 7, 8. and all the rest of the members to walk in such duties of love and purenesse, brotherly kindness and modesty, diligence and fervency, &c. as are requisite for every Christian, vers. 9. to the end of the Chapter.

"Object. 2. But Paul speaketh not of lay Elders ruling in the "Church, but of Rulers.

Answ. Neither do we acknowledge ruling Elders in the Church to be lay Elders properly; for to say nothing of the distinction between the Clergie and Laity, which is of a later edition then Apostolique times, the ruling Elders being ordained to the Office by the election of the people, and imposition of hands (as well as the preaching Elders) they are no more lay men, or private Christians, then the Teachers or Pastors are lay Ministers; and though the Pastor & Teacher be either of them Church-rulers, yet the Ruler is here distinguished from them, as a distinct member attending to his action of rule as his proper function.

"Object.
“Object. 3. Paul speaketh of severall gifts, not of publike offices in the Churches, for he speaketh of the severall powers and action of all the members of the body of Christ; now the officers of the Church, they alone are not the body of Christ, but all the multitude of believers; which of all these gifts in those times, was not common, as well to the people as to the Ministers, and to women as well as to men?

Answ. 1. Paul speaketh as well of publike officers as of particular gifts, as hath been shewed by three reasons above, out of the words of the Text. It is true indeed, hee speaketh of particular gifts also, not peculiar to any office, but common to all believers, from verse 9. to the end; but gifts are not the members of the body of Christ, but the persons indued with those spiritual gifts; neither can it be said, that all the members of the Church have all these gifts without manifest contradiction to the words of the Text, for then all the members had the same power to do all of them the same actions, which the Apostle expresly denieth, vers. 4. all the members (saith he) have not the same action, which is translated office; whence it is, that when hee speaketh of different offices, he divideth them by particles of partition, ãite, ãite, ãite, ãite, vers. 7, 8. and he injoyneth each office to attend his own function, but when he cometh to speak of the private members, and of the gifts common to them all, he neither maketh any partition of them into several sorts, nor bindeth then, to attendance on the employment or exercise of any special gift, as he doth the former.

But that as every truth, so every ordinance of God may be confirmed, by two or three witnesses; there be other Texts of Scriptures which bear witness to,

For ruling Elders, in 1 Cor. 12:28. the Apostle telleth the Corinthians, that God hath set in his Church severall members: as first Apostles; secondly Prophets; thirdly Teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Where government is expressly reckoned amongst these offices, which God hath set in his Church for the government thereof, long before it injoyed civill Magistracy, and therefore he meaneth spiritual government, or Church rulers.

Object. 1. But these governments are spiritual gifts, not spiritual offices or admistration.

Answ.
Answ. That they were gifts we willingly acknowledge, because all the offices and officers of the Church were given to the Church as well as the spiritual gifts and graces, whereby they do execute those offices; for so saith the Apostle, When Christ ascended upon high, hee gave gifts to men.

What gifts? some to be Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors, and Teachers, Eph. 4:8, 11. but yet governments, and all the rest there mentioned are spiritual offices, as well as spiritual gifts, as will appeare from the context; for the Apostle in this Chapter, putteth a manifest difference between spiritual,

1. Gifts and Graces, χαρίσματα, making he holy Ghost the giver of them, vers. 6.
2. Administrations, or Ministers or Officers, διακονίας making the Lord Jesus the giver and institutor of them, vers. 5. as he doth also, Ephes. 4:8, 11.
3. Operations, efficacies, or successes of their administrations, making the Father (the foundation of all power) the giver of them, vers. 6.

Now having spoken of the end for which spiritual gifts are given, vers. 7. hee reckoneth up nine of those several spiritual gifts, vers. 8, 9, 10. hee declareth them to be given to several members of the Church (not all to any one) that so every member might stand in need of the help and gifts one of another; and thus having discoursed of the variety of spiritual gifts and their use, he cometh in vers. 28. to 31. to declare the variety of spiritual administrations (that is, Ministeries or offices) which God hath set in his Church, and reckoneth up eight. First Apostles, secondarily Prophets, under whom your Evangelists are comprehended, as being of equall rank with them: thirdly Teachers, under whom he includeth Pastors also, the office of both whom, was to teach or praise in the Church; after that miracles, or as the word in the originall is, powers, to wit, to cast out Devils, or to do the like works; then gifts of healing, helps, (opitulations) that is, Deacons, governments (who else can they be but governing Elders for we heare of teaching Elders before;) lastly, the gifts of tongucs, true it is indeed, the Apostle reckoned up three of these before for spiritual gifts, χαρίσματα vers. 9, 10. Miracles, or powers, gifts of healing, kinds of tongues; but here he reckoneth them
them, not as spiritual gifts, and graces, for that were a tautology, and unsuitable to the method of his discourse, but speaketh of them as several functions or offices, wherein these gifts were exercised.

"Object. 2. But if these Governments were Officers or functions, "they were extraordinary, and so are now ceased, as gifts of "tongues, and healing, and miracles be.

Answ. Not so, for no offices are ceased, but such as had their chief use, not for believers in the Church, but unbelievers out of the Church; but governments are of perpetuall necessary use in the Church, even as teachers and helpers, unless we shall lay that Anarchy were fitter for a settled Church-government.

"Object. But why may not these Governors be the Pastors "in the Church, who have received an ordinary power of Go-vernment in the Church?

Answ. The order in which the Apostle reckoneth these govern-ments, will not suffer that; for here the Apostle reckoneth five several rankes, the former expressly precedent in order before the other; God (saith he) hath set in his Church; First, Apostles; second-ly, Prophets; thirdly, Teachers; after that Miracles, which is a fourth rank; then in the fifth place, gifts of healing, and helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Now if by Government, had been meant Pa-stors, he would not have reckoned them in a lower order; so far after Teachers, seeing they are of the same rank with them.

"Object. Why, but here helps or Deacons are set before Go-vernments; which argueth the Apostle did not regard to rank "them in due order.

Answ. It is evident by the words of order, which the Apostle useth, that he intendeth to reckon the foure first sorts in their due order, and the fift sort of them all in a latter order after the for-mer, though in a promiscuous manner, without respect of order amongst themselves; for so he saith; First, Apostles; secondarily, Prophets thirdly, Teachers; after them Miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, Governments, diversities of tongues. As Apostles are before Prophets, so are Prophets before ordinary teachers, the teachers before workers of Miracles, the Miracles before them that have the gifts of healing; for the gifts of healing follow after works of miracles, with a note of order, Then. But all those last foure, gifts of healing, helps, Governments, diversities of tongues, are reckoned without respect of order.
order amongst themselves. What order is due to them, is not expressed in this scripture, though it be in some other, (at least for some of them) but clære it it, all these last four sorts, are reckoned in order after the first four sorts.

"Object. 4. But it may be the Church, in which the Apostle saith all their members are set, is not meant every particular "Church, but the Catholic Church; for every particular Church "had not Apostles and Prophets.

Answ. It is true, every particular Church had not several Apostles, apart by themselves, nor was it needful they should, after that Churches were once planted, but every particular Church had need of his own Governors within it self, or else we shall make one Church subordinate to the Government of another, which is incompatible to the Church of the new Testament. The Lord having instituted and ordained, no particular Church, but the Church of a Congregation for the administration of his Ordinance, unto which Congregational Church he hath also appointed the same sort of Officers, without preferment of one before another.

"Object. 5. For human wisdom is pregnant and full of objections and exeptions against the ways and Ordinances of God, may be, say some, these Governors are no other but Arbitrators, which the Apostle biddeth the Corinthians set up in the Church for the deciding of differences amongst brethren, 1 Cor. 6:4. But now since God hath set up Christian Magiarates, there is no more need of such Arbiters to be chosen by each Church, to compound their difference.

Answ. These Arbiters in the Church had not place or office of Government, but of Counsell onely, to direct brethren in the judgment of right and wrong, equitie and inequitie; nor was such a power of such Arbitration any speciall gift for the Apostle thinketh every member of the Church, even the least capable enough of it, and sufficient for it. Nor is it well said, since God hath set up Christian Magistrates, there need no Arbiter to be set up in the Church, nor Church Goverours; For it is plain, the Apostle maketh it a fault or defect in the Church of Corinth, that any of their members went to law at all for such suites, as the least member of be Church, (if he were called to heart as the the case)
might arbitrate and determine and he maketh it a further fault, that they go to law under Infidels. Now therefore, saith he, there is utterly a fault among you, that brother goeth to law with brother, and that under Infidels, ver. 6, 7. The former is a defect of brotherly love, the latter is a neglect of the honour of Christ, and of his Church: and before Infidels. If brother goes to law with brother before Christian Magistrates, the latter of these faults is avoyded, but not the former. Neither may it be thought, as some have done, that the benefit of Christian Magistry taketh off the necessitie of Church-Government: For the government of the Church, is as the Kingdome of Christ is, not of this world, but spiritual and heavenly. The power of the keys is far distant from the power of the sword, and though one of them may need the helpe of the other, when they goe astray, yet when they are rightly ordered, and administred, the one of them doth not intercept, but establish the execution of the other.

A third witness to the office of ruling Elders in the Church, is that well knowne and much agitated Text in Timothy, 1 Tim. 5. 17. The Elders who rule well, are worthy of double honour; especially they who labour in Word and Doctrine. This text, though it have been much vext and rackt to look and speak another way; yet when all is done, it still giveth a clear and steadfast evidence to this office. The most learned Adversaries of this Ordinance would fasten four other interpretations of the place, and each of them (as they pretend) more pertinent to the scope and sense of the Apostles words, then this of ruling Elders.

"1. Say they, by ruling Elders may be meant Deacons; for the Apostle giving Timothy to understand, what manner of persons they be with whose maintenance the Chuch is to be charged, having before informed him of widows, now telleth him the "Deacons also are to be maintained, yea, and with a double portion above them, and either the Deacons are not to be maintai-"ned at all at the Churches charge, or else the Apostle provideth "for their maintenance in this place, of no where.

Answer 1. There is no man to be maintained at the Chuches charges, but eithe in respect of his present poverty and necessity, or in respect of his office, which calleth him off from attendance to the maintenance of his private family unto the publike service of D 2 the
the Church. In the former case, if it fall out that the Deacons be in necessity, they may be supplied with some maintenance from the Church, as well as any other of the poore brethren; and so, though this Text sayeth nothing concerning them, yet other Scriptures take care for them: for the Deacons, by the very institution of their office, were to take up the function which the Apostles laid down (as over troublesome, and incompatible to their Ministerial employment,) now that which they laid down, was the serving of tables, and distributing to every, brother according to his need Acts 6:2. with. 4:35. if the their own need require, they may with the Churches allowance, take themselves of that supply which they dispose to others. But in respect of their office, there is little cause they should expect maintenance from the Churches charge; for their office takes them very little off from attendance to the maintenance of their own family. Seeing by the Ordinance of Christ they spend no time to go in and out to collect monies, but only receive what is brought to them, as an oblation to the Lord, laid down before them every Lords day in the face of the Church, or else what is brought home to their own houses, according to the bills they put in on the Lords day; and look what time they may send in keeping a just account of what they lay out, or in visiting any sick or poore brethren, their time and labour spent herein is sufficiently recompenced by the use of the Churches flock, or treasury lying in their hands. Secondly, besides, this Text calles for maintenance to those Elders in respect of their office of ruling well, but neither are Deacons stiled Elders in any place of Scripture, neither is their office a place of rule, but of service to Tables; so that this Text will by no force be racked to bear this interpretation.

2. Another interpretation is fetched from that which is said to be the Proper and usuall force of the word κοπιάω which is more then simply to labour, even to weary a mans self with labour, so that this sense they make of the Apostles words, the Pastors or Elders that discharge their places well, are worthy of double honour, chiefly they which weary themselves with labour and care to teach and admonish.

Answ. Κοπιάω in the Apostles language, doth not note out any Intention or labour in some above others; but simply such pains, in a place somewhat parallel to this, 1 Thes. 5:12. Where the Apostle exhorteth
exhorteth the Thessalonians to acknowledge their Ministers and Rulers with singular love for their works sake, he calleth all their Ministers τούς κοπιῶντας, and maketh their κόπος, the common work and labour of them all, not any intensive or eminent labour of some above others; and in Rom. 16:12. when the Apostle speaketh of some godly women, that either took pains about him, or about other spirituall work, when hee speaketh of intensive or eminent pains and labour, he addeth another word to κοπιῶν, that may expresse so much but if he speake simply and positively of labour, he useth the word κοπιῶν alone, Salute (faith he, v. 12.) Tryphena and Tryphosa, τὰς κοπιῶσας ἐν κυρίῳ which is translated simply, who labour in the Lord; but when he speaketh of others, that took more painfull labour, salute Mary, vers. 6. (saith he) ἡτίς πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν εἰς ὑμᾶς, which bestowed much labour upon us, and vers. 12. salute the beloved ἡτίς πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν ἐν κυρίῳ, which is translated who laboured much in the Lord; and therefore in this Text in Timothy, if we strain not Pauls words beyond his wonted meaning, he means no more by Elders οἱ κοπιῶντες ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ, then such who labour in word & doctrine, and then he distinguisheth the Elders that rule well, from the Elders that labour in word & doctrine simply, by their different acts, about different objects, some Elders being conversant about the well ruling of the lies & manners of the people, others being conversant in labours about the word and doctrine.

3. A third interpretation is given of these words, That by Elders ruling well should be meant Pastors, and Teachers such as were resident and abiding in the Church, affixed to the place for the rule of it, and by κοπιῶντας, those that travelled from place to place, to visit and to confirm the Churches. To confirm this sense of κοπιῶν, the place, 1 Cor. 15:10. is quoted, where Paul saith of himself, περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα, which if he had meant of labour in Word and Doctrine, it might have seemed arragancy in him to profess himself before the rest of the Apostles in that work, and would have imputed some aspersion of negligence to them; but if it be meant of his labour and travel through many countreys and nations, for the spreading of the Gospel, so hee might speak truly, and soberly, that hee had laboured more abundantly then them all: to the same purpose, Mariæ κοπιῶν, and the labour of Tryphoea, Tryphosa & Persis are allledged out of Rom. 16:6. 12
as if the first had travelled much for Paul; and all of them had laboured in the Lord, in ways of travel, far and neer, by private persuasions to propagate the Gospell.

Answ. This interpretation indeed travelled for, and far fetcht, but such is our nature, willing enough to travel, far and wide, to avoid the authority of an unwelcome truth; how much nearer at hand and fitter were it, to fetch the Apostles meaning from himself, and to take the sense of his words here, according to the sense and use of the same words in a like place, 1 Thes. 5:12. where the Apostles κοπιῶντας, are not travellers abroad, but κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν, labourers amongst you. Their own Pastors, and Teachers, resident with them, and labourers amongst them. Pauls labouring more abundantly then all the rest of the Apostles, if it were not in word and doctrine, is impertinently alledged to shew the sense of the word in this place, where he speakes expressly of labouring in word and doctrine: Nor had it been arrogancy in Paul to have spoken of his own greater labours, then of his fellow-Apostles in the Ministry of the Gospel, without respect to his travels, for his Ministry was accompanied more then all the rest, with greater afflictions and wrastlings, both within and without, whether hee stayed in any place, or travelled abroad; and he might well think it necessary for him (as indeed the law of righteousnesse and gratitude required it of him) to take the more pains for Christ in preaching of the Gospel after his conversion, who had laboured more busilie then all the rest against Christ, and against the Gospel before his conversion; nor is κόπης, or κοπιάν an usuall word in that language, to expresse travelling to be more then any other labour either of body or mind.

The κόπης or labour of Mary doth not appear to be in travel up and down with Paul, but rather in some diligent hospitality and service unto him; but whether in travell, or in her house, is not at all expressed in the Word: Sure it is Paul denieth the taking of a sister or wife up and down in travel, though he acknowledged it lawful to have taken a wife, 1 Cor. 9:5. but to have taken a sister along, to have travelled up and down the countries with him, well be thought to be far from him, who was ever careful to follow things of good report, and to provide for things honest, not only in the sight of God, but of all men labours of Tryphena and
and Tryphosa, and Persis, do not imply travelling up and down, but rather their own wrastlings with spirituall conflicts, either in their own hearts, or else with other conflicting Christians in the places where they dwell, to settle them in the peace of the Lord Jesus, according to the same sense of the word, Matthew 11:28.

The 4th and last interpretation of these words in Timothy (which we see taketh with the most judicious amongst the adversaries of this Ordinance) is, that here not two sorts of Elders, but two parts of the office of preaching Elders are set forth: The one, good life and good government; and the other, good doctrine and painfulness therein; and this latter preferred before the other, as more worthy of due honour and recompence.

Now for answer hereunto, it may be considered, that good government, either of a mans life, or of the people, or as the Apostles words be, their ruling well, may either be taken properly and strictly, as rule is distinguished from ministry of the Word and Sacraments; or more largely for the whole office of a good Elder, Bené præesse, to be a good president. If to rule well, be taken in the former sense properly, then it acknowledgeth Elders that attend to rule, to be worthy of double honour, without respect to their labour, in the ministry of the Word, which is the sense of the place that we build upon c for if it should be said, that the Apostle speaketh of Ministers or Preachers, that they ruling well, are worthy of double honour, though they do not labour in Word and Doctrine; the wiser sorts of opposites do discerne that would not suite with the Apostles minde, who would be so far from thinking, that well ruling, but not painfull preaching Ministers should be worthy of double honour, that he would account them worthy of little or no honour at all. And they fitly quote for this purpose, the place before alledged, 1 Thes. 5:12. where when the Apostle calleth for singular love, and honour to their overseers, for their works sake, he putteth in there, Labouring amongst them (to wit, in the Word) without wch no such respect were due to them. They therefore take the Apostles words in the latter sense; understanding by well ruling, the whole office, even all the duties of good presidents: As if the Apostle had said, the Elders that rode well, that is, who are good rulers, and presidents, They are worthy of double honour; chiefly they who labour in preaching the Word. And they “give
“give for example this instance: Logicians, who reason well, that is, all good Logicians, are to be honoured, especially those who judge well, or are judicious; where, not two sorts of Logicians are held forth, but two duties or faculries of all Logicians, in respect of which they are to be honoured; the one generall to reason well, the other special to judge well; and these disposed, not in a distribution, but in a comparative sentence, preferring the later before the former.

Answ. But neither will this settle stand with the Apostles words and meaning: for hereupon this absurdity would follow, that if well-ruling in the former part of the sentence, held forth generally all the duties of good Ministers, and labouring in word and doctrine, (in the later part) one special part of their office, then the other, good Ministers, for doing all. Neither doth the instance given of Logicians help: for it may be truly said of Logicians; that Logicians who reason well, that is, all good Logicians, are worthy of honour, especially they who are judicious, because if they only reason well in invention, though they be not judicious, yet such also are commendable. But its not truly said of Ministers, that if they rule well, that is, do their office well in Discipline and Rule, though they labour not in word and Doctrine, that they are commendable; but otherwise, if Logicians, be good as well in judgement as in invention, and so perform both the parts of their art well; it may be said indeed, that they are commendable and honourable, but it cannot be said without absurdity, that such as are judicious are more commendable, or chiefly to be honoured above those that are both ingenuous and judicious, both parts are doubtlesse better then either alone: neither will the absurdity be helped by saying Logicians that reason well, both in invention and in judgement, are worthy of honour, or double honour, especially they that excel in judgement; for though speech be rationall, yet the like cannot be applied in this Text: for it is not said in the Text, the Elders that rule well are worthy of double honour, especially they that excel in preaching, which labour doth not hold forth excellency (as hath been shewed before, but only positively and simply pains taking, in preaching, the common act and work of all good Ministers, 1 Thes. 5:12. The issue of all is, that when men of learning and judgement have wearied their wits and strength, to shoulder out ruling Elders, from
from this Text, yet such is the evidence and wisdom of the holy
Ghost, in the word, that it may well appeare, the weaknesse of
God is stronger then men, and the foolishnesse of God wiser then
men; the words cannot but approve two sorts of Elders, and both
worthy of double honour, both they that *rule well*, though they
labour not in preaching, and especially they that do *labour in preach-
ing*; but this interpretation will by no means satisfie some of a con-
trary judgement, for three reasons, to speak nothing of the fourth,
the pretended probability of other interpretations, which have
been refuted already.

"First say they, the Text it self clearly renounceth non-preach-
ing Elders; for both sorts of Elders spoken of, are expressly ac-
knowledged in the Text to be worthy of double honour, that is,
"not reverence only, but maintenance at the charge of the Church;
"but that non-preaching Elders should by God's institution have
"received maintenance at the Churches hand, is a thing so strange,
"and unheard of, that untill I see it justly proved, (saith B. Bilson)
"I cannot possibly believe it.

*Answ.* It is very true, the Apostle by double honour, doth not
mean reference only, but maintenance; But why should it seem
so strange a thing, and unheard of, that ruling Elders, though
not Preachers, should partake in maintenance from the Churches
treasury do you think such men speake in good earnest, when
they so speak? Whence have the Chancellors, Commissaries, and
Officialls their maintenance, but from the Church? and do they
labour in word and doctrine? are not most of them Civilians?
and if we may use the word without offence, meer Lay-men? but
our ruling Elders, we utterly deny them to be Lay-men as the
word is commonly meant in this controversie; but Church-offi-
cers set apart to their office by the election of the people, and by im-
position of hands: but if they were Lay-men (which they are not)
yet you see it is no strange or unheard of matter, that Churches
should be bountifull to the maintenance of sundry sorts of Church
Rulers, who are meerly Lay-men, as their adversaries miscon-
ceive these to be; yea, what were the many Cloysters of Munks, and
Friers and Nuns, in the times of Popery? were they Preachers of the
Word? were they not Lay-men& women? and yet did the Churches
of those times grudge them their maintenance upon pretence of
their
that laity? But the world will love his own; be there never so many idle Droans, or statey Rulers of man’s own devising, the Church must supply them not only with maintenance, but with magnificence; but let the Lord appoint ruling Elders, according to the simplicity of the Gospel, to assist his Ministers in the work of government, that they might attend the more to labour in the Word, if they shall expect from the church any maintenance for their works’ sake, Oh! that seemeth a strange matter, and unheard of from all antiquity, till this present age.

“The second Reason why lay Elders, (as they miscall them) ruling Elders (as we with Paul call then) are not meant; in Paul’s Text, is because Paul mentioning the Presbyters but once in all his Epistles, excludes all lay Elders from that Presbytery, Neglect not (saith he) the grace which is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with imposition of the hands of the Presbytery, 2 Timothy 4:14. This Christian Presbytery gave imposition of hands to ordain Ministers; but lay Elder had no right to impose hands to that purpose; therefore Lay-men were none of this Presby-try; for the Presbytery be taken for the company of Elders, none were of that company but such as might give imposition of hands; or, if Presbytery be taken for the office of an Elder, then none might take that function on him, but must receive imposition of hands, as Timothy did, then Lay-men which neither give nor receive imposition of hands, are wholly de-barred both from the degree, and from the society of the Presbytery, that was in Paul’s time.

Our answer consisteth of three points:
First, Lay Elders we disclaim, but ruling Elders, though not attending to preaching, as they have their election from the people who are the body of the Church; so are they ordained & set apart from amongst the people by imposition of hands of the officers of the Church, who are the Presbytery, the company of Elders: for by Presbytery, we conceive cannot be there meant the office of an Elder, for he speaketh of such a Presbytery, as laid on hands: now it is not the office of an Elder, but the company of Elders, that lay on hands.

Answer 2. When it is said, no man can give what he hath not received; the light of Nature, the law of Moses, the Gospel of Christ,
Christ, do all of them make a ready answer for us. The law of Nature tells us, It is not necessary, that they that give should always formally have before-hand received that power which they give; it is enough if they have received it virtually: For instance, a multitude of free people may elect and ordain a King over them, and yet none of them had before-hand received kingly power; it is enough they have a virtual power, to set up and to submit unto any lawful form of government, which they see good for themselves in the land. The people of Israel (to wit, some in the name of the rest, for all could not at once) impose their hands upon the Levites, Numbers 8:10. and yet they were not Levites themselves, nor had received imposition of hands themselves, and yet may nevertheless impose hands upon others. In the Gospel of Christ, the power of the Keys is given to the Church, to Peter, not as an Apostle, nor as an Elder, but as a professed believer; in the name of believers, and upon occasion of the profession of his faith, Matthew 16:16. to 19. whereupon the binding and loosing (which is the power of the Keys) is attributed to the whole Church, Matthew 18:17,18. If then the power of the Keys which is the whole body of Church-power, be given to the body of the Church, though it be not in their power to exercise their pastoral preaching of the Word, and administering of the Sacraments, yet it is in their power to elect such whom God hath furnished with gifts among them unto such offices as may dispense all the holy things of God to them; and by imposition of hands, to dedicate them to God, and to the public service of his Church. Now if the whole Church have this power to impose hands upon their officers, in their first ordination, how can it seem a strange and unheard of thing, or an absurd matter, that ruling Elders should together with the Pastor and Teachers, (all of them making up the Presbytery of the Church) impose hands in the name of the Lord, and of the Church upon the ordained?

Answer 3. Besides there be that conceive, and that not improbably, that in ancient time, the children baptized in the Church were not received to the Lord’s Supper, nor into the full fruition of all Church liberties, untill that they being grown up to yeers, did publicly before the Church profess their faith, and ratify the covenant made for them in Baptism, and so were confirmed (as they call
call it) in their Church-estate, which was not done without *imposition of hands*, which some judicious Divines have conceived to be one cause, why imposition of hands is reckoned as one of the six Principles of the foundation of Christian Religion, Hebr. 6:2. For it could not be a principle of the foundation of Christian faith; it must therefore be a principle of the foundation of Church estate and order. Now then, if all the members of the Church were anciently confirmed in the full fruition of their Church estate by *imposition of hands*, then there were none of the members of the Church, but had received *imposition of hands*, much more the ruling Elders, who were over and above the former, ordained to their public office by *imposition of hands*; and so having received *imposition of hands* themselves, they might the more freely impose hands upon others.

3. The third Reason, which moveth the adversaries of ruling Elders to conceive that ruling Ethers are not intended in this Text “of Timothy, is, because that many, learned and ancient Divines have debated and sifted the force of these words, and not one of them ever so much as surmised any such thing to be contained in this Text: as Chrysostome, Jerome, Ambrose, Theophylact, with others, yea, all Lay-eldership is a stranger to all Antiquity for 1500. yeers.

Answ. Though with thankfulness and reverence we readily acknowledge and accept the Labours of these ancient Divines, yet we cannot but conceive it to be much partiality, to say they sifted, or which is all one, diligently searched, the force of these words in Timothy, and that they never so much as surmised any such thing contained in this Text, as ruling Elders for; Chrysostom on “this place, putting the question, what it is to rule well? An-swereth him self, in two things: first, in laying down (as a good Shepheard) his life for his sheep: secondly, in sparing none in his government. Tleophylact resteth in the former of these; Jerome interpreteth Elders that rule well, to be Elders who fulfill their of-fice; Ambrose interpreteth them to be good Dispensers, and faithful. Here is nothing in all these expressions that argueth any diligent sifting of the force of the words, or excludeth such ruling Elders, as do attend chiefly to rule, not to teaching we look upon it as a deceitful and vain-glorious flourish, to beare the world in hand, that Lay Eldership is a stranger to all Antiquitie for 1500. years; deceitful,
deceitful, for they know we disclaim Lay Eldership, (properly so called) as themselves do; yea more then themselves, who do prefer Lay Elders to the highest places of Judicature its the Church, next to the Bishops: For though some of the Brethren plead for Lay Elders, and bring proofs for them, both from Scripture, and out of Aniquity, yet herein they rather speak after the language of their opposites, then according to their own choice; for they mean no more then non-preaching Elders: And in the places which they quote for them out of Antiquity, wherein Seniors are sometimes distinguished from Presbyters, sometimes from Clerus, the words Presbyters and Clerus, are there taken more strictly then their proper and usual meaning will bear, to wit, for Preaching Presbyters otherwise Seniors cannot be distinguished from Presbyters, in propriety of speech the one signifying the same in Latin, which the other cloth in Greek: nor can they be distinguished from Clerus, but by a καταχρησίας. It is also a vain-glorious flourish to avouch Ruling Elders strangers to all Antiquity, for 1500 years; for, 1. If that were true, yet it will not evince Ruling Elders to be no ordinance of God, though so long ditiontinned: The keeping the feast of Tabernacles in booths, was neglected of the Church of Israel many hundred years; to wit, during the greatest part of the Assyrian Monarchy, and also the whole time of the Babylonian Monarchy, yea toward the end of the Persian Monarchy, Nehemiah 8:17. The long disuse of an ordinance of God, doth not make it of none effect; though a contrary custom may be of force to abrogate an human Law. 2. It was revealed to the Apostle John, that for the space of 1260 years, (which whencesoever they began, took up the greatest part of these 1500.) Antichrist bore such sway in the Church, that he trod under foot the Court and the holy City all that while, Revelation 11:2,3. And then when Antichrist had all the power in his owns hands, no marvel if he took away all power from the Rulers, which Christ did ordain in his Church, especially such Rulers, who whilst they stood, neither his Rule, nor the Image of it, could enter or stand. For set up Ruling Elders in every Congregation to transact (together with the preaching Elders ) all Church government within the Congregation, and what use will there be of preferments, of Officers of Cathedral and Diocesan Churches abroad? And for the former part of this 1500 years (which
(which is but a small remnant in comparison) 300 years were spent in the Primitive persecutions, whereof we have few monuments of Antiquity extant, written in that time; those we have "speak so of Elders, as do indifferently comprise as well Ruling Elders, as Teaching Elders; Ignatius his Presbyters, whom he styleth the Court of God, the Combination of the Apostles of Christ, the holy, Assembly, and Counsellors and Assessors of the Bishops; with all these Epithets may as well agree to Ruling Elders, as to Preachers: The Scripture doth not disdain to admit Civil Magistrates into the fellowship of God's Tabernacle, Psalm 82:1. And why not then the Rulers of his Church? For Tertullian his Elders, who were Presidents over the Censures of the Church, and attained that honour, not by Bribes, but by approved Testimony, Apologetic. Chap. 29. what is there in his whole description of them, but is compatible to Ruling Elders, as well as to Preaching? Yea Cyprian (who lived in those ancient bloody, but zealous times) doth expressly acknowledge Elders that were not Preachers: For it evidently appeareth in the fifth Epistle of his fourth Book, that he ordained Calinus and Auncellus to be Presbyters of his Church, who were no Preachers but readers only; and yet were to be maintained Sportulis communi-bus, (that is, at the common charge of the Church) with the Presbyters, and to sit with himself in their grown years. It appeareth also in the tenth Epistle of his fourth Book, That he ordained Numiditus a Confessor, to be a Presbyter of his Church, who was not at first called to be a Preacher. Ambrose, though he out-lived those times of purer government, yet beareth full witness to the honorable use of Ruling Elders in the Church before his time; for in his Comment on 1 Timothy 15:1. giving a reason why the Apostle would have Elders in years honoured, even in the healing of their faults, he urgeth the honour of old age in all Nations. Whence saith he, it was that the Synagogue, and afterwards the Church had Elders, without whose Counsel nothing was done in the Church: which by what negligence is grown out of use in the Church, I know not, unless by the sloth of Teachers, or rather pride, whilst they only would seem to be somewhat. Against this testimony, because it is pregnant, sundry exceptions (or rather evasions) are taken. As 1. That the Author of this Testimony was not that ancient Ambrose, the famous Bishop of Milan, but some other later of that name Answer:
Answer. And what though? yet all men acknowledge this other Ambrose, whose Testimony this is, to be an ancient learned Writer, and therefore his Testimony of the Antiquity of Ruling Elders, is sufficient to silence that charge and brave flourish, that Ruling Elders are utterly unknown, and unheard of from all Antiquity for 1500 years. A second Exception they give, is that Ambrose speaketh not of Elders in Office, but in years, without whose Counsel, not without whose authority nothing was done in the Church.

Answer 1. It is evident he speaketh of the Elders in the Church, as in the Synagogue; now the Elders were Rulers in the Synagogues, as appeareth by sundry places in the Gospel. 2. That nothing was done without their counsel, implyeth, that nothing was done without their authority, as the same phrase of other Ancients imply, when they speak of the concurrence of the Counsel of Presbyters in Church-government; for in that sense speaketh Cyprian to his Presbyters, (Epistolarum lib. 3. Epist. 10.) A primordio Episcopitus mei, I determined with myself, nihil sine consilio vestro & sine consensu plebes meâ privatim sententia gerere, that not out of courtesy, but as the words in the next sentence implies, Sicuti honor mutus posuit. And in the same sense Jerome’s words to the like purpose implies Authority in such Counsels, whereby the Presbyters of each Church governed their own Church; though otherwise in governing other Churches, they imply rather advice than authority: his words are before factions and schisms grew in the Church Communi Presbyterorum consilio Ecclesiæ gubernabant Hierome in the 2. Tome of his works, and upon Titus. A third exception they give is, that by Elders are meant preaching Elders, whom the Bishop were wont to consult withal, in government, but now had left it off, either by the idleness of the learned Teachers, who for their own ease gave over meddling with matters pertaining to government, or by the pride of the learned Bishops, who took all upon themselves, that they alone might seem to be somewhat; For if you expound Pastorum for the Teachers or Pastors of Parishes only, as the Presbyterians do; or for Bishops alone, as others do; I cannot see (saith Dr Downham) how the excluding of Seniors and taking the whole burthen and employment upon themselves, could by Ambrose be imputed as a matter of sloth and idleness, either in the Pastor to exclude lay Elders, or in Bishops to exclude learned
“learned Presbyters. Ans. 1. The words of Ambrose do plainly imply, not only that consulting with Elders was grown out of use, but that the Elders themselves, who were wont to be consulted with, were grown out of use also: for his words be, the Synagogue, and afterwards the Church had Elders, without whose counsel nothing was done in the Church, &c. which plainly intimateth, the Church formerly had such, but then hath them not, they are obsolete, and accordingly consulting with them is obsolete also. 2. It is plain these Elders are, opposite to Doctors or Teachers, or (if you will so construe them) learned men, and therefore these Elders were neither Doctors nor Teachers, nor Learned men. But to appropriate the name of Doctors or Teachers, or Learned men to Bishops only, were too great an arrogancy in Bishops, and too great an injury to the learned Pastors and Teachers in every age, till Antichrist his darkness overwhelmed all in ignorance, as well Bishops as Pastors. 3. It may be marvilled, why those learned opposites, that make this exception should understand Ambrose to attribute it to the idleness of the Teachers, that for their own case they gave over meddling in matters appertaining to government, when as rather it was the Bishops and their parties idleness, that they gave over labouring in Word and Doctrine, and their pride, that they ingrossed all rule and government into their own hands; and therefore, when they say, they cannot see how the excluding of Seniors, and the taking of the whole burthen of government upon themselves, could by Ambrose be imputed as a matter of sloth and idleness, either in the Pastors or Bishops; surely, if men do not willingly shut their eyes, they may see and, daily experience maketh it palpably evident, that they who are most idle in teaching, are most busy and proud in government; so that the Doctorum desidia, aut magi superbia, which Ambrose maketh to be the two causes why Seniors in the Church, and consulting with them, were then both of them grown out of use, need no Comment to expound the same, but the perpetual practice of those persons, who have from the former ages, to this very day, usurped all Church-government into their own hands.

If any man say (as some have done) that whatsoever this Ambrose saith, yet that famous Bishop Ambrose doth utterly disclaim it, in his Epistle to Valentinian, that any lay Ruler should be Judge of Church-
Church-offices and causes; let him take for an answer that which hath been often given; that we utterly deny those ruling Elders to be Lay-men, or lay Judges, but part of that Church body which those ancient times called Clerus. If it be said again (as also it is) that Ambrose calleth his Presbyters, Antistites, and Vicars of God, and such like full of high honour, let them understand, that the least office of rule in the Church of God, (to a spiritual eye) will easily and safely admit as great acknowledgements as these be; onely to flesh and blood nothing seemeth divine and high but secular pomp and worldly glory.

Having thus rescued the Testimony of Ambrose unto Ruling Elders from all Exceptions (of any colourable weight) made against it; Let us add only one observation out of Antiquity, which may give some further light to the cause in hand. It is well known to all such as are studious of Antiquity, that it was counted a rare and insolent matter for an Elder to preach in the presence of a Bishop, which was the cause why the good old Bishop Valerius was hardly spoken of, for suffering Augustine, a Presbyter (though a learned Presbyter) to preach before him; which is said never any African Bishop had allowed before him. Now whence should such an offence as was taken against Valerius arise, but from translating the silence of Ruling Elders from Preaching in the presence of Pastors and Teachers, unto those Presbyters also, who were called oft to preach the Word freely and diligently as well as the Bishop themselves? But when through corruption of times, Bishops claimed to themselves the principal pastoral cure of Souls, then it was taken for an offensive matter, that Teaching Elders should preach before them; as before it was unwonted for Ruling Elders to preach before the Teaching ordinarily.

Object. But there remains one objection or two; which some learned and prudent men have made against the office of Ruling Elders,

Object. 1. It is not credible that the office of Ruling Elders should be of Divine or Apostolical Institution, and no footsteps left of it in any Church of Christ, for these many hundred years. Popery it self, though it corrupted all Ordinances, yet retaineth some footsteps of every Ordinance of Christ, though much perverted
from the first Institution: But there are no footsteps at all of those Ruling Elders extant, in any Church, but those of Genevah, and such as have followed their pattern. For though some tell us of Church-Wardens and Vestry men in the Parish Churches of England, who assist the Preachers in the governing of the Church, yet there is a great difference between them and Ruling Elders; For these Church-wardens and Vestry men, are appointed not for assistance to the Ministers in governing the Church, but for other purposes: As Church-Wardens for keeping the Churches stock, and laying it out upon necessary repairs of the place of God’s Worship, (called the Church) and the Vestry being a company of the wisest and richest Parishioners, that have been, or are to be Church-Wardens, are exercised in auditing the accompts of the Church-Wardens and Collectors for the poor. And though now and then they are taken not by Authority, as Rulers, but by Christian discretion and charity.

Answ. We do not say, that Church-Wardens and Vestry men, are the same with Ruling Elders; for though they are both chose by the body of the Church, yet in the choice, the qualifications of Ruling Elders are not attused to; nor are they so ordained, either with the like holy Solemnity, or invested with the same measure of spiritual power, nor allowed to continue for life, as Ruling Elders are, and ought to be; But yet such as they be, we may see in them some footsteps and remnants, (and as it were Rudera) of that holy and ancient Ordinance, so much as is escaped out of the ruins of Antichristian Apostacy: For to say nothing of Chancellors, Commissaries, and Officials, (who are mere Lay Elders, and yet administer Church-Government, not in one Church only, but in many scores of Churches,) what other thing soundeth the very name of Church-Wardens, Guardiani Ecclesiae, but Church-Guardians, or Church-Rulers? And what is the company of Vestry men, but a kind of Consistory?

Secondly, Though by the Sophistry of Satan and of his Vicar (the man of sin) a great part of this care is transformed from ordering the spiritual body of the Church, to take care of the body of the material Church or Temple, yet what power of Government is left in any Congregation (besides Preaching the Word) the Church-
Church-Wardens and Vestry men do assist the Ministers in managing the same: they observe all scandalous disorders, that are found in any of the Church-Ministers or people, they admonish the offenders: And though they be over-rulers to present all disorders to the Cathedral Church (and the Officers thereof) which of right they should complain of (when the offenders are incorrigible) only to their own Congregation, yet it is an usual thing for the Bishop, and his Officers, to return such offenders (having first paid them their fees) to the Minister, and Church-Wardens, to make acknowledgement of their offences before them, and to profess their amendment, of which also they must bring a Certificate under the Minister and Church-Wardens hands. Yea, (of our knowledge) there be some peculiar priviledged Churches in England, exempted from the jurisdiction of the Bishop, and his Officers, where the Church-Wardens, and Ministers, either by themselves, or with the consent of the Congregation, do transact all that Government, which in other Churches the Bishop and his Officers do invade and usurp as to admonish offenders, to enjoin acknowledgement of scandalous offences, and to debar from the Sacraments, &c. And by this means they repress idleness, drunkenness, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, and the like disorders, with better success then other Towns can do; who have the help of Major and Justices, but not so much spiritual power in the Church: but by that power which is still left in some Churches unto their Ministers and Guardians, (or Rulers) it may not obscurely appear, that anciently they did enjoy it amongst themselves, before one Church began to Lord it over another.

Object. The other Objection which is made against Ruling Elders is, That it is a matter of perilous consequence to let up Rulers in the Church, and that by Authority from the Word of God, when yet the Word hath no where set forth the limits and bounds of their Authority.

Answ. The word of God hath clearly enough limited the bounds of a Ruling Elders Calling, and the work of his Rule: For since all Ecclesiastical power, is the power of the keys; (not of the Sword, Matth. 16:19.) And, the Kingdom of Christ is not of this world, Joh. 18:36. It is plain, no Church-Governor may take up the power of the sword, to wit, Civil Jurisdiction, without usurpa-
usurpation; The power of the sword is *Princely, Lordly*; But the power of the *Keys* is only *Stewardly* and *Ministerial*; For so it is said, the *keys of the House of David to Eliakim*, Isa. 22:22. And, *he was over the House*, Ver. 15. Which phrase of *being over the House*, is translated properly, *Gen*. 43:19. *Steward of the House*, Seeing then the Kingdom of Christ is *spiritual*, and not *worldly*, the *Government* of his Kingdom is not *Lordly*, but *Stewardly* and *Ministerial*, evident it is that these *Ruling Elders* in the Church, may only attend to works of spiritual and *ministerial Rule*: And further, because such acts of *spiritual Rule*, as are dispensed in the *preaching of the Word*, the *Ruling Elders* are not called to attend unto, but that work is left unto *Pastors* and *Teachers*; Therefore plain it is, that what acts soever of *spiritual Rule* and *Government*, Christ hath committed to his Church over and above the *Ministry of the Word and Sacrament*: All such acts of *Rule* are committed to the *Ruling Elders*, and none but such.

To Instance then in the particular duties of the *Ruling Elders* Office: The *Ruling Elders* having received the keys of Christ's House, as his *Stewards*; it doth belong to their Power.

1. *To open and shut the doors of Christ's House or Church*; that is, to admit and receive all members and Officers into place in the Church, (with the consent of the Church) and to keep out the unworthy: Hence Ministers are said to be ordained and admitted into office by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, 1 *Tim*. 4:14. And if Ministers be admitted through their hands into office in the Church, how much more private members after due trial.

2. If they have power to open the doors of the Church, by admitting officers and other members into the Church, and keeping out the unworthy, (shutting the doors against them) Then they have also power (with the consent of the Church, and their fellow-*Elders*, as in the former) to cast out of the Church by Excommunication such as fall into scandalous offences within the Church, and do persist therein; For *Ejusdem potestasis est destituere cujus est instituere*, The same keys that have power to open the doors, have power to shut it.

3. As it is the office of a *Steward* in a family, so it is of the *Elders* in the Church, To see that none live Inordinately, without a calling,
ling, or idly in a calling, but every one employed and set a work to his Lords advantage, 2 Thes. 3:10, 11, 12.

4. As a Steward in the family is not to suffer any members in the family to hinder his fellows in his Lords work, so neither ought the Ruling Elder to suffer any to walk scandalously in the Congregation; for that hindereth edification, which is the work that each one in his place is to set forward in the house of God: And the Church-Rulers are to attend to see it done accordingly.

5. It is the Ruling Elders office to prepare matters for the Congregation, as much as may be, to prevent their trouble, by keeping out such complaints, and other matters, as are not yet ripe for the Churches cognizance; And by ordering such things as are to be presented to them; Paul consulteth with the Elders as well as with the Apostles at Jerusalem, before he presented himself to the agitation of the Church, Act. 21:18. to 24.

6. It belongeth to the Ruling Elders (as well as to the Teachers) to moderate the carriage of all matters in the Congregation Assembled, as to call on Strangers of other Churches or members to speak upon occasion, Act. 13:15. And such as may call men forth to speak, may call for silence when speech is unseasonable.

7. Those Elders of Ephesus, whom Paul sent for, to wit, both the Teaching and Ruling Elders, (Acts 20:17.) those he commands to feed the flock of God, ver. 28. which implieth they should be able, not only to rule, but to in instruct the people, though not by attending to a word of Exhortation, (which is the Pastors office) nor by attending to a word of doctrine, (which is the Teachers office) yet by attending to a word of Admonition; For the Apostle maketh Admonition the work of them that are over the Church in the Lord, 1 Thes. 5:12. that is, that Rule over them. The same word which is ascribed to Ruling Elders, (1 Tim. 5:17.) whom he joineth with those that labour in word and doctrine in both places. And indeed Rule without counsel and instruction is dumb. Thus all Elders are apt to teach, according to 1 Tim. 3:5.

8. It is a part of their office (though it be not theirs alone) to visit the sick, (especially when they are sent for) and together with some counsel and admonition to pray for them, and to help forward their spiritual estate as John 5:14, 15, 16.

We
We have been the more large, in clearing the several sorts of these *Elders*, which Christ hath ordained in his Church, because we find Satan hath been very busy to let the wits of men awork, both to confound the several Functions of the *Pastor* and *Teacher*, and utterly to abandon the office of a *Ruling Elder*.

Now for *Deacons*, which are the other ordinary Officers, ordained by Christ for the perpetual service of the Church: All men do acknowledge them both to be Instituted expressly in the Scriptures, (*Acts* 6:2. to 6:1 *Tim.* 3:8. to 13.) and continued in the Church throughout all ages, though not without sundry mixtures of corruptions in the practise of the Church, which is impertinent to our purpose to prosecute, who only intend to declare and clear our own practise and proceedings.

*Deacons* therefore we reserve in our Churches, but without distinction of pre-eminence of some of them above others: much less over the Ministers and *Elders*: Neither do we imploy them about the Ministry of the Word, nor about the Government of the Church; For the Apostles thought themselves unmeet, both to attend to the Ministry of the Word, and to prayer, and to serve Tables also; And therefore the work which the Apostles laid down, and which the *Deacons* were elected and ordained to take up, was the serving of Tables, *Act.* 6:2. to wit, the serving of all those Tables which pertained to the Church to provide for, which are, the Lord's Table, the Tables of the Ministers (or *Elders*) of the Church, and the Tables of the poor Brethren whether of their own body, or strangers; for the maintaining whereof, we do not appoint them to go up and down to collect the Benevolences of abler Brethren, but as the Apostles received the oblations of the Brethren, brought and laid down at their feet, (*Acts* 4:35.) and thereby made distribution as the χαρία use of the Church required; so the *Deacons* being ordained to take up and execute that part of the office which the Apostles laid down; they receive the Oblations of the Brethren every Lords day, brought unto them and laid down before them, or else brought unto them on the week day, and distribute the same, as the use and need of the Church doth require.

**Sect. III**
SECT. III.

As for Widows, whom Paul speaketh of, as Servants to the Church, (2 Tim. 5:9, 10.) we look at them as fit Assistants to the Deacons, in ministering to the sick poor Brethren in sundry needful sevices, which are not so fit for men to put their hands unto: only we find it somewhat rare to find a woman of so great an age (as the Apostle describeth, to wit, of threescore years) and withal, to be so hearty, and healthy, and strong, as to be fit to undertake such a service.

SECT. IV.

Having thus declared what are the Officers we desire to supply each of our Churches withal, we come now to declare in what manner they are Chosen and Ordained into their Offices.

When therefore any of the Churches are destitute of any of these Officers, the Brethren of the Church (according to the Apostles advice, in defect of Deacons, and so in defect of all other Officers) they look out from amongst themselves, such persons as are in some measure qualified according to the direction of the Word; Elders according to 1 Tim. 3:2. to 7. Tit. 1:6. to 9. Deacons according to Acts 6:3. 1 Tim. 3:8. to 12. For the Church hath not absolute power to choose whom they list, but ministerial power only, to choose whom Christ hath chosen, hath gifted and fitted for them. If the Church can find out none such in there own body, they send to any other Church for fit supply, and each Church lookth at it as their duty to be mutually helpful one to another, in yielding what supply they may, without too much prejudice to themselves, according to Cant. 8:8, 9. Such being recommended to them for such a work they take some time of trial of them, partly by their own observation and communion with them, partly by consultation with the Elders of other Churches (continuing there) in so great a work; to fulfil the command of the Apostle Lay hands suddenly on no man, 1 Tim. 3:22. For every man of good gifts is not always endowed with an honest and good heart.
heart; every good heart is not fitted to close (so fully as were meet) with every good people: Every key is not fit to open every Lock; nor every good mans gift fit to edify every people: But when upon trial, the Church doth find every mans spirit among them desirous of the fellowship of the man, and his gifts; then they agree amongst themselves upon a certain day, wherein in a solemn manner they intend to Elect him to office amongst themselves. Of this they give notice to all the near adjoining Churches, whom, and when, and to what office they intend to choose such a man, whom they nominate to them, intreating their presence, and brotherly counsel, and assistance at the day appointed: They give notice also thereof unto the Governor, and such other of the Magistrates, as are near to them, that the person to be chosen meeting with no just exception from any, may find the greater encouragement and acceptance from all.

When the day is come, it is kept as a day of humiliation, with fasting, praying, and preaching the Word, according to the pattern, Act. 4:23. & 13:1, 2, 3.

Towards the end of the day, one of the Elders of the Church (if they have any) if not, one of the graver Brethren of the Church, (appointed by themselves to order the work of the "day) standeth up and inquirith of the Church, If now after this "solemn seeking of God for his counsel and direction in this "weighty work, they still continue in their purpose, to elect "a one for their own Pastor, or Teacher, or Ruling Elder, whom be-"fore they agreed upon; Then having taken their silence for a consent to their purpose, He proceedeth to inquire into the appro-"bation of the rest of the Assembly, not only the Messengers, and Brethren of other Churches present, but of all that stand by; be-"cause an Elder is to be a man of good report of them that are without (1 Tim. 3:7.) how much more well approved of the Churches "Of Christ? He demandeth therefore of the Churches first, and "then of the rest, whether any of them have known of any evil, "in the man presented before them, either in judgement, or "practice, which might give them just cause to forbear his ele-
"tion? If all keep silence (as usually they do, for if any have any just exception against the man, he is wont to acquaint some or o-
thor of the Church with it before the day) he turneth himself to the
the Church again. Now seeing all is clear for their free election of him to such an office, he desireth all the Brethren of that Church, to declare their Election of him with one accord, by lifting up their hands; which being done, he desireth to know of the party chosen, whether he doth accept of that calling, which the Church hath given him in the name of Christ unto that office? He having expressed his acceptance (upon such grounds, as wherein he hath chiefly seen the hand of God leading him thereunto,) the Elder, doth then admonish the Church what duties the Lord requireth of them all in his Word towards him, whom they have thus chosen; And afterwards advertiseth him what duties the Lord requisite of him in that place towards the Church; And having taken the acknowledgments of them both, of their mutual duty towards one another; He then with the Presbytry of that Church (if they have any, if not two or three others of the gravest Christians amongst the Brethren of that Church, being deputed by the “body) do in the name of the Lord Jesus ordain him unto “that Office, with imposition of hands, calling upon the Lord, “(who hath furnished him with spiritual gifts, and bowed the “hearts of the Church to call him to that office) to accept and “own him therein, to enlarge his heart and spirit, according to all the duties thereof, to breath in all his administrations, and to guide and bless all his going out and coming in before them: And so turning his speech upon the person on whom their hands are imposed, He as the mouth of the Presbytry, expresseth their “ordination of him to that office in the name of the Lord Jesus, “and puts a solemn charge upon him to look well to himself, “and to the whole flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made “him an overseer, as one that must give account of all their souls “unto the great Shepheard of the sheep, at the day of his appear-“ing. After this the Elders of their Churches present, observ-“ing the presence of God, both in the duties of that day per-“formed by the Officer then chosen, and ordained, and in the orderly proceeding of, the Church to his Election and Ordina-tion, one of them in the name of all the rest, doth give unto him the right hand of fellowship in the light of all the Assembly, testifying their Brotherly acceptance of him, and their thank-fulness to God for his gracious gift bestowed on him, and doth exhort
to him in the Lord to fulfil the ministry which he hath received of the Lord.

And, so after public praise given to God by him in the name of the Church, he dissolveth the Assembly with a Blessing.

**SECT. V.**

For our calling of Deacons, we hold it not necessary to ordain them with like solemnity, of fasting and prayers, as is used in the Ordination of Elders; because we do not read the Apostles gave any president thereof in the Ordination of the first Deacons at Jerusalem, Act. 6. But the Brethren of the Church having looked out among themselves men fitly qualified for that calling, according to the Scriptures formerly mentioned, and having made some proofs of them according to the Rule (1 Tim. 3:10.) the Elders with the content of the Church upon some Lords day, or other public holy meeting, do ordain them to the Office, and appoint them over that business, with prayer and imposition of hands.

**SECT. VI.**

Object. Two things are here demanded; First, by what warrant the People choose their Officers?

Answ. From the President of the Apostolical Churches. In the choosing of an Apostle, the voices of people went as far as any human Suffrages could go; of an hundred and twenty, they chose two, and presented them before the Lord, and his Apostles. And because an Apostle was immediately to be called of God, out of those two God chose one, Act. 1:15. 23:26. Act. 14:23. The Apostles are said to have ordained Elders by lifting up of hands, (to wit, of the people) as the original word implieth: And the multitude of the Disciples are directed by the Apostles to look out and choose seven Deacons, Act. 6:3. 15.

The practice of succeeding Churches for many years after, is plain from Cyprians words, Lib. 1. Epist. 4. Plebs maxime potestatem babet vel dignos Sacerdotes eligendi, vel indignos recusandi.

Object. 2. It is also demanded, by what warrant doth a particular Church depute such who are not Presbyters, to lay their hands upon
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upon Presbyters? Were it not more regular and orderly to repair to some Bishop, to receive imposition of hands from him? or as the Presbyters in every Church in Crete, received imposition of hands from Titus, who was left in Crete with Episcopal Authority for that very end, Tit. 1:5? or rather then take imposition of hands from lay-men (as they are called) why do not the Churches rather intreat the Elders of other Churches to supply the defect of their own Presbytery, by the Presbyters of other Churches?

Ans. The warrant by which each particular Church doth depute some of their own body (though not Presbyters) to lay their hands upon those whom they have chosen to be their Presbyters, is grounded upon the Power of the keys, which the Lord Jesus Christ (who received all fullness of Power from the Father) hath given to the Church: For the power of the keys, is the power of opening and shutting, binding and loosing, Matth. 16:19. And this is given to the whole Church met together in his name, Mat. 18:18. Whatsoever (saith Christ, speaking of the Church) ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven: which is the whole ministerial power of the Keys.

Sect. VII.

Object. 1. The Church is not the first subject and receptacle of all Ecclesiastical power; For though the Church elect a Pastor or other Elder, yet the office of a Pastor is from Christ, Eph. 4:8. And so is his Authority from Christ also; And if he have neither his Office, not his Authority from the Church, how can he be ordained by the imposition of the hands of the Church?

Ans. 1. Though the office of a Pastor in general be immediately from Christ, and the authority from him also, yet the application of this office, and of this authority to this elect person, is by the Church; and therefore the Church hath sufficient and just warrant, as to elect and call a Presbyter unto office, so to ordain him to it, by imposition of hands: They that have Power to elect a King, have power also to depute some in their name to set the Crown upon his head.

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Ans. 2.
Answ. 2. As the authority of the Pastor, and other Elders, is not from the Church, but from Christ; so neither is their Office and Authority from the Bishop, nor from the Presbytery, nor from the Classis of Presbyteries; If therefore that were a just impediment, why the Church should not lay hands upon their elect Pastors or Elders, because neither their office, nor their Authority, is from the Church, then neither may the Bishop, nor the Presbytery, nor the Classis lay their hands upon them; because their office and Authority is no more (nor so much) from them, as from the Church; nor by this Argument might the Apostles themselves (if they were present) ordain Officers, because neither the office nor the Authority is from the Apostles, but from Christ only. Neither will it follow from hence (as some object) that if the Elders received their ordination from the Church, then they should execute their office in the Churches name, or that then they may be more or less diligent in their office at the Churches appointment, or that then the Church hath a Lord-like power over them, or that then the Elders must receive their errand from the Church, as an Ambassador doth from him from whom he receiveth his Commission; or that then the Church, in defect of all Officers, may perform all duties of the Officers, (as to administer Sacraments, and the like.) None of all these things will follow; For 1. Most of these Objections do strike as much against impusition of hands by Bishops or Presbyters. 2. Though the Elders do receive the application of their office and of their power by the Church, yet not from the Church; or if from the Church, ministerially only, as instruments unto Christ. So that they cannot choose or ordain whom they please, to what office they please, but whom they see the Lord Jesus hath prepared and fitted for them, and as it were, chosen and ordained to their hands: nor may they enlarge or straighten the limits of his office whom they do elect or ordain, but as the Lord hath prescribed: nor can they give him any errand, but only a Charge to look to the ministry which he hath received from the Lord: nor have they any more Lordly power over him, then he over them, but both ministerial, as they have received from the Lord: neither may they administer Sacraments, in defect of all Officers, because that by appointment from Christ pertaineth only to such as are called by office to preach the Gospel, Mat. 28:19, 20. As for mutual
mutual instruction and admission, election and ordination of Officers, opening of the doors of the Church by admission of members, and shutting the same by Church-Censures; these things they may do (if need be) without Officers; yea, and if all their Officers were found culpable, either in heretical Doctrine, or scandalous crime, yet the Church hath lawful Authority to proceed to the censure of them all: For they that as a Church might admonish Archippus, (Col. 4:7.) might (in case he had not hearkened to their admonition) have proceed against him to Excommunication; And they that might so proceed against one of their Officers, might in like sort (upon like ground) proceed against them all, which they could not do if the Church did receive the power of the keys not immediately from Christ, but from the Presbyters: And yet in such cases our Churches are never wont to proceed, but in he presence, and with the consent and approbation of other Churches; as knowing that in such weighty cases, in the multitude of Counsellors there is safety: And as the Church doth not choose any Elders, but in the presence, and with the approbation of other Churches; so neither doth it proceed to the censure of them, but with the like grave and solemn hindrance.

Object. 2. The Apostles receive the power of the keys immediately from Christ, Joh. 20:23. And therefore the Church received it from the Apostles, and the Officers of the Churches from them also, and not from the Church.

Answ. It is true, the Apostles being extraordinary Officers, as they were immediately called and chosen of Christ, not by the Church; so they were most of them ordained by Christ, and not by the Church; And yet not all of them neither: For Paul and Barnabas, though chosen to the Apostolical office immediately from God, yet they were ordained to that office by the imposition of hands, of some officers, or members of the Church, Act. 13:2, 3. But that hindereth not, but as the Apostles received their power immediately from Christ, so did the Church receive their power immediately from Christ also; For he that said to the Apostles, Whose sins ye retain, thy are retained; whose sins ye remit, they are remitted, (Joh. 20:23.) He also said to the Church, Whatev’er ye bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatev’er ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven, Mat. 18:18. which is a Commission of the same power, and to the same effect.
If then the Church have received, as well as the Apostles, the same Commission of Church-Power, (so far as it is of perpetual use) that though the Church then presented their Officers chosen by them, to receive Ordination from the Apostles, yet when the Apostles are ceased, and no other successors left in their room, from whom their Officers might receive ordination, but from the Presbytery of their own Church, then where such a Presbytery is yet wanting, and their power is now to be executed, the Church hath full power to give ordination to them themselves, by the imposition of their hands.

Sect. VIII.

Object. When the Apostles ceased, Bishops were left as successors in their room; As Timothy in Ephesis, and Titus in Crete, to ordain Elders in every Church, Tit. 1:5.

Answ. Timothy and Titus were not left to ordain Elders as Bishops, but as Evangelists, whose office was alike extraordinary in the Church, as that of Apostles and Prophets, (Eph. 4:11.) Theirs work being to follow the Apostles, and so set forward the work which the Apostles had begun, whereto the Apostles called them forth, and directed them; And not to keep settled residence in any one Church, as Elders do, or in any one Nation of Churches, as Bishops do: Timothy is expressly commanded to do the work of an Evangelist, 2 Tim. 4:5. And Titus was not ordained a Bishop at Crete, but left in Crete, as having travelled up and down with Paul, Gal. 2:3. and coming to Crete was left to direct the Cretian believers in their Church-affairs, after Pauls departure: afterwards he departed to Dalmatia, 2 Tim 4:10. Sometimes Paul appointed him to meet him at Nicopolis, Tit. 3:12. Sometimes he sent him to Corinth, 2 Cor. 12:18. And commends him (as his partner and fellow-helper) to the Church of Corinth: And at Troas, Paul found no rest in his spirit, because he found not Titus his Brother, 2 Cor. 2:13. And in Macedonia he found much comfort, because he found Titus there, 2 Cor. 7:5, 6. Which argueth his calling was not Episcopal to rest in a certain charge, but to travel up and down with the Apostles, or after them, or whither the the Holy Ghost should lead them forth to help forward the work of Christ, and the Apostles.
Object. But in the Subscriptions of the Epistles of Paul to them, Titus is called the first ordained Bishop of all the Cretans: And Timothy the first ordained Bishop of the Church of Ephesus.

Answ. The Subscriptions of Paul's Epistles, both those and the rest, are no part of Canonical Scripture, but Apocrypha, nor written by the Apostles themselves, but by some Scribes that copied them out in after ages, as is observed by many learned both Protestants and Papists: In particular this Subscription in the Epistle to Titus containeth an apparent mistake; for the Subscription saith, the Epistle was written from Nicopolis to Macedonia; as if Paul had been at Nicopolis when he wrote this Epistle: which conceit in the Scribe sprang from a mistake of Paul's words, Tit. 3:12. where Paul bids Titus be diligent to come to me to Nicopolis, for I have determined there to winter; but Paul doth not say, I have determined here to winter, (as if he were there already in Nicopolis) but! have determined there to winter, to wit, as intending to go thither for to winter. The Subscription of the Epistle to Timothy, styling him the first ordained Bishop of the Ephesians, will not stand with the Apostles charge to him in the same Epistle, (2 Tim. 4:5.) do the work of an Evangelist. For a Bishop was to attend with personal residence upon his charge, Act. 20:28. But an Evangelist was to travel up and down with the Apostles, or after them; to come and go at their appointment: As Paul there doth command Timothy to be diligent to come to him, 2 Tim. 4:9, 21. Again when Paul addresseth himself to go to Rome (from whence this Subscription telleth us this Epistle was written) he intending to pass by Macedonia to Rome, (Act. 19:21.) besought Timothy to abide still at Ephesus, 1 Tim. 1:3. But if Timothy had been the Bishop, ordained of the Ephesians, his duty would have bound him to abide there, and should not have needed Pauls entreaty so to do.

Besides when Paul in that journey came to Miletus, he called for the Elders of Ephesus, Act. 20:17. whom also he named, Bishops; for so the Greek word is, which is translated overseers, v. 28. and then Paul acknowledged no such singular ordination of any to a transcendent Episcopacy, but what was common to all the Elders of Ephesus: But that it may further appear, that it was not the intent of Paul, or of the other Apostles, to direct the Churches to send the Elders whom they have chosen, unto any Transcendent (or
(or Diocesan) Bishop for ordination, nor left any to like eminent place after Timothy and Titus to perform that work; Let it be considered, that there is no direction at all in the Epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus, for the Churches election of any Evangelist, or of any Bishop over many Churches.

For 1. The Bishops Pail speaketh of in Timothy, of whose qualification he giveth direction 1 Tim. 3:2. to 7. he calleth them all (when he cometh to give order for their maintenance) by the name of Elders; some Ruling Elders; some Labouring in the Word and Doctrine: And in his Epistle to Titus, the Elders which Paul left Titus to ordain in every City, he calleth them Bishops, Titus 1. 5:7. Now of these he appointeth many Elders, and many Bishops in one City, or Church; not many Cities or Churches under, one Bishop, Act. 14:23. Elders in every City, Act. 20:17, 18. Many Elders and Bishops in the Church of Ephesus, Phil. 1:11. Many Bishops as well as many Deacons, in one Church of Philippi, and that a poor one too; for Philippi was a Church in Macedonia, Act. 16:12. And all the Churches of Macedonia had trial of deep poverty, 2 Cor. 8. 1, 2.

2. In the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, there is no difference at all put, of any one Bishop above his fellows, except only the difference of Ruling and Teaching Elders, 1 Tim. 5:17. And those as they, are not set over many Churches, so neither are any of them set above his fellows; only the Preachers are allowed more reverence and maintenance then the Rulers. If the Holy Ghost had appointed some singular Bishops above the rest, of any transcendent and eminent office, he would have appointed him also some eminent and transcendent proper work of his office: But what shall that be? shall it be Ordination, as Hierome saith, (speaking of the Bishops in his time; Quid facit Episcopus excepta ordinatione quod Presbyter non facet?) Why, that is a work of Rule; or shall it be hearing accusations against Elders, and censuring them accordingly; as 1 Tim. 5:19, 20? Why, that is a work of Rule also. Now the Apostle acknowledgeth no Acts of Rule, nor any Elders (or Bishops) that do Rule, as worthy of greater honour then such Elders as labour in Word and Doctrine, 1 Tim. 5:17. It is therefore apparently contradictory to the institutions given by Paul in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, to set up any eminent or transcendent Bishop in the Church, in respect
respect of Rule, or exercise of office of more honour and power, then pertaineth to all the Minsters of the Word. So that evident it is, that neither Ordination, nor Jurisdiction, (which are both of them Acts of Rule) are to be fetched from transcendent Bishops, but pertain indifferently to all the Presbyters.

Sect. IX.

Object. But if no transcendent acts of Jurisdiction and rule be reserved unto one Bishop alone above other Ministers, how cometh it then to pass, that in Rev. 2:3. each singular Angel in the Churches of Asia, is admonished, and reproved alone for all the faults that are found in his Church, whereof he is the Angel? Why should one Angel alone be charged with the guilt of all those faults in the Church, if it were not in his hand alone to redress and punish them?

Answ. It is an usual thing with John (and found also in other Scriptures) to use the name of Angel not singularly for one person, but collectively for a company, administering the same work: As the seven Angels that sounded the seven Trumpets, and the seven Angels that poured out the seven Vials, were not seven singular persons, but seven companies, or sorts of persons, performing that service. And when David saith, the Angel of the Lord pitcheth his Tent about them which fear him, Psal. 34:7. He speaketh not of one Angel alone, but of many of them; For one alone cannot pitch his Tents about all them that fear God. And that John in the second and third Chapters of the Revelation, did not mean by the Angel of the Church one singular person, but the whole company of the Ministers of the Church (the whole Presbyry of persons, more then one) it is evident by his speech unto them, as unto many; The Devil (saith he) shall cast some of you into Prison, Rev. 2:10. Some of you,* which implies more then one. And again in Rev. 2:24. speaking unto the Angel of the Church of Thyatira, But unto you,* I say, and unto the rest of Thyatira; which argueth that the Angel distinguished from the rest of the Church, was more then one person; For he saith unto you in the plural number.

Object. But now, say some; Let it be so then, if such eminent and transcendent Bishops (that is, Diocesan Bishops) who claim a peer-

* Gr. ὑμῶν
* Gr. ὑμῖν in the plural.
peerless power in Ordination and Jurisdiction to themselves alone, have no foot-hold in the Scripture, then let them neither have name, nor place, portion, right, nor memorial in the Christian Churches of the new Testament. But yet nevertheless, the Apostle is clear for a Presbytery, and acknowledgeth imposition of hands (even upon Timothy, how much more upon other Elders) by the Presbytery, 1 Tim. 4:14.

Answ. We willingly also acknowledge the same, where God hath furnished any Church with a Presbytery. To them it pertaineth to ordain by imposition of hands, any Elders or Deacons that shall be chosen by office, by the Church committed to them; But if the Church want a Presbytery; for want of Elders, they want a warrant to repair to the Presbytery of another Church, to impose hands upon their elect Elders.

Our reasons be;

1. Reason. First, Ordination by imposition of hands, is a work of Church Power, as all men acknowledge: Now as no Church hath Power over another, but all of them stand in Brotherly equality one towards another; so the Presbytery of one Church, hath no Power over the elders of another. As the Apostles having all of them received the same Commission (Job 20:23.) had none of them power over another; so the Churches having received all of them the same power of the keys, (as hath been shewn above) they none of them have power over another, and therefore no power of ordination of one anothers Officers.

2. Reason. As every Church hath equally received the same power of the keys, so they ought they to maintain and stand fast in the same; The power of the keys as it is a privilege and liberty purchased to the Church by the blood of the Lord Jesus; so at a less rate it may not be alienated from the Church. Christ by his death and resurrection hath obtained all power, both in heaven and in earth, mat. 28:18. Phil. 2. 8, 9, 10. And look where he hath communicated the same by his Testament, ratified in his blood, there it ought to remain and not to be removed out of their hands, by the hand of man or Angel. Whence it appeared unlawful for any Church of Christ to put over that power which they have received of Christ, out of their own hands, into the hands of the Presbyters of other Churches. The Apostles having received all of them equal power from Christ,
Christ, it was not lawful for them by common consent, to have conferred upon Peter and Paul, James and John, a transcendent government over them all. If some of the Apostles seem to be pillars, as is said of Peter, James and John, Gal. 2:9. and so more eminent in gifts then all their brethren, it may put upon their brethren an expediency, and sometimes a necessity to call upon them for more counsel, but not to call them to more Authority. In like sort, if a Church in a City, and the Officers thereof, be of more eminent gifts and graces, then a Church in a village, it is a just occasion for the Church in the village, to listen the more after the counsel of the Church in the City, but not to submit the more unto their Authority in the way of subjection. And so it is true, a Classis of the Presbyters of many Churches may excel (in more variety of all abilities) then the Presbytry of any one Church, yet that only reacheth to make their counsel the more weighty and acceptable, but not to invest them with more rule or more authority. Thirdly, If a Church shall send to the Presbyters of another Church for ordination of their Elders, they may as well repair and submit to them for censuring of their offenders; And would not that be a manifest transgression of the royal law of Church-Government, Matth. 18:15, 16, 17, 18. If a Brother see his brother fallen into a scandal, and after dealing with him first himself alone, and then with the conviction of two or three witnesses, find him to give no satisfaction at all, whither shall the offended brother repair? If to the Church whereof the brother offending is a member, that is indeed according to the rule, but what need is there then, or what ground of repairing to the Presbyters of other Churches? by what Authority shall they proceed to censure the offender that is a member of another Church?

Indeed if a Brother offended shall complain to the Church whereof the offending brother is a member, and the Church neglect to do their dude, through prejudice, or partiality, or other remissness, it may then be lawful to make use of the brotherly love and brotherly communion, which one Church oweth and beareth to another. The brother offended, and not satisfied with the proceedings of his own Church against the offence, may then repair to the Elders of other Churches, and crave their judgement and counsel in the case in hand; and if they do not approve upon good
good inquiry the proceedings of their sister-Church, they may admonish the Elders of that Church touching what they judge amiss. But if the Elders hearken not unto them, the Elders who admonish them, being unsatisfied, may acquaint their own Church with the offence of their neighbour Church, and then in the name of the Lord, and of their own Church, they may admonish them thereof, by Letters and Messengers sent to them to that purpose. If yet the Church admonished, hearken not unto them, the Church offended may and ought to acquaint their neighbour Churches therewithall, who may join with them, either in convincing the offending Church of their sin, and so prevail with them unto reformation or else (if they persist in obstinacy) they may from thenceforth withdraw all continuance of brotherly communion with them, till they acknowledge their transgression; which is as far as Churches may go in a Church-way, in case of obstinacy of a neighbour-Church in any offence, and so far they may go according to the proportion of the rule, Mat. 18:15, 16, 17. Look what rule a brother is to attend unto in seeking to heal the offence of a brother, the same rule may and ought a sister-Church to attend unto in seeking to heal an offending sister-Church. And look as Paul who had received the same equal power of the keys, with Peter, reproved Peter openly when he was to be blamed, Gal. 2:11. some Church, who hath received the same equal power of the keys with another, may reprove another Church openly when they are to be blamed. And look by what power they may reprove them, by the same they may proceed to withdraw from them, if they hearken not to their reproof according to God. But all this notwithstanding they will not allow a brother offended to complain to the Presbyters of another Church, till he see no hope of removal of the offence by his own Church at home.

CHAP. III.

OF THE ADDITION OF MEMBERS TO THE CHURCH

SECT. I.

The Church being thus gathered and furnished with such Officers, in such manner as the Lord hath appointed; look as in the first Primitive Church the Lord added to them
them daily such as should be saved, Acts 2:47. so do we admit and receive from the Lord such as he sendeth and addeth to us. The first and lowest number of a Church, to which the other members are added, is not expressly limited in the Word, only it is not so low as some have conceived, to consist only of two or three, it is a mistake of that place, Mat. 18:20. where a promise of Christ's presence is made to two or three, to conceive it made to the lowest number of a Church-body; for those two or three, are not considered there as a Church-body, but as a sufficient number of witnesses, to join with a brother offended, in convincing and admonishing the brother that gave the offence; against whom, if he do not hearken to them, they are then further to proceed, and to tell the Church. Which argueth that they themselves are not a Church, but a smaller company agreeing in a duty of brotherly love, either to heal an offending brother by their own admonition, or to witness against him before the Church; and yet they have a special promise of Christ's presence with them in the duty, lest they might think such a labour of love undertaken in value.

But the Church must needs be a greater number then two or three, seeing these two or three are to refer the person and the cause to a greater body then themselves; for though there might be a domestical Church in Adam and Eve at the beginning, yet such a Church which Christ hath instituted in the new Testament, consisteth of a greater number. The very Officers of a Church, completely furnished, are no less then four (a Pastor, a Teacher, an Elder, a Deacon,) and therefore the body of the Church had need to be of a greater number then so. And though the essence of a Church may consist without the integrity of all his members (as a lame man that wanteth some of his members may have the essence of a man,) yet under seven, a Church can hardly consist of so many members as do perform any part of a Church-body.

To such a body, how many members may be added, is not limited expressly in the Word, only it is provided in the Word, that they be no more then that all may meet in one Congregation, that all may hear, and all may be edified. For (as hath been noted above) the Apostle so describeth the whole Church as meeting in one place, 1 Cor. 14:23. But if all cannot hear, all cannot be edified. Besides the Apostle requireth, that when the Church meeteth together, for the
the celebrating the Lord’s Supper, *they shall tarry one for another*, 1 Cor. 11:33. Which argueth the Church indued with only ordinary Officers, should consist of no greater number then that all might *partake together of the Lord’s Supper in one Congregation*, and therefore such Parishes as consist of 15000, though they were all fit materials for Church-fellowship, yet ought to be divided into many Churches, as too large for one. When the hive is too full, Bees swarm into a new hive; so should such excessive numbers of Christians issue forth into more Churches. Whence it appeareth to be an error, to say there is no limitation or distinction of Parishes, meaning of Churches, (*jure divino*) for though a precise quotient, a number of hundreds and thousands be not limited to every Church, yet such a number is limited as falleth not below seven, nor riseth above the bulk of one Congregation, and such a Congregation wherein all may meet, and all may hear, and all may partake, and all may be edified together.

**Sect. II.**

They that desire to be added & joined to such a body, they first make known their desires to the *Elders* of the Church, who take trial of their *knowledge* in the principles of religion, & of their *experience in the ways of grace*, and of their godly *conversation amongst men*; that if any of them be found *ignorant*, and *graceless*, or *scandalous*, he may not be presently *presented to the Church*, till these evils were removed. The stones that were to be laid in *Solomons Temple*, were squared and made ready before they were laid in the building; neither iron, nor ax, nor any iron tool was heard in the house while it was abuilding, 1 King. 6:7. And wherefore so, if not to hold forth that no members were to be received into the Church of Christ, but such as were rough-hewn, and squared, and fitted to lie close and level to Christ and to his members?

But when such as offer themselves are *approved of the Elders*, they are *propounded* by one of the *Ruling Elders* to the Church, with a motion to *the brethren* to make inquiry after them, and if they shall hear of any just *exceptions* against them, to give *notice of it to one of the Elders*.

*But if no exception be heard of, they are called forth before the Church,*
Church, after other holy duties are performed, and each one maketh confession of his sins and profession of his faith. In confession of his sins (that it may appear to be a penitent confession) he declareth also the grace of God to his soul, drawing him out of his small estate into fellowship with Christ. In the profession of his faith, he declareth not only his good knowledge of the principles of Religion, but also his professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ, with his desire of walking therein, with the fellowship of that Church. Now before or after such his profession or confession, those of the brethren of the Church who are of his acquaintance do give some good testimony (if need be) of his life and conversation; either according to their own knowledge of him, or according to the credible reports or letters which they have received concerning him: which done, the Ruling Elder, or one of the Preaching Elders propoundeth it to the Church, whether from all that they have heard and seen, they find any just exception against him? if so, it is cleared and removed before any further proceedings; if no just exception appear, the Ruling Elder then moveth the Church to express their acceptance of him into fellowship with them, by lifting up their hands. Which done (and the like course taken with two or three more, is the time will permit) the Elder propoundeth to them the heads of the Covenant which the Lord hath made with his Church, what promises of grace he hath made to them; as also what duties of faith and obedience he doth require of them; As to take the Lord Jesus for their only Priest and Atonement, their only Prophet and guide, their only King and Law-giver, and to walk in professed subjection unto all his holy Ordinances; as also to walk in brotherly love with the brethren of the Church, unto mutual edification and succour, according to the rule of the Gospel. And the new received members acknowledging this to be their duty, and professing their consent unto it in the name of Christ; the Elder doth further acquaint them with what duties of holy watchfulness over them they may expect from the Church; and so shutteth up his work with some short prayer unto the Lord, who keepeth covenant and mercy with thousands of his people, to make us all faithful to him, and one to another, according to the rules of his holy Gospel in Christ Jesus, the Mediator, and surety of his Covenant, between the Lord and his people.

Sect.
Now what offence is there in all this? or what scruple may arise in a godly mind against these things? Two or three things seem herein offensive, but are not.

First, That we require gracious qualifications in such as we receive to Church-fellowship: whereas the visible Church is said to consist of all sorts, good and bad, and to be a garner containing chaff and wheat, as a field wherein wheat and tares grow up together.

Secondly, That we receive such into the Church by a covenant.

Thirdly, That we communicate too much power unto the people, and do not rather refer all power (in this case) into the hands of the Elders. To give therefore some account of these, as the Lord shall assist.

For the first, though we willingly admit all comers to the hearing of the Word with us (as the Corinthian admitted Infidels, 1 Cor. 14:24, 25.) yet we receive none as members into the Church, but such as (according to the judgement of charitable Christians) may be conceived to be received of God into fellowship with Christ, the head of the Church.

Our Reasons be:

First, From the near relation between Christ Jesus, and the Church, as also between the Church and the other persons in the Trinity: the Lord Jesus is the head of the Church, even of the visible Church, and the visible Church is the body of Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. 12:27. The visible Church is said to be the habitation of God by the Spirit, Eph. 2:22. to be the Temple of the holy Ghost, and the Spirit of God to dwell in them, 1 Cor. 3:16, 17. to be Espoused to Christ as a chaste Virgin, 2 Cor. 11:2. The members of the visible Church are said to be the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, 2 Cor. 6:18. and are exhorted to be followers of him as dear children, Eph. 4:1. Now how can the visible Church be the members of the body, or the Spouse of Christ, or the Temple of the Holy Ghost, or the sons and daughters of the heavenly Father, except the members in charitable discretion be (as indeed the holy Ghost describeth them to be) Saints by calling, (1 Cor. 1:2.) and faithful brethren, Gal. 1.
Gal. 3:2. and that not only by external profession, for these are too high styles for hypocrites, but in some measure of sincerity and truth.

Secondly, We read Act. 2:47. that the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved; and how then shall we add to the Church such as God addeth not? such as have no shew of any saving work upon them to any spiritual discerning? ought not the Lords Stewards to be faithful in God’s house, and to do nothing therein, but as they see the Lord got before them? receiving whom he receiveth, and refusing whom he refuseth, casting out whom he casteth out. Doth not the Apostle Paul upon this ground direct the Romans to receive a weak believer, because the Lord hath received him? Rom. 14:1, 2, 3.

Thirdly, The Lord Jesus maketh the profession of the faith of his name, and such a profession as flesh and blood hath not revealed to a man, but his heavenly Father; to be the rock on which his visible Church is built; for he speaketh of such a Church whereunto he committeth the keys of his kingdom, and that is the visible Church, Mat. 16:16. to 19. Now if such a profession be the rock and foundation of a visible Church, then we shall build a Church without a foundation, if we receive such members into the Church as do not hold forth such a profession, but either through ignorance make no profession at all, or such a verbal profession as favoureth not of any blessed work of the Father by his Spirit upon their hearts. And doth not the Lord expostulate with such a guest as comes into the fellowship of his Church, even unto his Table, not having a wedding garment, Mat. 22:12? And doth not expostulation intimate a Taxation also of them, by whose connivence he came in, where he saith, how comest thou in hither? And doth not Christ in the parable impute it to the sleepiness (that is, to he remissness and negligence) of his servants, that tares were sown in his field amongst the wheat, Mat. 13:25. 38:39.

Fourthly, Such as have only a form of godliness, and deny the power of it, we are forbidden to join with, and commanded to turn from them, 2 Tim. 3:5.

Fifthly, Can any man judge such Persons fit materials for the constituting and edifying of a Church, who are more fit for the ruin and destruction of the Church; such as leave their first love

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(as all hypocrites will at length?) They procure the removal of the candlestick, Rev. 2:4. We pass by the types of the old Testament, which yet are not without their due weight; it was touched above, that rough stones were not laid in the building of Solomons Temple, till they were hewn and prepared before, 1 Kings 6:7. and behold a greater than Solomon is here, and a greater Temple then that of Solomons; the attendance and watchfulness of the porters suffering none to enter into the Temple that were unclean in any thing, 2 Chro. 23:19. doth it not evidently type forth the watchfulness of the Officers of the Church of Christ, to suffer none unclean (unclean in estate or course of life) to enter into the fellowship of the Church, which ought to be a Communion of Saints?

Well then, if all the members of the Church ought to be Saints by calling, and faithful brethren, it cannot be thought an unseasonable curiosity, but rather held a due and faithful watchfulness in the Officers and body of every Church of Christ, to take a due trial of men by a confession of sins, as John Baptist did, Mat. 3:6. and by a profession of their faith, as Philip did, Act. 8:37. before they receive them into the Church as members of the body of the Lord Jesus; neither was it an excessive austerity in John, but an holy faithfulness and godly zeal, not only to repulse the Scribes and Pharisees, Mat. 3:7. but the profane people also from his Baptism, Luk. 3:7. as those who were a generation of vipers, and had not yet brought forth fruit meet for repentance, ver. 7, 8. and therefore themselves were not meet for his Baptism, which was a baptism of repentance, Luk. 3:3. Nevertheless, in this trial, we do not exact eminent measure, either of knowledge, or holiness, but do willingly stretch out our hands to receive the weak in faith, such in whole, spirits we can discern the least measure of breathing and panting after Christ, in their sensible feeling of a lost estate; for we had rather 99. hypocrites should perish through presumption, then one humble soul belonging to Christ, should sink under discouragement or despair; and by reason of these hypocrites received into the Church, it is that the Church is said to have in it good and bad, wheat and tares; for tares, (as Hierome saith) are like to wheat.
Sect. IV.

Come we now to give account of the second point, why we receive such into the Church by way of Covenant.

1. Meet it is that as the whole Church was received as one body unto Christ by professing their entrance into covenant with God, as hath been shewed above in the third Proposition of the fifth part, so every member of the Church should be received into the same fellowship, by profession of their taking hold of the same Covenant; Eadem est ratio partium & totius, there is the same reason of the whole and of the parts, in such things as concern the common nature of both; And as all relatives do, they mutually argue one another. Hence it is that when godly strangers (who had joined themselves to the Lord, to wit, by faith, to serve him, to love his name, and keep his Sabbath) were to be brought into the fellowship of the Lords house, they added this duty over and above the former, they took hold of the Covenant of the Lord, Isa. 56. 3,4,5,6,7. Surely not by faith only, for their personal salvation, (for so they took hold of the covenant before when they joined themselves to the Lord, ver. 3.) but by their profession of their acceptance of the Covenant, and subjection to it, which the Lord maketh with his Church and people, whom he causeth to pass into the hand of the Covenant, Ezek. 20:37.

Object. It is objected first, that the place in Isaiah speaketh of such strangers at were proselytes, who in joining themselves to the Lord, were therein also joined unto the Church, for so joining to the Lord, implieth joining to the Church, Jer. 50:5. Ezek. 2:11.

Ans. 1. They that joined to the Lord in those Texts of Jeremy and Zachary, did indeed in so doing join in a Church-body also; for they who are there spoken of were a multitude, concurring and consenting in the same Covenant, to join to the Lord, and to become his people; but herein, I say, the Eunuch and strangers are said to be joined to the Lord, who yet were not joined to the Church, but ready to complain that the Lord had utterly deprived them of that liberty of joining to the Church, and had utterly separated them from his people, ver. 3. As indeed he had by express Law separated them, that is, prohibited them from entering into the Congregation of the
The Lord for ever, Deut. 23:1, 2, 3. Against which Law the Lord comforteth them with this promise of the Gospel, that in the new Testament, neither their Eunuchical estate, nor the alienation or strangeness of any Nation, shall be an impediment unto their entrance into the Lords house, which is the Church.

The joining (there spoken of) is not their joining to the Lord and his people as Proselytes of the Church; for though they were joined to the Lord, yet they complained of their disjoining and separating from the Lords people, but the Lord comforteth them with this promise, that such as are joined to the Lord, he will hereafter bring them to his house; no bodily infirmity, (as that of the Eunuch) nor national pollution (as that of some strangers) should hinder their admittance into his Church, only this the Lord requireth both of the Eunuchs, ver. 4. and of the strangers, ver. 6. who had joined themselves to the Lord before, that they do also take hold of his Covenant (as antecedent to their entrance into Church-fellowship,) to wit, take hold of it by solemn profession of their acceptance of it, and of their subjection to it.

Object. 2. It is not credible that the Lord would ever separate or debar such from Church-fellowship as were joined to himself by faith, who can think it? what reason can you give for it?

Answ. The text is plain, that Eunuchs, Moabites, and Ammonites, were separated from the Church or Congregation of Israel for ever, without exception of godliness or ungodliness. Some in deed make a doubt whether the Law again Moabites and Ammonites reached to the women of those Nations; but against men the Law is clear. But if the Law had excluded them only upon point of their own ungodliness, that was no singular curse to them. No Nation under heaven could expect admission into the Church of Israel, unless they believed in the God of Israel. What reason God might have for excluding the Eunuchs, we leave to his sovereign wisdom. But yet himself giveth a plain reason for it against the Moabites and Ammonites, taken from their malignant enmity against God’s people, Deut. 23:4, 5. 6. Against the Eunuchs he giveth no express reason; the authority of the Law-giver is reason sufficient; who can tell whether God would not thereby type out the debarring of barren Christians from Church-fellowship?

Object. 3.
Object. 3. The word *separation*, implieth they had been sometime of the Church; or it cannot cannot be said in common sense, that any can be *separated* from that society of which they never were.

Answ. Why not? What is *separated* but *severed*? May England be severed from Scotland by the river of Tweed? and from France and Germany and Holland, by the Sea? though they were never joined to any of those Nations? Did not God make the Star to separate between the day and the night? (for it is the same word in the Original, Gen. 1:14.) and yet day and night were never joined in one society.

So that from the place in Isaiah, we have two passages of our practises in admitting *Church-members*, witnessed unto and confirmed by the Lord.

1. That those whom the Lord *joineth to the Church* in the new Testament, are such as have been joined *to himself*, to love him, and to serve him, and keep his Sabbaths.

2. That they do all *take hold of his Covenant with his Church*, before he bring them into his holy Mountain which is his Church.

Both which are the more to be observed in this place, because the place is a *prophesy* of what the Lord will do in the days of the new Testament, to wit, when his house shall be called an house of prayer unto all Nations, ver. 9. which is proper to the *times of the Gospel*.

Object. 4. But the *Covenant* here spoken of, hath nothing to do with the *Church Covenant*, for the Covenant is the *Lord’s* between him and his people, but the Church *Covenant* is between the members of the Church one towards another.

Answ. This objection was prevented before in the first point; for when the Lord entereth into covenant with his people, that is with his Church, his Church either expressly, or by silent consent covenanteith with him, and also one with another, to yield professed subjection to him, as hath been shewed above.

But though this place *prophecying of the days of the new Testament*, speak expressly of *taking hold of the Covenant* before entering into the Church, yet let no man wonder why there is so little express mention of the peoples taking hold of the Covenant in the new Testament, when this promise cometh to be accomplished. In the *old Testament*, where the *Church and Common-wealth* grew up together in divine institution and administration, there is express mention of

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of this Covenant, and the Church being national, and all the Magistrates being members of the Church from the first plantation of it, the Covenant of the Lord with his Church was not at all suspicious to them, (who were parties to it themselves) but very acceptable; but in the days of the new Testament, the Magistrates and Princes of the earth being Aliens and enemies to the Church, the Apostles thought it meet to speak of this Covenant not plainly, but as it were in Parables and similitudes, as knowing the name of Covenants and Covenanters might breed no small jealousies in Civil States, as seeming most dangerous to civil peace, but yet in apt similitudes they so describe the estate of Churches as doth necessarily imply a joint Covenant, both between the Lord, and them one with another: which may serve for a second argument to prove the point in hand, the receiving of Members by way of Covenant; for, 1. they so describe every Church of God, as a City of God, as the new Hierusalem, as the Church of the Jews at their first conversion is styled, Rev. 21:4. and the Church of the Jews, though it may be a more glorious Church then any of the Churches of the Gentiles, yet it partaketh in the common nature of them all, every true Church is as well a City of God, as the Church of the Jews; and hence the Members of the Church of Ephesus are called fellow-Citizens with the Saints, as being of the household, or Church of God, Eph. 2:19. Now every City is founded in some confederacy by oath, or such like bond, and every Citizen is received into the same City, by taking the same oath, or entering into the same bond, wherein the whole City standeth engaged; which holdeth forth to an intelligent heart, that if every Church of the new Testament be a City, and the Members thereof fellow-Citizens, then as the whole Church is planted and founded in some Covenant or Confederacy; so every Member of the Church is implanted and received into the same body, by taking hold of the same Covenant, and professing subjection thereunto.

Again, when the Apostle speaketh of the planting of the Church of Corinth, calleth espousing of it as a chaste Virgin unto Christ, 2 Cor. 11:2. It implieth plainly, that he drew them all as one body to profess their acceptance of Christ as an husband to them all, and of one another, as members of the same body: if he had spoken of his conversion of their particular souls unto Christ, he would not have
have spoken of them as *one virgin*, but so *many souls*; so *many virgins*; but now speaking of them all as *one virgin*, it plainly argueth he joined them all as one virgin into one body, and that one body into a *Covenant of Espousals* with Christ Jesus; for there are no Espousals without a covenant; and therefore they that will take hold of their Espousage, must take hold of their covenant.

3. The mutual relation wherein all the members in the Church stand one to another, members to members, and all of them to their Officers, and their Officers to them, together with their mutual interest one in another, and mutual power one over another, do all of them necessarily imply a mutual confederacy one with another and that whosoever will partake herein, must partake in their confederacy. Suppose a godly Christian come over into these parts, (as every year some or other do) there is not any Minister of any of our Churches can *usurp Pastoral authority over him*, unless that Christian *call him thereunto*, or profess his subjection to his Ministration, according to God. Nor can such a man expect *any Ministers watchfulness over him as his Minister*, unless the Minister see just cause to *accept such a charge*, and profess so much. No *Church* in the Country, nor all the members of any Church, can take upon them to *Censure any stranger*, though an inhabitant amongst them, unless he *give top himself to them*, and profess his subjection to the Gospel of Christ amongst them. Nor can he *challenge such watchfulness from them*, unless he have given them a *just call* to take upon them that care over him. That *Christian liberty* which the Lord Jesus by his blood hath purchased for his Church, and for all his children, giveth them all *liberty to choose their own Officers*, and their *own fellow-Members*, unto whom to commit the care of their souls according to the rules of the Gospel. We speak not of *Infants*, who *make choice in their parents*, but of such who know their liberty, and are called to stand fast in it: till then that a man tender and offer himself to the Church, (to the Officers and Members of it) they have no power to *receive* him; For the Churches receiving a believer (which is the Apostles *word*, Rom. 14. 1.) implieth and presupposeth his *offering and giving up* of himself unto them, in a *professed subjection* to the Lord, and unto them, according to the will of God; and their *receiving* of him, implieth and holdeth forth no less then their *professed acceptance* of him unto
to all those holy liberties with them, and performance of all such spiritual duties to him, which belong to all the fellow-members of the same body; and let men call this expression of mutual agreement by what name they please, this is no other then what we call *Church-Covenant*.

**SECT. V.**

Let us proceed then to give account of the third point, why we communicate so much power to the *people*, as to propound receiving of Members, unto their approbation and consent: our reasons are these:

1. From the like power given unto them by Christ, for the casting out of scandalous and corrupt members, *Matth. 18:17*. *1 Cor. 5:5.* if the Church must be *told of every member* that is to be *cast out*, and when he is to be *cast out*, they are to *deliver him to Satan*: then the Church must be *told of every member* that is *received*, and when he is to be *received*, they are to *receive him* into the fellowship of the Lord, and of his Church; but the former is clear from those Scriptures, and consequently the latter. It is a received Maxim, *Ejusdem est potestatis aperire & claudere*, *instituere & destituere* (as they call it,) they that have power to *shut* the doors of the Church by *Excommunication*, they have power to *open* the doors of the Church by admitting to Communion.

2. From the Example of the Church at Hierusalem, *Act. 9:26.* who when *Paul* assayeth to join himself unto them, did not at first receive him, because the Disciples were not satisfied in his spiritual good estate, until *Barnabas* by his testimony of him had removed their scruple: which argueth the *private brethren* in a Church as well as *public Officers*, must be satisfied in him who is to be received into Communion with them.

3. From the Churches power in Electing and calling Ministers to office. It hath been shewed above, that it belongeth to the people, the body of the Church, *to choose and call their Officers*, according to the speech of Cyprian, *Lib. 1. Epist. 41.* *Plebs maxime potestatem habet, vel sacerdotes dignos eligendi, vel indignos recusandi* And if they have such power of choosing worthy *Ministers*, and refusing the unworthy, how much more of receiving worthy *Christians,*
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Chap. IV.
Concerning our order and form in administration of Gods public worship.

Sect. I.

He Church being gathered and furnished with able helps, Officers and Brethren, they proceed to the administration of all the public Ordinances in public Assemblies, especially on every Lords day wherein our principal care and desire is to administer and partake in all, and no more then all, the ordinances of Christ himself, and in all those (so far as the Lord hath sent its light) in their native purity and simplicity, without any dressing or painting of human inventions. For as the first Commandment requireth us to worship him with his own only true worship, as he hath appointed in his Word, without adding ought thereto, or taking ought therefrom, Isa. 29:13. Deut. 12. 32. So we believe it to be unlawful for any Church to take upon them to observe, much less for the Officers of their own or other Churches to impose upon them any institutions of their own (whether in doctrine, or worship, or government, but what the Lord hath appointed in his word.

Our reason hereof (one in stead of many) is taken from the extent of the Commission of the Lord Jesus given to his Apostles, which is as large as ever was given to any Church-governors, and yet reacheth no further then to teach the people to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, Mat. 28:20. If the Apostles themselves teach the Churches to observe more then he hath commanded them, they got beyond the bounds of their Commission. The Apostles in the Synod in Hierusalem, laid upon the Churches no other burden then necessary things, Acts 15:29. Necessary
they were, some of them in their own nature, others for the present estate of things to avoid offence, and when they ceased to be offensive, the prohibition of them ceased to bind.

Object. If any shall say, the Apostles Commission reacheth only to matters of substance, not circumstances, of worship and forms of necessity, not indifferency.

We answer, let them shew us another Commission to authorize them to put laws upon the Churches for matters of circumstance (of forms and of indifferency) and we shall submit, but the Scripture holds forth no such Commission given to any of the sons of men since the world began.

That much urged place, 1 Cor. 14:40. doth not authorize the Church, nor any Church-governors, to make laws for the observation of such things as they shall account decent and orderly; but only provideth that all the ordinances of God, whether prayer, or prophesy, or singing of Psalms, or tongues, or interpretations, be all of them done decently, without uncomeliness, and orderly, without confusion; and that this place reacheth no further, appeareth evidently from hence, that if this place should give unto the Church, or unto Church-governors, authority to prescribe and command decent and orderly things at their own discretion, a man could not transgress the Commandment of the Church, but he should also transgress the Commandment of the Apostle; but the contrary is evident. For suppose the Church or Church-governors should make an order, that Ministers should always preach in a gown, the thing is decent enough, but nevertheless if a man shall preach in a cloak, he shall transgress the order of the Church, but not of the Apostle; for he that preacheth in a cloak, preacheth decently also; which plainly argueth, that such a commandment of the Church, is not grounded upon the commandment of the Apostle.

SECTION II.

First then when we come together in the Church, according to the Apostle direction, 1 Tim. 2:1. we make prayers and intercessions and thanksgivings for our selves and for all men, not in any prescribed form of prayer, or studied Liturgy, but in such a manner
manner, as the Spirit of grace and of prayer (who teacheth all the people of God, what and how to pray, Rom. 8:26, 27.) helpeth our infirmities, we having respect therein to the necessities of the people, the estate of the times, and the work of Christ in our hands.

After prayer, either the Pastor or Teacher, readeth a Chapter in the Bible, and expoundeth it, giving the sense, to cause the people to understand the reading, according to Neh. 8:8. And in sundry Churches the other (whether Pastor or Teacher) who expoundeth not, he preacheth the Word, and in the afternoon the other who preached in the morning doth usually (if there be time) read and preach, and he that expounded in the morning preacheth after him.

Before Sermon, and many times after, we sing a Psalm, and because the former translation of the Psalms, doth in many things vary from the original, and many times paraphraseth rather then translateth; besides divers other defects (which we cover in silence) we have endeavoured a new translation of the Psalms into English metre, as near the original as we could express it in our English tongue, so far as for the present the Lord hath been pleased to help us, and those Psalms we sing, both in our public Churches, and in private.

The seals of the Covenant (to wit, the Sacrament of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper) are administered, either by the Pastor or by the Teacher; and though with some godly learned Divines, it be a question whether the Teacher may dispense the seals, yet the question doth rather concern School-Doctors, then the Teachers of a Particular Church, but we who have only the Teachers of particular Churches, do believe that they to whom the preaching or dispensing of the Gospel (or Covenant of grace) unto the Church is committed, to them is committed also the dispensing of the seals of the Covenant; but to the Teacher as well as to the Pastor, is committed the dispensing of the Gospel (the Covenant of grace) unto the Church, and therefore to him (as well as to the other) is committed the dispensing of the seals of the Covenant.

Both the Sacraments we dispense, according to the first institution, Baptism to Disciples, and (who are included in them) their seed. The Lord’s Supper to such as neither want knowledge nor grace to examine and judge themselves before the Lord. Such as lie under any
any offence publicly known, do first remove the offence, before they present themselves to the Lord's Table; according to Mat. 5. 23, 24. The members of any Church, if any be present, who bring Letters testimonial with them to our Churches, we admit them to the Lord's Table with us, and their children also (if occasionally in their travel they be borne with us) upon like recommendation we admit to Baptism. The prayers we use at the administration of the seals, are not any set forms prescribed to us, but conceived by the Minister, according to the present occasion, and the nature of the duty in hand. Ceremonies we use none, but are careful to administer all things according to the primitive in institutions. The Father presenteth his own child to baptism, as being baptized by the right of his Covenant, and not of the Covenant unto God-fathers & god-mothers, (for there is no such covenant of God unto them and their god-sons) and therefore we have no use of them, but omit them in Baptism; as the Apostle cast out love-feasts from the Lord's Supper, being both of them alike super additions to the Lords institutions, 1 Cor. 11:23, 24. The Lord's Supper we administer for the time, once a month at least, and for the gestute, to the people sitting; according as Christ administered it to his Disciples sitting, (Mat. 26:20. 26.) who also made a Symbolical use of it, to teach the Church their majority over their Ministers in some cases, and their judicial authority, as co-fessors with him at the last Judgement, (Luk. 22:27. to 30.) which maketh us look at kneeling at the Lord's Supper, not only as an adoration devised by man, but also as a violation by man of the institution of Christ, diminishing part of the Counsel of God, and of the honour and comfort of the Church held forth in it.

In time of solemnization of the Supper, the Minister having taken, blessed, and broken the bread, and commanded all the people to take and eat it, as the body of Christ broken for them, he taketh it himself, and giveth it to all that sit at Table with him, and from the Table it is reached by the Deacons to the people sitting in the next seats about them, the Minister sitting in his place at the Table.

After they have all partaked in the bread, he taketh the cup in like manner, and giveth thanks a new, (blesseth it) according to the example of Christ in the Evangelist, who describes the institution
Mat. 26:27. Mark. 14:23. Luk. 22:17. All of them on such a way as setteth faith the Elements, not blessed together, but either of them apart; the bread first by it self, and afterwards the wine by it self; for what reason the Lord himself best knoweth, and we cannot be ignorant, that a received solemn blessing, expressly performed by himself, doth apparently call upon the whole assembly to look again for a supernatural and special blessing in the same Element also as well as in the former; for which the Lord will be again sought to do it for us.

After the celebration of the Supper, a Psalm of thanksgiving is sung, (according to Mat. 26:30.) and the Church dismissed with a blessing.

Sect. III.

In the afternoon after public prayer offered up to God, either by the Pastor or Teacher, and the Word read and expounded by them who preached in the morning (if there be time) and preached by the other, and the Sacrament of Baptism administered, (if any of the Church do offer their children thereunto) the Deacons (who sit in a seat under the Elders, yet in sundry Churches lifted up higher than the other pews) do call upon the people, that as God hath prospered them, and hath made their hearts willing, there is now time left for contribution: presently the people from the highest to the lowest in sundry Churches do arise, the first pew first, the next next, and so the rest in order, and present before the Lord their holy offerings. For in the old Testament at their solemn feasts none was to appear before the Lord empty, Deut. 16:16. And the Lords day is only unto Christians the ordinary solemn feast of the Lord: in the new Testament the Christians laid down their oblations at the Apostles feet, (Acts 4:35.) into whose place, for that service, Deacons were subtituted, Acts 6:3.

And to that purpose the Apostle gave order unto the Churches, that upon the first day of the week every one should lay by him, into the treasury (as the word signifieth) for the supply of the Saints, as God had prospered them, 1 Cor. 1:2. Which ordinance Justin Martyr speaketh of in his time, that the abler sort on the Lords day did contribute to the necessities of the brethren, in the end of the second Apolo-
gy. And Cyprian rebuketh a wealthy rich widow for believing she could celebrate the Lords day (as holy) and yet neglect to contribute to the Lords treasury, in his first Sermon de Eleemosynâ. Locuples & dives Dominicum celebrare te credis, quæ Corbonam omnino non respicis?

After the contribution ended, the time left is taken up in sundry Churches in the public trial and admission of such as are to be received Members into the Church, in such manner as hath been before declared; and so after a Psalm of praise to God, with thanksgiving, and prayer to God for a blessing upon all the ordinances administered that day, and a blessing pronounced upon the people, the Assembly is dismissed.

Besides the celebration of the Lords day, every week we sometimes upon extraordinary occasions, either of notable judgements, do set a part a day of humiliation, or upon special mercies we set apart a day of thanksgiving. The grounds whereof we conceive are generally known and approved amongst Christians. Moreover, every week in most of our Churches, Lectures are kept on some or other of the week days; so that such whose hearts God maketh willing, and his hand doth not detain by bodily infirmity, or other necessary employments, (if they dwell in the heart of the Bay) may have opportunity to hear the Word almost every day of the week in one Church or other, not far distant from them.

SECT. IV.

In all these admissions, onely two or three things may seem to require clearing from the Word of God; as

1. Why in our public prayers, we forbear to use set forms of prescript Liturgies

2. Why in our Sacraments we do not admit the members of the Church of England to the fellowship of the Lord’s Table, and their children to Baptism, as was said before, we did receive the Members of other Churches in this Country.

For the former, the reasons usually given may suffice

1. From the pattern of all the Churches, both in the old and new Testament, God never gave leave to any ordinary Officers of
of his Church, neither did any of them take leave to impose any forms of Liturgy upon any Church. And yet it ever there had been place for prescribing set forms to any, it had been most seasonable in the Jewish Synagogues, whose members being as children under age, (Gal. 4:2, 3.) might stand in most need of such a help. It is easily acknowledged, Moses prescribed a form of blessing, Numb. 6:23. to 26. and David sundry Psalms of praise and prayers; and the Lord Jesus taught his Disciples not only to pray after this manner, but thus, or these words, Luk. 11:2. But neither were these ordinary Officers of the Churches, neither did they prescribe any use but arbitrary and occasional of these forms; as they might suit our occasions. God by immediate revelation, and by the hand of his extraordinary Messengers, may prescribe this or that form to his Church, but will not warrant ordinary Officers (who have only received a common measure of the Spirit) to do the like. God who forbad his people to make to themselves Images or imaginations, inventions, and forms of worship, hath not restrained himself to set up what images or forms himself seeth good.

Object. These forms of prayer or praise, though as they be parts of hoy Scripture they are of God, yet as they are applied without special commandment to be the matter or form of a prayer or thanksgiving at this time, so they are the device of man, &c.

Answ. They are not applied to be matter and form of prayer or thanksgiving without commandment, or at least without such directions as amount to a lawful warrant from God for Moses expressly saith, On this wise shall ye bless the Children of Israel, and say unto them, (Numb. 6:23.) The 102. Psalm is expressed in the title, not only to be a prayer of one that was afflicted, but of any in like estate. And the Apostles exhortation is general concerning all the Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of David, (as well as of others) that we should sing them with holy melody unto the Lord, Eph. 5:19. and Christ's words, Luk. 11:2. When ye pray say our Father, &c.

A second reason why we forbear a set form of prescript Liturgies, is taken from the meaning of the second Commandment, which we conceive prohibiteth such prescript Liturgies.

It is a rule generally known in the exposition of the Commands
ments, that all sins forbidden in the Word of God, are reduced to the ten Commandments, and fall under the prohibition of one of them or other, for there is no sin but is a transgression of some or other commandment of the law, 1 Joh. 3:4. and upon the two Tables of the Law hang all the Law, and the Prophets, Mat 22. 40. Now it is plain, that all sins are not contained in the letter of the ten Commandments, and therefore there is no judicious Expositor of then, but openeth the letter of the Commandments by Synecdoches and Metonymies; Synecdoches to comprehend all sins of the like kind, and all he degrees thereof, and Metonymies to comprehend all causes and means, and occasions thereof so that for opening the second Commandment, which forbids both making and the worshipping of any image or similitude, it is requisite to consider in what sense or respects Images or similitudes are forbidden: Images or similitudes are forbidden in the second commandment, not as objects of worship, for all false objects of worship are the false gods forbidden in the first Commandment; Images then and similitudes are forbidden in the second Commandment, not as false objects of worship, wherein the worship is terminated and fastened, but as false means of worshipping the true God. For so are the Images considered that are forbidden in the Word. The golden calf was not considered as the God of Israel, that brought them up out of the Land of Egypt, but as an Image of that Jehovah which did bring them up out of the Land of Egypt. Whence it is said, that Aaron proclaimed a feast, not to the calf, but to Jehovah, whereof the calf was but an Image. To-morrow, saith he, is a solemnity (or feast) to Jehovah, Exod. 32:5. The Calf therefore was not the god, but the Image of the god which they worshipped, as that which resembled him, and put them in mind of him, helped their hearts nearer to him, or his presence nearer to them: As it is written in the Psalm, that they turned their glory into the similitude of an oxe that eateth grass. Psal. 106:20. And in this oxe or calf they looked at Jehovah as near unto them, and as going with them, and before them, Exod. 32:1. Furthermore, the Image forbidden in the second Commandment, is not only a false means of worshipping, devised by man, but a false manner of worship also; and therefore when the Samaritan-strangers knew not the manner of worshipping God in the Calves of Jeroboam, it is said they knew not the manner
manner of the god of the Country (2 Kings 17:26.) and one of the Priests of the high places was sent to teach them the manner of the fear (or worship) of Jehovah, ver. 28. and so they feared Jehovah after the former manner, ver. 34. and that was in serving him in the graven Images of their own devising, ver. 41.

So that under this one kind of false worship of God its graven Images, is forbidden by a Synecdoche, not only all worship of God in carved or molten or painted Images, (all bodily representations of God) but all spiritual Images also, which are the imaginations and inventions of men, whether they be ordained for worship, as the high places erected to the true God, 2 Chron. 33:17. and the devised feast of the eighth month, 2 Kings 12:33. or whether they be brought in and used for helps and means of worship, as the strange fire of Nadab, Levit. 10:1, 2. and Davids new Cart to carry the Ark, 2 Sam. 6:3. with 1 Sam. 15:13. or whether they be used for manner and form of worship, as preaching in the wisdom of mans words, (or in carnal Eloquence) which is but a painted Image of preaching (1 Cor. 2:4.) and so forbidden in this second Commandment. In like sort, Women praying in public bare-headed, and men covered, 1 Cor. 11. 4, 5. Mens praying or prophecing in strange tongues, and many of them at once, 1 Cor. 14:22. 26. the celebrating of love-feasts in holy Assemblies, together with the Lord's Supper, (1 Cor. 11:21. 23:34.) are all of them Images or imaginations of men, forms or manner, of worship devised and used by man, but not ordained by God, and so forbidden in this second Commandment.

The reason whereof is taken from the perfection of the wisdom of God revealed in Scripture, to make the man of God perfect to every good work, 2 Tim. 3:17. No wisdom of mans device, as any other worship, or any other helps or means of worship, or any forms or manners of worship acceptable to God, but what the wisdom of God hath directed us in his Word. Besides, the Church is complete in Christ, (Colos. 2:10.) so as we need no other Priest to make atonement, him, nor other spiritual King but him to rule our consciences, no other Prophet to teach us but himself, and such as he hath appointed to that end; thus the sum and substance both of Law and Gospel, lead us to rest in the ordinances of God, and not to help our selves by the inventions of men, for the administration of the worship of God. To apply this then to se-L
forms of prayer, devised by and prescribed to be read out of a book, and so taken up by one Church from another, as the forms of their worship, and as the means and help of their devotion, we find no command or pattern for them in the Word, nor any promise of their acceptance. They are enjoined for means and helps of God's worship which He hath not sanctified, and for forms of worship which God hath not acknowledged. What difference is there between the carrying of the Ark upon a Cart, and our prayers upon a Book? whereas both should be carried, the one upon the shoulders of the Levites, the other upon the gifts of the Ministers.

Object. 1. God hath in general commanded us to worship him in public with all manner of prayers and supplication, (1 Tim. 2. 1.) but prayers upon a book, stilted Liturgies, are some manner of prayers.

Answ. God that in general commandeth all manner of prayers, commandeth also in special the several kinds of prayers, whether supplications, intercessions, thanksgivings, or the like. He that commandeth the Genus, commandeth the distribution of it into all its species, but he that commandeth the subject, doth not always command the distribution of it into all its adjuncts; he that commandeth prayer in general, alloweth every kind of prayer, but not every form of prayer for then God should allow prayer in a starnage tongue, prayer before Images, prayer in the corners of the streets, and the like.

Object. 2. If set forms of prescript prayers be unlawful, then set-forms of confession of faith, set-forms of Catechism were unlawful also.

Answ. 1. It followeth not; for the Apostle commandeth us to keep a form of sound words in faith and love, that is, in the principles of Religion, (2 Tim. 1:13.) but he no where commandeth us to keep a form of sound prayer, unless it be a form of directions and instructions, how to pray, and that is included in the former, and we dislike it not.

Answ. 2. The Apostle did not command Timothy to devise himself a form of sound words, & to prescribe the same to the Churches, without suffering ought to be added to it, or taken from it, but what he must commend to others, were the things that he heard of
of Paul among many witnesses, which he was to commit to faithful men who might be able to teach others also, 2 Tim. 2:2.

Thirdly, For a third reason why we do not take up set-forms of prescript Liturgies, is taken from the like proportion of set-forms, both of prescript Liturgies, and of prescript Sermons and Homilies. Prayer and preaching are both of them public duties of the ministerial office. The Apostles tell the Church they will lay down the Deacons employment, that they may give themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer, Act. 6. In the one they are the mouth of God to the people; in the other, they are the mouth of the people unto God. If we prescribe to one another set-forms of prayer, why not set-forms of Homilies? and then neither the Apostle, nor their successors needed to have left off their employment in ministering to Tables, to attend the ministry of the Word and prayer, (Acts 6:4.) for both are prepared to their hands, by the prescriptions of others. Whence also it will follow, that Ministers shall little need to edify the Church by their own gifts received of Christ to that end, but may edify them by the gifts of others. Yea, Ministers, though destitute of ministerial gifts, may be fit for the public discharge of their duties by the help of other mens gifts, both in prayer and preaching and so indeed a prescript Liturgy is properly a maintenance to all Idol dumb Ministers. And in this forbearance of prescript prayers, as we follow the example of the Church of Israel, and of the Apostolical Churches, so we are not destitute of patterns in this case of those that succeeded them. Justin Martyr “In his second Apology for Christians, a hundred and fifty years “after Christ, speaketh of the ruler of the Church, sending up “prayers add praises to God, without mentioning any prescript “form, according to his power (or faculty) of prayer, or thanks-“giving left him by the Apostles or others. And Tertullian about “203. years after Christ, in his Apology for Christians, saith, “they prayed fine monitore, quia de pectore, without a prompter, be-“cause they prayed from their heart, Tertull. Apolog. 30. that is, “(as Zeph. on the place expoundeth it) they prayed not accord-“ing to the dictate of the Saints, to wit, in any form of words “prescribed by them. And indeed if in those bloody times of per-ssecution, the Church had any set-form of Liturgy, wherein they had been injoined a form of solemn prayers for their Emperor, it
it has been an unskillful and sinful neglect, both in Justin and Tertullian, to omit such public evidences of their professed loyalty and devotion to the State.

Sect. V.

Object. The second thing in our administration of public ordinances, whereof many require account of us is, why in the administration of the Sacraments, we do not admit the Members of the Churches of England, either themselves to the Lord's Supper, or their children to Baptism, as we receive the Members of other Churches in this Country.

Answ. Let it first be known what we do, and then consider upon what ground we do it.

1. We do not admit the members of other Churches in this Country, unless they bring with them Letters of recommendation from the Churches whence they came; or at least unless those Churches have made known to us their desire, that their Members coming occasionally amongst us, may be received to the Lords Table, with our own, by virtue of communion of Churches.

2. We do not admit the Members of other Churches to fellowship of the Lord's Table, if either the persons themselves, or the Churches from whence they came, lie under any offence before the Church.

Now the grounds upon which we thus walk, are these.

1. From the power requisite to the administration of the Sacraments, viz. to administer a Sacrament, is not an act of Christian liberty, that every Christian may dispense to whom he please, but an act of power, which Christ hath given to them who are called to be Ministers of the Word, and by them to be dispensed unto the Church, whereof the Holy Ghost hath made them over-seers. They then over whom we have no ministerial power, unto them we may not dispense an act of power; but they who are Members of no Church, we have no ministerial power over them; and they who are Members of other Churches (not of our own) we have no power over them, further then they are recommended to us from their own Churches, either by Letters, or by word of mouth, and such are all the members of the Churches in this Country whom
whom we do admit to communion with us at the Lord’s Table.

But now for our Brethren, who come out of England, many of them are altogether unknown to us; and those who are well known, (and it may be also well approved) yet they bring no Letters of recommendations to us from those Churches who had interest in them, and power over them. And besides, we know that those who have been members of any parish Church in England, when once they remove their dwelling out of that Parish, they are accounted as no longer members of that Church; so that they come over to us as members of no particular Church at all, either in old England or in new; and so they are under the power of no Church, either there or here; how then can we dispense an act of power to them, over whom we have no power at all, either commended to us by themselves, or by the Churches from whence they came? Would it be thought reasonable, in case that any of our Country-men coming over to us, should fall into drunkenness, or whoredom, or other scandalous crimes, if the Church where he sojourneth amongst, should proceed to excommunicate him for the same? were it not an act, Coram non judice? might he not demand justly, by what authority we cast him out of our Communion, who was never yet entered into our Communion? This may therefore yield us a just defence.

They over whom we have no power to censure, (in any case by Excommunication) to them we have no power to dispense the Communion; but so it is, we have no power to censure any of our Congregation (though never so scandalous) by excommunicating unless they first commend themselves to our fellowship.

Therefore neither have we power till then to receive them into our communion.

2. A second ground of their practise we take from the nature of the Sacraments, which though they be seals of the righteousness of faith, (Rom. 4:11.) yet not to all the faithful, or such, but as they are confederate and joined together in some particular visible Church. None may ordinarily dispense a Sacrament of the new Testament, but a Minister of a visible Church, nor may he dispense it to any, but to the members of a visible Church. In the old Testament, none were partakers, either of the Passover, or of Circumcision, unless they were either Israelites born, or Proselytes to the Church.
Church of Israel. Job and his three friends, and Elihu with them, though all of them righteous by faith, and all of the stock and kindred of Abraham, yet we read of none of them to be circumcised; nor is it credible they were; for had they been Circumcised, they would not have kept so deep silence of it throughout all their conference with Job, as they do; especially having so often occasion to urge the pollution of nature from the birth; whereof Circumcision had been a most pertinent and pregnant evidence to convince the same. And wherefore were they not all circumcised, being all of them righteous by faith, but only because they had not opportunity to join themselves to the house of Israel, to whom only the Church, and the Covenant of grace, unto them and their seed, and the seals of the Covenant were granted.

Object. If it be objected, that all that were circumcised amongst the people of Israel, might come and keep the Passover amongst them: but we here withhold the Lord’s Supper from them that are baptized.

Answ. Our answer is, they that were circumcised amongst the Israelites, might righthly keep the Passover amongst them, because the whole Nation of Israel made but one Church, and the Officers or Ministers of any one Synagogue (the Priests and Levites) were Ministers in common to the whole house of Israel. In proportion whereunto they that are baptized in any particular Church, may in like sort require the Lord’s Supper in the same particular church where they are baptized, if there be no other impediment in regard of their unfitness to examine themselves, which is a thing requisite to the receiving of the Lord’s Supper, more then was required to the receiving of the Passover. But now because the Churches of the new Testament are of another constitution, none of them national, as the Church of Israel was, but all of them congregational; Baptism in one Church doth not give a man right to the Lord’s Supper in another, unless the Officers of one Church were the Officers of all, (as in Israel they were) or unless that one Church and the Officers thereof did recommend their right and power to another.

3. A third ground of our practise in this point is taken from the case of public offence, which we conceive ought to be removed from all such as are to partake together at the Lord’s Table; so we deal with the members of our own Church, and so we deal with the members
members of neighbour Churches in this Country: None of them are received unto the Lord’s Table with us, whilst they lie under the guilt of any public scandal before the face of the Church: For it is our Saviour’s direction, that if a man bring his gift to Altar, and there remembers that his brother hath ought against him, he should there leave his gift, and go first to be reconciled to his brother, and then come and offer his gift, Mat. 5:23, 24. If this be a rule for a man’s own private direction, in case of private offences, it will be a rule also for a whole Church to direct an offending brother to do the like in case of a public offence: We do therefore direct both the brethren of our own Church, and of any other Church in this Country, that if they present themselves to communion with us at the Lord’s Table, they should first remove such public offence, as either themselves or the Church from whence they come, do lie under, before the Lord, and us; that according to the figure in the law of the Passover, no leaven must be found amongst us when we come to sit down at the Lord’s Table together.

Now though we rather choose to cover in silence, and to mourn in secret, for any corruptions found in other Churches, especially in these so dear and near unto us, as the Churches of England be; yet in this case, faithfulness to God and them, and the necessary defence of our own due proceedings here, constraineth us to confess sundry public offences, under which our English parish Churches lie, and wherein our selves also were defiled, whilst we lived in them, and our Country-men are defiled that come over to us from them.

1. It is a public offence, that they come over not as members of any particular visible Church, (for they leave that relation where they left their habitation) but of a National Church, whereof Christ hath given us no pattern in the new Testament; and in which he hath appointed no national Churches, nor any national worship to be performed by them.

2. It is a public offence, that though they were baptized in some parish Church in England, upon some Covenant, or stipulation of their parents, or of some in their stead, whom they call god-fathers, which also was without warrant, yet generally they have come to the Lord’s Table without any public profession of their own faith, or repentance, or promise of performance of those Christian duties, which their parents,
parents, or others in their stead, made for them; which is an offence, not only contrary to the order of their own Church, expressed in the Rubric before the Common Catechism, but also contrary to the word of God, which receiveth none to the fellowship of the seals of the Covenant but such as profess their taking hold of the Covenant, as hath been shewed before.

3. It is a public offence, that in their parish Communion, (which not communion of spirit, but co-habitation begetteth) they partake with all ignorant and scandalous persons, not excluding drunkards, whoremongers, prophane swearers, covetous worldlings, Atheists, Papists, and the like; whereby it cometh to pass, that not a little leaven, but a great mass of leaven hath deeply leavened the whole lump.

4. It is a public offence, that they have worshipped God according to the precepts and inventions of men, both in prescript forms of Liturgy, and Letanies, and in such ceremonies, as which though they be not ordained of God, yet are publicly enjoined, as neither dark, nor dull, but apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of duty to God by some notable and special signification, by which he may be edified.

5. It is a public offence, that they have yielded voluntary subjection and obedience to such a form of government in the Church, as the Lord Jesus hath not appointed in his Word, and have approved the same, whether by subscription, or by oath of Canonical obedience, or by conformity to their usurpations and injunctions.

These, or such like public offences, as we have bewailed in our selves, (so far as we had any fellowship with them) so we have thought it needful, that our brethren also who came over to us, should profess their repentance of the same, at least in a positive acknowledgement, of the contrary sincere ways of the Gospel, before they be received to Communion with us.

**Sect. VI.**

If these grounds may suffice to justify our non-admittance of all the Country-men promiscuously, that come over to us to the fellowship of the Lord's Table, without further satisfaction, the same also (or some of them at least) may suffice to justify our non-admittance
mittance of their infants unto Baptism. Infants cannot claim right unto Baptism, but in the right of one of their parents, or both: where neither of the Parents can claim right to the Lord’s Supper, there their infants into cannot claim right to Baptism. And they cannot claim right to the Lord’s Supper, if it be so that we have not lawfull liberty to administer the Lord’s Supper to the Parents, or to one of them, at least, either for our want of due power over them, or through their want of Communion with the Church, (whereof the Sacrament is a seal) or by reason of some public offence which they lie under; (as hath been already opened). Surely though this third reason reach not Infants, yet the two former do, and prevent as their Parents of just claim of the Lord’s Supper, so them of due right of Baptism with us. For neither have we power over them, neither have they communion with any particular Church, being dismissed from the Church where they were baptized, and recommended to none.

Against this sundry things are objected, and such (as seem) of much weight; as

1. That the Sacrament of Baptism hath been administered to some who were no members of any visible Church, and therefore why not to the Children of non-members? as Philip baptized the Eunuch, Acts 8:37, 38. and Peter baptized Cornelius and his household, Acts 10:47, 48. Paul baptized Lydia and her household, the Gaoler and his household, Acts 16:15. 33. To which we answer three things.

First, The Apostles had an unlimited power, and might baptize believers professing the faith, and their seed, wheresoever they came, but the power of Pastors and Teachers is limited to their own particular visible Church, which hath called them to minister unto them.

Secondly, It cannot be proved, that the Apostles or Evangelists baptized any but such as either were members of some visible Church before they preached to them, or else they gathered them into a visible Church estate, before they baptized them. The Eunuch in Acts 8. was a Proselyte to the Church of Jerusalem, for the Text saith, he came up to Hierusalem for to worship, Acts 8:27. Neither let any mam object, that his membership at Hierusalem would not intitle him to Baptism, seeing Baptism is a Sacrament of the Christian
Christian Church, not of the Jewish; for whatsoever member of the Jewish Church, as believed in Christ as the Messiah, and professed that faith, he was capable of Baptism; for such they were whom John baptized, \textit{Mat. 3:6} and Christs Disciples, \textit{Joh. 4:2}. yea all the Israelites were baptized in the cloud and in the Sea, in the days of Moses \textit{1 Cor. 10:2}. As for \textit{Lydia}, and the Gaoler, and both their families, they lived together in the same City of \textit{Philippi}, \textit{Act. 16. 12.} where was a company also of other brethren, \textit{ver.} 4. and from the beginning of the Gospel (which doubtless was when he preached to them, \textit{Acts 16.}) he speaketh of them as a Church; \textit{Know ye Philippians} (saith he) \textit{that in the beginning of the Gospel, no Church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only, Phil. 4:15}. Which evidently holdeth them forth as a Church at that time, and that \textit{Paul} did first gather the brethren there into a Church, when he baptized \textit{Lydia}, and the \textit{Gaoler}, and others there. And indeed the Commission which Christ gave his Apostles, holdeth it forth, that they were by preaching to make Disciples, before they baptized them and their children, \textit{Mat. 28:19}. Now a Disciple (as the meaning of the word implyeth) is a Scholar in Christs school, and therefore when the Apostles were directed to make Disciples before they did baptize them, they were not only to convert them to the faith, but also to gather them as Disciples or Scholars into a School of Christ; and the School of Christ is every particular visible Christian Church, wherein some are teachers, some are Disciples or Scholars, and his Discipline is exercised amongst them. Neither is it credible, that the Apostles would baptize any, that is, apply to them the seal of the Covenant given unto the Church, before they had taught them the Covenant itself, and entered them into it, in which regard we cannot easily think, that when \textit{Peter} baptized \textit{Cornelius} and his family he did only perceive they had received the holy Ghost, and evidently professed the same in new tongues, (\textit{Acts 10:45, 46, 47.}) but that he did also gather them into one \textit{body}, directing them to the spiritual use of the newly received gifts in the Communion of Saints, and baptized then, into the fellowship of the Lord Jesus, and of one another in his Name.

Thirdly, We answer, as the Apostles were transcendent Officers of the Church, so they received transcendent power to administer
minister their work. As the Father sent Christ, so Christ sent them, Joh. 20:21. to wit, Cum amplitudine & plenitudine potestatis, with all fulness of power, so that any one Apostle received both the gifts and power of all the Officers of the Church. Any Apostle might do the work, not only of an Apostle, but of a Prophet, of an Evangelist, of a Pastor, of a Teacher, of a Deacon. They do foretell (as Prophets) things to come, Acts 27:22. They travelled up and down not only to plant Churches, but to water Churches, as Evangelists, Acts 15:41. They as Pastors feed the flock of Christ with wholesome words of exhortation, Joh. 21:25. They as Teachers of the Gentiles, as Paul speaketh of himself, taught them in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. They (as Elders) ruled the Church, not as Lords, but as examples to the flock, and as Deacons they received the oblations of the Church, and distributed the same according to the necessity of the Saints. Yea, though when the Apostles came where Churches were planted, they did put forth no act of transcendent authority, but did all with the consent of the Church; yet in the absence of the Churches, they might do any act which any Church, and all the Officers thereof might do together. As for ought we know they might in such a case impose hands alone; so Paul might set apart Timothy to some special office, 2 Tim. 1:6. they might alone deliver unto Satan, 1 Tim. 1:20. they alone might baptize, in as much as the presence, and the power, and fellowship of any one of them, did comprehend as much as the presence and power and fellowship of the whole Church together their acts therefore in such transcendent cases, are not patterns, nor presidents for us; but according to the measure of the gift of Christ, we are to move in our own line, and to act only as the Ministers of Christ and his Church, in the presence and fellowship of the Church.

2. It is objected again, that children of excommunicated persons, such as being cast out, are not holden as members of the Church, has yet right unto Baptism, and therefore it is not well done of us to deny the Baptism of the children of such as are not Members.

That children of Excommunicated persons have right to Baptism, they prove by sundry Arguments.

1. From the consideration of the divers sorts of Members;

Rev. 1:1.
1 Tim. 2:7.
Acts 4:35.
some are members not actually, but in the eternal Counsel of God, as Paul before his conversion.

2. Some are members only in shew and appearance, as hypocrites, which are as wooden legs fastened to the body.

3. Some are lively members, knit to Christ by faith, to the brethren by the spirit of love.

4. Some are decayed members, which though they belong to God's Election, and are truly ingrafted into Christ Jesus, yet for the present have no lively sense of the power and virtue of Christ: these are like a leg or arm to a man that hath a dead palsy, which though it remain for a time without feeling and nourishment, yet being joined to the body, it may be recovered by the virtue of some strong medicine, and made whole as the other.

Of this sort are Excommunicated persons, for in regard of their ingrafting, they are true members, and cannot be quite cut off from the body of Christ, Joh. 10:18. And though they be holden as cut off from the holy Communion of the faithful by the Churches censure; as also became Christ ratifieth in heaven, what the Church hath done on earth; and likewise because in themselves they want the free passage of the life and virtue of the spirit of grace, till they be touched with repentance; yet they are not wholly cut off from the society of the faithful, because the seed of faith remaineth in them, and that knitteth the bond of conjunction with Christ.

Answ. Those godly learned Divines, who do thus argue, we do so highly esteem, and so deeply reverence in the Lord, that were the cause our own, and not the Lords, we should rather let it fall, then defend it, by opposition to the grave judgements of such holy Saints. But because we may not accept persons in the things of Christ, we are forced to excuse our selves from submitting to their judgements in this cause, which yet generally is others we yield unto them; Our answer therefore is, that howsoever such excommunicate persons as are truly faithful (notwithstanding the censure of excommunication) because the seed of faith remaineth in them; yet to the society of the faithful, joined in a particular visible Church, they are not knit, but wholly cut from their Communion: for it is not the seed of faith, nor faith itself, that knitteth a man to this or that particular visible Church but
but an holy profession of the faith, and professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ in their Communion. Which profession, when a faithful man hath violated by some notorious scandalous crime, or by wilful obstinacy, in standing out in any offence against the rule of the Gospel, he is now delivered unto Satan, and therefore wholly cut off from the Communion of the Church, and consequently from the seals thereof: himself from the Lords table, his seed (which are his members) from Baptism: he is not now as a dead paley member, cut off from the body; Ne pars sincere trahatur; the Lord Jesus may fill lay hold upon him by his Spirit, when yet he cannot in any lively manner for the time lay hold upon Christ; and so he may still remain a member of the invisible Church of the first-born, when yet he hath neither part, nor portion, nor fellowship in the particular flock and visible Church of Christ Jesus, but is as an Heathen, or a Publican.

Now because the Sacraments are not given to the invisible Church, nor to the members thereof, as such, but to the visible particular Churches of Christ Jesus, and to the members thereof; such therefore as are cut off from their memberlike Communion with the visible Church, are cut off all from the seals of that Communion, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. As therefore we do not receive an Heathen to the fellowship of the Supper, nor their seed to Baptism, so neither dare we receive an Excommunicate person (who is to us as an Heathen) unto the Lord’s Supper, nor his children to Baptism.

Object. it is objected again in the behalf of the children of Excommunicate persons, that it is not in the power of man to cut them off from Christ, though they be excommunicate: the personal sin of the Parent, may not keep the blessing from the child, and therefore not deprive it of the liberty of the ordinance of God.

Answ. The same power of Christ that ratifieth the Censure of the Church against the Excommunicate parent, though it do not cut off the child from Christ, (no more then the Father) yet it cuts him off from the outward fruition of the Covenant of Christ with his Church, and from the seals thereof: For as Christ gave the childe no right unto Baptisme, but by the Fathers right unto the Covenant, and Communion of the Church; so if he taketh a-way
way the Fathers right from the Covenant and Communion of the Church, he taketh away the Childtens right also. The personal sin of the parent is not in this case a mere private or personal sin, but the sin of a public person of his family. For as the profession of his faith at his receiving into the Church was as the profession of a public person, for receiving him and his children (who could make no profession, but by his mouth) into the Church: So his violation of his profession by a scandalous crime, was as a public violation thereof, for himself and his seed, who stand and fall before the Church in his name and person.

Object. It is yet further objected, We must always put a difference between persons Excommunicate, which do not make separation from the Church, (though they be grievous offenders) and open Apostates (which join themselves with the enemies of the Church, to the ruin and overthrow of the Gospel,) and between Turks and Infidels, that are forth of the Covenant, and never belonged to Christ.

Answ. We willingly put a difference between the Excommunicate persons and Apostates, and Turks; to wit, in such things wherein they differ. Excommunicate persons are nearer to help and means of conversion then Turks; For Excommunication itself is a means of salvation, 1 Cor. 5:5. and Turks are nearer then Apostates; For better it were never to have known the way of righteousness, then after they have known it, to turn away from the holy Commandment given unto them, 2 Pet. 2:21. But yet in this they all agree, they are all of them as Heathens, Mat. 18:17. And therefore neither the Parents to be admitted to the Lord’s Table, nor their children to Baptism.

2. Command. Object. Moreover, it is still further objected in behalf of Infants, If the mercy of God enlarge itself to thousands, why should men question whether such Infants belong to the Covenant, and so keep them from the Sacrament of Baptism, which is due to them by the right of their Ancestors?

Answ. 1. If the extension of Gods mercy to thousands, be a sufficient ground to extend Baptism to the children of Excommunicate persons, in the right of their Ancestors; it may suffice as well to extend it to the children of Turks and Infidels, and Apostates, and so the difference of the one from the other (urged in the last Argument)
ment) will be taken away. For it is not above 66. Generations from Noah to Christ, as is plain in the Genealogy, Luk. 3:23. to 38. and there have not passed as many more generations from Christ's time to the Turks and Infidels of this present age. And then if God's mercy to a thousand Generations may fetch in the Children of Excommunicate persons, the same promise may fetch in all Turks and Infidels at this day; we dare not therefore improve the large extension of God's mercy so far as to give a thousand Generations right and title to the Covenant of God with his Church, and to encourage the Ministers of the Gospel to let the seals of the covenant thereunto.

The true meaning of the promise we take to be, That God out of his abundant grace and rich mercy, may and doth extend thoughts of redeeming and converting grace and mercy unto thousand Generations; But he never allowed his Church any warrant to receive into their Covenant, and Communion, the Children of godly parents, who lived a thousand years ago, much less a thousand Generations. Nay rather the Text is plain, that the holiness of the children, dependeth upon the faith of the next immediate parents, (or of one of them at least) 1 Cor. 7:14. to wit, such faith as denominated them Christian-believers, in opposition to Pagan Infidels: and that holiness of the children to such parents, is called Federal, which receiveth them into the Covenant, and to the seals of it.

Object. Lastly, it is objected, that children born in fornication, have right to Baptism, and why not then the children of Excommunicate parents? The wickedness of parents ought not to prejudice the children in things that pertain to their salvation.

Answ. The wickedness of the Parent doth not prejudice the Election, or Redemption, or the faith of the child: Jephta, a bastard, is yet reckoned up in the Catalogue of Believers, Heb. 11:32. But yet in the old Testament a Bastard was not admitted to come into the Congregation of the Lord, to his tenth Generation, Deut. 23:2. and that could not but prejudice all the base-born children of Israel, and that in the things which pertain to their salvation. And though God sheweth greater grace to them in the days of the Gospel, yet greater grace cannot (by proportion of any rules of the Gospel) be expected for them from the Church, then this, that notwithstanding
standing the sin of their parents, they may be received into the Congregation of the Lord, and so unto Baptism, either when their parents repent and acknowledge their sin before the Lord and his Church, or when themselves are able to make a better profession of better things in their own persons.

It is generally known, that our best Divines do not allow the Baptism of Bastards, sine sponsoribus; But whether they consider Sponsors, as witnesses, as some do who fetch allowance of witnesses from Isa. 8:2, 3, 4. or whether they consider them as Sureties, the holy Scripture gives no warrant for either in such a case. The place in Isaiah giveth no foothold for Witnesses in Baptism. The Prophet called not Uriah for a witness of the Circumcision of his child; but of the conception of a man-child yet unbegotten, and of the Prophecy of such events as were to fall out during the infancy of the child; nor was it meet the Prophet should honour so wicked a time-server ever as Uriah was, to be a witness of the Circumcision of his child; though the more prophane and idolatrous he was, the more fit and faithful a witness of a miraculous prediction, to the conviction of an incredulous King, and people: And as for Sureties, the Covenant is not intayled to Sureties, to such as for whom they undertake, but to faithful parents, pertaining to the family of the Church, and to their seed. It is true indeed, there is a large promise to Abraham, stretching the Covenant to his feed, not only to the children of his own body, and to his proselyte servants, but also to all that were born in his house, or bought with money, Gen. 17:12, 13. which happily may grant so much liberty to a Christian Sponsor, that if a stranger or wicked man should give him a child from his infancy to he brought up as his own, it may be baptized as his own: But that is the utmost bounds of liberty in this case. And very doubtful it is, whether the promise pertain only to the children of Proselytes, either strangers or born in the house. But we know not any ground at all to allow a faithful man liberty to entitle another mans child to Baptisme, only upon a pretence of his owne promise to have an eye to his education, unless the child be either borne in his house, or resigned to him to be brought up as his owne.

Chap.
CHAP. V.

Touching the Dispensation of the Censures of the Church.

SECT. I.

We proceed not to Censure, but in case of known offence, and such offence as cannot be healed without Censure. Two sorts of offences there be, some private between Brother and Brother; Come public and notorious, being known to the whole Church; or at least to many. And of them, some are more gross and heinous, some less.

If the offence be private between Brother and Brother, the Brother offended is to follow the Rule of Christ, Mat. 18:15, 16, 17. That is, first to go and tell him of his fault, or (as the word signifieth) Convince him of his fault, and to admonish him of it privately; So that the plaister may be no broader then the fore; private admonition is most suitable to a private fault, and expresseth both the wisdom and love of the Brother, who in so doing, both healeth and covereth the offence at once: If the offender take the admonition in good part, (as taking part with the admonition against his own sin) the Brother hath won and gained him both to God and himself: to God by repentance; to himself by this experiment of his brotherly love: But if the offender hear not his Brother, but takes part with his sin against the admonition, he then taketh one or two more with him, (such as in wisdom he thinketh to be most fit to prevail with him) that so by the mouth of two or three, his word of admonition may be established; or if the offender hear them not, his word of accusation to the Church may be established: And they coming to the offender and acquaint him with the cause of their coming to bring him to the sight of his sin, which they understand is committed by him; they first call upon the name of Christ to be present with them in this duty according to his promise, Mat. 18:19, 20. where he hath said he will be present with any two or three that are met together in his name, to ask of him, (for it is upon this occasion, and this chiefly upon which the promise is made.)
made.) And the brother offended layeth open the offence before them, and declareth how ill the labour of his love was accepted before, and desireth their help, to assist him in the conviction of the offender. If they can prevail with him to acknowledge his offence, and to be humbled for it, the soul of the offender is healed, thanks are given to God, and mutual love renewed and increased among themselves. But if the offender deny the fact, and there is none to prove it but the Brother that brought them, they can proceed no farther, because the testimony of one against one, will not stand in judgement, Deut. 19:15. If he acknowledge the fact, but do not acknowledge the sinfulness of it, but stand stiffly to justify it, the the Brother first offended telleth the Church of it, to wit, in God’s way. He telleth the Elders, who are the mouth of the Church, that by them it may be presented before the Church, and the cause heard and examined, and judged by them. Then one of the Elders, either by himself, or calling forth the Brother offended, declareth the offence given to him by such a Brother, and what course he took with him (according to the rule of Christ) to heal his Brother. First by private admonition, but so he prevailed not to bring him to a sight and sense of his sin; then how neither so could he or they revail with him; which they being present, do openly testify before the Lord and his Church: And so by the mouth of two or three, the word of his accusation is established before the Church.

The Church being thus informed of the estate and carriage of the offence, the Elders do labour in public with the offender to convince him, both of his sin and impenitency under it, notwithstanding all the faithfulness, and love of his Brethren, in seeking to heal his spirit in private. It is free also for any of the Brethren (leave and liberty being first desired and obtained of the elders to help forward the conviction by any words of wisdom and zeal which God shall put into their mouths; wherein if the convictions and persuasions of the Church do prevail to any kindly humiliation of the offender in the acknowledgement of his sin before the Lord and his Church; the offender is gained, the sin is subdued, others discouraged from the like offence, and the Church is satisfied.

But
But if on the contrary the offender stand out in defence of his sin, as well against the whole Church, as he did before against the Brethren, who dealt with him in private, the Church then entcreth into consideration of the Nature and Quality of the offence, whether it be gross and heinous, such as is condemned by the light of nature, (like those cast out by the Apostle 1 Cor. 5:11.) or whether it be such as (through some mist of ignorance, or strength of present passion) he doth not clearly discern the sinfulness of it: if it be of the former sort, they proceed then to excommunication, both in respect of the nature of the crime (whereof more hereafter) as also in respect of his contumacy to the Church. If it be of the latter sort, the Church proceedeth not forthwith to excommunication of the offender, but after once or twice admonition; For in this case it is with the offender as with an Heretic, who may err at first, and stand in his error, for want of clear light, and is therefore once and again (according to the rule of the Apostle, Tit. 3:10) to be admonished before he be rejected: when therefore an admonition is judged seasonable, one of the Elders, with the consent of the whole church, doth recollect the offence, and all the arguments of weight, which have been publicly or privately used to convince the offender of his sin, and discovereth to him also, that invalidity and shallowness of all his answers and evasions; and and thereupon doth solemnly, in the name of the Lord, admonish and charge him to see the danger of such a sin, and distemper of his soul, it maintaining of it; that so (if it be the will of God) he may be recovered out of the snare of the Tempter. Whilst the Brother is thus cast, and lyeth under the censure of admonition, he standeth in the judgement of the whole Church, as a convinced public offender; and therefore, till he be reconciled to the Church by the penitent and public acknowledgement of his sin before them, he doth abstain from the Lord’s Table; according the direction of our Saviour, who would not have on offender present himself nor his gift before the altar, whilst the guilt of the offence of his brother lay upon him, Mat. 5:23, 24. or, as the Priests in the Law did forbear to eat of the holy bread, whilst they lay in uncleanness, Lev. 22. 3, 4. or, as one who lying in his uncleanness, did rather pollute the holy Ordinance of God by partaking of it, then receive any holiness from it, Hag. 2:12, 13.

The offender then by this public admonition being debarred of
of his wonted fellowship in the Lord’s Table, and with all being so-
lited, and urged by his brethren and friends, to consider his great
distemper of spirit, in standing out so long in that which is evil;
If hereupon (by the grace of Christ) he come to himself, and see
his sin, and desire to reconcile himself to the Lord, and his bre-
thern, he then acquainting one of the Elders with his desire, is called
forth in the face of the Church, to make public confession of his
sin, and to judge himself for it; wherein, if the Lord help him to
hold forth an ingenuous and humble loathing of his sin and of
himself for it; they bless God for his blessing upon his ordinance,
and readily receive him into wonted favour, and brotherly fellow-
ship with them, in all the liberties of God’s house; but if on the con-
trary the spirit of the brother grow more & more hardened in his
sin, and stand out against all means (public and private) of his
reformation, the Church having waited a convenient time, and yet
finding their brother wax worse and worse, (as is commonly seen
in such cases, wherein men are not humbled under such means)
then, according to the rule of Christ, Matth. 18:17. one of the
Elders propounding the case, first to the whole Church, and they
giving their consents (as before for his admission, so now for his
expulsion) he setteth his sin in order again before him, with all
the circumstances and aggravations of it, especially how he hath
taken in vain, and made unprofitable all other means for his reco-
very; and therefore now, in the name, and with the power of the
Lord Jesus, and with the consent of the whole Church, he pronoun-
eth him cut off from the communion of the Church and delive-
reth him unto Satan, as an Heathen or a Publican, for the destru-
cption of the flesh, that his soul may be saved in the day of the Lord
Jesus; and all this according to the direction of the Holy Ghost,
Matth. 18:17. 2 Cor. 5:4, 5.

Sect. II.

A

nd thus the Church proceedeth, in case the offence be pri-
vate at first, and and less scandalous; but if the offence be
public, and hainous and grossly scandalous, such as is condem-
ned even amongst the Heathens, by the light of nature; as those
mentioned by the Apostle 1 Cor. 5:11. Fornication, Adultery, Incest,
Murther,
Murther, Rayling, Extortion, and the like; or such as an generally accounted damnable and detestable amongst Christians, as Idolatry, Blasphemy, Prophaneness, &c. We take our selves bound to proceed more roundly against such; for in such cases the Apostle doth not direct us to such gradual proceedings by private admonitions, but if any Brother (saith he) be a fornicator, or covetous, or an Idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a one no not to eat: For it doth not stand with the glory of God, or honour of his Church to accept an acknowledgement of such gross and scandalous crimes without further censure; but it becometh the Church, (being a communion of Saints) rather to free themselves from the guilt and fellowship of such notorious wickedness, by expression of their zeal and just indignation against such sins by calling out the committers thereof from fellowship amongst them; for though the blood of Christ, and the repentance of an offender do remove any offence, though never so heinous in the sight of God and man, yet God being jealous of his own glory, and of the honour of his Church, is not wont ordinarily to grant repentance unto such notorious sinners, until the censure of the Church have passed upon them.

Whilst the offender lyeth under the censure of excommunication, though he be excluded from the communion of the Church, and so from the Lord’s Table, and from all other liberties of Church-fellowship (as voting in elections, admission of members, censures, &c.) yet we do not debar him from entrance into the assembly of the Church in time of preaching the Word, or Prayer, or such other worship of God, as is not peculiar to the Church; for this liberty we do not forbid to Heathens and Indians; and persons excommunicate are but as Heathens, in respect of worship, although worse then Heathens (even as Publicans) in respect of familiar private communion; for though we might eat with an Heathen, (1 Cor. 10:27.) yet with a Publican the Jews would not eat, Mat. 9. 11. no more may we with excommunicate persons, 2 Cor. 5:11. But we do not read that an Heathen was forbidden to hear the Word in the Synagogues, though they were not permitted to enter into the Temple (which was to them of a Sacramental nature) Act. 21. 28:29. nor might they enter as members into the Congregation, Deu. 13:3. to 8. But suppose Heathens were forbidden to hear the Word,
Word, even in the Synagogues, yet seeing that wall of partition between Jews and Heathens is now broken down, as in other respects, so in this, that it is not now unlawful for an Infidel or Heathen to come into the assembly of the Church (1 Cor. 14:23, 24, 25.) As therefore we do not deny the like liberty, either to Indians or Negars; so excommunicate persons: Moreover, this further compassion and succour we afford to an excommunicate person, that though we have call him out of our liberties and priviledges peculiar to Church-fellowship, yet we have not cast him out also of our hearts, nor out of our prayers, nor out of our care to recover such a lost sheep into Christs fold again; and therefore still, though we forbear all familiar fellowship with him, and counted nance towards him, that he may be ashamed; yet we account him not as an enemy, but still take opportunity to admonish him as a Brother, 2 Thess. 3:14,15. And if we find by the blessing of God and Christ upon the censure, or by the rebukes of many ministred unto him, that the soul of the excommunicate person be humbled (as it was the case of the incestuous Corinthian, 2 Cor. 2:6.) the Elders discovering the same, do call him forth before the Church, where he giving glory to God, and confessing his sin, and the justice of God against him, and holding forth a repenting frame of spirit, to the satisfaction of the Church, they do with common consent forgive him and comfort him, and confirm their love to him, by receiving him again into communion with the Church, and into all the liberties of God’s House, as before.

Sect. III.

In all these transactions of Church proceedings, when we say we do this or that with common consent, our meaning is, we do not carry on matters, either by the over-ruling power of the Presbytery, or by the consent of the major part of the Church, but by the general and joint content of all the members of the Church; for we read in the Acts of the Apostles, the Primitive Church (which is a pattern for succeeding ages) carried all their administrations, δόμηθαι αὐτοῖς that is, with one accord, Acts 2:46. as becometh the Church of God; which ought to be of one heart, and one soul, of one mind, and one judgement, and all to speak the same thing, Act. 4:32. 1 Cor.
1 Cor. 1:10. Phil. 2:2, 3. But if is to fall our, that any
difference do arise, (as sometime there doth, through the remaining
darkness of our minds, seeing we all know but in part) then
such as do dissent from their Brethren, are required to propound
the grounds of their dissent; which if they be weighty, and held
forth from the light of the Word, all the rest do submit, and yield
thereunto, not as to the voice of their Brethren only, but as to the
voice of Christ; whose voice alone must rule in the Church and
all the sheep of Christ will hear it; and all the upright in heart
will follow it; thus Paphnutius is said to turn about the whole ge-
neral Council of Nice, in the point of Ministers marriage. But if
the grounds of such as do dissent, do upon due consideration ap-
ppear to have little or no weight in them, the officers of the Church,
or some other of the Brethren, do declare unto them the invalidity
thereof: If they be satisfied, the matter in hand doth then proceed
with the common consent of all; if they be not satisfied yet, it is
either through want of light, (and so through weakness of judg-
ment) or through strength of pride, and so through stiffness of will.
If the former be the let, they take further pains, lovingly to inform
them, and patiently bear with them, till matters be further, clear-
red; so that at length, they come either to consent, to go along
with their Brethren, or at least to be content to refer the matter to
the judgements of their Brethren; and for their part to sit still, and
to make no farther dealings with the Churches proceedings; but
if through partiality or prejudice, their dissent do appear to spring
from stiffness of will, or from a spirit of contradiction, (which yet
falleth out very rarely) in so much, that they will not be brought
(by loving and brotherly information) to give way to the better
judgements of their Brethren, the Church doth proceed with com-
mon consent to admonish them of their pride, and self-willedness,
and so leave them under the censure of admonition; whereby the li-
berty of their voice is taken from them, till they have removed this
offence from the spirits of their Brethren; but if it do appear that
the dissent, whether of one or more Brethren, do arise from such
darkness and intricacy of the matter in hand, as that the officers
and members of the Church do find themselves either unable to
clear the matter fully, or at least unfit, in regard of some preju-
dice which may be conceived against them, (which somtimes doth
fall
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fall out, though very seldom) in such a case, when the matter is weighty, and the doubt great on both sides, then (with common consent) we call in for light from other Churches; and entreat them to send over to us such of their Elders, or Brethren, as may be fit to judge in such a cause; upon their coming, the Church meeting together in the Name of Christ, the whole cause, and all the proceedings in it, are laid open to them; who by the help of Christ, pondering and studying all things according to the rule of the Word, the truth is cleared, a right way of peace and concord discovered and advised, and the spirits of the Brethren on all Parts comfortably satisfied.

Sect. IV.

In there transactions we know not what might be subject to exception, or controversy; but only that we allow, to the people so much power in the: censures of the Church, both in binding an offender to admonition and excommunication, and in loosing of penitents from the same. But the Reasons that prevail with us to take this course, seems to us to have evident ground from Scripture-light; and therefore may excuse us from following the pattern of such Churches as rather consult with human wisdom then divine institution in this case.

Our first Reason is taken from the royal rule of Love and Wisdom, in healing offences, given by our Saviour, Matth. 18:17. where he directeth a Brother offended, for the healing of the spirit of an offender, finally to refer the matter to the Church. Tell (saith he) the Church. Now we cannot find throughout the new Testament, that ever the word Church is taken any otherwise then for the Society and Congregation of the faithful; unless it be once, where it is taken for a evil Assembly, Act. 19:41. But never for one Bishop, or Counsellor; or Archdeacon; for neither doth the Scripture acknowledge any of these offices in the Church at all, (as hath been shewed above) taking a Bishop, as now they stand; nor can the Church, which is a word of multitude, hold forth a Bishop or his Commissary, who is but one Person: For, though one person may represent a whole Church when he is sent forth in the Churches name, with instructions from the Church; yet such is not the case here:
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here: The Bishop cometh in his own name, and the Commissy in the Bishops name, but neither of them in the Churches’ name, nor with instructions from the Church; but rather with destructions, or at least with disturbance to the Church. Neither is the word Church taken throughout the new Testament for an Assembly of Presbyters: the Consistory is a word unheard of there. Nor are any complaints directed thither, unless it be to prepare them for the hearing & judgement of the Church; As all the Elders are said to be assembled in the house of James, to prepare and induct Paul for the carriage of his matter before the Church. Nor are any Censures of the Church committed to the Presbyters alone, to be administered by them; though they be to be administered by them in the presence, and with the consent of the Church. And therefore when the Angels of the Churches in Asia are blamed for neglect of proceeding against offenders, (whether Balaam, or Jezabel, or the Nicholaitons) the charge is given not to the Angels of the Churches only, but to the Churches also themselves; Let him that hath an ear hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches, Revelation 2:17,29. And though the word Congregation, which is all one with Church, be sometimes put in the old Testament for Elders or Judges of the Congregation; yet

1. It is far more frequently put for the Elders and body of the people met together, as he that observeth the several places shall find it.

2. When it is put for the Elders and Judges of the Congregation, as Numbers 35:12,24,25. it is never understood of them sitting in a Consistory by themselves apart from the people, but in the presence of the public Assembly of the people, who also had liberty in such cases to rescue an innocent from unjust punishment. 1 Samuel 14:45.

Objection. In Matthew 18:17. when Christ directeth the Brother offended to tell the Church, he speaketh of such a Church to whom we may orderly, and ordinarily complain; now this we cannot do to the whole multitude.

Answer. We willingly grant, it will be orderly to tell any offence to the Elders of the Church, before it be presented to the multitude of the Church, both because they are the mouths and guides of the Church: and also meet it is all things be prepared by them for the Churches cognizance, that so the Church be not cumbered, (as sometimes it might) with unnecessary and frivolous agitations.

But
But though the *Elders* in such a case have *power to direct and persuade what were best to be done*, yet not *power to judge and determine public Cases*, without the consent of the *Church*; unless the Brother offended be satisfied in their advise.

*Answer* 2. When a whole multitude is assembled in a body, any offence may be orderly and ordinarily told unto them, by a complainant; especially in case any Officer amongst them shall call him forth to tell his complaint: As the *Levite* orderly told his complaint to the *whole multitude* of the Congregation of *Israel* assembled at *Mispah*, Judges 20:3,4, &c.

*Objection* 2. The *Church* Christ directeth unto, he presupposeth to be the ordinary Executioners of all Discipline and Censures, which the multitude is not: And the reason ratifying the Censure of the *Church*, doth show the number of them to be small, *Matthew* 18:20, where two or three, &c.

*Answer*. The multitude of the *Church* doth ordinarily execute all Discipline and Censures *by the Presbyters*, and the *Presbyters* by *their Consent*. The promise made to two or three (ver. 20.) respecteth not the *Judges* of the cause when it is brought to the *Church*; but the *two or thee Brethren who dealt in the Cause before it came to the Church*: As in like sort, the promise of *binding in heaven, what the Church bindeth in earth*, (ver. 19.) pertaineth to the ratifying of the Censure of the *whole Church*, mentioned in the verse before, to wit, in vers. 17.

A second *Reason* why we allow such power to the people in *Church-censures*; is taken from the practice of the *Church* of *Corinth*, in the case of the *incestuous person*, and that according to the *Apostles* direction; For in the 1 Corinthians 5:4,5 he directeth the *whole Church* of *Corinth*, (to whom he writeth) That they in the name of the *Lord Jesus*, when (saith he) ye are gathered together, and my *Spirit*, with the *Power* of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, to deliver such a one unto *Satan*. Where *Paul* laying in the verse foregoing, that *he had judged already* that so it should be done, doth not argue that now the *Church* was at hand, he took the *power of judging* the *Cause wholly unto himself*, and the publication and declaration of it only in the *Church*, but that *he had seen already evident cause, to judge the party worthy to be cast out*: but directed them to do it with all the power that is requisite to that action:

As 1.
As 1. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the principal power of all Church-censures resteth.

2. When they (that is, the whole Church) are gathered together: not the Bishops, nor the Presbyters alone.

3. And Paul’s spirit with them, to wit, much of Apostolical Authority being committed to the Church, and present with it in such cases.

4. He speaketh of the power of the Lord Jesus with them in this action, which holdeth forth their Authority.

5. When the Excommunicate person was humbled under this Censure, Paul beseecheth them to forgive him, to comfort him, to confirm their love unto him, 2 Corinthians 2:7,8. Now they who have power of forgiving an offender, have power also of binding him under wrath: Ejusdem potestatis, &c. ligare, &c. & solvere.

Objection 1. All this argueth no more, but that some in the Church had this power, to wit, the Presbytery of the Church, but not the whole body of the people.

Answer 1. There is no word in the Text that attributeth any power to the Presbytery apart, or singularly above the rest: But as the reproof is directed to them all, for not mourning and taking the offence to heart, that the offender might be taken away from amongst them, (ver. 1,2.) so is Commandment directed to them all, when they are gathered together, to proceed unto the casting of him out: in like sort, in the end of the Chapter, he exhorteth them all again, Put away therefore (saith he) from amongst you that wicked person, ver. 13. and that by a judicial power, (to wit, as under Christ,) do not ye judge them that are within, ver. 12. And lest this Judgment should be restrained to the Presbyters only, he magnifieth the judgements of the Saints, taking occasion from hence to stretch their Judicature, in some cases, even to Civil matters also; Know ye not (saith he) that the Saints shall judge the world? yea the Angels, 1 Corinthians 6:2,3. And thereupon he encourageth them to betrust the deciding of my Civil Cause depending between Brethren, to the Judicature of the meanest Brother in the Church, (ver. 4.) rather then to fly suddenly unto Civil Magistrates, especially amongst the Heathen.

Objection 2. But if the power of Judicature be committed to the whole Church, together with the Presbytery, then all he multitude shall
The way of the Churches of Christ in New England

shall be made Governors, and who then shall be governed?

*Answer.* The multitude of Brethren are governed by the Elders, so long as they rule aright, to wit, whilst they hold forth the Word and voice of Christ, which the sheep of Christ are wont to hear, *John 10:4*. But in case the officers do err, and commit offence, they shall be governed by the whole body of the Brethren; though otherwise the Brethren are bound to obey and submit to them in the Lord, *Hebrews 13:17*.

*Objection 3.* A democratical government might do well in *Athens*, a city fruitful of pregnant wits, but will soon degenerate to an Anarchy (a popular tumult) amongst rude common people.

*Answer 1.* It is unworthy the spirit of so godly learned a man as maketh this objection, to preferre *Athens* before *Jerusalem*, *pregnant wits* before *sanctified hearts*.

*Answer 2.* Though the government were democratical (as it is not) yet there is no tumultuous disorder, where not the *will* of each man beareth the sway, but the *voice of Christ* alone is heard, who is the Head and wise Monarch of the Church.

*Objection.* If it be said, tumult, and disturbance, and confusion cannot be avoided where the multitude have all of them, no only leave, but power to speak, and one will be ready to take the word out of the others mouth, and one of them to thwart and contradict one another; and will not this make the Church of Christ a confluence of Cyclops?

*Answer.* All such disorder is easily and timely prevented by the Elders, who have power from Christ to restrain any man’s speech, whilst another is speaking; and to cut off any man’s speech that growtheth either impertinent or intemperate: the Elders having received in special manner the power of the keys, they have power to open and shut the doors of speech and silence, in which respect the government of the Church is not meerly democratical, but as the best governments be) of a *mixed temper*; in respect of *Christ* (whose voice only must be heard, and his rule kept) it is a *Monarchy*; in respect of the *peoples power* in choosing officers, and joint power with the officers in admitting members, in censuring offenders, it is a *Democracy*; in respect of the *officers* instruction and reproof of the people in the public ministry, and in ordering of all things in the Assembly, it is an *Aristocracy*; what is so
good in any civil government, is in Church-government; and what is found evil is by the wisdom of Christ safely avoided and prevented.

But that we may more distinctly declare ourselves wherein lieth the difference of their mutual authority, both of the Church over the Elders, and the Elders over the Church, we conceive the Church exerciseth several acts of authority over their Elders, to wit, in three cases

1. In calling and electing them to office, and in ordaining them also thereunto in defect of their Presbytery.

2. In sending them forth upon the public service of Christ, as the whole Church at Jerusalem sent forth chosen Ministers with letters of instruction to Antioch, and other Churches, Acts 15:22. Now the Ambassador is not greater then he that sent him, but usually inferiour, John 13:16.

3. In case of offence given by any Elder, or by the whole Eldership together, the Church hath authority to require satisfaction of them, and if they do not give due satisfaction, to proceed to censure according to the quality of the offence. For we see when some of the Church of Jerusalem took offence against Peter, for communicating with the Gentiles, and contended with him about it; Peter condescended to give ample and due account of his actions to the satisfaction of them all, Acts 11:2. to 8.

If admonition, and (in some cases) excommunication be ordinances of God sanctified for the healing of the souls of God’s people gone astray; it were a sacrilegious injury to the Elders, to deprive them of the benefit of such wholesome medicines, when the estate of their souls should come to stand in need thereof: and it being a ruled case, Cujus est instituere ejus est destituere; If Plebs obsequens præceptis Dominicis & ipsa (as Cyprian saith, lib. 1. Ep. 4.) maximè potestatem babet dignos Sacerdotes eligendi, then, as he saith there also, potestatem etiam babet Sacerdotes indignos recusandi, & abdicandi.

On the other side, the Elders have rule over the Church, and do express it in sundry acts of authority: as,

1. In calling the Church together upon any weighty occasion, Acts 6:2.

2. In opening the doors of speech and silence to any of the Assembly,
Acts 13:15 unless it be where the Elders themselves lie under offence or suspicion of offence; and the offended parties may begin with them, Acts 11:2, yet with due reverence observed, as to their years, so to their place, 1 Timothy 5:1.

3. In preaching the Word, the Elders have power to teach and exhort, to charge, command, to reprove, and rebuke, with all authority, 1 Timothy 5:7 & 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6. Titus 2:15.

4. In dispensing all the censures of the Church (unless it be in their own cause:) for though they take the consent of the Church, in dispensing a censure, yet they set it on with great authority, in the Name of the Lord; yea, it is no small power they put forth in directing the Church what censure is due, according to the Word; as in our native country, though the Judge dispense no sentence but according to the verdict of the Jury, yet his authority is great, both in directing the Jury to give in their verdict, according to the law, and in pronouncing sentence with power and terror according to the law, and their verdict. The like do the Elders, in dispensing Church-censures.

5. The Elders have power to dismiss the Church, and that with a blessing, Numbers 6:23 to 26 which is an act of superiority, Hebrews 7:7.

6. In case of the Apostasy of the Church, or of other notorious scandal committed by them, and their obstinacy therein, the Elders have power to denounce the Judgement of God against the Church, and to withdraw themselves from it. As upon the Idolatry of the Israelites, Moses took the Tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, Exodus 33:7. and Paul with Barnabas, rejected the Jews for their blasphemy, and turned to the Gentiles, Acts 13:45,46.

CHAPTER VI.

SECT. I.

E come now to that last part of our order, which standeth in our communion with other Churches amongst our selves; though one Church claim no power, either of Ordination or Jurisdiction, over another, (for we know of none such given us by Christ) yet we maintain Brotherly communion one with another, so far at we may also
also help forward our mutual communion with the Lord Jesus. The communion of Saints is accounted an Article of the Creed; and communion of Churches is but a branch thereof. Seven ways there be, wherein we exercise holy communion one with another; which for distinction and memories sake, we may sum up in so many short names: First, by way of Participation: secondly, of Recommendation:thirdly, of Consultation:fourthly, of Congregation:fifthly of Contribution:sixthly, of Admonition:seventhly, of Propagation, or multiplication of Churches.

1. For Participation, we have occasionally spokcn of it before; it is allowed by the consent of our Churches; that when the members of any other Church are occasioned to rest with us on the Lord’s day, when the Supper cometh to be administered, (and neither the persons themselves, nor the Churches they come from, lie under any publick offence) we do admit them to the participation of the Lord’s Table with us: For we look at the Lord’s Supper, not only as a seal of our communion with the Lord Jesus, but also of our communion with his members; and that not only with the members of our own Church, but of all the Churches of the Saints.

Sect. II.

By way, of Recommendation, we communicate one with another in this wise; When any of our members by occasion of business is called to reside and continue for any time in another “Town, we give him Letters of recommendation unto the Church in that place, giving testimony of him as of a Brother approved, and intreating them so receive him in the Lord, (as becometh Saints) unto holy Communion with them, and to watch over him in Brotherly love, to his building up in fellowship with the Lord Jesus: The pattern wherof we take from Pauls recommendation of Phœbe (a Deaconess of the Church of Cenchrea) unto the Church of Rome, Rom. 16:1, 2. Of which Letters he maketh mention also to the Church of Corinth, though not as needfull for himself, but for others, 2 Cor. 3:1. But if a Brother have necessary occasion to remove himself and his family for all together unto another Church, and there to take up his settled habitation, for the necessary employment of his
his calling, or for other just ends, he acquainteth the Elders of the Church, and some of his intimate friends and brethren, and it may be (if conveniency permit) the whole Church with the grounds of his removal; which if they do appear to them to be just and weighty, they then write more ample Letters of recommendation unto "that Church in his behalf; wherein they do recommend him "wholly to their charge; now not as one of themselves, but as one of "theirs, to whom they do resigne him, and intreat them to re- "ceive him as a Brother, beloved in the Lord, unto all those "Christian liberties, and holy duties, wherein they are wont to "Communicate with their own members, unto all spiritual "growth in Christ Jesus." Which Letters, because they do so ful- ly recommend a Brother unto another Church, are to dismiss him from his owne; we therefore for distinction sake, call them Letters of dismission; which indeed do not differ from the other, but that the former recommendeth him to another Church for a time, these for ever.

The Brother thus dismissed to another Church, bringeth his letters to the Elder of that Church, who reading them before the Church, demandeth the Churches content for his acceptance. If he be well knowne and approved of them, they expresse their consent, either by lifting up of hands, or by silence: but if the man be wholly unknowne, and doubted of by them, though they re- serve due honour to the testimony of the Church which sent them, yet for as much as Churches may erre sometimes, as well in judgement of persons, as of doctrines; (Hanc veniam petimusq; damusq; vicissim) we cake libertie to take some tryall of his spirit and gifts, and then either upon his just approbation of him,we receive him, or if we see just occasion of offence in him, we return him with the cause back again to his owne Church, who receiveth him again into her own fellowship, and takes care for his healing; for we look at our Church-Covenant, as an everlasting Coven- nant, Jer. 50:51. And therefore though it may be translated or re- signed from one Church to another, as God's hand shall direct, yet it is not to be rejected or violated by us, but onely by the mem- bers cutting off himself from the fellowship of the Church by such demerit, as exposeth him to the just censure of Excommunication. But if a member be importunately desirous to remove wholly from the
the Church where he is unto another, and yet the grounds of his removal favour of nothing, but levity, or covetousness, or schism, or the like, according to their Covenant of brotherly love, and faithfulness; the brethren of his own Church labour to convince him of his sinful weaknesse, herein to disswade him from his purpose, to which counsel, God usually toweth his heart to stoop and submit: But if after all their disswasions, they shall see the bent of his spirit unremovably set upon removal; in such a case, if his sinne be not apparent, and his danger imminent, they use indulgence towards him, as not willing to make the Church of God a prison to any man. But when men thus depart, God usually followeth them with a bitter curse: either taking away their lives from them, or blasting them with poverty, or exposing them to scandal where they come, or in entertaining them with such restless agitations, that they are driven to repent of their former rashness, and many times to desire to return to the Church, from which they had broken away.

Sect. III.

Our third way of communion with other Churches, is by way of Consolation, whereof we have given some touch before; as 1. In time of the gathering of a Church, the Brethren who desire to enter into Church-estate, do give notice to all the Churches about them, and desire the presence of their Elders, and of such other Brethren as they shall see meete to send to helpe them with their counsell, in discovering the spirits and competent gifts of such members, as should joyne with them in that worke; And further, to give counsell, and direction, in the ordering of that day; as hath been shewed above.

2. In the choice and ordination of Officers, one Church is wont to send all the rest about them, for such Elders, and Brethren, as may give counsell and direction to their proceedings, and approbation of the same, as the matter shall require; as hath been formerly delivered.

3. In case of difference of judgement amongst the Brethren of a Church, in the administration of Church-Censure, and the like, to prevent all suspition of partiality or preudice, the Church is same
time soccasioned to send to the neighbour-Churches (one or more) for the assistance of some of their Elders, and Brethren, to help them with their counsell, in discovering and judging of the causes depending amongst them, who giving advice according to the Word, do by the blessings of Christ heale jealousies, and compose differences, and settle peace and love amongst them; and this also hath been mentioned before.

4. In doubtfull cases arising in the Church, whether of judgement or practice; where yet no difference hath risen, but all or most are uncertaine, what were fit to be done; as whether a child may be baptized by right of his Grand-fathers Covenant, or the like; the Church doth sometimes send Letters or Messengers, to crave the counsel of other Churches; who deliberate by considering and arguing the matter, and agree upon what they conceive most agreeable to the Word; each Church sendeth their judgements, and their reasons, either by Elders, or by Messengers, to the Church that sent to them.

Sect. IV.

A Fourth way of our communion with other Churches, is by way of Congregation, or gathering together many Churches, or the messengers of many Churches to examine and discuss, either some corrupt opinions, or suspicious practices, which being scattered, and found in many Churches at once, cannot well be healed in any one alone. In which case the Elders of the Churches; desirous to maintain verity, and unity of judgement in matters of doctrine, and integrity of life throughout all the Churches; do both acquaint our Magistrates, being nursing fathers to the Church, with the necessary occasions and ends of a general and a solemn assembly, and do also solicit the Churches to send some fit persons, at such a time, to such a Church (where assembly be most seasonably held) to consider and discern of the matter in question and agitation.

The assembly being met in the name of Christ, and his presence called for by humble and earnest prayer, the matters to be discussed and cleared, are propounded by some or other of the Elders of that Church, where we meet, or by some other appointed by them, and consented to by the assembly.

When
When the matters are propounded, the Elders do declare their judgements of the points in order, one after another, together with their reasons from the Word, at which time it is free for any man present (and all may be present, if they will) as well the Messengers of the Churches as others, (after leave orderly craved or obtained) to propound their doubts, without offence) whence disputation doth arise (as in Act. 15:7.) till all parties be either, satisfied or convinced, and so the matters in controversie are cleared and this course is taken for the clearing of all the points remaining, which may seem to some not so fully cleared, and agreed upon, and the nature of them such as may admit further discussion; yea, and difference of apprehension, without disunion of affection, or disturbance of the Churches peace; yet for satisfaction of God’s people the mean while, in such things each man is left to his Christian liberty: So far as thy are all come, they judge and mind one thing; If any be otherwise minded who in simplicity of heart seeketh the touch, and in meekness of wisdome and love holdeth forth the same, we hope God will in time reveale the same unto him: in the mean time all agreeing in this one, not to condemn, nor to despise one another in differences of weaknesse, according to the Apostles rule, Rom. 14:2, 3, 4.

Sect. V.

A Fifth way of communio with other Churches, is by contribu- tion, or communication in yeelding supply to one another’s wants: for (according to the ancient president, in the Primitive Churches) if any of our Brethren should fall into such decay as not to be able to supply, their own necessities, in outward things amongst themselves, we should take it our bounden duty, to minister to their wants, according to our abilities, Act. 11:29, 30. Rom. 15. 25, 26. Hitherto, the Lord hath been pleased, out of his all-sufficient goodness, so to supply us all, (each Church within it self) as that we have had scarce (any occasion never but once) to exercise our mutual love and liberality to one another in this kind; but if need should require, we consider aforehand what mutual help God requireth of us from one towards another in such a case.

Also, if any of our Churches do want some fit members to im-
ploy in some publike office amongst them and shall make known
their want of some other Church, who may abound in such bles-
sings, (sometimes the Church at Antioch had four or five Pro-
phets among them, Act. 13:1. when others wanted) the Church that
aboundeth in such helps, is ready to send and commend such of
their members as their selves may spare, and are fit for office, (but
not called to office amongst themselves) to supply the necessities
of their Brethren.

Sect. VI.

A Sixth way of communion amongst our Churches, is by way
of admonition: as if one Church should be credibly given to
understand, of some scandall arising in another Church whether
by corruption of doctrine, or in manners, and upon diligent search
and inquiry, the report is found true; the Church hearing there-
of, sendeth Letters, or Messengers, or both, unto the Elders of
that Church, where such offence is found, and exhorteth them to
take a speedy and diligent court for the redress thereof; but if
the Elders of that Church should be remiss therein (or be faulty
themselves) they then certifie the whole Church thereof, to call up-
on their officers, as Paul sent to the Church of Coloss, to call upon
Archippus, to take diligent heed to the fullfilling of that work of
the Ministery, which hee had received of the Lord (Col. 4:17.) If
the Church heare them, the scandall is removed; if it heare them
not, the Church offended herewith, taketh in the help of two or
three Churches more to joyne with them in their exhortation, or
admonition.

If still the Church where the offence lieth persisteth in the neg-
lect of their duty, and of the counsell of their Brethren; either the
matter would be referred to a Congregation of many, or all the Churches
together; (if need should require) or else, if the offence be evident and
weighty, and of ill, though not generall consequence, the Churches
offended with them would (as justly they might) withdraw them-
selves from the right hand of fellowihip, and so forbeare all such
exercises of mutual brotherly communion with them, which all
the Churches of Christ are wont to walk in one towards another.
We have never yet been put to the utmost extent of this duty to-
wards
wards; of our Churches: The Lord hitherto so far preventing with his grace, that no Church hath stood out so long in maintaining any offence found amongst them: But if it should so fall out, (which God forbid) we look it as our duty to be faithful, one Church to another in like sort as the Brethren of the same Church are called to faithfull one towards another; Do not Churches injoy brotherly Communion one with another, as well as brethren of the same Church? The Church in the Canticles took care, not only for her own members, but for her little sister, which had no breasts, Cant. 8:8. And would she have taken no care of having her breasts healed, if her breasts had been distempered, and given corrupt milk? The Apostles had a public care (by virtue of their office) of all the Churches, 2 Cor. 11:28. And is the public spirit of grace and love dead with them? ought not all the Churches of Christ, to have a care and watchful eye over the public good of one another? Though not virtute officii, yet intuitu charitatis.

Sect. VII.

The seventh and last way of the Communion of our Churches, is by way of propagation, or multiplication of Churches; Though this was a peculiar eminency of the Apostolic calling for them in their life-times to travel into all Nations, to preach the Gospel, to beget Disciples, to gather them into Church-estate, and so to plant Churches wheresoever they came: yet that which they did by vertue of their office, is reserved unto the Churches of Christ, to prosecute and carry along (according to their measure) throughout all generations, and in all Nations, for the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, unto the end of the world.

The power of the keys, which was immediately given by Christ unto his Apostles, is also given by Christ unto all the Churches, in that fulnesse of measure, which the establishment and enlargement of Christs kingdom, doth require.

If then any particular Church of Christ shall come in process of time to be so far multiplied, as that like Bees when the hive is too full they are necessarily occasioned to swarm forth (as it is Indeed the case when the voice of their Ministers cannot reach to all)
all) in such, or in the like case, the Church surcharged with multitude, may send forth sundry of their members, fit for the purpose, to enter into Church-estate amongst themselves; or if a number of godly Christians shall come over into a Country, where they finde the Church so full that they cannot with convenience joynie with them, the Church may comfortably encourage them, to enter into holy Covenant amongst themselves. They may also commend both unto the one Company, and unto the other, such able gifted men, whom they may fitly choose, to be Minister and Officers to them, and both then when they enter into Covenant and gather into Church-estate, (as hath been shewed in he beginning) as also when they go about to choose and ordain Church-Officers amongst themselves, the Churches already established ought to be ready to help them, with their presence, counsel and assistance, so far as shall be found requisite for the propagation and enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, in the multiplication of Churches according to the order of the Gospel.

Thus have we given unto all our holy Brethren, throughout the Churches of our Lord Jesus, a just and true account of all our proceedings in Church-affaires; so far as concerneth our way and order amongst our selves. If we fall short of the Rule, in some thing or other go astray, it is our humble and earnest request unto all our godly learned Brethren, that they will be pleased, *Erranti comiter monstrare viam*; but if the way we walk in be upon serious and mature consideration, to be agreeable to the rules of the Gospel (as we verily believe it is) let all the upright in heart be entreated, in the name of the Lord Jesus, not to judge or speake evil of the ways of Christ before his people; But rather seeke how to address themselves, and to call on others to walk in the straight steps of the Lord Jesus, in the kingdom of his grace, till we shall all come to meet him in the kingdom of his glory.
Chap. VII.
Of the way of reformation in the Congregations in England.

Sect. I.

We take not upon us as ἀλλοτριοπίσκοποι, to prescribe unto our Brethren in England, (men of their Churches, and eminent lights in the world) what course to take in pursuing and perfecting the great work of Reformation in England, Nay, we know our own Tenuity, and the store of business enough which we have to attend unto neere home: Nevertheless, as we cannot cease to pray for, and seek their good as our own; so we cannot but rejoice with them to behold that open doore which God hath set before them, and with that all their hearts were so far enlarged towards the Lord, and to his ways, as we heare his hand is enlarged towards them. Onely being absent in body, but present in spirit, we crave leave to beare witnesse to them, and with them; That if the Lord be pleased to prosper his worke amongst them, it is possible to reduce the estate of the Congregations in England, to such reformation, as is suitable to the patterne revealed in the Gospel, according to the way of Primitive simplicitie, described above.

Four things we observe in the estate of the Churches in England, which make way for Reformations amongst them.

First, The efficient instruments of their first plantation, which were either Apostles, or Apostolical men, whether Philip, or Joseph of Arimathea, or Simon Zelotes, as any of our Countrymen may read in Mr. Foxes booke of Acts and Monuments, in the beginning of it, next after the story of the ten Primitive Persecutions, our of Gildas, Tertullian, Origen, Beda, Nicephorus. Which being so, we cannot but conceive the Churches in England were rightly gathered, and planted according to the Rule of the Gospel; and all the corruptions found in them since, have sprung from Popish Apostasy in succeeding ages, and from want of through and perfect Purging out of that leaven in the late times of Reformation in the dayes of our Fathers. So that all the worke now is, not to make them
them Churches, which were none before, but to reduce and restore them to their Primative Institution.

Secondly, The publick Service-booke acknowledgeth, That in the Primitive Church, there was a godly Discipline; That notorious sinners were put to open penance, and punished in this world; that both their soules might be saved in the day of the Lord, and others admonished by their example, might be the more afraid to offend. Which godly Discipline, is a thing (saith the Book) much to be desired, that it might be restored again. See the beginning of the Comminations against sinners. It is therefore acknowledged by the very state of the Churches of England, that the present estate of Church discipline, is not perfect, but defective, and swerving from the Primitive godly discipline.

Thirdly, In the publick Rubrick before the Catechism, it is ordered, That when children come to yeares of discretion, and have learned what others promised for them in Bapsisme, they should then themselves with their own mouth, and with their own consent, openly before the Church ratifie and confirme the same: And also promise, that by the grace of God, they will evermore endeavour themselves, faithfully to observe and keep such things as by their own mouth and confession they have assented to. Which course the Booke in a few words after acknowledgeth to be agreeable with the usage of the Church of times past, That children coming to perfect age, having been instructed in Christian Religion, should openly profess their own faith, and promise to be obedient to the will of God. Which direction (if it were as duly observed, as it is expressly ordered) doth plainly hold forth, that the Church of England (as they call it) doth not acknowledge any to be confirmed members of the Church, and unfit to partake of the Lord's Supper, till they have expressly confessed their faith openly before the Church, and promised obedience to the will of God. Which if it be seriously done, and not perfunctorily, is somewhat of like nature with our receiving of members into the Church, and joyning them by Covenant.

Fourthly, In the Exhortation before the Communion, the Minister “is directed to denounce unto the people, That if any of them be “a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of his Word, “an adulterer, or be in malice, or envie, or in any other grievous “crime,
crime, they should bewaile their sinnes, and not come to that  
holy Table, lest after the taking of that Sacrament, the Devil  
enter into them, as he entered into Judas, &c. Which plainly  
argueth, they would allow no scandalous person to partake in the  
Communion of the Lord’s Table: All these things presupposed,  
really performed, and serioully attended to, might open a door  
to sundry passages of a more full and perfect Reformation.

SECT. II.

Tendering certain Propositions tending to the Reformati-
on of the Churches in England.

Propos. 1. Where godly Miniurers be already planted in any  
Congregations, let them (with due encourage-  
ment from the State) call the people to solemne humiliation be-  
fore the Lord for their own sins, & those of their fathers they have  
imitated. So did Ezra, and Nehemiah, with the Levites and Priests,  
and upon the like ocsions, Nehem. 9:2. 2, 3, 4. Ezra 10:1, 2:9, 10.  
For though the Parliament, & the whole Kingdome have protested,  
and Covenanted Reformation for the time to come, yet they have  
cause also to be humbled, and that throughly for the time past.

2. Let such of the people, is are of good knowledge in the ways  
of God, and of approved conversation, take up that course which  
the Service-book (as hath been said) giveth an hint of; Renew their  
Covenant formerly made in Baptism, professing their faith and repen-  
tance, and promising Reformation of life, not onely in their private con-  
versation, but also in their publick Communion in the Church of God,  
yielding professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ in the fellowship of all  
his holy Ordinances.

3. Let no Minister, that loves the Lord Jesus better then his own  
belly, stand upon his advocation from his Patron, but rather expect  
his vocation from his people.

4. For this end let every patron restore his jus patronatus to the  
Church. Or if it seeme too hard a thing for them to part so freely  
with their freehold, (though they ought freely to give unto Christ,  
who have received freely from him) the Parliament may be plea-  
sed to give them a competent part of the revenues of the Benefice,
(as they call it) and annex it to their own private inheritance, reserving so much to the use of the Church, as may strengthen their hands in a sufficient maintenance of their Ministry; for though things dedicated to sacred use, cannot be alienated, or diverted to private use without sacrilege, yet that holdeth in such things as are so dedicated to sacred use, as that the Lord accepted, as sacred to himself: But God nowhere in the new Testament, hath expressed his acceptance, or allowance of lands, dedicated to the ministry, but onely to the service of the whole Church, and then for the Churches service they may be disposed of by their consent; as sometimes the Kings and Princes of Israel gave away the treasures of the Temple, to save themselves from captivitie, 2 King. 18. 15, 16.

5. The people having called or chosen their Minister (one or more unto office in a day of humiliation, let them in the presence of the Ministers of other Churches depute some of the gravest and godly members of the Church, to lay their hands upon him, with prayer over him in the name of the Lord, letting him apart to that office. The whole Congregation are said to anoint Zadok to the office of an high Priest, as well as Solomon to be King, 2 Chron. 29. 22. Which is a sacred right, as Imposition of hands and this the whole body, of them could not do, but by deputing some eminent persons among them to the performance thereof: But after they be furnished with Elders, (a Presbytery of their owne) let Imposition of hands be given by them (according to 1 Tim. 4:14.) to such as for the future shall be ordained.

6. For the making up of a Presbytery, in stead of Parson and Vicar (wherewith some Congregations are endowed) let them choose Pastors and Teachers; and Ruling Elders, in stead of those who crept into their room, viz. the Church-wardens, and Sidesmen. But let them choose and ordaine them in a day of humiliation (according to Acts 14:23.) and not for a yeare onely, but during life; and let the Presbyteries of all neighbour Churches, take all opportunities to make use one of another, for brotherly consultation, but not for Jurisdiction, and Authoritie one over another. And in stead of Collectors or Overseers for the poore (who crept into the room of Deacons) let Deacons he chosen as hath been shewed above; but not as members of the Presbytery.

7. Set
7. For set forms of prayer, or prescript Liturgies, let them not be enjoyned unto the Ministers of the Churches; but let the Ministers as well give up themselves wholly unto prayer, as to the Ministry of the Word, *Act. 6:4*.

8. Baptism may orderly be administred to the children of such parents, as have professed their faith and repentance before the Church, as above. Or where either of the parents have made such profession; or it may be considered also whether the children may not be baptized, where either the grand-father or grand-mother have made such profession, and are still living to undertake for the Christian education of the childe; for it may be conceived where there is a stipulation of the Covenant on God’s part, and a restipulation on mans part, there may be an obligation of the Covenant on both parts, *Gen. 17:7*. O if these faile, what hindereth, but that if the parents will resigne their infant to be educated in the house of any godly member of the Church, the childe may be lawfully baptized in the right of its household Governour, according to the proportion of the law, *Gen. 17:12, 13*.

9. Let the Lord’s Supper be administred onely to such, as have so professed their faith and repentance publickly, and are received & approved members of the Church, endued with sufficient knowledge, to examine themselves, and to discerne the Lords body: free from scandall, and of good conversation.

10. Let Officers in the Church, be redressed, and removed, not by presentments to Officers of other Churches, but according to the order of the Gospel, described above, *Chap. 5. sect. 1, 2, 3*.

11. Where the Ministers of the Congregation are ignorant or scandalous, meet it is that they were removed, and better chosen in their roome by the people; according to the counsell & direction of the godly Ministers and brethren of neighbour Churches, *Hos. 4:6*.

12. Where the people in a Congregation are generally ignorant and profane, it were necessary godly Preachers were sent forth with countenance from the King and State, to preach unto them, till they were brought onto knowledge, and to some measure of gracious reformation. Thus *Jehosaphat* sent forth Priest and Levites, to teach in the Cities of Judah, and certaine Princes and Nobles with them, to countenance the good worke in their hands, 2 *Chron. 17:7, 8, 9*.
13. Till the people be in some sort duly prepared, and grown up to some measure of knowledge, and grace, it were neither meet to receive them to a renewing of their Covenant formerly made at their Baptism, or to the seals of it. But after they have been wrought upon by the Ministry of the Word, to lament after the Lord; as the Israelites did when the Arke had been long absent from them, 1 Sam. 7:29. then let them proceed as other godly Christians were directed to do, Propos. 2, 3, &c. for renewing of their Covenant, for choice of their Ministers, and Officers, and for Communication in all the liberties of the Church of God.

14. For the helpe of the Universities (of the whole Kingdom, and of all the Churches in it) it were necessary, that some experienced godly learned Nobles and Ministers were deputed, to visit and reforme the Universities; That subscriptions to Ceremonies and prescript Liturgies were removed; That degrees in Divinity were not abused unto qualifications for pluralities, and non-residency, nor allowed in the Ministers of Churches, to put a difference between brethren of the same calling, whence Christ hath removed it, Matt. 23:8, 9, 10. The Καθηγητής there mentioned, is not to be translated Master; for it is a Title common to all Ministers, but Doctors; and the Academicall title of Doctors fitter for Masters of Colledges, & Readers in the Schooles, then for Church-officers. Here also special care would be taken for setting up of such Preachers in both the Universities, as whose spirit, and gift, and Ministry, might be examplary patterns to young Students.

15. For the effectuall and orderly expedition and transaction of all these things, it were requisite, that as King Jehosaphat did, so the King and State should depute some choice persons to do the same, to wit, to goe throughout all the Kingdome, to see the people returned, and all the Churches reproved to a true state and course of Reformation, 2 Chron. 19:4.

All which things are humbly presented by us, not as if we would undertake to give Counsell them that are wiser then our selves, much lesse, Injunctions; But as Subjects who desire to approve our faithfull service to the Lord, and our King, and Countrey, hold them forth as true Consectaries from the Rules of the Gospel, which should rule us all.

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* * * So the Author, though yet we cannot come up to him in that.


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