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R E V I E W  
O F A  
D I S C O U R S E  
O F T H E  
V I S I B L E and I N V I S I B L E  
C H U R C H of C H R I S T.  
B E I N G A  
R E P L Y to M r. S Y K E S's Answer to  
that Discourse.

*The Laws of the Church, whereby for so many Ages we have been guided in the Exercise of Christian Religion, and the Service of the true God; our Rites, Customs and Orders of Ecclesiastical Government are called in question. We are accused as Men who will not have Christ Jesus to rule over them, but have wilfully cast his Statutes behind their Backs, hating to be reformed and made subject unto the Scepter of his Discipline. Behold therefore we offer the Laws whereby we live unto the Trial and Judgment of the whole World, &c.*

Hooker Eccl. Pol. Lib. I.

By JOHN ROGERS, D. D.

THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed for THO. WOODWARD, at the *Half-Moon* against St. Dunstan's-Church, Fleet-street. 1722.





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T H E

P R E F A C E.

**T**HE Reverend and Learned the Dean of *Worcester*, having mentioned with some Approbation that mean Discourse of *The Visible and Invisible Church*, which I offer'd to the Publick; it appear'd, it seems, to Mr. *Sykes* to deserve his Animadversions. I verily think that the Question, as it lies between this Gentleman and me, might have been left to the Reader, under the Terms which he proposes, and that I need not much have feared the Censure of any one who should attentively compare what each of us had said on

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Mr. S's  
Pref. p. 1.

*the respective Heads.* So far as I am able to discern Truth from Error, I may presume to say, this worthy Person has not refuted any one Position by me asserted, in the Sense in which I asserted it, or defended any one Position by me oppos'd, in the Sense in which I oppos'd it. But from the short View I took of that Subject in my Discourse, I perceived it to be of great Extent, to take in many important Questions within the Compass of it, to deserve a much larger Consideration, and upon which I might usefully employ my Leisure in the remaining Part of my Life. I was therefore easily determin'd to review what I had written, with a due Regard to what had been objected to it, that I might the better judge what requir'd *Correction, Enlargement, or Support.* What occur'd to me in that Revival, it was my Intention to have digested into a Form, rather of *Direct Assertion*, than of *Personal Controversy*; but the many  
 necessary

necessary Engagements of my Time, obliged me to lay aside that Design, and will, I hope, be my Excuse to the Reader for offering these Reflexions to him, under a Form which I wou'd not willingly have chosen.

WHETHER Mr. S. or I are the ablest Disputants, is a Point of so little Concern to the World, that I shou'd think a Sheet of Paper thrown away, which was employ'd in the Decision of it. But the Question which lies before us, is of great Importance, and cannot be too largely discuss'd. 'Tis perhaps a Defect scarce wholly to be avoided in *Personal Controversies*, that each is more solicitous to defend his own Way of Arguing, and invalidate that of his Adversary, than to clear and establish the Truth; to Object as much, and Affirm as little as they can: But he who disturbs the Peace of the World, only to shew his Skill in Disputation, deserves to be treated as a publick Incendiary. Truth is the only justifiable End to be fought for in Controversy;

and if I am not wholly free from the common Defects of Writings of this kind; yet this I can with good Conscience declare, that I have endeavour'd with an honest and upright Heart to follow Truth: And wherever any Point offer'd it self, that appear'd material, and the Clearing of which I hop'd might give Light to the main Question before me, I have departed from the usual *Reserve* of a *Defendent*, and according to my Abilities, pursu'd it to its proper Conclusions.

THE Power of the *Civil Magistrate* in the Church, the Reader must have observ'd, was only transiently mention'd by me in my *Discourse*, without any Intention to enter into the Grounds and Measures of that Authority, but rather to set it aside as a Subject foreign to the Inquiry before me, which related only to *Ecclesiastical Power*.

To do Justice to that Important Subject, would require altogether as large a Consideration, as what I intended on Powers properly Ecclesiastick. As

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( vii )

I then declin'd it for that Reason, so the same will be my Excuse for passing over what Mr. S. has objected on that Head; especially since the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of *Oxford* \* has encouraged us to hope, That *whenever it is made necessary to him, he will write professedly on that Argument.* His Lordship will I hope suffer this *Necessity* to be brought on him by the Request of his Friends, tho' no Adversary should think fit to provoke him to it. By so great a Master we may expect to see this Subject plac'd in a clear and distinct Light: But if no better Hand can be prevailed on to undertake it, the little Service I am able to do the Church of *Christ* shall not be wanting, on that or any other Question, which I shall be call'd upon to consider.

I am persuaded, the *Right* of the Magistrate to such Power may be deduced from clear Principles, and that

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\* Def. of Charge, p. 32.

when the *Limits* of it are ascertain'd, it will be free from any Objection, but what lies equally against all Authority committed to Men, *viz. That it may be abused.* In the mean time I cannot but observe, that while some are labouring to subvert those Principles, upon which every Christian Church subsists as an *Ecclesiastical Society*, others are with equal Affiduity employ'd to deprive them of all Protection from the *Civil State*, and root out the very Notion of an *Establish'd Church*. These appear to be the natural and necessary Tendencies of the *late Schemes* advanced amongst us, in the most impartial Judgment I am able to make of them, from the broken imperfect Manner in which they have been propos'd.

Mr. S. takes it ill, that the *Scheme lately contended for* should be call'd a  
Pref. p. 12. *Destructive Scheme: The Destruction*  
meant, he says, *is only to Abuses,—*  
p. 13. *The Amendment contended for, only of*  
*Faults: But,*

1<sup>st</sup>, BEFORE we shall be oblig'd to part with any thing establish'd, I hope he will permit us to be convinc'd that 'tis an *Abuse*, and ought to be *remov'd*.

2<sup>dly</sup>, IF we are to take the Catalogue of *Faults* and *Abuses* from this Gentleman, and *remove* all that he objects to, so far as I can perceive, the whole Polity of the Church, and the very Essentials of it as a *Visible Society*, are to be given up. But,

3<sup>dly</sup>, I would willingly know by what *Authority* this is to be done? Who are to be the *Judges* and *Reformers* of what is *amiss*?

WHAT will make this whole Matter clear, he tells us, is this Allusion—*Nothing is more frequent, than to speak of Passages of Scripture mis-translated—Now, no One pretends to want an intire new Translation—*—but correct the Mis-Pref. p. 13. translations, and pull them down, and leave the rest as it is already, and we shall have a very just, exact, and true Translation. This Case, he says, is exactly parallel in every respect to what

he

he contends for ; and therefore I may be permitted to argue from it.

Now, amidst the infinite Variety of Objections of this Kind, whose Judgment are we to follow in the *Corrections* to be made, in order to establish the *just, exact, and true Translation* he speaks of? To consult all Persons is endless, and to gratify all, impossible. If all Mr. S's *Corrections* were admitted, he perhaps wou'd be pleas'd, and might be contented to have done *Reforming*: But what Satisfaction would this be to those who have numberless Objections to the *Translation* of Places which he approves, who like perhaps the *old Translation*, even of the Places *corrected*, better than what he would substitute in the room of it? Every one of these Persons has the same *Christian Liberty* of Objecting, is as *fully persuaded* in his *private Judgment*, and has as good a *Right* to be hearken'd to in the Work of *Reformation*, as he has. What then is to be done? Shall we expunge all the Places in the present *Translation* to  
which.

which any one has objected, and make a *short Bible* out of the Remainder? This, I think, is the only Project, in which these dissonant *Correctors* can possibly unite upon the Scheme proposed. An Expedient, I confess, which would suit admirably well with the *short Creeds* of late contended for. But then, I fear, we should be troubled with a fresh Mutiny of great Numbers offended with our *Omissions*, and clamouring for their *old Bible* again. They would tell us we have got away their *old Translation* from them, under pretence of *Pulling down, Correcting, and Amending Faults* in it, and have given them nothing but an incoherent Fragment in the Place of it. Shall we then bid the People get them Home, and make the *best of their Bible*, and *translate* it as they can; and since we cannot agree upon a *common Translation*, resolve every one to *translate* for himself, and have a Bible to our Humour? This, methinks, would be inconvenient on many Accounts, and would be utterly giving up the Project  
of

of a *Just, Exact, and True Translation*. There is still one Expedient more, which is surely worth all the rest, and that is, leaving it to some Persons, of whose *Skill and Honesty* we may reasonably presume, to make a *Translation*; and, I hope, the Superiors of the Church will not, even on *these* Accounts, be an improper Choice. Let every one be at Liberty to offer his *Corrections*, but let *Them* judge upon the Whole, and let the *Translation*, so agreed on, be proposed to publick Use by their Authority. 'Tis not to be imagin'd that such *Translation* will be without some Objection from some Body or other: It will not, perhaps, be so very *Just, Exact, and True*, as what this learned Gentleman would give us. But I cannot conceive how any *Translation* can be agreed on, and receiv'd into the publick Use of any Society, by any other Method than this. This, as Mr. S. says, is a *Case exactly parallel in all Respects* to the Scheme of *Pulling down and amending Faults* lately contended for; and I leave him to  
make

make his Advantage of the Conclusion from it.

THE Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of *Bangor* has a Right to my Acknowledgments for the Notice he has been pleas'd to take of me, under a Character to which I have no Pretensions \*. I beg Leave to assure his Lordship, that there is no one Person, whose *Assistance* I had more in View than his. If his Lordship meant the Positions by which he has given Offence in the same Sense and Extent in which I assert them, his Lordship may possibly receive some *Assistance* from what I have written; but if his Lordship maintains them in that Sense in which I oppose them, I am verily persuaded that neither his Lordship's own *Great Parts*, nor the utmost *Assistance* that can be given him, will enable him to defend them, and reconcile them with his Concession——  
*That there is a Catholick visible Church, composed of Particular visible Churches,*

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*Answer to Dr. Hare's Sermon, Pref. p. 6, 7.*

and *that these Churches ought to be orderly Societies.* As to the Question properly before me concerning Ecclesiastical Authority, his Lordship has kept himself so much within the *Caution of a Respondent*, and been so sparing of *Affirmatives*, that 'tis difficult to conjecture what he allows: His Lordship's *Negatives* are so many, and his *Restrictions* so very narrow and exclusive, that I confess, for my own Part, I cannot perceive, upon the Whole, that he *allows* any that can be sufficient to preserve social Order and Regularity in the Church. After so much Complaint of being *mistaken* and *misapprehended*, his Lordship might with Reason conclude, that what he has written wants Explanation. A Person of his Lordship's great Abilities might doubtless, with a single Sheet of Paper put an End to this Complaint. A fair explicit Declaration of what Ecclesiastical Authority his Lordship *does allow*, would bring the Question into Light, and put it into a fair Way of Decision, and would  
become



become a Searcher after Truth. It would then appear how far his Lordship's Negatives extend, what he admits, and what he disapproves.

Methinks his Lordship should be desirous to put as speedy an Issue as is possible to a Controversy, which has so manifestly fretted and discomposed his natural good Temper; that *Vexation of Spirit* which has appear'd in his Lordship's late Writings, must have been very uneasy to a Mind whose Delight is to be *calm and undisturbed*. It was no common Disorder, and doubtless very painful to his Lordship, under which he was moved to treat with that Passion of Scorn and Bitterness, a Person, whose great Learning, Modesty, and exemplary Piety, render'd him venerable, even in a private Station; and who fills with so much Honour and Ability both the Episcopal and the Professor's Chair. His Lordship has given the World sufficient Proofs of his Skill in the Science of Defence, and 'tis time for him now to open his Scheme, and tell us plainly what 'tis he contends  
 3 for.

for. If his Lordship's *Scheme* of a *visible Church* were fairly drawn out, and shewn to be consistent with that Order and Regularity which are essential to the Church as a *visible Society*; and to be either agreeable in *Polity* to the primitive Constitution of the Church, as it came from the Hands of *Christ* and his Apostles, or to depart from it only in such Instances in which present Necessity obliges us to recede from that Pattern, his Lordship will soon find himself reliev'd from all Contradiction. But if his Lordship shall still chuse to keep his *Scheme folded up*, and deliver us out only such general *Negatives* as are in Appearance, destructive of our present Constitution, (which we are desirous to preserve, till a better is offer'd in the Place of it,) his Lordship must not take it ill if we think ourselves concern'd to guard against Expressions, even of a *suspicious* Meaning, and endeavour to defend such Authority as his Lordship *seems* to oppose, whether he really intended to oppose it or not.



# Introduction.



## *Of the* DISTINCTION *of the Vi-* *fible and Invisibile Church.*



**T**HAT all true Propositions are im-  
mutable in themselves, and *consi-*  
*stent with each other*, I readily  
agree with Mr. *Sykes*; but before Pag. 1.  
this Remark will be of much Ser-

vice to us in Application, it will be necessary  
to take another along with it, *viz.* That there  
are very few Propositions but what require some  
Limitations or Restrictions before we can se-  
curely assent to them, or argue from them.  
Whoever will run over the most establish'd Prin-  
ciples or Axioms in all Sciences, will find few  
in which it is not necessary to exclude some

B Sense

Sense in which the Terms have been sometimes used, before they can be admitted as true. And, perhaps, all the Errors which have ever appear'd in the World, might be traced up to this Original, that Men have argued from some true Principle, without attending to its necessary Restrictions. And tho' in all Ages Conclusions have been affirm'd so absurd, that 'tis many times difficult to conjecture by what Appearance of Truth the Authors have been misled; yet whenever we can trace the Error back to its Source, we shall generally find it an irregular Deduction from some Principle, which the Author perceiving to be true in some Sense, has too hastily receiv'd as an universal Truth, and, under this Mistake, has been led to assert Positions as Consequences of such Principle, which otherwise he would hardly have assented to.

FROM a Persuasion, that much of the Intricacy attending the present Dispute about *Ecclesiastical Power*, might be clear'd, if the necessary Restrictions were added to what each Side affirm'd, I was induced to consider the most material Propositions on either Part contended for, and to endeavour to shew how far, when reduced within their proper Limits, they might be reconciled to each other. What had been affirm'd on the one side, of the Authority of *Christ*, as *Ruler*, &c. and the Liberties of Christians, was oppos'd by the other, as destructive of all outward Order and Discipline in the Church; and, *vice versâ*, what had been generally affirm'd of that ministerial Authority which is necessary to outward Order, Regularity, and  
Discipline

Discipline in the Church, was look'd upon as inconsistent with the Supremacy of *Christ*, and the Liberties of his Disciples. Now the Expedient that promised fairest to bring this Debate to some Issue, was to consider within what Restrictions the Propositions affirm'd by each were true. By this I hoped it would appear which Side had transgress'd in their Assertions, and by what Reduction of each they might be render'd consistent with Truth and one another. In pursuance of this Design, I began with considering what had been affirm'd by one Side, of the *Authority of Christ*, and the *Liberties of Christians*; because some general Assertions on this Subject had given the present Rise to this Controversy. An Author of great Character had affirm'd in indefinite Terms, *that Christ was the sole Ruler, sole Teacher, &c.* in his Church. At these Propositions publick Offence had been taken, as apparently exclusive of all outward Ministry, Order, and Discipline in the Church. In Defence of them from this Imputation, the same Author had reply'd, That the Church to which these Propositions related, was the *Invisible Church*, and therefore that they could not be charg'd with tending to destroy that outward Government and Discipline which belong'd only to the *Visible Church*. I thought my self therefore oblig'd to consider these Assertions, as guarded by that Distinction which had been claim'd as ascertaining their Meaning, and by which, when truly understood, they appeared very defensible.

But to my great Surprize, the Gentleman who has done me the Honour of his Animad-

Pag. 8. versions, tells me, *There is no such subtile Distinction in the matter*, at least none in *Scripture*. Mr. Sykes very well knows, that not I, but his very good Friend, first apply'd this Distinction in this Controversy, who, I presume, will be able to tell him whence he had it. I am unwilling to think Mr. S. intends to contradict that *judicious, inimitable Writer*; and yet so it is, that *judicious Writer* affirms in plain Words, that the Church he meant was the *Invisible Church*. Mr. S. on the other hand says, Pag. 6. the Church is a *Visible Society*, and that there is no such subtile Distinction. Now I can imagine Pag. 229. no way of reconciling these two Friends, but by supposing either that the one means the same thing by an *Invisible Church*, that the other does by a *Visible Society*; or else that *Christ* has two Churches, one *Visible*, and the other *Invisible*; or, lastly, that these two Terms are apply'd to the same Church in different Considerations and Respects. I presume this Gentleman will not contend for either of the former Suppositions; and therefore, unless he will break with his Friend on this Point, he must allow the latter; but then this is that very *subtile Distinction* which he rejects.

FOR what secret Reasons this Distinction, within which so great a Master of Disputation had intrench'd himself, as a Defence impenetrable by all his Adversaries, is now thus slighted, I will not take upon me to conjecture; but very remarkable it is, that thro' this whole Performance of Mr. S. this Distinction is entirely dropp'd. It concerns me to offer some Reasons for the Justice

stice and Pertinency of that Distinction, which I chose as the Subject of my Discourse, and which I continue to think of great Use and Importance, and the best Key to open the Perplexities of the present Question.

THAT the Authority of *Christ* over his Disciples, is a spiritual, internal Authority, a Dominion over the Conscience, the Spirit, the inner Man, will not, I presume, be denied; and consequently that the Subjects of this Authority are the Spirit, the internal Man. For tho' the Obedience of the outward and visible Action be also due to the Authority of *Christ*, yet this is no farther an acceptable Service to him, than as a Sign or Evidence of the inward Submission of the Heart and Soul to his Authority. This is the special Subjection he requires: And therefore tho' Charity obliges us, where the Action is regular, to esteem the Person as internally acceptable to *Christ*, yet this Conclusion is not certain, but only presumptive: for as the Apostle supposes, in the case of Charity, a Man *may give all his Goods to feed the Poor*, and yet want that Grace; so in all other Instances, the *Reality* of the Virtue, which is the Obedience requir'd by *Christ*, is invisible to Men, and discernible only to God. Now when we speak of any Christian, as standing in this *internal* Relation to *Christ*, we call him a Member of the *Invisible Church*; and the whole Body or Aggregate of such Christians, the *Invisible Church*. And this Denomination we apply to them; because the Relation on which it is founded, the Dominion it refers to, the Graces and Influences

by which that Dominion is exercised, and the Obedience that is paid to it, are all spiritual, internal, and with respect to us who speak of it, *invisible*. But these very same Persons who stand thus *internally* related to *Christ*, standing also *externally* related to certain Ecclesiastical Superiors, as Members of a *visible* Ecclesiastical Community, and obliged by that Character to certain outward *visible* Observances : When we consider them in this Relation, we call them *Members of the Visible Church*, and the whole Body or Aggregate of Christians so consider'd, *the Visible Church*. This Distinction I think just, because the two Relations express'd by the two Terms of it, are real and distinct Relations ; and therefore I cannot, without better Reasons than I yet see, be convinced, that the Idea of the *Invisible Church* is a mere *ens rationis*, an empty unfounded Notion ; but to me it appears an Idea resulting from the Nature of the Thing, and a Relation really existent. The Word *Church*, if I mistake not, is what seems improperly used in this Branch of Distinction. This Word, I acknowledge, generally signifies a Number of Christians associated together under the same visible Pastors, in the same outward Worship and Profession of the Christian Religion ; and while only this common Sense of the Word is attended to, it may appear the same Solœcism to say an *Invisible Church*, as to say an *Invisible visible Society*. But besides this external Relation, which is express'd by the Word *Church* taken in the common Sense, Christians stand also in an internal Relation to *Christ*, superior to this, and distinct



distinct from it, and which therefore it is proper to express by some distinctive Term. To this purpose the Word *Church*, as limited by the Term *Invisible*, has been used by many of the best Writers since the *Reformation*; and even long before, we find Christians as standing in this internal, invisible Relation to *Christ*, consider'd collectively, and as a Body, as I observed formerly from St. *Augustine* and *Clement of Alexandria*. But 'tis not worth the while to dispute about a Term, provided what is meant by it is understood. It is, I think, sufficient to observe that this Term, *Invisible Church*, has been used to express the Idea I have annex'd to it; and till a better can be found, this may very well serve.

Disc.  
 Pag. 11.

BUT whatever Words we make choice of for this Service, it is of great Concern that our Ideas be kept as distinct as the Relations on which they are founded, because otherwise our Reasoning will be attended with great Confusion and Perplexity. It is certain, that where the Person is the same, and the Relations under which we consider him are really distinct, it must often happen that what we affirm of him under one Relation, will not belong to him under the other; what is true of him in one Relation, will not be true of him in the other; and consequently two apparently opposite Propositions will be true of the same Person. Thus of the same Person it may be affirm'd, that *Christ is his sole Ruler*, and that others also are his Rulers. Now when we refer each of these Propositions to that Relation of the Person to which each belongs, they

are both true, and both consistent; but if, attending to the Unity of the Person, we conclude an Unity of the Subject in these Propositions, they must appear opposite and inconsistent, and we shall be led to discard one of them as false, which yet cannot be done without great Inconvenience. And so if two Men are speaking of this Person, one of which considers him in one Relation, the other in the other, they may wrangle on eternally, each affirming contrary to the other; one (*e. g.*) that *Christ is his sole Ruler*, the other, that *others also are his Rulers*, and each very confident of the Truth of what he affirms: Neither can this Confusion be put an end to, but by shewing in what Relation of the Person what each affirms is true.

A farther occasion of Misunderstanding has been, that tho' the Relations express'd by these Terms, *Member of the Invisible Church*, and *Member of the Visible Church*, be really distinct, yet the same Words have been used to express the Authority to which the Persons in each of these Relations are subject, (*e. g.*) *Ruler, Teacher, Judge, &c.* Now 'tis acknowledged that in these different Applications, the Extent of Authority apply'd in these Terms, and the Measure of Subjection due to it, are different; the best way therefore to ascertain the Use of these Terms, is to consider the distinct Relations they are applied to; and when the just Boundaries of each Relation are fix'd, the Sense of the Terms in each Application will be easily fix'd and determin'd too. A Confusion of Words is, I confess, very apt to introduce a Confusion of Ideas; but

but as no Language ever did, so I believe none ever will furnish out distinct Words for every Idea; but where two or more Ideas have agreed in some general Resemblance or Analogy, one common Term has been thought sufficient to stand for them, and the common Sense of Mankind has been rely'd on; to observe from the difference of the Subjects it is apply'd to, the different Extent and Import of it. And this Remark I beg leave to apply here more particularly. These Terms, *Ruler, Teacher, &c.* have been used indifferently, to signify the supreme Authority of *Christ* in these Characters, and the ministerial Powers of the visible Officers of the Church; and this promiscuous use of some of them we find in the Scripture itself. Mr. S. has taken notice of it, with respect to the Word *Teacher*; and if he had thought fit to allow the same Distinction of a *supreme* and *subordinate* Sense, with respect to the other Terms, he might have saved himself and me a great deal of Trouble. The Church of *Rome* indeed has taken Advantage from the promiscuous use of these Terms, and by extending them beyond their due Import, in the latter Application, has ascribed Powers to the visible Superiors of the Church, which intrench on the proper Authority of *Christ*. But nevertheless, the best Writers since the *Reformation* have not thought it necessary to throw by these Terms, but have contented themselves with ascertaining the Meaning to which they ought to be restrain'd in each Application, and within which they are as inoffensive as any that could be substituted in the

Pag. 9.

Place of them. And unless a new Set of Terms can be agreed on, and receiv'd into common Use, there is no Remedy, but we must go on in the old Way of Speaking, and depend on the Equity of Mankind, to understand the Words in that Sense which each Application requires. For my own Part, I thought I had taken sufficient Care to prevent Misconstruction of these Terms, as apply'd by me to the visible Officers of the Church, by the Limitations I annex'd to them; in which I, as plainly as I could, renounc'd that Authority which was signify'd by them, when apply'd to *Christ*. The Authority of *Christ* I acknowledge to be superior and paramount to all others; that his Doctrines are to be believ'd, and his Laws obey'd, tho' the whole World should contradict the one, and forbid the other. All this I affirm, and shall always contend for, as zealously as Mr. S. and let him be *Anathema* who denies it. And if in assigning the Limits of any Branch of Ecclesiastical Power, I have extended it too far, I acknowledge it to be a Mistake, which affects the real Subject of the Dispute, the Bounds of the two Relations; and whenever I am convinc'd of any such Error, I shall readily retract it. But as I am not conscious to my self of any such Transgression, and am very sure I never intended it, so if any Expression seems not fully enough exclusive of such a dangerous Sense, I only desire the common Favour of explaining what may be obscure in one Place, by what is express'd more fully and clearly in another.



C H A P. I.

*Review of the first and second Chapters of my Discourse. Of Christ, the sole Law-giver, Judge, &c. And of the Danger of Religion from the Principles I oppose.*



**I**N Application of the foresaid Distinction of the Church, I observed, that when we consider the Church under the Idea of *Invisible*, we acknowledge *Christ only as Law-giver, Ruler, &c.* in it: But as for *sole Head*, which Mr. S. has put in by a Slight of Hand, I shall often have occasion to admire, I say no such thing; on the contrary, in the Words preceding those, he cites from *Page 2.* I say, these Terms, *Visible* and *Invisible*, represent *one Church, one Society, of which Christ is Head*; and at the Beginning of the 2<sup>d</sup> Part, I say, *under both these Denominations Christ is consider'd as Head of the Church.* But this I affirm, that when we say that *Christ is the sole Ruler, sole Teacher, &c.* in his Church, we consider the Church under the Idea of *Invisible*; and 'tis with some Surprize I find my self contradicted in this by Mr. S. because an Author very high in his Esteem had said  
so

*Disc.*  
Pag. 2.

Pag. 6, 7.

Pag. 8. so before me. But Mr. S. it seems, is of another Mind, and cannot allow any such *Distinction, any such partial abstract Consideration*. As to the Distinction, I presume, I have offer'd something in Vindication of it. If its being a *partial abstract Consideration* of the Church is what offends, I acknowledge it is so; I think it must be so, and was so, when apply'd by his Friend, as much as when apply'd by me. His said Friend apply'd it to the same Propositions that I do, *viz. That Christ is the sole Law-giver, sole Teacher, &c. of his Church*. In Defence of these Propositions from the Charge laid against them, of tending to subvert all outward Government and Discipline in the Church, he had declared, that the Church he was speaking of, was the *Invisible Church*; which Answer, if it signify'd any thing, must mean, that in these Assertions he consider'd the *Invisible Church*, and did not consider the *Visible*; which, unless there are two Churches, is a *partial abstract Consideration* of the Church.

Pag. 8. S. BUT I must observe, that this Gentleman, when he comes to apply his Answer, has, with a very unfair Liberty, alter'd the Terms of the *Notion* he professes to oppose, and instead of partial abstract Consideration of the Church, has put partial abstract Consideration of the *Rule of Christ*. Now when I say, that under the Idea of the Invisible Church, "The Mind has no other Authority or Ministry in View, but those of *Christ* and the Holy Spirit." I assure Mr. S. I mean the *whole* Authority of *Christ*, with respect

Disc. Pag. 6.

respect to his Church; and what I affirm is, that when we consider the Church under this Idea, the Mind has this *whole* Authority of *Christ* in View, and only that, without considering any external *Rulers, Teachers, &c.* This is indeed a partial abstract Consideration of the *Church*, but not of the *Authority of Christ*. The Church, or the Christians subject to this Authority, we consider in one respect, and do not consider in another; but this Authority of *Christ* we do not consider in one respect, and not consider in another; but we only consider his Authority, without considering the Authority of other *Teachers, Rulers, &c.* This, I think, is not properly *Abstraction*; but if Mr. S. will have it so, I shall not contend about a Word; but then I must observe, that such *Abstraction* as this he himself will be obliged to allow, even in that Scripture he refers to in Disproof of any Abstraction, *Mat. xxiii.* where he says, *Christ is call'd Ma-* Pag. 8.  
*ster and Teacher, with an express Prohibition to all others to assume to themselves those Titles*; for I suppose it will be allow'd, that notwithstanding this Prohibition, Men may take to themselves, or acknowledge in others, the Title of *Master* in a *civil* Sense, and consequently here, is one such *Abstraction, (i. e.)* the spiritual Authority of *Christ* is consider'd, without considering the Authority of a Civil Superior. *Secondly,* Mr. S. in the next Paragraph allows o- Pag. 9.  
 ther *subordinate Teachers* in the Church; and therefore here is also another such *Abstraction, (i. e.)* *Christ, as Teacher* is here consider'd, and other subordinate Teachers are not consider'd; but,

but, in Truth, as to the Authority of *Christ*, in this Idea of the *Invisible Church* there is no *Abstraction* at all. But when under this Idea we consider the Church, or Christians subject to this Authority, it is an *abstract* Consideration of them; we consider them as *internally, invisibly* related to *Christ*, not attending to other *external* Relations, in which they are subject to other Rulers, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical. Now when we consider Christians under this Character (as Members of the *Invisible Church*) *Christ* is truly and properly their *sole Ruler, Teacher, &c.* When we consider the same Persons in their Civil Character, they are as truly subject to their Civil Rulers; and when we consider them as Members of the outward Community of the Church, they are as truly subject to the visible Rulers in that Community. Under each of these Characters here is a *partial abstract Consideration* of the Person subject, but here is no *partial abstract Consideration* of either of the Powers to which he is subject. They are not consider'd in one respect, and not in another, but each is consider'd in its full Extent; and while they are confined within the Bounds of that Extent, it may as truly be affirmed, that the Person under the *second* Character is subject only to his Civil Rulers, and under the *last*, that he is subject only to his Ecclesiastical Rulers, as it is under the *first*, that he is subject only to *Christ*.

BUT Mr. S. in order to convince his Reader, that I intend here a *partial abstract Consideration* of the Authority of *Christ*, and to shew the  
 Absur-



Aburdity of such a Consideration, pag. 12. argues thus — *To say that Christ is sole Law-giver and Judge, is only true in this Sense, that the Mind in making this Conclusion perfectly abstracts from external Relations, and attends wholly to the internal Relation between the Members of the Church and Christ, is in reality to say, that Christ is not sole Law-giver, &c.* For these Words he refers to pag. 8. of my *Disc.* I must beg Leave to transcribe the whole Sentence, which runs thus: “ For tho’ a conscientious Observance of all relative Duties to either of these Powers (*Civil and Ecclesiastical Superiors*) may be one Reason why we esteem any Person to be a Member of *Christ’s* Invisible Church; yet the Mind, in making *this Conclusion*, perfectly abstracts from these external Relations, and attends wholly to the internal Relation between him and *Christ*, and affixes this Character to him, not as he has obey’d Men, but as in obeying Men he has obey’d *Christ*.” This Gentleman must permit me to ask him seriously, with what Justice or Truth he could represent me as he does.

HE tells the Reader, That *the Conclusion* I there speak of is — *That Christ is sole Law-giver, &c.* The Reader, to his great Surprize, must see that the Conclusion I refer to is, *That any Person is a Member of Christ’s Invisible Church.* According to him I go on thus — *The Mind, in making this Conclusion, (that Christ is the sole Law-giver, &c.) perfectly abstract from all external Relations.* — External Relations of whom, of *Christ*, or between  
Christ

*Christ* and the Members of the Church? I know of none; all the Relations I can conceive between *Christ* and the Members of his Church here on Earth, are spiritual, internal Relations. The Relations I refer to, are the Relations of the Person to his *Civil or Ecclesiastical Superiors*; and from *these*, I say, the Mind abstracts, when it considers any Person as a Member of the *Invisible Church*; here is an abstract Consideration of the Person, but none of the Authority of *Christ*. I think then, upon a Comparison of my Words with his Recital of them, I might content myself with replying, That the Recital is a manifest Falsification of my Words. But suppose I had said — That when we affirm that *Christ* is the sole Law-giver over Christians, the Mind abstracts from all external Relations of such Christians, and attends wholly to the internal Relation between the Members of the Church and and *Christ*, which is as near the Proposition he seems willing to contradict, as any I can frame out of the Words of this Paragraph; why then, Mr. S. will tell me, this is *in reality saying, that Christ is not sole Law-giver and Judge, but that others are Law-givers and Judges with him*. But I conceive 'tis in reality saying no more than this, That *Christ* is *sole Law-giver and Judge* over Christians, consider'd in one Relation, tho' others besides *Christ* are *Law-givers* over them, consider'd in other Relations; and this I shall continue to say, till I see better Reasons why I should say otherwise.

Pag. 13.

BUT in the next Paragraph we have a very material Question put. *If Christ be sole Law-giver,*

giver, Ruler, &c. over whom does he stand in these Relations? The Answer is, the Invisible Church. This Answer Mr. S. can by no means allow to be sufficient; but before I examine his Objections I beg Leave once more to remind him, That in this Answer I have the Happiness to agree with his good Friend, my Lord Bishop of Bangor, who, pag. 17. of his Sermon, asserts, *That the Church is the Number of Men, who are truly and sincerely subject to Jesus Christ alone, as their Law-giver and Judge.* This Church, this Number of Men, who are thus subject to *Christ* alone in these Relations, he affirms, pag. 70. of his *Answer to the Representation of the Committee*, to be the *Invisible Church of Christ*. Now I suppose my Invisible Church, is to all Intents and Purposes as good an Invisible Church as his Lordship's; and whenever his Lordship shall People his Church with Subjects to *Christ*, as *sole Law-giver and Judge*, I shall hope to find some in mine. But how fruitful soever of Subjects to *Christ* his Lordship's Invisible Church may be, Mr. S. is of Opinion, that mine can produce none. For *so it is, that* "the same Persons are both internally  
 " united to *Christ*, and externally incorporated  
 " into a visible Society of his Church;" *so that* *Christ is sole Ruler, and yet has no Subjects whom he can solely rule; he is sole Law-giver, and yet can give Laws to none solely: For this plain Reason, because the Invisible Church is a mere Notion, a mere abstract Consideration, a mere Relation, not capable of Rule and Government.* Now, if there neither were, nor could

be any such thing as true Christians in the World, the Term *Invisible Church* might be call'd a mere Notion, a Fiction, an Idea, which had no real Being to answer it. But so long as there are any such Persons, these Persons are not mere Notions, mere abstract Considerations, but real Beings standing in a real Relation to *Christ*, express'd by this Idea; and in that Relation these Persons are very capable of being *ruled* and *govern'd*, tho' not of *Rule* and *Government*; neither is there the least Absurdity in saying, that these same Persons, as internally related to *Christ*, are subject only to him, and as externally incorporated in the visible Society of the Church, are subject also to others.

Pag. 8.

FROM the Consideration of these two Chapters of my Discourse, to which he had refer'd, Mr. S. goes off to a Question, concerning which I there say nothing at all, *viz.* Whether the Notion I assert, or those I oppose, *tend most to the Security of Christianity and Religion in the World?* Now, tho' I think this not the proper Place for this Enquiry, yet, I acknowledge, 'tis a Question I am bound so far at least to answer, as to shew that Religion is endanger'd by the Assertions which I oppose; because in my Preface I gave this as a Reason why I offer'd my Discourse to the Publick. But I confess, this Author's Reasoning, in this and the following Page, are so profound and unintelligible, at least to me, that I will not presume to ascertain his Meaning, lest I shou'd be charg'd with misrepresenting. I shall therefore think it sufficient to explain and support what I suggested, concerning  
ing

ing the Danger of Religion in my Preface, which alone is here referr'd to. And,

*First*, It is fit we ascertain what is endanger'd, before we enquire what Danger it is in. Now since this is given as the Ground of my Apprehension, that some Principles which are true only of the *Invisible* Church have been extended to the *Visible*, 'tis evident that the Religion or Christianity which I apprehend to be endanger'd, is either a Part or the Whole of the *Visible* Church; for that concerning which they were true, would not be endanger'd by those Principles; but if they were apply'd to a Subject concerning which they were false, that would be endanger'd by them. And agreeably I observ'd, that those Principles so apply'd, en- Prof. p. 9.  
danger'd, *First*, the Peace, Discipline, and even the Being of the *Visible* Church; and, *Secondly*, *Our Religion*, or the particular Constitution of the *Church of England*, as opposed to the Religion of *Papists* and *Sectaries*. In these Senses the Word *Religion* has ordinarily been used and understood; and whatever endangers Religion in either of these Senses, I hope, as a Christian Divine, and a Member of this Church, I may be permitted to oppose.

Now for the Reason of that Apprehension, I assign'd this; That these Principles, *Christ is sole Ruler, sole Teacher, &c.* in his Church, had by some Authors been so *unwarily and suspiciously* Prof. p. 8.  
affirm'd, that they had been understood in such a Sense as was exclusive of all outward Order, *Ministry*, and Discipline in the Church, and appear'd to leave it without *any visible Authority*

to judge, censure, or punish Offenders. Whether these Authors intend this Sense or not, I did not take upon me to determine; I rather hoped they might not, because the Propositions were really true in a very safe and important Sense. But whatever they intended, it was manifest these Propositions were not so clearly limited to their true Sense, but that they were daily understood and argued from in another; and these Conclusions, deduced as Consequences from them, That no Christian is any more a Priest, a Teacher, a Ruler in the Visible Church than another; in short, that all Christians are in all respects Equal. These are the Conclusions which I opposed, and not the Propositions whence they were inferr'd, which within their proper Limits I undertook to defend. Now that the Peace, Order and Discipline of the Visible Church is endanger'd by these Conclusions, I shall for the present suppose; and if these Principles, *Christ is sole Ruler, sole Teacher, &c.* in the Church, be extended to a Sense which necessarily leads to these Conclusions, they are then equally endanger'd by these Principles. That they ought not to be extended to such a Sense, and that they may safely be affirm'd in another, I have endeavour'd to shew: But when those Conclusions are deduced from them, I continue to say they endanger both *Ours* and every other *visible* Church in the World; for this plain Reason, because no *visible* Church can subsist without Teachers, Rulers, &c. and a Subordination of some Persons to others; and whatever tends to subvert and destroy all *visible* Churches, will,

I am

I am afraid, be found to endanger Christianity it self, or Religion, even in the most spiritual Notion of it. Mr. S. grants, that a True Principle Pag. 13. may be the accidental Occasion of Danger to that which it was design'd to preserve; which, I suppose, can only happen by its being not truly understood: Such Danger, I imagin'd, I saw in the present Case; which, whether accidental or intended, I thought it worth my while to endeavour to prevent; and that the best way to prevent it, was to assign the true Sense to such Principles as, misunderstood, had been the Occasion of Danger. In the true Sense I contend for them as earnestly as Mr, S. and in that Sense only in which they occasion'd Danger, I oppose them.

BUT tho' I cannot perceive the Force of all this Author's Reasonings in these Pages, yet some Things I think I understand; and those I shall take notice of. Pag. 16. he says, *Religion to a Christian signifying Faith in Christ, and Obedience to all his Laws.* — *This cannot be endanger'd by this Principle, that Christ is sole Ruler, &c. because the firm Persuasion of the Truth of this Principle tends to establish this Faith and Practice.* No doubt it does, when truly understood; but as extended to the Sense, and produced for the Conclusions which I oppose, it tends to destroy and subvert both, and therefore endangers Religion, even in this Sense. But he says, *It lessens not our Esteem for any* Pag. 17. *thing Christ has enjoin'd.* Now, I conceive, 'tis an Institution of Christ, that some should be appointed for the publick Teaching and Instruction

of others; and that 'tis a Law of *Christ*, that the Inferiors of the Church should *submit themselves to those who are appointed to Rule over them*, or guide them; and that Mens Esteem for this Institution, and this Law of *Christ*, is very much lessen'd by those who affirm, in Consequence of this Principle, that no Christian is any more a Priest, or a Teacher, than another; and that none is appointed to Guide or Rule over others. In short, I argued only against a mistaken Sense of this Principle in which I apprehended it to be dangerous; Mr. S. in Answer to me proves, that there is a Sense in which it is not dangerous; to which I readily agree: But in Defence of what I oppose, he has not, so far as I can perceive, offer'd any thing at all.

Pag. 15. IF I understand him, he says, that my Distinction of the Church into *Visible* and *Invisible*, and the Sense I gave of that Principle, *Christ is sole Ruler, Teacher, &c.* in Consequence of it, represents *Christianity as a Religion, partly Divine, partly Human, — confounds and makes a Medley of Christianity, &c.* Now my Representation is of the *Church*; and if this Distinction represents it as having something *Human* in it, as well as something *Divine*, it represents it truly; and I am so far from perceiving that it tends to introduce Confusion, to affirm that *Christ is sole Ruler, &c.* over Christians, as Members of the *Invisible Church*; and that others also are Rulers over them, consider'd as Members of the *Visible*, that I think quite otherwise; and that considering Christians under these two Relations, is the best way to prevent  
Confu-



Confusion, and to distinguish those Powers in the Church which are reserv'd to *Christ*, from those which are committed to Men.

UPON the Whole, I beg Leave to observe, that all Mr. S. has objected against my Distinction of the Church into *Visible* and *Invisible*, proceeds upon this Mistake, that it implies a *partial abstract Consideration of the Authority of Christ*: Whereas, I hope, I have plainly shewn, that the *partial abstract Consideration* is only of the *Church*, or Christians subject to that Authority. This I can easily excuse as a Mistake; whether the same Excuse will be allow'd for the Liberty he has taken in reciting my Words, I leave to the Reader. As to my Notion of the *Invisible Church*, which is truly the Subject of the two Chapters which have been under Consideration, I have the Satisfaction to believe, that whenever *My Lord Bishop of Bangor* shall favour us with as full an Explication of what he meant by this Term, as I have attempted, he will find himself as much concern'd to answer Mr. *Sykes's* Objections against it as I am. This, indeed, I presumed was a Point agreed on. And though it may be sufficient in Disputation, for the Conviction of an Adversary, to take a Principle *pro concesso*, which we do not allow; yet as the Refutation of any Author was not the End I principally, or indeed at all, intended, any farther than an honest Search after Truth appear'd to require it, I take this Opportunity of declaring, That the Relations on which that Distinction is founded, I then thought, and continue still to think, real distinct Relations, and the Distinction

such, as whoever will judge truly of this Controversy, will be obliged carefully to attend to, by whatever Terms he may chuse to express it.



C H A P. II.

*Review of the third, fourth, and fifth Chapters, Of the Obedience due to Christ as our Teacher and Law-giver. In which are consider'd, First, The Measure of our Obligation, to understand the Laws and Doctrines of Christ in their intended Sense. Secondly, Our Obligation to act upon such Interpretations of Scripture as we receive upon Human Authority.*

**I**N the next Chapters I proceeded to enquire what are the Duties we owe to *Christ*, consider'd in this internal Relation to him, or as *Subjects* of the *Invisible Church*; and first, the Duties we owe to Him as our *Teacher* and *Law-giver*. Mr. S. does me the Favour to agree with me, that these Relations oblige us,

Pag. 20.

*First*, “ To a careful Attention to acquaint  
“ our selves with his Doctrines.

*Secondly*, “ To receive all he teaches as an  
“ Oracle of God, and to hearken to no  
“ Authority in Contradiction to him.

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly*, “ DILIGENTLY to apply our selves to  
 “ know and perform his Commands. And,  
*Fourthly*, “ WE must assent to some of his  
 “ Doctrines in the same Sense in which he  
 “ taught them, and obey some of his Laws  
 “ in the same Sense in which he prescrib’d  
 “ them.

## S E C T. I.

*Of the Measure of our Obligation to understand  
 the Laws or Doctrines of Christ in their in-  
 tended Sense.*

**F**ROM this last Principle I concluded, that Disc.p.14.  
 “ some of *Christ’s* Doctrines are so plain,  
 “ that his Disciples, by a due Attention, and the  
 “ Use of such Assistances as he has put in their  
 “ Power, may certainly understand them in the  
 “ true Sense intended in them.” The only Point  
 in this and the two following Chapters, which  
 Mr. S. hath thought worthy of his Examination,  
 is, *Whether the Rule I laid down be proper to  
 determine what Doctrines of Christ are so plain,*  
 that all his Disciples, by a due Application, may  
 understand them, and are therefore obliged to un-  
 derstand them? The Rule assign’d, was in the  
 following Words:

“ JESUS CHRIST, a Teacher sent from God, and  
 “ who himself knew the Extent of Human Fa-  
 “ culties must be presumed to have adapted his  
 “ Doctrines to those Faculties; the common  
 “ Reason and Application of Mankind therefore  
 “ are the Standard and Measure to which his Do-  
 “ ctrines were suited, and consequently are the  
 “ Rule

“ Rule by which we are to judge what is the  
 “ true and plain Sense of them. Those Do-  
 “ctrines, which to the common Reason of  
 “ Mankind appear to be plainly taught by  
 “ *Christ*, are to be esteemed plain, and such as  
 “ his Disciples are oblig’d to assent to; and that  
 “ Sense in which the common Apprehension of  
 “ Mankind understands them, is to be esteem-  
 “ ed the plain Sense in which they are obliged to  
 “ receive them; neither is any one excused,  
 “ who, in Opposition to the common Senti-  
 “ ments of Mankind, will take these Doctrines  
 “ in a private Sense of his own.” Thus far I  
 acknowledge the Justice of Mr. S. in the Reci-  
 tal. I beg Leave to add the next Paragraph :  
 “ Every Author may with Reason think himself  
 “ injur’d, if, when he has express’d himself plain-  
 “ ly and clearly to the common Sense of Man-  
 “ kind, any one shall pretend that he has a Right  
 “ to understand him in his own Sense, and im-  
 “ pose what Meaning on his Words he pleases.  
 “ If this be allowed, if there be no common  
 “ general Standard of Interpretation, to which  
 “ we may appeal; no certain Sense, in which  
 “ we have a Right to be understood, ’tis to no  
 “ Purpose to write or discourse. All our Con-  
 “ versations will be attended with the Confusion  
 “ of *Babel*; and Words, and Reason, will be  
 “ no longer of any Use. Neither is the Case  
 “ at all different in Doctrines taught us by God.  
 “ God speaks to us as rational Creatures; He  
 “ addresses himself to the same Faculties of our  
 “ Nature that Man does, and the Words in  
 “ which he delivers himself are the same in  
 “ which

“ which we converse with one another; and,  
 “ consequently, we are obliged to understand  
 “ him, according to the same Laws and Rules  
 “ of Interpretation, which we require to be ob-  
 “ served in conversing with one another.

IN these Passages I am so unfortunate, as to appear to Mr. S. to have asserted, That the *common popular Opinions*, which at any Time, or in any Place, happen to prevail, are the Standard and Measure of *Truth*. He is the first Person I have met with, who has so understood me; and, I believe, he is pretty much alone in his Interpretation: But thus he either understands me, or is willing to represent me, and has spent 16 or 17 Pages in refuting an Error which never enter'd into my Thoughts.

Now I presumed my Readers to be Christians, and that, in consequence of that Character, they acknowledg'd every Proposition in Scripture to be *true*, not because they *perceived the Agreement of the Ideas* express'd as Mr. S. would have it, but because *Christ* or the Holy Ghost has affirm'd it. There cannot, I think, be a greater Absurdity, than for one Christian to offer to another a Rule, by which he may determine the *Truth* of the Propositions contained in Scripture; because every Christian is supposed to acknowledge the *Truth* of every Proposition in Scripture as revealed by God. It was therefore no part of my Design to offer Arguments for the *Truth* of *Christ's* Doctrines, or to consider how much of Scripture every Christian was obliged to own to be *true*; or upon what Conviction we should confess the *Truth* of it, because I supposed

sed it a Principle universally agreed to by all Christians; That the whole Scripture, and every Doctrine contained in it were *true*. But the Point I there consider'd, was the Measure of our Obligation to understand the Laws or Doctrines of *Christ* in the intended Sense, or, which is in effect the same thing, what Propositions in Scripture ought to be *plain* to any one, for I think these Conclusions mutually infer each other. If I am obliged to understand a Proposition in Scripture in its *intended Sense*, that Sense is certainly so *plain* in that Proposition, that I may understand it; and if the intended Sense of a Proposition in Scripture be so *plain* that I may understand it, I am certainly obliged to understand it. Now it having been supposed that every Christian is obliged to understand some Doctrines of *Christ* in their intended Sense; it follows, that some Doctrines of *Christ* are so plain, that every Christian, with due Application, (which I also required) may understand them. For the Measure of this general Obligation, I proposed that common general Share of Apprehension which belongs to all Men as rational Beings. This is what I meant by the *Human Faculties*, the *common Faculties of our Nature*, the *common Sense*, the *common Reason* and *Apprehension* of Mankind. And this I continue to think the only Rule or Measure that can be assign'd of this general Obligation.

JESUS CHRIST, a wise and righteous Lawgiver, sent from God; as he exactly knew the Abilities of his Subjects, so he must be presum'd to have exactly proportion'd every Obligation  
he

he lays on them, to their Abilities to perform it. And since, as 'tis granted, he requires all Christians to understand some of his Doctrines in the Sense in which he taught them, this general Obligation must suppose, and be proportion'd to some general Faculty or Ability of Discernment common to all Christians; and since there are no Faculties of Discernment common to Christians, as such, we must refer this Obligation to such Faculties as are common to them as Men, as rational Beings; and since this Obligation is proportion'd to these Faculties, these Faculties are the proper Measure by which we may judge how far this Obligation extends: And therefore what Doctrines every Christian, as a rational Being, may understand in their intended Sense, we may conclude every Christian is obliged to understand in their intended Sense.

THIS general Capacity belonging to all Men, I propos'd as the Measure of that general Obligation which lies on all Christians, to understand *some* of *Christ's* Doctrines in their intended Sense: But this I did not propose as the precise Measure of every particular Christian's Obligation, but that particular Share or Degree of Capacity by which one Man is distinguish'd from another. For the same Reasons that a Christian, even of the lowest Capacity, is obliged, as a rational Being, to understand *some* Doctrines in their intended Sense, a Christian of higher or more improv'd Capacities is required to understand, not only those of general Obligation, but *also* more; and therefore every Christian is obliged, in Proportion to his Capacities, to understand

stand more or fewer Doctrines in their intended Sense ; and for the same Reasons that a Christian of the meanest Capacities is not excused, who does not understand in their intended Sense such Doctrines as every Man, as a rational Being, may so understand, a Christian of superior Capacities or Improvements, is not excused, who misunderstands such Doctrines, as, by a due Application of such Capacities, he might understand.

THIS Measure of our Obligation to understand the Doctrines of *Christ* in their intended Sense, must also lead us to the Rule of *Plainness*, or the Rule by which it must be determin'd what Propositions in Scripture ought to be *plain* to any one ; for, as I observ'd, these mutually infer each other. From the Principle suppos'd, *That all Christians are oblig'd to understand some Doctrines of Christ in their intended Sense* ; it follows, that there is a certain intended Sense in some of *Christ's* Doctrines, which all Christians, by a due Use of their Faculties, and such Assistances as are in their Power, may perceive ; or, in other Words, which ought to be *plain* to them : And since this general Obligation to perceive such intended Sense in such Doctrines, supposes, and is proportion'd to a general Share or Measure of Capacity in all Christians, which, with due Application, will enable them to perceive such Sense ; it follows, that that general Capacity is, with respect to such Doctrines, the Rule of *Plainness*, or the Rule by which it must be determin'd what ought to be *plain* to any Christian ; and those Doctrines or Propositions in Scripture, which, to the com-

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mon Reason and Apprehensions of Mankind duly apply'd, &c. appear plain, ought to be esteem'd plain, and that Sense in which they appear to be so, the intended Sense of them; and consequently he who understands them according to this Rule, will certainly understand them in that Sense in which *Christ* intended, and requires he should understand them. And as that common Reason, or general Measure of Capacity, is the Rule that determines what ought to be plain to all Christians, so each Man's particular Measure of Capacity, is the Rule that determines what ought to be plain to him.

THIS, as I observ'd, is the Rule of Plainness in all human Writings, or the Rule by which we require to be understood by every Person we write or speak to. I will suppose that in Mr. *Sykes's* Book some Propositions are so plain, that the meanest Capacity may understand the Import of them. Now, should any one pervert or mistake the Meaning of such Propositions, would not Mr. *S.* appeal to the common Sense of Mankind, as what obliges all, even the meanest Capacities, to understand him otherwise? Should a more difficult Proposition be perverted or mistook by a Man of Letters, would he not appeal to that Measure of Apprehension and Capacity, which is presumed in Persons of such Education and Improvements? And would he not in either Instance complain of Injustice done him, in departing from a Rule by which he had a Right to be interpreted? Now the Words and Propositions of Scripture, as I observ'd, are addressed to the same Faculties of our Nature as all other

Pag. 32.

other Writers are, and are therefore to be understood according to the same Rules of Interpretation; and consequently 'tis the same Injustice to depart from this Rule in interpreting Scripture, as in interpreting any other Writing. This Observation Mr. S. will not allow to be *any thing to my purpose*; for this Reason, because he *knows no Man that ever pleaded for the Imposition of what Meaning he pleases upon the Words of God*. I suppose this Gentleman thinks nothing said to any Purpose but what contradicts some body or other. If this be a Principle with him, I am afraid he will find it difficult to reconcile all that is true in this long Section to it. But to me it appear'd something to my Purpose to observe, that the Rule I had laid down for determining what ought to be plain to any one in Scripture, is and must be the same by which we determine what ought to be plain in all other Writings in the World. Whether *any one had pleaded for the Imposition of what Meaning any Man pleas'd, or the Words of God*, or not, I did not enquire; because it appear'd sufficient to my Purpose to observe, that he who had denied the Proposition I had asserted, *viz.* "That every Christian is oblig'd actually to understand some Doctrines of *Christ* in their intended Sense;" must consequently plead, that no one is oblig'd so to understand any; which I think is much the same thing with pleading, that every one is at liberty to understand all Doctrines of *Christ* in what Sense he pleases; and the more universally such a Proposition was rejected as absurd, the more it was

to my Purpose to observe it, because the more effectually it establish'd the Principle I was concern'd for.

IN sum, the Point I consider'd in these Chapters was the Measure of Mens Obligation to understand the Laws or Doctrines of *Christ* in their intended Sense: And,

*First*, THE Principle I took for granted was, " That all Christians are obliged to understand " some of *Christ's* Doctrines in their intended " Sense." From hence it appear'd to follow by just Consequence, that all Christians are endued with such Faculties, such a Measure of Apprehension, as by a due Application, &c. may perceive the intended Sense of some of *Christ's* Doctrines; for no Man can equitably be obliged to understand a Proposition which he has not Capacities, with due Application, to understand; and whatever Doctrine, deliver'd by God, he may with such Application understand, he is for that Reason, and in Proportion to such Abilities, oblig'd to understand. From hence also this Corollary must be inferr'd, That there is a certain intended Sense in some of *Christ's* Doctrines, which every Christian, by a due Application of his Faculties, may perceive. These Conclusions, and the Principle they are deduced from, I think of the greatest Importance, the Ground upon which we can make the best, if not the only Stand against the *publick Infallibility* pretended to by the Church of *Rome* on the one Hand, and the *private Infallibility* pretended to by Enthusiasts on the other.

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*Secondly,*

*Secondly*, IN the remaining Part of these Chapters, I proceeded to consider the particular Obligation of particular Christians, and determin'd, That as all Christians are oblig'd, in Proportion to that common or general Measure of Apprehension belonging to all, to understand some Laws and Doctrines of *Christ* in their intended Sense; so, besides this general Obligation, each particular Christian, in proportion to his particular Capacities, Improvements, and Opportunities of being assisted in the Enquiry, is bound so to understand more or fewer. And this Variety of particular Christians Obligations I observed and insisted with the more Pleasure, because it led me to what I think a clear Answer to a very insidious Question, often urg'd by the Papists.

*Disc. p. 15.*

IN the Examination of these Chapters, Mr. S. has mistaken me.

1. As meaning by *common Apprehension*, &c. the *popular Opinions* which at any Time, or in any Place, happen to prevail.

2. As proposing here not the Measure of our Obligation to perceive the *Meaning* of a Proposition, but to perceive the *Truth* of it.

3. THAT *common Apprehension* which I propose only as the Measure of that general Obligation which lies on all Men, he supposes me to offer as the precise Measure of every particular Man's Obligation.

WHETHER he has succeeded in his Arguments or not, since he proceeds wholly on these Mistakes, I think my self not concerned to enquire.

## S E C T. II.

*How far we are obliged to act upon such Interpretations of Scripture as we receive upon Human Authority.*

**B**UT I confess this Subject deserves a larger Consideration than the Brevity I confined my self to in my Discourse allow'd: For tho' I am fully satisfy'd that the Extent and Improvement of our Faculties, together with the Assistances in our Power, are the true and proper Measure of our Obligation to understand the Laws and Doctrines of *Christ* in their intended Sense: Yet this Resolution of the Case is too general, and will be of little Service as a Rule in particular Applications, unless it be also considered, What are the proper Assistances to be taken along with us in this Enquiry, and how far we are to rely on the Direction we receive from them. This Defect in my Discourse I shall now endeavour to supply, with a particular Regard to a Conclusion; which if I apprehend Mr. S. he is unwilling to grant, *viz.* "That the Sentiments or Judgments of other Men, consider'd as an Authority, is under some Restriction, a good Rule, and such as we are bound to follow, in determining the Sense of Scripture." The Sense of the Propositions there contained, and not the Truth of them, is, as I observed, what we are concern'd to enquire after, in a Book which we acknowledge to be written by Divine Inspiration; but in regard to some uncommon Assertions of this Author concerning

cerning the Measure of Truth, or the Rule of Assent, I shall offer some Thoughts on that Subject also.

As to the Sense of a Proposition; we then understand it when we understand the Import of the Words of which it consists. Now the Sense of a Word can be taken from no Rule, but the Agreement of Men in the Use of it. No Sound or Combination of Letters stands for one Idea more than another, but just as common Use has determin'd it should stand. Common Use or Acceptation then is the only Rule by which we can ascertain the Sense of a Word, or what Idea it stands for. Some Words there are, in every National Language, of so universal and almost daily Use, that every one of that Nation must be presumed to know what Ideas they stand for, and when he reads or hears them, to understand them according to their ordinary Acceptation. Other Words there are in every Language, of common Use only among Persons of some particular Study, Education, or Employment, which lead them to a frequent Use of such Words, and a familiar Acquaintance with the Ideas they stand for; and if a Person of an inferior Education, or different Study, has Occasion to inform himself in the Meaning of such a Word, there is no imaginable Way for him to come at such Meanings, but either by applying himself to the Study of those Subjects to which these Words and their Ideas relate, or consulting others who have studied them, and to whom therefore these Words and their Ideas are familiar. And as there will always be in every Nation great Numbers of

Persons

Persons unqualify'd by their Education for such Studies, or by other necessary Employments render'd incapable of attending to them, the *latter* is the only Recourse that can be thought of for such Persons; but in this Recourse, 'tis evident, they must depend on the *Authority* of those whom they consult. This is the only Rule by which they can judge of the Sense of such a Word, and according to this Rule, they are obliged to understand it, because they cannot understand it by any other; neither is such Person excusable to common Sense, if he either determines the Sense of such a Word without such Application, or after such Application, will use it in a quite different Meaning. 'Tis possible, indeed, he may be neither obliged to consider, use, or understand such a Word at all: But if he is, or thinks himself concern'd to use or understand it, he is obliged to understand it according to this Rule; with respect to such Words, he is in the Case of one who enquires into the Meaning of a Word in a foreign Language, which he does not understand; and he who will not allow *Authority* to determine him in such an Instance, will be as ridiculous as a *Frenchman* would be, who understands nothing of *English*, if either without consulting those who do, or in Contradiction to them, he should to an *English* Word affix a Sense of his own.

As the present customary Use of Words is the Rule by which we must interpret all Words spoken or written in the present Age; so the Rule by which we must interpret the Words of a Book written in any past Age, is the customary Use of

such Words in the Age and Language in which such Book was written. And he who will apply himself to the understanding such a Book, must govern himself by this Rule. He who has Abilities for the Enquiry, must endeavour, by the best Assistances of Learning he has Skill to make use of, to find out what was the customary Acceptation of Words when written; and he who has not such Abilities, must consult those who have, and can by no way imaginable arrive any farther at their Meaning, than he can rely on their Skill and Fidelity whom he consults.

AND as in all Languages there are a Multitude of figurative Words, so the Sense of such Words in any Language is determined either from the customary Use of such Words in the figurative Sense assign'd in that Language, or from the general Custom in all Languages, of expressing by the same Word Ideas between which there is a near Resemblance and Analogy. In all Cases and Instances that can be referr'd to, the customary Use and Acceptation of Words is the only Rule that can determine the Sense of them, and consequently is the Rule by which we are oblig'd to understand them; and he who cannot any other way inform himself what the customary Use of any Word is, or was, but by consulting other Men, must, if he is concern'd to know the Meaning of such Words, rely on their *Authority*.

IN short, an Enquiry into the Meaning of a Word, is an Enquiry of Fact, *viz.* what Ideas customary Use has made that Word stand for; of this Fact in a living Language, every one whose Language it is, is himself a Judge, as to many  
Words,



Words, and so far he has no Occasion to consult any *Authority*; but even in a living Language, as I observ'd, the customary Use of some Words being confined to Persons of a particular Education, &c. can to a Person incapable of those Advantages be known only by consulting those who have them. But in Books written long since, in a dead Language, or in which the Use of Words has much vary'd since the Time such Books were written, the customary Use of all Words can be known only from Authority. In this Case even the greatest Abilities must depend on Authority, not perhaps the Authority of any now living, but of Authors contemporary, &c. But he who has not Capacities to consult such Authorities, must depend on the Authority of Translators, or other living Interpreters.

MR. S. may perhaps think all this *nothing to the Purpose*. I must therefore observe, that the Words of Scripture are to be understood according to the same Rules, and by the same Methods and Applications as the Words of other ancient Books are. The Rule by which the greatest Abilities must determine the Sense of any Word in Scripture, is the customary Use of that Word when the Scriptures were written. What was the customary Use of that Word, he must receive from the Authority of Coetaneous Writers. He who has not Abilities for such a Search, must receive the Sense of the Words from the Authority of *Translators*, or other Persons more capable of making the Original Enquiry. The Words of such *Translations* or *Interpretations* he must understand according to the customary Use of them

them in the Language of such *Translation*. Between our Obligation indeed to understand Scripture, and any other Book, there is a great difference. The Words of Scripture are by all Christians acknowledg'd to be the Words of God, what we are infinitely concern'd to understand; whereas other Books it is not of such Concern to us whether we understand or not. But still the Rules and Methods by which we must interpret Scripture, are the same by which we interpret any other Words or Writings, only a greater Attention to these Rules, and a greater Application to these Methods is required with respect to Scripture than any other Writings, and how far soever these Methods of Enquiry are resolv'd into *Human Authority*, so far every Christian must be govern'd by *Human Authority*. And since there always were, and ever will be, great Numbers of Christians who cannot by any other possible way acquaint themselves with the Meaning of the Words of Scripture, but by receiving it from the Authority of *Translators*, or other *living Interpreters*, either such Christians are not obliged to understand any Words of Scripture at all, or else the Sense which they receive from such Authority must be esteem'd that in which they are obliged to understand them.

WHEN such *Translation* is acknowledg'd and receiv'd as Scripture, the Words of that *Translation* are to be interpreted according to the same Rules by which the Words of any other Book in that Language are. Some Words in that *Translation* will be of so general and familiar Use, that all Persons of all Stations and Capacities may be presumed

presumed to know what Ideas they stand for in the common Acceptation of all who speak that Language; and such Words all Persons are obliged to understand, according to their common receiv'd Sense in that Language. Every *Englishman* who reads or hears in our Translation—*Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, may be presumed to understand the Word *Adultery* in its true Sense, because no *Englishman*, who is capable of conversing at all, can be ignorant of the Meaning of so common a Word; and this Sense of the Word he does not receive from any Authority, but the common general Agreement of his Nation in the Use of that Word, of which Use he himself is a competent Judge. But then other Words there will be in such Translation, which are not of so general popular Use, but are of customary Use only among Persons of some particular Studies and Application; and the Sense of such Words is to be determin'd by their customary Use among such Persons; as when 'tis said, the *Elements shall melt with fervent Heat*, the Sense of the Word *Elements* must be taken from the Use of it among Persons acquainted with those Parts of Philosophy to which that Word belongs. Many other Words also there will be of a *Figurative Sense*, in which Sense perhaps they are not used at all in the Language of such Translation, tho' the Original Words, of which these are a verbal Translation, were in such Original Language commonly so used. Other Words there will be, whose Sense depends on certain *Proverbs* or *National Customs* prevailing either among the *Jews*, or other Nations to whom the Scriptures

Scriptures were directed; the common Knowledge of which made these Words very intelligible to them, tho' difficult to us. Now in these Instances, if a Person whose Education will not qualify him, or his Employments will not permit him to attend on such Studies as are necessary to ascertain the Meaning of such Words or Expressions, has yet occasion to inform himself in the Meaning of them; the Wit of Man can devise no other Method for him, but to consult those who have Capacity, and have so apply'd themselves; and if the Sense they give him should happen not to be true Sense, yet 'tis the best he can possibly get, and he will be justify'd in receiving it; and if any Action of his is to be directed by the Sense of that Word, he will be obliged to act according to that Sense of it which he so receives.

Pag. 24. LET us apply these Reflections in the Instance refer'd to by Mr. S. — *This is my Body*. The figurative Sense in these Words, as this learned Author has observed, was easily understood by those to whom they were spoken, from their exact Analogy, to a customary way of speaking, used in the Solemnity immediately preceding—

Pag. 24. *This is the Passover*. As by this Expression they had been always used to understand — *This is the Memorial of the Passover*, so they readily understood our Saviour in these Words as instituting a Rite, which in all After-Ages was to be observ'd as a *Memorial* of his Passion; and in the same Figure that the Lamb they had eaten was call'd the *Lamb of the Passover*, they might understand the Bread which he then brake to be his

his *Body* to be broken for them. Thus they might very well understand these Words; but what must we do who live at almost 1700 Years distance from the Time in which they were spoken? Why, they who have Abilities for the Enquiry, must do as Mr. *S.* has learnedly done, search and examine what customary way of Expression then prevailing these Words alluded to, and in what Figure it had been usual to speak upon the like Occasions: And from hence it will be easy for them to conclude in what Figure, and in what Sense, these Words are to be understood. But I cannot imagine how Persons not capable of making this Enquiry, can ever come at this necessary Knowledge, but by consulting Mr. *S.* or some other learned Men who are qualify'd for the proper Enquiry, and have actually apply'd themselves to it. This is the utmost they can do, and in the Event they must receive this Account, and the Interpretation which depends upon it, from the Authority of those whom they consult. If they are bound to understand these Words in that Sense, which, upon their best Application, appears to be the true Sense of them: Since this is the only Application in their Power, it follows, that they are bound to understand these Words in that Sense which they receive from this Application.

I SUPPOSE my Friend Mr. *S.* will be in Pain for me on this Occasion, lest I intend, by this way of arguing, to justify all those who, under the Direction of Popish Guides, understand these Words, as affirming all the Absurdities of *Transubstantiation*. But I hope he will find himself  
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somewhat eas'd when I observe, That tho' the Rules I have assign'd are the best, and I think the only Rules by which we can ascertain the proper Sense of any Words in Scripture; yet there is another Rule by which we may certainly conclude what is *not* the proper Sense of them; and that is, when according to the Sense given of any Words, the Proposition form'd by them is Nonsense, or evidently false. 'Tis for this Reason that immediately, and without enquiring into the proper Sense of the Words, *This is my Body*, we pronounce, that the Doctrine of Transubstantiation cannot give us the proper Sense of them, because that Doctrine includes in it these palpable Absurdities — That a Part is equal to the Whole, — That the same Body may be in two Places at once, &c. Now if we cannot be sure that these Propositions are false, we cannot be sure that any are true; and therefore we are sure that a Doctrine, manifestly including these Propositions, cannot be the Sense of any Words written by divine Inspiration; because then the same Proposition would be True and False at the same Time: True as affirm'd by God, and false from the evident Reason of the Thing. To the Acknowledgment of such Absurdities, no Authority, not even Scripture itself, can oblige us: For I can never be so sure that any Words are a Divine Revelation, as I must be that these Propositions are False; and consequently, if *Transubstantiation* were the only Sense that could be given of those Words in Scripture, I must rather be determin'd to reject that Scripture, as no Divine Revelation, or at least those Words,

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as no Part of Scripture, than admit that Sense of them. The Absurdities of *Transubstantiation* are so gross, and so apparent to every one, even of the meanest Capacities, who duly attends to the Consideration of that Doctrine, That no Authority can justify any one in admitting it. But still we are got no farther than rejecting a Sense from those Words which cannot be the True one. If we will find the true proper Sense of them, we must follow the excellent Rule Mr. S. pursued, and enquire in what Sense they were originally used by *Christ*; and if we have not Abilities for this Search our selves, we must consult others who, with greater Abilities, have pursued it.

THRO' these Reflections then, I think, we are brought fairly down to this important Conclusion, " That the greater Number of Christians are bound, in their Search after the Meaning of the Scriptures, in many Instances to submit to the Authority of other Men." For if they are oblig'd in all Cases to use the best Helps and Assistances in their Power, and to acknowledge that Sense which they receive in Consequence of such Application; since 'tis evident there are many Instances in which the only Recourse in their Power is consulting other Men, and the only Resolution they are capable of, is submitting to their Judgment and Authority; it follows, that in many Instances they are obliged to submit to the Judgment and Authority of other Men.

Two Questions relating to this Subject we are concern'd to resolve,

*First,*

*First*, UNDER what *Limits* and *Restrictions* we are obliged to this Submission to *Authority*?

*Secondly*, AMONG a Variety of *Authorities*, whose is to be preferr'd?

As to the First, The Rule or Measure of Mens Obligation to submit to Authority is, in general, taken from the Nature of the Question consider'd, and the Abilities of the Enquirer to judge for himself; so far as any Person is able to judge for himself from the Reason of the Thing, so far he need not, nay, cannot resign to Authority.

1. IT is suppos'd that a Man is under some Doubt or Difficulty before he applies to others for Assistance or Direction; for in a Point concerning which I am already fully and clearly satisfy'd from the Reason of the Thing, I have no occasion to consult or advise with any other Man: And if another Man will offer me his Sentiments on such a Point, I cannot submit my Convictions to his Authority, because no Authority can be an Argument of equal Weight with the plain Evidence of the Thing.

2. IN a Question doubtful to me at present, but determinable by Reasons, of whose Force I am a competent Judge, if a Person whom I consult offers me such Arguments for his Opinion, I cannot be any farther convinced by that Person, than his Arguments appear to be conclusive. If his Arguments appear inconclusive, I cannot assent upon his *Authority*, because I may presume these Arguments to be the Ground of such Person's Judgment; and these I perceive to be  
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be insufficient: and if I am convinced by his Arguments, and agree to his Opinion, yet in this I do not submit to his *Authority*, but his *Reasons*. But,

3. IF a Question be such, as the Decision of it depends merely on Testimony, or on such Arguments of whose Force I am unqualify'd to judge; it is evident, that in such a Question I can be determin'd only by *Authority*; and if a Person whom I consult offers me never so many such Arguments for his Opinion, these Arguments can have no Weight with me; and if I agree to such Person's Opinion, I must assent purely upon his *Authority*.

AND these Rules are applicable to Enquirers of the greatest and the meanest Capacities. If a Man of Learning consults an Author on any Point of Philosophy, he is no farther convinc'd by such Author than his Opinion is supported by his Reasons; of the Force of these Reasons, he may presume himself to be as good a Judge as such Author; and if he agrees to his Opinion, he does not submit to the Man, but his Arguments: But if such a Person consults an ancient Author, to know the common Use or Acceptation of any Word or Expression in the Age and Language of such Author, or any Fact done, or Custom prevailing in his Time, all that is expected from such Author is his Testimony, or the Report of his own Observations; of which he who consults him cannot be so good a Judge, and must therefore resign to his *Authority*; or if he rejects this Author's Account, it must be, because it contradicts some other *Authority* which  
he

he thinks more worthy to be rely'd on: So that in the Result he must either conclude nothing at all in such Question, or else be determin'd by *Authority*. But I shall consider this Obligation more especially with respect to Inferior Capacities, whose Case will be most in View in the Application, and confine my self to the Question before us concerning the Meaning of Scripture.

LET us suppose a Christian of common ordinary Education and Apprehension seriously inquisitive after the Meaning of Scripture, which he proposes as the ultimate Rule of his Faith and Actions, because he believes it to be the WORD OF GOD.

IN the first Place, 'tis evident he is capable of consulting this Scripture only in some Translation in his own Language.

Now for the Fidelity of this Translation, he must rely on the Authority of the Translators, because he is not capable of examining those Reasons which moved the Translators so to render the Words in the Original. If those Reasons should be offer'd, as, "That this was the common Acceptation of the Words in the Original at the Time when it was written, &c." And that this appears from the best Authorities, &c. of these Reasons he cannot judge, he must take them upon Trust, and be determin'd by *Authority*. If any other Person comes to him, and tells him these Translators are mistaken, he must offer the same kind of Proofs for his Opinion that the Translators offer for theirs, the Man is equally incapable of judging of either; and the only

only Question before him must be, whose *Authority* he should rely on. The only Stand he can make against this *Authority*, is, when these Translators or Interpreters assign such a Meaning to any Words of Scripture as makes the Proposition contain'd in them evidently false, or contradictory to some other Proposition in the same Translation. He is sure that all Propositions in Scripture are true and consistent; and therefore he is sure that in the *first* Case the Translation is false in that Place; and in the *second*, that 'tis false in one of the two Places. In these Instances he judges within the Compass of his Abilities; and this Judgment no Authority can over-rule: But if he is concern'd to know the true proper Sense of these Words, he has no other way, but to go on, and consult other Translators or Interpreters; and if he can find none, who can give him a Sense of these Words free from these Objections, he must conclude either that some Alteration has happen'd in this Place, or that this is a part of Scripture which he is not obliged to understand. But if he lights on a Man of Learning, who gives him a rational consistent Sense of these Places, which he affirms to be deduced from the Acceptation of the Original Words, this he may reasonably receive as their proper Translation. This is the utmost he can do; and if he is to be determin'd to any Translation of these Words, he must be determin'd by this Application; and if he is determin'd by this Application, 'tis manifest he is determin'd by *Authority*.

BUT let us suppose he is satisfy'd with the Translation before him. This Translation being in his own Language, many Words will occur in it of so common and popular Use, that no Guide or Director can be wanting to ascertain the Meaning of them. No *Englishman* (e. g.) of such Capacities wants to be inform'd what is the Sense of the Word *Adultery*; and if any Person, of how great Learning or Character soever, shall tell him that the Word *Adultery* signifies the same with *Theft*, he cannot submit to his Opinion, because he is as well acquainted with the common Acceptation of that Word in the *English* Tongue as any Person of the greatest Improvements. But then, as I observ'd, many other Words will occur in that Translation, the Sense of which a Person of his Capacities will be obliged to receive from the Information of others; and in every such Instance he will be obliged to depend on *Authority*. And in the Cases suggested by Mr. S. (p. 36.) when Words are used in a *Figurative Way*, or when 'tis necessary to consider a Multitude of Places together, to collect the proper Sense, or the Doctrines deliver'd in the Words of Scripture; if a Person be concern'd to understand these Places, and is not equal to the Difficulty of the Search himself, I can imagine no Way for him to be resolv'd, but by consulting others more equal to it, and within the Limitations assign'd, being determin'd by their Authority. I agree with this Author, that *Involuntary Error*, in such Cases, will certainly be excus'd by *Christ*; but then the Error is not *Involuntary*, unless the Person has apply'd himself

himself to all proper Assistances in his Power. Now the most proper Assistance, and which is certainly in his Power, is to consult others more equal to these Difficulties than himself. If he has omitted this, the Error will be *Voluntary*. And since in many such Applications, it is necessary for him to be determin'd one way or other, and yet impossible for him to be determin'd but by submitting to the Judgment or Authority of those whom he consults; it follows, that in many such Cases he is oblig'd to submit to *Authority*; and if he does not so submit, his Error will be *Voluntary* \*.

FOR the Resolution of the second Question, viz. among Variety of Authorities, whose is to be prefer'd, I observe in general, that the *Personal Authority* of any Man, as a Director, is founded upon a Presumption of his *Skill* and *Fidelity*; and consequently when a Question is to be determin'd by Authority, and two Persons, whom we consult, differ in their Judgment, his Authority ought to be prefer'd of whose *Skill* and *Fidelity* we have the most reasonable Presumption. If one is by his Education and Capacity qualify'd to judge of the Question we want to be resolv'd in, and has with a particular Attention apply'd himself to the Study of it, we ought in reason to prefer his Authority before any other Person not so qualify'd. In a Question relating to our Health, the Opinion of a Phy-

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\* Mr. Sykes's Determination, that the Enquirer in such Cases ought to suspend his Assent, unless the Persons whom he consults can convince him by Evidence, from the Reason of the Thing, will be consider'd in its proper Place. - Part II. Chap. 3.

fician shou'd have more Weight with us, than the Opinion of one who has never apply'd himself to the Study of Medicine. If in such a Case we consult two Physicians, and they disagree in their Prescriptions, we ought certainly to adhere to him, of whose Skill and Honesty we have the best Presumption. If our Esteem for them in these respects is equal, and we can neither consult others, nor prescribe to our selves, we must still, in many Cases, submit to one, tho' without any Reason for our Preference, because our Lives may depend upon applying some Remedy; but if we can consult others, for whom we have the same Esteem, 'tis reasonable for us to do it, and be determin'd to follow that Prescription which the greater Number agree in. If they whom we consult in any Case, offer us Reasons for their Opinion, of whose Force we are able to judge, we shall certainly adhere to his Opinion who offers us the most and the best Reasons: But in this Case we do not submit to his Authority, but his Reasons. If their Reasons are, or appear equal, we cannot be determin'd to either of their Opinions from any other Motive, but a Presumption of greater *Skill* and *Fidelity* in one than the other; and so far as we are determin'd by this Motive, so far we are determin'd by *Authority*. If the Arguments on which they found their Opinions are such as we are perfectly unqualify'd to judge of, these Arguments can be of no Weight with us, or incline us to one Side or the other; but if we must receive one of their Opinions, we must receive his, of whose *Skill* and *Fidelity* we have the most reasonable Presumption.

But

BUT besides this *Personal Authority*, resulting from the Personal Qualifications and Abilities of him whom we consult, there is also a *Derived Authority* which requires a special and distinct Regard from us. As when any Persons are set apart by the Appointment of our proper Superior to be our Guides and Directors in certain Inquiries. If such Persons are obliged, by previous Study and Application, to qualify themselves for this Choice; if their Proficiencies are tried and examined by proper Methods of Scrutiny, and by Persons more capable of judging of the Abilities necessary for such Office than our selves, these Circumstances must be acknowledg'd to be strong Presumptions, even of their *Personal Qualifications*; and, *cæteris paribus*, they have, even on these Accounts, a better Title to our Confidence and Esteem than other Men: And consequently, if we consider our selves only as rational Men, acting upon the common Motives of Prudence and Discretion, we should rather chuse to consult, and be determin'd by such Persons, than by others not so recommended to us. But if we acknowledge our selves Subjects to that Superior who appoints them, so much Regard is certainly due to his Appointment, as to oblige our first Application in all Difficulties to them; and where any other Person's Opinion stands in Competition with theirs, to allow at least the turning of the Scale to their *Commission*. In short, where ever any Question must in the Event be decided by Authority, theirs ought, *cæteris paribus*, to be prefer'd.

As in civiliz'd Nations there are Persons set apart and obliged by long Study to acquaint themselves with the Laws of the Community, so 'tis reasonable that Men of inferior Education and Capacities should, in all difficult Questions of Law, consult such Persons, and depend on their Judgment rather than any other Man's. And if one of that Profession be appointed by a special Commission to be a Guide in such Difficulties to all within a certain District, 'tis not only reasonable that all within that District should first advise with him, as a Person whom publick Wisdom has thought capable of directing them, and in whose *Personal Abilities* they may therefore have great Confidence; but his *delegated Authority* is also to be regarded by them, as Members and Subjects of that Community, and (*ceteris paribus*) submitted to, rather than any other Persons not Partaker of the same Commission. In all Cases from which, by the Limitations before-mention'd, all Authority is excluded, his cannot be submitted to; but wherever the State of the Question is such, that, whichever Side we take, we must be determined by *Authority*, the Obedience we owe to our Superior, obliges us, *ceteris paribus*, to prefer his *Authority* whom he has appointed to direct us. And tho' such Director should happen to be mistaken in his Judgment, and lead us into Error, yet we may depend on the Approbation of our Superior, because we have done the best we cou'd to understand his Laws, in the Method which he himself has appointed to inform us.



THE Case of an ordinary Christian inquiring into the Meaning of Scripture, is very much parallel to this. Some Parts or Words of Scripture are so plain and generally understood, that he wants no Director to inform him of their Meaning; others he cannot understand without consulting Persons of better Abilities than himself. To an Interpretation of a difficult Place contrary to a plain Place, which he does understand, or to any other evident Truth, he cannot submit upon any Authority, *personal* or *derived*; but where no such Contradiction appears, and the Reasons which determine the Sense of the Words are above his Apprehension or Inquiry, 'tis manifest, that if he will be at all determin'd in such a Question, he must be determin'd by some *Authority* or other. And since in the Church of *Christ* some Persons are selected from others, and after long Study and Preparation are tried by competent Judges of their Abilities, and then appointed to be Guides and Instructors of others, such Persons he is, in Reason, Prudence, and Duty to his Superiors, rather to consult; and where other Considerations are equal, rather to submit to than other Men: And if out of these Persons one is more particularly appointed to be his Director, for the same Reasons he is obliged, *cæteris paribus*, to prefer his Judgment: And if in tracing up this Constitution to its Original, we find it to be the Appointment of *Christ* and his Apostles, that some Persons should be thus set apart for the Edification and Direction of the Inferiors of the Church, where no manifest Reason of Preference appears,

to follow any other Man's *mere Authority* in Contradiction to theirs, is a Contempt, not only of those visible Superiors who appointed them to this Office, but of *Christ* and his Apostles, in Obedience to whose Institution this Appointment was made.

S E C T. III.

*How far we are obliged to assent to a Proposition as True upon Human Authority.*

**F**ROM the preceding Reflections I hope it appears,

*First*, THAT Persons even of the best Abilities are obliged to receive both the Tradition of the Scriptures in general, and the Sense or Import of many particular Words, and consequently of the Propositions express'd by those Words from *Human Authority*.

*Secondly*. THAT Christians of common ordinary Education and Abilities, are bound to rely on *Human Authority* for the Fidelity of those Translations in which they read the Scripture, and on the *Authority* of present living Guides and Directors, for the Meaning of many Words and Expressions even in those Translations.

THE Extent and Limits of such Authority, the several Degrees of it in different Persons, and the different Measures in which some are more or less than others obliged to submit to it, are I hope also so far ascertain'd, that the Rules laid down may without much Difficulty be apply'd to all Questions of ordinary Occurrence.

BUT

BUT I affirm'd also that *Authority* is a *Rule* by which we might judge, not only of the *Meaning*, but, in many Instances, of the *Truth* of Propositions; to this Point therefore I am also obliged to say something.

Now a Proposition is then *true*, when there is a real Agreement or Disagreement between the Ideas affirm'd or denied of each other in it. So that as we understand the *Meaning* of a Proposition, when we know what Ideas the Words stand for, so we acknowledge the *Truth* or *Falshood* of a Proposition, when we either *perceive*, or are *assured* of the real Agreement or Disagreement between the Ideas signified by those Words. Where the Ideas are distinctly and familiarly known to us, and are immediately compared to each other, we easily perceive how far they agree or disagree, and consequently how far the Proposition is true or false. And as some Words are of so common general Use that they must be understood, and some Ideas so simple in themselves, and so familiar to every one, that they must be distinctly known to every one, even of the meanest degree of Apprehension, that can consist with the Character of a rational Being; so the Truth of Propositions consisting of such Words, every Man may be presumed able to perceive, and, as a rational Being, oblig'd to perceive whenever 'tis offer'd to him. In this Proposition, (*e. g.*) *The Whole is greater than its Part*: The Words are so generally used, and the Ideas so simple, and so universally known, and the Agreement so apparent, that he who is able to  
perceive

perceive any Truth, must be presumed to acknowledge this. But then, as there are some Words of familiar Use only to certain Persons, and in themselves more difficult than others from their Derivation, their figurative Use, their Relation to ancient Proverbs or Customs, &c. so there are many Ideas familiar only to Persons of a certain Study or Education, and in themselves so complex, &c. that an uncommon Measure of Capacity and Application is required so fully and distinctly to comprehend them, as to perceive their several Habitues and Relations, with what they agree, and with what they disagree, especially when an intermediate Application of several other Ideas is necessary to shew such Agreement. In such Instances a Person of inferior Education cannot from his own Knowledge or Observation perceive the *Truth* of Propositions in which these Ideas are affirm'd or denied of each other. And as a Person of such inferior Education, if he will know the *Meaning* of such difficult Words, must consult others better qualify'd than himself for understanding them, so if he will be assured of the *Truth* of any such Proposition, in which he cannot perceive the Agreement or Disagreement of the Ideas himself, he has no other Way but to consult those to whom the Ideas and their Relations are more familiarly known, and by whom therefore the Truth or Falshood of the Proposition is more distinctly perceiv'd. Suppose an ordinary Mechanic, (*e. g.*) for his Direction in some Practice, wants to be resolv'd, whether the three Angles of a Rectilineal Triangle

angle are equal to two Right ones: If he cou'd be assur'd of this Conclusion, he cou'd make an Engine which wou'd answer some certain Purpose; but this Proposition he is not able to demonstrate himself: What other Way then has he to be resolv'd, but consulting some *Mathematician*? And if he is not able to apprehend the Demonstration, when offer'd to him, such Demonstration signifies no more to him, than if the Person he applies to shou'd repeat the first Verse in *Homer*. If he consults Ten Mathematicians instead of One, he is still in the same Case as to his own Perceptions, and cannot be any farther assured of the Truth he inquires after, than he can depend on their *Authority*. Now I wou'd ask whether such a Person may not rationally acquiesce in such an *Authority*, and proceed to act upon the Assurance he receives from it. His Assurance, indeed, is less than if he cou'd demonstrate the Proposition himself; but still 'tis the best he is capable of, and such as in reason he ought to act upon.

WHAT I wou'd infer from this, and innumerable other such Instances as might be refer'd to, is, That *Authority* is, in many Cases, a just and reasonable Ground for Assent to Propositions, in which we cannot our selves perceive the Agreement or Disagreement of the Ideas. In proportion to our Reasons, for Confidence in the *Skill* and *Fidelity* of the Person, our Submission to his *Authority* is more or less reasonable, and our Assent will be more or less assured: But to the highest human Authority the Ground of our Assent can be but *probable*, and therefore

Pag. 74.

therefore the Degree of it no more than *Opinion*: But upon these Probabilities the daily Occasions of Life require us to act, and he wou'd be esteem'd a Madman who thou'd refuse to be govern'd by them. The *highest Degrees of Probability*, as Mr. S. has well observ'd, are *little short of Knowledge and Certainty*; and a higher Degree of Probability there cannot be, than what arises from the best human Authorities.

BUT where the Authority is *Infallible*, the Authority of God, who cannot deceive, or be deceiv'd, an absolute Submission is required, and an Assent of *Faith*, an Assent free from any Doubt or Diffidence.

Pag. 27.

IN the Question we have been considering, it is suppos'd that the Holy Scriptures are the *Word of God*; and consequently every Proposition contain'd in them is infallibly true, and must be assented to by all Christians, as soon as the Meaning of it is understood, upon the *Authority* of the Revealer. When God has affirm'd one Idea of another, I am assured there is an Agreement between them, tho' I cannot perceive it; because God, who is eternal Truth, and certainly knows what Ideas agree, and what do not, has here affirm'd that there is an Agreement. I am therefore astonish'd to find a Christian and a Divine affirming, in express Terms—*That to those Doctrines of Jesus Christ which a Man understands, (i. e.) perceives the Agreement of the Ideas contain'd in the Propositions, to those he is oblig'd to assent, nor can he be oblig'd to assent any farther. To those*

those Propositions in which we perceive the Agreement of the Ideas, we do not and cannot assent upon any Authority, Human, or Divine; but because we clearly perceive the Truth of them. Shou'd God and Man concur in affirming to me, *That the Whole is bigger than its Part*, I should certainly assent to this Proposition, but not because 'tis affirm'd by either Authority, but because I have a clear Perception of the Truth of it. This Proposition I assent to as firmly, when not reveal'd, as I cou'd do when reveal'd. I believe it already, upon the greatest Evidence that human Reason is capable of, a clear distinct Perception, and cannot believe it more or less upon any Authority. By this Doctrine then Mr. S. has reduc'd our Blessed Lord's *Authority* as a Teacher to this— That we are oblig'd to assent to nothing upon his *Authority*, but what we should equally have assented to if he had never affirm'd it, or if it were affirm'd by the next Man we meet. But what *Authority* he leaves him as a *Teacher*, after this Limitation, I cannot imagine. I wou'd ask this Reverend Gentleman, whether he perceives any Agreement between the Ideas affirmed of one another in these Propositions— *The Dead shall be raised*— *This Corruptible must put on Incorruption*— *Christ is ordained to be the Judge of Quick and Dead*.— If he perceives an Agreement between the Ideas of the *Predicates* and *Subjects* in these Propositions, he would equally have believ'd them, whoever had affirm'd them; if he perceives none, then, according to his Rule, he cannot  
be

be obliged to assent to them. I confess I differ very much from this Author's Notions in this Matter. I suppose every Christian, as such, bound to acknowledge the Holy Scriptures to be a *Divine Revelation*. In this general Conclusion he is firmly resolv'd, That every Proposition contain'd in these Scriptures is undoubtedly true, whatever is the Meaning of it. In particular Applications, if upon Enquiry into the Meaning of an (*affirmative*) Proposition, or what Ideas the Words stand for, he affixes to them Ideas, between which he sees clearly there is no possible Agreement, this Proposition, so understood, is evidently false, and he cannot assent to it upon any Authority: He therefore concludes, that either that Proposition is no Part of Scripture, or that he mistakes the Sense of it. But he cannot make either of these Conclusions from his not perceiving whether the Proposition be true or false, (*i. e.*) whether the Ideas signified by the Words, agree or not; because that may be true which he cannot perceive to be so, and those Ideas may agree, whose Agreement he cannot perceive; and consequently that Proposition, even in that Sense, may be in Scripture; and if he has no other Objection against it, he is oblig'd to admit it as a Part of Scripture, and to believe it true, because God, who certainly knows whether it be true or false, has affirm'd it.

IN such Propositions in Scripture, where we evidently perceive the Agreement of the Ideas, we acknowledge Truth from its own Light, and not upon the *Authority of the Revealer*: But  
 where



where we only understand the Meaning of the Words, and do not perceive the Agreement or Connexion of the Ideas which those Words stand for, there we properly assent upon the *Authority of the Revealer*; and unless we acknowledge our selves bound to assent to every such Proposition in Scripture, we allow no more *Authority* to Christ and his Apostles, than to the most inconsiderable Author that ever wrote.

WHEN we do not understand the Sense of a Proposition, or what Ideas the Words stand for, tho' we in general believe it to be true, because 'tis in Scripture, yet we cannot distinctly assent to it, we do not properly either *believe* it or *disbelieve* it: But as soon as we are satisfy'd in the Meaning of it, we then believe it as affirmed by divine Authority. If it be ask'd what Propositions in Scripture we are bound to believe upon *Human Authority*; the Answer, in short, is, *None*. Those Propositions in which we perceive the Agreement of the Ideas, we are not (as I observ'd) induced to believe by any *Authority*, but by the Evidence of the Thing: And those Propositions which we assent to without perceiving such Agreement, we assent to upon the *Authority of God*; and it cannot be imagin'd how the Affirmation of a less Authority should be the Inducement of our Assent to a Proposition which is affirm'd to us by an infinitely greater. All that can be allow'd to *Human Authority*, with respect to any Proposition in Scripture, is to ascertain the Meaning of the Words. How far we are oblig'd in that Inquiry to be resolv'd by *Human Authority*, I have already

already consider'd. But then in any Instance in which we are oblig'd to consult, and rely on *Human Authority* for the Meaning of the Words, tho' it be not that Authority which assures us of the *Truth* of that Proposition, but God's; yet that this Truth, rather than another, is express'd by those Words, 'tis manifest we must in many Instances receive from *Human Authority*. Suppose (*e. g.*) an ordinary Christian consulting several Persons, whose Abilities he esteems, for the Meaning of the Word *Hell*, in the Article of Christ's Descent, or, *Act. ii. 31.* One tells him the Sense is, Christ descended into the Place of the Damned; Another, that Christ's human Soul descended into the Place or State of other departed Souls, &c. If he cannot judge of their Reasons, and will be determin'd to either Sense, he must be determin'd by his *Authority*, of whose Knowledge and Fidelity he has the best Assurance; but which ever Proposition he receives as explanatory of that *Text* or *Article*, he does not assent to it *as true*, because 'tis affirm'd by that Person, but because 'tis affirm'd in Scripture. The Proposition he assents to upon human Authority is this; 'That this (which ever he receives) is the Meaning of that Word or Expression in Scripture.' But for the Truth of this Proposition, *that Christ* (in such a certain Sense) *descended into Hell*, he relies wholly upon that divine Authority which he now believes to have affirm'd it. So that our Faith in the Belief of any Proposition in Scripture relies only on *Divine Authority*; but then for the Direction of our Faith to the Special

cial Proposition we are to believe, as contain'd in Scripture, we must of Necessity, in many Instances, depend on *Human Authority*.

THE Position by which all assent upon Authority, has been usually oppos'd is this; *That no Man rationally can or ought to assent to any Conclusion, unless he perceives the Truth of it from the Evidence of the Thing*: A Position, which, if receiv'd as an universal Principle or Rule of Assent, with regard to all Subjects, and all Persons, must introduce the greatest Absurdities into human Life. It is acknowledged, that as far as the Nature of the Subject will admit it, and our Capacities will qualify us for the Inquiry, 'tis rational for us to endeavour after such Evidence; and where-ever we do perceive it, not to suffer any *Authority* to overrule our Conviction. But then the Instances are so numerous, in which 'tis necessary for Men to be determin'd one way or other, and yet morally impossible for them to perceive such Evidence, that the Catalogue of *Exceptions* must be very large before the Maxim contended for can be admitted as a *general Rule*. For,

1. WE must except all Conclusions which are merely the Result of *Experience*, or the Memory and Observation that such Antecedents have been follow'd by such Consequents.

2. ALL Conclusions that depend on *Testimony*, the Credibility of which must of necessity be resolv'd into human Authority. And whoever attentively considers how great a Compass of human Knowledge these take in, will be convinc'd that the *Generality* of this Rule is very  
F much

much contracted by these Restrictions. But to these we must add,

3. ALL Conclusions in which we are concern'd to be resolv'd, and yet want either Capacities or Opportunities to examine the Reasons on which they are founded. A Person even of the greatest Abilities and Improvements will be obliged to admit many Conclusions, in some Part of Knowledge or other, upon *Authority*; and in the same proportion that we abate of these Advantages, the Number of Conclusions, so to be admitted, will increase upon us in the Estimate; and when we come down to Persons of very mean Parts and Education, we shall find them almost innumerable.

THERE is hardly a Branch of useful Knowledge, but, if searched to the Bottom, will employ the Life of one Man. Now the Knowledge of such a Person will be of little Use to any but himself, unless he can prevail on others to admit his Conclusions; and the Instances are without Number in common Life, in which his Conclusions may be useful, and even necessary for the Direction of Persons, either unable to follow him thro' the several Trains of Reasoning by which he deduced them, or else whose other Avocations will not permit them to attend to the Inquiry; or, lastly, if the Conclusion has relation to some Practice, as, if 'tis useful it probably will have, the Occasions of Action are many Times such, as will not admit so long Deliberation as such a Search may require. In all these Cases 'tis evident the Inquirer can be no farther assured of the Truth of such Conclusions

sions, that he can depend on his *Authority* who reports them. And even this Person himself will be under the same Necessity of relying on *Authority*, with respect to other Branches of Knowledge to which he has never apply'd himself. 'Tis true, Men's Applications will be principally engaged to those Parts of Knowledge whose Use most frequently occurs in their particular Vocation and Method of Life; but then there is no Man but has often occasion of Recourse to some Conclusions at least, in such Parts of Knowledge as his Attention to One renders him a Stranger to; and for the Truth of such Conclusions he will, in the Cases before-mentioned, be oblig'd to depend on the *Authority* of those who have studied them.

'Tis for these Reasons that all wise Governments have appointed and encouraged Persons to devote their Application severally to the various Branches of useful Knowledge, that they might be as so many Repositories in each kind of Knowledge, to which every Member of the Community might have Recourse, as his Occasions should require, without being diverted from his own particular Province and Employment. But this Provision will be to very little Purpose, if this Principle be receiv'd, That *no Man ought to assent to any Conclusion, unless he perceives the Truth of it by Evidence from the Reason of the Thing*: For upon this Supposition every Man will be obliged to study every Subject of human Inquiries, or else be depriv'd of all the Benefit and Assistance he might receive from them. If it be said that the Service intended in

such Appointment of Persons to particular Studies, is only this, That they may shorten the Labour of other Men in such Inquiries; and having the proper Conclusions of their Science, and the Reasons which support them always in View, may readily offer them to those who consult them. 'Tis acknowledg'd, that the Labour of such Persons will be considerably useful to the Publick, even thus apply'd; their Direction will be of great Advantage in the Education of others to the same Study, and to Persons of superior Capacities, or who have some competent Knowledge of the Subject before them, they will be able to give Satisfaction in their Inquiries from the Reason of the Thing. But then the far greater Number of the Persons who will consult them, and of the Occasions upon which they will be consulted, will come within the Cases abovemention'd, in which the Inquirer must necessarily rely on their *Authority*. In such Cases *Authority* is *Reason*, and such, as a rational Man may rationally acquiesce in.

IN whatever Proportion indeed any one's Knowledge or Capacity extends beyond other Men's, in the same he will be less oblig'd to assent upon *Authority* than other Men. A Person who with good Parts and a proper Education has long apply'd himself to any Branch of Knowledge, may be presumed to have formed his own Sentiments upon that Subject upon Reasons; and so far as he has done so, the Convictions of these Reasons he cannot give up to any one's *Authority*, and may justly insist on having better Reasons offer'd him, before he  
 departs

departs from his present Judgment. And since almost all Parts of Knowledge have some Principles in common, and a regular Pursuit of any one Inquiry opens the Understanding, and better enables Men to reason on other Subjects, the Instances in which Persons of such Abilities and Improvements may perceive Truth from the Evidence of the thing, may be so many, that with respect to such Persons, it may well enough pass for a general Rule, That *they ought not to assent but upon Evidence from the Reason of the Thing*: But *Universal* it cannot be allow'd, even with respect to them. For as no Capacity is equal to a thorough Consideration of all Subjects, some Conclusions at least in every Subject, but that to which the Person has specially apply'd himself, will lie so deep, so far removed from any general Principles, and require so many Deductions before their Evidence can be perceiv'd, that in many Cases he will be under a Necessity of losing the Advantage of such Conclusions, or of admitting them upon the *Authority* of those who may be presumed to have regularly deduced them. And if any one's Application has been more general, and extended to many Subjects, his Knowledge will be proportionably imperfect in any, and the more remote Conclusions, in all, will be beyond his Reach; and, upon the whole, he will be oblig'd to depend on *Authority* in as many Instances, as if his Inquiries had been more confined. But with respect to Persons of inferior Parts and Education, which compose the Bulk of Mankind, the Rule propos'd cannot be allow'd

low'd to be so much as *General*. The Instances are so few, in which they are capable of perceiving the Reason and Evidence of Things, and so many, in which the Necessities of Life will oblige them to assent without such Evidence, and even upon mere *Authority*, that the old Maxim, *Cuique in sua arte credendum*, will bid fairer to be a general Rule of Assent, with respect to the Bulk of Mankind, than the other. It must therefore argue a strange Miscalculation of human Capacities, for any one to lay down this as an universal Rule, *That no Man ought to assent, but upon Evidence from the Reason of the Thing*. A very little Observation will convince any one, that 'tis impossible for the greater Part of Mankind to perceive such Evidence for Conclusions of great Importance to them, or to assent to them upon any other Ground but *Authority*. If all Men were equal to the Consideration of all Subjects, the Rule proposed might be *universally* good and useful: But as this is a Supposition fitted only for *Utopia*, this Principle, if insisted on as an *universal Rule*, must be sent thither too. As the State of Mankind is in Fact and Reality, and without continual Miracles ever must be in this World, this Principle, receiv'd as the universal Rule of Assent, for all Persons, in all Cases, can produce nothing but the most ridiculous Confusion. Let any Society, composed, as all Societies must be, of the several Ranks, Professions, and Capacities of Men; Let even a single Village act universally up to this Rule, and they will, in very little Time, give the rest of Mankind



kind reason to look upon them and treat them as a Company of Madmen. That Religion is not a Subject in which Men have the particular Privilege of being never oblig'd to assent upon *Authority*, has, I hope, been partly shewn already, and will farther appear in occasional Applications of what I have offer'd in this Chapter.

THE Conclusions I have endeavour'd to establish in the preceding Reflexions, are of such Importance to the Decision of the Controversy I am engag'd in, that I hope the Reader will not think I have detain'd him too long in the Pursuit of them. In Disputes with Men who deny Propositions, which have been long receiv'd as unquestion'd Truths, and appeal'd to as *Principles*, we must begin our Inquiry higher, and argue upon some *Principles* which cannot be deny'd. What I have now offer'd, I have endeavour'd to trace down from the most simple Elements of human Knowledge; and I hope 'twill be some Amends to the Reader for his Patience here, to find his Trouble shorten'd by it in some succeeding Inquiries.





## CHAP. III.

Review of the *sixth* Chapter of my Discourse. Of Sincerity.

Pag. 23.



THE Conclusion which I oppose in that Chapter of my Discourse which treats of this Subject, is this——“ Tho’ we  
 “ mistake any or all the Laws of  
 “ *Christ* never so much, and in consequence of  
 “ such Mistake act even directly contrary to  
 “ what, in the common Apprehension of Man-  
 “ kind, is the Meaning of them; yet if we are  
 “ *fully persuaded* that our Interpretation is a-  
 “ greeable to his Will, we are in all Cases ju-  
 “ stify’d in his Sight, and the Action will be  
 “ approved and rewarded by him as Obe-  
 “ dience.” What I mean by the *common Appre-*  
*hension of Mankind*, I have already explain’d,  
*viz.* that Measure of Apprehension which be-  
 longs to us as Men, as Beings capable of con-  
 versing and understanding what is proposed to  
 us; in consequence of which, every Christian,  
 as a rational Being, is bound to understand,  
 and, as a Subject of *Christ*, to obey some of his  
 Laws. In this Principle Mr. *S.* is pleas’d to a-  
 gree with me, “ That every Christian is strictly  
 “ obliged to understand some of *Christ’s* Laws  
 “ according to the Meaning intended in them.”

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From whence, I think, it evidently follows, That no Christian can be excused, who mistakes and acts contrary to the Meaning of *Christ* in *All* his Laws. Now if a full Persuasion of Mind will, in *All* Cases, or with respect to *All Christ's* Laws, excuse us acting contrary to his Intention; If this, which is the Proposition by me opposed, be true, then that Proposition cannot be true, That we are strictly obliged to understand *some* of *Christ's* Laws, according to the Meaning intended in them. These Propositions are contrary, and cannot be both true. Either therefore Mr. *S.* must concur with me in rejecting the *former*, or else he must retract the Concession he has made of the *latter*, and affirm either the Contradictory or the Contrary of it; either that no Christian is oblig'd to understand *some*, or that some Christians are not oblig'd to understand *any at all*.

But this Gentleman, by his great Skill in the modern Arts of Controversy, has found out an Expedient to evade this Difficulty, which is changing the Terms of the Question. To the Words *fully persuaded*, he tells me, I shou'd have added *after an impartial Search*. No doubt 'twas very ill done of me, to put such a Hardship upon my *Considerer*, that he must be forced to alter the Conclusion I oppose to quite another Sense, before he cou'd find Matter for a Section in Answer to me: But having, it seems, full Authority to oblige me to insert that Clause, he looks upon it as actually inserted by me into the Conclusion I deny; and proceeds upon that Supposition, to shew how weakly I have

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argu'd

argu'd, *ab absurdo*, against it. Before I consider his Examination of my Arguments, it may not be improper to inquire a little into the Reasons which are presumed to oblige me to state the Question under the Limitation prescribed. This judicious Person has not thought fit to insist so distinctly on this Obligation as methinks he might have done; but some scatter'd Suggestions there are in this Section, which, if I apprehend him right, were intended to be Proofs of it. As,

1. THAT the Term *Christian* is equivalent to a Person *apprehending and obeying all that is necessary to constitute him a Christian*, i. e. some of *Christ's* Laws in the Sense intended in them: And therefore, if I wou'd have consider'd this Question to any Purpose, I should have supposed it to be on all Hands agreed, that every Christian is bound so to understand and obey *some of Christ's* Laws, and only inquired whether a full Persuasion of Mind wou'd not excuse him mistaking also *some*. This I conceive to be Mr. S's Meaning, *Pag. 39 and 40*, and I hope it does not suffer in the Representation.

2. THE Nature of the Subject (*Sincerity*) requires that I should add, *after an impartial Search, &c. Pag. 41.*

3. THAT they whom I *oppose*—who *plead for the Sufficiency of Sincerity alone*, mean such a Persuasion only, as is the Result of a full and impartial Inquiry, That this Notion which I oppose, is *not maintain'd* by Mr. S. or any  
one

one *that he knows of*, Pag. 49, 53, 56, 61. I beg leave to begin with this last.

Now, suppose no one had ever affirm'd the Conclusion which I oppose; I was not engaged in a personal Dispute with any Author, but had professedly renounced it; and why I might not endeavour to disprove any false Proposition I pleas'd, I cannot imagine. But, in Truth, the Conclusion which I oppos'd, I therefore oppos'd, because I conceiv'd some Body had affirm'd it; and this Reason I gave in my Discourse, because it *seem'd to have been affirm'd, that tho'* Disc. p. 26. *we mistake any, or all the Laws of Christ, &c.* no one, who has convers'd in this Nation for some Years past, can be ignorant how widely this very Opinion has prevail'd, and with what Triumph every Error has appeal'd to it. Whether the Authors who *have seem'd to affirm* this unlimited Conclusion, did really affirm it, or not, I concern'd not my self to inquire. That they had *seem'd to affirm it*, may not be deny'd; but whether deriv'd from these Author's Assertions, or not, manifest it was, that this Opinion spread and grew popular in that very Sense in which I endeavour to refute it. A Delusion which led to such fatal Consequences, I thought it might become me as a Minister of *Christ*, to oppose; and that I might do it with better Hopes of Success, by shewing the Falshood and Absurdity of the Position, than by engaging in an endless Wrangle about ambiguous Meanings.

BUT the Terms *Christian*, and a Person *obliged to understand some Laws of Christ in their intended*

*intended Sense*, are equivalent, and consequently, a Proposition in which the latter of these Terms is affirmed of the former, is identical, *i. e.* no more is contain'd in the Predicate than the Subject itself implies; and therefore 'tis frivolous to put a Question, *Whether a Christian can be excused by a full Persuasion of Mind from understanding any Laws at all of Christ in their intended Sense.* I have given some Reasons why I think this no frivolous Question; and in order to convince a Christian of the Absurdity of the Affirmative, no shorter or better Method could be taken, than to shew that it contradicts what is implied in the very Idea of a Christian. In all Arguments, *ab absurdo*, the nearer the Proposition in consequence to be deny'd is to an identical Proposition, the stronger and more conclusive is the Argument, because the greatest of all Absurdities is to deny an identical Proposition.

BUT the Nature of the Subject (*Sincerity*) requires that it should mean *such a Persuasion as is the Result of an impartial Search.* &c. Better still; for if *Sincerity*, in the very Nature of it, implies an *impartial Search*, &c. then hence I may very justly argue the Absurdity of those who leave out of the Idea of *Sincerity* what is necessarily imply'd in it, and ascribe that Efficacy to a present strong Persuasion of Mind, however founded, which belongs only to a sincere, attentive, impartial Inquiry.

BUT suppose I ought, in consequence of these or any other Reasons, to have stated the Question with Mr. S's Limitations, will this justify him

him in representing me as having actually so stated it? Will it excuse him altering the Premises in every Argument according to that State, and then exposing the Conclusions as not deducible from them? Mr. S. and every one who read my Book, must see that, in Fact, I had stated the Question otherwise, *viz.* “ Whether Sincerity, as used to signify a present Persuasion of Mind, however founded, would excuse us mistaking and acting contrary to the intended Sense of any, or all *Christ’s* Laws.” If he had thought this Question impertinent, and insisted only on that, that had been a fair Answer; but to shift and shuffle Terms, to leave out and put in what he pleases, in order to represent my Arguments ridiculous, is a Liberty which no honest Man will allow himself.

My first Argument against the Proposition which I oppose, is taken from this absurd Consequence, “ That if that Position be true, then Disc. p. 27. no one is strictly obliged to apprehend or obey any Law at all of *Christ*, in the intended Sense.” Put into Syllogism, it will run thus.

“ HE who by a full Persuasion of Mind may be excused in *all Cases*, or with respect to *all Christ’s Laws*, mistaking and acting contrary to the Sense intended in them, cannot be strictly obliged so to apprehend and obey any: But, according to this Position, every Christian may, by a full Persuasion of Mind, be excused in *all Cases*, or with respect to *all Christ’s Laws* mistaking, &c. Therefore, according to this Position, no Christian can be strictly obliged to apprehend  
“ or

“ or obey any Law of *Christ* at all in its intended Sense.” When this Consequence is shewn to be false, my Argument will be answer’d, and not till then. Mr. S. has done me the Favour to repeat it thus, pag. 40. *This Argument*, says he, *stands thus: If Christians (who, as Christians, must apprehend and obey all that is necessary to constitute them Christians) may be justify’d in the Sight of Christ by their Sincerity, notwithstanding their Mistakes, then they are not bound to apprehend or obey any Laws of Christ: That is, in other Words, If Persons who are bound to apprehend some Things, may be accepted without apprehending other Things, then they are not bound to apprehend any thing at all:* Upon which he breaks out into this Exclamation, full of Scorn and Triumph: *A Consequence! Few will be imposed on by it.* Now if this Ingenious Person intended nothing more than to divert his Reader by making a ridiculous Consequence, and then laughing at it, he has perform’d tolerably well; but if he really intended to represent this as my Argument, he is a little concern’d to reflect with what Justice he has acted. He goes on in the same pleasant Strain; but if the Reader will keep the Position which I oppose in View, I assure my self he will perceive my Arguments and Inferences to be just, and his Representation most unrighteous. I shall only place one against the other, and leave common Sense and common Honesty to judge between us.



*My Arguments.*

“ If Christians may by a full  
“ Persuasion of Mind be ex-  
“ cused in *all Cases*, or with  
“ respect to *all Christ's Laws*,  
“ mistaking and acting contra-  
“ ry to the intended Sense of  
“ them, then no Plainness can  
“ oblige them to understand  
“ any at all in their intended  
“ Sense.

“ If a Christian may, by a  
“ full Persuasion of Mind, be  
“ excused in *all Cases*, &c.  
“ then there can be no such  
“ thing as a culpable Mi-  
“ stake.

“ If he who mistakes *all*  
“ *Christ's Laws* or Doctrines,  
“ and acts contrary to the in-  
“ tended Meaning of them, is,  
“ by a full Persuasion of Mind,  
“ justified and approv'd in his  
“ Sight; then he who disbe-  
“ lieves the Doctrines, and dis-  
“ obeys the *Laws of Christ*, if  
“ he acts under a full Persua-  
“ sion

Mr. S's Representation.

*If a Christian may be  
accepted, notwithstanding  
his mistaking some  
Laws and Doctrines of  
Christ, then no Plain-  
ness is sufficient to ob-  
lige us to understand  
any, Pag. 40.*

*Because a careful Ap-  
plication will make us  
accepted by Christ, tho'  
we mistake by Accident  
his Will; therefore there  
can be no Negligence  
which may render a  
Man obnoxious to the  
Wrath of God, Pag. 41.*

This Conclusion Mr. S.  
has thus changed.

*He who disbelieves  
some of his Doctrines,  
and disobeys some of the  
Laws of Christ, if he  
acts upon a full Per-  
suasion of Mind, and af-  
ter a sincere Applicati-  
on to find out the Mean-  
ing*

“ sion of Mind, is in as good  
 “ a Condition as he who be-  
 “ lieves and obeys. | *ing of them, is in as  
 | good a Condition, cæte-  
 | ris paribus, as he who  
 | believes and obeys.*

THE Difference between us is so apparent, that I may be permitted to use his own Words, *Few will be imposed on by such a Representation.* It has always been thought the strict Duty of a Respondent to repeat fairly; whether Mr. S. has done me that Justice, I leave to the Reader. If the Liberty he has here taken can be justified, he need never despair of answering any Book that ever was, or ever will be written in the World.

To the last Conclusion, as chang'd by Mr. S. I thus far agree, “ That he who mistakes *some*  
 “ Doctrines, and acts contrary to the Meaning  
 “ of *Christ* in *some* Laws; if he acts with a full  
 “ Persuasion of Mind, and after a sincere Appli-  
 “ cation, and punctually obeys all Laws of ge-  
 “ neral Obligation to all Christians, shall be ex-  
 “ cused and accepted by *Christ.*” This is what I expressly allow'd pag. 30. and was clearly imply'd in what I before observ'd of the different Obligations of Men, in proportion to their different Capacities, which Mr. S. has with great Sagacity discovered to be Inconsistencies, Concessions irreconcilable with what I here affirm, (*i. e.*) what he has affirmed for me.

IN one Instance, to which he has applied this Conclusion, I must beg Leave to dissent from him. He says, pag. 42. *If a Man has not Abilities to search out and comprehend the Do-  
 ctrine*

*ctrine of Christ, and in Consequence of that sits down in the Disbelief of it, his Readiness and sincere Desire shall, according to the Apostles Rule, be equally rewarded as if he had believed right.* My Reason why I cannot agree to this is, because he who understands the Meaning of any Proposition in Scripture, or what the Words signify, whether he *comprehends* it or perceives the Truth of it or not, is bound to assent to it upon the Authority of the Revealer, as I have endeavour'd to prove in the preceding Chapter. That Mr. S. does not here, by *comprehending*, mean *understanding the Sense of the Words*, is evident, because he supposes the Person *not comprehending* to *sit down in the Disbelief* of the Proposition before him. Now a Man can no more *disbelieve*, than *believe* a Proposition, whose Words he does not understand: 'Tis to him as a Proposition in an unknown Tongue; he can neither assent to it, nor dissent from it. Mr. S. therefore supposes here a Christian *to sit down in the Disbelief of a Proposition in Scripture*, whose Meaning he understands; and yet not only to be excused, but *rewarded*, provided he does not *comprehend* or perceive the Truth of it; a Conclusion which I presume no Rule of the *Apostle* will support.

To the Position which I oppose, I farther objected this Consequence, "That if that Position be true, then he who rejects Christianity, Disc. p. 27.  
 " because he believes it to be false, is as acceptable to God as he who embraces it, because  
 " he believes it to be true." To this Mr. S. answers, 1. *That the Controversy relates wholly* Pag. 45.

to Christians, and therefore the Case put is foreign to the Purpose. Now I acknowledge the Controversy relates wholly to Christians; but is it foreign to the Purpose, to endeavour to convince a Christian of the Falsehood of a Position, by shewing, *ab absurdo*, that he who rejects Christianity, must, in consequence of that Position, be as acceptable to God as he who embraces it? But, 2. This Consequence Mr. S. does not deny, but seems to think what I object as an Absurdity to be a true Assertion; because mere *Ideots*, nay, and others not quite so great Fools as these mere *Ideots*, yet *Ideots* to a certain degree; and in this respect, in short, Persons so framed by God, as not to be capable of seeing the Connexion of the Proofs, urged in behalf of Christianity, must be excepted out of that general Sentence of our Lord, *That he who believeth not shall be damned*. Thus far I can make a shift to go with him: But he will not be content with this, but must go on, and observe, *That in Disbelief a Man is as passive as he is in not seeing when his Eyes are out*. But how shall we do to reconcile this Doctrine to that Sentence of our Blessed Saviour; *He that believeth not shall be damned*? Mr. S. here affirms on the contrary, *That in Disbelief a Man is purely passive*, and cannot be answerable for it; nay, that 'tis *Blasphemy* to affirm it shall be laid to his Charge as a Crime. Here is then, it seems Blasphemy on the one Side or the other, either in our Blessed Lord affirming, that *he who believeth not, shall be damned*; or in this Reverend Divine affirming, in Contradiction

tion to him, *That he who believeth not, cannot be answerable for it, (i. e.)* cannot be damned; and Mr. S. must pardon me if I chuse to impute the Blasphemy to him, rather than to the Son of God. If this Author had consider'd this Subject with that Attention it deserves, he might possibly have found, or if he had consult-ed others <sup>n</sup> who have done it, he might have been inform'd that *Assent* and *Dissent* are not Acts of the *Understanding*, but of the *Will*; that they imply Choice and Election, and are therefore of a Moral Nature, capable of being directed by a Law, and may consequently be either rewarded or punish'd by the Justice of God. Methinks he might have been led to this Conclusion, if he had only consider'd the great Rewards promised to *Faith* in Scripture; for if we are *passive* in *disbelieving*, we are also *pas-sive* in *believing*; and it can no more consist with infinite Justice to reward the one, than to punish the other.

Mr. S. proceeds—*When our Saviour de-* Pag. 27.  
*nounced those heavy Woes against Chorazin, &c.*  
*'twas not as Mr. R. would insinuate, as the*  
*Answer of his Adversaries, " That they knew*  
*" him to be the Messiah, and yet rejected him."*  
 Now I desire it may be observ'd, that my *Ad-*  
*versaries* in this Point, whom Mr. S. so fre-  
 quently mentions, are they only who maintain  
 the Position which I oppose, (*i. e.*) who affirm  
 that *Sincerity*, as it signifies merely a present

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<sup>a</sup> Dr. Fiddes Body of Divinity, Vol. 1. Book IV. Ch. 1.  
 Mr. Norris Disc. of Reason and Faith, Ch. 1.

*full Persuasion of Mind, however founded, is in all Cases, and in all Mistakes, a sufficient Excuse before God.* And I would ask any Person who maintains this Position, what Crime these Cities were Guilty of? If they were persuaded that *Christ* was not from God, according to this Position they were excused from any Crime in rejecting him and his Message. If therefore they were guilty of any Crime, as our Lord's Denunciation supposes they were, their Crime, according to this Position, must be, that they were *persuaded he was from God, and yet rejected him.* Mr. S. I acknowledge has given a true Answer to this Question, but not in consequence of the Position which I oppose, but of one which I expressly affirm: Their Crime, as he says, was this, *That they were not ready and willing to embrace the Truth; that they refused to hearken to Christ, tho' the mighty Works he did were sufficient Proofs that he came from God.* Which, I think, was as fully express'd by me, where I say, "their Crime was  
 " this, That notwithstanding the mighty Works  
 " he had done among them, were so clear a  
 " Proof of his Mission, that every rational Man  
 " was oblig'd to acknowledge it; yet, contrary  
 " to this Obligation, they refused to receive  
 " him.

Pag. 47. BUT this Author cannot but *wonder what I mean, when I talk of Infidelity, being safe under the Interpretation of my Adversaries.* Now these Adversaries of mine, (*i. e.*) they who maintain the Conclusion which I oppose, must, in consequence of it, affirm, that no one can be  
 guilty

guilty of a Crime in *not believing*, if he is persuaded in his Mind that he ought not to believe. He therefore only can, according to them, be guilty of a Crime in *not believing*, who is persuaded in his Mind that he ought to believe. And if this be the only Crime threaten'd in that Sentence of our Lord, *He that believeth not*, &c. I think Infidelity need not much fear the Effects of it.

As a farther Disproof of the Proposition which I oppose, I endeavour to shew the Necessity and Reasonableness of admitting the Principles whence I argue against it, *viz.* "That every Christian is oblig'd to understand and obey some of *Christ's* Laws, according to their intended Meaning." In order to this, I observe, That if the Proposition contrary to this be true; if we are not oblig'd to understand any, even the plainest Laws of *Christ*, according to their intended Meaning, than the *Law is, in the Language of the Papists, only a Number of unsens'd Characters, without any certain Meaning.* In this, I think, Mr. S. agrees with me. He grants *Christ certainly had a precise Meaning in every one of his Laws; and, that it requires only a common Capacity to understand his plain Laws in that Sense in which he intended them.* I presume he will not deny that some of *Christ's* Laws are thus plain to the ordinary Capacities of a reasonable Nature, tho' he has not express'd so much in this Grant; because he has acknowledg'd, that every Christian is oblig'd to understand some Laws of *Christ* in their intended Sense. Now, no Man

*Disc. p.*  
28.

Page. 49.

can be oblig'd to understand what his Faculties, by a due Application, will not enable him to understand. If therefore every Christian be oblig'd to understand some Laws in their intended Sense, the intended Sense, in some Laws, must be so plainly taught, that every Christian, by a due Use of his Faculties, may understand them. Mr. S. as he does not grant, so he does not deny this Conclusion: But thinks it most to his Purpose to go off, by way of Digression, to a Question, of which I was saying nothing; viz. *Which Doctrines, and which Laws of Christ are plain, and must be esteem'd so by Others.* He is in great want of a *Standard of Plainness, a Rule by which we may be able to judge for Others:* But I must intreat him to observe, that in that Chapter he refers to; and, indeed, in the whole first Part of my Discourse, I profess to consider a Christian, in a *private* Character, as a *Member of the Invisible Church*, a Person immediately and internally related to *Christ*, and not as a *Director* or *Judge* of others. What Obligations are imply'd in that Idea, I endeavour'd in general to point out; in doing which, the Nature of the Subject, and the Character I was considering, requir'd me rather to offer Rules by which every Christian might judge of his own Duty, than by which he might determine the Duty of other Men. I must therefore beg Leave to postpone this Question a little; in its due Place it shall not be unconsider'd.

Pag. 50.

Mr. S. here calls me to another Task, to which I shall rather address my self. He observes that I before gave the *common Reason*  
and



*and Apprehension of Mankind, as the Standard and Measure to which the Doctrines of Christ were suited, and consequently the Rule by which we are to judge what is the true and plain Sense of them; but in this Chapter, the Acceptableness of our Faith depends on the Truth or Evidence of the Thing we assent to.* These Assertions he, for divers weighty Reasons, apprehends it difficult to reconcile. In Reply to this Remark, I must trouble the Reader with repeating,

1. THAT by the *common Reason and Apprehension* of Mankind, I meant, that common Capacity or common Measure of Apprehension which belongs to all Men as rational Beings.

2. THAT *common Apprehension* I proposed only as the Measure or Standard of that general Obligation which lies on all Christians, to understand *some Doctrines of Christ*, according to their intended Sense. For the precise Measure of different Mens Obligations, I assign'd that Proportion of Capacity, Improvements, &c. by which one Man was distinguish'd from another.

3. THIS *common Apprehension* I did not there propose as a Measure of *Truth*, but as a Measure of *Plainness*, which Mr. S. has confounded. This Difference 'tis material to observe here, because, as I before prov'd, every Christian is oblig'd to assent to every Proposition in Scripture as soon as he understands the Meaning of the Words, whether he *comprehends* the *Truth* express'd in it, or not.

WHAT I affirm'd then of the *Common Apprehension* of Mankind, was, That this was the

Foundation and Measure of that Obligation which was supposed to lie on all Christians, to understand *some* Doctrines of *Christ*, or *some* Propositions in Scripture, according to their intended Sense; and since 'tis the same Thing, to say any one is oblig'd to understand some Propositions, and to say, some Propositions ought to be plain to him; consequently, whatever is the Measure of his Obligation to understand, will also be the Measure or Rule of what ought to be plain to him. Let us then see whether I have affirmed any thing inconsistent with this, in these Words; *The Acceptableness of our Faith depends on the Truth or Evidence of the Things we assent to.* Whoever reads the Paragraph in which these Words stand, will observe that I am not there speaking of Christians, but of Persons who deny'd and rejected Christianity, and the Mission of our Lord, who proposed it to them. Now, between the Rule of a Christian's Duty, of which alone I was speaking before, and the Rule of a Person's Duty, who does not yet believe Christianity, to whom these Words are apply'd, there is this Difference, That a Christian, who has already acknowledg'd the Authority of *Christ*, is bound to assent to every one of his Doctrines as soon as he understands the Meaning of the Words; and consequently, all he is concern'd to inquire into, is the Meaning of such Propositions as he finds in Scripture: But the other has only this one Proposition offer'd to his Faith, (if a *Jew*) *that Jesus is the Messiah* (if a *Gentile*) *that he is a Teacher sent from God*; and of this Proposition

position it is not the *Meaning* he inquires into, but the *Truth* of it. One is bound to assent to such Propositions, or Doctrines of Scripture, whose Meaning he is capable of understanding, upon the Authority of *Christ*, whether he comprehends the Evidence of their Truth or not. The other cannot be bound to assent to the Proposition before him upon the Authority of *Christ*, because that is the very Thing in question; but the only Rule he can be oblig'd to act by, is the Evidence of the Thing; and consequently, his Faith or Belief that *Jesus* is the Messiah, is therefore *acceptable to God*, because he acts according to this Rule, and submits to the *Evidence* of those Proofs which are offer'd for the *Truth* of it. And, with respect to this Article, the Case of all Men is the same: Even a Christian, if he examines rationally the Proofs of this Article, must so far put himself in the Place of an Infidel, and deduce it from such Evidences as wou'd convince a rational unprejudiced Man who did not believe it before. But as a Christian's Faith extends to all Doctrines taught by *Christ*, the Rule of it is very different from that, in consequence of which an Infidel is induced to believe in *Christ*, and I must have been very inattentive if I had not distinguish'd them: But then the Foundation and Measure of either's Obligation, to act according to their several Rules, is the same, *viz.* the *Person's Capacity or Share of Apprehension*. As the Obligation of all Christians, to understand some Doctrines of *Christ*, in their intended Sense, is founded on this, That some Doc-

trines

trines of *Christ* are so plainly taught, that every Christian, as endued with the common Apprehension of a reasonable Nature, may, with due Application, so understand them; so the Obligation of all Men, to believe in *Christ*, to whom the Proofs of the Gospel are offer'd, is founded in this, That these Proofs are such, that every Man, as a rational Being, may, with due Application, perceive the Force of them: And agreeably, as I observ'd, the rejecting our Lord, was therefore a Sin, because the Evidences he gave of his Mission were such, as every rational Man, by a due Attention, was capable of perceiving.

Pag. 51. BUT Mr. S. thinks I am oblig'd, in consequence of these Rules, to give him an exact Catalogue of Doctrines, to which, and to no more, every Christian is precisely oblig'd to assent, *Sure* (he says) *the Asserters of these Notions can tell him what must be assented to, and what may not, and which those Truths are which will atone for some Errors.* But since his Reasoning here proceeds upon a Mistake of the Rules I laid down, and my Application of them, I take the Liberty to think my self unaffected by his Conclusions. But he cannot but have observ'd, that this very Question I before  
Disc. p. 15. consider'd as *impertinently urged by the Papists*, and in consequence of the Rules which I did lay down, gave what I think a sufficient Answer to it, and which I hope will equally serve, when 'tis as impertinently urged by a Protestant. If he can supply me with a better, I shall be glad to see it.

BUT

BUT he discovers fresh Matter of Triumph in that ample *Confession* of mine, as he calls it, Pag. 53.  
 " That such a Persuasion as is the Result of a Disc. p. 39.  
 " full and impartial Inquiry, according to the  
 " best Use of our Faculties, and in which no  
 " Means of Information in our Power have  
 " been unapply'd to, must be acknowledg'd to  
 " excuse our Mistake of the Meaning of such  
 " Laws as are either in themselves of difficult  
 " Interpretation, or from the natural or un-  
 " avoidable Incapacities of the Person are ob-  
 " scure to him." In which Concession he sup-  
 poses me to give up all I have been contending  
 for, and to agree with that which is maintain'd  
 by those whom I oppose. But the Consistency  
 of what I here grant, with all I had before as-  
 serted, is so obvious, that I may venture to leave  
 it in Judgment with the Reader, who I assure  
 my self will observe, that in the preceding Part  
 of that Chapter, I endeavour'd to prove that  
*Sincerity*, as it signifies *a present Persuasion of*  
*Mind, however founded*, will not excuse in *all*  
 Cases; and what I here affirm is, That *Sinceri-*  
*ty* in quite another Notion of it, as it signifies  
*such a Persuasion of Mind as is the Result, &c.*  
 will excuse in some Cases, (*i. e.*) Cases difficult  
 in themselves, or with respect to all Capacities  
 (and such it must be acknowledged there are)  
 or Cases difficult to the Person, either from the  
 natural want of Capacity, or his being unavoid-  
 ably destitute of proper Means of Informa-  
 tion, &c. Between these Positions, there is  
 certainly no Inconsistency; but Mr. S. with  
 great Dexterity first changes the Position which

I oppose into that which I here allow, and then triumphs in Insinuations of their Inconsistency.

Pag. 53. BUT I cannot let his Inferences from this *Concession* pass without some Observation. *From hence, he says, it follows, That Sincerity is a sufficient Security in all Cases to act upon, for it excuses our Mistakes in all difficult Cases.* Now suppose this Consequence good, what Inconsistency is there between my affirming before, that such a *Persuasion as is not the Result of an impartial Inquiry, &c.* will not excuse all Mistakes, and affirming here, *that such a Persuasion as is the Result of an impartial Inquiry, &c.* will excuse in all Cases. But this Consequence I cannot allow for this manifest Reason, because there are some Cases which are not *difficult*, and consequently, *all difficult Cases* are not *all Cases*. But Mr. S. thinks it *trifling to say, some Laws of Christ are so plain, that no Man who mistakes them, can be supposed to have duly attended to them.* Now I think 'tis no more trifling to say this, than to say, That all Christians are obliged to understand some *Laws of Christ*, because the Foundation of that general Obligation is this, that some *Laws* are so plain, that every Christian who duly attends, may understand them. His Reason why this is *trifling* is, because *they who plead for the Sufficiency of Sincerity only, must necessarily condemn such a Man as not being sincere.* Now for this very Reason, I think it an Absurdity to say, that *Sincerity*, as it signifies such a *Persuasion of Mind, as is the Result of an impartial Search, &c.* will excuse us mi-

Ibid.

Ibid.

staking *all Christ's Laws*, because 'tis imply'd in the very Notion of such a *Sincerity*, that it must understand *some*.

FROM this *Concession* too, Mr. S. argues, *how fallacious and absurd the Arguments are from* Pag. 54.  
*Obedience to Human Laws, to the Obedience to Divine Laws.* Now my Argument is this —  
 That since in Human Laws it is always thought Disc. p. 30.  
 equitable to require the Persons they are directed to, to understand them in the Sense intended by the Legislator, it cannot be unequitable in *Christ* to require us to understand his *plain* Laws in their intended Sense. That this was my Argument, must appear to any one who observes the Connexion of this Paragraph with that immediately preceding, where I affirm, that *to such plain Laws of Christ in which it requires only a common Attention, and the ordinary Capacities of a reasonable Nature to understand his Meaning, an exact Obedience according to that Meaning is necessary.* The Equity of this Obligation I endeavour to illustrate from the acknowledg'd Equity of the same Obligation with respect to *Human Laws*. The Equity of this Obligation with respect to *Human Laws* is founded on a Presumption, that a reasonable Being with due Attention may understand them; and if there is the same just Presumption that a reasonable Being may with due Attention understand *some of Christ's Laws*, there is the same Equity in his Obligation to understand them. If this cannot be presumed of any of *Christ's Laws*, then, as I there say, *Christ's Laws are such intricate, unintelligible*

Pag. 55.

*ble Prescriptions, that no one is bound to understand any of them; and if no one is bound to understand them in any certain determinate Sense, then every one is at liberty to understand them in what Sense he pleases or likes best. Thus far, and no farther, did I argue from Human Laws to Divine; and thus far I see neither Fallacy nor Absurdity in the Argument. But Mr. S. thinks it strange, that in the same Page I should tell him that the Penalties of Human Laws are constantly executed on him who transgresses them, without any Regard to his Persuasion concerning the Meaning of them; and thence infer, that 'tis as equitable that we shou'd be oblig'd to understand those plain Laws of Christ, which there is the same reason to presume we may understand (for this is what I tell him) and then in the next Paragraph tell him, That such a Persuasion as is the Result of an impartial Inquiry, &c. must be acknowledg'd to excuse us mistaking some Laws which are not plain, but difficult; i. e. 'tis strange I should say in one Place, that some Laws of Christ are plain, and in another Place, that some Laws of Christ are difficult; now this strange Inconsistency I shall also leave the Reader to reconcile.*

Pag. 54.

*BUT 'tis not only strange, but unaccountable, that I shou'd say we are oblig'd to understand a Human Law according to the Sense intended by the Legislator, because to his certain Knowledge, in Human Laws the Letter of the Law is the Law. Now, I confess, I had some Regard to an ancient Maxim, that Ratio Legis est Lex;*



*Lex*; And, I suppose, this *Letter of the Law*, of which Mr. S. speaks, signifies something, and was intended to do so by the Legislator, and can for this only Reason be called the *Law*, because 'tis presumed to express the Sense of the Legislator. The *Law* is a Declaration of the Will of the Legislator; what the Legislator therefore never intended, cannot be properly his *Law*. The best Rule, indeed, by which we can judge of this Intention, is the common ordinary Acceptation of the Words, and in this Sense only *the Letter of the Law is the Law*; neither they to whom the *Law* is prescribed, nor they who are appointed to execute it, may ordinarily depart from the *Letter of the Law*, to follow Conjectures of their own of the Intention of the Law-giver; because *the Letter of the Law* is generally a better Evidence of the Intention of the Law-giver, than any one's Conjecture can be. But nevertheless, where the *Letter of the Law* is ambiguous, repugnant to another *Law*, or for other Reasons is equitably presumed not truly to express the Meaning of the Law-giver, in all well-govern'd Nations there is a Power lodged, either with the ordinary Judges or some Court of Appeal, to depart from the strict *Letter of the Law*; and any one who attends the *Chancery Bar* will inform Mr. S. that the Decrees of that Court are not always made according to the *strict Letter of the Law*. Neither are divine *Laws* so very different from human in these Respects, as this Author seems to imagine. The *Laws of Christ*, indeed, were *design'd, not barely to go-* Pag. 55.  
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*vern the outward Act, but to regulate the Hearts and Consciences of Men.* There is this difference between the Object of Human Laws and the Object of Divine: I acknowledge also, that *these Hearts and Consciences* are to be regulated by the *Intention of Christ* in his Laws. But then these Laws of *Christ* are written in Words as well as Human Laws; and *these Hearts and Consciences* can no otherwise know the *Intention of Christ in his Laws*, but by the Words of them; and these Words they must interpret by the same Rules by which all other Words in the same Language are to be interpreted. Where the Words of *Christ's Law* are plain, and the Proposition form'd by them, neither repugnant to another of his Laws, nor to any evident Truth, these *Hearts and Consciences* are not at liberty to depart from the literal Meaning of them; and even in Human Laws, where two Laws, prescribed by the same Authority, are repugnant in their literal Meaning, it is necessary to depart from the Letter in one of them. All the Difference I can perceive between these Laws, with respect to their Interpretation is, That in *Human Laws* the Legislator being *fallible*, and capable of *unjust Designs*, we cannot certainly infer from the Contrariety of the literal Sense of any Human Law, to any Maxim of Truth or Justice, that that Sense was not intended by the Legislator; but *Christ* being *infallible* and perfectly *just*, wherever the literal Sense of any of his Laws is contrary to *Truth* or *Justice*, we may certainly conclude, that was not the Sense intended by *Christ*.

*Christ.* But still this Rule holds equally in both, that the *literal Sense* is no farther the Law, than as 'tis presumed to convey to us the Will of the *Legislator*.

BUT Mr. S. infers farther, from the Concession above-mention'd, That if from the Proposition which he defends, it follows, That *Christ's Laws are such intricate unintelligible Prescriptions, that no one is bound to understand them, in their intended Sense, but every one is at liberty to obey them in what Sense he pleases: If this be the consequence, and it be an odious one, HE has the Comfort of having me with HIM in the Principle, and, in course, in the Odium of the consequence; for I grant that a sincere Persuasion will excuse the Mistake of Christ's Laws in all the Cases that HE does; and therefore I must take the Shame of it to my self, as well as others.* Now I am sorry to deprive this worthy Person of any Comfort; but I cannot but remind him, that the Consequence which I impute, follows truly from the Position to which I impute it, *viz. That no one is obliged to understand any of Christ's Laws in their intended Sense: But it does not follow from any Proposition which I grant; and therefore I cannot give him the Satisfaction of taking the Shame of it to my self.* But to make him all the Amends in my Power, I here declare, That to whomsoever I imputed that Consequence I had not and could not have the least personal View to HIM, or any thing HE had written; for I assure him, that to this Hour I never read one Syllable of his Works, besides the clear  
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*and excellent Consideration* now before me; and if this will be any Consolation to him, I am contented to *take to my self this Shame*.

HAVING thus made and limited the Concession which gives this Gentleman so much Pleasure, *Disc. p. 31.* I observed farther, “ That when ’tis affirmed  
 “ that a sincere Persuasion of Mind is *alone* a  
 “ secure Principle of Faith and Action, and  
 “ Men are bid to rely on this in *all Cases*, this  
 “ cannot be meant of such a Persuasion, as is  
 “ the Result of a *full impartial Inquiry*, &c.  
 “ because the Persuasion here recommended is  
 “ proposed as the ultimate Rule of Faith and  
 “ Action. Now whatever *Christ* has appointed  
 “ to be the ultimate Rule, by which we  
 “ may always judge, whether we practise agreeably to his Will, is certainly such a Rule  
 “ as may be apply’d to the particular Occasions of Faith and Action: But such a Sincerity of Persuasion as this can never certainly be apply’d as a Rule to any Part of  
 “ our Conduct; because we can never be assured we have neglected no Means of Information in our Power, &c.” Now I confess, in this I designed only to take Advantage of that crude and indigested Manner in which *Sincerity* had been proposed, as the sole and ultimate Rule of Faith and Action. The Obscurity in which this Doctrine was first delivered, was such, that it was generally understood to mean no more than a *present strong Persuasion of Mind*, and even the fullest Explications that had been given in Defence of it from that Imputation, went no farther than this, *That such a Per-*

*a Persuasion as is the Result of an impartial Inquiry, in which no Assistances or Means of Information had been unapply'd to, &c. was a sufficient Excuse.* But then, by what *Rules* this Inquiry was to be made, what *Assistances* and *Means of Information* ought to be apply'd to, Men were left without any Direction, and at the same Time discouraged and dissuaded from any Regard to the best and most proper Assistances that could in any Difficulty be apply'd to. *Learning* and *Study*, and all that could render one Man's Judgment preferable to another's, were represented as disqualifying Men from being Directors in these Inquiries; and, lastly, no *Human Authority* was allow'd any Weight in ascertaining the Meaning of any Scripture. Now, this Rule, even with the Additions of *impartial Search*, the *best Use of all Assistances*, &c. proposed in these loose general Terms, and at the same time clogg'd with such Discouragements from taking the most proper Methods of Inquiry in all Difficulties, could be of very little Service in the Application: Neither can I yet see how an ordinary Christian, in any Difficulty, could, in consequence of this Rule, believe or practise any Thing, with just Assurance that he had done his Duty. In Practice, indeed, it would naturally be resolved into this Position, *That whenever Men act under a strong Persuasion of Mind, however founded, they may depend on the Acceptance of Christ*; and accordingly it was in Fact so apply'd, and every Schismatick and Heretick took up their Rest under it, as a full Vindication;

tho' I may venture to say, that not one in fifty had impartially search'd with the best Use of all Assistances, &c. And therefore I proceeded to consider only *that Rule*, the Refutation of which I had at first propos'd as the Subject of that Chapter.

BUT I freely own, That with respect to Christians who own the Authority of the Scriptures, *Sincerity*, as it signifies a *full Persuasion of Mind* concerning the Sense of them, founded on an *attentive impartial Search*, with the Use of *all Assistances*, &c. when it is determin'd what these *Assistances* are, and how far we are oblig'd to consult and be govern'd by them, is a Rule very capable of being apply'd, and such as we may act by with a moral Certainty of being accepted by *Christ*. The Defects I observe in some former Proposals of this Rule, I have endeavour'd in some Measure to supply in the preceding Chapter: But this Rule, when thus render'd practicable, will, I think, be of little Service to those Conclusions, in Support of which it was first alledg'd.

P. 59, 60. Mr. S. having now happily dispatch'd all my Objections but one, applies himself to discharge that. 'Tis, *lastly*, he says, *objected*, (by me) *If whenever we act with a full Persuasion of Mind, we are secure from Sin, then, the Blasphemies and Persecutions of St. Paul were no Sins, and the same Plea will excuse all Heathen or Popish Princes, who have persecuted the Church of Christ; The Powder-Treason, and all the Villanies that have ever been committed*

ted from a *Persuasion of Conscience*, will be defended—neither can we convince them of *Sin*. Before I consider his Arguments here, I may be permitted to take a little Notice of the Fidelity of the Recital. Whoever looks into my Discourse, will see, that the Case of *St. Paul* is not produc'd by me as an Objection against the Position which I oppose, but as an Objection which I imagine might be made against what I affirm in Disproof of that Position. This worthy Person refers, for this Objection of *mine*, to Page 36. where the Sentence he recites cannot be found; but, instead of it, this— “ It cannot Pag. 59.  
 “ therefore be infer'd, from this Instance, (of *St. Paul*) that whenever we act *with a full Persuasion of Mind*, we are secure from *Sin*, since the Blasphemies and Persecutions of *St. Paul* are confess'd by him to be *Sins*, notwithstanding the *Sincerity of Persuasion* under which he committed them.” In which Words every Man of common Sense must see that I do not propose an Objection, but endeavour to answer one. But *Mr. S.* will have it, that I there propose the very Objection he recites; and *this Objection*, which I there propose, (*Pag. 36.*) he tells his Reader, that (by Pag. 60.  
 a very preposterous Way of Writing) *I prosecute at large*, thro' I know not how many Pages before I propose it, *viz. Pag. 32.* (in which there is not one Syllable about it,) &c. And as for the latter Part of *my Objection*, as he calls it, the Case of *persecuting Princes*, the *Gunpowder-Treason*, &c. they are alludg'd only as an Argument from Parity of Reason, that *St.*

*Paul* was guilty of Sin. If *St. Paul* can be excused from Sin, because he was *verily persuaded* he ought to Persecute; the Actors in these Tragedies will also be excused, because they have the same Plea. In the Close of his Recital, he stops short in the midst of a Sentence, and quite alters the Sense of it, *neither can we convince them of Sin*. The whole Sentence is, *Disc.p.36. Neither can we convince them of Sin by any other Argument than this; That they acted contrary to such plain Laws of God, and Christ, as they were bound to understand.*

§. Now, I confess, I do not readily perceive what Purpose this Author serves by this strange Representation; I am therefore willing to excuse him from any Malice in it, and believe it merely an Effect of Custom; and that he has got such a Habit of misrepresenting, that he could not help it, even where it gave him no Advantage. For, I think, the Result of the Argument will be much the same, whether the Case of *St. Paul* be consider'd as an Objection made by me against the Position I endeavour to disprove, or as an Objection supposed to be made by another, against what I offer in Disproof of that Position. For if it be proved or allowed that *St. Paul* acted with a *full Persuasion of Mind*, and yet was guilty of Sin, in which every Way we pursue the Argument, 'twill bring us to this Conclusion, *That we are not always secure from Sin, when we act with a full Persuasion of Mind*. If therefore this Author would do me the Justice to remember, that the Position I oppose is this, " That when-  
" ever



“ ever we act with a full Persuasion of Mind, “ we are secure from Sin ;” He shall take the Argument in which View he pleases. But this, it seems, is more than he can afford me: For tho’ in his own Recital, of what he calls *my Objection*, he has laid it against this very Position, yet so forgetful is he, that *Pag.* 61, and 63, he represents me after his usual manner, as arguing from this Instance, not against that Notion of Sincerity which is express’d in that Position, but against another Notion of it, in which I allow it to be a sufficient Excuse in *some* Cases. But that Justice which I am not to expect from Mr. S. I will depend on from the Reader, and desire him only to observe, that Mr. S. agrees with me, *First*, That St. Paul acted with a *full Persuasion of Mind*, when he blasphem’d and persecuted the Church of Christ, Page 60. *Secondly*, That these Blasphemies and Persecutions of St. Paul were nevertheless *Sins*, Page 62. And from these Premises I shall leave him to draw the Conclusion.

I SHALL trouble Mr. S. no farther on this Subject, than with a Remark or two on some Propositions, which occur in the Pages before me. *Suppose* (says he) *Page 62. that the Authors of the Gunpowder-Treason, of the Rebellion of Forty-one—were persuaded to act those Tragedies upon a full and impartial Enquiry, according to the best Use of their Faculties—then I, with all my Zeal, shall be forced to confess, that this must be acknowledg’d to excuse the Mistake.* But in Answer to this shrewd Argument, I, *with all my Zeal*, deny this Sup-  
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Pag. 62.

position; and before Mr. S. can *force* me to agree with him in the Conclusion, he must *force* me to agree with him in the Supposition. Now it appears to me not only absurd, but morally impossible, that a reasonable Being, after a *full impartial Inquiry*, (i. e.) in which, he fully considers the Question, without Prejudice to one Side or the other, and in which he applies to all Means of Information in his Power, and makes the best Use of his Faculties, should be persuaded, that such *Villanies* as these are *Duties*. Some of these Requisites must certainly be wanting; and therefore such a Supposition as this can never be brought within the Terms of my Concession. Nay, but (says Mr. S.) *suppose a Man so unhappily fram'd, that he cannot be convinced but that 'tis lawful to practice these Villanies*. This will bring us to the old Story of the *Idiot* again; and, I say, a Person so fram'd, as not to be capable, by his best Applications, of understanding such plain Laws as these Villanies contradict, is not capable of any Law at all: But if he allows the Person to be a rational Man, I assure him I am so *unhappily fram'd*, and have such Notions of Rationality, that it will be impossible for him to *force* me to admit this Supposition. At the same Time I cannot but observe, with how compleat and excellent a Rule of Action this Author has oblig'd the World, which he supposes may mislead Men, even with their *best Application*, in such plain Instances as these.

Page 63. he expostulates thus—How this Author (meaning his humble Servant) *could affirm*

*firm that All Villanies committed from a full* Disc. p. 36.  
*Persuasion of Conscience, will be defended up-*  
*on the Notion of Sincerity, is to be left to his*  
*own Conscience, and the common Sense of eve-*  
*ry impartial Reader. Now the Notion of Sin-*  
*cerity, to which I impute this Consequence, is,*  
*as I have said, That whenever we act with a*  
*full Persuasion of Mind, we are secure from*  
*Sin. This Mr. S. himself, in the same Page, al-*  
*lows to be a Sense in which the Term Since-*  
*city is sometimes used; 'tis sometimes, he says,* Pag. 63.  
*put for Acting according to one's Conscience;*  
*and since (as I say) the Actors in those Trage-*  
*dies have declared, that what they did, they*  
*were persuaded they were bound to do; I a-*  
*gree with this worthy Person to leave it to the*  
*Reader, if he has but common Sense, whether*  
*the Conclusion does not justly follow.*

Page 64. he tells us—*If St. Paul persecutes*  
*the Church, following his own Persuasion, his*  
*Crime consists not in Blaspheming and Perse-*  
*cuting, (These, it seems, are very innocent*  
*Things, provided we think them so,) but in com-*  
*ing into a State which put him upon those*  
*Acts by his own Negligence and Crime; (i. e.)*  
*his Crime consists in coming into a State by his*  
*Crime; an Account which, I confess, I can't*  
*well understand: But I guess he means, That*  
*St. Paul did not duly and impartially examine*  
*the Case before him, did not attend to the Evi-*  
*dences of Christianity by which he might have*  
*been convinc'd, that he blasphem'd and per-*  
*secuted God's true Religion and Servants. This*  
*Neglect was undoubtedly one Crime; but were*  
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his *Blasphemies* and *Persecutions* consequent to this, no Crimes? If any one assassinate a Man he is persuaded he ought to kill, Is he guilty of no other Crime than Neglect of duly considering the Nature of the Action? Is he not guilty of Murder too? But our Author goes on, *His (St. Paul's) present Persuasion was just and right, and such as God would have requir'd in his Circumstances; but then the Circumstances were wrong*—Now St. Paul's Circumstances were manifestly these: He was *zealous for the Law*, believ'd the Jewish to be the only true Religion, and that Christianity was an Imposture. I ask then, Will these Circumstances render a *Persuasion to persecute just and right, and such as God requires from a Person under them?* If they will, then suppose the late *French King* to have firmly believ'd the Popish to be the only true Religion, and the Reform'd to be a false one, his *Persuasion to persecute was just and right*, and his Duty in those Circumstances. Now as much a Friend to Persecution, as Mr. S. may sometimes think me, I have never yet affirm'd that any Circumstances could render a *Persuasion to persecute Just and Right in the Sight of God.*

Page 63. Mr. S. *thinks it proper to conclude this Section, with pointing out the great Cause of Difference in this Article. The Term (Sincerity) (he says) is sometimes put for acting according to one's Conscience; at other times 'tis put for a Man's best Endeavours and utmost Application in the Use of all proper Methods for his Information. 'Tis pity methinks*

but he had began this Section with this Observation; it would surely have very much shortened it. Every Reader must see, that the Conclusion I oppos'd in that Chapter which he has spent near thirty Pages in refuting, is, "That Sincerity, in the former Sense, is not a sufficient Excuse of *all* Mistakes of the Meaning of *Christ's* Laws." Mr. S. here owns, *That when a Man has acted contrary to the Laws of Christ, in consequence of such a Sincerity: If he is convinc'd of what he has done, he may have Occasion to call himself the greatest of Sinners.* To which wary Concession I beg Leave only to add, "That he who mistakes and acts contrary to such a Law of *Christ*, as with due Attention, &c. he might have understood, whether he be convinc'd, or has Occasion to call himself a *Sinner*, or not, is certainly a *Sinner* in the Sight of *Christ*." This, I think, Mr. S. also agrees to.

As to his *second* Notion of *Sincerity*, he tells us himself, *That I allow it to excuse in all the Cases he does.* Pag. 56. Would not any one then wonder what could provoke this Gentleman to give himself so much Trouble in contradicting a Man who treats this Subject under that very Distinction which he here *points out*, as the great Secret that must put an End to all *Differences* about it; and who, with respect to his *first* Notion of *Sincerity*, opposes only a Position which he himself disapproves; and who, with respect to the *second*, (by his own Confession) allows all he contends for.

Pag. 65.

ibid.

THIS judicious Person having now finish'd his Observations on my Chapter of *Sincerity*, with an Air of great Satisfaction in the Performance, tells his Readers—*Thus have I consider'd each of the Objections which Mr. R. has urged on this Head. Thus indeed has he consider'd them; but surely 'tis in such a manner, as no Man ever before him consider'd any Thing which he profess'd to answer. To close all, he tells us what wonderful Advantages we might expect if we would but come into his Notions. If 'twere acknowledg'd that all involuntary Error is innocent, a Foundation would be laid for the Peace of Christians, and the Security of the Church of England, &c. Now I think the World has been pretty well agreed in this Point; but the great Question is, What Errors are Involuntary. Mr. S. will tell us those Errors are Involuntary, which are the Result of a full impartial Search, with the best Use of all Assurances in our Power, &c. But when we can be said to have made a full impartial Search, what Assurances we ought to apply to, &c. are Questions in which he has left us as much in the dark as ever. And 'till we are put in a Way of resolving these Questions, his general Rule will, in Application, fall in with this, That whenever we act with a full Persuasion of Mind, however founded, we are secure from Sin. For in this Point, Whether we have duly apply'd our selves in the Inquiry, we are left without Rule or Direction, and each Man is to be determin'd by his present Persuasion, however founded; in consequence of which, e-*  
*very*

very Man will think his Opinions, if they should happen to prove Errors, yet to be *Involuntary*, and therefore *innocent*; and how a Principle, which manifestly tends to divide Christians, and to give them Confidence and Security in all Schisms and Separations from one another, can be a Means of promoting Peace among them, I cannot apprehend; much less can I conceive, how it can add to the Security of the *Church of England*, as a Christian Society, favour'd with the civil Establishment. Mr. S. tells us, That these *Principles are apply'd for*, or in Vindication of, *the Dissenters*, and it will be difficult to shew, how that which is a Vindication and Encouragement of all who do, or shall separate from it, can contribute to the Security of the Establish'd Church. It will perhaps be said, That these Principles vindicate none but those who separate in Sincerity, (*i. e.*) *with a full Persuasion of Mind, founded on an impartial Search made, with the best Use of all Assistances, &c.* But may not every one of these Dissenters answer, That they have thus *impartially Search'd, &c.*? And what Rule have we given us, by which they may be convinced that they have not? But, perhaps, if these Principles would not produce a *Religious*, they might yet produce a Civil Peace among Christians. If Churchmen and Dissenters, and all who differ or separate from each other in their Sentiments and Worship, were persuaded that the Errors they mutually impute were innocent, they would live friendly and amicably by one another. Now, supposing for the present

sent, that this would be the Effect of such a Persuasion, the Difficulty will be to bring Men, in consequence of Mr. S's Rule, to have this Opinion of each other's Errors; for if the Error be not the Result of a full impartial Search, &c. then, according to this Rule, it will not be *involuntary* or *innocent*. And by what Rule are they to judge whether such *sincere Application* has been used or not? If this is to be presumed of every one, I would ask to what Purpose any Man should apply himself to convince another of his Error, if he has already *fully and impartially* consider'd and determin'd the Question according to the *best Use of his Faculties, and all Assistances in his Power*? Can I hope, after this, to convince him? Nay, can I with good Conscience attempt it? He is already in a State of Salvation, and shall I offer to disturb and unsettle him, and lessen that Confidence which now assures his Salvation? This, I think, will effectually put a Stop to all *Attempts of Reformation*; an Inconvenience which Mr. S. so often objects as the greatest Absurdity. But then, if this is not to be presumed of every one, and I have no Rule given me to ascertain of whom it is to be presumed, and of whom it is not, this Principle will leave me just where it found me, as to particular Applications, and no more determin'd to live peaceably with those who differ from me than I was before. When proper Directions indeed are added for the Application of this Rule; when 'tis ascertain'd what are the proper Assistances and Means of Information to be apply'd to, and how far they are to be sub-

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mitted to, this Rule may then be a good Means of promoting Peace among Christians, and securing the Church of *England*: But while it is left in that loose Generality in which it has been proposed, I see nothing it can produce but Division and Confusion among Christians, and, in the End, by increasing the Strength and Confidence of its Enemies, the Destruction of the *Church of England*.

Mr. *S.* assures us farther, That if his Principle were receiv'd, *it would make Men search the Scriptures* — *free from the Embarrassments which Popery has laid on its Devotees, &c.* I should be glad to find this good Effect from any Thing that either he or I have offer'd on this Subject; but as I am not conscious to my self that I have less encouraged that excellent Study than he has done, so I hope in one Point I have exceeded him; in that I have endeavour'd so to direct Men's Application in this Study, that it may be effectual to the Ends proposed in it. Some Propositions I have shewn are so plain in Scripture, that every Man, who has the common Capacities of a reasonable Nature, and understands the Language in which he reads or hears the Scriptures, may understand them; where the Proposition is difficult to any one, I have directed him to consult others better qualify'd for the Inquiry, and especially those who are *over him in the Lord*; and endeavour'd to ascertain how far he may and ought to rely on their Interpretation. With these Directions a Man of ordinary Capacity may be able to judge when he has done his Duty; whether he

he has duly apply'd himself in the Inquiry or not; (*i. e.*) whether he be sincere, in that Sense he ought to be, or not. But while the Rule is propos'd in Mr. S's general Terms, he cannot judge with any Security, whether he has done his Duty, or not. He is told indeed in general, that he ought to apply to the *best Assistances and Means of Information in his Power*; but what these Assistances or Means are, he is left to conjecture; and yet if there be any special Assistances, any Means of Information in his Power which he ought to prefer before others, his Neglect of them will be criminal; he will not have done what he might and ought to have done, in order to know his Duty; he will not be sincere. Whatever Imperfection the Rules I have offer'd for this Service may be charg'd with, it cannot, I hope, be objected to them, that they lay Men under any of those *Embarrassments of Popery* which Mr. S. seems to fear. The *Limitations*, beyond which I allow no Man's Authority to be regarded, are a Barrier which I assure my self all the Artifice of *Popery* will never be able to get over or remove.

UPON the whole, I hope I shall appear to have impartially consider'd what this worthy Person has offer'd in Answer to the first Part of my Discourse. I fear I shall rather be thought to have said too much on this Subject, than too little; but in a Question, "Whether *Authority* claim'd to the *visible Officers* of the Church, be consistent with the Duties we owe to *Christ*, as *immediately and primarily* subject to him, it is necessary to inquire pretty distinctly, what these

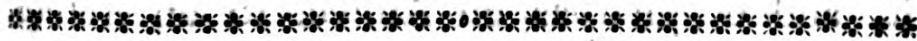
these Duties are that we may be able to judge what is consistent or inconsistent with them. As for the Liberties of *Christians as such*, they are perfectly coincident with these Duties, and are, in other Words, nothing else but the Plea of a prior Obligation to the Authority of *Christ*; and therefore whatever is consistent with the one, is consistent with the other. If our Submission to the Authority of our Ecclesiastical Superiors is consistent with our Submission to the *Authority of Christ*, then for the same Reasons the *Authority* of our Ecclesiastical Superiors is consistent with the *Authority of Christ*. Under which ever of these Terms the Question is proposed, 'tis in Effect the same, and the Answer to one will be included in the Answer to the other. I agree with this Author, that 'tis a Subject of great Importance. And as the Motive that first induced me to trouble the Publick with my Thoughts upon it, was a sincere Desire to find Truth, it would have been a real Satisfaction to me to have been set right in any Mistake; and when this Performance came recommended to the World with the Character of a *clear and excellent Consideration* of my Discourse, I expected nothing less than to see the Question placed in a full Light, and to have been clearly shewn, either that the Principles I argued from were false, or that I had erred in my Deductions from them. But so far as I have hitherto gone, I find, to my great Disappointment, that in every Place to which this Gentleman has apply'd his Answer, he either mistakes my Meaning, or misrepresents it; and wherever he does me Justice

stice in these respects, he generally agrees with me. But an Answer he had resolv'd on, and something must be said in it. His Mistakes of my Meaning, may, perhaps, be sometimes owing to want of Clearness in me, and sometimes to want of Attention in him; and in the Blame of these Instances I am contented to take my Share: But the Liberty he has assumed of reciting Sentences for mine, which are not to be found in Places he refers to, either in the same or in equivalent Terms, inserting Words, changing Terms and Propositions, and substituting others of a quite different Sense in the Room of them, in order to bring my Assertions to something he imagin'd he could answer; this he must take wholly to himself, and will find it more difficult to excuse.





P A R T II.  
*Of the Visible CHURCH.*



INTRODUCTION.

**I**T must appear to every one who has read my Discourse with any Attention, that my principal Design was not to assert the Right of Church Officers to the Powers I ascribe to them by *direct Proofs*; but to shew, that these Powers are *consistent with the Supremacy of Christ, and the Liberties of Christians*. As this was the Profession of my Title, so this Conclusion I endeavour'd to keep constantly in View, and engage no farther in any Inquiry than it appear'd conducive to this Inference. And therefore, tho' the common Rules of Method oblig'd me, first, to assert, That there are some Persons superior to others in the Church; and that these Persons were invested

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with such *Powers*, before I inquired into the Limits of them: Yet, on these Heads, I confined my self to more Brevity than could consist with an Intention to do Justice to the Argument; because I had not observ'd, That the Authors, who had given Rise to this present Controversy, had in express Terms disown'd such Powers, and was willing to hope from the Characters they own'd, and the Stations they fill'd, that they might not intend to do so. This Point, indeed, had been so fully and excellently clear'd by a <sup>b</sup> great Ornament, and Father of our Church, in a Discourse written purposely on it, and design'd as an Answer to an Author, who had expressly denied all these Powers, that I could not well imagine how any could intend to appear for the same Opinions, without taking Notice at least of what so great a Person had, in so celebrated a Performance, offer'd in Disproof of them.

BUT, whatever the Intention of these Writers might be, it was manifest, that the pernicious Doctrines of the *Rights of the Church* were daily revived and contended for, as Consequences of what *They* had affirm'd of the *Supremacy of Christ*, and the *Liberties of Christians*. That excellent Discourse before mention'd, seem'd for some Time to have put an End to the Controversy. It had stood for several Years an unanswer'd Vindication of Ecclesiastical Authority, as derived from *Christ* and his Apostles. But upon

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<sup>b</sup> The R. R. the Lord Bishop of *Oxford's* Discourse of Church-Government.

the Advantage given by these new Assertions, the Enemies, which had been beaten from their former Ground, began a fresh Attack upon a more intangled State of the Question, and endeavour'd to expose all Church-Authority as Imposture and Usurpation; not by answering the direct Proofs by which it had been establish'd, but in Consequence of the Arguments now supply'd to them, by representing it as *inconsistent with the Supremacy of Christ, and the Duties or Liberties of his Disciples*. The Question was now, by this Chicane, reduced to another State; and 'till this Difficulty was taken out of the Way, all the direct Arguments that could be offer'd in Assertion of these Powers, lay under the Disadvantage of appearing irreconcilable with acknowledg'd Truths, and Men were dispos'd to understand any Scripture, or other Authority, in any Sense which the Words could possibly bear, so it deliver'd them from the Terror of these seeming Absurdities. But I presumed, if this Point could be clear'd, the Question would lie where it did before, in an *Inquiry of Fact*, Whether the Powers contended for were, in the Original Constitution of the Church, committed to the Superiors of it, or not? The Proofs which had been offer'd for the Affirmative, from *Scripture* and *Antiquity*, would be restored to a fair and impartial Consideration, and the common Rules of Interpretation would be allow'd their due Weight in ascertaining the Sense of them. In hopes I might contribute something to this good End, I propos'd to consider within what *Limits* these Powers are

claim'd; and to shew, that within these *Limits* they are free from the Objections rais'd against them.

IF in an Attempt which requires so accurate a Hand as weighing the Authority of Superiors, and the Liberties of Inferiors against each other, and adjusting them to a Balance, I have fall'n into any Mistakes, I may be permitted to offer in my Excuse, That 'tis a Subject in which I had little Assistance from any Writers on Ecclesiastical Power; And that in this, as in all other moral Questions, the nearest Approaches of the *Medium*, and the *Excess*, are divided, as it were, but by a *Line*, which a much better Understanding than mine, may, sometimes, thro' a pardonable Inadvertency, transgress. I desire it may also be remember'd that when any Part of the *Medium* is asserted which approaches the *Line of Partition*, 'tis easy for an Adversary, by aggravating the Sense, tho' but a little, to represent it as a Transgression, and charge it with all the Absurdities of an Excess. This I can with good Conscience declare, that I sincerely and impartially follow'd Truth, wherever it appeared to lead me. However, I know my self fallible; and be he Friend or Adversary who convinces me of an Error, I shall freely retract it, and acknowledge the Correction as a Favour. Whether I have any more Obligations of this kind to Mr. *Sykes*, for his Observations on what I have asserted concerning the *Visible Church*, than I have found in his Reflections on my former Part concerning the *Invisible*, I shall now proceed to consider.





## C H A P. I.

## Of Church-Communion : Being a Review of the second Chapter.

**T**HE first Thing that occurs to us in the Idea of a *Visible Society*, is the Union of its Members. So far as any one is united to the Members of a Society, so far, and no farther, is he himself a Member of it. The Obligation which lies on Men to be Members of the *Visible Catholick Church of Christ*, I endeavour'd to shew from our Lord's Declaration, *That he who believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.* Disc. p. 41. From whence I infer, "That Men are oblig'd to be enter'd in-  
 " to this Society, on pain of being excluded  
 " from any Union with *Christ*, and any Title  
 " to the Privileges of the Gospel; and since  
 " our Relation to the *Catholick Church* cannot  
 " otherwise appear, than by our Communica-  
 " ting with some of those *Particular Churches*,  
 " of which that general Society is composed."  
 I argue farther, That every Christian is under the same Obligation to be a Member of some *Particular Church*, as to be a Member of the *Catholick Church of Christ*.

To this Mr. S. answers, *First*, That *external Admission* and *external Communion* are fit Pag. 67. 71.

*and expedient, but not necessary.* Now it happens, that I have not in any Assertion of my own, used the Term *Necessary*, or *Necessity*, thro' this whole Chapter; and yet upon a Supposition that I have said, that this Admission and Communion are not only *necessary*, but *strictly* and *indispensably necessary*, this Author has laid the whole Stress of his Answer. In a Passage indeed which I cite from the Right Reverend the present Lord Bishop of *Oxford*, this Word *Necessity* is found apply'd to particular Church-Communion. But suppose I had used this Term as his Lordship has done, Mr. S. acknowledges that *external Admission is necessary*, in a *Moral* Sense, for *Order and Decency of Church-membership*: And why might not the Term *Necessity* be used in this Sense? But I contend for a higher *Moral Necessity* than this, and that Admission into and Communion with the Catholic Church are *necessary*, as the Means of Salvation prescrib'd by *Christ*. Baptism is the Rite by which we are admitted into the external Society of the Church. If therefore *Christ*, in the Scripture I refer'd to, has prescribed this Rite as the Means of our Salvation, then he has prescrib'd Admission into the external Society of the Church as the Means of Salvation. This, I think, is an express Proof from our *Saviour's own Words* which Mr. S. so much insists on; but if this be not full enough, I desire Leave to add to it those Words of our Lord, *Except a Man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. Both these Texts, I think, imply a *Moral Necessity* of

Ibid.

of being admitted into the external Society of the church, and a *Physical Necessity* no one ever thought of; here is the highest *Necessitas Medii*, 'tis necessary in order to our Salvation, to our being made *Children of God, Members of Christ, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven*. And here is also an *Instituted Necessity*, or a *Necessitas Præcepti*, from our Saviour's own Words. And if it be necessary that we should be admitted into this Society of the Church, there is the same *Necessity* that we should continue in it: For he who wilfully departs from this Society, or is justly expell'd from it, is in the same State as if he had never been admitted.

BUT Mr. S. says, This Admission is only *ge-* Ibid.  
*nerally Necessary*, but not *indispensably*. That *Christ* may *dispense* with his own Institutions, no one ever denied; and that he will do it whenever 'tis impossible to comply with them, I am as ready to hope as this Author. But is not that a *necessary* Duty to which we are obliged, whenever 'tis *possible* to perform it? If not, then there is no such Thing as a *necessary* Duty; for 'tis imply'd in every Command, that 'tis *possible* for the Persons it is directed to, to perform it; and consequently, that he is excused to whom it is *impossible*. The Instance therefore produced by Mr. S. in Objection to the Necessity of Communion; viz. *A Man being so* Pag. 73.  
*remote from all Christians, that 'tis impossible for him to communicate with any*, is trifling, and offers only in Disproof of a *general Rule*, a  
 Case

Case which every one supposes to be excepted.  
But 'tis objected,

Pag. 68. *Secondly, That all the Communion that Christ has made necessary to his Disciples, is a Communion of Faith and Love; and for Proof of this he refers to Ephes. iv. 13. Till we all come to the Unity of the Faith and Knowledge of the Son of God, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ. I suppose Mr. S. means an internal Communion of Faith and Love; because an external Communion, in such Ordinances as are Testimonies of our internal Faith and Love, is the very Thing we contend for. Now, whoever looks into that Scripture will see, that if any Communion be there enjoin'd, 'tis external. I only desire the Reader to consider this Passage with the Context in which it stands, and leave it to his Judgment, whether this accurate Interpreter of Scripture cou'd have produc'd any Authority less to his Purpose. But suppose that Scripture had injoin'd only internal Communion in Faith and Love, is that any Proof that no other Scripture has injoin'd external Communion? But Mr. S. says,*

Pag. 70. *that which unites a Man to Christ, and makes him an acceptable Subject of his Kingdom, is the sincere Belief of his being the Messiah, and a Readiness to comply with his Laws. Be it so; but if this be a Law of Christ, That all his Subjects shall be baptized, and admitted into the external Communion of his Church, he who does not comply with this Law, when 'tis in his Power, will even upon these Terms be excluded*

cluded from the Character of his acceptable Subject. This *first Mistake* then, as this Author calls it, I hope I have clear'd from his Objections, and shewn, that we are oblig'd to be enter'd into the *Catholick Visible Church of Christ*. Pag. 71.

LET us see then, whether my *strange Consequence* from this (as Mr. S. calls it) can be defended. From hence I argue, "That since our *Disc. p. 42.*  
 " Relation to the *Catholick Church* cannot o-  
 " therwise appear than by our communicating  
 " with some of those *particular Churches* of  
 " which that general Society was compos'd; it  
 " follows, that every Christian is under the  
 " same Obligation, or *is as much oblig'd* to be  
 " a Member of some *particular Church*, as to  
 " be a Member of the *Catholick Church of*  
 " Christ; or, in the Words of the Lord Bishop  
 " of *Oxford*, hence appears the Necessity which  
 " every Christian lies under of maintaining Com-  
 " munion with the particular Church in which  
 " he lives, in order to his Communion with  
 " the Church Catholick."—— To this it is an- Pag 72.  
 swer'd, *To be a Member of the Catholick Church,*  
*and to be a Christian, is exactly of the same*  
*Extent; or more explicitly, every Man is a*  
*Member of the Catholick Church, the very In-*  
*stant he believes in Christ, and resolves to obey*  
*his Laws.* 'Tis plain, I think, that Mr. S. here  
 means the *Catholick Invisible Church*; now,  
 granting that every Man is a Member of the  
*Catholick Invisible Church the Instant he be-*  
*lieves, &c.* yet a Member of the *Catholick Vi-*  
*sible Church* (of which only I was there speak-  
 ing) he cannot be, till he *professes that Faith*  
 and

and *Resolution of Obedience*, and is thereupon admitted to Communion with that Society; and if he cannot maintain his Relation to, or Communion with that Catholick Society, but by communicating with some particular Church, then he is equally oblig'd to communicate with some particular Church, as with the Catholick Church. But *Baptism* (he says) *admits a Man into the Catholick Church, and not into a particular Church*; but just before we are told, that *every Man is a Member of the Catholick Church, the very Instant he believes in Christ, and resolves to live according to his Laws*. This, 'tis evident, a Man may do before he is *baptiz'd*; Does *Baptism* then admit a Man into the *Catholick Church*, who was a Member of the *Catholick Church* before? To assist him all I can, I imagine he meant by *Catholick Church*, in the former Sentence, the *Catholick Invisible Church*, and in the latter the *Catholick Visible Church*. And I cannot but observe, from the manifest Perplexity of this Author's Reasoning in this Place, among others, of what Importance it is to keep the two Ideas under which I consider'd the Church distinct. If this judicious Person had attended to that Distinction, he wou'd have perceiv'd how trifling it was to observe upon what Terms a Man may be a Member of the *Catholick Invisible Church*, or internally acceptable to *Christ*, in Answer to an Argument in which I professedly spoke only of the *Catholick Visible Church*. He would not have ask'd *to whom his Relation to the Visible Church cou'd appear*, or affirm'd, that *it was*

no matter whether it appears to any mortal Man; but would immediately have answer'd himself, that a Man's Relation to a *visible* Society, must, in its Nature, be *visible* to Men, as well as to *Christ*: Neither would this have appear'd so strange an Inference, "That there is " the same Obligation to be a Member of, or " maintain Communion with, some *particular* " *Visible Church*, as with the *Catholick Visible* " *Church*;" if he had consider'd, that there is no Way of maintaining Communion with the *Catholick visible Church*, but by communicating with some *particular visible Church*, which is a Branch of it.

BAPTISM, I acknowledge, *admits a Man into the Catholick Church*, but he is at the same time immediately admitted into that *particular Church* in which he is Baptized, and upon whose Terms of Profession he receives Baptism. Before particular Churches were settled, Baptism admitted *simply* into the *Catholick Church*, with an Obligation nevertheless on the Person, when such Societies shou'd be form'd, to communicate with them. But when *particular Churches* are settled, every Man's Entrance into the *Catholick Church* is through some of them. 'Tis as if a Stranger should resolve to come to live in *Britain*; his primary Intention is to come into *Britain*, but 'tis necessary for him to land in some County or Province of it: If this Island were not divided into Counties, he must be said simply to land in *Britain*; but as it is so divided, he must unavoidably land first in some such Division or District of it; and when he is settled

in

in that Nation, he becomes subject not only to the general Laws of that Community, but also to the particular Laws of the City or District in which he lives.

THE Cases Mr. S. puts, I readily own are Exceptions to the general Obligation to communicate with the particular Church in which we live. If that Church requires unlawful Terms of Communion from us, we may not communicate with it. In this Case we are under a *moral* Impossibility; for, *morally, Id tantum possumus, quod jure possumus*; and whether the Terms of Communion are lawful or not, we must judge by the same Rule that ought to govern us in all other Inquiries concerning our Duty. Mr. S's other Case, of a Person *unjustly excommunicated*, is also for the same Reason excepted, because in such Circumstances 'tis made *impossible* for him to communicate. All

Pag. 73.

*Impossibilities*, and such Mr. S. affirms these Cases to be, are in Course, and in the Nature of the Thing, excepted out of the Obligation to every Command; but the Command continues still a *general* Command, and of *necessary* Obligation, whenever 'tis possible to be obey'd.

IN Sum, all Mr. S. has offer'd on this Head, has either arisen from his not attending to the Distinction, under which I consider'd the Church, or else is mere quibbling upon the Term *Necessity*; a Term which appears not in any Thing I have said myself, and only in a Passage which I quote from my Lord Bishop of *Oxford*, by which (if that venerable Person will excuse me

answering



answering for him) he meant no more than I did by *Obligation*.



## CHAP. II.

Review of the third Chapter, of the Superiors or Officers of the Visible Church.

**I**N the next Chapter to that which has been under Examination, I proceeded to consider the Members of the *Visible Church*, as distinguish'd into *Superiors* and *Inferiors*. That the Members of the Christian Church were, by the original Constitution of it, thus distinguish'd, I offer'd some Proofs from Scripture, to which no Objection Disc. p. 44, is made. The Point I am called to Account for 45. is an *Incidental* Assertion, "That no Authority Disc. p. can belong to any Member of *Christ's* 45. Church but what is derived from *Christ*, the supreme Head of it, either by his own immediate Commission, or by the Ordination of those who had Power from him to appoint others." This I call an *Incidental* Assertion, because whether it be true or false, it does not affect the Question, which is the proper Subject of this Part of my Discourse, *viz. What are the true Measures and Extent of Ecclesiastical Authority*. Now if we allow any Ecclesiastical

Pag. 76.

fistical Authority, *These* will be much the same from whatever Origin we derive it; and therefore I only mention'd this, *in transitu*, without entering into the Argument, because I would not divert into an Inquiry, in which my main Question was not immediately concern'd; I shall however consider what Mr. *S.* has offer'd against my Assertion. This worthy Author allows the *Usefulness, Regularity, Antiquity, and Apostolical Institution of Episcopal Ordinations.* By which (without entering into the Question about *Episcopacy*) I understand him to grant,

" That the Apostles ordain'd Persons themselves,  
 " and gave them Authority to ordain others to  
 " the same Powers which they had receiv'd  
 " themselves, and appointed this as a *Rule* to  
 " succeeding Ages, and that *Antiquity* agrees  
 " that this *Rule* was accordingly observ'd."

The Question here is, whether it be *necessary* to adhere to this *Rule*. And here again we must consider the Notion of *Necessity*, or in what Sense this is *necessary*. Now an Institution of the Apostles is to us an Institution of *Christ*, for they had the Authority of *Christ*; and an Institution of *Christ*, or his Apostles, in all Things of perpetual Use, has the Authority of a Command, and the Observance of one is just as necessary as Obedience to the other. And as an Exception is imply'd in all Commands for Cases of *Impossibility*; so also is the like Exception imply'd in all Institutions. To shorten this Dispute, I will give Mr. *S.* all Cases of *Impossibility*; *Christ* may certainly dispense with his own Institutions, and in all such

Cases

Cases 'tis not doubted but he will do so. But the true State of this Question is, Whether there be a Necessity of adhering to this Rule, as Necessity is opposed to Liberty; or in other Words, whether it be necessary to adhere to this Rule, when 'tis neither naturally nor morally impossible to adhere to it? And a Question consequent to this, is, Whether an Appointment of Persons to the Ministry, contrary to this Rule, where it might have been observ'd, is a valid Ordination? I affirm then upon this State of the Question:

*First*, THAT our Adherence to this Rule is necessary, whenever 'tis possible. And the Proof of this is very short: For in Things of perpetual Use, a Divine or Apostolical Institution obliges, *Necessitate Præcepti*, whenever 'tis possible to observe it; and the Usefulness of this Rule, and the Apostolical Institution of it, are both acknowledged. If any express Exception be made to this Rule, so far we are at Liberty to depart from it; but if no such Exception be made (and none, I think, will ever be produced) we are not at Liberty to make any but what is imply'd in the Nature of the Thing, *viz. Cases of Impossibility*. *Christ* may dispense with his own Institutions; but Man, without assuming his Authority, cannot dispense with them; and therefore I affirm:

*Secondly*, THAT all Appointments or Ordinations of Men to the Ministry, made in consequence of such a Departure from this Rule, are null and void, as to any Authority from *Christ*. Mr. S. has acknowledg'd, *That 'tis evidently*

*the Will of God, that there should be Men whose Office and Duty it should be to teach and instruct others, &c. That the Authority which any one has to do this, is deriv'd from God; That the Rule instituted by the Apostles for the Derivation of this Authority, was a successive Conveyance of it from one Hand to another. From which Concessions I take the Liberty to infer, That no one can have this Authority, unless it be deriv'd to him according to this Institution; for I cannot so much as conceive how an instituted Authority can be derived from God any other Way than according to his Institution.*

IN both these Points Mr. S. disagrees from me. As to the *first*, the Necessity of adhering to this Rule, tho' he amuses his Reader with Cases of Impossibility, in which I allow the Exception, as imply'd; yet, 'tis plain, he argues against the Necessity I contend for, a Necessity as oppos'd to Liberty, a Necessity of adhering to the Rule where it may be observed; for, he says, there is no Necessity at all in this Matter, but only Fitness and Expediency, *pag. 86.* And accordingly he argues, *pag. 83.* That a Person appointed by the People would have sufficient Authority, because People might as well improve under his Care, as under one who derived his Authority by Succession from St. Peter, or, appointed according to the Apostolical Institution. And so in the next Section he represents this as the whole of the Matter, That, because what is every Body's Business would be done by no Body; and to prevent Disorders, the

*Apostles*

*Apostles ordain'd some to preach, &c.* The Inference from which Assertions is evidently this, That provided these Ends are served, 'tis no Matter whether they are served by the Methods *Christ* has appointed, or not. Now if Mr. S. will attentively consider any of *Christ's* Laws or Institutions, he will doubtless perceive great *Usefulness* and *Expediency* in them; and I readily agree with him, that these useful Ends were intended by *Christ* and his Apostles in the Appointment of a Ministry; but I cannot be persuaded from hence to infer, that whenever we imagine these Ends can as well be promoted by any other Methods, we are at Liberty to depart from their Appointment. What infallible Wisdom has appointed as the proper Means to attain any End, I ought even in Judgment to be convinced is the most conducive to that End. But we are led to this Conclusion by a farther Reason in this Case, because the Efficacy of a Ministry depends on a Concurrence of the Divine Grace; and we cannot with any Reason presume that the Grace of *Christ* will be as freely vouchsafed, where an Ordinance appointed as a Means of Grace is voluntarily departed from, as where it is observ'd; so that if we regarded only the Ends for which a Ministry was instituted, even this wou'd determine us to adhere to the Apostolical Rule and Institution. But here is not only the highest Fitness of the *Means*, a Means chosen by Divine Wisdom, but here is also an obligatory Institution. And therefore Mr. S's Allusion to the Case of *Princes deriving their Authority from God*, is

nothing to the Purpose, because the Cases are not parallel in the very Point of Question. Had *Christ* and his Apostles as certainly instituted a Rule for the *Succession of Princes*, as they did for a *Succession of Ministers* in the Church, we had been as much obliged to adhere to the one as we are to the other. But as no such Rule can be pretended in the one Case, and an *Apostolical Institution* is acknowledg'd in the other, an Argument of Parity of Reason cannot lie from the one to the other.

Ibid.

Pag. 83.

FROM my second Conclusion Mr. S. dissents, and affirms, that *whosoever should be appointed by the Church for the Office of the Ministry, would by that Designation receive Authority to execute the Ministerial Function*. What he means by the *Church*, he explains in the foregoing Page, where he supposes, that if a *Commission were given by the Church, or Congregation of the People*, the Person so appointed would have *sufficient Authority*. This he infers from the Reasons I have last consider'd, taken from the *Ends* for which a Ministry was appointed. Now, suppose a Person chosen by the People, either is, or appears to be, better qualify'd to teach, &c. than one regularly appointed; will this give him *Authority from God*? Unless the People can give him such Authority, his Qualifications will not give him one Jot more than he had before their Choice. If Mr. S. can prove, that the Choice of the People is a Method appointed by God to convey this Authority to him, he will then say something to the Purpose; one plain Text of  
Scripture

Scripture would be of mighty Service here; but till this is done, he will convince very few that an *instituted* Authority, *to be derived from God*, can be conveyed to any one, by any Number of Men who never receiv'd any Power from him to convey it. But *this*, he says, *seems to be the Sense of our Church in her Twenty Third Article*. The former Part of the Article asserts the Necessity of a lawful Mission in these Words; "It is not lawful for any Man to take upon him the Office of Publick Teaching or ministring the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully call'd, and sent to execute the same." In the latter Part it defines what is a lawful Mission, thus—"Those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this Work by Men who have publick Authority given them *IN* the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's Vineyard." Now I wonder this ingenious Author, who has shewn much Dexterity at such Expedients, could not change that little Particle *IN* (*the Congregation*) into *BY* (*the Congregation*) it might then have made him a pretty Argument; but, as it stands at present, I fear 'twill do him very little Service. But from this Article he infers, that if any *particular Congregation or Person were by the particular Circumstances of Countries vested with publick Authority to call and send Ministers, the Person so appointed to minister would have a sufficient Commission, and his Authority would be from God; and we ought from our Articles*

Pag. 84.

Pag. 84.

Pag. 85.

to judge him lawfully sent. By the *Constitutions of Countries*, and *publick Authority* derived from them, I presume he must mean *Civil Constitutions and Civil Authority*; Now, is there any thing in this Article that obliges us to judge that a Person so appointed would have a sufficient *Commission and Authority from God*? But granting for the present, that this was meant by our Article, Mr. S. must go higher, for an *Authority from God*, than to this Article. But he says, unless we grant this, we must maintain that the *Church of Scotland (which by the Act of Union is declar'd and establish'd as unalterable)* to have no *Ministry, &c.* we must think all the *Reform'd abroad to be in the same unhappy Condition*. Now, supposing these Consequences to be just, Mr. S. knows Principles are obstinate inflexible things, and care not whom they condemn. But in truth, these Principles do not absolutely condemn them; an Exception is allow'd in their Favour; and if they are under a moral Impossibility of adhering to the Apostolical Rule and Institution, they are excused receding from it. But it concerns them impartially to consider how far they have a Title to this Plea; for it cannot easily be conceiv'd how Christians can be excused departing from such an Apostolical Institution by any other. But still I must affirm, that Authority, *derived from God*, they have not and cannot have, but according to that Institution by which *Christ* or his Apostles appointed it to be *derived*. God, no doubt may, and, where 'tis unavoidable, we hope will supply the Defect of  
 Autho:



Authority: *Christ* may annex his Graces to what Administrations he pleases; but when Men *voluntarily*, and without *Necessity*, depart from his Institution, and chuse *Teachers* and *Ministers* to themselves in *Contradiction* to it, it will require a better Argument than the *Act of Union*, to prove that such Ministers will have Authority from *Christ*, or that he will approve their Administrations.

NEITHER can I see how this Author's Case of his Friend *Frumentius*, cast on the strange Pag. 85. Coast, will help him to clear up this Matter. His said Friend would do very well, and as became a good Christian, in endeavouring to convert the Heathen on the *strange Coast on which he was cast*; but still he would only do his Duty as a *private Christian*: Authority derived from God he could have none, unless he had an immediate Commission from him: For Mr. S. must permit me to ask our Lord's Question; *Is his Authority from Heaven, or of Men?* From Men, who have ever receiv'd Power to convey such Authority it is impossible for him to have it; and Men who have never receiv'd Power to convey such Authority, cannot convey it to him; from Men therefore, in such Circumstances, he cannot have it: Neither can he have it from *Heaven*, except by an *immediate Call*. God will doubtless in such a Case supply all Defects of Authority, but as soon as the Impossibility is remov'd, the Preacher and his Converts will be oblig'd to receive and submit to Authority, ac-

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\* Socrat. *Ecccl. Hist.* L. I.

ording to the Institution of *Christ*, as the true *Frumentius* \* and his Converts did.

‡ pag. 85.

ONE Objection more Mr. S. has, That *unless we can prove our own Genealogy from the Apostles never once to have receiv'd any Interruption*, we shall be oblig'd to judge those lawfully sent, who, by the *Constitutions of any Country*, are chosen by the People, or by other Persons, by such *Constitutions* appointed. To which I reply, *First*, That it lies upon them who object such *Interruption*, to prove it. *Secondly*, Supposing such an *Interruption* proved this will come within the Case of an Impossibility, the Defect is unavoidable; but still we are obliged to observe the Rule as near as we can, and depend on the Goodness of God to supply a Defect, which it is not in our Power to remedy.

THESE Conclusions, I think, follow from this Author's Concessions, that *Authority* to minister in the Church is *derived from God*, and that *Episcopal Ordinations* are the Rule *instituted by the Apostles* for the Conveyance of it. And I cannot but observe, that tho' this Gentleman agrees perfectly with the Author of the *Rights of the Church* in this Assertion, that the Choice of the People is a sufficient Ordination, and in his Method of proving it; yet that Author having never made these Concessions, argues much more consistently than he does.

BEFORE I take leave of this Subject, I am concern'd to vindicate my Application of a Scripture in Support of my Assertion, *Heb. v. 4.*

Disc. p.  
46.

“ No Man taketh this Honour to himself, but  
“ he who is called of God——*as was Aaron.*

I shall

I shall consider this Author's Objections against my Inference from this Scripture, as he has summ'd them up, *Page 82.* In the first Place 'tis objected, That *this Passage is particularly appropriated to Christ, and of him alone spoken.* That this Proposition was particularly apply'd by the Apostle to prove the Authority and Dignity of *Christ's Priesthood*, I readily acknowledge; and for this very Reason contend, that 'tis here argued from, *as an universal Truth*, because otherwise the *particular Truth* of *Christ's Priesthood* could not be inferr'd from it. For every one who has read the least System of Logick, knows, that *Particulars* cannot be certainly inferr'd, but from some *Universal*; and it was not the *Deduction* of the Apostle which I quoted, but the *Principle* whence he argued. Whoever observes what the Apostle is proving, and to whom he is proving it, cannot but see, that this is argued from, as an *Universal Principle*. He is proving to the *Jews*, who honour'd and adher'd to the *Aaronical Priesthood*, that they ought not only to admit, but to prefer the Priesthood of *Christ*. The Argument he uses to convince them of this, is the best that could possibly be offer'd; *viz.* that the same Principle, in consequence of which they adher'd to the Priesthood of *Aaron*, obliged them to prefer that of *Christ*. That as they adher'd to the Priesthood of *Aaron*, because he was *call'd of God*; for the same Reason they ought to prefer that of *Christ*, because he was as evidently *call'd of God* to a Priesthood of greater Dignity. The Apostle  
here

here manifestly supposes they had argued right, in adhering thro' so many Ages to the *Aaronical* Priesthood, because he was *called of God*; and for this very Reason concludes, that they ought to admit the Argument when apply'd to *Christ*. But if the Principle whence these Inferences are made, be not supposed an *Universal* Truth, the Argument will have no Force in either Application, and neither prove that they ought to have adher'd to the Priesthood of *Aaron*, nor that they ought to admit that of *Christ*. It is evident the *Jews* acknowledg'd the Priesthood of *Aaron*, in Consequence of this Principle, "That whosoever was *call'd of God*, might *take this Honour*;" and all other Pretenders to this Honour they rejected, in Consequence of this universal Negative, "That no Man could *take this Honour to himself*, unless he was *call'd of God*." Neither Conclusion could have been made, neither that the *Aaronical* was the true Priesthood, nor that others were not, unless these universal Propositions had been true. And since the Apostle's Argument proceeds on this, That they had the same Reason to infer a Preference of *Christ's* Priesthood from this Principle, as they had to admit *Aaron's*, and reject those who opposed it, the Principle must be equally *Universal* in both Applications. I conclude therefore, that this Principle is here argued from, by the Apostle, as an *Universal* Truth.

BUT Mr. S. says, *Secondly, Supposing this Principle to extend to others, even then it has no relation to the Persons to whom it is now apply'd*

apply'd, but to a particular positive Institution of God under the old Testament, which does not now subsist. But if Mens Obligation to adhere to that particular positive Institution of God under the Old Testament, was truly infer'd from this Principle, then this was argued from as an *universal* Principle, and must extend farther than to that particular Institution. But let us suppose this Principle to be limited, as Mr. S. contends it should be, the Apostle's Argument will run thus——

“ HE who is call'd of God, as was *Aaron*,  
 “ may take the Honour to himself of execu-  
 “ ting a particular positive Institution of God,  
 “ under the Old Testament while that subsists.

“ CHRIST was call'd of God, as was *Aaron*;  
 “ therefore *Christ* may take the Honour to  
 “ himself of executing a particular positive In-  
 “ stitution of God, under the Old Testament,  
 “ while that subsists.

THIS is the proper Conclusion from the Principle so limited, for the Conclusion cannot be wider or more general than the Premises. But this Conclusion Mr. S. cannot imagine the Apostle intended to infer, because he disputes largely, That *Christ's* Priesthood was to supersede and extinguish that *positive Institution*; That it was *after the Order of Melchizedeck*, and *not after the Order of Aaron*; and, consequently, if the Principle were thus limited, it could not be apply'd to *Christ* himself.

BUT, *Thirdly*, Mr. S. says, *Supposing the Text relates to the Christian Ministry, it will not prove the Necessity of an uninterrupted Success-*

*Succession; but of such an immediate Call as Aaron had: The Words, as he tells us before are express, call'd of God, as was Aaron. But supposing this Text to relate to the Christian Ministry, it will relate to them in the same Extent as it did to the Jewish. Now, if no Man under the Jewish Oeconomy could take this Honour to himself, unless he were immediately call'd of God, as Aaron was; then the Successors of Aaron could not take this Honour to themselves, because they were not immediately call'd of God, as Aaron was. But 'tis evident that the Jews had all along acknowledg'd the Priesthood of the Sons and Successors of Aaron, who had not an immediate Call, but succeeded according to the Rule first instituted by God, and at the same Time that the Apostle argued with them, this Succession was what they adher'd to in Opposition to the Priesthood of Christ; and since the Apostle's Reasoning supposes they adher'd to it in Consequence of this Principle, this Principle was argued from by him, as including Succession, as well as an immediate Call. Upon the whole; if this Position be here argued from as an Universal Principle, it is applicable to the Christian Priesthood, as well as to the Jewish; and if it be argued from, as including Succession as well as an immediate Call, then this Conclusion justly follows from it, That no Man can take the Honour and Authority of the Sacerdotal Office to himself under the Christian Dispensation, unless he be one of these Ways called of God, which is what I inferr'd from it. Me-thinks*

thinks therefore Mr. S. might have abated the Severity of his Reflexion on me, as *racking* Pag. 78. *and forcing this Scripture*; a heavy Charge, and which, I hope, through God's Grace, I shall never be guilty of. The Words, *As was Aaron*, with the Omission of which, in my Recital, he seems offended, I confess I purposely omitted, because they did not appear to be Part of the Principle argued from, but an Instance to which it had been apply'd by the *Jews*. The Principle is purely this—*No Man taketh this Honour to himself, but he who is call'd of God*. As for the Infertion he charges me with, (*One of these Ways*) it is printed in different Characters, as my own Words, and not as a Part of the Text: But I hope I have shewn that I had Reason to apply the Text in that Extent.

## S E C T. II.

*Of the Particular Powers committed to the Ministry; and, first, of their Authority to Teach.*

**F**ROM this Assertion, concerning the Powers of the Ministry in general, I proceed to mention the particular Powers committed to them: And, first, their Authority to Teach; of which I say, That ‘‘tho’ all Christians are com-  
 ‘‘ manded to *teach and admonish one another*, Pag. 46.  
 ‘‘ yet that this Office was committed to the  
 ‘‘ Ministry with distinct Powers, appears from  
 ‘‘ St. Paul's Determination, *That none could* Rom. x.  
 ‘‘ *preach*, 15.

“ *preach, as a Minister, except he was sent.*”  
 With my Application of this Scripture also Mr. S. is much offended. But if these Words are spoken of the *Ministers* or *Preachers* of the Church, as he acknowledges they are, and “ *imply any more Power or Commission given to them than what is imply’d in that general Command to all Christians, my Inference from it will be justify’d.*” Now, whatever is meant by the Word *Sent*, ’tis evident that the being *sent* gave them some Power which they had not before. When they were *thus sent*, they could preach; when they were not *thus sent*, they could not preach. But because Mr. S. says this Text has been so very *unhappily* apply’d, it may be worth the while to consider the Import of it a little more distinctly. This judicious Author’s Account of it is this—The *Jews* having conceiv’d a *Displeasure* against St. Paul for *Preaching to the Gentiles*, to convince them that they had *no Reason to be displeas’d with him*, he proves, first, that *both Jew and Gentile were to be saved by the Gospel*, Whence he argues with them, *How shall they (the Gentiles) bear without a Preacher; and how shall they (the Preachers) preach, except they be sent (to them) as he thinks, the place necessarily requires.*—The Persons here *sent* were, *in the Apostle’s sense, already Preachers*; and by *sent*, is only meant, That they were *literally sent, they being commanded by the Holy Ghost to go to such and such Nations to preach the Gospel*. Now, with this Account I cannot be satisfy’d; because, *First, There is not the least Intimation thro’ this*



this whole Epistle, that the *Jews* at *Rome* had any particular *Displeasure* against *St. Paul* for Preaching to the *Gentiles*. Secondly, I cannot perceive that this *Place necessarily requires* us to understand the word *Sent* of a Mission to preach only to the *Gentiles*. At the 12<sup>th</sup> Verse the Apostle says, *There is no Difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is rich unto all (Jew or Greek) that call upon him; for whosoever (Jew or Greek) shall call upon the Name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they (Jews or Greeks) call upon him of whom they have not heard, &c.* The Relative *They* seems, quite through the Argument, to refer to the Antecedents, *Jew or Greek*; and the learned *Grotius* is so far from thinking the *Jews* excluded here, that he understands the *Place* to relate only to the *Jews* of the Dispersion. But, I confess, I think with this Author, that by the Persons here suppos'd to be *sent to*, the Apostle principally meant the *Gentiles*; but then I cannot grant, that what he says of the *Necessity of a Mission* is necessarily so restrain'd to them, as that no one cou'd preach to *Gentiles* without being *sent*, but to the *Jews* any one might preach without being *sent*. But least of all can I perceive from any Thing in this *Place*, that the Apostle, by *Sent*, intended only a *literal Mission* of Persons, *already Preachers*, to preach to the *Gentiles of some particular Nation*. That the Persons here suppos'd to be *sent* were not Preachers before, I rather imagine; because if they had been, they might certainly have *gone* to these Nations, and  
preached

preached to them, without being thus *literally sent*. St. Paul, at least, who is supposed by Mr. S. to offer this in his Defence for preaching to the *Gentiles*, needed not this *literal* and particular *Sending*, to enable him to preach to them, having been originally called to this Office; and, as he tells *Agrippa*, *sent to the Gentiles, to open their Eyes, &c. Acts xxvi. 17, 18.* If this Author means by his *literally sent*, that these Nations were at a Distance, and therefore the Preachers must be *sent to them* before they could preach to them; the Question will recur, Why could not they, why could not St. Paul at least *go to them*, of his own Accord, without being thus *sent*? At least, why was this Mission so necessary, that if he went, he *could not preach* without it? Besides, why must the Necessity of a Mission, in this Sense, be confined to Preaching to the *Gentiles*, as Mr. S. says the *Place necessarily requires it should be*? Were not a great Part of the *Jews* at a Distance as well as the *Gentiles*; and was it not as necessary that a Preacher should be *thus sent* to the *Jews* at *Alexandria*, as to the *Gentiles* at *Alexandria*? I am persuaded this Gentleman will never be able to find any consistent Meaning for the word *Sent* in this Place, unless he allows it to imply an *Authoritative Mission*. In this Sense of the Word the Proposition is plain: “ No one could preach to them, unless he were “ commission’d to do it.” But I can imagine no Reason why a Preacher, who went to a *Gentile* Nation without being sent to them, in his Sense, might not preach to them. And that  
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this Word does here imply an *Authoritative Mission*, must, I think, be collected from the Place of *Isaiab*, which the Apostle applies to it in the Words immediately following—*How can they preach, except they be sent, as it is written:* “How beautiful are the Feet of them who “preach the Gospel of Peace”——Some *personal* Character is here manifestly signify'd, in this Figurative Expression, and apply'd to the Persons *sent to preach the Gospel*, and for that Reason, because they are *sent*; something that is an Honour to them, and a Distinction from other Men *not sent*; and what this can be, besides the *Authority* of their Commission, 'twill be difficult to shew.

But supposing this Word *Sent* to imply an *Authoritative Mission*, it related, it seems, only to such *particular Missions* as that of *Saul* and *Barnabas*, Act. xiii. But as there is not one Syllable in the Text or Context, that determines the Word to this particular Sense, I have the same Liberty to deny it, Mr. S. has to affirm it. But I observe farther, that in Consequence of this Interpretation of the Apostle, this Author must conclude, that no Preacher of the Gospel could preach to the *Gentiles*, unless he were thus *specially sent* to do it. And by *could preach*, or *can preach*, he must mean not a *Physical* Power, but a *Moral*, i. e. Authority, for a *Physical* Power to preach, he would have who went and was *not sent*, as well as he who *was*. Now if no one could or can have Authority to preach to a *Gentile* Nation, unless he be thus *specially sent*, What shall we say to those

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Pag. 85.

many Persons who did preach without being thus *especially sent*? What will become of our Friend *Fruventius's* Authority *on the unknown Coast*? For if a Preacher of the Gospel, if even an Apostle, could not preach to the *Gentiles*, unless he were thus *especially* and *locally* sent to them, what Authority will he have, who was neither *generally* or *especially* sent? Supposing then that these Words relate to such particular Missions as that of *Barnabas* and *Saul*, Acts xiii. the Conclusion from them will be, That no one could preach to a *Gentile* Nation, unless he were thus *especially sent*, and commission'd to do it *by the Holy Ghost*. I take leave also to add, *and by the Church*; and this I am encouraged to do by the very Instance refer'd to, Acts xiii. Where 'tis remarkable, that tho' *Barnabas* and *Saul* were personally called by the *Holy Ghost*; yet he directs that they should be *separated for this Work by the Ministers of the Church*; and accordingly they were *separated by Fasting, and Prayer, and Imposition of Hands*; and then said to be *sent by Them* as well as by the *Holy Ghost*; so great a Regard had the Holy Spirit to the outward Order and Rules establish'd in the Church. And if they who were already ordain'd to the Ministry could not go and preach to particular Nations, unless they were *thus sent* by the Holy Ghost, or the Church, we may hence conclude, *à fortiori*, that no one could take upon him the Office of the Ministry, unless he was one of these Ways called to it.

BUT the plain Sense of this Scripture will, I think, appear from the following Considerations. I agree with Mr. S. that these Words of the Apostle related principally to the Conversion of the *Gentiles*. From the beginning of the *Second* Chapter, to the middle of the *Eleventh*, the main Drift of the Apostle's Reasoning is to convince the *Jews*, that the Wall of Partition was to be taken down, and the *Gentiles* admitted into the Covenant of the Gospel. This the *Jews* were very unwillingly brought to acknowledge; they were fond of the Privilege of their Separation, and would have appropriated Christianity to their own Nation; and accordingly we find the Apostles themselves, before *Peter* was sent by Revelation to *Cornelius*, thought the Gospel confin'd to the *Jews*, and that the whole Design of their Mission was to preach to them. Under this general Prejudice the *Jews* at *Rome* also lay, and in Consequence of it, were offended that the Gospel was preach'd to the *Gentiles*; and therefore in that Part of this *Epistle*, which is specially address'd to them, the Apostle argues with them against it, and proves, from the general Covenant with *Abraham*, and from several Predictions of the Prophets, that the *Gentiles* also were to be receiv'd into the Covenant of the Gospel. For since it was foretold that they were to be the *Sons of Abraham*, the *People*, the *Children of the living God*; and to these Relations they could not be admitted, unless they believ'd in *Christ*; it follow'd necessarily, that the Commission of those who were to preach the Gospel, must extend to

Rom. iv.  
16, 17.

Rom. ix.

them as well as to the *Jews*. For how could they believe on him of whom they had not heard; and how could they hear without a *Preacher*; and how could They (the Preachers of the Gospel) *preach* to them, unless they were sent to preach to *Them* as well as to the *Jews*? In these last Words he manifestly speaks to an acknowledg'd Principle of the *Jews*, "That none could preach in the Name of God, unless he were sent or commission'd by him." This is an easy natural Sense of the Words perfectly agreeable to the Scope of the Apostle, and what gives his Reasoning its full Force; and, I think, the Words thus understood, evidently suppose, That no one could *preach* the Gospel to either *Jew* or *Gentile*, i. e. be a Minister of the Gospel, without being *sent* or commission'd to that Office.

## S E C T. III.

*Of the Power of the Superiors as Ministers.*

Pag. 91.

**T**HE Power of *Administring the Sacraments*, and of *offering the Prayers of the Congregation to God*, Mr. S. acknowledges to be *committed to the Clergy*, or the Ministers of the Church; but then this was only for *Order and better Regularity*. But if these Powers were committed to Them by the Institution of *Christ* and his Apostles, we are not at liberty to recede from that Institution, because we can give Reasons why they thus Instituted; and he who assumes these Offices without being call'd, according

according to that Institution, and in Opposition to those who are so called, will sin against an Institution of *Christ*, and ought not to be acknowledged by Christians in the Character he so assumes.

BUT Mr. S. thinks me *guilty of a great Mistake*, in saying, that the "*Consecration of the Lord's Supper was committed to the Ministers of the Church.*" And says that there is *no Place of Scripture that appropriates the Administration of the Lord's Supper to the Superiors of the Church.* I beg Leave to refer him to *Luke xxii. 19. And he took Bread, and gave Thanks, and brake it, and gave it to them, saying, This is my Body which is given for you; DO THIS in Remembrance of me.* Now the only Actions of our Lord here, are taking Bread, giving Thanks, breaking it, and giving it. *This* therefore he commands should be *done*. The Persons whom he commands to *do This*, are the Twelve, his chosen Apostles, whom he appointed the *Superiors* of his Church. Here is then the express Institution of *Christ* committing this Office to the *Superiors* of the Church; and unless Mr. S. can produce as plain an Institution and Command of *Christ*, to DO THIS, given to the *Inferiors* of the Church, He must permit us to conclude that it was *appropriated to the Superiors*. If the Argument be good, that the *Inferiors* of the Church may DO THIS, because they are no where expressly prohibited from doing it, it will equally hold against all other Commissions given to the Apostles; for there is not one given with an ex-

Pag. 92.

press Exclusion to all others. It was a Principle so generally acknowledg'd by the *Jews*, that no one could take upon him any Office or Administration in the Church but what was committed to him by God, or according to his Institution, that there was no need to add an express Exclusion. What was committed to one Man, or to one Order of Men, was understood to be committed to them exclusively of all others.

Disc. p. 47. A FARTHER *Authority* I ascribe also to the Superiors of the Church of *Rule* and *Government*. The Texts whence I collect this Authority, have all, or most of them, fallen under the Consideration of Persons \* as much my Superiors in Learning and Abilities, as they are by their Stations in the Church, and therefore to their Expositions I refer the Reader for his full Satisfaction: But I cannot let Mr. S's notable Way of answering here pass without a Remark or two.

I OBSERVED in general, that a Power of *Rule* and *Government* might be collected from the Texts referr'd to, without assigning which special Branch of that Power I inferr'd from one Text and which from another, which I presumed the Reader would easily do; whence Mr. S. takes the Liberty of making me infer every Power comprehended in *Rule* and *Government* from every Text cited; the Power of *making Laws*, for Instance, from a Text produced for *judicial Power*, &c. But this is

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\* The Reverend Dean of *Worcester*, and the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of *Oxford*.



a Fallacy lies so open and obvious, that a Reader cannot miss perceiving it.

THE particular Power of Judgment I concluded from 1 Cor. v. 12. *Do not ye judge them that are within?* Against which Mr. S. argues, *Disc. p 48. Pag. 95.* that they had only a *Right* to condemn *scandalous Christians, and declare them Persons not to be conversed with*; this he says is the *natural Meaning* of the Place. And what Words can more fully express a Power of Judgment, the Power I infer, than these? No, says he, they imply only a *Right not to have any* *Conversation with scandalous Christians.* *Pag. 96.* But he forgets that a Line or two before he had introduced *St. Paul* as acknowledging their *Right to the Use of such a Power over those that were Christians, as he himself disclaim'd over those that were not Christians, a Power to condemn them, and declare them Persons not to be convers'd with*; and if this be not a *judicial Power*, I cannot imagine what is.

AGAINST my arguing for Authority of Rule in the Superiors of the Church, from the *Subjection, Submission and Obedience* we are commanded to pay to them, he objects, that *these Words* are used in other Places to express only the common *Condescensions of Humility*, as *Eph. v. 21. 1 Pet. v. 5.* which is just as good an Argument as if he had said, That when *St. Peter* commands us to *submit unto the King as Supreme, and unto Governours as sent by him*—he requires us only to *give them the Wall, or pull off our Hats* to them; or when he commands *Servants to be subject to their Masters,*

that no more is meant, than that they shou'd be their *Humble Servants*.

Pag. 97. I AGREE intirely with that ° excellent Person to whom this Author refers me, That he who will form a just Idea of the Plan upon which the Society of the Christian Church was formed, must consult the *Writings of the primitive Church*; an exact Account of its Polity in all the Parts of it, is no where given us in the New Testament. But then, quite through those holy Writings, there occurs frequent Mention of such *Outward Ordinances* administer'd, such Acts of *External Communion* injoin'd and practis'd, such *Offices* and *Powers* either committed to, or exercised by some Christians, and such *Submissions* paid or required from others, as mannifestly suppose and relate to a regular Government and Oeconomy in the Church. And, I think, the Evidences of this Kind which we may collect from Scripture are such, that if we take the Assistance of primitive History for the Interpretation of them, (which is equally necessary for the understanding any other ancient Book) we shall want little of a compleat Account of the *Officers* of the Church and their *Powers*, even in the Scriptures. Without this concurrent Assistance indeed, many Passages which relate to this Subject, will be hard to be understood; and therefore these primitive Writings are to be taken as a proper and even a necessary *Supplement* in this Point. This Inquiry of Fact, indeed, must at last determine these Questions a-

bout Ecclesiastical Power. How slight an Opinion soever Mr. S. may have of *Historical Narrations* on this Subject, the Argument will ever have Weight with reasonable Men; and that Authority, which we are assured by the earliest Christian Writers belong'd to the Superiors of the Church, either in the Apostolical Age, or in Periods little remov'd from it, it will be concluded, was committed to them by the Apostles in the Original Settlement of the Church. But the Assertion of the several Branches of Ecclesiastical Authority by direct Proofs, was not the Design I engaged in, and, I bless God, that Part of the Argument has fallen into Hands much more equal to it than mine. The Province I took upon me, was to do the Drudgery of an Underlabourer, in removing the Rubbish and Embarrassments which had been thrown about the Question; to clear the Ground, and open the Way for these Master-Builders; and the little Service I am able to do of this kind, I humbly offer to their Assistance.





## C H A P. III.

*Review of the Fourth Chapter, Of the Nature and Extent of the Powers committed to the Visible Superiors of the Church; and, first, Of their Authority as Teachers.*



THE first Instance in which I inquire, Whether the *Authority* claim'd to the *Superiors* of the Church be inconsistent with the Supremacy of *Christ*, and the Duties or Liberties of Christians, is their Authority as *Teachers*.

Pag. 87.

MR. S. acknowledges the *Usefulness* of a *standing Ministry*, whose proper Office and Business it should be to instruct People in the *Laws* of Jesus Christ, and to direct them in the *Means* which he has prescribed for *Salvation*; and accordingly, *They must be vested with Powers proper for their Office*, such as Teaching, &c. no doubt therefore they have *Authority to Teach and Preach the Gospel*. Now, it is not here inquired, how they came by this Authority, but what is the *Extent* of it. It is supposed, that here are Persons appointed with *Authority to preach* the Gospel to other Christians; and unless no more be intended in this Office, but that they should read a Portion of Scripture, it will be necessary for them in  
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the Discharge of it, to explain and interpret Scripture in other Words; and that Sense, which to the best of their Judgment appears to be the true proper Sense of Scripture, that they are empower'd and obliged to teach as the Law or Doctrine of *Christ*. Thus far, I think Mr. *S.* and I are agreed. The Question then between us is, "How far the *People* to whom they are appointed to *preach*, are obliged to receive their *Interpretations of Scripture*, as the proper Sense of it, and to believe and practise accordingly." This Question and another previous to it, *viz.* how far any Christian is oblig'd to receive the *Interpretation* of Scripture upon any *Human Authority*, I discuss'd pretty largely in my first Part; but because Mr. *S.* has here more expressly insisted on the Positions I there contradict, I beg leave to resume and apply what I there offer'd. To shorten the Inquiry as much as may be, we will carry it no farther than to Christians of common ordinary Education and Capacities, for whose Instruction these *Teachers* are appointed, and of whom therefore this Question properly proceeds. Of these I affirm, that they are bound to receive Interpretations of Scripture from *Human Authority*. Mr. *S.* affirms on the contrary, That they are not oblig'd to receive any Interpretation of Scripture any farther than they are convinced by *Evidence* of the *Reasons* offer'd for it. He says, that when the *Reasons* for two Interpretations are *equal* (and consequently where no Reason is given, or none whose Force we can judge of, for as to any Determination

termination from Reason, the Cases are just the  
 same) *we ought to suspend our Assent*; and  
 more expressly, and in Terms which include all  
 Cases, *That no Man's Doctrine or Interpretation is any farther to be regarded, than 'tis supported by his Reasons.* Now I would ask this judicious Person, whether these Christians can read or hear the Scripture at all to any Purpose, but either in some Translation of it in their own or some other Language which they understand, or from the Mouth of some living Interpreter. And is it not manifest that such a Person can be no farther assured that any one Word or Sentence in that Translation or Interpretation expresses the true Sense of the original Scriptures, than he can depend on the *Skill and Fidelity*, (i. e.) the *Authority* of such *Translators and Interpreters*? Of the Force of those Reasons upon which such Interpretation is founded, he cannot judge, and consequently can no more be convinced by them, than by any one's reading to him the original *Greek or Hebrew*. The only Stand he can make against this *Authority*, is upon the Limitations I above assign'd. When an *Interpretation* is offer'd to him contradictory to any plain evident Truth, or to any other Part of such *Translation or Interpretation*, In the former Case he is assured, that that cannot be a Proposition reveal'd by God; In the latter, that the Translation of one of the Places is false. Thus far he judges within the Compass of his Abilities, and cannot be over-ruled by the Affirmation of any Authority. But these are only Negative Conclusions:

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He knows what is *not* the Sense of such Parts of Scripture, but as to what *is* the Sense of them, he is as much in the dark as ever. And unless he will suffer *Authority* to lead him by the Hand, there he must rest, and will never be able to get one Step farther. But as to all other Parts of such Translation, against which he has not one of these Objections, he can have no Objection from the *Reason of the Thing* at all, and must either receive the Sense offer'd him by such Interpreters, or else never receive any Sense of them at all; so that to tell such Persons that they are bound to *suspend their Assent* to all Interpretations of Scripture, to which they are not determin'd by *Evidence of the Reasons* upon which they are founded; and that no Interpretation is any farther to be regarded, than 'tis supported by the Interpreter's Reasons, is to tell them, that they are never to assent to, or regard any *Interpretation* at all, (*i. e.*) They are never to regard the Scriptures at all: For these Scriptures can never be of any Use to them as a Rule of Faith or Practice, any farther than they understand the Meaning of them; and if they cannot understand the Meaning of them any farther than they can depend on the *Authority of human Translations or Interpretations*, either they are not oblig'd to understand them at all, or else they are oblig'd to receive the Sense of them from such *Authority*. May not a Person instructed by Mr. S. and convinced of the Principles which he asserts, argue thus? "Here is a Book indeed, which is called the "*Word of God*"; but supposing it to be so, I do not  
 8 " understand

“ understand one Word of the Language in  
 “ which it was written: And as for this *Inter-*  
 “ *pretation* which is offer'd me, I can no more  
 “ judge of the Reasons by which the Truth and Fi-  
 “ delity of it must be proved, than I can of the  
 “ Original: And if I cannot judge of the Force  
 “ of these Reasons, I am sure I cannot be de-  
 “ termin'd by them; and in all such Cases my  
 “ Learned Friend, a great Patron, and Asserter  
 “ of Liberty has assured me, that 'tis my Duty  
 “ to *suspend my Assent*, and trouble my self  
 “ no more about the Matter.” If the Principle  
 be good, the Conclusion is just, and cannot be  
 avoided.

As for the Advantages which Mr. S. supposes  
*Popery* may receive from my Doctrine; the Li-  
 mitations, beyond which I allow no Authority  
 to extend, and under which I claim to be un-  
 derstood, are, I think, an impenetrable Defence  
 against that Enemy. But let us examine how  
 glorious a Bulwark this Author has rais'd against  
 it, in the Assertions he maintains in Opposition  
 to me. Let us suppose him preaching to the  
 good Men of *Rayleigh*, what he has here taught.  
 “ That they are not obliged to admit any In-  
 “ terpretation of Scripture as Scripture, unless  
 “ they are determin'd to it by the Proofs or  
 “ Reasons offer'd for it.” That they are not to  
 regard any *Doctrines* or *Interpretations*, far-  
 ther than they are so supported; and that this  
 Principle is the *only Defence of our Reforma-*  
*tion against the Papists*. Must not every one  
 of his Hearers, who is capable of asking him-  
 self why he assents to any *Interpretation of*  
 Scripture



Scripture as Scripture, immediately perceive that he assents to it merely on a Presumption of the *Skill and Honesty* of the *Interpreters* (*i. e.*) on *human Authority*, and not in Consequence of the *Reasons* which moved them so to interpret it; and that 'tis impossible for him ever to receive any *Interpretation* upon any other Ground than this? And what must he conclude, when he is told by his *learned Pastor*, that a Principle directly contrary to what he feels, and perceives in himself to be necessary and unavoidable, if he will at all read or consult the Scriptures, is the only *Defence of our Reformation against the Papists*? What can he conclude, but that he must either not consult the Scriptures at all, or depart from the *only Principle* by which the *Reformation* can be *defended*; that is, in Effect, he must either give up his *Christianity*, or give up the *Reformation*. The Cause of the *Reformation* cannot suffer more than from such an injudicious Defence as this Principle, which, in order to keep out *Popery*, will shut out *Christianity* too; at least confine it to such Persons as are capable, by a direct Inquiry, to examine and ascertain the Sense of the original Scriptures. And if we trace even their Assent to any Interpretation, up to its Principles, we shall find it rest ultimately on *Human Authority*, from whence alone we can receive the Sense of Words in a dead Language: And that even the Tradition of the Scriptures themselves cannot be derived from any higher Fountain. But these are Points out of the present Question, which considers only the Obligation of  
ordi-

ordinary Christians to admit Interpretations of Scripture upon *Human Authority*.

BUT let us carry the Inquiry a Step lower, and suppose the *Translation* before these Persons just and agreeable to the Original. Under this Supposition I consider'd the Question in my Discourse, and to the Limitations of Authority above assign'd we must add, upon this Supposition:

*First*, THAT where the Words of such *Translation* are *plain*, such whose Meaning the Person is perfectly acquainted with, he cannot be oblig'd upon any Authority to receive an Interpretation or Explication contrary to it.

*Secondly*, No *Interpretation* or *Explication* of any Place, or Words of *doubtful* or *difficult* Meaning can be received upon any Authority, which is contrary to the evident Sense of such *plain Place*.

BUT still it must be remember'd, that these *plain Places* are no farther *plain Scripture* to such Person, than he can rely on the *Authority* of the *Translators*; and when this is supposed, all the Conclusions he can infer from these Rules, are only *Negatives*; and the Arguments by which, in Consequence of these Rules, he opposes any Interpretation offer'd him, are only *Argumenta ad Hominem*, and not drawn from the *Reason of the Thing*: And what he says to a Person he disputes with, is, in Effect, no more than this: " You acknowledge this  
" *Translation* before us to be just, and the  
" Sense of it in this Place is as *plain* as Words  
" can make it. If I do not understand this, I  
" can

“ can understand nothing, and consequently I  
 “ cannot admit any Interpretation of these  
 “ Words contrary to this *plain* Sense of them;  
 “ neither, if this Book be divinely inspired, can  
 “ I admit any Interpretation of any *Doubtful*  
 “ Place in it, contrary to this *plain* Place.”

’Tis evident that this Argument proceeds purely upon a Supposition, that his Opponent acknowledges the *Translation* in such *plain Places* to be just, and is therefore only an Argument *ad Hominem*; for if the Fidelity of the *Translation* in such Place be deny’d, his Argument is at an End, and he unavoidably falls back into the Question above consider’d, “ Whether  
 “ the Translation be agreeable to the Original?” In which, as I have said, he must be determin’d by *Authority*; and, consequently, every Argument of this Kind proceeds upon a Supposition which necessarily implies a Resignation to *Human Authority*.

But let us suppose it as acknowledg’d on all Sides, that the *Translation*, in these Places, is just: It follows then to be inquired, Whether the Persons, of whom we speak, are obliged to understand *difficult* and *doubtful* Places; and how they are to be determin’d as to the Sense of them. The Resolution of these Questions will, perhaps, appear in a clearer Light, if we consider them in an Instance. I would ask then, Whether an ordinary Christian be oblig’d to understand those Words in our Translation—*This is my Body*—*This is my Blood*—Surely, if the Knowledge of any Part of our Religion be necessary, this is necessary. The Ordinance  
 M these

these Words relate to is of general Obligation to all Christians: *For he who does not thus eat of the Flesh of Christ, and drink his Blood, is pronounced to have no Life in him, Joh. vi. 53.* It is a perpetual Ordinance, and to be continu'd till *Christ's coming again.* Our Mistakes of the Nature of it are declared by the Apostle to be of great Danger to us: *For he who eateth and drinketh unworthily (i. e.) without discerning the Lord's Body, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself.* And how can he discern the Lord's Body, unless he understands those Words of the Institution—*This is my Body.* Now Mr. S. has learnedly observ'd, That in order to understand their true Meaning, it is necessary we should know, that *our Saviour, in these Words, address'd himself to his Disciples in the Paschal Language, alluding to the usual Expression at that Season—This is the Pass-over; which was commonly understood to signify, This is the Memorial of the Passover; and accordingly his Disciples, to a Man, understood him, as instituting a Memorial of his Body to be broken for them.* But how shall the Persons we speak of attain this necessary Knowledge by any possible Way, but by consulting other Men, and receiving this Account upon their *Authority?* So far as they can rely on this Account, so far only can they be assured that the Interpretation deduced from it, is the true intended Sense of these Words; and so far as they receive this Account from *Authority,* so far they receive the Interpretation depending on it from *Authority* too: And since they

cannot

1 Cor. xi.  
27.

Pag. 24.

cannot receive this Account any other Way than from *Authority*, either they are not oblig'd to understand the Sense of these Words at all, or else they must be oblig'd to understand them in that Sense which they thus receive from *Authority*. To this Instance a Number, almost infinite, might be added of Places which require Learning, Skill in the Original, and Knowledge of Antiquity, to ascertain the Sense of them. And tho' it be not *absolutely* or *generally* necessary for ordinary Christians to understand all these Places; yet, if upon reading any of them, any Doubt arises in the Mind of such a Person relating to his Faith or Practice, it becomes of great Concern to him to understand it; and what other Method can he take, than consulting Persons of more Learning than himself? If the Reasons they offer for their Interpretation are such, of whose Force he is not able to judge; such as the Use of Words in the Original, an Allusion to some ancient Custom, &c. 'tis evident, that unless he receives the Sense of such Place from their *Authority*, he cannot receive any Sense of it at all, but must continue, as Mr. S. says, *suspended* (i. e.) tormented under his present Doubt and Dissatisfaction of Conscience.

THIS Conclusion then I shall look upon as proved, " That if ordinary Christians are oblig'd to regard the Scriptures at all as a Rule of Faith or Practice, they are oblig'd to act according to such Interpretations of them as they receive from *Human Authority*." It remains to be inquired, Whether the Authority

of their *appointed Teachers* be to be preferr'd before the Authority of *other Persons*. For the Affirmative of this Question, I have offer'd some Reasons, which I shall no farther repeat here, than a more particular Regard to Mr S's Objections will oblige me; which I now proceed to consider.

BUT I beg Leave just to remind the Reader.

*First*, THAT Authority is either *Personal* or *Derived*. That Authority I call *Personal*, which is founded on a Presumption of a Man's *Skill, Abilities, and Honesty*; *Derived*, what belongs to him as specially appointed and commission'd to be a *Guide* and *Teacher* of others. Now 'tis acknowledg'd, that where there are good Reasons to believe that another Man is more learned, more knowing, more honest than the *appointed Teacher*, our Assent will unavoidably be determin'd by his Judgment, rather than the *Teacher's*. But, as I observ'd, the Presumption of a greater *Personal* Authority is generally on the Side of the *appointed Teacher* against other Men; but, to keep the Question as unperplex'd as may be, we will suppose it only *equal*.

*Secondly*, I PREMISE, That the *Authority* of these *Teachers* is asserted within the common *Limitations* of all Authority, *Personal* or *Derived*; and, consequently, the Question by these Suppositions is reduced to this:

“ WHETHER, when the Sense of any Scrip-  
 “ ture, which we are concern'd to understand,  
 “ is not *plain* to us, and we must be determin-  
 “ ed by some *Authority* or other, we ought  
 “ not,

“ not, *ceteris paribus*, to prefer the *Autho-  
 rity* of our *appointed Teacher*?” The pre-  
 cise Terms in which I consider’d this Question  
 in my Discourse, were these: “ Whether, when  
 “ our Teacher on one Side, and either we our  
 “ selves, or any other Person on the other Side,  
 “ suggested *equal* Reasons for different Inter-  
 “ pretations of any Scripture, we ought not to  
 “ prefer the Interpretation of the *Teacher* on  
 “ the Account of his *Commission*.” To which I  
 beg Leave to add this Supposition, That all  
 Foundations of *personal* Authority are equal.

Mr. S. objects, *First*, against the State of the  
 Question, as exemplified in this Case. He says,  
 That the *Case*, I suppose was never in Fact. Pag. 102,  
*Secondly*, That the *Authority* I here claim is 109, 104.  
*really no Authority*—and that every *Intelli-  
 gent Reader* must suspect that something was  
 to be pretended to, that might look like a *Claim*  
*of Authority*, and yet under that Cover all Au-  
 thority was to be given up in this Place, and  
 yet to be retriev’d and regain’d elsewhere. *Third-  
 ly*, That more than this is contended for by  
 me in other Parts of my Book: As, 1. “ Where  
 “ I plead for a Right in the Pastors, That Men  
 “ are oblig’d in Conscience, and under the Pains  
 “ of Sin, to obey all their Laws, which are Disc. p. 82,  
 “ not contrary to the Laws of *Christ*. 2. That 77, 76.  
 “ they have a Right so far to interpret Scrip- 18.  
 “ ture, as to judge what Articles are to be pro-  
 “ fess’d, and what Doctrines to be taught. 3.  
 “ That they have Authority, by their Commis-  
 “ sion, to injoin such Professions to be made,  
 “ and such Doctrines to be taught. 4. That a

“ Subject of *Christ's* Visible Church is bound to  
 “ prefer the Authority of their Doctrines and  
 “ Decisions to the Authority of any other Per-  
 “ son teaching contrary to them.” Now,

*First*, THE Reason why I put the Case in these Circumstances, was, because in the short View I intended of this Subject in my Discourse, I thought it sufficient to consider the Question in an Instance which would eventually include and determine all others. When therefore I said, *More Authority than this we do not claim*, I meant not, That this was the only Instance in which Submission is due to the Authority of the *Teachers*; but that this was an Instance in which the *Authority* we claim'd was carried to the highest; and the Necessity of submitting in other Instances would be included in the Proofs of this. The Case is here put with all the Advantage to the Inquirer that can be: He is supposed able to judge of the Reasons by which the Sense of the Place in Question is to be determin'd, to perceive so much of the Force of them, as only not to be determin'd by them. If we go but one Step farther, and suppose him convinc'd by clear Reason on either Side, *Authority* is excluded. And if even in this Case, in which the greatest Concessions are made in favour of Reason and Liberty, it can be prov'd, that he ought to follow his appointed Guides and Teachers, the Argument will hold, *à fortiori*, that he is oblig'd to this Submission when no Reasons against it appear to him, or none of whose Force he is able to judge, are offer'd. Now, whether the Case here supposed ever *happens in Fact*, or not,



'tis very possible it may happen, which is enough for a Supposition; but the seldomer it does really happen, the more Advantage it is to my Argument: For if this, the most disputable Case, is what seldom or never happens, and the Cases in which the Necessity of Submission here pleaded for are of common and daily Occurrence; then my Argument, in real Practice and Application, has a much greater Force than 'tis here represented to have upon this speculative Supposition.

BUT, *Secondly*, this Author thinks, that granting the Supposition, the *Authority here claim'd is really no Authority at all*. But if the Man is not, and cannot be determin'd by *Reason*, and yet must be determin'd one way or other, 'tis manifest that which does determine him is *Authority*, real *Authority*. Now, that he is not determin'd by *Reason*, is the very Supposition. That he must in many such Cases be determin'd one way or other, has been already shewn, and shall be farther asserted. And as to the Application of this Case to ordinary Practice, it has been observ'd, that the Decision of this Case is inclusive of all others to which this Question can extend. That the Conclusion here asserted is not merely this— "That in this *particular Instance* we are to be determin'd by "the Authority of our *appointed Teacher*;" But that in all Cases in which we are undetermin'd by *Reason* and must be determin'd by *Authority*, *His* ought to be preferred. And since in Cases of common Occurrence it is much

more evident, that Men are not determin'd by *Reason* than in this, this Decision may be easily and certainly apply'd in Practice, however difficult it might be to find Instances of the Case supposed. No ordinary Christian, in the greater Part of his Doubts about the Meaning of Scripture, in which all Reasons from the Nature of the Thing are quite out of his Sight, can be at a Loss to know, Whether he be determin'd by such Reasons or not. In such Cases he must immediately perceive, that either he must not be determin'd at all, or else that he must be determin'd by *Authority*. And therefore this Gentleman might have spar'd his *intelligent Reader* the Trouble of suspecting me of so much Artifice, as amusing him with a pretended Disclaim of all Authority here, in order to regain it with less Suspicion in the *other Places refer- ed to*. For this *Intelligent Person* will perceive, *First*, That I have not here given up all *Authority*, but *claim'd* one very considerable and extensive in its Application. *Secondly*, He will perceive that I have not asserted one Jot more Authority to the Superiors, as *Teacher's*, in those Places, than I have here, and that only the *first* and *last* of those Places relate to Them as *Teachers*; and that in the Second and Third I speak of Them under different Characters, as *Law-givers* and *Rulers*. And, *Thirdly*, if he be so very *intelligent*, he will also observe, That tho' the *Teachers*, as giving Instructions, are here consider'd as Members and Officers of the *Visible Church*; yet the *Persons taught* are consider'd as Members of the *Invisible Church*.

Disc. p. 82.  
77, 78, 88.

What

What they are here supposed to be determin'd in, is their *internal* Belief and Assent to any Proposition, as reveal'd in Scripture: And these Instructions of their Teachers are propos'd as the Means by which they may come to know what is the Will of *Christ*. And therefore I have consider'd their Duty, in this respect, more fully in my *First Part*. But in the Places Mr. S. refers to, the Duties required of them are *outward Professions* and *external Practice*, Duties which belong to them as Members of the *Visible Church*. In the Cases under Consideration indeed, *viz.* when the *Inferior* does not himself perceive the Direction of the Law of *Christ*, but must receive the Sense of it from *Authority*; his Obligation to perform those *external* Duties, in Compliance with the *Command* of his *Superiors*, is founded on, and proportion'd to his Obligation to submit his Assent to them as *Teachers*. He is no farther oblig'd to perform their *Commands* as *Rulers*, than they are agreeable to the Laws of *Christ*: But that these *Commands* are agreeable the Laws of *Christ*, he is oblig'd in the Cases, and within the Limitations assign'd, to believe upon their *Authority* as *Teachers*. Whether I have extended one Obligation beyond the other, I suppose Mr. S. will give me Occasion to consider hereafter. At present I only observe, that his Reasoning here is confus'd and indistinct, and will ever be so, till he is persuad'd to admit and attend to that Distinction of the *Visible* and *Invisible Church*.

UNDER the same Confusion he puts his next Question, — *What one Point of Doctrine* Pag. 103.  
*was*

was ever settled upon this Bottom? Take any of those Disputes which have made the greatest Noise in the World, Arianism of old, or Arminianism of late.—Mr. R. will not say that the Reasons on each Side of these Questions is exactly equal; and that therefore the Weight of the Pastors ought to preponderate, and be submitted to for Calvinism in Holland, for Presbytery in Scotland, &c. The Instances he here appeals to, are publick Decisions of Councils and Churches, which are properly *Laws* for the outward Peace of the Church, and can only by a Reduction, which he has not made, be apply'd as Arguments for or against what I here affirm. If the Question be put simply—*What one Point of Doctrine was ever settled upon this Bottom? (i.e.)* as I have shewn the Resolution of the Case supposed to imply, upon *Human Authority* independently of *Reasons* from the Nature of the Thing for or against it, Mr. S. will easily answer it, if he only asks himself, why any ordinary Christian receives the *Translation* of the Bible in his Hands as the Word of God. As to the publick Decisions of *Councils* and *Churches*, when they are reduced to a Consideration pertinent to the Question before us, (*i.e.*) as they propose a *Doctrine* or *Interpretation* of Scripture to the Assent of ordinary Christians, they are to be receiv'd according to the Rules I have laid down. If the Inferiors can judge of the *Reasons* offer'd for or against such *Interpretation*, and are determin'd against it by those *Reasons*, they cannot be oblig'd to submit their *Assent* to *Authority*. But if they are  
not,

not, and cannot be determin'd by such *Reasons* to one Side or the other, and the Scripture controverted be such as they are concern'd to understand in some Sense or other, they are oblig'd to receive that Sense which is propos'd to them by *Authority*: And I scruple not to affirm, that the People in *Holland* or *Scotland*, supposing their present Ecclesiastical Superiors to be their *rightful Teachers*, or that they are incapable of knowing they are not so, are bound in the *Cases*, and within the *Limitations* aforesaid, to receive such Interpretations of Scripture as they propose to them. But if they may, by an Inquiry in their Power, be convinc'd that these Persons are not their *Rightful Teachers*, and are so convinc'd, they are not oblig'd to submit to their Doctrines or Decisions, as having *Authority* under *that Character*, tho' to their *Personal Authority*, as Men of Learning, &c. there may be good Reason for their Submission; but beyond those *Limits* they are not bound to submit to them under any Character.

*Pag. 105.* Mr. S. lets us into the Principle whence he argues thro' this Dispute, *viz. That Reason is the only Power to determine an understanding Agent.* This is true, if Authority be allow'd to be Reason; but if he means only *Reasons from the Nature of the Thing*, as he must when he argues against Authority, then it is evidently false, and leaves Mankind incapable of being determin'd in Questions of the greatest Importance to them. Where *Reasons from the Nature of the Thing* can be had, 'tis readily own'd that *Authority* must be submitted

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ted to them; but where such *Reasons* cannot be had, and the Question must be decided one way or other, *Authority* is Reason, such a Reason as Men ever will, and ever ought to act upon; and the more *Understanding* they have, the more they will perceive it necessary they should do so.

His next Objection is against my Assertion, pag. 53. *That the Teacher's Judgment ought to be submitted to by us, not only for Reasons of Prudence and Discretion, as because of his particular Study, &c. but from an Obligation of Conscience to his Commission and Authority.* The Suppositions under which this is affirm'd are, *First*, That the Question in Consideration must be determin'd one Way or other. *Secondly*, That it cannot be determin'd by Evidence from the Nature of the Thing, and therefore must be determin'd by Authority. And, *Thirdly*, tho' the Presumption of *Personal* Authority from Learning, Study, &c. be generally for the *appointed Teacher*, at least in Comparison with the Judgment of Christians of ordinary Education and Capacities; and therefore ought in *Prudence* and *Discretion* to be preferr'd; yet, to bring the Question to a State as simple and unintangled as may be, I have also supposed that the Motives for *Personal* Authority are only *Equal*. Under these Suppositions I affirm, That ordinary Christians are bound to submit to the Judgment of their *appointed Teacher*, (i. e.) receive the Interpretations of Scripture which he proposes, from an Obligation of *Conscience* to his Commission and Authority. Now  
- this

this worthy Person has acknowledg'd, That 'tis Pag. 8;  
*agreeable to the Will of Christ, and to Aposto-*  
*lical Institutions,* that some Persons should be  
 appointed to *Teach, &c.* That the Persons so Ibid.  
 appointed *must have Authority to Teach, &c.*  
 and consequently the Persons so *appointed* must  
 have some more *Authority to Teach,* and have  
 therefore a Right to some more Regard from  
 the Persons to be taught, than others not so ap-  
 pointed. And since this Appointment is *agree-*  
*able to the Will of Christ,* and design'd for the  
 Promotion of Ends of great Importance to Re-  
 ligion, it will lie as a Duty upon our *Conscience*  
 to pay this Regard to them. This Regard in-  
 deed, properly speaking, does not terminate in  
 them, but is paid first to the *Authority* which  
 appointed them, and ultimately to the *Will of*  
*Christ, agreeably to which* such Appointment is  
 made. And if any distinguish'd Regard be due  
 to them as *Teachers so appointed,* less cannot  
 be conceiv'd than submitting to their Judgment,  
 when all other Motives of assent are equal. The  
 bare turning of the Scale is all that, in the Case  
 suppos'd, is claim'd to them; and if we will not  
 allow them this, we allow them nothing at all.  
 They are appointed, according to an Institution  
 of *Christ* and his Apostles, to be our *Leaders*  
 and *Guides* in the Paths of Duty; and if, when  
 we are not determin'd by other Reasons one  
 Way or the other, we refuse to follow them,  
 how are we *led* or *guided* by them? As for  
 this Author's Resolution, that we *ought to sus-*  
*pend Assent,* that may not be done when the  
 Scripture, whose Sense is in Dispute, is such as  
'tis

'tis necessary for us to assent to in some Sense or other; and that this may and must often happen, I have before shewn, and therefore here supposed.

Dist. p. 50.

As an Argument for this distinguish'd Regard to the Authority of the appointed Teachers, I observ'd that they are call'd *Embassadors of Christ*, which *high Character demands Reverence and Submission from us*. To which it is answer'd, that this is giving them an *unlimited*

Pag. 106.

*Authority to declare what they please to be the Will of God* (tho' I in express Terms disclaim it:) For, says Mr. S. *If the Ambassador of the King of Great Britain must have his Message receiv'd with Submission, because he is the Ambassador of the King of Great Britain, and the Person to whom he delivers his Message is under the strictest Obligation to obey, not only for Reasons of Prudence, but on account of the Em-*

Pag. 107.

*bassador's Commission; what signifies it what his Message is, or where is the Difference betwixt an unlimited and a limited Authority? Now the Submission required to this Embassa-*  
*dor, is to believe that the Message he delivers is the Command or Proposal of his Master; and if this Submission is not due to him, because he is the Ambassador of the King of Great Britain, then his Message might as well be receiv'd as the Command or Proposal of the King of Great Britain, tho' deliver'd by one whom he never sent. But let us see how this Commission is unlimited. If his Message and Instructions are given him in Writing, and the Persons to whom he delivers it can read and understand the Language, he is as clearly limited as Words can limit him. If there be any Word*

or



or Sentence difficult or obscure, and the *King of Great Britain*, or others by Authority from him, have appointed this *Embassador to explain* all such Words, then his *Explication* ought to be preferr'd before another Person's, not only for *Reasons of Prudence*, as, because he may be presumed by verbal Instructions to have been acquainted with the *King's Meaning*, &c. but for this very Reason, because the King has appointed him to *explain* it. He cannot indeed, in virtue of such Appointment, or from any Presumption of his Knowledge of the King's Meaning, be submitted to, interpreting *plain Words* contrary to their common receiv'd Sense, or any *obscure Words* contrary to such *plain Words*: But if this whole Message be in a Language, of which the Persons it is sent to do not understand one Word, or if the Sense of such *obscure Words* is to be taken from Reasons, of whose Force they cannot judge; it is evident, that if they are bound to understand and obey this Message at all, they must be oblig'd to receive the Sense of it from some *Authority* or other. And since the *Embassador* is a Person appointed by the King to *explain* it, his *Authority* ought, in Obedience to that Appointment, to be preferr'd; and if he shall happen to be a Knave, and mislead them, the Men will certainly be excused to the King, since they have done their best to understand his Message, and in Obedience to a Method of Inquiry, which he has appointed. Exact Parallels will never hold between Things originally signify'd by Words, and those they are apply'd to by

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Metaphor.

Metaphor. Between the Cases here compared, there is this material Difference, That the *Embassador* of the *King of Great Britain* is not properly sent to his own Subjects; whereas the *Embassadors of Christ* are sent to his own Subjects, as well as to Strangers. But Mr. S. has been pleas'd to argue from this Allusion, which I think I have represented pretty parallel to the Case in Question, and I leave him to make the best of it.

*Dist. p. 50.* To my Allegation of those Words of our  
*Pag. 108.* Lord, *He that heareth you, heareth me*, it is answer'd, That *this implies no Command to submit to their Authority, when there were Reasons as good, as many, and as strong against what they said, as for it.* But I observe that our Lord demands Submission to what he himself taught, not in Consequence of Reasons or Evidence from the Nature of the Thing, which would equally have determin'd Men's Assent to what any one else taught, as to what he taught; but purely upon his *Authority*, because *He who heard him, heard his Father who sent him:* And the same Submission that was due to him on account of his *Commission*, he, in the Words cited, requires to those whom he sent on account of theirs. But Mr. S. thinks this Claim of Authority is also *contrary to that Direction of our Saviour* — *Why do ye not, even of your selves, judge what is right?* I reply, That whenever we are able to judge for our selves, and determine upon the Evidence of the Thing, 'tis doubtless our *Right* and our *Duty* to do so; but when we must be resolv'd on one Side or the  
 other,

*Ibid.*

other, and we cannot judge for our selves, or be determin'd by the Evidence of the Thing, (which is the Case supposed) then, I say, we must be determin'd by *Authority*; and the same Answer will serve to the Allegation of all other Scriptures, which assert a *Right of private Judgment*; for the *Right* of private Judgment cannot extend beyond the *Power* of it.

For the Conclusion which I affirm, I argue Disc. p. 55. farther from the *End* assign'd in Scripture of the Appointment of Teachers. One *End* of this Appointment we are assured by St. Paul, Eph. iv. 14 was, *That we should no more be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, by the Slight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* Now I continue to think it impossible that this *End* should effectually be served by such *Appointment*, unless ordinary Christians are oblig'd to pay more Regard to the Doctrines or Interpretations of Persons so *appointed*, than to other Mens. To avoid Repetition as much as may be, the Question under the Suppositions above made is precisely this, "Whether the *End* here assign'd by the Apostle, for the Appointment of *Teachers* can be answer'd, If Christians, in such Cases where they may not *suspend their Judgments*, and cannot be determin'd either Way by Arguments from the Nature of the Thing, but can be determin'd only by *Authority*, are not oblig'd to prefer the *Authority* of their *appointed Teachers* to the *Authority* of other Men, teaching contrary to Them?" 'Tis evident, that the *End* here assign'd

sign'd of such Appointment is, that Christians might be more secure from Error than they were before. Now 'tis unimaginable how they can be one Jot more secured from Error than they were before in these Cases, unless the Authority of the *Teachers* is to be preferr'd to the Authority of the *Seducers*. In the Cases supposed they must necessarily be determin'd by some *Authority* or other; and if that which alone can determine them, be equally with the one and the other, if the *Seducer* has just as much *Authority* as the *Teacher*, if the *Teacher* himself had just the same *Authority* before his Appointment, they are just in the same Condition, and not in the least Degree more secured from Error in these Cases, than they were before any such *Teachers* were appointed.

Pag. 113,  
114.

BUT Mr. S. will not allow that the *End* of this Appointment was to *secure Christians from Error*, because they are not, *in Fact*, secured from Error by it. By this Observation, I suppose, he intended to refute the Apostle, whose Words are, That they *should be no more tossed to and fro*, &c. For surely he could not but observe that my Words are not, That Men should be *absolutely secured from Error* by such Appointment, but MORE secured from Error than they were before, in which I presume I speak agreeably to the Apostle's Meaning. But if he really design'd this Observation as an Argument against my Assertion, 'tis a very strange one; and he may as well conclude from Men's falling into Sin, and being damned, notwithstanding Christianity, that Christianity was not design'd by

by God to render Men more secure from Sin and Damnation than they were before, as from Men's falling into Error, notwithstanding such Appointment of *Teachers*, that such Appointment was not intended to render Men more *secure* from *Error* than they were before.

BUT he imagines I have made a Concession irreconcilable with my Assertion, " That Men " cannot (in the Case there supposed, and " in view of which I all along argue) be " more secured from Error by the Appoint- " ment of Teachers than without it, unless " what they teach be *farther to be regarded,* " than 'tis supported *by their Reasons.*" For as he observes, *I in the very next Paragraph say,* (in Answer to an Objection, that this Institution of a Ministry was no otherwise intended to secure Men from Error, than by appointing Persons under particular Obligations, to watch and apply the Reasons which support the Faith, upon particular Occasions of Danger to any of the Flock,) " That from this Concession ap- " pears the Wisdom of this Institution, by which " even the Weak and Negligent are in a great " Measure *secured* from Danger; and all who " are willing to apply for Direction, are provi- " ded with an easy Recourse to one of superior " Knowledge." But what then? Why still I say, " That this Provision would be ineffe- " ctual in the Case suppos'd, if the *Seducer* " had the same *Authority*, and were to be " heard with the same Submission as the *Pastor.*" Where this strange Inconsistency lies, I cannot perceive: No doubt this Institution of a Mini-

stry is excellently useful, and is a great Security against *Seducers*, consider'd as a publick Provision for Recourse, to Men qualify'd by *Learning* and *Study* to watch and occasionally apply the *Reasons which support the Truth*; because, whenever the *Reasons which support the Truth* are such, of whose Force the Person, attempted by the *Seducer*, is able to judge, the *Seducer* may be refuted, and the Christian confirm'd by the Application of such *Reasons*. As, suppose the *Seducer* offers an Interpretation of Scripture contrary to any plain natural Truth, or to any other plain Scripture, whose Meaning is on all Sides acknowledg'd; in these and the like Cases, the *Seducer* may be refuted by such *Reasons* as a Christian of ordinary Capacity may very well apprehend. But still in the Case supposed, where the *Reasons* offer'd on both Sides are equal, or such whose Force such a Person cannot apprehend, he would be no more secured from Error or Heresy by the Appointment of *Teachers* than without it, unless more *Authority* be allow'd to such *Teacher* than to the *Seducer*: For by *Reason* he cannot be determin'd, and therefore if he must be determin'd at all, he must be determin'd by *Authority*; and since all Grounds of *personal* Authority are supposed equal, there is nothing left that can determine him, but the *Authority* of the *Teacher's Commission*; and consequently, in such Cases, he must either not be determin'd at all, or be determined by that Authority. Our Author's Solution, indeed is, That he ought not to be determin'd at all, but *suspend his Assent* from both.

both. What I have offer'd against this already, Pag. 112. might, I think, be sufficient; but because this worthy Person insists so much on this, as a full Solution, let us consider, in an Instance or two, how this refin'd Piece of Casuistry would operate.

SUPPOSE then, a Seducer comes to an ordinary Christian, and tells him, that the Sense of the Words, *This is my Body, this is my Blood,* is, That the Bread and Wine in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, are substantially chang'd into the very natural Body and Blood of *Christ*; and unless, when he receives that Sacrament, he takes them in that Sense, *He eats and drinks unworthily, not discerning the Lord's Body,* and therefore *eats and drinks Damnation to himself.* The Man is put under a great Doubt by this, and applies to his proper *Teacher*, who endeavours to satisfy him in the true Sense of these Words. If he is convinc'd by Arguments on either Side, the Decision never comes to *Authority* at all; but what must he do, if he cannot be determin'd by their *Reasons* to one Side or the other? Our Casuist's Advice is, *He must suspend his Assent* to either; and as he Pag. 115. very consistently directs in another Place, he must *not Act*, i. e. he must never receive this Sacrament at all, tho' our Lord expressly declares, *That except we eat his Flesh and drink his Blood, we have no Life in us.* Suppose, in another Instance, that a *Seducer* comes to one of the *Church of England*, and endeavours to persuade him, that this Church is heretical, guilty of Idolatry, &c. and therefore, that he

cannot continue in this Church without damnable Sin, but ought to leave it, and go into some other; his proper *Teacher*, on the other Side, endeavours to refute this Charge, and prove that the *Church of England* is not heretical, requires nothing from him idolatrous or unlawful, and therefore that he cannot break Communion with this Church, without damnable Sin; but the Man is not convinced or determined by either's Reasons, what must he then do? Why, this judicious Person tells him, he must suspend *his Assent*, (he might as well have said *himself*) and communicate with no Church at all.

BUT I must remind this Gentleman here again, that in the Case of *Equality of Reasons*, in which I chose to consider this Question, a Supposition is made, by which the utmost Regard is allowed to *Reasons from the Nature of the Thing* that can be, without being determined by them; and consequently the Decision of such Cases is inclusive of all others, when our Regard to such Reasons must necessarily be less; for if we must be determined by Authority, where we have as full a View of the *Reason of the Thing* as we can have, without being determined by it; much more must we be determined by Authority, where the *Reason of the Thing* is quite out of our Sight, and such as 'tis impossible for us to judge of. The Case indeed of *Equality of Reasons*, tho' tis manifestly possible, and therefore may justly be supposed in an Argument, yet, as this judicious Writer has observ'd, and I heartily thank him  
for



for it, 'tis what happens not often in Fact. The real Case of ordinary unlearned Christians, is, That the greatest Number of their Doubts about the *Interpretations* of *Scripture*, relate to Places whose Sense must be determin'd by Reasons, whose Force is beyond their Reach and Comprehension. And in that great Question, Whether the *Translation* in their Hands be agreeable to original *Scriptures* or not, they must necessarily be determin'd by Authority. If they reject it, 'tis because Persons in whose *Learning* and *Honesty* they have a Confidence, disapprove it; and if they admit it, 'tis because Persons in whom they have a greater Confidence approve it. And whether these Persons are many or few, dead or living, the Conclusion drawn from their Approbation or Dislike rests ultimately on *Human Authority*. Now, if a *Seducer* comes and tells an ordinary Christian, that either a Part or the Whole of a *Translation* before him is false and contrary to the Original; and that one he offers instead of it, is agreeable to it; his *appointed Teacher*, on the other Hand, assures him, that what he offers is just, and the other false; the Reasons whence either argue for their several Interpretations, are such of whose Force he cannot judge, cannot be determined by. What must he then do? Must he *suspend his Assent*, and throw away his Bible? Must he not necessarily be determined by one's Authority or the others? I say, not that he will be *absolutely secured from Error*, in following his appointed Teacher in such a Case, but he will certainly be *secured from the Guilt of*

*it*, because he has done his best to acquaint himself with the Will of *Christ*, and follows the Judgment of a Person appointed, according to the Institution of *Christ*, to be his *Guide* and *Director*; but, on the contrary, if in such a Case he errs, in following another Person's mere Judgment, in Contradiction to his *Teacher*, he will be answerable to *Christ* for departing from a Method of Instruction which he has appointed.

*Disc* p. 56.

How great the Number of Persons is, and ever will be in the Church, who must unavoidably depend on Authority, both for the Fidelity of whole Translations, and the Sense of particular Parts of Scripture, and consequently for the Measures of their Duty, which are to be taken from them, I observed in my Discourse, And Mr. S. who has a Country Parish under his Care, cannot but have observ'd, how few there are among Persons of such Education, capable of being convinced by *Evidence from the Nature of the Thing*, where the Subject is never so little removed out of the common Road of their Conversation and Employment; and in what a Multitude of Cases, even of the highest Importance, they not only *are*, but unavoidably *must be*, determin'd by Authority. I allow as freely as he can desire me, that 'tis *the Duty of every Man, as far as he is able, and the Direction of the Law reaches, to compare his Conduct with the Law of Christ, and to be determined to agree to that which appears most agreeable to that Rule.* But since there are a great Number of Questions, in which they

they cannot know the Meaning of the Law of *Christ*, and consequently cannot compare their Conduct with it, without depending on *Human Authority* for the Sense of it, what we contend for, is, That in such Cases the Judgment of their appointed Teacher should, *cæteris paribus*, be preferr'd before any other Person's.

WHAT Mr. S. has answer'd to this apparent Necessity of Mens being determin'd by *Authority*, amounts to this: *First, That no Man's Doctrine ought any farther to be regarded than 'tis supported by the Reasons* he offers in Proof of it; and therefore, *Secondly*, That whenever the Person taught, is not determin'd by the Evidence of those Reasons, he ought to *suspend his Assent*. These Assertions I have fully considered, and I hope fully answer'd. Another Principle he has suggested, of the same Size with these; That *Truth may always be trusted with it self*; but this will fall under my Consideration in another Place, where 'tis more largely insisted on by him; and therefore I have said nothing to it here. And as for his Mormo of *Poper*y he so often calls upon, his horrible Out-cries of *Racks, Inquisitions, Fires, Confiscations, Prisons, and Banishments*, which make either the Whole, or a considerable Part of at least thirty Pages in his Book, to deal freely with him, they make no manner of Impression on me. I am apt to think, they may be only a rash Way of Asseveration he has got a Habit of, and mean no more, than if he had said, *Popes, Racks, and Inquisitions* take me, if what I say be not true;

Pag. 117.

Pag. 116.

true; or, *Fire, Faggots, and Gridirons broil me, if what you say be not false.* Whenever I am convinc'd that our Religion is as *nearly* endanger'd by *Popery*, as I am now persuaded it is by other Enemies, Mr. S. shall find me, as ready to oppose it, according to my Abilities, as he or any one else. And I hope I might offer something in Defence of this Protestant Church, of which I am an unworthy Member, without departing from any one Position I have asserted, or calling for Assistance from any one I have opposed.

THE *Limitations* under which, I have asserted the Authority of the Superiors of the Church, as *Teachers*, are, as I have said, an invincible Bar against *Popery*, and will be ever found so in Application. They are the very Ground upon which our *Reformers* stood, and the only Ground of *Reason from the Nature of the Thing*, upon which they cou'd stand. The Interpretations of Scripture, upon which our *Fathers* separated from their *Popish Guides*, they therefore rejected, because the Sense assign'd by them, was either contrary to some *plain natural Truth*, or to some other *plain Places of Scripture*. Of the Reasons which supported the former Objection, every Man, learned and unlearned, was able to judge; and of the latter also, so far as clearly to perceive, that two inconsistent Interpretations of Places in a Book divinely inspir'd, cou'd not be both agreeable to the Original. These, I say, properly speaking, were the only Arguments in that Inquiry, which cou'd be taken from the *Reason of the Thing*;  
and

and these no Authority cou'd over-rule. Every other Argument used in that Controversy, will be found, when traced to its Principle, to rest upon Authority, or to be only an Argument upon Concession. Men of Learning disputed from the original Sense of the *Greek* or *Hebrew*, from Historical Accounts of *Customs* or *Proverbs* refer'd to, or from the primitive Interpretations of those, who liv'd in or near the Times of the Apostles, &c. all which Reasons, manifestly resolve into *Authority*. And all that Persons of inferior Education cou'd offer beyond those Reasons from the *Nature of the Thing*, depended more immediately on *Authority*. They cou'd argue only from what they were taught by some *Men of Learning*, or from what they read in the *English Translation*; and for the Truth and Fidelity of both, they must unavoidably rely on *Authority*. And in these Instances, I think both learned and unlearned acted as became rational and *understanding Agents*, and had as good a Title to this Character, for depending on *Authority*, when it ought to be depended on, as for following the Evidence of *Reasons from the Nature of the Thing*, where such Evidence appear'd; because in Questions determinable only by *Authority*, a rational Being ought to be determin'd by *Authority*. By those Reasons from the *Nature of the Thing*, they were led only to *Negative Conclusions*, that the Interpretations asserted by the *Papists* cou'd not be true; but for every Step they took beyond these Conclusions, unless *Authority* be *Reason*, they had no Reason

at all. And as for the Bulk of the common People, they went upon no Reasons, but what resolve into a greater Confidence in the Skill and Fidelity of those who *oppos'd* Popery, than of those who *defended* it. The *positive* Doctrines they admitted in the place of those they reject- ed, and the Sense of those Scriptures whence they argued against them, they received from the Authority of those of their Pastors and Guides who appear'd for the Reformation. In these Instances it was necessary for them to be determin'd by some Authority or other; and they had this good Reason to prefer the Authority of their *Reforming Guides* to that of their *Popish*, that the *latter* they now saw plainly had taught them evident Falshoods and Contradictions, and therefore might justly be concluded to be defective in *Skill* or *Honesty*.

THUS was the *Reformation* introduced into this Church, partly in Consequence of the *Limitations* which I have assign'd to all *Authority*, and partly by a Submission to *Authority* within those *Limitations*. I think it a great Mercy to this Church, than its *Reformation* was made with so great a Concurrence of the Clergy; but had it been otherwise, had even all the Clergy oppos'd it, those *Reasons, from the Nature of the Thing*, had justify'd the People in departing from them: But if the *Authority* of some Persons or other had not been submit- ted to within my *Limitations*, no Church, and, in Effect, no Religion could have been preserv'd. The *Negative Conclusions*, deduced from those Reasons, might indeed have *expelled Popery*;  
but

but when this was done, nothing but wild Enthusiasm, or a total Ignorance of Scripture, could have succeeded, without such a *Submission* to *Authority* as I contend for.

THE Reader will, I hope, excuse me for detaining him so long in the Vindication of the Superiors Authority as *Teachers*, when he observes, that every other Branch of Ecclesiastical Authority bears a Proportion to this. If this Branch of *Authority* be not inconsistent with the *Supremacy of Christ*, or the *Liberties of Christians*, the Imputation will be easily removed from all others. In every Instance in which I have claim'd Submission to the *Authority* of the *Teacher*, I have endeavour'd to prove such Submission *necessary*; That the Person taught must, in such Cases, be determin'd one Way or other, and cannot be determin'd but by *Authority*; and if I have succeeded in these Proofs, it cannot, I think, be objected, that I have deprived him of any *Liberty* he has a *Right* to: for where the Action is *necessary*, he can have no Right to *Liberty*.

I cannot help observing from the Whole, upon how hasty and shallow a Consideration of Things my worthy *Considerer* and his Friends have taken upon them to dispute an Authority claim'd by the *Teachers*, and submitted to by the *People* in all Ages of the Christian Church, and which will be ever necessary to render the Ministry effectual to the Ends of its Institution. The great Principle they set out upon in this pious Design was, *That Sincerity gave a full Exemption from all Human Authority in Mat-*  
*ters*

ters of Religion; and that *nothing else need be regarded* by Christians. But this Principle was so crudely and indistinctly offer'd in the *first* Proposal, that it was almost universally understood to mean only a *present strong Persuasion of Mind, however founded*, and under that Appearance gave great and just Offence. In a *Second* Edition of this Principle, it was brought a little more into the Light, and explain'd to mean such a *Persuasion of Mind as is the Result of a full impartial Inquiry, according to the best Use of our Faculties, and of all Assistances in our Power*. Now if they had gone but one Step farther, and only inquired what is the *Extent* of human *Faculties*, in what Cases we may require *Evidence from the Nature of the Thing*, and in what we must depend on *Authority*; and again, what these *Assistances* are, and what Use Christians are oblig'd to make of them, they had found themselves under a Necessity of admitting that *Authority* which they had taught Men to despise, and for the Claim or Defence of which they had rais'd such an Outcry against their Brethren.







## CHAP. IV.

Review of Chap. V. Of the Authority of the Superiors to Minister in the publick Offices of Religion; and of Part of Chap. III. relating to the Efficacy of Prayers offer'd by Them.



THE Character under which I next consider'd the *Superiors* of the Church, was their Appointment to *Minister in the publick Offices of Religion*. But since the great Objection I had in View, *viz.* "The Inconsistency of the *Powers* claim'd to the *Superiors* of the Church, with the *Liberties* of the *Inferiors*," appear'd not much to affect this Branch of their Office, I contented my self with little more than just mentioning the Powers belonging to them under this Character. But I am now call'd upon to defend my Assertions, and the short Proofs I offer'd in Support of them.

It is, I think, allow'd by Mr. S. that some Pag. 87.  
Persons must be set apart and appointed to these Offices; and that in virtue of such Appointment, *They must have some Authority* in these Offices more than belongs to other Persons not so appointed. In the Conclusion of Section V. he tells us, This, in his Opinion, is the *Truth*  
of

Pag. 130. of the Matter, *That these Offices being publickly to be administer'd, the publick Officers of the Church, for Order sake, were appointed to administer them. When this was settled, it became unlawful to break thro' what was fix'd. Nothing but the Necessity of the Thing, which is superior to Order, could cancel these Rules, or justify any Person meddling with the publick Offices, who was not in the regular Methods appointed to them. The Ministry is to pray publickly, and to administer the Sacraments; not that the Efficacy of Prayer, or of the Sacraments, is tied to one particular Sett of Men, appointed in such a particular Manner, but to avoid Disorders. The Points in Question between us, are:*

1. FROM whom, or by what Appointment this *Authority* is to be derived.
2. WHAT Obligation we are under to *submit* and *adhere* to such Appointment.
3. HOW far the *Efficacy* of these Administrations depends on the Appointment or Commission of the Persons who administer.

THE TWO former Questions I have already consider'd: But the

3d Point, which Mr. S. here principally debates, has not before been taken Notice of; *viz.* How far the *Efficacy* of the Administration depends on the *Appointment* or *Commission* of the Person administering.— Concerning Prayers, I say, “ That since 'tis reasonable to believe that  
 “ the Prayers of the Faithful are more accepta-

“ ble to God, when offer’d, in the *Manner*  
 “ *which he has prescrib’d*; it must follow, that  
 “ our Prayers will more effectually derive the  
 “ Blessings of God upon us, when offer’d thus  
 “ according to his Institution, by Persons *ap-*  
 “ *pointed by him to this Office*, than when pre-  
 “ sented by another Person *not thus appointed*.”

Now this Inference will, I think, stand free from this Author’s Objections, if it can be proved, that the *Manner in which God has prescribed Prayers to be offer’d, is by the publick Ministry*. He acknowledges that the *publick Officers of the Church* were appointed to *Minister in this Office*. If this Appointment was made by the Apostles, I shall look upon it as a Divine Institution. If it was not made by the Apostles, let Mr. S. tell us when and by whom it was made. That it was made in the Apostles Age, I infer from that Scripture I before alledg’d in this Question, *Rev. v. 8*. And whatever Order was settled in the Church in their Days, I shall presume was their Appointment. If then this *Proposition* be true, “ That Prayers are more acceptable to God, when offer’d in the Manner He has prescrib’d,” and the Assumption (“ That the *Manner* in which He has prescribed Prayers to be offer’d, is by the *publick Ministry*” ) be proved from Apostolical Appointment, the Conclusion will follow, That Prayers are more acceptable to God, and will therefore more effectually derive his Blessing, when offer’d by the appointed Ministry, than when offer’d by Persons not so appointed. ’Tis our Author’s own Assertion, that

Pag. 130.

Disc. p. 47.

Pag. 130. *when the publick Officers of the Church were appointed to this Office, it became unlawful to break thro' that was fixed; and, consequently, it became Sin in any one to break thro' what was fix'd, or to take this Office, without a regular Appointment to it. And can it be a Question, whether Prayers offer'd by a Person who sins in the very Act of offering them, are as acceptable to God, as Prayers offer'd by one duly appointed, according to his Direction? Nay, if this Defect be known to the Persons who join with him, they also sin in joining with him: For if 'tis unlawful for any one to take upon himself this Office, without being appointed, 'tis also unlawful for the People to acknowledge any one in this Office, who is not so appointed. As to Cases of Necessity, which our Author acknowledges can alone justify any one meddling with this Office, who is not in the regular Methods appointed to it, they are Exceptions to a general Rule; and how far they extend, I have before observ'd.*

Ibid.

Disc.p.47. *St. James, Is any Man sick among you? Let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with Oil in the Name of the Lord; and the Prayer of Faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed Sins, they shall be forgiven him. Now if this Author had assign'd any Reason why the Elders of the Church should be call'd for rather than any other*

Jam. v.  
 14, 15.

other

other Persons, which would not have imply'd what I have infer'd from these Words, he would have said something to the Purpose. But let us consider his Objections, such as they are.

*First*, HE says, *There are other Circumstances prescribed to these Prayers, besides being offer'd by the Elders, viz. anointing with Oil, &c.* But, *First*, what is prescrib'd to the *Inferiors*, is only calling for the *Elders*. *Secondly*, The *Elders* are indeed directed not only to *pray over the Person*, but to *anoint him with Oil in the Name of the Lord*. But what will he conclude hence? That, because this *anointing with Oil*, which was an extraordinary Direction, relating to a miraculous Power, then vouchsafed to the Church, is not to be continued; therefore *Prayer*, an ordinary and perpetual Duty, is not to be continued? Will he say, that because we are not now to *anoint the Sick with Oil*, we are not therefore to *pray* for them? or, that no Efficacy may be expected, even with respect to their *bodily Recovery*, except to our *Prayers* we add also this *Anointing*? Or, does he think that *Prayers* are not a Means to procure God's *Remission of Sin*; or, that they may not prevail for this Effect, unless they are accompany'd with this *Anointing*? The Direction of the Apostle to send for the *Elders to pray*, may surely still hold, tho' these *Elders* do not still use that extraordinary Rite of *Anointing with Oil*. Nay, the Apostle himself ascribes the Success of the Application not to the *Anointing*, but to the *Prayers*: These, he tells us, *will avail much*. If therefore *Prayer* be a perpetual Duty,

Pag. 122.

and will always continue of great Efficacy with God, there is the same Reason now to send for the *Elders* to *pray* as there was then; and unless Mr. *S.* can assign a better Reason why the *Elders* should be sent for to pray, rather than *other Persons*, he must give me Leave to conclude, That it was, because *Prayers* offer'd thro' their Ministry, would be more *acceptable to God*. But 'tis objected,

Pag. 123.

*Secondly*, THAT the Apostle *here speaks* of the Prayer of Faith, *i. e.* (as he says) *the Prayer of such Men who had that Faith, to which was annexed miraculous Powers*. But this very Apostle has given another Explication of *Prayer of Faith*, Chap. i. v. 6, 7. *But let a Man ask in Faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a Wave of the Sea.—Let not that Man think he shall receive any thing of God*. Now, I hope, this *Prayer of Faith* will always continue in the Church, and be always of great Efficacy with God. As to those Words *in the Name of the Lord*, whatever is imply'd in them, Mr. *S.* has acknowledg'd, that the present Ministers of the Church may offer up *Prayers in his Name*. He objects,

Pag. 253.

*Thirdly*, THAT the Apostle, in the very next Verse, tells us, 'tis the *Fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man availeth much*. By his Reference to the Original here, he seems to intend some Advantage to his Argument from the Word *Fervent*. We are bid to observe 'tis *ἐνεργητικὴ δέησις*; but he has not favour'd us with his Inference, nor can I imagine any, unless it be this; That *Fervent Prayers* were in Use in the Apostle's

postle's Time, but that all Prayers now are to be quite of another Kind, *calm and undisturbed*; and therefore, that it cannot be concluded from the Efficacy ascribed to the Elders Prayers *then*, that the same Efficacy may be expected from their Prayers *now*. But the Word he more expressly insists on is *Righteous*; 'tis the Prayer of a *Righteous Man availeth much*. No doubt, the *Goodness* of the Man who offers Prayers, *particularly recommends them to God, and derives his Blessing*; and for this very Reason the *Elders* were to be *call'd for*, because their *Goodness* and *Righteousness* might better be presumed on than any other Persons. The Moral Characters that recommend them to this Office, are, that they are *blameless, temperate, meek, of honest Report, &c.* And whenever the Contrary appears, the Discipline of the Church requires, that either they should not be admitted to this Office, or deposed from it; and the general Presumption of *Goodness* ought certainly to be stronger for him, whose whole Life has been strictly examin'd and inquir'd into by the best Rules of Scrutiny that can be prescrib'd, and who forfeits the Office he is call'd to, whenever the Contrary appears, than for any other Person. And upon this very Presumption the Argument of the Apostle proceeds; he supposes a tacit Objection to be made by those he wrote to—— "What special Efficacy could be expected from the Prayers of *Men of like Passions* with themselves?" He answers, the *fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man availeth much*; and proceeds to instance in the Prayers

Ibid.

Pag. 124.

of *Elias*, a Man of like Passions with those whose Prayers he commanded them to apply for. *Righteousness* is here manifestly supposed as a Part of the *Elders* Character; and this Supposition, I say, is therefore reasonable, because the Qualifications of any one for an Office, ought always to be presum'd of a Person vested in such Office, unless the Contrary evidently appears: and whenever it does so, the Person ought to be deposed from such Office. But allowing this Observation on the Term *Righteous*, all the Weight it can desire, it remains still to be accounted for, why the Apostle should direct the *Elders to be call'd for*, rather than other Persons. Were there no Good or *Righteous* Men in the Church but the *Elders*? If there were, why might not they be *call'd for*? and why is the Direction confin'd to the *Elders*? Upon the Whole, I do not perceive that any or all this Author's Objections do in least invalidate my Inference from this Scripture. Here is a plain Command to *call for the Elders to Pray*: And as no Reason has been given, which confines this Direction to the Age of the Apostles, so I imagine none will be given why they should be *call'd for* rather than other Christians, besides what I have assign'd.

THE *Administration of the Sacraments* is an Office which I also assert to the *Ministers of the Church*. Of their Appointment to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I have spoken before, and shall here only observe, that the Word *Consecration*, with which Mr. S. seems much displeas'd, I presumed I might use, with-  
out



out Offence, to any Member of the *Church of England*; because 'tis the very Term made choice of by our Church to express this Action in the *Communion-Service*.

CONCERNING the other *Sacrament*, what I affirm'd was, " That the Scriptures *plainly* and " *expressly* commit the Administration of it to " the *Ministers of the Church*, and no-where " *expressly* commit it to any other Persons." Now, which of these Propositions is it that Mr. S. denies? Is it not committed to Them in Words as *plain* and *express* as can be used, *Matt.* xxviii. 19. And can this Author shew us any Scripture where 'tis committed to other Persons? The Argument from others not being *expressly excluded*, I have before consider'd, and observe here particularly, with relation to this Sacrament, that Baptizing was an Office which, in the common Opinion of the *Jews*, required a *special Authority*, as appears from the Question they put to *John*—*Why Baptizest thou, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that Prophet*: And therefore there was no Reason to express an Exclusion, which was sufficiently understood by those our Lord spake to.

THE Cases of *Holland* and *Scotland*, &c. which Mr. S. objects as a Difficulty, I am concern'd to Answer; so far as they are Cases of *Necessity*, have been already consider'd. He acknowledges himself, that *nothing but Necessity can justify any Person in meddling with the publick Offices, who was not in the regular Methods appointed to them*. And if in these Churches these Offices were taken out of the

Hands of the Persons who were in the *regular Methods appointed to them*, and assumed by Persons *not so appointed*, nothing but *Necessity* can justify the Action. But as to *Authority*, I affirm in general, that no Man can have *Authority* either to *Teach* or *Baptize* in virtue of any Appointment, unless the Persons by whom he is appointed have Authority to appoint; tho' where the Defect of Authority is *necessary* and unavoidable, I doubt not but God will, by his Grace, supply it.

Pag. 128. THIS Author's Assertion, that *every Man who does this Office of Baptizing, (i. e.)* takes it upon him without being regularly appointed to it, (for that he must mean if he opposes me) *is properly a Successor of the Apostles*, is so loose, and the Scripture he proves it by, (*Every good and perfect Gift comes from above*) is so little to his Purpose, that I shall leave the Reader to answer for me.





C H A P. V.

Review of the Sixth Chapter, Of the Legislative Authority of the Church. In which are consider'd, 1st, the Authority of the Church, to prescribe Baptismal Professions. 2dly, To prescribe what Doctrines shall be publickly Taught, and what shall not be Taught. 3dly, To prescribe in Matters of Decency and Order.



THE Subject of this Chapter, is, as Mr. S. has justly observ'd, of *vast Importance* to the Church. And, as this is a Point in which my main Question is immediately concern'd, so I enlarg'd my self more upon it in my Discourse, than on the preceding Point, and shall consider it more fully in my Review, and more distinctly examine his Objections against what I offer'd. My Assertions, which he takes into his Examination, are these :

*First*, THE Rulers of the Church have *Authority* to prescribe a publick *Profession of Faith*, as a Condition of *External Communion*.

*Secondly*, THEY have *Authority* to prescribe what *Doctrines* shall be *taught*, and what *not*.

*Thirdly*, THEY have *Authority*, with regard to the *visible* Action, to injoin such a Manner of performing *Christ's* Commands, as may promote *Decency*, *Peace*, and *Edification*. And,

*Fourthly*, So far as may be conducive to the same Ends, to prescribe, or prohibit such other Actions, also, as are in their Nature *indifferent*, i. e. neither commanded nor forbidden by *Christ*.

EACH of these Points I shall consider distinctly.

#### S E C T. I.

*Of the Authority of the Church to prescribe a publick Profession of Faith, as a Condition of external Communion.*

**F**OR the first of these Assertions, That the Rulers of the Church have Authority to prescribe a publick Profession of Faith, as a Condition of external Communion, besides some general Reasons, which I assign, *Disc. pag. 73.* and of which no Notice is taken. I offer this;

*Dis. p. 75.* “ That the Power of admitting Men into the  
 “ Church, by *Baptism*, is committed to them.  
 “ For an open *Profession* of Christian Faith is a  
 “ necessary Condition of *Baptism*; and conse-  
 “ quently, they must have Authority to require  
 “ this *Profession*, which is the previous Condi-  
 “ tion

“ tion of it.” Mr. S. in his Answer to this, Pag. 134.  
 allows, *That the Clergy have a Right to require a publick Profession of Faith, in order to admit a Man into the Church by Baptism: But denies, That this implies a Right to make Laws about external Communion.* But if Laws about admitting into the external Communion of the Church, be Laws about the external Communion of the Church; and the Right of requiring a publick *Profession*, in order for *Baptism*, implies a Right to make Laws about admitting into the external Communion of the Church, then the Right here allow'd implies the very Right denied. Now, there being no certain Form-prescrib'd in Scripture, in which these *Professions* should be made, it must necessarily fall to the Ministers of *Baptism*, or the Superiors of the Church, to determine of what *Articles* or Propositions of *Faith* taught in Scripture these *Professions* should consist; and agreeably, in the earliest Accounts of History, we find *Creeds*, or Summaries, prescrib'd in every Church, according to which such *Profession* should be made. The prescribing the Profession of such *Creeds*, was evidently making *Laws* about admitting into the external Communion of the Church; and consequently, *Laws* about external Communion.

BUT, 'tis said, This Argument does not prove that the Superiors of the Church have a Right to *interpret Scripture so far, as to judge what is plain and fit to be requir'd in any other Case but Baptism.* I reply, It proves, what it is brought for, “ That they have a *Right* to re-  
Ibid.  
 “ quire

“quire a publick *Profession of Faith*, as a Condition of *external Communion*.” And since the Terms upon which any one is admitted into the Church, are Terms also of his Continuance in it, it will prove also, farther, that they have a Right, whenever they think it necessary, to require the same Profession to be made, as a Condition of Mens Continuance in the Church. And if they have a Right to judge what is plain and fit to be requir'd in order to Baptism, they have just the same Right to judge what is plain and fit to be requir'd as a Condition of being continued in the Communion of the Church.

Pag. 135.  
136. BUT it seems, even in the *Case of Baptism*, They have no Right to refuse it, if *the Party be convinc'd of the Truth of Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God, and is ready to promise, to the utmost of his Abilities, to perform all that he has commanded. For the Scripture has, over and over again, declar'd the Terms upon the Profession of which Persons were baptized. He then, that Now professes his Belief in God, and declares, as the Eunuch did, That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, has a Right to be admitted into the Church by Baptism: Nor has any one Authority from Christ to refuse Admission to him who should sincerely profess his Faith in those very Words, &c.*

THE Decision of this Question, Upon what Terms of *Profession* any Person has a *Right* to demand Admission into the Church by *Baptism*; or, upon what *Profession* the Ministers of Baptism are *bound* to admit him, being of great

great Importance to the settling the Point in Controversy, it will not be thought a Digression, if I consider it somewhat distinctly. For the stating this Question, I shall only premise, 1<sup>st</sup>, That 'tis not here inquir'd upon what Terms of *Profession* a Person may, in a Case of *extreme Necessity*, as in the Article of Death, &c. be admitted to *Baptism*, but upon what Terms of *Profession* Persons may generally, or in ordinary Cases, demand *Baptism*; or, in other Words, what *Profession* the Ministers of Baptism have a *Right* or *Authority* to insist on, as the *ordinary Rule* or Condition of admitting Persons to *Baptism*. 2<sup>ly</sup>, In the Consideration of this Question, we must suppose the State of the Church to be such as it was in the first Ages, when the Generality of Persons were admitted *Adult*, when the *Baptismal Creeds* were compiled: For, to the present State of the Church, when the Generality of Persons are admitted in *Infancy*, incapable of making such *Profession*, or judging the Terms of it, this Question is not so properly adapted.

MR. S. determines, That if *any one* Now *professes his Belief in God, and declares, as the Eunuch did, that he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; he has a Right to be admitted into the Church by Baptism, nor have any Person's Authority to refuse him.* In Opposition to which Sentence, I affirm, That the Superiors of the Church at all Times had, and consequently have Now, a Right to prescribe the *Profession* of other plain Doctrines of Scripture, besides this mention'd by Mr. S. as a Condition of being admitted into the Church by *Baptism*.

*Baptism*. Before I consider this as a Question of *Fact*, I shall offer some Arguments, in Support of the *Right* claim'd.

FOR my general Principle, I lay down this, That whoever may not Be *presum'd* to be a Member of *Christ's Invisible Church*, or a Person internally acceptable to him, ought not to be admitted into the Communion of his *Visible Church* by *Baptism*. I say, *presum'd* to be a Member, &c because, the Persons to whom the Office of *Baptism* is committed, being only Men, and not able to discern the *internal* State of the Man, any farther than it appears by outward Evidences, his *internal* Qualifications for *Baptism* in the Sight of *Christ*, give him no *Right* to be admitted to it by them; unless they appear by such outward Evidences as are just *Presumptions* of them. And the want of observing this, has occasion'd much Confusion in this Dispute. This then, being suppos'd, I affirm,

I. " THAT every Man is bound to believe every Proposition affirm'd by God, which he knows to be affirm'd by him, and whose Meaning he understands." And as a *Corollary* of this, " That to all Propositions which he is equally assur'd are reveal'd by God, he is equally bound to assent." If therefore any other Propositions, as plain as this, *Jesus is the Son of God*, are propos'd to him from the same Authority with this, he is under the same Obligation to assent to one, as to the other. And, consequently, supposing it true, that the Apo-  
stles,



stles, at the first preaching of the Gospel, admitted Men to Baptism upon the *Profession of this one Article*, when the State of the Church would not admit such a preparatory Care in the Instruction of Converts, as was soon after appointed, yet it will not hence follow, that no larger *Profession* than this ought to be requir'd, when great Diligence and Attention has been used to instruct any one more fully in the Will of God revealed in Scripture, and lay before him many other Truths of the Gospel, as plainly taught as *this*. For, since every Man is bound to assent to all Propositions taught by God, which, according to the *best Use of his Faculties*, and *Means of Information*, he may understand: He that does not even understand any other Proposition as plain as *this*, and as fully proposed to him, must appear guilty of a sinful *Inattention*, and not to have done what was actually in his Power, to know the Will of God. His *Ignorance* itself, in such Circumstances, must appear a just Reason to refuse him *Baptism*; for the only Excuses of Ignorance, want of Capacity, and want of Information, cannot be presum'd on here. His Instruction in all requir'd from him has been equal, and the same Measure of Capacity, by which he understands one Proposition, must be presum'd to enable him, with the same Application, to understand others express'd in as plain Words as that. He, for Instance, who is capable of understanding this Proposition, *Jesus is the Son of God*, can never be imagin'd to want Capacity to understand these, *Jesus died; Rose again from*

*from the Dead; Ascended into Heaven, &c.* Such a Person, therefore, can never be presum'd, by the Governours of the Church, to be in a State approv'd by *Christ*. Nay, supposing his *Ignorance*, in such Instances, pardonable in the Sight of *Christ*, yet the Reasons for which it is so, can never appear to Man. From this Argument then I infer, that when the Governours of the Church had provided for the full Instruction of *Catechumens*, in many other Propositions of Faith, as plain as that which Mr. *S.* thinks sufficient: They might justly insist on larger *Professions* than *that*, as a Proof that their *Catechumens* had duly attended to those Instructions, and made a Proficiency in Christian Knowledge answerable to them. If it be objected, that in Consequence of this Argument, the Governours of the Church might insist on a Profession of Assent to *every plain Proposition* affirm'd in Scripture, and enlarge the *Baptismal Creed* to a very inconvenient Measure; this will, I hope, appear to be answered in some following Considerations.

2. THEN, from my general Principle before laid down, I argue thus; Whoever *denies* and *opposes* any *one* plain Doctrine of the Gospel, or Proposition of Scripture, may not be presum'd to be a *Member of Christ's Invisible Church*, or a Person approv'd by him. He, for Instance, who denies that *Christ ascended into Heaven*, when he is fully instructed in this Article, and shewn that it is affirm'd in Scripture, in plain Words, the Sense of which no reasonable Man can doubt of, must appear to the *Superiors*

*periors of the Church* to contradict the Scripture, and deny the Veracity of the Author of it; and, consequently, cannot be presum'd, by them, to be a Person *approv'd by Christ*, and fit to be admitted into his Church by *Baptism*. Whenever, therefore, they have Reason to suspect that any Person denies this, or any other the like plain Proposition in Scripture, they may and ought to try and examine him in this Point, and require his Profession of such Truth, before they admit him. And if the Reasons of such Suspicion extend to great Numbers, and become by this Means *general*, they may and ought to prescribe the Profession of such Truth, as the *ordinary Rule and general Condition* of being admitted to *Baptism*. By this Argument the Primitive Church is justify'd in Point of Right, in inserting several Articles into their *Baptismal Creeds*, besides that which Mr. S. thinks ought only to be insisted on. The learned Author of the *Critical History of the Apostle's Creed*, has very judiciously observ'd, that many, even of the earliest Articles in that ancient Summary, appear to have been inserted in Opposition to some *Heresy* then arisen. When Doctrines, opposite to plain Propositions of Faith taught by the Apostles, were spread, and industriously propagated, a general Suspicion became reasonable, that any Persons who offer'd themselves for *Baptism*, might be corrupted with such Doctrines. It therefore became fit and necessary, that the Governors of the Church should direct, that all Persons offering themselves for *Baptism*, should be try'd

P and

and examin'd on such Points, lest any Person should be admitted into the Church who could not be presum'd qualify'd for such Admission. That they injured no Man's *Right* in this, is evident, because sufficient Care was taken for the Instruction of all *Catechumens*, previously to such Examination; and he who, after such Information, *refused his Assent* to such Proposition, might justly be suppos'd to *deny* it, and he who deny'd it, could not be presum'd fit to be admitted into the Communion of the Church. From hence then I infer, That tho' at the first Preaching of the Apostles, such a Profession as that recorded of the *Eunuch*, might be sufficient for Baptism, when no Heresies were risen, but all were of *one Heart, and of one Mind*; yet it will not hence follow, that when Doctrines opposite to the Truths of the Gospel were daily taught, and widely propagated, such *Professions* might not justly be insisted on, as would discover whether the Person offering himself for *Baptism*, held such Doctrines, and deny'd such Truths or not.

ANOTHER Principle I beg leave to transcribe from Bishop *Stillingfleet's Appendix to his Irenicum*, a Treatise which has not been suspected to carry Church-Authority too high; "What-  
 " ever Society subsists by virtue of a divine  
 " Constitution, does by virtue thereof, derive  
 " all Power necessary for its Preservation, in  
 " *Peace, Unity, and Purity.*" That the Christian Church is such a *Society*, will not I think be deny'd; and the Execution of this *Power* must of Necessity belong to the *Superiors, or Officers*

Ap. Iren.  
 P. 15.

of this Society. From this Position then I argue thus; If admitting Men into the Church, who *deny* and *oppose* any plain Doctrine of Faith tends to disturb the *Peace*, divide the *Unity*, and corrupt the *Purity* of that Society; then they to whom the Power of its Preservation from these Evils is committed, are justify'd in refusing to admit such Persons into its Community. That the spreading and diffusing in the Church, Doctrines opposite to the Truths of the Gospel, endangers its *Peace*, *Unity*, and *Purity*; and that such Doctrines may more successfully be diffus'd by the Persons who hold them, when admitted into the Church, than when excluded from it, are Propositions which I need not prove: And consequently, whenever there is *general Reason* to suspect, that the Persons offering themselves for *Baptism*, may be of that dangerous Number who hold such Doctrines, the Officers of the Church not only may, but are in Duty bound to require from all Persons whom they admit, an express Assent to the contrary Truths.

It may perhaps be said, that the other Use of the Keys would be sufficient to secure the Church from this Danger: That 'tis Time enough to *expel* such Persons from its Community, when discover'd actually attempting these Mischiefs against it: But as the Case of the Church stood in the early Ages, upon a Supposition of which State this Question proceeds, when almost all Persons were admitted adult, the Guard was best placed at the *Entrance* of the Church. Such Persons were immediately ca-

pable of the Mischief fear'd, as soon as admitted. They might long practise their Arts of *cunning Craftiness*, before they were discover'd; and if they had prevail'd on any Number their Exclusion would be attended with Difficulty and Disturbance, and the Opposition of a Party, and perhaps occasion a Schism in the Church: It was therefore better to prevent the Evil, than depend upon an after-Remedy. And the learned Author abovemention'd, has assign'd this as the proper Reason which mov'd the Governours of the Primitive Church, soon after the Apostolick Age, to add several Articles to the *Baptismal Professions* before requir'd.

THE most considerable Objection against the Doctrine I have asserted, has been offer'd as a Consequence from this Principle, That whoever may be presumed to be a *Member of Christ's Invisible Church*, or internally acceptable to him, ought to be admitted a *Member of his Visible Church*. This Character, as to Faith, it is said ought to be presum'd of every one who professes his Belief of those Articles which the Scripture has affirm'd to be *sufficient* to Salvation; and that the Measure of *Faith sufficient* to Salvation, may be collected from that Assertion of St. Paul, Rom. x. 9. *If thou confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy Heart that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved.* Upon the true Meaning and Extent of this Scripture the whole Force of this Argument depends, which necessarily requires these *Limitations*.

I. THAT the Person believing these, had no  
other

other Articles of the Gospel, as plain as these, propos'd to him. For since God requires from every Man, according to his Abilities and Opportunities of Information; he who has been fully instructed in other Truths, as plainly and intelligibly affirm'd in Scripture as these, cannot be presum'd, in believing these, to believe all that God requires from him, and, consequently, to be approv'd by him.

2. THAT the Person believing these, denies no other as plainly taught in Scripture as these, and as fully propos'd to him; for he who denies any one Proposition of Scripture, affirm'd in plain intelligible Words, and fully propos'd and offer'd to him, must either deny that this Scripture is the *Word of God*, or deny the *Veracity of God*. If he denies the Scripture to be the *Word of God*, he can have no more Reason to assent to the *two* Articles suppos'd necessary, than to that from which he *dissents*; at least such *Assent* cannot be *Faith*. But if he denies the *Veracity of God*, he is guilty of Blasphemy, and cannot be approved by him.

3. THAT these Articles are understood, and assented to, according to their *true intended Sense*. For he who assents to these Words, in any other Sense than that in which the Apostles taught them, does not assent to the Propositions taught by them, and consequently cannot be entitled to the Reward promised to such Assent.

THE true Import of this Scripture then, within these Restrictions, is this; That *these two* Articles, truly understood, are the *Foundation* of the Christian System, as distinguish'd

from other Religions; That the Belief of these only, is *simply* and *absolutely* necessary to denominate us Christians; and that he who believes these, if no more of the Gospel has been proposed to him, shall, in Virtue of *this Belief*, be accepted by God as a Christian, and entitled to the Hopes of the Gospel. But it will not hence follow, that God in no Cases, or in no Circumstances, requires from Christians the Belief of more than these; or that from him to whom *more is given, more is not requir'd* by God. Supposing then, that at the first preaching of the Gospel, or even *now*, in Cases of Necessity, and when Time for farther Instruction cannot be allow'd, *Baptism* ought to be given upon the Profession of these two Articles; yet, when great Care and Diligence has been used to instruct any one in other plain Truths of the Gospel besides these, the Officers of the Church, to whom *Baptism* is committed, may justly insist on his Profession of more than these, because they may justly presume that God, from a Man in his Circumstances, requires his Assent to more than these. And with much greater Reason may they refuse *Baptism* to any one who denies any other plain Truth of the Gospel; because they are assur'd that the Belief of these will no more excuse a Man to God, who denies any other as plain and as fully offer'd to him as these, than our Obedience to one practical Precept, will excuse our wilful Breach of another. Nay, supposing the *Ignorance* or *Error* of the Person may, by some secret Circumstances, be excused by God, yet, by the *Ministers of the Church,*



*Church*, who are but Men, this cannot be discern'd. He who is fully instructed in any plain Proposition of Scripture, must appear to them oblig'd to *assent* to it; and he who *denies* it, to be an Enemy of the Gospel, and therefore not fit to be admitted into the Church. In short, the Governors of the Church are not oblig'd, in the *ordinary Creed*, or Rule of Profession for *Baptism*, to consider what Faith is *strictly* and *indispensably* necessary, as the lowest Condition upon which any one can be approv'd by God, or may by them be admitted to *Baptism*; but what is *generally* necessary in such Circumstances, and what will be requir'd by God from Men who have such Advantages of Knowledge and Improvement, as are given to all who are Candidates for *Baptism*. For, since the Measure of every one's Duty, as to *Faith*, is proportion'd to his Capacities and Means of Instruction, the *ordinary Rule* of the Church may justly demand the Assent of Catechumens to such Propositions of Scripture as they have been distinctly instructed in, and to the understanding of which, no greater Capacity is requir'd, than to the understanding those which are simply and absolutely necessary. The Reasons indeed which determin'd the Governors of the Church, beyond these necessary Articles, to insist on the Profession of one Proposition of Scripture rather than another, were taken principally from the other Consideration I suggested, the Danger of admitting *Hereticks* into the Church. They thought themselves oblig'd, as *Overseers of the Flock*, to prevent,

as far as they might, *Wolves from entering un-awares into the Fold*; and therefore, it was not merely because a Proposition was *plain*, but because it was *oppos'd* by *Hereticks*, that they requir'd an open Assent to it.

IF any *positive Precept* can be assign'd, requiring the Ministers of the Church to give *Baptism* in all Cases, upon the Profession of *Articles simply and absolutely necessary*, the Authority will readily be acquiesc'd in; but since no such Precept can be produc'd, we can argue only from the *Reason of the thing*, and *primitive Practice*. From the *Reason of the Thing* I have endeavour'd to shew, that a larger Profession than those contended for, may, and ought to be insisted on, as the *ordinary Rule* of the Church. It remains then to be shewn, that *Primitive Practice* was agreeable to this Determination. This, indeed, is the only Argument offer'd by Mr. S. He says, *no one has Authority to refuse Admission to him who professes his Faith in those very Words upon which the Apostles did admit their Converts to Baptism; and he who professes his Belief in God, and declares, as the Eunuch did, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, has a Right to be admitted to Baptism.* To this Argument, as 'tis an Assertion of Fact, I reply,

Page. 135.

I. THAT it does not appear that we have a full Relation of the Facts he refers too. As to the Instance of the *Eunuch*, it is plain, that the Historian has given us no Account of *Philip's* requiring, or his Convert's performing some things

things which this Author himself thinks necessary. Here is no Mention of a *Promise*, that <sup>Ibid.</sup> *he would perform, to the utmost of his Abilities all that Jesus had commanded.* Nay, there is no explicit Profession mention'd even of that fundamental Article, the *Belief in God.* There is no doubt but *Philip* had largely instructed him in the Christian Faith, tho' it be only said, that *he preach'd unto him Jesus*; the Articles of his *Death and Resurrection* had, without Question, made a Part of the Preacher's Sermon, and been assented to by the Disciple; and the very Form in which our Lord himself had directed that Baptism should be administer'd, must suppose him both to have been taught, and to have assented to the Christian Doctrine, concerning the *Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, as well as the *Son.* That the Article of *Baptism* had also been propos'd to him, appears from his Desire of it. Since, therefore, this is manifestly short of a full Account of what pass'd between *Philip* and his *Convert*, and omits the Recital of some Particulars which are acknowledg'd *necessary* Conditions of Baptism, 'tis probable that *St. Luke* recites only the *Principal* Article of his *Profession*, as what would be understood by all Christians, to whom the ordinary Rule of Baptism was well known, to imply the whole.

'TIS to be consider'd farther, that this Eunuch was a *Jewish Profelyte*, and his Belief of all Articles common to that Religion, and the Christian might reasonably be presum'd on, and the Articles peculiar to the Christian Faith having been, immediately before propos'd to him, this

this *Profession* was a virtual Assent to all he had been taught. But,

2dly, SUPPOSING the utmost that can be desir'd, That in his *Profession*, he assented only to this *one* Proposition, that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*; It must be remember'd that this whole Case was extraordinary. *Philip* acted under the special Direction of the Spirit, in the Conversion of a Person, upon a Journey; *Baptism* was immediately to be given, or not at all: And whatever might, on such an Occasion, be defective in the Instructions of the one, or the Faith of the other, Illumination could supply. And all that can be strictly inferr'd from such an Instance, is, "That to a Person in such Circumstances, *Baptism* may be given upon such a *Profession*." But it can never be concluded hence, That this was to be a Rule for the *ordinary* Practice of the Church; neither will it follow, from this, or any other Example in Scripture, in which *Baptism* was given, upon this, or the like short *Profession*, that every Person, who should in After-Ages, *profess his Faith in these Words*, would have a *Right* to be admitted into the Church by *Baptism*. For, supposing, what I assure my self will difficultly be prov'd, that the Historical Account of such Instances is full; yet, the Circumstances of the Church at that Time, and in the Times succeeding, were so very different, that that Argument will not hold from the one to the other. No Example concludes farther than the same Reasons of Action continue; when these are alter'd, an Alteration in the Practice will be justify'd by them.

them. When the Church came to be settled, and the *Catechumens* were regularly prepar'd for *Baptism*, by a previous Instruction, I have endeavour'd to shew, that the Church might justly insist on larger *Professions*, than when its State would not admit of such Preparations. But especially, when *Heresies* became numerous, and a general Suspicion became reasonable; that the Persons offering themselves for *Baptism*, might be prepossess'd with such Doctrines, as might be presum'd to render them disapprov'd by God, and dangerous to the *Peace* and *Purity* of the Church; there was Reason to require a more distinct and explicit *Profession* of Faith, than when these Dangers did not appear. But,

3dly, If it can be prov'd, that *larger Professions* than those from which Mr. S. argues were requir'd, as *Conditions of Baptism*, either during the Lives of the Apostles, or in the Ages nearest to them, I shall think this Argument answer'd, and the Right I claim to the Church vindicated. Whether the *μία πίστις*, the *one Faith*; Eph. iv. 5. *ὑπόσπουσις ὑγιαυνόντων λόγων*, the *Form of Sound* 2 Tim. i. *Words*, and the *διδασχὴ βαπτισμῶν*, the *Doctrine* 13. *of Baptisms*, mention'd by St. Paul; Hebr. vi. 2. or the *ἐπερώτημα συνειδήσεως*, the *Answer or Interrogation of Conscience*, of St. Peter, imply that any particular Summary was at that Time prescribed, I shall not determine. Tho', when we find so early a Father as *Tertullian*, after the Recital of a *Rule*, or Summary of *Faith*, not so large, indeed, as the Apostles Creed, yet, much larger than Mr. S. thinks ought to be insisted on, adding;

ing; <sup>c</sup> *Hanc Regulam Ecclesia accepit ab Apostolis, Apostoli à Christo: This Rule the Church receiv'd from the Apostles, the Apostles from Christ: And in another Place, asserting of another Creed, in Substance the same, <sup>d</sup> *Hanc Regulam ab initio Evangelii decurriffe*; that it had been *derived down from the Beginning of the Gospel*, the Opinion may be allow'd, at least probable, that these Passages related to some such *Form of Profession*, then in Use. But this not being capable of clear Proof, I do not insist on it. It will be sufficient, I think, to observe, that some of the earliest Writers of the Church inform us, that the *Profession* of more Articles than those expressly mention'd, in any Instance, in Scripture, were requir'd as a *Condition of Baptism*. <sup>e</sup> *Justin Martyr*, in his *Apology* tells the Emperor, *That so many as believe the Doctrines taught and affirm'd by the Christians to be true, were led by them to the Water, and there regenerated, after the same Manner that they themselves had been, in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And a little after, he says, <sup>f</sup> This Washing had**

<sup>c</sup> Tertul. *De Præscrip. Adv. Her.* Pag. 209.

<sup>d</sup> *Adv. Prax.* Pag. 501. Edit. Paris. 1675.

<sup>e</sup> Ὅσοι ἂν πεισθῶσι, καὶ πισθῶσιν ἀληθῆ ταῦτα, τὰ ὑφ' ἡμῶν διδασκόμενα καὶ λεγόμενα εἶναι——ἐπεισάγοντες ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἕνθα ὕδατος ἵεσι καὶ τράπον ἀναγκησέως ὄν καὶ ἡμεῖς αὐτοὶ ἀναγκησόμεθα ἀναγκησῶντες, ἐκ ὀνόματος ᾧ ἔσται πατρὸς ἡ ὅλων καὶ δεσπότης Θεῶν, καὶ ἔσται υἱὸς ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου, τὸ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι τότε ληθῶν ποιεῖται. *Ap. II.* Pag. 93, 94 Edit. Paris. 1630.

<sup>f</sup> Καλεῖται ἡ ταῦτα τὸ ληθῶν φωτισμός, ὡς φωτισμῶν τῶν διανοίας τῶν ταῦτα μεθελόντων. *Ibid.*

obtain'd

obtain'd the Name of Illumination, because the Minds of those, who learned these Things, were enlighten'd. And in the same Place he intimates to us the Articles they learn'd, relating to the three Persons in whose Name they were baptiz'd; Of the Father, & That he was Parent, and Lord of all Things; of Jesus Christ, that he was crucify'd under Pontius Pilate; of the Holy Ghost, that he had foretold the Things concerning Christ by the Prophets; which are the very Particulars taken Notice of, in ancient Creeds, or Rules of Faith. From this Testimony of Justin, it appears, That the believing the Doctrines taught and affirm'd by Christians, was in his Time a Condition of Baptism. No reasonable Man can restrain these Doctrines to that one Proposition, *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*; or imagine that this was all that the Catechumens were taught. The Points he expressly mentions, as the Faith into which they were baptiz'd, must, at least, be comprehended in such Doctrines, and probably some more. What they were taught they were requir'd to believe, as a previous Condition of Baptism; and since they were taught more than that Article, they were requir'd to believe more: And since this Belief could not appear to the Church any other Way than by an open Profession of it, it follows, that they were requir'd to profess more

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ε — Τῷ πατρὶ, ἧ ὅλων κ' δεωότης Θεῷ — Τῷ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ,  
 ἔ σαυρωθέντῳ ἐπὶ Ποντίῳ Πιλάτῳ — Πνεύματῳ ἁγίῳ, ὃ διὰ τῶν  
 προφητῶν προεκήρυξε τὰ κτ' τῷ Ἰησοῦν πάντα. Ibid.

as a Condition of *Baptism*. And since this Father liv'd and wrote in the Age immediately succeeding the Apostles, we may reasonably conclude, that the Practice of his Time was agreeable to their Example and Direction.

*Irenæus*, who liv'd not above half a Man's Age after him, having recited at large the various Errors of some *Hereticks*, says, <sup>s</sup> their *Falsity will easily be discover'd, by any one who keeps invariably in his Mind that Canon, or Rule of Truth, which he receiv'd at Baptism; or, by which he was baptiz'd*. Now, if whoever attended to that *Rule of Faith* he receiv'd at *Baptism*, might easily perceive the Falshood of the *Heresies* he had mention'd, then the *Truths* opposite to those *Heresies* must be contain'd in that *Rule*; and whoever looks over that Catalogue of *Heresies*, will presently see, that the *Rule*, by a Comparison to which their *Falshood* might so easily be perceiv'd, must be much larger than the short Creed Mr. S. contends for: And tho' the *Summary* of Christian *Faith*, which that *Father* gives a little after, be not, I think, the precise Form of any *Baptismal Creed*; yet, from the Coherence of the Argument, we may conclude, that the Articles, he there recites, were contain'd in that *Rule of Truth* he before referr'd to.

ABOUT forty Years after this Writer, liv'd *Tertullian*, who, in the Places before cited, and in several others, recites larger *CreeDs*, or *Rules*

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<sup>h</sup> Ὁ ἄ κατόνα τ' ἀληθείας ἀκλινη ἐν ἑαυτῷ κατέχων, ὃν διὰ τ' βαπτίσματος εἴληφε. Iren. Lib. 1. Cap. 1. fine.



of Faith, than Mr. Sykes's; and in his <sup>h</sup> Book of Baptism, plainly intimates, That the Article of Christ's Nativity, Death, and Resurrection, were requir'd to be profess'd by the Baptiz'd; and in <sup>i</sup> other Places, the Article of the Holy Church, is expressly mention'd as a Part of the Baptismal Profession.

<sup>k</sup> Cyprian who follow'd Tertullian about half a Century, informs us, in express Terms, That the Articles of Life Everlasting, and Forgiveness of Sins by the Holy Church, were requir'd to be profess'd at Baptism. And Firmilian, his Cotemporary, in an Epistle to him, giving an Account of a Female Impostor, who pretended to the immediate Direction of the Holy Ghost, says, among other Things, that she took upon

<sup>i</sup> *Fuerit salus retro per Fidem nudam ante Domini Passionem & Resurrectionem; at ubi Fides aucta est credendi in Nativitatem Passionem Resurrectionemque ejus, addita est ampliatio Sacramento, obsignatio Baptismi.* Tertul. de Bapt. p. 229.

<sup>k</sup> *Quum autem sub tribus & testatio Fidei, & sponso salutis pignorentur, necessario adjicitur Ecclesiæ mentio, quoniam ubi tres, id est Pater, & Filius, & Spiritus Sanctus, ibi Ecclesia que trium Corpus est.* Ibid. p. 226.

— *In quam Repromissimus Sanctam Ecclesiam.* Adv. Marc. lib. 5. p. 464.

<sup>l</sup> *Quod si aliquis illud opponit, ut dicat, eandem Novatianum legem tenere, quam Catholica Ecclesia teneat, eodem Symbolo, quo & nos Baptizare——quod videatur in Interrogatione Baptismi à nobis non discrepare, sciat——non esse unam nobis & Schismaticis Symboli legem, neque eandem Interrogationem. Nam cum dicunt: Credis Remissionem Peccatorum & Vitam Æternam per Sanctam Ecclesiam; mentiuntur, &c. Ep. 69. p. 183. Ed. Oxon. Sed & ipsa Interrogatio que fit in Baptismo testis est veritatis. Nam cum dicimus: Credis in Vitam Æternam, & Remissionem Peccatorum per Sanctam Ecclesiam.——Ep. 70. p. 190.*

her to <sup>m</sup> *Baptize*, in the *usual and prescrib'd Words of Interrogation*, according to the *Ecclesiastical Rule*: That she us'd both the *Symbol*, or *Creed of the Trinity*, and the prescrib'd *Ecclesiastical Interrogation*, which Words plainly suppose, That there was at that Time a prescrib'd Rule of Interrogations, requir'd by the Church, to be us'd at Baptism, which contain'd more than the *Symbolum Trinitatis*, or Profession of Faith, in *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; tho' even this is a larger Creed, than Mr. S. thinks ought to be insisted on. Now, not to descend lower, to the later *Fathers* of the Church, of the Practice of whose Time there can be no Question, it appears from these early Writers, That the *Rule of Baptismal Professions*, us'd in their Time, included many other Articles, besides that mention'd in the *Baptism of the Eunuch*, or in any other Example of *Baptism* recorded in Scripture: And the Authority of so ancient a Practice will, with all reasonable Men, be a sufficient Defence of it in After-ages.

THIS *Right* indeed of the Church, to insist on larger *Professions of Faith* than those recorded in Scripture, is, in Effect, acknowledg'd by Mr. S. in his Approbation of the *Apostles Creed*, as a *Baptismal Profession*. A Creed, which as the Author of the *Critical History* of it observes, *was neither the Work of one Man, nor one Day*,

Crit. Hist.  
Pag. 34.

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<sup>m</sup> *Baptizaret quoque multos, usitata & legitima verba Interrogationis usurpans, ut nil discrepare ab Ecclesiastica Regula videretur—Cui nec Symbolum Trinitatis, nec Interrogatio legitima & Ecclesiastica defuit. Inter Cypr. Op. Ep. 75. p. 223.*

but

but a gradual Composure; Part of its Articles being deriv'd from the *Apostles*, and Part of them added occasionally by the succeeding *Bishops* and *Pastors* of the Church; and by the same Authority, that the several Compilers of that Summary extracted from Scripture some Propositions, and added them to the original Articles, they might have added more, if the same Reasons had appear'd to require it. This Ob-  
 jecti<sup>on</sup> Mr. *S.* had in View, and 'tis surprizing he shou'd leave it without any Answer: For, as for the Words he repeats from me, with the Preface, *I answer*, I cannot so much as guess how he meant to apply them. Pag. 133.

THE Truth of the Matter, as it appears to me, is this, Several Articles seem to have been added, by the *Apostles* themselves, before their Deaths, to the Professions requir'd from the first Converts to the Gospel, which probably might not exceed the <sup>m</sup> *Symbolum Trinitatis*, mention'd by *Firmilian*. The learned Author I have  
 before cited, is of this Opinion, That *some of*  
*the Articles of the Apostles Creed, were of the*  
*very inserting of the Apostles*; and instances in the Articles of the *Existence of God*, of the *Trinity*, that *Jesus is the Christ*, the *Remission of Sins*, and the *Resurrection*. In the Addition of these Articles to what I suppose might have been the first *Professions*, they acted upon the Reasons above assign'd: No Man who deny'd and oppos'd any plain Truth of the Gospel, *Crit. Hist.*  
*of Ap. Cr.*  
P. 34, 35.

<sup>n</sup> To this also Tertullian seems to allude, where he says—  
 Ter mergitatur respondentes aliquod amplius quam Dominus determinavit. De Coron. p. 102.

tho' not one of those fundamental Truths, mention'd by St. *Paul*, was qualify'd, or had a *Right to Baptism*. The Reason why they insisted on the Profession of one Proposition, rather than another, was not merely the *Plainness* of it, but because, from the Rise or Spreading of some *Heresy*, there was more Cause to suspect Mens denying one than another. And as this Conduct was strictly agreeable to Justice, excluding none who had a *Right* to be admitted; so 'twas what in Prudence and Duty they were oblig'd to, as *Overseers of the Flock of Christ*. For Persons prepar'd to spread Doctrines opposite to the Truths of the Gospel, could not without Danger to the Flock be admitted into the Church. The succeeding Governors of the Church acted upon the Authority of their Example, if not by their express Direction; and as often as the same Reasons appear'd to require it, added the *Profession* of more Articles as a Condition of *Baptism*. And from hence we have an easy Account of those Variations observable in the ancient Creeds. An Article was therefore inserted in the Creed of one Church, which was omitted in that of another; because, one Church was more concern'd to guard against the *Heresy* opposite to it than another. When any new *Heresy* arose, there was just the same Reason to guard against that, as against a former; and the Precedent of one Age requiring the *Profession* of the Truth, oppos'd by the *Heresies* of their Time, as the proper Defence of the Church against them, determin'd their Successors, upon like Danger, to apply the like Remedy; and accordingly, in all Churches

Churches some Additions were made to the *first Creeds*; in some more, in others fewer, according as the Danger of each Church, from the *Heresies* then arisen, requir'd such Provision. When the *Arian Heresy* arose, which spread wider and faster than any before it, the Council of *Nice* drew up a *Confession of Faith*, in Terms opposite to the *Tenets* of that *Heresy*; which was by the two succeeding Councils of *Ephesus* and *Chalcedon*, appointed to be used as the *Baptismal Creed*, thro' the Catholick Church: And in the *Greek Church* it continues to be so us'd to this Day; but in the Western Church, where that *Heresy* less prevail'd, if this Decree was at all obey'd, it was but for a Time; and when the Danger of the *Arian Heresy* appear'd to be over, the ancient Creed, which we call the *Apostles*, was restor'd to general Use again, and will probably continue to be the only *Baptismal Creed*, in this Part of Christendom, to the End of the World. For when by a general Reception of Christianity, *Baptism of adult Persons* became rare and unusual, and almost all were baptized in *Infancy*, the Guard against any new *Heresies*, which was before properly set at the *Door* of the *Church*, was remov'd from that Post, and plac'd at the Entrance into its *Offices*. Not that the Governors of the Church ceas'd to have a Right to require the Verities, opposite to any emergent *Heresy*, to be *profess'd* as Conditions of *Baptism*; but because the Reasons of Prudence and Discretion, which mov'd their Predecessors to do it, now ceas'd. *Infants* were not capable of such a Trial, or Scrutiny; and

therefore the Security of the Church in that State, cou'd only be provided for, by diligently *catechizing* and instructing such Infants as they grew up, by placing a due Guard upon the *Publick Offices*, and by a vigilant Execution of the *Discipline* of the Church, upon all who in any Station attempted to corrupt its Purity, or divide its Communion.

Pag. 137. FROM hence I think an easy Answer may be given to Mr. Sykes's great Problem, *What Authority any Church can have, to turn out Men for Opinions*, (Doctrines, I presume he means) *literally consistent with the Apostles Creed, who admit Men into the Church upon the Profession of that Creed?* For, the true Reason why the *Profession* of that Creed only is now insisted on, as the *ordinary Rule of Baptism*, is, because Men are now generally baptiz'd in *Infancy*, when a personal Tryal of their Faith cannot be made. *Baptism* was never given without some *Profession*, and therefore 'tis fit that some *Profession*, should be requir'd from the Sponsors in the Name of the Infant: And Reverence for Antiquity, and the long Usage of the *Western Church*, has determin'd for this. A *Summary*, indeed, so compleat, that when understood, in it's full Import, few Errors in Faith can arise, but what will be contrary to some Article or other contain'd in it. But 'tis the Meaning of the Creed is properly the Creed; and since *Hereticks* have equivocated with the Terms of that Creed, as *Irenæus* ° complains they did, with the Creeds

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• ° Ομοια μὴ λαλῶντες, ἀνόμοτα ἢ φρονηῶντες. Iren. Proœm.

then in Use; repeating, indeed, the Words, but reserving to themselves a quite different Meaning from that which they are known to have in the Sense of the Church; there is the same Reason *now*, at the Admission of Men into any *Office* in the Church, (the Post at which the Guard against *Heresy* is now principally set) to require an Assent to the *Meaning* of that *Creed*, as there was before such Equivocation was to be fear'd, to require Assent to the *Terms* of it. And he, who, after his Admission, shall teach Doctrines contrary to the known Meaning of that *Creed*, is as much a *Heretick* from that *Creed*, as he who contradicts it in *Terms*, and therefore may as justly be expell'd the Church. The Church of *England*, for Instance, is known to receive the *Nicene*, or *Constantinopolitan* Creed, as explicitly declaring the Sense intended in the *Apostles*; and he who teaches Doctrines contrary to that explicatory Creed, or, upon Examination, refuses to *profess* it, must, in the Sense of that Church, deny the *Apostles Creed*, and appear as worthy Deposition or Excommunication, as if he contradicted or refus'd to profess the Words of it.

FROM what has been offer'd, I shall take Leave to conclude, That the Superiors of the Church have *Authority* to require *larger Professions* than those which Mr. *S.* thinks ought only to be insisted on as Conditions of *Baptism*. It remains to be inquir'd, within what *Limitations* this Authority is claim'd, and how far the Inferiors are oblig'd to submit to it. The *Limitation* I Disc.p.75. assign'd in my Discourse, was, that, " They are

Pag. 135. “ bound to require no Article to be *profess'd*,  
 “ but what the Scriptures require plainly to be  
 “ *believ'd*.” But this Restraint, Mr. S. thinks  
 I have explain'd away, and left them wholly  
*unconfin'd*; by saying, “ That in the Executi-  
 “ on of this Office, it is resolv'd into this; that  
 “ they are bound to require no Article to be  
 “ *profess'd*, but what they, in their Conscience,  
 “ think the Scriptures require plainly to be *be-  
 “ liev'd*.” But does he think, that he is *whol-  
 ly unconfin'd* by Scripture, who is bound to act  
 according to that Sense of Scripture, which he,  
 in his Conscience, thinks the true intended Sense  
 of it? Is it not plain, that the Superiors are as  
 much *confin'd*, by that *Limitation*, as any other  
 Persons, who propose Scripture for their Rule?

WE have been often told, that *every Chri-  
 stian is to judge of his own Duty from Scrip-  
 ture, according to the best Use of his Faculties,  
 and all Assistances in his Power.* And that  
 the Conclusions any one comes to, in the Re-  
 sult of such Inquiry; he may justly look upon  
 as the precise Measure of his Duty. Here then is  
 an Office of great Importance, committed to the  
 Superiors of the Church; the admitting Men into  
 its Communion, by *Baptism*, upon a *Confession  
 of Christian Faith*. 'Tis allow'd that they have a  
 Pag. 134. *Right to require a publick Profession of Faith,  
 in order to such Admission* and that no particu-  
 Pag. 135. *lar Form of this Profession is prescrib'd in  
 Scripture.* This Profession must be made in  
 some *Form* or other, and this Form must be a-  
 greeable to Scripture. According to whose Judg-  
 ment, then, must this *Form* be taken from  
 3 Scripture?



Scripture? This Author has determin'd, *that* <sup>Ibid.</sup> every Man (who offers himself for Baptism) must judge for himself, and see with his own Eyes what is plain; and that the Clergy have no Authority, or Right, to refuse him, who cannot be persuaded to believe what they think plain and fit to be requir'd; and consequently, they are bound to admit him who professes what *He* thinks plain and fit to be requir'd; *i. e.* The Clergy have a Right to require a Profession of Faith, in order to admit a Man into the Church by Baptism; but in the Exercise of this Right, they are not to be directed by their own Judgment and Conscience, but by the Conscience and Judgment of another Man; the Person who offers himself for Baptism, is to judge both for himself and them, and prescribe to them upon what *Terms* they ought to admit him. So that it seems, after all the Out-cry we have had for Liberty, the Clergy are to be excluded out of the Charter; they are allow'd neither Reason nor Conscience of their own, but are bound to submit both, to the Persuasions not only of their Inferjors in the Church, but of Persons not yet admitted into it. This Gentleman is so kind, indeed, as to allow them an Exemption from the Authority of such a Person, if he will not profess that *Jesus is the Christ*. Methinks, he may permit them to insist, at least, on what he says was the whole of the Eunuch's Creed, *That Jesus Christ is the Son of God*. Suppose then, they have a Right to insist on this Profession; this Article, he tells us, *Pag. 158. is capable of several very differ-*

*rent Senses.* Now, if the Superiors of the Church, to whom Baptism is committed, think in their Conscience that some of *these Senses* are subversive of the Foundation of Christianity, and Blasphemy against our Blessed Saviour; May they, with good Conscience, admit a Man, who is known to take it in *such a Sense*? Can they think such a Person fit to be admitted into the Communion of *Christ's Church*? And if they have just Reason to suspect that a Person does take the Words in *such a Sense*; if they have previously instructed him in what they think the only Christian Sense of these Words, and he refuses to acknowledge that Sense, may they not justly require a more explicit Declaration from him? But Mr. S. seems of Opinion, that

Pag. 159. if such Person thinks the Phrases, *The Son of God*, and the *Messiah*, or *Christ*, to be *synonymous*, i. e. If by *Jesus is the Son of God*, he understands only, that *Jesus* had an *Uction from God*, which the Words *Messiah* or *Christ* signify, and will profess this, 'tis sufficient. But what if the Superiors of the Church, to whom the Office of Baptism is committed, think otherwise? That by this *Profession Christ* is not sufficiently distinguish'd from his Disciples; of whom the Apostle also says, that they have an *Uction from the Holy One*: Nay, that this Profession, in this Sense, does not distinguish the Man from a *Mahometan*, who will own as much as this: They cannot surely think it *sufficient*. They must at least have a just Presumption that the Man is a Christian in his Faith, and yet, from this *Profession*, they cannot be assur'd even

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of that. Here I cannot but observe, how accurate a Declaration of Faith this Exposition of *Christ* and the *Son of God*, as *synonymous Terms*, makes of the *Eunuch's* Profession. As explained by this Comment, it will stand thus: I believe that *Jesus, the Son of God, is the Son of God*. A Profession which might justly be looked upon only as *Hypothetical* and equivalent to this, I believe, that *if Jesus be the Son of God, he is the Son of God*. And can Mr. S. think, that any Man has a Right to Baptism upon such a *Profession* as this?

I hope I have shewn, that the Superiors of the Church have a *Right* to require the *Profession* of many more Articles besides *this*. Mr. S. is pleas'd to agree, that they have a *Right to extract from Scripture what they think the principal Articles of Christianity*; but then, all the Use <sup>Pag. 135.</sup> they are to make of this *Right*, is, to *teach and instruct Men, in what they, in their Conscience, think the Scripture plainly requires them to believe*. But if, after all their Instruction, the *Catechumen* will not be persuaded to assent to any of these Articles, *except One*, but will contradict and deny them; they have no *Authority*, it seems, to *refuse* him; but are bound, nevertheless, to *admit him*. In which way of Reasoning, 'tis plain, this Author supposes the Superiors of the Church to have, in reality, no other Office committed to them, but that of *Teaching*: But he ought to remember, that he has allow'd them the same Authority to *administer the Sacraments*, as to *Teach*; and since <sup>Pag. 133.</sup> the Holy Scriptures are the Rule of their Duty  
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in both Offices; they must have just the same Right to *interpret Scripture* for their Direction in the Performance of one Duty, as the other; and accordingly, to *refuse Baptism* to any one, who denies, or refuses to *profess* what they, in their Conscience, think the Scriptures require him to *believe*. This Refusal is to be considered, not only as an Act of *Authority*, but of strict *personal Duty*, in the Exercise of an Authority committed to them; neither will they be excus'd acting against their own Conscience in the Execution of this Office, by pleading that they did it in Compliance with the Conscience of another Man. And even in the Case which Mr. S. puts, if the Superiors were, after an impartial Search, fully persuaded that the Profession of *Transubstantiation* was necessary, to qualify any Man for *Baptism*; how much soever they would be mistaken in so judging; yet, while they so judg'd, they could not, without Sin against their own Conscience, give *Baptism* without that *Profession*. But the Person it is propos'd to, is no farther oblig'd to make this *Profession* in Compliance with them, than he is oblig'd to submit to their Judgment, as *Teachers*; which Obligation, as I have said, does not, and cannot extend to such Instances as this. The Person has doubtless a *Right to Baptism*, without making such *Profession*; but he has no *Right* to oblige another to give it him against his Conscience. It is also the Duty of such Person, rather not to be admitted into a Church requiring such Terms, than to comply with them. But if the Articles propos'd to his *Profession*, and  
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the Interpretations of Scripture upon which they are founded, be such, as within the Limitations assign'd, he is bound to receive upon the Authority of the Superiors, as *Teachers*; he is then oblig'd to make the Profession requir'd by them as Rulers. His Obligation in one Instance, is proportion'd to, and founded on, his Obligation in the other; so far as he is at Liberty to refuse his Assent to the Article propos'd, as the *Doctrine* of the Superiors, so far he is at Liberty to refuse to profess it as a *Rule of Baptism*, or *Condition of Communion*. And as he is allow'd to dissent from his *Teachers*, when their *Doctrine*, or Interpretation of Scripture, is contrary to any plain natural Truth; or to any other plain Place of Scripture, the Sense of which he is assur'd he understands, or which is acknowledg'd to bear the Sense in which he argues from it; so, whenever he has the same Objections, he is justify'd in not complying with their *Rules* or *Laws*. And as I think, I have proved, that when he has no such Objection, he is bound to receive their *Interpretations* as *Teachers*; so it will hence follow, that he is bound to submit to such *Rules* and *Prescriptions*, as, in Consequence of such Interpretation, they injoin. And I beg leave here to observe, that the same Arguments that prove the Submission requir'd to the Superiors as *Teachers*, to be consistent with Christian Liberty, prove also, that the Submission here requir'd to them as Rulers is consistent with it. All the Liberty, as I have said, that can be contended for by Christians, as such, is, in other Words, nothing else but the Plea of a  
prior

prior and superior Obligation to the Law of *Christ*. Now, in stating the Submission due to the Superiors as *Teachers*, it was consider'd how far Christians, as *immediate Subjects* of *Christ*, were oblig'd to receive Interpretations of Scripture upon their *Authority*. If therefore, it be there prov'd, that within the Limitations assign'd, the Inferiors are oblig'd to receive their Interpretations as the true Meaning of the Laws of *Christ*, no part of Christian Liberty is taken from them by that Submission: And if 'tis no Restraint of their Liberty, to be oblig'd to submit to that Interpretation, 'tis none to be oblig'd to submit to a Law founded on that Interpretation: For such Interpretation being to them the Law of *Christ*, in every such Case *Christ* and the Ruler must be understood by them, to require the same thing. But Mr. *S.* tho' he can allow the Superiors a *Right to advise and direct in this Affair*, yet he can by no means be persuaded that they have a *Right to make Laws*, because this would exclude all *Right* of the *Catechumens* to *judge for themselves*. The Principle whence he deduces this Consequence, is this, *'Tis impossible to find a Medium between judging for our selves, and implicitly obeying others*. Now, the *Medium* between these, is as obvious as any thing in the World, *viz.* " We may have a Right to judge for our selves in *some* Cases, and yet be oblig'd to submit to Authority in others." 'Tis in View of this *Medium* I have always acknowledg'd, that where Men are capable of Evidence from the *Nature of the Thing*, and perceive the Truth,

Truth, in any Question, from such Evidence; such Conviction no *Authority* may over-rule. On the other Hand, I presume it has been prov'd, that there are many Questions in which it is necessary for Men to be determin'd one Way or other; and yet, being incapable of Conviction, from the *Evidence of the Thing*, they can only be determin'd by Authority; and therefore, in such Cases, they must be so determin'd. The want of observing this *Medium* has occasion'd great Perplexity in Men's Reasoning on this Subject. The *Papists* on the one Hand observing, that in many Instances the Inferiors of the Church must necessarily be determin'd by the *Authority* of their *Guides* and *Teachers*, extended this Authority to *all* Instances: and concluded that they were bound to receive *all* Interpretations of Scripture, which such Authority should propose to them. Some injudicious *Protestants*, on the other Hand, perceiving manifestly, that no Authority could so far over-rule a Man's own private Judgment, as to oblige him to receive any Interpretation contrary to his own *evident Perceptions of Truth*, have concluded, That no Man is in *any* Case oblig'd to receive *any* Interpretation from Authority. Both Conclusions are equally false, and equally pernicious; and the Inconveniencies of both are effectually remedy'd in the *Medium* propos'd, *i. e.* Adhering to our Convictions, from the *Evidence of the Thing*, where such Evidence may be had, and is clearly perceiv'd; and where such Evidence cannot be had, or is not perceiv'd, and yet our Assent is necessary on the one Side

or the other, submitting to Authority. Properly speaking, indeed, he who in such Cases, is thus determin'd by Authority, acts with as full a *Right* and Exercise of *private Judgment*, and with as free a Use of his Reason, as he who is determin'd by the *Evidence of the Thing*, when such Evidence can be had. As to the Term, *Implicitly obeying* or *submitting*, if by it be meant, submitting to Authority, when we are not, or cannot be determin'd by the Evidence of the Thing; I affirm, that in many such Cases, we are bound *implicitly* to submit. But if by this Phrase is meant, submitting to Authority, in Contradiction to such Evidence; I say, that we are in no Case bound *implicitly* to submit. I agree with Mr. S. that if Men were oblig'd to submit to a Law, requiring the Profession of *Transubstantiation*, the *Right of private Judgment* would thereby be destroy'd: But as I have exempted the Inferiors from all Obligation to assent to any such Doctrine, or obey any such Law, this Consequence cannot be charg'd on me. To the *Right of private Judgment*, within its proper and necessary Restrictions, I am as much a Friend as my Adversary. 'Tis in Consequence of it that I claim a *Right* to the *Superiors* of the Church, to prescribe such Professions, as they (acting according to the best of their Judgment, by the Direction of Scripture) think fit and necessary to be requir'd. And as I claim this *Right* to the *Superiors* to judge from Scripture what Laws they ought to prescribe; so I allow also to the Inferiors the same *Right* of judging from Scripture



ture how far they ought to comply with such Law. But then, I say, in the same Proportion that they ought to depend on the Authority or Judgment of their Superiors for the Sense of Scripture, they are also oblig'd to comply with the Law they propose.

S E C T. II.

*Of the Authority of the Church to prescribe what Doctrines shall be publickly taught, and what not.*

I HAVE consider'd the preceding Question the more fully, because, 'tis in a great Measure inclusive of those which follow. The same Reasons that prove the Superiors to have a Right to prescribe what Professions should be requir'd at *Baptism*, prove also their Right to prescribe what *Doctrines* shall be publickly taught in the Church. For if they have a Right to require from any Person these Professions as *Terms of Admission*, they must also have a Right to require the Performance of these *Conditions* after he is admitted, and consequently, to restrain him from teaching any *Doctrines* contrary to those, upon the Profession of which he was admitted. This is not one jot greater Power than the former; but only the Exercise of the same Power, in another Instance. That in both these Instances, this Authority of the Superiors must be exercis'd according to *their own Interpretation of Scripture*, in the Place Mr. S. refers to, I thus argu'd: Either, “ They Dist. p. 74.  
“ must

“ must require such Profession or teaching, ac-  
“ cording to their own Interpretation of Scrip-  
“ ture, or according to his whom they direct.  
“ If according to his, then when ever his In-  
“ terpretation is contrary to theirs, they must  
“ direct what they believe contrary to the Law  
“ of *Christ*, and consequently, contradict what  
“ to them appears the Law of *Christ*; or if  
“ they may permit Men to teach any thing con-  
“ trary to what they believe *Christ* has taught,  
“ the Absurdity is the same: For then they may  
“ permit Men to commit what they think a  
“ Sin, and so be Partakers of their Sin; and  
“ must, moreover, be guilty of a distinct Sin  
“ of their own, in not executing that Authori-  
“ ty which *Christ* has given them to prohibit  
“ all open Violations of his Law.” Whence, I  
Pag. 140. infer, in the Words Mr. S. has recited; “ Ei-  
“ ther, therefore, we must deny that they have  
“ any Authority to require an open Profession  
“ of Faith to be made, or to prescribe what  
“ Doctrines shall be openly taught; or else  
“ we must allow them to exercise this Authori-  
“ ty according to their own Sense and Inter-  
“ pretation of Scripture.” But instead of an-  
swering this Argument, this Gentleman betakes  
Pag. 141. himself to his common Refuge, an Out cry of  
*Popery and Inquisitions*, and he might as well  
have added *Earthquakes and Inundations*.

BUT, before he can agree to this Authority,  
he demands a Satisfaction to these *Queries*.

1. By *what Authority did the Church of Eng-  
land separate from the Church of Rome?*

2. *How is it possible for us to judge for our  
selves,*

*selves, if we are oblig'd to see with the Church's Eyes, and submit to the Interpretation of others?* Both these Questions, I think, I have fully answer'd.

3. *WHENCE is it that the Rulers have more Authority, as Lawgivers, than as Teachers?* I answer, That as to the Submission of Judgment requir'd to them, they have just the same; and their *Authority*, in one Instance, is founded on their *Authority* in the other. Only I desire it may be observ'd, That their *Authority as Teachers*, is propos'd as a Rule, by which, within the Limitation assign'd, the Inferiors ought to judge of the Meaning of *Christ's Law*, and take the Measures of their *immediate Duty to him*. But in submitting to their *Authority as Lawgivers*, they act also, and more especially as Members of the *outward Community of the Church*, by which Character they are oblig'd to obey them, as far as they may lawfully do it, as Persons appointed to provide for the *Peace and Order* of that Society. And since the Inferiors are no farther oblig'd to obey them, as *Rulers or Lawgivers*, than they are bound to submit to their Judgment as *Teachers*, nothing is demanded of them as *Subjects to the visible Rulers of the Church*, which is inconsistent with their *Duty, as immediate Subjects of Christ, or as Members of the invisible Church*.

BUT Mr. S. is exceedingly offended with what I assert, in Support of this Authority. “ That  
 “ the Rulers of the Church are to be consider'd  
 “ as *Guardians* of the Church's *Peace and E-*  
 “ *dification, &c.* *Disc. Pag. 76.*

Pag. 142.

BEFORE I inquire, whether the Authority here claim'd extends to the Instances in which I assert it, it may be proper, in a few Words, to shew that the Rulers of the Church have such Authority, or ought to be consider'd under this *Character*. For tho' Mr. S. does not expressly deny such Authority, but is so good, as to *suppose it for the present*, yet he often calls upon me to shew *whence they had this Authority*; and tho' he does not peremptorily demand such

'ag. 143. Proof, yet he tells me, the *Proof of it will require a very clear and express Text of Scripture*. But I differ so far from him in this Point, that I think, tho' this particular Authority could not be inferr'd from any one Place of Scripture, yet this, and all other Powers necessary to preserve the *Peace, Order, and Purity* of the Church, would follow from the Concession, that 'tis a *visible Society instituted by Christ*. For as *Grotius* \* judiciously observes of the Power of Excommunication, *There is no need of a particular Precept for such Authority, since, the Society of the Church being constituted by Christ, all Things necessary to the Purity of that Society must be look'd upon as commanded by the same Authority*. And this Argument will hold as well for all other Powers necessary to the Peace, Order, and Purity of the Church, as for Excommunication. It is sufficient, that we find in Scripture general Di-

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\* *Neque ad eam rem peculiare praeceptum desideratur; cum, Ecclesia coetu à Christo semel constituto, omnia illa imperata censerì debeant sine quibus ejus coetus puritas retineri non potest. Grot. in Luc. vi. 22.*

rections given to *follow after the Things that make for Peace*, to let all Things be done to *Edifying*, &c. For if these Rules concern the Church in general, *as a Society*, as they manifestly do, the Execution of them must of Necessity belong to the Overseers or Rulers of that Society. That the Rulers of the Church, therefore, have Authority to provide for its Peace and Edification, I shall presume upon, not only as *supposed for the present*, but as a necessary Consequence from the Nature and Constitution of the Church, as a *visible Society*. What I am here principally concern'd to inquire, is, whether the prescribing what Doctrines shall be publickly taught, and what shall not, be necessary to promote and secure the Peace and Edification of the Church.

BUT here, first I am reprov'd for a great Omission: *I ought surely* (Mr. S. says) *so far to* Pag. 143 *have explain'd Peace and Edification, that my Readers might know what is necessary to these Ends*. But if this Objection has any Weight, it will lie equally against those Scriptures, in which general Rules only are given, to *follow after the Things that make for Peace*, and *Things that edify*,—*to let all Things be done to edifying*. For tho' these Precepts were given with a particular View to some Irregularities then appearing in the Church, yet the Rules are manifestly *general*, and extend to all Instances by which Peace and Edification are equally affected. To descend, indeed, to all Particulars which may either promote or obstruct these Ends, is not only needless, but as impossible as it would be

to enumerate all the Irregularities either in Doctrine or Practice, which may in any Age arise in the Church. Mr. S. tells us that the true scriptural Meaning of Peace is, an *Unity of Spirit produc'd by Love and Charity*; and of *Edification, an Improvement in Christian Knowledge and Graces*. By which Explications we are very little better directed to the *particular Things* that make for Peace, or the Things that edify, than by the mere Words, *Peace and Edification*. He infers, indeed, from it, but with what Consequence I cannot perceive, *That then it is evident, that a Power of Legislation to secure and promote Unity of Opinions* (he should have said *publick Doctrines*, for of these only I was speaking) *and Uniformity of Ceremonies, is not fit and proper to produce, nor has really any Tendency towards Peace and Edification*. Of *Ceremonies* I shall speak elsewhere. It will be sufficient for me here to shew, That an Authority in the Superiors of the Church, to prescribe what shall be publicly *taught*, and what not, *is fit and proper, and has a real Tendency* to promote that *Peace and Edification* in the Church, which the Scriptures recommend and injoin.

No w, if an unbounded Liberty to all *Teachers*, to preach what Doctrines they please, in the Church, tends to destroy *Peace and Edification*; then a Power to restrain this Liberty, manifestly tends to promote these Ends. That the preaching opposite and contradictory Doctrines, in the Church, tends to introduce *Divisions*, and trouble the *Peace* of the Church, is  
 a Truth

a Truth so obvious, and confirm'd by the Experience of so many Ages, that 'twould be trifling to enlarge on the Proof of it. And that the *Peace* broken, and disturb'd by such *Doctrines*, is a *Peace* which the Scripture directs us to preserve, will appear to any one who considers the following Texts; *Now I beseech you Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same Thing; that there be no Divisions among you; that ye be perfectly joyn'd together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment, 1 Cor. i. 10. Mark them which cause Divisions among you contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learn'd, Rom. xv. 17.* And when St. *Peter* (2 Pet. iii. 14.) exhorts those he wrote to, to be diligent, that they may *be found of Christ in Peace*, 'tis plain he had respect to the Heresies, which in the preceding Parts of that Epistle, he tells them, should be brought in by *false Teachers*; and therefore the Peace he enjoins, is remaining in *Unity of Doctrine*, in Opposition to being divided by these Teachers, and going after them: And since this Duty is recommended as a necessary Preparation for the final Coming of *Christ*, it will remain of perpetual Obligation to the End of the World.

AND as to *Edification*, or Improvement in Christian Knowledge, while different and opposite *Doctrines* are permitted to be taught in the Church, it will be impossible that the People, who, as I have shewn, must necessarily depend on Authority for the Resolution of the greater Number of those Questions upon which their *Teachers* will be divided, should ever come to

any Conclusion at all. They will be in the State  
 Tim. 3. of those mention'd by the Apostle, *ever Learning, and never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*. But Mr. S. says, unless the Teachers have the Liberty in Preaching he contends  
 ag. 144. for, *Stupidity, Lethargy, and total Ignorance, and Blindness*, must follow. I suppose he thinks, a little *Heresy* or *Blasphemy*, now and then, from the Pulpit, is necessary to keep the Congregation awake, and make them stare, who wou'd else all go to sleep in their Pews. But as to their *total Ignorance, and Blindness*, I cannot be so very apprehensive of that, from an *Uniformity of Doctrine*; because, I conceive, if no other Doctrines were preach'd to them, than those in which all Churches agree, they would not be *totally ignorant* of the Christian Religion. But perhaps he only means that the *Clergy* would grow *lazy and ignorant*; unless they were quickened and kept in Discipline by *Hereticks*. I acknowledge it may be an accidental good Effect from these Evils, that they engage the Clergy to more Study and Application, than they might be inclin'd to without such Opposition: And, as P St. *Augustine* says, “ These Contradictions of  
 “ Hereticks, are an Occasion that many Arti-  
 “ cles of Faith are more attentively consider'd,  
 “ more clearly understood, and more earnestly  
 “ preach'd and inculcated.” But this Argument

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P *Multa ad fidem Catholicam pertinentia, dum Hæreticorum calida Inquietudine agitantur, ut adversus eos defendi possint, & considerantur diligentius, & intelliguntur clarius, & instantius predicantur, & ab adversario mota Quæstio discendi existit Occasio.*  
 Aug. de Civ. Dei, Lib. 16. Cap. 2.

will



will never prove it the Duty of the *Rulers* of the Church to permit them; because they may not permit an Evil from the Prospect of an accidental Good being promoted by it. These Events, as the same *Father* argues, are an Instance of the good Providence of God to his Church, <sup>a</sup> *who, by his Omnipotence can bring forth Good out of Evil*, and turn Attempts intended for its Destruction, into Means of Strength and Establishment to it. But Man must not presume on this Skill or Power, but must regard these Events as *Evils*, and do the utmost in his Power to prevent them. The Holy Spirit has foretold us, that *false Teachers should arise, Men speaking perverse Things; that there must be Heresies; that it must needs be that Offences come*; but the Persons by whom they come, are represented as Enemies of the Gospel, Persons *disapprov'd*, or reprobated by God; and against their Attempts the *Overseers of the Church* are commanded *to watch, and be vigilant*, to reprove, and admonish them; and if they are unreclaim'd by such Application, to cast them out of the Church. And if there are any *Doctrines* for which They may *Expel* Men the Church, They may certainly prohibit such *Doctrines* on Pain of *Expulsion*. This is all the Power of *Compulsion*, or *Penalties*, I assert to the Church; which I shall be call'd upon to consider in another Place.

BUT Mr. S. objects farther against this Posi-

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<sup>a</sup> *Qui Bonus non sineret Mala fieri, nisi Omnipotens etiam de Malo facere posset bene.* Aug. Enchirid.

f. p. 76. tion, “ That the Peace and Edification of the  
 “ Church, is no Way so much endanger’d, as  
 “ by Mens openly teaching Doctrines, contra-  
 g. 145. “ ry to those taught by the Church.” *A false  
 Notion, he says, of Peace and Edification, is  
 first laid down, and then the Consequence is  
 such, as must necessarily perpetuate all esta-  
 blish’d Errors, &c.* In the Paragraph immedi-  
 ately preceding, the Crime objected to me, is,  
 g. 143. That I had given no *Explication* at all of  
*these Words*; but here, with great Consistency,  
 I am charg’d with *laying down a false Notion  
 of them*. One of these Censures, at least, I may  
 hope to be excus’d from; for if I have given *no  
 Explication* of these Words, it cannot be object-  
 ed to me, that I have given a *false One*; or if  
 I have given a *false One*, it cannot however be  
 g. 145. objected, that I have given *none*. But it seems  
 this false Notion of Peace and Edification be-  
 ing laid down, I have the Assurance to affirm,  
 i. p. 76. “ That the Peace and Edification of the Church,  
 “ is no Way so much endanger’d, as by Mens  
 “ openly teaching Doctrines contrary to those  
 “ taught by the Church.” That the *Peace* and  
*Edification* of the Church, are endanger’d by  
 Mens openly teaching Doctrines contrary to  
 the Truths of the Gospel, is evident: And when-  
 ever the Church acts within the Limitations I  
 assign’d to this Authority, *i. e. Teaches, or  
 prescribes to be taught*, only such Doctrines as  
 are agreeable to the Truths of the Gospel, I can-  
 not conceive how the *Peace* and *Edification* of  
 the Church, can any Way be more endanger’d,  
 than by Mens openly teaching Doctrines con-  
 trary

trary to such Prescriptions. How far this Assertion, and the Authority I infer from it, are expos'd to the Consequences Mr. S. charges upon them, shall be consider'd, when I have remov'd an Objection or two, of less Weight, and which, I think, are founded purely on a Misapprehension of what I affirm.

Mr. S. is much offended with me, for saying, Pag. 145  
 “ That Doctrines contrary to those taught by  
 “ the Church, have *therefore* obtain'd the Name  
 “ of *Heresies* or *Divisions*.” My Words are  
 these, “ The Peace and Edification of the  
 “ Church, are no Way so much endanger'd, as  
 “ by Mens teaching Doctrines contrary to those  
 “ taught by the Church, which have *therefore*  
 “ obtain'd the Name of *Heresies* or *Divisions*.”  
 Where 'tis evident to common Sense, that the  
 Particle *therefore*, relates to the former Part of  
 the Sentence, which he has omitted in the Reci-  
 tal; and that my Assertion is this, “ That be-  
 “ cause openly teaching Doctrines, contrary to  
 “ those taught by the Church, endanger'd the  
 “ Peace of the Church; *therefore* such Do-  
 “ ctrines had obtain'd the Name of *Heresies* or  
 “ *Divisions*.” This is purely an Assertion of  
 Fact, and produc'd only to shew, that Mankind  
 had in all Ages concurr'd in thinking, the open-  
 ly teaching Doctrines contrary to those taught  
 by the Church dangerous to the Peace of the  
 Church, which appear'd by their giving them a  
 Name which signifies *Division*. To the Asser-  
 tion of Fact Mr. S. agrees; and it cannot be con-  
 cluded, from my Words, whether I approve Ibid.  
 such Denomination or not. But I observe far-  
 ther,

ther, that 'tis plain I do not use the Word *Heresy* in the common Ecclesiastical Sense of it, but merely as equivalent to *Division*, which the Word in its *Notation* signifies, and in which Sense only I had Occasion to apply it: So that suppose I had said, " That Doctrines, contrary " to those at any Time taught by the Church, " not only were, but ought to be call'd *Heresies* in this Sense, *i. e.* *Divisions*;" the Assertion had been strictly true. But wou'd any reasonable Man think it equivalent to this? " That " all Doctrines, contrary to those at any Time " taught by the Church, are *Heresies* in quite " another Sense of the Word, *viz.* Doctrines contrary to some Article of Faith, against which Sense of the Word only Mr. S. argues, tho' I had expressly guarded against it. From what has been said I hope it appears, how little Foundation this Gentleman had for his Remark, and how unjustly he represents it as my Assertion, that, All are *Hereticks*, (in the Sense he means,) who teach Doctrines contrary to those at any Time taught by the Church. All *Heresies*, in his Sense, are *Divisions*; but all *Divisions*, are not, in that Sense, *Heresies*. Where the *Division* is necessary, 'tis not only lawful, but a Duty; where it is not so, 'tis sinful, whether it be founded on *Heresy* in that Sense or not. As for the Advantages which he fancies the *Papists* may with *no great Skill* deduce from this, or any other Proposition affirm'd by me, they are at their Service; and tho' this Author shou'd join his *Skill* to theirs, I should not be in Pain for the Consequence.

BUT 'tis objected, That this Authority is plainly an *Encroachment upon the Authority* Pag. 149. of Christ; for he having deliver'd to us his whole Will, and expecting that Mankind shou'd be taught his whole Will, if they (the Governours) select out only such and such particular Parts of his Will, to be publickly taught (by the appointed Teachers,) and hinder Men from being publickly taught some of his Will, the End of such Appointment is frustrated. But what does the Man mean, or against whom is he arguing? Have I any where asserted, That the Governours of the Church have Authority to require some of *Christ's* Doctrines to be taught, and prohibit other of his Doctrines? My Words are manifestly inclusive of the whole Scripture: "What, upon the Result of their In- Disc. p. 76. quiry, appears to them agreeable to Scripture, that they must command to be taught; and what appears repugnant to it, that they must forbid." To give some Countenance to this Objection, he represents me as claiming an Authority to prescribe what *particular* Doctrines should be taught. The Word *particular* is neither express'd nor imply'd by me. But suppose I had affirm'd this very Proposition; this had been capable of a very obvious, and a very true Sense, without being in the least expos'd to this Objection. In a Time of Persecution, the Doctrine of the Cross, and the Duty of Perseverance, may be *particularly* directed to be taught. Upon any publick Occasion of Charity, the Preachers may be directed, and commanded, to insist *particularly* on that Duty, and

and exhort Men to the Performance of it. Upon a particular Occasion of Danger to the Flock, from the spreading of any false Doctrine, the publick Teachers may be *especially* directed to preach the true Scripture Doctrine, opposite to that; and when such false Doctrine is founded on a manifest Perversion of Scripture, the true Sense of that Scripture may be *prescrib'd*, to be *publickly taught*, and the *Preachers* requir'd, as often as they explain that Scripture, to explain it according to that true Sense. In all these Instances, the Prescription may be *particular*, without the least Appearance of prohibiting any Doctrine of *Christ*, to be at other Times publickly taught and inforc'd.

Pag. 149. BUT Mr. S. objects farther, *That if they*, (the Governors) *prescribe that all our Saviour's Doctrines shou'd be publickly taught, this wou'd be exerting no Authority at all, but only obeying the Commands of Christ.* This, I confess, is an extraordinary Argument, and would effectually prove, That a Judge upon the Bench has no *Authority*, because he *obeys* the Commission of the Prince who appoints him. No doubt the Governors of the Church, in *prescribing* *Christ's Doctrines to be publickly taught*, with respect to him, act as *Subjects*; but with respect to their Inferiors, whom they direct, they act as *Rulers*, and with *Authority*: And the Obedience of the *Inferiors*, is, for this very Reason, due to these Prescriptions; because the *Superiors*, in prescribing them, *obey a Command of Christ.*

BUT

BUT he proceeds, *If Men under any Denomination, may prescribe what Doctrines shall be taught, they may, in Effect, prescribe what Doctrines shall not be taught.* No doubt they may. He who may prescribe, that the Doctrines of the Scriptures only shall be taught, in Effect, prescribes, that the Doctrines of the *Alcoran* shall not be taught. This Authority of the Church, indeed, is principally exerted in such *Prohibitions*. The general Direction is, to teach *all* the Doctrines of the Scriptures; but when any particular Errors have risen, and been propagated, the Usage of the Church, in all Ages, has been to assert the Verities opposite to such Errors, with a Prohibition to all Teachers to preach any Thing contrary to those Assertions.

BUT on my Assertion, "That the Superiors have Authority to provide for the *Peace* and *Edification* of the Church, by prescribing what Doctrines shall be *publickly taught*," a long Train of evil Consequences is charg'd, to which it concerns me to give some Reply. 'Tis said,

1. *It must necessarily perpetuate all established Error.*
2. *It must at first have prevented Christianity's being admitted in the World, and afterwards have hinder'd the Reformation.*
3. *'Tis an Authority to perpetuate Sects among Christians.*
4. *'Tis a Power to stop all Inquiries, or, at least, to stop the Increase of Knowledge and Truth.*
5. *'Tis*

5. 'Tis owing to this Principle, that so many contradictory Orthodoxies are taught and profess'd.

Now, from these Consequences, every one may perceive this Authority, as by me asserted, to be perfectly free, who attends to the Limitations annex'd to it. In the very Paragraph recited by Mr. S. I say, " That in the Exercise of this Power, the Governors of the Church are limited by the Laws of *Christ*, to require nothing to be taught, but what is agreeable to Scripture; and to prohibit nothing but what is contrary to it." Now, whenever they act according to this Rule, no *establish'd Error can be perpetuated*, because none can be *establish'd*. And if they who *sate in Moses's Seat*, in the *Jewish Church*, had attended to the Rule before them, and hearken'd to the Voice of *Moses* and the Prophets, they had immediately *admitted* the Doctrine of *Christ*, and encourag'd the Preachers of *Christianity*. And if the Superiors of the Church, before the *Reformation*, had kept to the Rule of the Scriptures, *The Reformation* indeed had been *binder'd*, but in a Way very happy for the Christian World; none would have been wanted. The Application, indeed, of this Rule, must, unavoidably and in the Nature of the Thing, be left to the Judgment and Conscience of the Superiors: And in this Application it must be acknowledg'd they may mistake, and prescribe *Error* instead of *Truth*; and if, whenever they do so, I had requir'd their Prescription to be comply'd with, Mr. S. might have

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charg'd



charg'd me with these *Consequences*. The Justice or Injustice of this Charge depends entirely on the Measure of Obedience requir'd to such Prescriptions, which tho' I omitted to state in that Chapter, yet I referr'd to a particular Consideration of it in another Place, where I assert, upon this very Supposition, (that the Rulers, through Mistake, or Design, transgress the Bounds of their Authority, and prescribe any Action forbidden by *Christ's Law*;) " That they act  
 " without Commission; and the Subject cannot  
 " *actively* obey their Command, because he is  
 " under a prior Obligation, *to obey God rather*  
 " *than Man*. And as it is allow'd to the Governors of the Church, to judge of the Sense of Scripture, in enacting these Laws; so it must also be allow'd to the Subject, to judge of the Sense of Scripture, and the Agreeableness of these Laws to it, in order to determine how far he may *actively* obey them; and whenever he believes the Law of his Superiors is contrary to the Law of *Christ*, he is bound to decline an *active* Compliance with it.

SUPPOSE then, the Governors of the Church should prescribe any Error to be publicly taught, *e.g. Transubstantiation*; The particular Teachers (who, with respect to the supreme visible Authority in any Church, are consider'd as Subjects) are here allow'd to refuse their Compliance with this Law. Or, suppose the Governors should prohibit the preaching the Doctrine of the *Resurrection*, or *Future Judgment*; 'tis here determin'd, that the particular Teachers,  
 are

are not to comply with such Law. And why the Authority here claim'd, must, under these Limitations, necessarily *perpetuate any establish'd Error*, I cannot perceive. For among whom will it *necessarily be perpetuated*? With Respect to the Persons who are convinc'd that it is an *Error*, 'tis plain it is not perpetuated; and the Persons who believe it to be a *Truth*, are not oblig'd, in Consequence of any Authority claim'd by me, so to believe; they are allow'd to *judge of the sense of Scripture, and the Agreeableness of the Doctrines prescrib'd to it*; and if they omit to do this, 'tis chargeable only on their own Negligence and Inattention. It may perhaps be said, That Men are apt to take the *Prescriptions* of their Superiors upon Trust, and hand them down from one to another, without Examination. But have I any where requir'd they should do so? And supposing no Doctrine was prescrib'd, but all Teachers were left at Liberty to preach what they thought good, can we be secur'd that no Persons would teach such *Errors*, or that no negligent Persons would receive them upon the *Authority* of their *Learning*, &c. Whenever this happen'd, (and 'tis unimaginable, but upon the Scheme contended for by Mr. S. it must happen) here would be the same Inconvenience, and *Error* would be as much *perpetuated*, as when prescrib'd by the Authority of the Superiors.

'TIS acknowledg'd, that when the Governors of any Church happen to mistake the Rule, and prescribe *Error* instead of *Truth*, such *Error* will thereby receive Encouragement in that

Church, and the Removal of it be attended with Difficulty: But I cannot see that it must *necessarily be perpetuated*, if those Teachers, who are convinc'd that such prescrib'd Doctrine is contrary to the Truth of the Gospel, oppose it even within those Liberties which are reconcilable to Order and Government in the Church. Let them first endeavour, with the Humility that becomes Subjects, to convince their Superiors of such Error. This may be done, not only by private Application, but in the Synods of each Church, where Liberty of Debate is allow'd in a manner very consistent with Rule and Order. And if Truth be so very apt to *prevail*, as Mr. S. suggests; if the *Nature of Man* Pag. 225: *be such, that Truth will prevail over faulty Reasons*, some Effect may be hop'd for, from such Applications; or if they do not prevail with a present Sett of Governors, they may, however, have Weight with their Successors. This must be allow'd at least *possible*, unless the Superiors of the Church be the only Persons in the World not capable of being convinc'd by Reason; and if it be but *possible*, the *Error* will not *necessarily* be perpetuated. But if these Applications prove without any Effect in the Conviction of the *Superiors*, and the *Teachers* are persuaded in Conscience, that 'tis the Duty of their Office and Station, to oppose the prescrib'd Doctrine, and preach against it to the People, let us for the present grant them oblig'd so to do. But then, it must also be allow'd to the *Governors* of the Church, to act according to their Consciences; and if they are convinc'd in the

best of their Judgment, that what the *Teachers* preach is contrary to the Doctrine of *Christ*, to do what the Duties of their Station appear to require from them, and reprove or depose them: As the Teachers must *obey God rather than Man*, so must also their Superiors *obey God rather than comply with Man*. This is the utmost that a private Christian can be permitted to do, in Opposition to any *establish'd Error*, consistent with any Government in the Church: Let him oppose it within the Compass of his Station, to the utmost of his Power; let him *obey God rather than Man*; but if any Inconvenience attend his so doing, from the Resentment of his mistaken Superiors, this he must submit to; neither is it possible to make any Provision against this, that can consist with any Government in the Society. These were the Principles upon which the first Preachers of the Gospel acted, in Opposition to the *establish'd Errors* of the World. They knew that their Religion was founded upon the Doctrine of the Cross; they oppos'd and suffer'd; and the Providence of God gave Success to the Conduct he had prescrib'd. Christianity by this Method prevail'd against the *establish'd Errors* of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; and by the same, our *Reformation* prevail'd against *establish'd Popery*.

But when this Gentleman objects against the Authority claim'd, that it must *necessarily perpetuate all establish'd Errors*, it may be expected that the Scheme of Liberty he proposes in the Place of it, should be an effectual Remedy for this Evil. Now, I grant, that Scheme  
will

will not *perpetuate establish'd Errors*, because upon it, nothing, neither Truth nor Error, can be *establish'd*. But will fewer Errors prevail, if all Preachers are left at Liberty to teach what Doctrines they think fit, than if this Liberty be restrain'd by the Prescriptions of Authority? Or when any Error happens to be *establish'd* in a Church, can Mr. S. think of no better Remedy, than throwing off all Authority, which will in Effect be dissolving the Society? An Error is supposed to be got into the Church, and will he advise us not only to set open all the Doors, but to pull down the Walls in order to drive it out? Does he not perceive what Multitudes will enter in at the Breach, and that while he is driving out one Error he will let in an Hundred? This Argument is, in few Words, resolv'd into this, "Error may happen to be establish'd, therefore establish nothing at all.

But we are farther told, That this Authority to prescribe what Doctrines shall be publicly taught, is an Authority to *perpetuate Sects among Christians*. This, indeed, is very unhappy, that an Authority, whose chief End is to prevent and suppress *Sects* among Christians, should be a Means to encourage and *perpetuate* them; and that a Liberty to all Teachers to preach what Doctrines they please, which, in all Experience, has been found the most effectual Way in the World to multiply *Sects*, should be the only Remedy against them. By *Sects*, as far as I can perceive, this Author means the several particular Churches of Christendom. Now, I question not, but that the Liberty he contends

Pag. 150.

for, if allow'd in any of these Churches, would soon put an End to that *Seēt*, as he calls it, and raise up five Hundred in the Place of it. In the mean Time, this very Argument of his proves that the Authority of prescribing what *Doctrines* shall be taught, is an effectual Way to *perpetuate* any Church, *i. e.* to prevent *Seēts* and Divisions from destroying it. And if Christians, united in such Church, are a *Seēt*, they are, however, but one *Seēt*, *all speaking the same Thing*, and living in Peace and Communion with each other. But

Mr. S. is chiefly offended with the Rule, according to which, I say, this Authority is to be exercis'd.

Now, the *Rule* which I in general assign, is the *Holy Scripture*; but the Application of this *Rule*, I observe, “ must be left to the Judgment and Conscience of the Superiors of the Church. What, upon the Result of their Inquiry, appears to them agreeable to Scripture, that they must command to be taught; and what appears repugnant to it, that they must forbid.” That they have some Authority to prescribe what *Doctrines* shall be publicly taught in the Church, I hope, I have already shewn; and Mr. S. has been pleas'd to acknowledge, *That when they prescribe, that all our Saviour's Doctrines should be publicly taught; they, in reality obey a Command of Christ; consequently, there is a Command of Christ, requiring them to prescribe, that all his Doctrines should be publicly taught; and whatever Christ has commanded them to do, they have*

have Authority to do. And to the Arguments I offer'd, in Proof of this Disjunction, "That Disc. p. 75.  
 " either we must deny them to have any such  
 " Authority, or allow them to exercise it ac-  
 " cording to their own Interpretation of Scrip-  
 " ture," Mr. S. has not vouchsafed to answer.

To inforce this farther, let us suppose, that they have only Authority to require the publick Teachers, *in general*, to preach the Doctrines of the Scriptures. Either the Persons thus directed, must be confin'd barely to read a Chapter to the People, or else they may *explain* or *comment* upon the Scriptures. Mr. S. has allow'd them to do the latter, *They may do their best*, he says, *and make Use of all their Skill and Learning, and Judgment, to explain and inculcate the Things which Christ requires.* Suppose then, one of these Teachers should, in *explaining* the *Doctrine* of the *Resurrection*, use all his Skill and Learning, to persuade the People that this Doctrine is to be understood only in a spiritual Sense, and that all the Scripture means by it, is, *a Death unto Sin, and rising again unto Righteousness*: What must the Governors of the Church here do? Must they stand still, and suffer this Man to go on preaching this Doctrine, and subverting the Faith of his Hearers? Yes, it seems they must; for if they presume to prohibit him, they take *from him the Right of private Judgment*, they Page. 151.  
 set up their own *Comments* in the Place of Scripture, and all the terrible Consequences, up- Page. 162.  
 on which he declaims, must immediately follow.

'Tis to no Purpose to talk of *dubious Passages*

in this Case: For who shall judge between the Teacher and the Governors, and determine what is *dubious*, and what is *plain*? To each of these the Sense they assign seems *plain*. Among the People, indeed, some will, by such preaching, be made to doubt of the *Resurrection*, and some to deny it, which are the very Evils this Authority was intended to remedy. If by *dubious Passages*, from the Interpretation and Injunction of which he would exclude this Authority, he means all Passages, whose Sense has ever been disputed; He tells us Page 160, *That no one Doctrine can be nam'd, which has been constantly taught in the same Sense.* According to his Explication therefore, *dubious Passages* are *All Passages*, and consequently, by excluding this Authority from prescribing in *dubious Passages*, his Meaning is, to exclude it from *All*.

Ibid.

But this Authority, He says, is a *Power to stop all Inquiries, or at least to stop the Increase of Knowledge and Truth, so long as it hinders the Propagation of it.* I cannot imagine how any Man is precluded by this Authority from making what *Inquiries* he pleases. But 'tis at least a Stop to the *Increase of Knowledge and Truth, so long as it hinders the Propagation of it.* i. e. while it hinders the Propagation of Knowledge or Truth, it stops the Increase of it. But let us simply inquire whether this Authority does thus *stop the Increase of Knowledge and Truth*? For my own Part, I think it the best calculated for the contrary Effect, of any Method that can be devised. But this



this Author, in Pursuit of this great Design of *increasing Knowledge*, has found out a Secret unknown to former Ages: That an unbounded Liberty to preach and propagate Error, is the only Way to \* make Truth prevail; and to restrain this Liberty, is to suppress it. But what is it he means by this *Increase of Knowledge*, for which he is so solicitous? The Christian Faith is not capable of *new Discoveries*; all that is truly a Part of the Doctrine of *Christ*, is *old*. The most probable Method, therefore, to advance Christian Knowledge, is to require the publick Teachers diligently to preach and inculcate these *old Doctrines*, and forbid them to teach Novelties, and, under Pretence of *increasing Knowledge*, to subvert the ancient Faith.

BUT Mr. S. says, 'Tis owing to this Principle, (that this Authority belongs to the Church) that we have every where such contradictory Orthodoxies taught and profess'd. I presume, he means that different Churches of Christians teach different and contradictory Doctrines, which are by each esteem'd *Orthodox*. For as to each particular Church, the contrary is evidently true in Fact; all Preachers in the same Church (unless I may except the Church of *England*) preach the same Doctrines, at least, in all Points prescrib'd by such Church; and 'tis owing to this Principle, that they do so. Instances, indeed, there are, of Doctrines taught

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\* This, I suppose, is what Mr. S. means by *increasing Truth*; for Truth cannot in a proper Sense be encreased or diminish'd.

in one Church *contradictory* to the Doctrines taught in another. I am heartily sorry for it, and should honour any one who would propose an effectual Remedy for this Evil. But does this Author think the unbounded Liberty He contends for would mend the Matter? That if in every Church, every Teacher were permitted to teach what Opinions he pleas'd, fewer *contradictory Doctrines* would be taught, than are at present? The Doctrines in which the present establish'd Churches of Christendom contradict one another, are not very many; and if we except the Church of *Rome*, they are but few: But if this blessed Scheme of Reformation were to take Place, they would soon become innumerable, and the Remedy prove infinitely worse than the present Disease.

Pag. 152. But let it be granted, that in Consequence of this Authority, some Errors may in particular Churches be encourag'd and confirm'd, and some Truths put under great Disadvantages; and let us take the Instances Mr. S. has given, the Church of *Scotland*, and the Church of *Rome*.

1. As I have said, this Project of *Liberty*, instead of lessening the Number of Errors taught in each Church, would certainly multiply them beyond Number. But I observe,

2. THAT the Rise and Prevalence of Errors in each Church, is intirely owing to the Want of a due Exercise of this Authority. If the Governors of the Church of *Scotland* had watch'd, as they ought to have done, over the Teachers, and prevented their preaching against *Episcopacy*; and if the Governors of the Church of *Rome* had

had taken the same Care, to discourage the Preachers of *Transubstantiation* and *Image-Worship*, when those Doctrines first appear'd, none of these Errors had ever prevail'd. It was through their Remissness and Inattention to their Duty, their Lenity and Connivance at some of those *Liberties* this Author is pleading for, that these Errors got footing, and finally subverted the Truth. They first receiv'd the Maintainers of them into the *Ministry*, without due Examination of their Sentiments, without taking any previous Security, by requiring a Profession of, or a Subscription to, the Truths opposite to these Errors: And after such Persons were got into the *Ministry*, they permitted them openly to teach these Errors, without Restraint or Correction. When they were thus admitted into the Ministry and Offices of the Church, they had then Power to let in more of the same Sentiments, 'till at last they had got the whole Authority of the Church into their Hands; and then, as the Author of *Hudibras* says,

—*The Laws that were intended  
To keep it out, were made defend it;  
As when the Sea breaks o'er its Bounds,  
And overflows the level Grounds,  
Those Banks and Dams, that like a Skreen  
Did keep it out, now keep it in.*

And to pursue this just Allusion, an Inundation might, with as good Reason, be imputed to the Height of the Banks, as Mr. S. ascribes the  
Errors

Errors of any Church to this Authority, in the Governors of it. And his Expedient to remove such Errors, is just as wise a Project, as if he should advise his Countrymen at *Dagenham*, in order to let out the Flood, to throw down all the Banks, through a Defect of which it enter'd; which, the next Tide, would let in the whole Ocean.

THAT Truth may *at all Times be trusted to it self*, without any Discouragements on those who oppose it, is a Principle often asserted by our Author; and in Consequence of it, He here suggests the *Increase* (as he calls it) of *Truth*, the *Prevalence of Truth*, if the Scheme of Liberty he contends for were admitted. Now if all Men were, in all Questions, capable of those Evidences by which *Truth* must be perceiv'd, and were free from Passion, Prejudice, Affectation of Novelty, &c. in their Inquiries, some Weight might be allow'd to this Argument: But does he find this Hypothesis confirm'd in Fact and Experience, by his Observations on Mankind? The Writers of *this Church* have, I think, clearly vindicated her Doctrines and Constitution from the Objections of those who dissent from her; and yet, I doubt the Success of their Labours has not been answerable to the Force and Evidence of their Arguments. There is one, at least, of our *Prelates*, who Mr. S. will acknowledge, has, *in an unanswerable Manner*, shewn the Reasonableness of Conformity. But I fear, whenever his Lordship shall take an Account of the Converts which so *unanswerable* a Performance has made, and compare

pare it with the Number of our Dissenters, He will find but little Reason to conclude that *Truth* will at all Times certainly prevail, tho' never so clearly and *unanswerably* offer'd. 'Tis suppos'd by Mr. S. that nothing can prevent the Success of Truth, unless it be put under some Discouragements, unless the *Engines of Men be play'd against its Effects*. Now, I never heard that any Engines of Men were play'd against this Performance; that either his Lordship was put under any Discouragements for writing, or the Dissenters for reading it. From so eminent an Instance we may therefore conclude, that *Truth* will not at all Times so certainly prevail, as this Author suggests, tho' not only Liberty, but even Encouragement, be given to the Proposal of it.

But let us consider a little more distinctly, among whom we might expect *Truth* would thus certainly prevail, supposing the Liberty contended for should be allow'd among the *People*. 'Tis evident, that in the greater Part of those Questions, which, in Consequence of such a Liberty, will be disputed among the *Teachers*, the common *People* are utterly incapable of those Arguments, by which the Interpretations of Scripture they depend on must be settled. Either, therefore, they must not be determin'd at all, in such Questions, or else they must be determin'd by some Authority or other. If they are not determin'd at all, how will *Truth* prevail more than *Error*? And if they are to be determin'd, the only Question before them will be, whose Authority they should rely on:  
And

And how will he secure us, that they who teach Error, shall not have more Authority with them, than they who teach *Truth*? Has he found a Way to cure all that Passion and Prejudice, which he tells us prevail among Mankind, *and warp them from the Embraces of Truth*? If he has not, the only Event we can expect from this Scheme is, That *Error* must prevail among some, *Scepticism* among others, and an universal Distraction spread it self through the Church: And whereas he now complains, each Country has its *particular Orthodoxies*, determin'd by the *Rivers* or *Mountains* which bound it; every Parish will, in Consequence of his Scheme, have its different *Orthodoxies*.

But perhaps the Superiors and Teachers, and all Men of Learning and Inquiry in each Church, will, by this Liberty of preaching, be all convinc'd and brought to the Acknowledgment of the *Truth*. But will the Teachers in any Church, who, under the Advantage of this Liberty, oppose the *Errors* prevailing in such Church, offer more or better Arguments than may be found in the Writings of those Churches who now differ from it in these Points? And can it be hop'd that these Arguments should have more Weight, when offered with that Fierceness and Passion which Experience shews us are hardly to be avoided in Disputes between Members of the same Church, irritated by daily Contentions, than when propos'd in a more calm and amicable Manner, by Churches, which notwithstanding such Differences, consider one another,

another, in the Main, as Friends; which Temper has been generally preserv'd, at least, between the Churches of the *Reformation*.

BUT, suppose this *Chaos* should at last break up, and *Truth* universally prevail: Shall this Liberty still be continu'd? Methinks when we have fought and harras'd our selves into Peace, and have got all we contended for, 'tis pity to leave a Door open at which the War must presently enter again. And yet, whoever considers how subject Mankind are to Error, either thro' Defect of Capacity, for want of a due Attention, &c. How fond every one is to persuade others to admit and approve his Sentiments, and with what Obstinacy Men will defend what they have once asserted, will perceive that this happy Settlement upon *Truth* can last but a very little Time, unless Men are restrain'd from farther opposing it. He must love Disputation much better than I do, who can fancy these Contests desirable for their own Sake. *Truth* is the only End, that a reasonable Man can propose in them, and when this End is attain'd, our Care should then be to preserve it; for which Purpose Mr. S. very judiciously advises, to grant an unbounded *Liberty* to preach against it. The Church of *England*, for Instance, has happily reform'd from the Errors of *Popery*; and does this Gentleman seriously think that the best Way to prevent the Return of these Errors, is to permit them to be publickly taught and inculcated to the People.

I can agree in *general* with this Author, that *dubious* Doctrines ought not to be prescrib'd by  
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the Governors of the Church; and the Reasons which dissuade this, hold equally against such Doctrines being taught by particular Teachers. But since, according to him, there is no such thing as a Standard of Plainness, all that he can mean by this, is, that the Governors should not prescribe what to them appears *dubious*, nor the Teachers preach what appears *dubious* to them. If the Teacher may preach what to him appears plain, why may not the Governors prescribe to be taught what appears plain to them? Nay, supposing some Passages of Scripture are really *dubious* to all Persons now living, (and such I presume there are) why have not the Governors of the Church as much Right to pitch upon a *particular Sense* of such Passage, and prescribe that to be publickly taught, as each Preacher has to pitch upon a *particular Sense* of such Passage, and preach that as the true Sense of such Place to his Congregation? The latter upon the Scheme of Liberty pleaded for, must be allow'd, and why may not the former? This I acknowledge ought not *generally* to be done; but there are Cases in which the Governors of the Church may have good Reason to prescribe a particular Sense of a Passage really *dubious*. As, when a manifestly false Doctrine has been rais'd and propagated from a *dubious* Passage: In such Case they may justly forbid the preaching such Doctrine as the Sense of that Place, and propose another Sense, which, tho' but probably deduc'd from that Place, is yet agreeable to other plain Scriptures.

Pag. 153. BUT 'tis objected farther, *That this Power*  
*of*



of commanding to be taught what appears to the Rulers agreeable to Scripture, and forbidding every thing else, naturally raises a mighty Reverence for such and such particular Passages of Scripture, whilst it makes other Places of Scripture equally sacred in themselves, disregarded and despis'd. Now,

1<sup>st</sup>, SUPPOSING this Inconvenience may sometimes follow; this is only an accidental Consequence, and can with no more Justice be objected to these Laws, than the Consequence St. Paul mentions could be objected to the Mo-  
saical Law, *That if it had not been for the Law,* Rom. vii. *he had not known Sin;* notwithstanding which, he declares the *Law to be Holy, Just, and Good.*

2<sup>dly</sup>, THIS is only a Matter of *prudential Consideration*; and in such Cases, the Method which is expos'd to fewest Inconveniencies ought to be preferr'd. And will the Remedy he proposes be attended with fewer Inconveniencies? Suppose the particular Teachers should think fit to preach only a Set of Doctrines to their Parishes, which, according to his Scheme, they are at full Liberty to do; would not the very same Inconveniencies follow? And what Remedy has he prescrib'd against them? Not to mention the many greater Inconveniencies of this Scheme, already observ'd. But

3<sup>dly</sup>, UPON what Experience, or Example, does he ground this Observation? There is, I think, at this Time, in every establish'd Protestant Church in Christendom, a *Regula Prædicandi* prescrib'd; and does he find that all other  
Places

Places of Scripture, not relating to the prescrib'd Doctrines are *despis'd*? If, indeed, when these Doctrines are prescrib'd, all other Places of Scripture, not relating to them, were forbidden to be preach'd on, there would be something in this Objection: But if this Prescription implies no more than this, That whenever any *Preacher*, preaches upon any of these Places, he shall teach according to the prescrib'd Explication of them, without being restrain'd from preaching upon any other Scripture; how will this Consequence follow more than if there were no Prescription? The *Teacher*, notwithstanding such Prescription, is at Liberty to preach upon what other Scriptures he pleases, and if he neglects his Duty, this Prescription is not the Cause of it, and he would as certainly neglect it if there were none.

BUT upon a special Occasion of Danger to the Flock, as when any particular Errors are gone out among them; as 'tis the Duty of every *Teacher* to insist more especially on the Truths opposite to such Error, so it is the Duty of their *Governors* to direct them so to do. And if the Regard and Attention of the People be, in such Circumstances, principally engaged to such Doctrines, 'tis no more than it ought to be; and 'tis a very good Argument for this Authority, if it can prevail for this Effect.

I acknowledge the great Condescension this  
 Pag. 154. Gentleman is pleas'd here to favour me with, in Directing my Studies. But I have never heard that the *Treatise* he recommends to me, was

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\* *The Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the Study of the Scriptures in the Way of private Judgment.*

own'd by the worthy Person to whom he ascribes it. The great and deserved Reputation of that learned and judicious Writer, as well as my own *particular Obligations* to him, will engage my utmost Respect to whatever appears under his Name; and when he acknowledges the Discourse here laid to him, I shall certainly pay a greater regard to it, than I have yet done. But, if I may judge of the Value and *Excellency* of that Treatise, by the Improvements of my Adviser, I confess, I can expect but very little *Light*, or Advantage from it.

But he goes on to object, that the Authority Pag. 154,  
I contend for, *has been one main Source of all* 155.  
*the Factions and Schisms which have appear'd in Christianity.* But this being co-incident with an Objection already consider'd, I shall look upon it as answer'd; but on the Words following this Objection, I beg Leave to make a few Remarks: The Words are these, *Whilst every Party of Christians act as if they were the whole Body, every Member who is ejected out of a particular Communion for dissenting from a receiv'd Opinion, is usually judg'd ejected out of the Church of Christ.* So, indeed, it would be, did every particular Church hold only such Points as Christ taught, without any *Additions, or Alterations whatever.* Now by these *Parties of Christians*, he explains himself to mean *particular Christian Churches*; these *Parties*, he says, *act as if they were the whole Body, by ejecting out of their Communion, Persons dissenting from receiv'd Opinions, i. e. prescrib'd Doctrines.* The *whole Body* then, or

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the whole Church, would have this Authority, *i. e.* the whole Church would have Authority to *eject Men* out of the Church, who openly *disfented from* prescribed Doctrines; in which Concession 'tis also imply'd, that the *whole Church* has Authority to *receive or hold Opinions, i. e.* to prescribe Doctrines. Now, 'tis impossible this Authority of the whole Body of the Church should be exercis'd but in a general Council, and this I heartily agree would be the best Remedy, for the present Differences between Churches. But such an Assembly I despair of ever seeing. In the mean Time, 'tis a Satisfaction to me, to find it suppos'd by my *Considerer*, that the *whole Body of the Church* might act with this Authority; because I conceive it will hence follow, that every particular Church has the same Authority over her own Members. For the Authority of this aggregate *Body*, is nothing else, but an Union of that Authority, which severally belongs to the *particular Churches* which compose it. The Authority of *particular Churches*, is the same in Kind, and differs only in the Extent of it's Obligation, from the Authority of the *whole*. And therefore, in the Ancient Councils, the Representatives of each Church brought with them Credentials of the Authority given them by their Principals; and often Synodical Determinations from their several Churches, of the Points to be debated; to which, the Sentence of such Representative was confin'd. Neither was any Church esteem'd concluded by the Resolutions of a Council, in which they had no Representative, or which they

they did not *ex post facto* by the Authority of their own Synod approve. 'Tis therefore surprizing, this Author should allow this Authority to the *whole Body* of the Church, and yet deny it to *particular Churches*.

I observe farther: He says, *Every Party of Christians*, or every particular Church, acts as if it were the *whole Body*. I know none that does so, except the Church of *Rome*. All Protestant Churches prescribe only to their own Members, and leave all other Churches at Liberty to do the same to theirs; the independent Authority of each particular Church, on any other particular Church, I look upon as one of the great Principles of the Reformation.

BUT, I suppose, the Grievance is, That they Judge a Person who is ejected out of their particular Communion, for dissenting from the Doctrines they prescribe, to be ejected out of the whole Church; and so 'tis acknowledg'd it won'd be, did every particular Church hold only such Doctrines as Christ taught, without any Additions, or Alterations: I presume he means, did that particular Church, which ejects him, hold only such Points as Christ taught, &c. For, whatever other Churches may hold, if that particular Church, which ejects him, holds only such Points as Christ taught, and he is ejected for denying any such Point; he is effectually ejected out of all Churches, and cannot have a Right to be admitted into any. But suppose the Church, which ejects him, hold some Point which Christ did not teach; yet if he is ejected for denying a Point, which Christ did

*teach*, his Ejection is just, and general: Nay, suppose he is ejected, for denying a Point, which Christ *did not teach*; 'tis true, he will not be really *ejected out of the Church of Christ*, yet the Persons who eject him, if they sincerely, and upon the Result of their best Examination, believe that all the Doctrines they hold, are the very Points *taught by Christ, without any Addition, or Alteration*, must, in Consequence of this Rule, *judge him ejected out of the Church of Christ*, and cannot *judge* otherwise, unless they may *judge* a Doctrine not to be taught by *Christ*, which they firmly believe to be taught by *Christ*.

I am willing to make the most of the good Disposition this Author seems here to be in, and therefore, beg leave to make one Observation more upon these Words; he says, *A Person ejected out of a particular Church, holding only such Points as Christ taught, &c. would indeed be ejected out of the Church of Christ*. Now, this Gentleman having solemnly subscrib'd, and profess'd his Assent to all the Doctrines held by the Church of *England*, may be presum'd to acknowledge, that that Church *holds only such Points as Christ taught, without Addition, or Alteration*; and consequently, that he who is *ejected* out of that Church, for denying any of its Doctrines, is *ejected out of the Church of Christ*. However, therefore, *Things* (as he complains) may be *manag'd in other Parts of Christendom*; he who is ejected out of *this* Church, for denying, or opposing any of its Doctrines, will be justly ejected, and his Ejection will have  
Consequences,

Consequences, which very well deserve this Author's serious Consideration.

WHAT follows, indeed, I am at a Loss to re- Pag. 155.  
concile, with the Words I have been considering; he says, *Were the Discipline of the Church exerted against Immoralities, and wicked Livers, and not against Opinions, and false Notions, then wou'd Christianity shine in its full Lustre, &c.* But a few Lines before, he acknowledges, That a Person *ejected* for denying the Doctrines of a Church, *which holds only such Points as Christ taught, &c.* wou'd indeed be ejected out of the Church of Christ. If he be *indeed* ejected out of the Church of Christ, he was not worthy to continue in it; and if he was not worthy to continue in the Church of Christ, he ought to be *ejected* out of every particular Church. How comes it to pass then of a sudden, That *Discipline is not to be exerted against Opinions, that no Zeal is to be shewn against false Notions?* For *Notions and Opinions*, I beg Leave to substitute *Doctrines*, because these only can fall under the Notice of the Church. Now, whatever really, and *indeed*, ejects a Man out of the Church of Christ, is certainly a good Reason for the Governors of any Church, to eject him out of the Communion of that Church. If therefore false Doctrines, or Doctrines contrary to a Point taught by Christ, do *indeed* eject a Man out of the Church of Christ; Why may not *Discipline be exerted, and Zeal shewn* against them, as well as against *Immoralities, and wicked Livers.* Why, the Reasons we are to collect out of the  
T 3 following

Pag. 155. following Declamation, *Then wou'd Christianity shine in its full Lustre, 'twou'd be the Desire of all Nations and Languages, and we might reasonably Hope for the Conversion of Jews, Turks, and Infidels, i. e. If false Notions, and false Opinions, were not at all inquir'd into, nor false Doctrines discourag'd or censur'd; then Jews, Turks and Infidels, might be admitted into the Church, and continue Jews, Turks and Infidels still: And when they were once in, if they cou'd get any Body to chuse, and hear them, they might set up for Teachers; for this it seems is a sufficient Call and Authority: And then they might preach Judaism, Mahometism, and Blasphemy; for no body has any Authority to call them to account for their Doctrines. The best Apology that can be made for this loose incoherent Project, is, that the Author is here only shewing his Talent at Oratory, in which, strict Reasoning is not to be insisted on.*

Pag. 156. BUT he proceeds to observe, That *I seem sensible how liable this Authority is to be abus'd.* No doubt it may be *abus'd*, and I have very freely acknowledg'd it may be so: But can it be inferr'd hence, that this Authority ought to be abolish'd? If this Argument be good, it will soon drive all Authority of all Denominations out of the World. No Authority can be instanc'd in, but what has been *abus'd*; and unless we could divest Human Nature of Passion, and Infirmary, 'tis impossible to commit any Authority to Men, but what may be *abus'd*. And yet every Argument this Author has urg'd, in Disproof of the Authority by me asserted, is  
resolv'd

Dis. p.94,  
156.



resolv'd into this. He has rak'd together Instances, in which Church-Authority has been, or may be *abus'd*; and from thence concluded against all such Authority. The State of the Church in this World, is not capable of absolute Perfection, but is subject to the same Inconveniences that attend other Societies. A Claim and Exercise of exorbitant *Powers*, in the Governors, will doubtless introduce great Evils into the Church; but the unbounded *Liberty* assign'd for the Cure of these Evils, will be attended with infinitely greater, even Anarchy, and utter Dissolution of the Society. Let us allow the Subject all the *Liberty* than can consist with Government; and let us allow also the Rulers all the *Authority* that is necessary to it, and we shall probably come to that *Medium*, which is the proper Remedy for all these Evils. This Rule, I have endeavour'd according to the best of my Judgment, to follow; neither am I convinc'd by any thing this Author has suggested, that I have deviated from it. But after we have adjusted this *Medium*, in Theory, so long as weak and passionate Men are intrusted with these *Powers*, on the one Hand, and these *Liberties* on the other, Matter of Complaint will never be wanting against both: but to argue against either, from these Irregularities, will be equally absurd; for the Inference is altogether as just, *Liberty* has been abus'd, therefore none should be allow'd; as, *Authority* has been abus'd, therefore all should be taken away. But I cannot omit taking Notice, with how manifest a Partiality this Author has treated this

Subject. The *Inferiors* are in every Argument consider'd as Men, sincerely applying themselves to know, and perform their Duty, as always acting upon due Examination, without any corrupt Motive, without Malice, Ambition, or Vanity; while the *Superiors* on the other Hand, are represented as crafty, insolent, and tyrannical, without Religion, or Honesty. Now, the Qualities necessary in good Governors, may certainly with more Reason be presum'd on in Men chosen and appointed, according to a Rule, which directs these Qualities to be wholly regarded in such Choice, than the Qualities necessary to make good Subjects, can be presum'd of the Bulk of Mankind, in which wicked, as well as good Dispositions, must of Necessity be included; and therefore the Evils proceeding from the *Abuse of Liberty*, are generally more to be fear'd, and in all wise Constitutions are rather provided against, than the Evils proceeding from the *Abuse of Authority*. Were all Men wise, just, and good, tho' in any Constitution too much *Authority* were given to the *Superiors*, or too much *Liberty* to the *Inferiors*, no great Inconveniences wou'd follow; but in all social Constitutions, Mankind must be considered as they really are, and not as they ought to be; and the strongest Guard shou'd be set on that Side, on which the greatest Evils are to be fear'd. Now let the Supposition of *Wisdom* and *Honesty*, be only equal for the *Superiors*, and the *Inferiors*; and let this Gentleman then consider, Whether the Evils we may fear from *abus'd Authority*, supposing all the Governors wicked,

wicked, wou'd be greater than the Evils of *abus'd Liberty*, supposing all the *Inferiors* wicked; and Whether even *unbounded Authority*, wou'd be more formidable than *unbounded Liberty*.

UPON Supposition that the Scripture is the Rule of the *Superior's* Duty, in the Execution of his Office, as well as 'tis the Rule of the *Inferior's* Duty, in his Station; and that both have, with equal Sincerity, apply'd themselves to understand, and act according to this Rule; I affirm, *That if the Superiors, in executing their Office; prescribe any Thing which happens not to be agreeable to the Intention of Christ's Will, they have a Right to all that can be said in Excuse of any other Person, who acts upon a mistaken Sense of Scripture; in which Assertion, Mr. S. says, there is a visible Mistake.* Now, an Author very high in his Esteem, has affirm'd, *That every equal Degree of Sincerity, will be equally rewarded by God,* by which he has explain'd himself to mean, at least thus much, That these will be equally intitled to the Approbation of God: One, as well as the other, will be approv'd by him. If therefore these *Superiors*, and *Inferiors*, are equally sincere, they will be equally approv'd by God; and the very same Plea that *excuses* one, will also be the *Excuse* of the other. His Objection from the outward Consequences of either's Mistake, is nothing to the Purpose. The Consequences of two Mens Mistakes, will be different, not only when one is distinguish'd from the other, by a *Publick Office*, but from the Difference

Disc. p. 76.

Pag. 156

rence

rence of their *Personal Characters*. The Mistake of a Man of Learning, whether he be a *Ruler*, or a *Minister*, or not, will have a stronger, and wider Influence, than the Mistake of a Peasant; and yet I presume Mr. S. will not say, That the Mistake of a Man of Learning, who has sincerely apply'd himself to find Truth, will be condemn'd by God; but the Mistake of a Peasant, equally sincere, will be approv'd.

I might therefore justly add, That in executing their Office, according to their own Interpretations of Scripture, *The Rulers of the Church claim no other Right in their Station, than what is earnestly contended for, as belonging to all private Christians in their Stations.* To which it is answer'd, *If I wou'd be contented to mean only a Right to interpret Scripture, for their own Direction in their Duty, it ought to be allow'd.* Now this I can be contented to mean, provided it be also allow'd, That very different Duties are requir'd by God, from the Rulers in their Station, and from those which belong to private Christians in their Station. But to what Purpose is a Right allow'd them to *interpret Scripture, for their own Direction in their Duty*, if they have not also a Right to perform their Duty, according as they appear by Scripture to be directed. But 'tis said, *If I mean a Right to command others, what they think agreeable to Scripture, and to forbid what they think contrary to it, I know no private Christians, no Protestants, that contend for this.* One would think this Author was at  
cross

Disc. p. 77.

Pag. 157.

Ibid.

cross Purposes, in this perplex'd Answer: I had before asserted, and I think prov'd, That the Superiors of the Church, have Authority by their Office, to *prescribe what Doctrines should be profess'd, or taught, and to forbid what shou'd not be taught.* It was then inquir'd, whether they should execute this Office, according to *their own Interpretation of Scripture*: To other Arguments before us'd, I add this, " That no Reason can exclude the Superiors from the same Right of interpreting Scripture, for the Direction of their Conscience, in the Discharge of the Duties of their Station, which every private Christian demands, for the Direction of his Conscience, in the ordinary Duties of Life." To which this judicious Person answers, *No private Christian claims a Right to command others, &c. i. e.* Tho' the Scripture be the Rule of Duty, both to Superiors, and Inferiors; yet because their Duties are different, they have not both an equal Right to act according to this Rule. Every one who reads the Paragraph, in which the Words reflected on stand, will perceive that I am not there proving the Right of the Superiors, to the distinct Powers of their Office and Station, from this Argument, *That the same Powers belong to ordinary Christians*: An Argument, which wou'd directly contradict the Conclusion it was brought for; and yet thus, in this Answer, I am supposed to argue: But my Argument and Inference is evidently this, " That since 'tis claim'd as the common Right of all Christians, to perform the Duties of their several Stations, according

Disc.p.77.

“ to their own Sense and Interpretation of  
 “ *Scripture*, the Superiors ought to allow’d  
 “ this Right in their Stations.” This Gentle-  
 man’s Answer therefore is either a very unjust  
 Representation, or a total *Ignoratio Elenchi*.

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BUT I think his *Assertions* here, are as extra-  
 ordinary as his *Conclusion* from them. He says,  
*I know no private Christian, or Protestant,*  
*that contends for this; or if I do, they are so*  
*far Papists.* Now, tho’ I think I cou’d Name a  
 Person who contends for something like this, *viz.*  
 That the Superiors of the Church have *no Right*  
*to refuse to* perform a Part of their Office, ac-  
 cording to the Persuasion, or Interpretation of  
 another Man, tho’ such Persuasion be contrary  
 to their own; yet, for the present, we will sup-  
 pose, That *I know no such private Christians.*  
 But if I did, I cannot imagine why they shou’d  
 be *Papists*, because I never heard that any *pri-*  
*vate Papists* contended for this Right, or Pow-  
 er. If he means, that no *private Christian, or*  
*Protestant*, contends that the Rulers of the  
 Church have this Power; I hope there are many  
 Millions, I assure him I know a considerable  
 Number, and I presume he himself knows some,  
 or else he would never have taken all this learn-  
 ed Pains, to convince the Christian Laity, That  
 the Rulers of the Church have no such Power.  
 But if he means, That no *Protestant Rulers*  
 contend for this Power, this also is manifestly  
 false; neither can he produce for Instance, any  
 establish’d *Protestant Church in Europe*, but  
 what does actually claim and exercise this Pow-  
 er; and calling them *Papists*, is only calling  
 them

them Names, and reviling them for a Practice, agreeable to the first Ages of the Church.

BUT he is pleas'd next, to shew me my *Mistake, in all this Method of Reasoning.* 'Tis it seems this, *Whatever the Rulers of the Church* Pag. 158. *are bound by their Commission to perform, they have certainly Authority to perform: This, he says, is true. But then, 'tis not true, tho' by me suppos'd to be so, That their Commission obliges them to injoin such Professions to be made, and such Doctrines to be taught, as they from their own Interpretation of Scripture think fit or necessary.* Now, what *Mistake* there is in this *Method of Reasoning*, I cannot comprehend. If there be any Defect, 'tis not in the *Form*, which is the *Method of the Reasoning*, but in the *Matter* of the Argument. But if the Proposition, which he objects to, is true, this Argument is neither defective in *Matter* nor *Form*. This Proposition, I confess, being the main Point in Controversy, I ought not to suppose without Proof: But having endeavour'd to prove,

1. " That the Rulers have Authority to prescribe
- " what Doctrines should be publickly taught,
- " and what should not be taught. 2. That they
- " have a Right to exercise this Authority, according to their own Interpretations of Scripture:"

I had Reason to suppose these Points as prov'd. But I must observe a great Ambiguity in this Recital of my Argument. He represents me as claiming to the Rulers, *a Right to interpret Scripture for their Direction and Rule*, in the Execution of their Office, as a Branch of their Commission, which I no where do.

What I claim to them, in Virtue of their Commission, is to prescribe what Doctrines shall be publickly taught. The *Right* of acting, according to their own Interpretations of Scripture, in the Exercise of this Authority, I claim to them as a *common Right of all Christians*, in their several Stations. When the Rulers have, in Virtue of this *general Right*, consider'd, and resolv'd, according to the best of their Judgment, what Doctrines are agreeable to Scripture, and what are contrary it; their Commission then obliges them to prescribe the one, and forbid the other to be publickly taught, as the Occasion, or Danger of the Church appear to require.

Now, tho' I think these Assertions sufficiently prov'd, yet the Instance to which he requires me to apply them, being of great Importance, it shall not be unconsider'd. The Proposition he gives (for Instance) to be preach'd, is this, *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

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Now, says he, *'Twill not follow, that because I am bound by my Commission to preach and prove this Truth, that therefore I have Commission to require an explicit Profession of, and oblige any Man to my private Opinion of the Sense of this Proposition.* To this I reply,

I. THAT my Assertion, which he takes upon him to oppose is, “ That the Governors of the  
 “ Church have Authority to prescribe such Doc-  
 “ trines to be taught, as they in their Conscience  
 “ think agreeable to Scripture, and to forbid  
 “ such as they think contrary to it.” Against which he argues, That the Commission of a *particular*



*ticular Teacher*, implies no such Authority; in which Instance 'tis manifest, the Argument is not *ad idem*, and therefore cannot conclude.

2. I do not remember, that I have any where made the Inference he here objects to, That because any Person has a *Commission to preach and prove this*, or any other Proposition, in the Sense which he thinks the proper Sense of it; therefore he has Commission to require it to be taught, or profess'd by other Men. If this had been my Inference, I must have confess'd it a very weak one. But thus, indeed, I have argu'd, and I think with good Consequence, " That if the Rulers of the Church are bound  
 " by their Commission to require this, or any  
 " other Proposition to be taught; they are  
 " bound to require it to be taught in that  
 " Sense, which they in their Conscience think the  
 " true intended Sense of it, and to forbid it to be  
 " taught in any other." For if they may require, or permit it to be taught, in any other Sense; then they may require or permit a Doctrine to be taught, which they in their Conscience think contrary to the Doctrine of *Christ*. If it be said, That this Proposition ought only to be preach'd, or prescrib'd, in the *very Words* of the Scripture, *i. e.* the very Words of Scripture ought only to be read or prescrib'd; he himself allows the particular Preachers to *declare what they think the Meaning of it*, *i. e.* to explain it in other Words. And why may not the Governors of the Church *declare what they think the Meaning of it*, and prescribe that Meaning to be publickly taught? The *Commission* of a particular  
 Teacher,

Teacher will, he says, *Authorize him to preach what he thinks the Meaning of it.* Now, if the Governors have as good a *Commission* to prohibit Doctrines to be taught, which they in their Conscience think contrary to the Doctrine of *Christ*, Why will not their *Commission* also *authorize* them to prohibit such a Sense of this Proposition as They think contrary to the Meaning of it? The Supposition upon which Mr. S. here argues, is, That this Proposition is *allow'd to be very justly capable of several very different Senses.* If this, indeed, were *universally allow'd*, there would be some Weight in his Argument. This Proposition might then be reckon'd among the *δυσνόητα* of Scripture, and Men permitted to differ in their Interpretation of it. But, by whom is this *allow'd*? Was it ever *allow'd* by the Catholick Church? The learned Bishop *Bull* has shewn, that this one Sense of this Proposition, *That Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, of the same Substance with the Father*, is the Sense in which the first Ages of the Church receiv'd it, and transmitted it down to those which follow'd. Neither is there, so far as I know, any one Church, at this Day, in the Christian World, which *allows* it *justly capable of any other.* A great Variety, indeed, of other Senses, have been offer'd in several Ages of the Church; but as soon as the Preachers of them came to publick Notice, they were reprov'd, censur'd, and, if obstinate, expelled the Church. This one Interpretation, has been held thro' all Ages, while all the various Heresies which have oppos'd it, tho' they have prevail'd

prevail'd far for a Time, some more and some less; yet they have expir'd for long Periods, while the one Catholick Sense, has still at length regain'd its Authority. But in the Times of greatest Opposition, was this Proposition *allowed justly capable of several very different Senses?* Did *Paulus Samosatenus, Arius, &c.* and the Church that oppos'd them, *allow this?* Did not each contend that their Sense was the *only* Sense of which it was *justly capable?* This Supposition then itself being false, the Argument built upon it cannot conclude.

3. HIS Expedient for a Comprehension of the Preachers of these *very different Senses* of this Proposition, is utterly impracticable. For these *very different Senses*, propose very different Objects of Christian Worship, and Persons who profess to worship the one God, who made Heaven and Earth, can never join in Worship with them, who profess to worship a mere Man; for the *latter* must be esteem'd Idolaters by the *former*: And yet, according to some, at least, of these *very different Senses*, our Blessed Lord is no more than a *mere Man*, and according to others, but a *mere Creature*. But the *Scripture*, he tells us, *has provided a Remedy against this Misfortune*, i. e. Division of Communion. Tho' Men differ in their Interpretations of this Proposition, *by enjoining Love and Charity, by com-*

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*manding that we should keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.* The Scriptures, indeed, injoin *Love and Charity*, and these Words may in a large Sense imply *religious Communion*; but where do they require us to maintain

*Eph. iv.* *this Love and Charity, with Men holding very different Senses of this Proposition? They exhort us to keep the Unity of the Spirit; but in the same Place they tell us, that this Unity is founded on our having one Lord, one Faith.*

*Rom. xii.* *They require us to live peaceably with all Men; but 'tis with a Provision, that 'tis possible that it lies in us; and to maintain the Peace of Communion with Men, who differ so widely from us in so important a Point as the Object of Worship, no good Christian will think it possible, or that it lies in him. But suppose a Peace cou'd be patch'd up between these dissonant, and contradictory Professors, how long cou'd it hold, if every one were at Liberty to preach his different Sentiments, in so material a Point as this? Upon the Whole, this Instance, as urg'd by Mr. S. is nothing to his Purpose; does not conclude against the Assertion it is brought to oppose, but relates wholly to the Office of particular Teachers. The Supposition he proceeds upon is groundless: And the Expedient he offers for Peace and Unity impracticable.*

*Pag. 159.* *So far as I can collect his Meaning in the dark Paragraph that concludes this Section, it was his Intention to disprove this Assertion, That every Preacher of the Gospel, is strictly oblig'd to preach those Doctrines only which Christ taught, and in that Sense in which he taught them. An Assertion which, I confess, I presum'd wou'd not be deny'd; because, if every Preacher of the Gospel, is not strictly oblig'd to preach only those Doctrines which Christ taught, then he is at Liberty to preach, as the Gospel of*

of *Christ*, Doctrines which *Christ* never taught; and if he is not oblig'd to preach the Propositions of Scripture, *in the Sense in which Christ taught them*, then he is at Liberty to preach them in any other Sense, which is in Effect, indeed, the same Liberty with the former; for the Propositions of Scripture, taken in any other Sense, than that in which *Christ taught them*, are not the Doctrines of *Christ*, but Propositions of the Preacher's own framing. But against my Assertion he argues:

1<sup>st</sup>, FROM the dissonant Doctrines of different Churches, *England, Scotland, Rome, Geneva, &c.*

Ibid.

2<sup>dly</sup>, FROM the Disagreement between the Rulers of *the same Church*, concerning *some passages of Revelation*.

3<sup>dly</sup>, FROM the Impossibility of instancing in any Opinion, *which has been believ'd, semper ubique ab omnibus, when Men have left the Scripture Terms, and come to particular Explications of them*. Whence he infers, 'Tis unaccountable to say, that *Christ obliges Men to teach his Doctrines in the Sense in which he meant them, and yet to be able to Name no one Doctrine that has been constantly so taught*.

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THESE are his Arguments, and this his Inference from them. A Piece of Reasoning so perplex'd, and involv'd, that 'tis difficult to conjecture what View he had in it. But I am apt to suspect from some Hints in the Beginning of this Paragraph, That he intended an intermediate Inference from these Observations, which he for-

got afterwards to insert. His Argument I imagine might be design'd to run thus, " Different Churches, and different Persons, in the same Church, give different Interpretations of *some Scriptures*: Nay, there is *no Scripture*, but what has been differently explain'd, *therefore there is no certain Sense to be assign'd of any Scripture*; and if no *certain Sense* can be assign'd of *any* Scripture, then the Sense *intended by* Christ cannot be assign'd; and if this cannot be done, then no Preacher can be oblig'd to preach only *that* Sense." But this intermediate Inference, on which the whole Force of this Reasoning depends, cannot be deduc'd from these Arguments. In the two first, all that is affirm'd, is, that different Churches, and different Persons, have mistaken, or perverted *some* Doctrines of *Christ*: The Premisses are manifestly *particular*, and yet a *general* Conclusion is inferr'd from them. And with respect to the Second, I observe, that the Assertion itself is not true. For, tho' the Persons who are *Rulers* in the same Church, may differ in their Judgment of the Sense of *some* Scriptures; yet, whatever they determine as *Rulers*, they agree in. When they determine any Point in this Character, 'tis done in a Synod, and the Synodical Determinations in every Church, propose one uniform Doctrine, or Interpretation of every Passage they consider; and to the Decisions of such Assembly, the Consent, even of the Minor and dissentient Part, as Members of that Assembly, *i. e.* as *Rulers*, is included.

HIS third Assertion, indeed, is general; *No one Opinion has been believ'd, semper ubique ab omnibus, when Men have left the Scripture Terms, and come to peculiar Explications of them, i. e.* whenever they have explain'd them; for whenever they do so, they must *leave the Scripture Terms*, which cannot be Explications of themselves. What I suppose then, he means by this Assertion, is, " That no one Explication of Scripture, has been so universally receiv'd, that no one Person has ever disputed it." If he would be thus understood, this may possibly be true; but then this Argument will no more conclude than the former; neither will any Man be impos'd on by such a Consequence as this. " Every Proposition in Scripture has been perverted, or mis-understood by some Person or other, in some Age or other;" therefore, we can never *arrive at the certain design'd Sense* of any. If this Argument be good, then no one Proposition in the World, which any Person has ever, out of Ignorance, or Contradiction; mis-understood, or misinterpreted, is capable of being understood in its *certain intended Sense*; and, I am afraid, few Propositions can be instanc'd in, which have been thus universally agreed to. This Argument, as it appears to me, can lead us to nothing but Scepticism, and denying that any Words, or Sentences can have any certain Meaning. I hope this is not one of the Principles, from which the *Increase of Knowledge and Truth* we are promised, is to be expected.

IF he means no more, by saying, *That no Opinions have been believ'd, semper ubique ab omnibus, &c.* than that no one Doctrine can be nam'd, which has been constantly taught *by the Church* in the same Sense; this is manifestly false. He challenges me, to Name one. Let him then shew that the Article of *Christ's Resurrection* was ever taught, or permitted to be taught, and explain'd by the Church, in any other Sense than this, "That the Soul of our Lord was at the third Day from his Crucifixion, united to the same Body which hang'd upon the Cross." I might instance in almost every Article of the *Apostle's Creed*, as Propositions, which have been constantly taught in the same Sense. Hereticks, indeed, have from Time to Time arisen, who have wrested these Articles, and the Scriptures they are founded on, to several different Senses; but there has been one *certain Sense*, constantly, and uninterruptedly taught, while every one of these Heretical Innovations have expir'd, and not been heard of for several Ages together, except in History. Nay, Bishop *Bull*, as I observ'd, has shewn, that the larger Expositions asserted in the Council of *Nice*, are the Sense in which the Scriptures they relate to, were always taught and explain'd as the Catholick Doctrine of the Church. This Assertion then, in this Sense is false in Fact; and, in the other Sense, his Conclusion will not follow from it.

THIS Conclusion, indeed, I should with great Reluctancy admit, tho' I should see it much better prov'd than it is by this Author; because I think



think it subversive of that Fundamental Principle of the Protestant Religion, *that the Scriptures are a sufficient Rule of Faith and Practice, in all Things necessary.* For if there be no Way of arriving at the certain design'd Sense of any one Proposition of Scripture, to what Purpose is this Scripture propos'd to me as my *Rule*? Upon this Supposition, I am oblig'd to follow a *Rule*, which I can never know whether I follow or not. As to any Direction I am capable of receiving from it, a Book in an unknown Tongue would be altogether as good a *Rule*. 'Tis representing God, as solemnly sporting with the Weakness of his Creatures; giving them a Revelation of his Will, their Compliance to which should lead them to Happiness; and yet, proposing this Will in such obscure Terms, that 'tis impossible by any *Method to arrive at the design'd Meaning of it.* 'Tis, indeed, in Effect, giving up all Revelation, and throwing Mankind back into mere Natural Religion. For this Revelation, no farther informs us in the Will of God, than 'tis understood in the Sense which God intended it. If therefore, we cannot by *any Method arrive at the intended Sense* of any Part of this Revelation, we cannot be inform'd of the Will of God by it, but are left altogether as uncertain what his Will is, as if no Revelation had ever been made. This Doctrine, and these very Arguments in Support of it, we have often heard from the *Papists.* But Mr. S. is the first Protestant Writer, in whom I ever met with it. The View of the *Papists* in this Way of arguing is easily perceiv'd, to induce us

to rely on their pretended *Infallibility*, in which, some *Rule*, absurd as it is, is proposed to us. But this Author, while he injudiciously flies from this Extreme, has fallen into another, and persuades us to live without any reveal'd *Rule*, and give up the Scriptures themselves as useless and unintelligible, rather than allow the Church any Authority in explaining any Part of them.

IF I have mistaken his Meaning in this Paragraph, I am sure my Error is Involuntary. He does not, I confess, in express Terms say, " That " no Proposition of Scripture is intelligible in " any certain Sense." But when he demands of me, to *put him in a Way of arriving at their certain design'd Meaning*, 'tis plain he proposes it as an Impossibility; and that *their certain design'd Meaning cannot be attain'd to*, is the immediate Conclusion, to which every one of his Arguments leads us; the two former, with respect to *some* Parts of Scripture, and the last with Respect to *all*. A Position, which I cannot conceive how he will reconcile with his own Acknowledgment; " That every Christian is bound " to assent to some of *Christ's Doctrines* in the " same Sense in which he taught them:" For thence it follows, that every Christian *is capable of arriving at the certain design'd Sense of some of Christ's Doctrines*, and as a Corollary from this, that some of *Christ's Doctrines* are so plainly taught in Scripture, that every Christian who understands the Language in which he reads or hears them, may, by a due use of his Faculties, and such Assistances as are in his Power, *arrive at the design'd Meaning of them*.

IF

IF it be Mr. *Sykes's* Opinion, that no Sense of any Scripture is any farther *plain* and *certain*, than as each Person apprehends it for himself, but that no Number of Persons are bound to understand any Scripture in the same Sense; I would only ask him why, in disputing with me, or any one else, he appeals to Scripture in Proof of any Assertion; or requires me to prove any thing I assert by Scripture. Nothing can be more impertinent than this; if there be no *certain Sense* of any Scripture, in which, he and I, and every rational Man are bound to understand it. In every Argument, the Principle argu'd from, is suppos'd a Truth, which the Adversary is bound to acknowledge in the Sense assign'd: But if there be no common Standard of Interpretation, by which the Meaning of any Scripture can be ascertain'd; every Argument from Scripture will be a *Petitio Principii*. Nay, if we follow this Assertion to its Consequences, it will carry us still farther, and prove, as I have before observ'd, that no Words or Sentences in any Book in the World, are capable of any certain Meaning, in which the Author has a Right to be understood. For it will be impossible to assign a Reason, why, every Proposition in Scripture should be thus unintelligible, which will not be equally applicable to any other Book. One would imagine, indeed, from this Author's Treatment of me, in the first Part of his Performance, that this was the Principle he went on, *That no Words are capable of any certain Meaning*. But, to what Purpose, then do he or I, or any one else, write, or preach, or even Discourse  
with

with one another? If this be the Case, he is disputing against Positions, as asserted by me, which he knows not whether ever I meant or not: He is persuading his Readers to assent to him, and dissent from me, tho' there be no Way by which *they can arrive at the Meaning design'd* by either of us. In short, the Absurdities are so many, and so obvious, that follow from this Assertion, " That no Doctrine of Scripture " is capable of any certain Meaning perceivable " by all rational Beings who attend to it," that unless his Arguments had manifestly led to this Conclusion, I should not permit myself to suppose, that any considering Man could intend it.

## S E C T. III.

*Some farther Considerations on the preceding Subject.*

**T**HE Positions I have been contending for, *viz.* That we are capable of arriving at the *certain design'd Sense* of some Scriptures, and that we are bound so to understand them, I look upon as clear Truths, and of the greatest Importance to us; and it will perhaps be a Satisfaction to the Reader, if I can shew him that the Powers I have here claim'd to the *Superiors* of the Church are Deductions I have been led to by these Positions. Let it then be suppos'd, " That to some Doctrines of *Christ* every Christian is bound to assent, in the *same Sense in which he taught them.*" And (what is a Consequence of this) " That every Christian by  
3 a due

“ a due Attention, a due Use of his Faculties,  
 “ and all Assistances in his Power, may perceive  
 “ the *Sense intended* in *some* of *Christ's* Doc-  
 “ trines.” From hence it follows, That he who  
 does not assent to *some* of *Christ's* Doctrines in the  
*Sense in which he taught them*, does not do  
 what he is bound to do as a Christian, and is  
 therefore in a State of Disobedience to *Christ*;  
 and since he who is in a State of Disobedience  
 to *Christ*, is not fit, or qualify'd to be *admitted*  
 a Member of *Christ's visible Church*; he who  
 does not assent to some Doctrines of *Christ* in  
 the Sense in which he taught them, is truly un-  
 qualify'd for such *Admission*. And since the  
 Superiors of the Church may not *admit* any  
 Person, who is unqualify'd for it, they may not  
*admit* any Person who does not assent to some  
 Doctrines of *Christ*, according to the *Sense in-*  
*tended in them*: And since such Assent cannot  
 appear to them, but by an open *Profession* of  
 it; they may not *admit* any Person who refuses  
 to *profess* such Assent. And since he must un-  
 avoidably appear to them to refuse to assent to  
 a Doctrine of *Christ* in its *intended Sense*, who  
 refuses to assent to it in that Sense which they  
 in their Conscience believe to be the *intended*  
*Sense* of it; they may not *admit* a Person who  
 refuses to profess his Assent to some Doctrines  
 of *Christ*, in that Sense which they in their Con-  
 science believe to be the *intended Sense* of them.  
 And since the *intended Sense* of any Doctrine  
 can be but one, whatever Doctrines all Christi-  
 ans, Superiors, and Inferiors are oblig'd to as-  
 sent to, in the *intended Sense*, they are all ob-  
 lig'd

lig'd to assent to in the same Sense; and since the Sense in which any one is oblig'd to assent to any Doctrine, must be such, as by due Attention, &c. he may certainly perceive to be the Sense of it, all Christians, Superiors, and Inferiors must be able, by a due Attention, to perceive one and the same Sense in *some* Doctrines: Whence it follows, that if the Superiors of the Church, do their Duty as private Christians, in duly attending to such Doctrines which All are oblig'd to assent to, the Sense in which they assent to them, will be the same, in which all other Christians are oblig'd to assent to them: And Consequently, whenever they use due Attention, they cannot do any one Injustice, whom they require to *profess* such Doctrines, in that Sense in which they themselves assent to them; or whom they reject as unqualify'd, for refusing to make such *Profession*. I argue farther:

'Tis acknowledg'd, that some Persons are oblig'd to understand and assent to *more* Doctrines in *their intended Sense* than Others. And the Measure of this Duty is proportion'd to the *Capacities of the Person*, and the *Assistances and Means of Information* in his Power. Whoever then, does not assent to such Doctrines of Scripture, in their *intended Sense*, as by a due Use of his Faculties, and Assistances, he might understand in such Sense, is in a State of Disobedience to *Christ*; and consequently, not fit to be *admitted* into his Church. If therefore, it can be known to the Superiors of the Church, that a Person does not assent to such Doctrines of *Christ* in their *intended Sense*, as by a due Use

Use of his Faculties, &c. he might so understand; such a Person they may justly look upon, as not fit to be *admitted* into *Christ's* Church. Now, tho' the Superiors of the Church are but Men, and not able exactly to determine the Extent of every Man's Faculties, yet they may proceed upon this equitable Presumption, that every Man has the *Common Faculties of Human Nature*, and is capable of understanding the Sense of a Proposition deliver'd in Words of common and ordinary Use in his own Language. As for *Attention*, that is in every one's Power, and therefore, may be always presum'd; and his *Assistances* being outward Applications to him, fall easily under Notice; especially, when these Superiors themselves, or others, acting by their Direction, have been his Instructors. If, therefore, the Superiors are assur'd, that any Person has been fully instructed, and any Number of such Propositions have been distinctly propos'd to him; they may equitably presume him bound to understand, and assent to such Propositions in their *intended Sense*; and may therefore require his open Profession of them as an Evidence of such Assent. If in such Circumstances, he is even ignorant of them, he must appear guilty of great *Inattention*, and may justly be remitted to farther Instruction before he is receiv'd. But if he *denies* them, he must appear to deny the Authority of *Christ*; and consequently, not fit to be *admitted* into his Church. But I go farther:

WHATSOEVER Interpretation of Scripture any Person is bound to receive upon the *Authority*  
of

of his *Teachers*, if he differs from it, he is guilty of Sin in the sight of *Christ*; he does not what he is bound to do. That such Cases there are, I here take Leave to suppose, as before prov'd. Whoever therefore, refuses his Assent to such an Interpretation as he is bound to receive upon the *Authority* of his *Teachers*, must be presum'd not fit to be *admitted* into the Church of *Christ*. Neither is it difficult from the Limitations assign'd, to determine in any Instance, whether the Person be obliged to admit the Interpretation offer'd upon such Authority, or not. I acknowledge, 'tis not generally necessary, or even prudent to require such *Interpretations* of any difficult Text of Scripture: Nay, nor all *plain* Propositions of Scripture, to be profess'd as the ordinary Condition of *Baptism*, tho' every Christian may be obliged to assent to them when fully proposed to him. The fewer the Terms of *Admission* are, beyond what are simply necessary, 'tis generally the better. All that I insist on is, that the Superiors may lawfully require the Profession of any such Proposition, as the Person may be presum'd to understand by a due Use of the Means before him. That they do him no Injury since they require his Profession of no Doctrine, but what they may equitably presume *Christ*, in such Circumstances, requires his Assent to. And when Doctrines contrary to any such Proposition, are openly spread and propagated, it becomes then prudent and necessary to guard against them, and to prevent, as far as may be,  
all



all such Enemies to Truth, while they continue such, from entering unawares into the Church.

THE second Branch of Authority here claim'd to the Governors of the Church (the prescribing what Doctrines shall be publickly *Taught*, and what not,) will also be deduc'd from the same Principles.

'TIS acknowledg'd that, " Every Christian is oblig'd to assent to some of *Christ's* Doctrines *in the Sense in which he taught them.*" This has also pass'd without Contradiction; " That some Men are oblig'd, according to their Capacities, Opportunities of Knowledge, &c. to assent to more Doctrines of *Christ*, in their *intended Sense*, than others are." Now every Preacher of the Gospel may be suppos'd not only to be a Christian, and as such, oblig'd so to assent to some Doctrines of *Christ*; but also a Christian, who has particular Advantages of Knowledge, from his Education, Study, &c. And therefore, under particular Obligations to assent to more Doctrines in their *intended Sense*, than the Generality of other Men. And whatever Doctrine of *Christ*, he is oblig'd as a Christian, or as a Christian with such particular Advantages, to assent to in the *intended Sense*, he is oblig'd as a *Teacher* to preach in that Sense. And whatever is his strict Duty, in that Character, his Superiors may, without any Injury to him, require him to do, and prohibit him acting contrary to it. All the Difficulty lies in assigning a Rule, by which the Superiors shall judge what Doctrines the *Teacher* is oblig'd to assent to, in their *intended Sense*:  
And

And in this Case they have just the same equitable Presumptions to proceed on, as in the former. That such Person has the *common Faculties of a rational Being*: That he has *attentively* apply'd himself according to the Advantages of his *Education*: And therefore, they may equitably presume him obliged to understand all such Propositions, as a rational Man, with those Advantages, may understand. He, for Instance, who may be presum'd acquainted with such ancient Customs, or Practices, as when known, plainly determine the *intended Sense* of a Place in Scripture, they may equitably suppose obliged to understand such Place in such *intended Sense*. This Sense being one and the same to all Persons acquainted with such Customs, &c. and the Presumption being just, that the *Teacher* is acquainted with such Customs, &c. the *Superiors* may justly require him to teach this Doctrine, in such Sense, as they, from their Knowledge of these Customs, perceive to be intended in it.

THIS is no more than is every Day thought equitable in other Cases. A Person educated in the Study of the *Law*, is presum'd not only to be acquainted with the Letter of the *Law*, but with such *Precedents, Decisions, or Customs*, as explain any Difficulty in the Expressions of it; and may justly be requir'd by his Superiors to proceed in the Execution of any Office committed to him, according to such a Sense of the *Law*, as such *Precedents, &c.* determine it to. And the *Superiors* of the Church may; with just the same Reason, presume a *Teacher* to know,  
what

what a Person of common Parts, and his Education might know. And may therefore, with the same Justice, oblige him to teach any Doctrine in such a Sense as a Person so inform'd, and capable of reasoning upon the Evidences before him, must needs understand it in. And the Knowledge requisite to such Conclusions may, with still greater Reason, be presum'd of the *Teacher*; if he is admitted to that Office, upon a previous Trial of his Capacities, and Improvements.

UPON the Whole, here is no such Occasion for *Infallibility*, to render this Authority reasonable, as Mr. S. and the Papists would insinuate. Let it only be granted, that the Scriptures are a Rule of all Christians Duty, in their several Stations, intelligible by the same Attention and Assistances which are necessary to the understanding any other ancient Book; and nothing farther need be supposed, than that Men have common Sense and common Honesty, in the Use of it. A Supposition necessary to render Authority reasonable in all Societies, of all Denominations. I cannot, I confess, so much as conceive a Society so fram'd, but that some Powers must be committed to the *Superiors* of it, for the due Execution of which, their Wisdom and Probity must be depended on. If we pretend to restrain them, so that 'twill be impossible for them, thro' Error or Design, to bring us under any Inconvenience; we shall find their Authority render'd useless, and incapable of doing us any Good. No other Supposition is requir'd in order to assert Ecclesiastical Government among Men, professing to live accord-

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ing

ing to the *Law of the Scriptures*, than would be equally necessary, if no Revelation had ever been made, in order to assert any Government at all, among Men professing to live according to the *Law of Reason*. As the Revelation of the *Scripture*, is the Rule, according to which every Christian is obliged in Conscience to conform his Actions; so, in the other Case, must every Man be oblig'd in Conscience to conform himself to the Dictates of *Reason*, as the *Law of God*. To say, that no Doctrine of *Scripture* is intelligible by Men, as rational Beings, in any *certain Sense*, is altogether as absurd, as to say, there is no certain Conclusion of *natural Reason*, which all Men, as rational Beings, are bound to acknowledge. As Men may differ in Interpretations of *Scripture*, so may they also differ in Conclusions of *Reason*. And if this Argument will prove, that no Man can have Authority to prescribe any *certain Sense* of *Scripture*, it will equally prove, that no Man can have Authority to prescribe any certain Conclusion of *Reason*. If the former be an Incroachment on *Christian Liberty*, the latter will be equally an Incroachment on *Human Liberty*: Neither can any Reason be offer'd, which will excuse Submission in one Case, but what will equally excuse it in the other. If it be said, that the *Superiors* of the *Church* are *fallible*, and may prescribe that, as agreeable to *Scripture*, which is not so; so also, are the *Superiors* in all *Human Societies* *fallible*, and may prescribe that, as agreeable to the *Law of Reason*, which is not so. If the Christian is bound to  
act

act according to that Sense of *Scripture*, which he is convinc'd in his Conscience, is the *intended Sense* of it, and upon no Account to act against it; so, also (supposing no Revelation) is every Man bound to act according to what he in his Conscience thinks the true Dictate of *Reason*, and not, upon any Account, to act contrary to it. As in one Case we are bound to *obey God*, speaking in the Dictates of *Scripture*, rather than *Man*; so, in the other, we are bound to *obey God*, speaking in the Dictates of *Reason*, rather than *Man*; the Right of *private Judgment* in the one Case, is the same as in the other: If therefore, any or all these Objections are conclusive against the Authority claim'd to the *Superiors*, or the Submission required from the *Inferiors* in the *Church*, they will equally conclude against all Authority in the World. And whatever Arguments will prove that the *Superiors* in any *Civil Society*, may, without injuring the Liberty of their Subjects as rational *Beings*, oblige them to act according to any certain Conclusions of *Reason*, will also prove that the *Superiors of the Church* may oblige their *Inferiors* to act according to a *certain Sense of Scripture*, without injuring their Christian Liberty. If the *Superiors* in one Society may so far judge for the *whole*, as to prescribe such Dictates of *Reason* to be obey'd by the Members of such Community, as they may equitably presume them bound to acknowledge; so also may the *Superiors* in the other, so far judge for the *whole*, as to require their *Inferiors* to obey the Precepts of *Scripture* in such a Sense, as each

in their several Stations may be equitably presumed bound to understand them in. The general Presumption, on which the Reasonableness of Authority in both Instances are founded, is the same, *viz. That there are some Laws of Reason, and some Laws of Scripture, which every Man, endued with the common Faculties of Human Nature, may, with due Attention, understand, according to the true Import of them; and either more or fewer, according to his Advantages of Improvement, Education, &c.* And unless this may be presumed, 'tis impossible to conceive how either *Scripture* or *Reason* can be a Law to Men, as *united in a Society*. The Cases compar'd, indeed, are parallel, in almost all Respects, except in the Nature of the *Penalties*, to be inflicted by each Authority: But the *Directive Powers* in each, are liable to the same Objections, are supported by the same Maxims of Equity, and must stand or fall together.



## CHAP. VI.

*Of the Legislative Authority of the Church,  
in Matters of Decency and Order.*

*Disc. p. 71.*



IN my Discourse, I affirm'd in general, that the Governors of the Church have Authority to injoin the *external Observance of all Christ's Commands, as Terms of external Communion*; and may *ordain*

*tain Laws or Rules, prescribing such visible Actions as are agreeable to Christ's Laws, and prohibiting such as are contrary to them.* This Authority of the Rulers, with respect to those Commands of *Christ*, which relate to the *Faith* to be *profess'd*, and the *Doctrines* to be *taught* in his Church has been largely consider'd. Whether Mr. *S.* has so *fully examin'd*, and *refuted* what I offer'd on these Heads, as he with great Confidence assures his Reader he has done, I am contented to leave in Judgment with that common Reason of Mankind, to which we both appeal. It remains farther to be inquir'd, what Authority the Rulers of the Church have, with respect to those *moral*, or *instituted* Duties of Christian Religion, which have usually obtain'd the Name of *Practical*. That the Rulers of the Church have Authority to require the *external* Observance of these Duties, I only asserted, without entering into the Proofs of it; because it had not, so far as I know, been ever disputed. No Man, I think, ever deny'd, that the Rulers of the Church might forbid *Murder* or *Adultery*, or require Men to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, on Pain of incurring the Discipline of the Church. Much Controversy, indeed, has been rais'd, whether the Superiors of the Church have Authority to prescribe the Manner or Circumstances of performing some moral or instituted Duties, commanded by *Christ*; and therefore to this Point I confin'd my self in my Proofs. And Mr. *S.* tho' he appears to disapprove my Assertion of an Authority in the Rulers, to require these Du-

Pag. 164.

ties to be perform'd; yet is pleas'd to confine his Objections wholly to their Right of prescribing the *Manner* of the Performance, and therefore that Point only I have occasion to reconsider.

*Iren. par.  
x. chap. 4.*

BUT I must here observe, That Mr. S. takes a Liberty of substituting the Terms *Clergy* and *Laity*, instead of *Rulers, Governors, Superiors* and *Inferiors*, which nothing said by me could warrant. 'Tis, I acknowledge, my firm Persuasion, That whoever inquires in what Hands pure Ecclesiastical Authority is lodg'd, will be oblig'd to leave it with the *Clergy*. For as in every Society, there is requisite a Distinction of Persons, and a Superiority of *Power*, and *Order*, in some over others, (as Bishop *Stillington* has well observ'd;) so the Administration of all Authority belonging to any Society, must of Necessity be lodg'd with those Persons who are thus distinguish'd by *Office*, and *Order*, from other Members. And since in the visible Society of the Church, the *Clergy* are the only Persons distinguish'd by any *Office*, or *Order*, from other Men, the Administration of all Authority belonging to that Society, must fall to them. But intending to avoid all collateral Questions, as much as might be, I made Choice of the Terms *Rulers* and *Subjects, Superiors* and *Inferiors*, &c. and never once, that I remember, of *Clergy* and *Laity*; it being sufficient to my Purpose to shew, That the Church, as a Society, must have such Authority as is claim'd, and that this *Authority*, in whatever Hands it is plac'd, is consistent with Christian *Liberty*:  
And



And the Terms I then us'd, I desire this Gentleman's Leave still to preserve. But to proceed:

THE Assertion to which he has apply'd his Animadversions, is this, " *Christ* has given Disc. p. 62.  
 " Authority to the Rulers of his Church, to  
 " injoin such a *Manner* of performing his Com-  
 " mands, as may promote *Decency, Peace, and*  
 " *Edification*. And as far as may be condu-  
 " cive to the same Ends, to prescribe, or prohi-  
 " bit such other Actions also, as are in their Na-  
 " ture *indifferent*, i. e. neither commanded nor  
 " forbidden by *Christ*." In this Sentence, he  
 is pleas'd to take Notice of a *Perplexedness* and Pag. 162.  
*Obscurity* which, I confess, I cannot perceive.  
 Having elsewhere affirm'd, That the Rulers have  
 Authority to injoin the external Observance of  
 all *Christ's* Commands; I here assert their Au-  
 thority to injoin such a *Manner* of performing  
 them, (*i. e.* such *Modes* and *Circumstances* of  
 the Performance) as may promote *Decency, &c.*  
 Words, I think, as plain and intelligible, as cou'd  
 be us'd. Against two Instances in which I assert  
 this Authority to the *Rulers of the Church*, (he  
 must permit me to keep my own Terms,) *viz.*  
 ordering the Times of *Publick Prayers*, or Disc. p. 71,  
*Fasts*, and directing the Publick Exercise of 12.  
*Charity*: He objects, That I take no Notice of  
 this *palpable Difficulty*, which every Reader  
 at first Sight cou'd start: That Christian Princes Pag. 163.  
 have almost every where Authority to appoint  
 Fasts and Thanksgivings; and the sole Power  
 of granting Letters Patent for Briefs. Now,  
 this notable Objection I might possibly apprehend  
 from some very ignorant Mechanic; but I

confess I cou'd not expect it from a Person in the least acquainted with the State of the Church for the first Centuries; when, Mr. S. well knows, the Superiors of the Church exercis'd Authority in these Instances, independently of any Civil State: That they injoin'd *Fasts*, appointed the Times of *Publick Prayer*, order'd when *Collections* shou'd be made for the Publick Use of the Church, and the Relief of the Poor; and I hope he will grant that the Authority they then exercis'd was an Authority of Right belonging to them.

THE *Prince*, before he was a Christian, might command his Subjects to *pray* to God for Assistance, in any publick national Danger, and to give him solemn *Thanks* for Deliverance from it, and appoint certain Days for such Performances. And the *Superiors* of the Christian Church, within his Dominion, wou'd doubtless have comply'd with such an Order themselves, and appointed it to be observ'd in all their Assemblies. But will this prove that they might not prescribe such Duties for other Reasons, and when they were not commanded by the Prince? The *Prince* might also direct *publick Collections for the Poor*, as a natural Duty, or as a mere civil Provision of Government: But will it hence follow, that the *Superiors* of the Church might not order such *Collections for the Poor* among them as a Christian Duty? These Powers may certainly belong both to the *Prince*, and the *Superiors* of the Church, without any Interference, and without any Necessity of supposing, as Mr. S. does, That the Exercise of them by  
one,

one, implies a Cession of Right in the other. When the State became Christian, the Civil and Ecclesiastical Powers, prescribing generally the same Things, their Distinction became less discernable. But the original Powers committed to, and exercised by the Christian Church, before such Union, remain still inherent in it. And even in our own Constitution, the *Ember-Fasts*, &c. and Collection for the Poor at the *Communion*, are deriv'd from Ecclesiastical Authority, tho' confirm'd by Civil Laws. But the best Way to avoid Confusion in this Inquiry, is to consider the Church as separate from the State; as such it actually has subsisted, and therefore is in its Nature separable from it, and may without a Fiction be so consider'd: And whatever Powers were necessary to its Polity in those Circumstances, we may conclude are the Powers properly belonging to it.

BUT Mr. S. says, he does not *deny* that the Rulers of the Church *may direct Men in those Instances*, in which he opposes their Authority; but *what he denies, is, That Christ has given them alone these Rights; so that they have a Right to make Laws, and oblige their Inferiors to the Determinations in these Cases.* But if *Christ* has given these *Rights* and *Powers* to the Church in general, as a Society, it will follow, That the Exercise of these Rights and Powers, must belong to the *Superiors* in that Society. That the Manner and Circumstances of the Performance in some Religious Duties, must be ascertain'd by some general Rules, is evident, from the Nature of the Thing. In Publick

lick Worship, for Instance, 'tis necessary that some special Time and Place shou'd be appointed, because, otherwise Men cou'd never meet together for the Performance of that Duty. And so, if *Decency, Order, and Regularity* be requir'd in such Assemblies, 'tis necessary that some general Rules shou'd be observ'd for that Purpose. For tho' it be a Matter indifferent in it self, at what Hour we meet, or in what Order Prayers, Instructions, or giving of Thanks succeed one another; yet unless some Rule be observ'd, the Performance of these Duties will be subject to Confusion. And since *Rules* to be observ'd by *All*, must be prescrib'd by some Authority to which *All* must submit, and *Christ* has no where particularly directed these Circumstances, the Power to prescribe them must be lodg'd with the Society of the Church, and consequently with the Governors of it. Whatever Form we suppose of its Polity, it must, as a *Society*, be divided into *Superiors* and *Inferiors, Governors* and *Governed*; and unless the latter submit to the former in such Instances, no *Rule* can ever be establish'd concerning them, and consequently no *Order* or *Regularity* be preserv'd in them. To the Conclusions I have here asserted, the Nature of the Thing must lead us, tho' not one Syllable had been found in Scripture relating to them. But in the Scriptures we are not (as I observ'd in my Discourse) without *Examples*, both of the *Apostles*, and the ordinary Governors of the Church appointed by them, exercising this Authority, and *Precepts* requiring the Exercise of it.

To the *Example* of the Apostles, Mr. S. makes the same Objection that I consider'd at large from *Pag.* 63 to 69, *viz.* " That the Apostles were *inspir'd*, and therefore that it cannot be inferr'd from their Precedent, that the ordinary Rulers of the Church have this Authority." Whether he has taken due Notice of what I offer'd in Answer to this Objection, or given any sufficient Reply to it, I leave to the Reader's Judgment. After I had there endeavour'd to shew, That the *immediate Inspiration* of the Apostles was so far from rendering their Example inconclusive for this Power in the succeeding Governors of the Church, that it very much strengthen'd my Inference from it, I observe farther.

THAT we have the Example of St. Paul prescribing Rules, for which he declares himself, that *he had not the Direction of the Spirit.* The Scripture, I refer'd to, was, 1 Cor. vii. 12, 13. *To the rest, speak I, not the Lord, if any Brother hath a Wife that believeth not, and she be minded to dwell with him, let him not put her away: And the Woman which hath a Husband that believeth not, and he be pleas'd to dwell with her, let her not leave him.* In answer to which, Mr. S. is pleas'd to correct the Apostle, and assert that *he had the Spirit of the Lord*, for THESE VERY RULES, in which he declares, *that He, and not the Lord, spake to them.* For he tells us, that *ŷ. 40.* the Apostle says of THESE VERY RULES, *She is happier if she abide, &c. And I think also, that I have the Spirit of God.* Now any one who reads

Disc. p. 69.

Pag. 165.

reads this, and does not look into his Bible, would imagine that the SHE, spoken of, *ŷ. 40.* was the very same SHE, the Wife spoken to, *ŷ. 13.* For otherwise, if these are *different* Rules given to *different* Persons, in quite *different* Circumstances, it will be very reconcileable, that the Apostle might give Rules in one Case, by the *Direction of the Spirit*, and in the other *without such Direction*. And it must be a great Abuse, both of the Apostle, and the Reader, to represent them as the same. But thus, whoever looks into this Chapter, will find it. *ŷ. 12, and 13.* He is giving Rules for a *Brother, who had an unbelieving Wife; and for a Christian Woman, who had an unbelieving Husband.* After which, he gives Rules for *Servants*; and then proceeds to consider *Virginity*, concerning which, also, he thus expresses himself, *ŷ. 25.* *Now, concerning Virgins, I have no Commandment of the Lord, yet I speak my Judgment, as one who has obtain'd Mercy of the Lord, to be found faithful.* And lastly, he considers a Case different from all the Former, the Case of *Widows*, concerning whom he gives these Rules, *ŷ. 39, 40.* *The Wife is bound by the Law, so long as her Husband liveth; but if her Husband be dead, she is at Liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord; But she is happier if she so abide, after my Judgment, and I think also, that I have the Spirit of God.* Now, let *δοκῶ* imply as positive an Assertion as Mr. S. pleases, (tho' no one who reads the Context will think it very clear, that it has this Force here;) yet, supposing this, with what

what Face could any one say, that the Rule this Assertion is apply'd to, by the Apostle, is, THOSE VERY RULES he gave, *ŷ. 12, 13.* concerning quite different Cases? This Inforcement of the Apostle's Judgment, is as expressly confin'd, as Words could confine it, not only to the Case of Widows, but to that particular Determination or Advice, *That they were happier, in his Judgment, if they continu'd Widows, than if they married again.* One would imagine this Author must presume Men had no Eyes, or no Bibles, before he could offer such a Representation of Scripture as this. The Reader, if he opens *these*, will presently see, who 'tis, that *attempts to deceive him*, and be equally amaz'd at the Weakness and Confidence of so manifest an Imposition. Mr. S. may use me with what Liberty he pleases, but he must permit me to be a little mov'd at such Treatment of Scripture.

Ibid.

BUT he proceeds, *Allowing that St. Paul, did deliver Rules which were not dictated by the Spirit of God, and that the People did submit without Judging for themselves to what he commanded; yet it does not follow, that Men are oblig'd to submit to the Laws of the ordinary Pastors now-a-days, in all Parts of the World, which this Argument must prove, if it proves any Thing.* I reply: This Argument, with this *Concession*, proves what it was brought for, " That the *immediate Direction* " of the *Spirit*, is not necessary to empower " the Governors of the Church to prescribe, such " *Rules* ; " and is an Answer to that particular Objection, against arguing from the example of the

Ibid.

the Apostles, viz. " That the Apostles were  
 " *immediately directed by the Spirit*, the suc-  
 " ceeding Governors of the Church, not so di-  
 Pag. 167. " rected." What Mr. S. objects farther, *That*  
*this Argument is the same, in the Mouth of a*  
*Papist; of a Ruler of the Kirk of Scotland, &c.*  
 I freely acknowledge, It was intended to be e-  
 qually conclusive for all Christian Churches in  
 the World. It is equally necessary to all Churches,  
 that *Order, &c.* should be provided for, by some  
*Rules*; and since *Rules* cannot be prescrib'd,  
 unless some body has Authority to prescribe  
 them, it is necessary that there should be in eve-  
 ry Church this Authority. And since these Pre-  
 scriptions cannot be in the least conducive to  
 these Ends, if no body is under any Obligation  
 to obey them; it follows that the Members of  
 each Church are oblig'd to obey them. But the  
*Measure and Extent* of this Obligation, will  
 fall under Consideration in another Place. All  
 that we are here inquiring after, is, whether  
 there be any such Authority, in the Church.  
 Ibid. But Mr. S. says, the *Fallacy of this and the*  
*like Arguments lies in this; That from a par-*  
*ticular Matter of Fact, an universal Right is*  
*inferred.* But if he is pleas'd to observe my Ar-  
 gument, it is this, " What Authority the Apo-  
 " stles had, as *ordinary Governors* of the Church;  
 " that, all succeeding *ordinary Governors* of  
 " the Church have. But from these *Facts*, it  
 " appears that the Apostles had Authority to  
 " prescribe such *Rules*, as *ordinary Governors*  
 " *of the Church*, therefore, &c." What is im-  
 mediately inferr'd from those *Facts* is, " That  
 " the



“ the Apostles as *ordinary Governors of the Church*, had Authority to prescribe such *Rules.*” If this be deny’d, I would ask by what Authority, did they prescribe them? That they did not act in these Instances, by the *immediate* Pag. 166.  
*Direction of the Spirit*, is allow’d. That these Acts did not relate to their *extraordinary Commission to convert the World*, is also evident; either therefore, they must act without any Authority at all, or else they must act by their *ordinary Authority*, as *Governors of the Church*: And if this be granted, the Argument so far as I can perceive, is just and conclusive, without any *Fallacy* or Defect.

WHETHER the other Inference which Mr. S. here opposes, viz. *That because the Christian* Pag. 167.  
*Laity implicitly obey’d an Apostle, who they were antecedently sure would not direct them amiss; therefore, they are obliged to submit to those, who not only may, possibly, but if we look into the Christian World, ’tis evident that they actually do misguide them.* Whether, I say, this Inference be good or not, having never made it from these *Facts*, I am not concern’d to inquire. That such Rules were prescribed by the Apostles, I asserted, but what Obedience, was paid to them, whether *implicit* or not *implicit*, I did not take upon me to determine. But the Persons with whom this Gentleman is here disputing, may, I think, very well assert, notwithstanding any thing he has offer’d to the Contrary, That whatever Submission was due to the Apostles *in these Instances*,  
 is

is also due to their Successors in the like Instances. For in whatever Instances the Apostles acted only upon their own Judgment and Discretion, they were *fallible* as other Men; and therefore, in such Instances, the *Christian Laity* could not be *antecedently sure*, that they would not direct them amiss. If it be said, they were sure the Apostles would not *designedly* misdirect them, I answer, it will be difficult for the *Christian Laity*, ever to be assur'd that any of their Governors do this, *i. e.* know the Directions they give them to be wrong, and yet give them. If therefore, they are bound to submit, whenever they have no just Presumption that their Governors *designedly* misdirect them; they must always submit, because this *Design* cannot appear; and what cannot appear *Christian, Charity* will not permit them to presume. And if they are never to submit when 'tis *possible* their Governors may misdirect them, then they were not bound to submit to the Apostles, in these Instances; because, they being *fallible* in these Instances, it was *possible* they might misdirect them. But I beg Leave here to observe, that *Decency, Edification, &c.* being Things mutable in their Nature; That being *Decent* in one Age or Countrey, which is *Indecent* in another; and That *Edifying* in some Circumstances, which would have a contrary Effect in others; it is necessary that the Rules, providing for these Ends, should be variable, *pro hic & nunc*, and consequently, that an Authority should be continu'd to the Church in all Ages, to change, reverse,

verse, or add to these Rules, according as the present State and Exigence of Things, should at all Times appear to require.

MR. S. is very importunate with me, for a Pag. 167.  
*Passage of Scripture, in which Christ vested the ordinary Rulers of the Church with such Legislative Powers.* Now, as I observ'd, if the Scriptures had been wholly silent, as to these *Powers*, the very Nature of the Church, as a *Society*, would oblige us to infer them. But I answer farther, that all the Instances produc'd from *Scripture*, of the Exercise of such *Powers*, are Proofs that *Christ* did commit such *Powers* to the Governors of the Church. And since the Ends to be provided for by these *Powers*, will always require the Care, and Superintendence of some Persons to provide for them; and since they are in their Nature variable, and cannot be duly provided for, unless some Persons have Authority to change and alter the Rules concerning them, as the State of different Ages, and Countries requires; any reasonable Man will hence conclude, that these *Powers* were committed by *Christ* to the first Governors of the Church, with an Intention that they should commit them to their Successors.

OUR Lord's Promise of *the Spirit*, to the Successors of the Apostles, *unto the End of the* Pag. 167.  
*World*, which is represented as the only Proof, brought from the *Scripture*, in support of my Assertion, is not apply'd by me, as a Proof that the Governors of the Church have such Legis- Disc. p. 64.  
*lative Powers* as I claim to them: But as an

Answer to that Objection against my Argument, from the Precedent of the Apostles, *That the Apostles were directed by the Spirit, their Successors not.* And if this Promise implies that the *ordinary* Assistances of the Spirit shall attend the Successors of the Apostles in all Ages; and if such ordinary Assistances are sufficient to enable them duly to exercise such Authority; this Argument will be found conclusive of what it is brought for. Now, that *Christ* will *abide* with every Member of his Church, who duly applies for it, in such *ordinary* Assistances of the Spirit, as will enable them to perform the Duties of their several Stations, I cannot imagine any Christian will deny. That the *Ministers* and *Governors of the Church* were specially regarded in the *Promise* here refer'd to, is evident. And to confine it, consider'd as a *Promise of the ordinary Assistances of the Spirit* to the particular Offices then committed to them, is trifling, because these Assistances are necessary to them in every Office and Duty of their Station as well as these. And, I think, it cannot be deny'd, that the *ordinary Assistances* of the *Spirit* are sufficient, with a due Application of their own Faculties, to enable them to prescribe such prudent Rules, for *Order*, and *Decency*, as are properly conducive to those Ends. From this *Promise*, then, of the Spirit, to the Successors of the Apostles, it follows, that they shall have to the End of the World, as great a Measure of his Direction, as is necessary to the Discharge of that Authority I asserted to them; and consequently, that they are

not disqualify'd for this Authority, by any Want of the *Spirit's Direction*, which is all I inferr'd from it.

FROM the Example of the Council of *Jerusalem*, prescribing Rules in Things *indifferent*,<sup>Disc.p.63;</sup> for Reasons of Peace and Expediency, I argue, that this Power belongs to the *Governors of the Church*. Mr. Sykes's great Objection, in Consequence of which he charges me with Fallacy, is, that these Rules were prescribed by the immediate *Direction of the Holy Ghost*. This Objection I there suppos'd to be made, and endeavoured to give some Answer to it, which I am at Liberty to insist on, as not reply'd to; and if my Answer to that Objection was just, I thus far, at least, impos'd no Fallacy on the Reader, in this Argument, because, he will see, that the Conclusion is inferr'd from it, granting all that is affirm'd in the Objection.

BUT I beg leave to observe, from the Scripture Account of this *Council*:

I. THAT as the Decrees there resolv'd on, are said to have *seemed good unto the Holy Ghost*, so they are also said to have *seemed good unto them*<sup>Acts xv. 28.</sup> (the Persons assembled;) which implies, that they had a distinct Authority of their own, in this Affair, besides what was given to their Decree, by the Approbation of the *Holy Ghost*; for otherwise, it had been superfluous for them to have added, after they had said, it *seem'd good to the Holy Ghost*, that it *seem'd good also to us*. And agreeably, the Appeal from the Church at *Antioch*, upon which this Council was assembled,

was not to the *Holy Ghost*, whose Pleasure might have been known at *Antioch*, as well as at *Jerusalem*, by consulting *Paul* and *Barnabas*, Persons whose Inspiration was acknowledg'd; but the Appeal was made to the Church, the

A&S xv. 2. *Apostles* and *Elders* at *Jerusalem*, as the ordinary Recourse, for the Decision of any emergent Questions. To say, that there were more inspir'd Persons at *Jerusalem* than at *Antioch*, will signify little, for the Decision of one inspir'd Person, is as much the Dictate of the Spirit, as of twenty: The same Spirit would certainly give the same Sentence from the Mouth of one Man, as of many. It is therefore plain, that this Appeal was not made to the *Apostles*, and *Elders* at *Jerusalem*, merely as inspir'd Persons, but as *Governors of the Church*: And this Appeal is a manifest Proof, that this was the primitive Order, settled in all Churches, that whatever Difference could not be reconciled by the Authority of a particular Church, should be referred to a more general Assembly.

2. I observe, that this Appeal was to the *Apostles* and *Elders*, *Acts* xv. *ŷ*. 2. and at *ŷ*. 6. it is said, the *Apostles* and *Elders met together, to consider of this Matter*. And in the next Chapter, the Decisions are said to be the *Decrees that were ordain'd by the Apostles and Elders that were at Jerusalem*, without any Mention of the *Brethren*, or the rest of the Church; neither can it be concluded from the

A&S xvi. 4. *Words* Mr. S. refers to, that the *Brethren* or the rest of the Church had any Authority in the making these Decrees. The Words are, *Then it pleased*

2

pleas'd the Apostles and Elders, with the *Acts xv.* whole Church, to send chosen Men of their <sup>22, 23.</sup> own to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, &c. and wrote Letters after this Manner, The Apostles, and Elders, and Brethren, send greeting, unto the Brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, &c. From which Words, nothing more can be inferr'd, than that the Brethren approv'd the Message, and the Persons it was sent by, and join'd their *Salutation* to that of the Apostles and Elders. An *Approbation of Consent*, I can acknowledge they gave, but such as did not imply any *Authority*: Agreeably to the Usage afterwards prevailing in the Church, in *Councils* in which any of the Laity were present, in which their Subscriptions are in a distinct Form, from those of the Bishops or Clergy, and without Authority; *Consentiens Subscripti*, or some equivalent Terms.

As a Scripture-Instance of this Authority in Things indifferent, exercised by Persons who were not Apostles, I refer to that general Direction sent by St. Paul to the Church at *Corinth*, *Let all Things be done decently, and in Order*; in which he only in general directs the <sup>1 Cor. xiv. 20.</sup> Ends, to be provided for, but leaves the prescribing such particular *Rules*, as might conduce to these Ends, to the Superiors of that Church. Jointly with this, Mr. S. chuses to consider another Passage, six Pages distant, for this judicious Reason, because it contains a different Argument. But having already answer'd all he observes upon this join'd Passage, I shall only consider his Objections to my Argument from

Pag. 170. this general Direction of St. *Paul*; to which he answers, *This Direction is not given to the Superiors of the Church only, but to the Brethren mention'd in the preceding Verse, to all that are sanctify'd in Christ Jesus, and called to be Saints, Chap. i. v. 2.* I reply,

1<sup>st</sup>, THAT the Apostle might very well use the Appellation of *Brethren*, tho' he address'd himself only to the *Superiors* of that Church; and therefore, it cannot be inferr'd from his using that Appellation, that he did not address this Direction only to *Them*. Much less can it be inferr'd from the Address, at the Beginning of this Epistle. For this Epistle containing Directions for all Orders of Men, in that Church, for *Prophets* and *Teachers*, as well as inferior Christians, it was proper it shou'd be inscribed to *all*: But it will not follow from this Inscription, that the Duties prescrib'd to *one*, will belong to *another*. But,

2<sup>dly</sup>, SUPPOSING this Direction was given to the *Brethren*, in a Sense inclusive of the *whole Church*; yet the very Nature of the Direction given, is such, That the Execution of it must of Course belong to the *Superiors* of the Church: For *Order* and *Decency* cannot be provided for, without the Observance of some *Rules*. Now, suppose the Members of the Church of *Corinth*, to have been at that Time in a State of the utmost Equality, and Independency on one another, that cou'd consist with their being a *visible Society*; That the Polity they were united in was purely *Democratical*: It cannot be conceiv'd how any Rules cou'd be establish'd



establish'd among them, even in that State, unless the *minor* Part submitted to the *major*. That every single Member shou'd agree in Judgment concerning Matters of Prudence, and Discretion, such as Rules for *Order* and *Decency* are, is never to be expected; and consequently, unless the Judgment of some, be over-rul'd by the Judgment of others, the Judgment of the *minor* Part, by that of the *major*, no Rule can ever be establish'd. This *major* Part, are properly the *Superiors* in such a Society, to whom the Authority of prescribing such Rules must belong; and every Member of the Society, must be oblig'd to observe those Rules, or else they can never be effectual to the Ends they are intended to provide for. Imagine what Form of Polity you will in this Society, there must be *Superiors* and *Inferiors*, or else it will be no Society; and unless the *Inferiors* are in these Instances, concluded by the Judgment of the *Superiors*, no *Rules* can ever be prescrib'd, and no *Order* or *Decency* can ever be provided for: And the farther we recede from the Form of a *Democracy*, this Authority must still be lodg'd in fewer Hands. Admitting then that this Direction was given to the *whole Church*, the Nature of the Thing requires us to understand it thus; That the *Superiors* were hereby directed to *prescribe* such Rules, and the *Inferiors* were hereby directed to *submit* to them.

THE Instance of *Titus*, sent into *Crete*, with Disc. p. 707 Commission to *set in Order the Things that were wanting*, a Commission which implies Authority to ordain such Rules as shou'd be con-

ducive to that *Order which was wanting*; I apply'd

1. As an Answer to what might be objected to the *Example* of the *Apostles*, ordaining such *Rules*. For *Titus* not being an *Apostle*, and there being no Intimation that he was *immediately and especially* directed by the Spirit, in ordaining such *Rules*; this is a Scripture Instance of a Person, *not an Apostle*, exercising this Authority, and not specially *directed by the Spirit* in the Exercise of it. From whence I infer,

Ibid.

2. THAT the *ordinary Governors* of the Church, have sufficient Ground from Scripture, for the Right they claim to prescribe such *Rules*, tho' it should be granted, this Power cou'd not be inferr'd from the Practice of the *Apostles* themselves.

Pag. 172. THE *Weakness* of this Inference, Mr. S. thinks sufficiently appears, when put into *Syllogism*. If he pleases then, let him take it in this *Syllogism*:

“ WHAT *Titus* had Authority to do in the  
 “ Church of *Crete*, that the *Governors* of all  
 “ other Churches have Authority to do in their  
 “ several Churches: But *Titus* had Authority to  
 “ put in Order the Things that were wanting in  
 “ the Church of *Crete*, Therefore the *Governors*  
 “ of all other Churches, &c.” The *Weakness*  
 presum'd in this Argument, must lie in the *major*  
 Proposition, against which 'tis objected, “ That  
 “ *Titus* was immediately commission'd by an  
 “ inspir'd

" inspir'd Apostle to do this, which cannot be  
 " said of the ordinary Governors of the Church."  
 To this Objection I before offer'd in Answer,  
 " That the *Inspiration* of the Apostle, who Disc. p. 79.  
 " committed this Power to him, rather *inforc'd*  
 " than *weaken'd* this Argument, since it prov'd  
 " that 'twas a Direction of the Spirit, that the  
 " Apostles shou'd commit this Power to those  
 " whom they appointed to the Government of  
 " the Church," of which Answer Mr. S. has not  
 vouchsaf'd to take any Notice.

THE Apostle was *directed by the Spirit* to  
 commit this Authority to *Titus*; but *Titus*, for  
 ought that appears, was left to act upon the  
 common Motives of *Prudence* and *Discretion*  
 in the Exercise of this Authority; and conse-  
 quently other *prudent* and *discreet* Persons are  
 as capable of exercising this Authority as *Titus*  
 was. And since *Want of Order* is an Evil  
 which in the *Judgment of the Spirit* ought to  
 be remedied, wherever *Order is wanting*, it is  
 necessary that some Persons shou'd have Autho-  
 rity to provide for it. And if the immediate  
 Commission of an Apostle be necessary to give  
 this Authority, then after the Death of the Apo-  
 stles no Persons cou'd give it; and wherever  
*Order in Aftertimes was wanting*, the Defect  
 was incapable of Remedy. But the same Argu-  
 ment will also prove, That no other Ecclesiasti-  
 cal Power cou'd be transmitted to the succeed-  
 ing Ages of the Church. If the immediate Com-  
 mission of an Apostle be necessary to convey one  
 Power, it will be equally necessary to convey  
 all, the Consequence of which must have been,  
 that

that after the Death of the Apostles, and those appointed by them, all Ministry must have ceased, and the whole Polity of the Church have been dissolv'd: A Conclusion, which, I presume, this Author will not, and I am sure cannot defend.

Pag. 173. I hope I have shewn, That the Reasons which I offer'd for this Authority in the Church, which this Author with great Scorn ridicules, as *Attempts to Argument*, are unanswer'd by him, and truly conclusive. He appears full of *Wonder and Surprize*, first, That during these *Attempts* to prove an Authority in the Rulers of the Church, to *ordain Laws about the Exercise of Charity, and other moral Duties*, no Difference is perceiv'd by me between *Directions, Rules, &c. and Laws*. Now, he himself frequently asserts, That the Discipline of the Church ought to be exerted against *Immoralities, and wicked Livers*. These Inflictions of the Church I conceive to be *Penalties*; and since 'tis admitted, that these *Penalties* are not inflicted in Execution of *Christ's Laws*, they must be inflicted in Execution of *their own Laws*, requiring the *external* Observance of *Christ's Commands*. Now, if he has a particular Fancy to call these *Rules Directions, &c.* rather than *Laws*, he is at Liberty to chuse his own Terms; but I confess I cannot distinguish *Rules, Directions, or Precepts*, with *Penalties* annex'd to them, from *Laws*.

Ibid.

BUT his second, and greatest Surprize, is, to see a *Man pleading for a Power in the Superiors of the Church alone, to prescribe Laws*  
of

*of Behaviour in publick Worship, at the same Time when the Acts of Uniformity and Toleration shew him evidently who have Authority in such Cases. To which I reply,*

1. THE Church is here consider'd as in the same Circumstances it was in before the State was Christian, at which Time the Superiors of the Church did certainly exercise this *Power*; and the *Powers* then belonging to the Church are still inherent in it as a Society.

2. OUR *Liturgy* and *Rules* of Behaviour, prescrib'd in it, were compil'd and prescrib'd by our Ecclesiastical Superiors, and only confirm'd, with the Addition of Civil Penalties, by the Act of *Uniformity*; and therefore it cannot be so *evidently perceiv'd by this Law, who has this Authority.*

3. AS to the Act of *Toleration*, it has only taken off the *Civil Penalties* which the State before inflicted; the Offender is as liable to pure *Ecclesiastical Censure* as before, which a Christian Emperor can no more take off than a Hea-then cou'd.

BUT this Gentleman, after all his Contempt of my Arguments, and notwithstanding the Acts of *Uniformity* and *Toleration*, grants an *Authority in the Church to prescribe indifferent Actions; but not in such a Manner as to exclude the Right of private Judgment.* Now, if I have asserted this *Authority* in a Manner consistent with all the *Right of private Judgment* that Men in Society can have, I hope we  
may

may be agreed in the Conclusion, however we may differ in the Methods of proving it. Whether I have so asserted it, or not, will more fully appear, when we come to consider the *Obedience* due from the *Subject* to this Authority.

Pag. 174. He contends also, he says, for *Decency, Order, &c. the Decency, the Order of Men, not of irrational Creatures.* 'Tis a Pleasure to me to hear it, 'twou'd be a greater to see it, and I promise him never to contend for any other.


Pag. 175. But, *The Subject of this Authority*, he says, *is not ascertain'd by any of those Passages of Scripture by me produc'd.* If he means, that the *particular Rules* to be given in several Ages for these Ends, are not ascertain'd in these Scriptures, this I also agree to, and for this very Reason contend, that they must be left to the Wisdom of the Church in different Ages and Nations. But I think it sufficiently evident from the Scriptures refer'd to, that *Order* and *Decency* are Things to be provided for in the Church. That the Care of these was in the first Constitution of the Church committed to the *Governors* of it, and whoever is in any Degree acquainted with Antiquity, cannot be ignorant, that the succeeding Ages of the Church acted upon the Precedent of the first, and exercis'd this *Authority* as deriv'd to them from the first Founders of the Christian Society. Arguments from the Nature of the Thing, tho' not insisted on by me in that Chapter of my Discourse, in which I asserted this *Authority*; yet the Reader will observe, were not overlook'd by me, where I consider'd the *Obedience* due to it. From what *Principles* this  
this

this Author wou'd *determine* this Question, he leaves us to conjecture; but why They shou'd be *foreign to his present Design*, in the Title Pag. 175. of which he professes to *vindicate the Authority of the Clergy, and the Liberties of the Laity*, I cannot imagine: I suppose in a Treatise of *Trigonometry, or Conick Sections*, we may expect this matter to be clear'd.



## C H A P. VII.

*Of the Jurisdiction of the Church, being a Review of Chap. vii.*

 R. S. is pleas'd here to acknowledge Ibid. *an Authority in the Church, to censure, exclude, and excommunicate some Persons.* As to the Nature of this Power, whether he differs from me in the Sense of these Expressions, *Let him be an Heathen, and a Publican, have no Conversation with him*, unless he had explain'd himself more distinctly, I cannot certainly tell. But of the Pag. 176. *wretched Fallacy* he charges me with *imposing on the Reader, in making the scriptural Delivering over to Satan and Excommunication the same Thing*, I hope I am innocent. I said, indeed, that St. Paul excommunicated *Hymeneus and Alexander*, when the Words in the Place Pag. 199. *referr'd to are, deliver'd over to Satan*: But I conceive, that he who was *deliver'd over to Satan,*

*Satan*, whatever is meant by that Expression, was *excommunicated*. 1 Cor. v. The common Terms by which *Excommunication* is signify'd, such as, *taking him away, putting him away from among them*, are apply'd to the same Person whom they are requir'd to *deliver over to Satan*. Neither has any one, that I know of, ever question'd, whether the Persons to whom this Expression is any where apply'd, were *excommunicated*. Supposing then these Words to imply a particular miraculous Infliction at that Time attending *Excommunication*, and not afterwards to be annex'd to it; yet I might without any *wretched Fallacy* conclude from that Expression, That *Hymenæus* and *Alexander*, were *excommunicated*, and without any Intention to represent *Excommunication* and *delivering over to Satan* as equivalent Terms. But, I confess, I think this Expression capable of a Sense very applicable to the *Excommunication* of the Church at all Times. We have many and not obscure Hints in Scripture, of the World being divided into two opposite Kingdoms, one under *Christ* as its Prince or Head, and the other under the *Devil*. The Reader may see this Thought very ingeniously pers'u'd and supported by the Author of the *Critical History of the Apostles Creed*, to whom I refer him. Agreeably to this Notion, all who were receiv'd into *Christ's* Church by Baptism, submitted themselves to him as their *Lord* and *Governor*, and were admitted Subjects of his *Kingdom* and at the same Time openly renounced the *Kingdom* and Interest of the *Devil*, to which in their former unconverted

*Crit. Hist.*  
P. 141. &  
seq.



converted State they had been subject. Now when Men broke the Conditions upon which they were *admitted* into *Christ's Kingdom*, and were thereupon *expell'd* from it, I see not, why their *Expulsion* may not properly be call'd, a *delivering over to Satan*, as throwing them back into their former State; and as they were no longer Subjects of the *Kingdom of Christ*, they consequently became Subjects of that other opposite *Kingdom of Satan*. But this I offer only as a probable Conjecture, and submit it to better Judgments.

BUT whatever may be the Meaning of this Expression, Mr. S. and I shall differ little about the Nature of the Power here consider'd. If he agrees with me, as I think he does, in these Positions:

Pag. 179.

1<sup>st</sup>, " THAT this Power reaches no farther,  
 " than to exclude from the *external Privileges* Disc. p. 79.  
 " of the Church, or restore the Offender to  
 " them again.

2<sup>dly</sup>, " THAT the Governors of the Church  
 " do not pretend to execute the Laws of  
 " *Christ*, for then they must inflict the *Pe-*  
 " *nalty* denounc'd by him, *i. e.* eternal Dam-  
 " nation.

3<sup>dly</sup>, THAT as the Church cannot inflict the *eternal Penalties* of Sin, so it cannot absolve the Offender from them.

4<sup>thly</sup>, THAT the Pastors of the Church have Authority to declare to the *Penitent*, according to the *apparent Signs of Repentance* in him,

him, that his Sin remitted, or retain'd by God\*.

Mr. S. agrees also farther, that the Church may *Censure, &c. all Persons who openly violate* Christ's moral *Laws*. I cannot therefore but wonder, he should deny the Church's Authority to direct the *open Observance* of Christ's moral *Laws*, by its own *Laws*, and forbid the *open Violation* of them. For, as I observ'd before, these *Censures* are *Penalties*, and all *Penalties* must be inflicted in Execution of some *Law*. Now, he admits that the Governors of the Church may not execute *Christ's Laws*: I would fain know then, in Execution of whose *Laws* these *Penalties* are inflicted? I assure myself, he will assign none but the *Laws* or *Canons* of the Church. But to proceed:

Pag. 177. THE Points on which we differ, as to this Branch of Ecclesiastical Authority, relate wholly to the Application of the Censures of the Church. Mr. S. cannot allow, that Persons are censurable, or ought to be subject to the Penalties of the Church,

I. WHO are Transgressors in Point of indifferent Actions, enjoin'd for the sake of Peace and Order.

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\* Mr. S. here offers me a Correction, that instead of *apparent Signs of Repentance*, I should have said *real Repentance*; I thank him for the Favour, but cannot make Use of it, because the Pastors of the Church cannot judge of his *real Repentance* any other Way, than by the *apparent Signs* of it, according to which, therefore, they must unavoidably proceed.

2. WHO

2. WHO offend in the *external Profession of their Faith*, i. e. *profess a Faith contrary to what the Rulers of the Church require.*

*Lastly, WHO openly Teach such Doctrines as are contrary to the Faith prescrib'd by the Rulers.*

IN Opposition to me, on these two last Points, which he chuses first to take into his Examination, he offers nothing in his 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>d</sup>, 3<sup>d</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> *Observations*, but the self same Arguments which he before urg'd against the *Authority* of the Rulers to require such Articles to be *profess'd*, and such Doctrines to be *taught*, as they in their Conscience believe the Scriptures require Christians according to their Stations to *profess* or *teach*; which Arguments I shall look upon as already consider'd and reply'd to.

IN his 5<sup>th</sup> *Observation* he suggests, *That this* Pag. 180:  
*Power of Censure and Punishing*, thus apply'd, *can answer no End, but the establishing Hypocrisy by a Law, and beating down all the Supports of Truth and Honesty.* I reply, It manifestly answers these great Ends, the preserving the *Peace* and *Purity* of the Church; which, as I have shewn, can never be preserv'd, if Persons holding all manner of Opinions are to be receiv'd into the Church, and, when receiv'd, must be permitted to preach and spread what Doctrines they please. And as for promoting *Hypocrisy*, this Charge will lie equally against all Securities taken by any Society from those admitted into it, either by *Oaths*, *Subscriptions*, or *Professions*. For all who design to disturb

the Peace, or subvert the Laws of such Society, are by these Provisions put under the grievous Hardship of turning *Hypocrites*, before they can gain so considerable an Advantage to their Designs, as being admitted Members of it. But these *Laws* do not encourage, and much less *establish Hypocrisy*. The *Law* supposes so much common Honesty left among Men, that they will not prevaricate with their Consciences, falsify their *Oaths* and *Subscriptions*, and equivocate themselves into Perjury; but if they will do it, it is not the *Law*, but their own *Wickedness*, that makes them *Hypocrites*.

Pag. 180,  
181.

HE objects farther, *That 'tis not in a Man's Power to believe what another would have him to believe, unless he can produce Evidence sufficient to raise in him that Belief. If sufficient Evidence be produc'd, the Point is certainly gain'd, and Men will believe.* In which Argument, neither Proposition is universally true: For, 1<sup>st</sup>, 'Tis not indeed in *any one's Power to believe* what he evidently perceives to be false. But I have largely shewn, that in many Instances Men are oblig'd to believe upon *Authority*, when they cannot percive any *Evidence* from the Nature of the Thing, *sufficient to raise in them that Belief.* 2<sup>dly</sup>, That *Evidence* is *sufficient* for the Conviction of any Person, which a reasonable Man in his Circumstances ought to admit. Now will this Author assure us, that when *such Evidence* is offer'd, the *Point will certainly be gain'd, and Men will believe?* Will no one, through Passion, Prejudice, or Obstinacy, refuse *such Evidence?* Our  
Blessed

Blessed Lord certainly offer'd *sufficient Evidence* of his Mission to the *Jews*, and yet *the Point was not certainly gain'd*, neither *did they believe*. He must find better Premisses than these, before he will be able to infer his Conclusion; that 'tis *Tyrannical* and *unjust* in the Governors Pag. III. of the Church to *censure* or *punish* any one for refusing to profess what they in their Conscience think the *Scripture* requires him to believe.

BUT let us see what he offers farther against this Authority, *Page 200*, where he resumes this Question again: He grants, *They ought to be look'd upon by Christians as Heathens and Publicans, who will not believe any Doctrine taught by Christ, as much as they ought, who will not practise any Law commanded by him; and there is exactly the same Reason for both*. Now, I presume, it is not the bare repeating so many Words, but the assenting to the Proposition express'd by those Words which *Christ* requires. If the former were all that is requir'd, a Parrot might make as good a Profession of Faith as a rational Being; but if the latter be what *Christ* requires, then he who does not assent to the Proposition contain'd in his Words, is in his Sight a *Heathen*, &c. The Proposition affirm'd, or deny'd in *Christ's* Words, is the Doctrine of *Christ*: He, therefore, who will not believe the Proposition affirm'd in *Christ's* Word, ought to look'd upon by the Church as *a Heathen and a Publican*. But Mr. S. thinks, professing the *very Words* of Scripture ought to satisfy the Church. Let us

Gr. Myst.  
p. 206.

take, for Instance, these Propositions, *Jesus is the Christ; He was crucified; Rose again from the Dead*. Every Word and Sentence of Scripture, in which these Articles are deliver'd, the most Heretical among the *Quakers* will profess their Assent to; but then they mean only this, *That Christ is an internal Principle of Light within them, that his Crucifixion and Resurrection are nothing else but the Mortification and Regeneration of every Believer*. So G. Fox tells us, *If there be any other Christ than he which was crucify'd within, he is a false Christ: That the true Christ is crucify'd, and risen within, and that none but Reprobates and Devils make a Talk of Christ without; and in the next Page, Christ is not distinct from his Saints*. Now, are these the Doctrines of *Christ*, or are they not? If they are not, if they are contrary to the Doctrines of *Christ*, as I hope Mr. S. will agree that they are, then the Persons understanding these Scriptures in such a Sense, may justly be look'd upon as *Heathens and Publicans*; and notwithstanding their Readings to profess the *Words* of Scripture, unfit to be admitted or continu'd in the Church. And when such Doctrines are commonly spread and propagated, may not the Church justly suspect, that the Persons offering themselves for Admission, may have been corrupted by them, and insist on a more explicit Declaration of Assent to these Articles? Proposing the *bare Words* of Scripture to be profess'd, is, in such Cases, no Test or Trial of *Mens Faith*; for these they are prepar'd to assent to, but in a Sense directly contrary to the

Doctrine

Doctrines taught in them. If therefore Persons holding Doctrines contrary to the Doctrines taught by *Christ*, ought to be excluded from the Church, it is necessary to require their Profession of these Doctrines of *Christ*, in such Words, as they are not so prepar'd to elude. When there is no Reason to suspect that the Words of Scripture may be understood in a Sense contrary to the Doctrine taught in them; it is doubtless best to preserve the *very Words* of Scripture in *Baptismal Professions*. And it was not the Church which first departed from the Words of Scripture: But when Men arose, who interpreted the Words of Scripture in a Sense contrary to their known Meaning, it became necessary that the Church should assert the Verities contain'd in those Scriptures, not in the Words of Scripture, which were perverted, but in other Words more explicit: And in such Cases, professing the *very Words* of Scripture, could with no Reason be thought a sufficient Proof that a Person did not hold a Doctrine contrary to the Doctrine of *Christ*, or *deny the Doctrine of Christ*.

With respect to *Publick Teaching*, this Caution is still more necessary. For it being allowed to the Teachers, in the Execution of their Office, to depart from the Words of Scripture, and *explain* or *interpret* them in other Words, the Church can never be secur'd, that they will not contradict a Doctrine of *Christ*, by their professing or subscribing to the *Words of Scripture*. In their *publick preaching* or *interpreting* of Scripture, 'tis certain they may depart from the Meaning of Scripture, and assert Doc-

trines contrary to those taught by *Christ*, and, consequently, *deny a Doctrine taught by Christ*; and if they do so, Mr. S. allows that they *ought to be look'd upon as Heathens and Publicans*. If the Hardship lies in this, that the Governors of the Church are made the Judges, when any *Teacher* does *thus deny a Doctrine of Christ*; I answer, unless this Judgment be left to some Persons or other, here is a Rule given, which can never be of any Use or Application. If it be said that the Application is left to every *private Christian*: I answer,

1<sup>st</sup>, THAT Christians of inferior Education, are oblig'd, as I have shewn, in many Instances to receive the Interpretations of Scripture, or what are the Doctrines of *Christ*, from *Authority*; and therefore, in such Instances, can only know from *Authority*, what Doctrines are contrary to them; and, consequently, what *Teachers* they are to avoid. But,

Ap. Iren.  
p. 28.

2<sup>dly</sup>, WHEN we consider the Church as a Society, the Infliction of these Censures must necessarily belong to the *Superiors* of it. For, as Bishop *Stillingfleet* very justly argues, *I cannot understand, how it should be a Duty in Christians to withdraw from every Brother walking disorderly, and yet the Church Officers not to have a Power to declare such a Person to be withdrawn from, which amounts to Excommunication*. Excommunication is excluding or suspending from the outward Privileges of the Church, as a Society, which the arbitrary *withdrawing* of particular Persons, according to their  
several



several Opinions, could never effect. This Duty, indeed, of *withdrawing* from criminal Persons, unless it be under some common Direction, instead of preserving the *Peace* and *Purity* of the Church, must fill it with the utmost Disorder and Confusion, and render even the common Assemblies for publick Worship impracticable; whilst one would esteem himself bound to *withdraw* from this Man, another from that, &c. If therefore this Punishment is to be at all inflicted, it is necessary it should be inflicted by the Governors of the Church.

THAT the Church has the same Authority to censure and punish Persons offending against the Doctrines of *Faith*, as those who offend against the *moral* Commands of the Gospel, besides the Reasons taken from the Right of the Church to prescribe in these Instances, and the Necessity of it to preserve the Peace of the Society, I argued also from the Examples and Directions of Scripture. St. Paul, I say, excommunicated *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, for teaching Doctrines contrary to the *Faith* of Christ. To which 'tis answer'd: *They maintained no future Resurrection; which tended to root out Christianity, and was, in effect, teaching that Jesus was not the Christ.* That this Doctrine was *inconsistent with the Profession, that Jesus was the Christ*, I reply,

I. THEY admitted the *Words*, in which the Doctrine of the *Resurrection* was delivered, and erred only in interpreting them, as most of the *Gnosticks* did, and as some at least of the *Quakers* do now, *viz.* that the ἀνάστασις ἐκ νεκρῶν

signified only the *παλιγγενεσία*, or *Spiritual new Birth* of the Christian. According to Mr. S. therefore, all these Persons were very innocent, and undeserving the Censure of the Church; because they would readily profess the Words in which *Christ* had taught this Doctrine, and refus'd only to profess what they call'd *human Interpretations*. And as for the *Inconsistency of this Doctrine, with the Profession, that Jesus is the Christ*, if Mr. S. had been then living, and propos'd this to them, they would have told him that they were ready to profess their Faith to *this Proposition*, and have explain'd it in a Sense consistent with their Doctrine of the *Resurrection*. If he had insisted, "Nay, but the Words of *Christ* plainly affirm, that all who are in their Graves shall rise again at the End of the World," they might have reply'd, that 'twas possible, he might understand them in that *gross carnal Sense* which they oppos'd; but he must excuse them, they could not agree to his *human Interpretation*, because their own Sense appear'd evidently to them to be meant in *Christ's Words*. They might have reminded him, that *no Doctrine of Christ is capable of any certain Explication, whenever we leave the very Terms in which it is deliver'd*; and that they had as much Right to censure him, for not admitting their Explication, as he had to censure them, for not admitting his. Whatever Answer Mr. S. will be pleas'd to give to this Expostulation, I will promise him to apply to other Doctrines, besides that of the *Resurrection*.

2. I agree with this Author, that *denying the Doctrine*

*Doctrine of the Resurrection tends to root out Christianity*; but the same evil Consequence I also apprehend from the Denial of other Articles of our Faith. *If Christ is not come in the Flesh, if he was not crucified, if he was not buried, if he did not ascend into Heaven, if he did not send the Holy Ghost, the Labour of the Preacher, and the Faith of his Converts, is also vain, and the History of the Gospel is a Fable: And consequently, this Argument will equally prove that Men ought to be excommunicated for denying or preaching contrary to these Articles, as for denying the Article of the Resurrection. And for just the same Reason that any Person may be excommunicated for opposing the true Meaning of the Article of the Resurrection, tho' he owns it in the Words of Scripture, he may also be excommunicated for opposing the true Meaning of any of these Articles, tho' he may own it in the Words of Scripture. This is what Irenæus and Tertulian complain of in the Hereticks of their time; That they would agree to the Words of Scripture, but in their Doctrine, explain'd them in a Sense contrary to that in which they were taught by Christ and his Apostles.*

BUT he objects farther, That these Persons, excommunicated by *St. Paul*, besides their Error in Faith, had *put or driven away a good Conscience, and therefore were immorally dishonest Men, and known to be so by the Apostle*; for Proof of which he refers to *1 Tim. i.* where the Apostle charges *Timothy* to hold Faith and  
*a good*

*a good Conscience, which some having put away, concerning the Faith have made Shipwreck, of whom are Hymenæus, &c.* Now if we place the *Comma* after *Faith*, the Sentence will run thus,  *Holding Faith and a good Conscience, which some having put away concerning (or asto) Faith, have made Shipwreck, &c.* In which Reading of the Place, the putting away a good Conscience, is confin'd to *Faith*, and does not include that they had put away a good Conscience in any other Respect. But reading it with a *Comma*, as it usually stands, the *Shipwreck* they had made is confin'd to *Faith*; neither can it be concluded from this Place, that they were in any other Respect *immoral Men*, or *fully known by the Apostle to be so*. But whatever they were, as to other Parts of their Character, 'tis manifest, that what offended the Apostle, was their *blasphemous Doctrines*; and accordingly, the Reason he gives, why he *delivered them over to Satan*, is, not that they might learn to be sober, just, or temperate, but that they might *learn not to blaspheme*. And when he mentions their Crime in another Place, all he says of them is, *That concerning the Truth, they had erred and overthrown the Faith of some*. But I agree with Mr. S. that they were *immoral Men*, for that very Reason, because they were *Hereticks*; and for this I have the Authority of the same Apostle, who, *Gal. v.* reckons *Heresies* into his Catalogue of the *Works of the Flesh*, and declares that they who are guilty of this Crime, shall be excluded from the Kingdom of God, as well as those

2 Tim. ii.  
18.

those who are guilty of *Murder, &c.* From whence I take leave to infer, that they ought equally to be excluded from his Church.

To my Argument, from the Apostle's Command to *Titus*, to reject an Heretick after the first and second Admonition, he objects: Disc p.84.  
Tit.iii. 10.

I. THAT the Word is not *excommunicate*, 'tis *παραισ*, which he translates *avoid, shun*. The common *Lexicons* would have told him, That *παραισ* has many Times a greater Force than this, and is used to signify even the *Divorce of a Wife*, and therefore might justly be translated *reject*. But the Objection is trifling, and the Words *avoid*, or *shun*, if we consider them as spoken to a Governor of the Church, will imply not only that he should *avoid* them himself, but declare them Persons to be *avoided*, and *withdrawn from*, which will amount to *Excommunication*. But, Pag. 202.

2. HE says, the Character of this *Heretick* in the next Verse, is, That he is *subverted, and sinneth, and is self-condemn'd*. But 'tis impossible to prove a Man sins, who holds a Doctrine contrary to the establish'd one, unless you can know his Heart, and know that he is self-condemn'd; and unless he has these Properties he is not the *Heretick* we are to avoid, nor are we authoriz'd by this Passage to treat him otherwise than as a Brother. This Gentleman must permit me to wonder a little in my Turn, how he could fall into such a strange Exposition of Scripture as this. *Titus* is here commanded to reject a *Heretick*; but this *Heretick*, it seems Pag. 203.

seems, was such a one, as it was impossible for him ever to find out. Let us take the *Heretick*, which this Author himself says ought to be avoided, viz. He who *refuses his Assent to the Words of Scripture*. Now, how shall we find out, that the Man who does this, is *self-condemn'd*? This, it seems, is *impossible, unless we can know the Heart*; and yet unless we can know this, we are to treat him as a Brother. So that we are commanded to avoid a *Heretick*, but this *Heretick* is such a sort of a Creature, as no body can ever find out, or distinguish from one whom he is to *treat as a Brother*. But suppose this *Heretick* should tell us, That he did not believe what he himself affirm'd, then indeed he would be *self-condemn'd*, and we might know it; but he must be a Fool of a *Heretick* who would declare this, unless he intended to recant, and renounce his Errors: And whenever he did this, he would no longer be a *Heretick*, no longer be to be avoided; and therefore being *self-condemn'd* in this Sense, would be so far from a Reason why we should avoid him, that it would be a Reason why we should *not avoid* him, but *treat him as a Brother*. The plain Meaning of this Expression, is, that which *Cyprian* \*, and all others, who make Sense of it, have given us, “ That such a  
 “ Person having broken the Peace and Unity  
 “ of the Church, has anticipated the Sentence

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\* *Hic enim reus sibi erit qui non ab Episcopo eiectus, sed sponte de Ecclesia profugus, & Hæretica Præsumptione à semetipso damnatus.* Cyp. Ep. 69. p. 182.

“ of the Church, and confess’d the Justice of  
 “ his Exclusion.” He is in the common Legal  
 Phrase, *ipso facto*, excommunicated. Agreea-  
 bly to this Exposition, the same Father argues  
 in another Place †, “ How strange is it that any  
 “ one should think they ought not to be *con-*  
 “ *demn’d* by us, who, as the Apostle testifies,  
 “ are *condemn’d* by themselves?” As this is a  
 plain easy Sense of this Place, so I think ’tis ca-  
 pable of no other. This is the *Heretick* we  
 contend ought to be censur’d by the Church,  
 who divides and seduces the Members of it by  
 his Doctrine, *overthrowing the Faith of some,*  
 and endeavouring to *draw Disciples after him;*  
 such a Person, if after *Admonition* he is incorri-  
 gible, we think the Governors of the Church  
 ought to exclude from the Privileges of the  
 Church, and the Society of Christians.

To my Argument from *Christ’s* reprov-  
 ing the Bishops of *Pergamus* and *Thyatira*, for  
 suffering those who taught the Doctrine of *Ba-*  
*laam*, and the *Nicolaitans*, ’tis answer’d, *The*  
*Doctrine of Balaam, the Nicolaitans, &c. are* Pag. 202.  
*expressly said to be teaching the grossest Immo-*  
*ralities, to commit Fornication, to eat Things*  
*sacrificed unto Idols: What have these of Pa-*  
*rity, or Similitude, with the openly professing*  
*a Notion, or a different Interpretation of a*  
*Text from what is usually taught in the Church?*  
*This is highly consistent with the strictest and*  
*most immediate Regard to Christ, whilst the o-*

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† *Quale est ut videantur damnandi à nobis non esse, quos  
 constat Apostolica Contestatione à semetipsis damnatos esse? Cyp.  
 Ep. 74. p. 211.*

*ther is such a Conduct as every Christian, as a Christian, is under a Necessity of abhorring, it being inconsistent with any Regard to Christ.* Now, I think, 'tis plain, these *Nicolaitans* call'd themselves Christians, because they were continued in the Church, and no doubt profess'd Obedience to *Christ*, as well as other Christians; but only in Right of *private Judgment* they explain'd his Precepts in a Sense consistent with their own Doctrines. If their Bishops, or any one else, had told them they were *wanting in their Regard to Christ*, they would have answer'd, That they paid the *strictest and most immediate Regard to Christ*: That they *immediately* referr'd their Conduct to his Precepts, and not to any one's *human Interpretations*. If the plainest Precepts against Adultery and Fornication had been shewn them, might they not have reply'd, *That only is plain, which to each Man's Apprehension appears to be so?* To us, our Sense appears the *plain* Meaning of these Doctrines, neither has any one Authority to oblige us to *teach* them in his Sense, or punish us for teaching them in our own. 'Tis an Injury to our Right of *private Judgment*, and that *Liberty in which Christ has made us free*, in which we are resolv'd to *stand fast*, and never to submit to such an Usurpation. I only desire the Favour of borrowing whatever good Answer will be made to this Plea, and by whatever Arguments any one will prove, That the Governors of the Church may censure Persons openly teaching Doctrines contrary to their Interpretations of the *moral* Commands of Scripture, I will



will take upon me to prove, That they may censure Persons openly teaching contrary to their Interpretations of the Doctrines of *Faith*, asserted in Scripture. I assure my self, that upon Comparison there will be found a just *Parity and Similitude* between the Cases; and that I had Reason to conclude, “ That the Church Disc p. 85.  
 “ has altogether the same Authority to punish  
 “ those who publickly offend against the Doc-  
 “ trines of *Faith*, as those who publickly of-  
 “ fend against the *Morality* of the Gospel.” But I think it to my Purpose, to observe here a particular Mistake of Mr. S. in affirming the *eating Things offer'd to Idols*, to be a gross, nay, the *grossest Immorality*. The Apostle has determin'd, in a distinct Debate of this Question, that 'tis in its Nature an Action purely *indifferent*, and such as was forbidden only for Reasons of Prudence and Peace, to *avoid Scandal, &c.* And therefore I beg leave to argue from this very Instance, That the Governors of the Church have Authority to censure Persons offending against *Rules of Peace, &c. i. e.* such as refuse to conform to publick Prescriptions of *indifferent Things*; which is the only Instance of Ecclesiastical Authority that remains farther to be consider'd. I Cor. viii.

IN a close Examination of this Point, Mr. S. Pag. 195.  
 observes, *That when a Man is baptiz'd, he is by that Ceremony publickly admitted into the Society of those who profess their Faith in Jesus Christ. This is all that is done, let him be baptiz'd by any Clergyman, of any Nation, or of any Notion. He is not by Baptism made a*  
 2  
 Lutheran,

Lutheran, &c. but he is only receiv'd as a Disciple of Christ. After this he is at Liberty to join himself to any People, who, in his Opinion, are the purest Worshippers, and by Means of Communion with whom, he thinks he can best edify, and most advance in Christian Knowledge. Now, tho' I cannot agree with this Gentleman, in all these Assertions, yet, that we may not wander from the present Question, I am contented for the present to admit them, and suppose the Man applying for admission into that particular Church which he thinks *the most pure*, &c. He proceeds, *If they have made Terms of Communion among themselves, and injoin these in such a Manner, as not to let any Man communicate with them, unless he conforms to their Ceremonies, 'tis evident, that they make Communion to consist in standing, kneeling, or whatever else is the Point they pitch upon.* This is so far from evident, that 'tis a great Mistake. For 'tis not the *standing, sitting, or kneeling*, which any Church enjoins as Terms of Communion, but submitting to the Authority of that Society, to prescribe *Rules for Order and Decency* in Acts of publick Worship. This Submission, I conceive to be a *Term of Christian Unity, which our Lord made*, when he constituted his Church a *visible Society*. Submitting to the Governors of the Church within the due Exercise of their Authority, is certainly a Qualification for Union with *Christ*, and therefore very fit to be insisted on as a Condition of Communion with any Church. Mr. S. has acknowledg'd, That the  
Church,

Church (by which, as I observ'd, must be meant the Governors of it) has *Authority to prescribe in indifferent Things*; and consequently this Authority, which is their Right, ought to be acknowledg'd by all who are admitted into the Privileges of that Society, of which they are Governors.

*Different Practices*, he says, *are no Breach of Unity, whilst each Man allows another to abound in his own Sense.* Different Rites and Ceremonies, in different Churches, are no Breach of Unity, whilst each Church allows other Churches *to abound in their own Sense*, or decree various Usages in indifferent Things. But when in any Church, indifferent Things are prescrib'd, (and if every Member is left to *abound in his own Sense*, if none are prescrib'd, no Order or Decency can be preserv'd,) it becomes then a *Breach of Unity* with that Church for any Member to refuse to comply with such Prescriptions. Pag. 195.

BUT, he says, these Prescriptions oblige Men *no farther than their own Judgment leads them*, and if upon Refusal of Compliance, *Penalties are inflicted*, with Relation to the Favour of God, *they continue the same as if they were allow'd Communion.* How far the Inferi- Pag. 196.ors are oblig'd to submit to these Prescriptions, and in what manner the Penalties of not submitting affect them, are Subjects consider'd in another Place; at present, I only observe, that if the Superiors have Authority to prescribe in these Instances, some *Submission* is due to this Authority.

*Disc.* p. 82. HIS next Objection is against these Words,  
 “ They (the Rulers) teach indeed, that Men  
 “ are oblig’d in Conscience, and under the  
 “ Pains of Sin, to obey all their Laws which  
 “ are not contrary to the Laws of *Christ*.”

*Pag.* 196. *Whence is it, he asks, that Men have Authority to teach such Doctrines?* I answer, from *Christ*, who constituted his Church a *visible Society*, and gave it *Authority to prescribe in indifferent Things*: For he who resists this Authority in any Thing, or in any Measure, in which he ought to obey it, resists an *Ordinance of Christ*, and sins against him, and ought to be taught so by his Instructors. And as for

*Ibid.* this Gentleman’s Consequence, *That Sin and Damnation would, upon this Supposition be entirely in the Disposal of every Church*, ’tis frivolous, and no better than this; “ Sin and  
 “ Damnation are in the Disposal of every civil  
 “ State, because the Governors in every State  
 “ have Authority to make Laws, which the  
 “ Subject is bound, under Pain of *Sin against*  
 “ *God*, to obey.” *The Standard of Obedience to the Rulers of the Church is very different*, he says, *from that here taught*. This Question will fall under Consideration hereafter, where his Objection shall not be neglected.

HAVING said, in the Words last consider’d,  
 “ That they teach, that Men are oblig’d under  
 “ the *Pains of Sin*, to obey all their Laws,  
 “ which are not contrary to the Laws of *Christ*,  
*Disc.* p. 84: “ I go on to say, Neither do they teach, that  
 “ *these Penalties* attend their Actions, as they  
 “ are Transgressions of their Laws; but as they

“ are Transgressions of such Laws of *Christ*, as  
 “ require a Submission to those who are *ap-*  
 “ *pointed to rule over them.*” By these Penal-  
 ties, I thought, I could not be understood to  
 mean any other than the *Pains of Sin*, just be-  
 fore mention’d, and which alone are spoken of  
 in that Paragraph. But Mr. *S.* has mistook me,  
 to mean the ordinary Penalties of the Church,  
 (*Suspension or Expulsion from their Communi-*  
*on,*) and since his following Harangue proceeds  
 intirely upon this Mistake, ’tis sufficiently an-  
 swer’d in the Correction of it. But upon the  
 Whole, I must observe, that this judicious Per-  
 son has here disputed only against the Authority  
 to prescribe in Things indifferent, and the Mea-  
 sures of Submission requir’d to this Authority.  
 But to the proper Question of this Place, “ Whe-  
 “ ther the Governors of the Church may exert  
 “ its Discipline against those who refuse to o-  
 “ bey these Prescriptions, he has said nothing  
 “ at all.





CHAP. VIII.

*Of the Obedience due to the Superiors of the Church; and, 1<sup>st</sup>, Of the Obedience due to them consider'd, as Teachers and Ministers, being a Review of Chap. 9.*



THE Authority of the Superiors, as distinguish'd by the *first* of these Characters, I had consider'd with so particular a Regard to the Obligations it laid on their Inferiors, that I thought the Restrictions of their Obedience must sufficiently appear from what had been before offer'd. But if my former Consideration of that Subject was not full enough, I may now, at least, hope that Defect is in some Measure supply'd.

WITH respect to their Authority, as Ministers, I consider'd the Obedience of the Subject as limited.

- Dist.*p.90. I. WHEN any Person assumes this Authority, “to whom it is not committed.”
- 2<sup>dly</sup>, “WHEN Persons duly ordain'd to this Authority, *exceed* their Commission, in the Execution of it. With Regard to the *first* of these Limitations”, I say, “That whoever takes upon him to execute *this Office*, (and the

“ the same will also hold with Regard to that  
 “ of *Teaching*,) without being duly call'd, and  
 “ appointed to it, according to the Institution  
 “ of *Christ*, has no more *Authority* in it, than  
 “ any private Christian; and consequently, no  
 “ more Regard or Submission is due to him,  
 “ than to any other private Christian”. The  
 Point here in Question, is, What Regard or Sub-  
 mission, we are bound in Conscience, or by any  
 Law of *Christ*, to pay to a Person, who takes  
 upon him to *minister in the Publick Offices of*  
*Religion*, without being *duly call'd to it, ac-*  
*ording to the Institution of Christ*. All Cases in  
 which this Defect is necessary and unavoidable,  
 are expressly *left out of the Question*; and un- Disc. p. 91.  
 der this Exception I affirm, “ That no Regard,  
 “ or Submission at all, is due to him; but that  
 “ all good Christians ought to detest and abhor  
 “ him as a Thief and a Robber, an Invader of  
 “ an Authority which properly belongs to ano-  
 “ ther.” And this I think will follow from Mr.  
*Sykes's* own Concession, That *nothing but the* Pag. 130.  
*Necessity of the Thing, can justify any Person,*  
*in meddling with the Publick Offices, who is not*  
*in the regular Methods appointed to them*. For  
 if nothing but *Necessity* can justify such a Per-  
 son *meddling with these Offices*, nothing but  
*Necessity* can justify others, in *joining with him,*  
 or acknowledging him as a Person vested with  
 such Office. If he *sins* in taking the Office up-  
 on him, they also are *Partakers of his Sin*, who  
 join with him.

IN Answer to me on this Point, Mr. S. says, Pag. 206.  
*That want of Commission in this Office, is no-*

A a 3 *thing*

*thing else but not being regularly appointed to it.* This I agree to. But he goes on, *Had Christ, or his Apostles, instituted one certain Way, and had they enjoin'd it, as the only one, which shou'd necessarily and perpetually be follow'd throughout all Ages; then, indeed, to depart from that Method, had been to rebel against the Authority of Christ, who appointed it. But has this ever yet been proved to be the Case?* Now, What is all this to the Purpose? Whether this has ever been prov'd, or not, my Assertion is not affected by it. I affirm, That whoever *assumes* this Office, without being duly call'd, according to the Institution of *Christ*, and where there is no *Necessity* of departing from that Institution, has no Authority. Now, whether *Christ* or his Apostles have instituted *One* or *Ten* Ways, my Argument is precisely the same. The special Ways, or Methods of Appointment, as a Question foreign to my Design, I did not consider. But this being confess'd an Authority to be *deriv'd from God*, I have asserted, and I presume offer'd some Proofs for it, That he who is not either *immediately call'd by God*, or according to a *Method appointed by Christ*, can have no *Authority from God*. And my Conclusion, " That  
 " therefore no *Submission* can be due to him,  
 " as a Person so *authoriz'd*, will equally hold,  
 " whether the Methods appointed for the Con-  
 " veyance of this Authority be few, or many,  
 " *One, or Ten*".  
 But tho' I did not enter into the Question, concerning the Methods of Appointment, instituted



tuted by *Christ*, or his Apostles; yet I think Mr. S. has determin'd it for *Episcopal Ordination*, and plainly asserted our Obligation to adhere to that Method, as far as I have asserted our Obligation to adhere, indefinitely, to some Method instituted by *Christ* or his Apostles. *He* Pag. 76.  
*contends*, he says, *for the Regularity, and Apostolical Institution of Episcopal Ordinations*.  
 And in another Place, he says, *That nothing* Pag. 130.  
*but Necessity can justify any one meddling with the Ministerial Offices, who is not according to the regular Methods appointed to them*. From which two Places, compar'd together, I think it will follow, *That nothing but Necessity can justify any one meddling with these Offices, who is not appointed to them by Episcopal Ordination*. If it be said, that this was not the *only* Method instituted by the Apostles, it concerns those, who affirm this, to shew that the Apostles appointed some other. The Proof of the *Negative* in this Case, can, by no Rule of Reasoning, be requir'd from the *Respondent*. This is acknowledg'd to be a Method appointed by the Apostles; and unless it can be prov'd that they appointed also some other, this must appear to us the only one by them appointed; and this Appointment must appear *unalterable*, (Cases of *Necessity* excepted) unless it can be shewn, that they declar'd it *alterable*, and left *Authority* with some Persons to *alter* it.

OF a Person intruding into the Ministry without being duly appointed to it: I say, *However he may appear qualify'd by his Gifts and Abilities, yet till he is regularly admitted, he* Disc. p. 96.

*has no publick Character, his Administrations are null and void, as to any Authority. This*

Pag. 208. *Mr. S. calls incircling my self in Mists and Clouds; Words inserted on purpose to divert the Reader from the Point in Hand. Now, I confess, these Words were inserted on purpose, but 'twas to keep the Reader to the Point in Hand, the Authority of the Person Ministering, and consequently the Submission due to him: And I think my Meaning plain enough; That the Administrations of a Person so assuming, are not to be esteem'd or regarded as authoritative Acts, or of any more Value than the Acts of any private Christian; and for that Reason, his Pretensions are not to be submitted to, but disallow'd by all good Christians. This Reasoning, I acknowledge, implies that the Validity of the Administration depends, as to some Effects, on the Commission or regular Appointment of the Minister. And in the Case, supposed of a Person taking upon him the Office of the Ministry, without any Necessity, and in Opposition to the regular Ministry; I scruple not to affirm, that his Administrations are without any legal Effect, either with Respect to God, or the Church. In Baptism, for Instance, we have no Warrant from any Promise of the Gospel, to expect the Graces annex'd to that Sacrament, when administered by such a Person. The Concurrence of the Holy Spirit Mr. S. admits to be promised to the Apostles, and their Successors, in the Offices*

Pag. 168. *of Teaching and Baptizing: And I know not that 'tis any where made to any other Persons. Cases of Necessity are here expressly set aside:*

*And*

And the Person who, without Necessity, takes upon him this Office without a regular Appointment, to it, 'tis confess'd *cannot be justify'd, i. e.* must *sin* in so doing. All his *Administrations* therefore are *Sins*; and it cannot be presum'd, that *Christ* will, by his Grace, concur with, and ratify a *sinful* Act, done in Opposition to that Order, and in Contempt of that *Authority*, which he has establish'd; unless we suppose the mere Act of *Baptism* to operate like a Charm. How far God may, in any Instance, by an uncovenanted Act of Grace, concur with and ratify such Administrations to the *Person receiving* them, I do not pretend to determine: But I say, That according to the Covenant of the Gospel, no Promise is made to them, and they have no *legal* Effect; and this I think a good Argument why every Christian should detest and fly from such a Person, and disown his Ministry.

BUT with Respect to the *outward Society* of the Church, 'tis evident the Administrations of such Person can have no manner of Effect at all. The *outward* Effect of Baptism is Admission into the *visible* Society of the Church: Now, no Person can be admitted into any Society, but according to the Rules of that Society, and by Persons appointed or allow'd to admit Men into it. He, therefore, who has no Authority for this Purpose, in the Society of the Church, can no more admit a Man into the Privileges of it, than any private Subject can make a Man a Denizen of *Great Britain*. This is a publick Act of the Society, and must be transacted by the publick

publick Authority and Officers of it. Whatever Authority any Man may have to give Baptism, on any other Accounts, yet as an Initiation into the *visible Society* of the Church, no Man can give it with Effect, but he who is authorized to do it. *Lay Baptism* was never allow'd, but in Cases of *Necessity*, and even in those Cases, the Allowance of the Church made it an Act of the Church; neither was the Person so baptized admitted into the full Privileges of Communion, without a particular Approbation, and *Confirmation* of the Act, by the Authority of the Church. This Point I think so manifest, that it need not be farther insisted on. And this I might justly use as an Argument why Christians should avoid and disown the Ministry of a Person, who, without any *Appointment*, and without any *Necessity*, assumes the publick Offices of the Church. " That his Administrations are  
 " of no Effect to *admit* Men into the *visible*  
 " *Society* of the Church, or as Acts of *Communion* with it.

Pag. 208. BUT Mr. S. will have it, that the Question here, is, *what Obedience is to be paid to the Teacher, suppose him to be regularly ordain'd.*

Pag. 209. To this he thinks it a *very cautious Answer* to say, " When any Person assumes this Authority, to whom it is not committed, the Subject is excused from Obedience to Him."

Now, to this Question, 'tis plain, I did not intend this to be any Answer at all, *cautious* or *incautious*; because, as I said, in the first Words of that Chapter, I look'd upon this Question as answer'd before, and propos'd here, only to consider

consider the Limitations of the Subjects Obedience. 1<sup>st</sup>, When the Authority was *irregularly assum'd*. 2<sup>dly</sup>, When it was *irregularly* or *unduly executed*. Under both these Heads, my principal View was to the Office of the Superiors as *Ministers*; tho' in Application of what I offer'd on the former Head, I included the Office of *Teaching*. But under the second Head, I confin'd my self to the Authority of the Superiors, to *Minister in the publick Offices of Religion*. Of the Obedience due to them under this Character, I say, "That the Minister may exceed his Commission, and be guilty of such Irregularities and Defects, in the Execution of these Offices, as may excuse the Subject withdrawing from him." This Author's Observation upon this, is, *That Necessity extorted this Limitation from me, and that I have spoken short, and cautiously upon this Topick*. What he means by *Necessity*, I cannot well tell, but I assure him, the same *Necessity* that *extorted* this Limitation, *extorted* all I have asserted concerning Authority, *viz.* a full Conviction of the Truth of it, and my Duty as a Minister of *Christ's Church* to assert it. My Meaning I perceive is intelligible, and I presum'd a Point not likely to be opposed, need not be much enlarg'd on.

"How far the Subject is bound to submit to the Judgment of the Superiors, as to the Lawfulness of such Prayers or Administrations depends on the Authority of the Superiors as *Teachers*;" which having been before consider'd, with a particular Regard to the Obligations

Dist. p. 92.

Pag. 209.

ons of the Subject, I thought it sufficient to refer to it, and I hope the Review of that Part is so full; that Mr. S. may there find an Answer to his Questions; *When the Teacher can exceed his Commission, and when the Subject may refuse his Obedience.*

“ How far the Subject is to be determin'd,  
“ to the use of such Prayers and Administrations,  
“ as are directed by the *Laws* of the Church,  
“ manifestly depends on the Obedience he owes  
“ to the *Legislative Authority* of the Church.”  
And I think Mr. S. blames me without Reason, for not farther prosecuting an Inquiry here, which employs the whole next Chapter.



C H A P. IX.

*Of the Obedience due to the Superiors  
as Legislators, being a Review of the  
Tenth Chapter.*



HIS Authority of the Superiors was claim'd as limited,

1<sup>st</sup>, To direct only the *external* Action.

2<sup>dly</sup>, To prescribe only such *external* Actions as are agreeable to the *Laws* of Christ.

My View in this Inquiry was to shew, That the *Submission* requir'd from the Inferiors of the Church

Church to this *Authority*, is consistent with *Christian Liberty*, and the Obedience we owe to *Christ*. When the Superiors are acknowledg'd to require the *external* Observance of the same Things that *Christ* has commanded, it is evident that Obedience to them is consistent with our *Obedience to Christ*. It must be also consistent with all the *Liberty* that can belong to us as *Christians*; for where *Christ* has commanded an Action, we are not *free* whether we will perform it or not. The only Cases then, which can admit of Dispute, are:

1<sup>st</sup>, WHEN the Action prescrib'd by the Superiors, *appears* to be *forbidden* by *Christ*.

2<sup>dly</sup>, WHEN 'tis *doubted* whether it be forbidden or not.

3<sup>dly</sup>, WHEN 'tis confessed to be a Thing *Indifferent*, *i. e.* neither commanded nor forbidden by *Christ*.

#### S E C T. I.

*Whether the Inferior is always free from Sin, in refusing an active Compliance with such Laws of his Superiors, as appear to him contrary to the Laws of Christ.*

**M**Y Resolution of the first Case was,  
 “ When ever the Inferior believes that Disc.p.95.  
 “ the Law of his visible Superiors is contrary  
 “ to the Law of *Christ*, he is bound to decline  
 “ an active Compliance with it.  
 “ NOT, (*I say*) that he is always free from  
 “ Sin when he refuses his Obedience to such  
 “ Laws

“ Laws as appear to him contrary to the Laws  
 “ of *Christ*; because he is indispensably oblig’d  
 “ to obey some Laws of *Christ*, in the Sense  
 “ in which *Christ* intended them. When, there-  
 “ fore, his Superiors prescribe to him an *ex-*  
 “ *ternal* Observance agreeable to that Sense and  
 “ Intention of the Law of *Christ*, in which he  
 “ is bound to understand and obey it, it is not  
 “ his Persuasion will excuse him from Sin in  
 “ not obeying it; because he is oblig’d, by the  
 “ Law of *Christ*, to obey it, in the same Sense  
 “ in which his Ruler proposes it to his *exter-*  
 “ *nal* Observance. But so far as his Mistake of  
 “ the Meaning of *Christ*’s Law is excusable, so  
 “ far is he excused for not *actively* obeying such  
 “ Prescriptions of his Superiors as he thinks  
 “ contrary to *Christ*’s Law.

THE Position here affirm’d by me, and op-  
 posed by Mr. *S.* is, “ That there are some Cases  
 “ in which a Man may be guilty of Sin, in dis-  
 “ obeying a Law of his Superiors, which ap-  
 “ pears to him contrary to the Law of *Christ*.

THE Case supposed, is, “ That a Man mi-  
 “ stakes the Meaning of some Law of *Christ*,  
 “ which he was oblig’d to obey according to  
 “ the intended Sense of it; his Superiors pre-  
 “ scribe the outward Observance of such Law  
 “ according to the intended Sense of it; and  
 “ consequently the Law of his Superiors appears  
 “ to him contrary to what he apprehends to be  
 “ the Law of *Christ*.” In such a Case, I say, the  
 Man *sins in disobeying the Law of his Superi-*  
*ors*; and I think, the Reason by which I sup-  
 port this Resolution is clear and conclusive.



BUT Mr. S. answers, 'Tis *actually impossible* that any Man should be oblig'd to obey a Law of Christ, which does not appear to him to be his Law. Which is saying, That no Man, thro' *Inattention, Prepossession of Judgment, &c.* ever mistook the Meaning of a Law of Christ, which he might and therefore ought to have understood in its true Sense. Whenever this happens, 'tis evident the Man is oblig'd by the Law of Christ, which yet does not *appear to* Pag. 213. *him to be his Law.* The Consequence which He looks upon as so *great an Absurdity*, That upon this Supposition, a Man may be oblig'd to obey, and *not to obey* at the same Time, is no *Absurdity* at all, but the unanimous Resolution of all the Casuists who ever considered this Case. That the Man is brought under a *sad Necessity of Sinning*; if he acts against his present Persuasion of the Meaning of the Law, he *Sins*, in doing Violence to the Light of his own Conscience; and yet if he acts according to it, he *sins*, in transgressing a Law of Christ, which he ought to have understood. This is the Decision of A. B. Sharp, B. Sanderfon; and if a foreign Protestant's Judgment will be thought of more Weight, of \* Amefius; his Words are, *Conscientia per errorem judicans, illud esse licitum vel debitum quod est illicitum, ita ligat, ut peccet quis, si contra eam agat, & peccet etiam, si agat juxta ejus præscriptum.* Now, if the Man *sins* in not obeying such a Law, according to its intended Sense, he was certainly oblig'd so to obey

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\* Amef. De Conscientia. Thef. 22. ad Lib. I.

it: For Sin is the Transgression of a Law, which we are oblig'd to obey. And if he is oblig'd to obey the Law of *Christ* in its intended Sense, he is also oblig'd to obey the Law of his Superiors, requiring his *external* Observance of it according to that Sense; and consequently, his Persuasion will not excuse him from Sin, in not obeying it, which is the Position by me affirmed. 'Tis strange, a Person, who, as I am told, has written a Treatise to state the Case of *involuntary Error*, should affirm, *That Cases of this Kind are without Instance, and have hardly any Foundation in Nature.* What he has offer'd on that Subject I am a Stranger to; but if he has omitted the Consideration of this Case, I am sure he cannot have done it Justice. The Mistake which appears to have misled him here, is, that he supposes all Mankind to be *sincere* and *honest*, *duly attentive*, and uncorrupted by any *Passion*, or *Prejudice*, in their Inquiries into the Meaning of *Christ's* Laws. If this Supposition would hold, what he says might be true, that no Man could be oblig'd to obey a Law of *Christ*, which he did not perceive to be his Law. But the Case, in Fact, is quite otherwise; Men are *prejudic'd*, *inattentive*, &c. And in Consequence of these Defects, do actually misunderstand such Laws of *Christ*, as they might and therefore ought to have understood in their true intended Sense: And I fear the Instances of this Kind are by far more numerous, than of *Errors* properly *involuntary*. But if there are any at all, they are enow to support my Assertion, " That Men are not al-  
" ways

“ *ways* free from Sin, or that there are *some*  
 “ Cases in which Men are not free from Sin,  
 “ who refuse Obedience to such Laws as appear  
 “ contrary to the Laws of *Christ*.” Had I laid  
 it down as my *general* Rule, “ That a Man is  
 “ *never* free from Sin, when he refuses Obedi-  
 “ ence to such Laws as appear contrary to the  
 “ Laws of *Christ*, any Instance of *Involuntary*  
 “ *Error* had been properly objected. But just  
 the contrary my *general* Rule is, “ Whenever Disc. p. 95.  
 “ he believes that the Law of his Superiors is  
 “ contrary to the Law of *Christ*, he is bound  
 “ to decline an active Compliance with it,”  
 and consequently does not sin by such Refusal.  
 To which Rule I make an *Exception* of the  
 Case instanc’d in; against which *Exception* this  
 Gentleman argues with great Sagacity, by shew-  
 ing that there are Cases, in which my *general*  
 Rule holds; and thence concludes, that the  
*Rule* and *Exception* contradict one another, and  
 imply a Supposition, which he is pleas’d to say,  
*is absurd to the last Degree*. I think, I have Pag. 214.  
 given sufficient Reply to all he has offer’d on  
 this Point, except these Questions. *For what* Pag. 213,  
*End do Superiors command the Laws of Christ,* 214.  
*in the same Sense that Christ himself does?*  
*Does it not seem commanding for commanding*  
*sake, to prescribe a Law which is already pre-*  
*scribed by a Superior Authority?* Which Que-  
 stions I promise him to answer, whenever he  
 will give me a Reason why any human Autho-  
 rity should forbid *Murder*, or *Theft*, which are  
 already forbidden by the Law of God.

## S E C T. II.

*What Obedience is due, when the Inferior only doubts whether the Action injoin'd by his Superiors is forbidden by Christ.*

Disc.p.95.

**T**HE next Case, in which I consider the Obedience of the Subject, is, “ when he only doubts whether the Action required is contrary to *Christ's* Law, or not, *i. e.* Where the Appearances of Reason are so equal, that he cannot resolve on either Side. There, I think, the Authority of his lawful Governors ought to turn the Scale, and determine for an *active* Compliance; because, by obeying his Superiors, he only runs the Hazard of offending against some unknown Law; some Law, which by his *doubting* he confesses he does not know whether *Christ* has injoin'd or not, and consequently does not know whether the Action commanded be contrary to *Christ's* Law, or not; but by *disobeying*, he breaks a clear undoubted Law of *Christ*.”

Disc.p.96.

THIS Mr. S. acknowledges to have been the usual Resolution of this Case. I need not mention other Authorities for it, than those two great Names of our own Church, Archbishop *Sharp*, and Bishop *Sanderfon*. But I confess, the Objection rais'd by Mr. S. from *Rom. xiv. 23.* is material, and well urg'd, and offers some Points, which even that accurate Casuist Bishop *Sanderfon*, in his excellent Sermon on this Text, does not appear to have fully clear'd. I begin

*See Sanderfon's Judgment in one View, p. 30. He makes with some remark, concerning a double Doubt.*

with that which I think the most considerable, that this Rule, *Whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin*, is laid down by the Apostle as an *universal Rule*; and therefore binds, not only in the particular Cases it is there apply'd to, but in all *doubtful* Cases which can ever happen. Now, I acknowledge, That this being assign'd as a *Principle*, whence the Justness of the particular Direction he had given about *eating* or not *eating Things offer'd to Idols*, shou'd be infer'd, must be of greater Extent than the Action it is apply'd to; but as Mr. S. has well observ'd, whether it be *universal*, or not, must be determin'd from the *Nature of the Thing*. For

if the *Reason of the Law admits of Exception*, then there is ground to examine how far those *Limitations extend*; and notwithstanding the *Generality* or *Universality* of the Terms, the Rule cannot be extended beyond those *Limits* which the Nature of the Thing sets to it. And if there are Cases of *Doubts*, to which this Rule cannot be apply'd, these are properly *Limits* to this Rule, and it must be understood as restrained by those Exceptions. The Cases instanc'd in by Mr. S. and from which he presumes the *Universality* of this Rule must appear, neither of

them come up to the Point. The latter, in which he supposes *Kneeling at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* commanded, and the Person to think it *idolatrous, superstitious, and sinful*, is not so much as a *doubtful* Case. For the Man is determin'd, and thinks it *idolatrous* and *sinful*; and there is no Question but Mr. S. has resolv'd truly, That in him it wou'd be *sinful*,

Pag. 218.

Pag. 218.

Pag. 219.

ful, how much soever he might be mistaken. But here is not that *motus indifferens ad utramque partem*, which is the proper Nature of a *Doubt*; and therefore the Case here given, is not of a *doubting*, but of a *gain-saying* Conscience. In his other Instance he supposes a Man to *doubt whether he may eat Blood*, and that his Superiors pronounce it *lawful*. But how far the *Judgment* of our Superiors should determine our *Judgment*, as to the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness of any Action, is not the Question here consider'd; but how far we are bound to obey their *Laws*. Now, in this Case, it is not suppos'd that there is any Law of the Superiors requiring to *eat Blood*, and therefore here is only a *single Doubt*. The Man *doubts* whether he may *eat*; but there is no *Doubt* but he may *let it alone*, because the *eating* is not commanded by any Authority, *human* or *divine*. To this, and the like Cases, I suppos'd those Directions concerning *doubtful Things* ought to be confin'd, which St. Paul gives the *Corinthians*. Now, in *single Doubts*, I acknowledge the Rule of the Apostle, *Whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin*, obliges, and is a full Direction. But then, in Cases where the *Doubt* is *Double*, i. e. where we are equally apprehensive of sinning, by letting the Action alone, as by performing it, it does not appear that this Rule can possibly take

Pag. 218. <sup>w</sup> Mr. S. questions not but I casually here mistook the *Corinthians* for the *Romans*. I know not what Copy of the N. T. the Author follows, but in all I have yet seen, the whole viiith Chap of 1 Cor. treats on the very same subject with the latter Part of Rom. xiv.

place. A Man, for Instance, *doubts* he is not fit to receive the *Eucharist*, and therefore fears that if he receives, he shall incur the *Damnation* denounced against the *unworthy Receiver*. On the other Hand, he fears he shall offend against that Law of *Christ*, requiring his Disciples to *shew forth his Death*, in the Participation of that Ordinance, *till his Coming* again, and shall *have no Life in him*. To this, and all other Cases of the like Nature, this *Rule*, and its proper Direction, *not to act*, cannot be apply'd; because the Man is as much in *Doubt*, or in Fear of Sin, by *not acting*, as he is by *acting*. One of these must be chosen, but which, 'tis impossible to determine by this Rule. Now, the Case in Question, will, in a proper State, be reduc'd under this Class. An Action is commanded by a Man's lawful Superiors, of which he *doubts* whether it be lawful or not, *i. e.* He is not determin'd on either Side, but the Appearances of Reason are equal on both; his Fear of Sin, if he performs the Action, is, That he shall offend against some *special* Law of God, by which he *doubts* it may be forbidden; on the other Side, if the Action should be lawful, which he knows not but it may, he fears he shall sin in not performing it; because, by *another* Law of God, he is requir'd to obey all lawful Commands of his lawful Superiors. Here is manifestly a *double Doubt*, as it must always be, when we deliberate upon an Action concerning which two Laws of God seem to interfere. Here is a Fear of Sin, whichever Side we chuse, whether we perform the Action, or let it alone.

This *Rule* therefore, and its proper Conclusion, *not to act*, cannot be apply'd here; because, whilst we thus *doubt*, we are no more safe or secure from Sin *in not acting*, than in *acting*; 'tis no more of *Faith* not to act, than it is to act. In these Cases there is no standing still, or being intirely *suspended*, it appears equally dangerous to *act*, or *not to act*; and yet we must of Necessity be determin'd to one. For the Resolution of this Difficulty I offer,

I. WHEN the Law we fear we should transgress by not performing the Action, is a plain Law, the Meaning of which we do not doubt of; and the Law which we fear we should transgress by performing it, is obscure, and of uncertain Interpretation; we should be determin'd to act: And the Fear of offending against the plain Law should over-rule the Fear of offending against the obscure Law. Thus, in the former Instance, the Law requiring Christians to communicate, is a plain Law, no body questions the Meaning of it: But the Meaning of the Law against *unworthy receiving*, is difficultly ascertain'd, since the Qualifications for *worthy receiving* are no where so expressly defin'd, but we may easily be mistaken in judging of them. The usual, and I think proper Resolution in this Case, is, We should be determin'd to receive: And the Reason of this Resolution is, That where some Hazard must be run, the least is to be chosen. Now, while the Doubt continues, some Hazard must be run; there is no middle Choice, we must either receive or not receive; and



and I think less is ventur'd by acting against the possible Meaning of a Law, which we confess we do not understand, than by acting against a Law of whose Meaning we have no Doubt. So also in the Case before us, the Precept, *Obe your Rulers*, is deliver'd in plain Terms of obvious Meaning; but the *particular Law* by which we doubt the Action is forbidden, we confess by our doubting we do not understand. Nay, whether there be any Law at all forbidding the particular Action, we cannot tell; but we are sure there is a Law requiring us to *obey our Rulers*. To act therefore appears the more prudent, as the safer Choice. Before I offer my second Resolution, I beg leave to consider what is objected to this. Mr. S. objects,

I. To the State of the Question. *The Doubt* Pag. 216.  
 he says, is, *Whether there be any clear Law of Christ, which obliges a Man to obey his Superiors, when he doubts of the Lawfulness of any Action.* But this is only *Fallacia Compositionis*, and blending two Doubts into one. Whether the Superior is to be obey'd, is manifestly *one Doubt*; and whether the Action be lawful is as manifestly *another*; the former respects the Law requiring *Obedience to Rulers*, and the latter the *special Law* to which 'tis doubted the Action is contrary. And this is plainly imply'd in this Author's own State of the Question, *Whether there be any clear Law of Christ, which obliges a Man to obey his Superiors, when he doubts of the Lawfulness of the Action?* In which Words there is evidently a Regard to two

Laws, the Law commanding Obedience to Superiors, and the special Law to which the Action itself is referr'd. Every Man, in these unhappy Circumstances, if he consults what passes in his own Mind, will find himself thus divided; and that the Difficulty he is under, is, which of these Laws should take Place. For if either of these Laws be left out of his View, and unconsider'd by him, the *Doubt* what he should do is immediately over; *e. g.* If the Action be not consider'd as commanded by his lawful Superiors, there is then no Doubt but he may let it alone; or if the Lawfulness of the Action be not doubted, with respect to some special Law of God, there is no Question, but he may obey his Superiors in performing it. Now, the Rule, *Whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin*, not affording any other Direction than what Mr. S. very rightly concludes from it; *not to act*, can be of no Service to us in these *double Doubts*, in which there is equal Fear of Sin in *not acting*, as in *acting*. But he offers,

Pag. 217. 2. THAT *here is, on one Side, a clear certain Command of God not to act*, whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin, *but the Command on the other Side, obey your Rulers*, is subject to Exceptions and Limitations, and uncertain in its Application; and therefore we ought to be determin'd *not to act*, as the Direction of the clearer Law. In this Light, I think his Reasoning appears in its full Force: For the State to which he alters the Question, That the Dispute is between a Command of *Men*, and a Command of *God*, cannot be admitted; because 'tis suppos'd,

pos'd, That nothing but a Law of *God* can bind the *Conscience*, and therefore the Points of View in this Doubt, must be two Laws of *God*. Supposing then for the present, that these are the two Laws in the *doubting* Person's View, *Whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin*, and, *Obey your Rulers*. Mr. S. says, the former is a *clear certain Command not to act*; but when the Man comes to consider this Command, he finds it subject to Limitations, as well as the other. There are Cases, as we have seen, to which its Direction cannot be apply'd; and whether his Case be one of these, or not, can only be determin'd by a Consideration of the Nature and Circumstances of it. If he cannot be satisfy'd that his Case comes under the Direction of this Rule, he is just where he was, equally unresolv'd, whether to *act*, or *not to act*. 'Tis to no Purpose to tell him, that his is a *doubtful Case*, and therefore that *acting* in it is determin'd by this Rule to be *sinful*. For this is the very Thing he doubts of, whether it comes within this Rule or not; and to this *Doubt* he cannot receive Satisfaction from this *Rule*, but must have Recourse to some other Principle. In short, these *Rules* are equally general, equally restrain'd. As there are Cases to which the Precept, requiring *Obedience to Superiors*, cannot be apply'd; so there are also Cases to which the Rule, *Whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin*, cannot be apply'd. The Man, while he has only these two *Rules* in View, is equally uncertain, whether his Case be such as requires him to *act*, in Consequence of one Rule, or *not to act*, in Consequence of

the other; and cannot be determin'd by either of these Rules, but by the Circumstances of his Case, and the Nature of the Action requir'd from him. And therefore the true State of the present Question, is, not as Mr. S. supposes, That the Persons *Doubt* arises from the seeming Interference of these two *Rules*; but what he hesitates upon, is, the apparent Contrariety of some *special Law*, suspected to forbid the Action which the Superiors prescribe, with the Command to *obey our Superiors*. His *Doubt* is equal, whether he should act, or not act, which the Interposition of a third Law, equally doubtful in its Application, will not remove. Something must be thrown into one of the Scales, in which the real Points of his Doubt lie, before he can be determin'd. If this Rule indeed, *Whatsoever is not of Faith, &c.* determin'd *acting* to be *sinful*, and *not acting* to be *safe* and secure from Sin, it would be a proper Decision of this Question; but when it is no more of Faith not to act, than 'tis to act, *i. e.* a Man is no more fully persuaded to the one than to the other, he can no more be determin'd by this Rule, *not to act*, than to *act*. Now,

2. I confess the Resolution before given is only for the present Distress, and so long as the *Doubt* shall continue: One Side or the other, in such Circumstances, must of Necessity be chosen; and where a clear Determination cannot be had on either Side, Submission to lawful Authority is offer'd as the *safest* Choice, and what should be allow'd the turning of the Scale. But  
tho'

tho' the Casuists determine, that 'tis *licitum & consultum aliquando agere contra scrupulum aliquem Conscientia*, yet the Mind, in such an unresolv'd State, which ever Side it chuses, cannot act with that Chearfulness and Pleasure, which every good Man desires; and therefore the only full and adequate Remedy, is, such a Resolution as takes away the *Doubt*, which can only be done by determining whether the Action prescrib'd be lawful or not. If this be once settled, the Doubt concerning Obedience to the Superiors prescribing it, will cease of itself. For if, in the Result, the Action proves to be lawful, it is to be perform'd; if unlawful, 'tis not to be perform'd.

Now, if the Person ought, in such a Case to be determin'd in Judgment, That the Action commanded by his Superiors is lawful; if this, I say, can be prov'd, this seems a full and clear Solution of the Difficulty upon which he may act with Confidence and Chearfulness. Let us consider this in the Case first suggested, of a Man *doubting* whether he should *receive*, or *not receive*, the Eucharist. It is suppos'd he is equally divided, between his Regard to two Laws, equally fearful of Sin in *receiving* or *not receiving*. But his Doubt, whether he should obey one Law in *receiving*, being intirely founded on a Suspicion, that he is unqualify'd, unworthy, and therefore forbidden by the other Law to *receive*, this Doubt can only be remov'd by ascertaining the Meaning and Application of this latter Law, whether he be the unworthy Person there meant or not. Now, if he cannot

satisfy

satisfy himself by his own private Deliberation upon the Reasons on the one Side or the other, I see no possible Method he can take for Satisfaction, but to consult and advise with other Men: And I hope his appointed Guides and Pastors will be allow'd, *cæteris paribus*, his most proper Choice. Suppose then the Reasons they offer him are such whose Force he cannot apprehend, or however are such as leave him undetermin'd one Way or other, either that he is worthy or unworthy; yet if they declare it to be their Opinion and Judgment, that he is worthy, he ought to be determin'd to receive and submit to their Judgment, tho' he cannot apprehend the Reasons upon which they found it. For the Man being under a Necessity of being determin'd one Way or other, and yet incapable of being determin'd, either by his own Deliberations or their Reasons, there remains no possible Consideration that can determine him, but the Judgment of those whom he consults. Upon this Ground all Mankind have ever acted in such doubtful Cases; and upon this Ground any Man may act, with this comfortable Satisfaction, That he has done his best to inform himself:

“ And when he could not be determin'd by any  
 “ Reasons offer'd from the Nature of the Thing,  
 “ to one Side or the other, he has submitted to  
 “ their Judgment whom *Christ* has appointed to  
 “ be his Guides, and Directors, and therefore  
 “ that his Submission will be approv'd by him.

Now, in the Case in Question, when an Action is prescrib'd by our proper Superiors, of which we *doubt* whether it be *lawful* or not,  
 their

their very Command implies, That in their *Judgment* they esteem it *lawful*. That we have no *Reasons* to oppose to their *Judgment*, is imply'd in the Supposition of our *Doubting*: For if *Reasons* turn'd the Scale on either Side, we should no longer *doubt*. And if in Cases where we must be determin'd one Way or the other, and yet cannot be determin'd by the Weight of *Reason* either Way, we ought to submit to the Judgment of our proper *Guides* and *Directors*, then ought we in this Case to believe the Action *lawful*, which they, by their commanding it, have declar'd to be in their Judgment *lawful*. And if we are thus determin'd, as to the *Lawfulness* of the Action, the Question I think is decided, whether we ought to obey: For all that withheld the Obedience, was the *Doubt* or Suspicion of the *Unlawfulness* of the Action.

### S E C T. III.

*Of the Obedience due to such Commands of the Superiors, as prescribe indifferent Actions for Decency, Order, &c.*

“ **T**O such Rules as the Governors of the  
 “ Church claim Authority to prescribe,  
 “ for *Decency, Order, and Edification*, when  
 “ the Action, or Circumstance of Action, which  
 “ they direct, is acknowledg'd in its Nature in-  
 “ different, (I say) an *active* Obedience is un-  
 “ doubtedly due.” This, as Mr. S. observes, I  
 infer from this Principle, “ That we are oblig'd  
 “ to obey our Rulers in all Things, not con-  
 “ trary

*Disc. p 96.*

Pag. 220. "trary to the Laws of *Christ*." To this he answers, *This Principle is a false one.* A Principle so evident, That the Proof of it is for that very Reason difficult, because 'tis hard to find any more evident to prove it by. 'Tis manifest that *Conscience* cannot be pretended for Disobedience to any *human* Law, not contrary to any Law of *God*. For the Law of *God* is the only Rule of *Conscience*, and agreeably the only scriptural Limitation of Obedience to lawful Authority, is, That we should *obey God rather than Man*. This is acknowledg'd a just Limitation of all human Authority. For as Bishop \* *Stillingfleet* says, *My Obedience to a lawful Superior, being founded upon a Divine Law, it must be suppos'd my Duty to obey him first, by Virtue of whose Authority I obey another.* But when it is not pretended, that any Law of *God* forbids the Action, that Divine Law, which requires Obedience to the Authority that prescribes it, obliges the *Conscience* to the Performance of it. Here is a Divine Law on the one Side, requiring Obedience to Superiors in general; and here is no Divine Law on the other Side, forbidding the special Action prescrib'd: And consequently, by performing it we transgress no Law of *God*, but by not performing it, we transgress that Law which requires Obedience to Superiors. And accordingly, the forecited Author lays it down as an undeniable Position, That *what is left undetermin'd by Divine Positive Laws, and by Principles deduc'd from the natural*

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\* Iren. Part 1. Chap. 2.



*Law, if it be determin'd by lawful Authority in the Church of God, doth bind the Conscience of those who are subject to that Authority, to those Determinations.*

THE great Difficulty that withholds Mr. Sykes's Pag. 220. Assent to this Principle is, *That if this be granted, he sees not how all the Superstitions of the Church of Rome can be refus'd. Take for Instance Baptism, and see what there is contrary to any Law of Christ, in all their Ceremonies.* Now, if it be a Principle to obey actively, in all Things, not contrary to the Law of Christ, all this must actively, and upon Principle be comply'd with. Now, to deal freely with this Gentleman, if I had been a Subject of the Church of Rome, or any other Church injoining these Ceremonies merely as Things indifferent, and in order to Decency and Edification, I should most certainly have comply'd with them. And he who has no better Reason of his Departure from that Church than these Ceremonies, can give but a poor Account of his Separation. If I judg'd as I do now, I should disapprove them as inconvenient for their Number, as apt to divert Men's Minds from the essential Parts of the Sacrament; and for these and other prudential Reasons, if I were in a Station of Authority, I should, within the Compass of it, endeavour the Discontinuance of them; But if I were only a private Person, I should think my self oblig'd to comply with them, and that their Removal was no Concern of mine. If indeed they were injoyn'd as necessary, and my Approbation of them as such,

was

was requir'd, this I shou'd refuse. But if they were injoin'd only as Matters of *Decency*, and such as might be improv'd to *Edification*, (and I presume the Church of *Rome* it self prescribes them as no other, because Baptism is allow'd valid that is given without them) I know no Reason I should have to scruple them. All that can render them Superstition in the Imposers, is, their injoining them as *commanded* by God; and there is just the same Superstition in avoiding them as *forbidden*. But to all who acknowledge them in their Nature *indifferent*, and neither expressly, nor by good Consequence forbidden by God, which is the Case here suppos'd, they are certainly *lawful*. These I conceive were the Principles upon which our Reformers proceeded. They did not separate from the Church of *Rome*, upon the Account of these, or any other *indifferent Ceremonies*. But when for other just Reasons they had shaken off the Yoke of that Church, and asserted their own just Rights and Independency, they, by their own Authority, for prudential Reasons, abrogated these Ceremonies. But if Mr. *S.* will chuse to say, they were *superstitious, unlawful*, and therefore laid aside, this is perfectly altering the State of the Question; for then they will not be the *indifferent* Things we are speaking of, but Things *forbidden*; and therefore not to be comply'd with, in Consequence of the Principle which I before laid down.

Pag. 221. BUT Mr. *S.* insists farther, 'Tis not this Principle, but the *Relation to the End design'd by the Power prescribing, that must determine the*

*the Right to Compliance; and of this the Subject must be Judge.* For he being allowed to “ judge of the Sense of Scripture, and the Agreeableness of these Laws to it, in order to determine how far he may *actively* obey them”; *he is under a Necessity of judging for himself, how such and such are expedient, or inexpedient, i. e. because I allow the Subject to judge of the Sense of Scripture, in comparing all Laws prescrib'd to him, with it; and to refuse an active Compliance with such as appear forbidden by it; therefore I must allow him to judge by Scripture of Actions concerning which 'tis supposed the Scripture has said nothing at all, but left them perfectly indifferent, neither commanded nor forbidden.* But this I shall consider farther, before I take leave of this Subject.

Mr. S. has granted an *Authority in the Church*, Disc p. 94. Pag. 174. *to prescribe indifferent Actions*, and that for *Decency, Order, &c.* The Exercise of this Authority in the Church, as in all other Societies, must belong to the Superiors, and Governors of it. And unless it be left to their Judgment, what *indifferent* Things are conducive to these Ends, nothing can ever be prescrib'd. For if the Concurrence, and Approbation of every single Member of the Society, is to be had, before any such Thing may be prescrib'd, since such a Concurrence of Judgment in Matters of Prudence, such as these are, can never be expected, no Rule, upon this Supposition, can ever be establish'd: So that here will be an *Authority* granted to the Church in Words, but under such a *Limitation*, as in Effect annuls the Grant, and

renders the Exercise of it utterly impracticable. If it be said, that 'tis not the *Authority* of *prescribing* in these Instances, which is here question'd, but the *Obligation* of the Subject to *obey* such Prescriptions; that 'tis acknowledg'd, the Superiors may *prescribe* such Rules as they in their Judgment think conducive to *Decency*, &c. but that 'tis also contended, that unless the Inferiors concur with them in Judgment, they are not oblig'd to *obey* such Rules; I reply, That this will be attended with the same Absurdity: For if the Church be consider'd as a Society, whatever Form of Polity we assign it, unless Provisions of this kind be submitted to the Wisdom of the Superiors, and their Prescriptions obey'd by the Inferiors, these Ends can never be provided for. Let us resume the Supposition, That the Polity of the Church was purely *Democratical*, a Form in which, as I observ'd, the utmost Reserve is made for Liberty, that can consist with any Government. If the Judgment of the *major* Part does not, in such Instances, conclude the *minor*, and oblige them to observe the Rules agreed on by such Majority, the Consequence will be, That the Part *dissenting* in Judgment concerning the *Expediency* of such Rules, will either separate from the other, and so form another Society; or else, if they continue in Communion, each practising according to their various Sentiments, that *Decency* and *Order*, intended to be provided for by this Authority, cannot in the least Degree be promoted by it. For upon this Scheme, every one will be left to just the same Liberty of Acting, in the

Things prescrib'd, as he had before any Prescription was given. He cou'd but follow his own Sentiments before, and he is at Liberty it seems to follow them still. Mr. S. therefore may e'en as well revoke his Grant of an *Authority in the Church to prescribe indifferent Actions*, since, with this Limitation, it can have no Manner of Use or Effect. And these Conclusions are yet more evident, if we suppose any other Form of the Church's Polity.

EVERY Man who enters into any *Society*, whatever is the Form of its Polity, recedes from some Part of his *natural Liberty*, and submits to be govern'd by the Rules and Authority of that Society, so far as may consist with all prior and superior Obligations. Now, in the Society of the Church, 'tis granted, there is an *Authority to prescribe indifferent Things*: this Authority must therefore be acknowledg'd by every Person who is admitted a Member of that Society: And the Things prescrib'd being suppos'd *indifferent*, a Compliance with the Prescription cannot be contrary to any prior Obligation. But Mr. S. says, the Compliance due to this Authority, must consist with the *Right of private Judgment*. I say so too; but then I distinguish, with Bishop *Stillington*, That the *Liberty belonging to us, in Virtue of this Right, lies in the Freedom of the Judgment, and not in the Freedom of the Practice*; the Proof of which Position he largely pursues, *Iren. Chap. ii. §. 10.* And the same very judiciously concludes, That *if the Magistrate declares the Things to be indifferent, but only upon prudential Considerations,*

ons, for Peace and Order, requires Persons to observe them; tho' this brings a Necessity of Obedience to us, yet it takes not away our Christian Liberty; for an antecedent Necessity, express'd in the Law (as he observes from Bishop Sanderſon,) does necessarily require the Assent of the practical Judgment to it, which takes away our Liberty of Judgment: But a consequential Necessity, upon a Command suppos'd doth only imply an Act of the Will whereby the Freedom of Judgment and Conscience remaining, it is inclin'd to Obedience to the Commands of a superior Law; which agrees with my Determination, That Obedience to Authority, prescribing Things indifferent, for Peace, Order, &c. is perfectly consistent with all the Right of private Judgment, that can belong to us as Members of a Society. The Liberty of Judging, not only whether the Things prescribed be lawful, but whether they be expedient, or not, remains with us, and cannot indeed be parted with. But the Liberty of Acting, according to this Judgment, or, as the Author above-cited properly terms it, the Authority of our Judgment is submitted to a publick Constitution; and so far as any Person resumes that Liberty, so far he disengages himself from that Society, and returns to the natural State of Independency. And if every single Person is at Liberty to act as he pleases, in these Instances, notwithstanding the Prescriptions of Authority to the contrary, it will be difficult to conceive how such Persons can be united in Society. But Mr. S. thinks I have made a Concession, whence  
 this

this Liberty must be inferr'd. For I have allow-  
 ed " the Inferiors to judge of the Sense of *Disc.p.94.*  
 " Scripture, and the Agreeableness of these  
 " Laws to it, in order to determine how far he  
 " may *actively* obey them." But this Conces-  
 sion, as I observ'd, the very Nature of the  
 Thing restrains to the *Lawfulness* or *Unlaw-*  
*fulness* of the Action. For the Scripture is not  
 a Rule for Matters of Prudence, such as *Expe-*  
*diency*, or *Inexpediency*, but only of Duty. Ge-  
 neral Rules for *Decency* and *Order* are given in  
 Scripture; but the particular Observances that  
 shou'd promote these Ends, are not there deter-  
 min'd for all Ages of the Church: neither was  
 it possible they shou'd be; because, as I have  
 observ'd, They must necessarily be vary'd ac-  
 cording to the different Manners or Customs of  
 different Ages and Nations. Whatever particu-  
 lar Directions or Usages we find of this Kind in  
 Scripture, were never understood to be conclu-  
 sive for all after Ages. So long as they conti-  
 nued *Decent*, they were retain'd; but when, by  
 the Alteration of Customs and Opinions in the  
 World, they appear'd *indecent*, they were dis-  
 us'd, as the *Holy Kifs*, &c. But if any one will  
 contend, that these particular Usages or Directi-  
 ons of Scripture are a *Rule* we are *oblig'd* to  
 adhere to, then, I say, the State of the Questi-  
 on is chang'd, and they are no longer the *indiffe-*  
*rent* Things, of which only we are speaking,  
 but Things *commanded*.

IN Sum, the Subject can no more be deter-  
 min'd by Scripture, how far he may obey these  
 Prescriptions of *indifferent* Things as *expedient*,

or *inexpedient*, than whether it be *expedient* for him to take Physick, or let Blood. What he is to search for there, is his *Duty* to God; but Matters of *Prudence* must be left to occasional Determinations; in those Parts of our Conduct which relate only to our own private Concerns, to each Man's own Discretion; and in those Parts of our Conduct which concern the Community of which we are Members, to the publick Wisdom of that Community.

## S E C T. IV.

*Of Passive Obedience.*

**T**HE Point remaining to be consider'd, is, the *Passive Obedience* I require from the Subject; concerning which I say, "All Laws of the Church, whatever our Opinion may be of their Inconsistency with the Laws *Christ*, or however we may be excus'd from an *active* Compliance with them, we are certainly oblig'd *passively* to obey." Now, the Case here consider'd, is, not of a Person who offends against a Law of the Church, which he acknowledges himself bound *actively* to obey; for in such a Case, I think there is no Question, but he is oblig'd to submit to the Penalties of his Transgression, and desire the Pardon and Absolution of the Church. But the Case in View, is, of a Person who thinks himself bound, by the Law of *Christ*, to refuse an *active* Compliance with the Law of the Church; in such a Case I determine, He is oblig'd *passively* to obey. This, I think



think a Point of great Importance, and such as deserves a distinct Consideration. I am ask'd, *What is imply'd in this Notion of passive Submission?* My Answer to this Question, will, I hope, somewhat help to clear this Point. Now, the *passive Submission*, or *Obedience* here requir'd, is, submitting to have the Penalties of our Refusal inflicted on us, when we are persuaded in Conscience, that we ought not to perform the Action injoin'd. These Penalties, in the Case before us, I determin'd to be only *Suspension*, or *Exclusion* from some or all the Privileges of the Church, as a visible Society. He then *passively* submits to the Laws and Authority of the Church, who, when he is persuaded in Conscience, that he may not perform the Thing commanded by the Laws of that Society, submits to be *suspended* or *excluded* from the external Privileges of it; so that if he is *suspended*, he does not, during such *Suspension*, intrude himself into those Offices, or Acts of Communion, from which he is *suspended*; or, if he is *expell'd*, no longer pretends to claim the Privileges of that Society, or to act as a Member of it.

Mr. S. has been pleas'd with his usual Liberty, to represent me as explaining what I meant by the *passive Obedience* I here require, in these Words, "If he does not join himself to any So-

ciety, opposite to this, but quietly submits to the Censure, and still acknowledges the Authority of its proper Governors and Pastors, and desires their Absolution." Whoever looks into the Place referr'd to, will see, That I am

Disc. P.  
102.

not there explaining what I before meant by *passive Submission*; but only inquiring how far the Excommunication of the Church cuts a Man off from his Relation to that *visible Society*; concerning which, I say, “ He, who for any  
 “ Offence against the Laws of the Church,  
 “ stands excommunicated by the Censure of it,  
 “ if he does not join himself to any Society op-  
 “ posite to this, &c. this Man is not effectual-  
 “ ly *cut off* from the Society, but only *exclu-*  
 “ *ded* from a *present Participation* of the  
 “ Rights and Privileges of it.” To this Con-  
 clusion, Mr. S. agrees: What is it then he ob-  
 jects to? Why, he supposes me here to affirm,  
 That 'tis in *all* Cases the Duty of *every* Man  
 excommunicated by any Church, so to act, and  
 so to submit. 'Tis indeed here suppos'd, That  
 there are Cases in which a Man under Censure  
 may so act and submit, *viz.* When he is censur-  
 ed for the Breach of a Law, which he confesses  
 he ought to have obey'd, (the Case there ma-  
 nifestly suppos'd) his Obligation so to act, in  
 such a Case, I do not there consider: However,  
 I now affirm, That in such a Case, it is his  
 bounden Duty so to act, and so to submit: And  
 what Advantage the Church of *Rome* can find  
 hence, against any *Protestant*, whom it expels  
 out of its Communion, I cannot imagine. His  
 Answer is easy and obvious, That his Case dif-  
 fers widely from that here suppos'd. He is re-  
 quired by that Church, to obey Laws as Terms  
 of Communion with it, which are contrary to  
 the Laws of *Christ*; and if he is expell'd for not  
 obeying them, he is under no Obligation to sue  
 for

for Re-admission upon these Terms, or to continue a Member of that Church so imposing them; But then, I say, he is oblig'd to *submit* to his *Expulsion* out of that Society, and no longer to claim any Privileges he was before intitled to, as a Member of it. This is a proper Instance of the Case I am now considering, and this is the *passive Submission*, or *Obedience* I require in it. This Submission I think strictly *equitable*, with respect to the Person expell'd, and necessary to the Subsistence of any Church, Catholick or Particular, *as a visible Society*.  
And,

1<sup>st</sup>, IT is strictly equitable, with respect to the Person expell'd. For every Man who is admitted into any Society, of what Denomination soever, is admitted on Condition that he will observe the Laws of that Society, and submit to the Authority of it, in the Execution of those Laws. If he breaks those Conditions, and obstinately refuses to comply with them, he manifestly forfeits all Rights or Privileges annex'd to them, and is bound by *Compact* to submit to the Forfeiture. And so, if he is call'd to any *Office* in that Society, he is admitted to it upon Condition, that he will discharge such *Office* according to the Laws of the Society; and consequently if he will act contrary to those Conditions, he must be contented to be deposed from such *Office*. No manner of Injury is done him, he has nothing to complain of; the same Authority which gave him an *Office*, resumes it again, upon a Failure of performing the Conditions upon which it was given. Christians indeed, as  
such

such, are oblig'd by a Law, *prior* and *superior* to the Law of the *visible Church*, viz. the Law of God, or of *Christ*. If therefore the Laws of the *visible Church*, either are, or to any Person plainly appear, contrary to the Laws of *Christ*, and his Obedience to such Laws is requir'd, as a Condition of Union with that Society; he may, and ought to refuse to comply with them, and his not being admitted into such Community, will be no Prejudice to him in the Sight of *Christ*. And so, if the Conditions of being admitted to any *Office*, in that Society, be such as he cannot with good Conscience comply with, 'tis doubtless his Duty not to comply with them. *Christ* does not in those Circumstances require him to take that *Office*; he sins not in refusing it. If after he has accepted such *Office*, upon the Conditions proposed, he perceives any of them to be *unlawful*, he is bound not to perform them; but if the Performance be insisted on, he is bound to depart from that *Office*: No Injury is done him, he receiv'd it upon these Conditions, and is oblig'd to submit to the Execution of his own Contract. If he is permitted still to continue in Communion with that Society, as a *private Person*, and no unlawful Terms of *such* Communion are requir'd from him in that Station, he is oblig'd so to continue, by the same Reasons that induc'd him at first to be a Member of it: But if he cannot with good Conscience comply with the Terms of *such* Communion, he must, for the Reasons suggested, be contented to be excluded the Community, and recede from all Claim to the Privileges of it.

Mr.

Mr. S. says, *He is not oblig'd to think himself* Pag. 225. *justly excommunicated.* If he means, That he is not bound to believe the Conditions, for the Breach of which he is expell'd, such as may *justly* be requir'd, this may be either true or false, according to the Nature of the Things requir'd; this he should more accurately have consider'd, before he accepted of them. But surely he cannot think it *unjust*, That an Office, or Privilege, which he was contented to receive upon certain Conditions, should, upon the Breach of those Conditions be forfeited. These Conclusions hold equally with respect to the *Catholick* visible Church, and *particular* visible Churches; whether the Society be great or small, the Reasons are the same. He who breaks the Conditions upon which he was contented to be admitted into it, has no Manner of hardship put upon him, if he is expell'd or excommunicated from it. This is the utmost Penalty I assert a Power in the Church to inflict. To this Penalty I conceive every Member of it is oblig'd by Contract to submit, whenever it is inflicted according to the Laws of that Society; and, consequently, That he is bound quietly to submit, which is the *passive Obedience* I require from him. And such Submission I affirm,

2dly, To be necessary to the Subsistence of the Church as a visible Society.

IN every *visible Society*, the Acts in which the Union, Incorporation, or Fellowship of the Members of it consist, must be *visible*. The Acts of Fellowship, or Communion between the  
Members

Members of such a Society, cannot be *Thoughts*, *Intentions*, or *inward Dispositions* of the *Heart*, but must be *visible Actions*. They must *visibly* obey the same social Laws, or Rules of Action, and be under some common Obligation so to do. And since in all visible Societies, consisting of Men, it is necessary that some visible *Penalties* shou'd be affix'd to the Laws, to be observ'd in it, the lowest of which kind are Suspension, or Exclusion from the outward Privileges of such Society; it must also be included in the common Obligation enter'd into by the Members of such Society, that they will either visibly obey these Laws, or visibly submit to the Penalties affix'd to the Transgression of them. And since these Penalties can never be inflicted, and consequently can be of no Use, or Effect, unless an *Authority* be lodg'd somewhere in the Society, to oversee the Behaviour of the several Members, and compare it with those social Laws which they are bound to obey, and inflict these Penalties on the Transgressors of them; it is also included in the Contract upon which every Member is admitted into such Society, That he shall acknowledge such *Authority*, and submit to it in the Infliction of those *Penalties*, to which his Actions, according to the Laws of that Society, are Subject. These are Properties inseparable from the Idea of a *visible Society* as such. In these, all *visible Societies* must agree, whether they be such *arbitrary* Combinations as we enter into, without any previous Obligation, or such as we enter into in Compliance with a prior Authority, to which we owe Obedience:

Whether

Whether they be Great or Small, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical, and under whatever Form of Polity they subsist. However they may *specifically* differ from each other, yet in these *generical* Properties they must all agree; and consequently, whoever acknowledges the Church to be a *visible Society*, must allow it *as such* to agree in these Essentials, with all other visible Societies, of what Denomination soever. And tho' we cannot argue from what ought to be *visible* in other Societies, to what ought to be *visible* in this, with respect to those Things in which they *specifically* differ; yet the Argument is good from the one to the other, with respect to those general Properties, in which, *as visible Societies* they must agree. If therefore the Church be a *visible Society*, the Members of it must owe a *visible* external Obedience to the same stated System of Laws, some *visible* Penalties must be annex'd to these Laws, and there must be a *visible* present Authority in some over others, to take Care of the Observance of these Laws, and to inflict the Penalties directed by these Laws, on those who offend against them. And without the Submission of the Members of this Society to these *Laws*, these *Penalties*, and this *Authority*, the Church can no more subsist as a *visible Society*, than any other Community of what Denomination soever.

BUT Mr. S. thinks he can allow the Church to be a *visible Society*, without being oblig'd to admit these Conclusions; *The Church*, he says, *is a Society instituted by Christ, and 'tis a visible one. 'Tis a Society whereof Christ him-*

*self is King and Judge over his Subjects; and the Laws of this Society are those which he himself has given.* Now, *Christ* is certainly *King*, and supreme Legislator over his Church; by his Authority this Society was instituted, upon his Laws it is founded, and to his Laws every Member of it, as his Subject, owes Obedience. But these Subjects of *Christ*, as united in a *visible Society*, instituted by him, and founded upon his Laws, must *visibly* obey his Laws. For the Union of Men, in a *visible Society*, must be *visible*; and the Union of Men, in a Society form'd upon any System of Laws of prior Obligation, cannot be *visible*, unless they *visibly* obey those Laws, *i. e.* unless they perform, or agree to perform, the same *visible Actions*, in Obedience to them. And from hence it will follow, That the Laws of *Christ* can no farther be the Terms of Union, in a *visible Society*, than as they are understood, and agreed to, as prescribing the *same* outward Actions; and consequently are understood, and agreed to, according to the *same* Sense and Interpretation. Ten Men, acting according to ten different Senses of any Law, must, in Appearance, act according to ten different Laws; neither can they be *visibly* united in the Acknowledgment of, or Obedience to one Law. The Members therefore of the Church, as a *visible Society*, form'd upon the Laws of *Christ*, must be under some common Obligation to act, according to some certain Sense and Interpretation of all such Laws of *Christ*, as are made Terms of *visible* Union in that Society. These  
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Determinations, or Prescriptions, directing by what *visible Actions* Men should express their Obedience to the Laws of *Christ*, are properly the *Laws* of the *Society*, the Terms of Union upon which it subsists. Whenever these Prescriptions are agreeable to the intended Sense of *Christ's* Laws, they are then *materially* *Christ's* Laws; but *formally*, or as Terms of Union in that Society, they are the Laws of the Society, enacted by the Authority of IT, and to be submitted to, as to Conditions of Union with IT.

BUT Mr. S. says, *Surely this visible Society* Pag. 230. *may subsist upon obeying only the Laws, not of IT, but of Christ.* I reply, that when the Members of this Society are engag'd, under a common Obligation or Contract, to perform the same *visible Actions*, in Obedience to the Laws of *Christ*, as Terms of *visible* Union in that Society; upon such an Obedience to the Laws of *Christ*, this *visible* Society may subsist. But then, the immediate Rule of Action, in Conformity to which they thus visibly obey the Laws of *Christ* in the same Actions, is manifestly the *Law of the Society*. The Union, as I have said of Men in a visible Society, must appear in a *visible* Acknowledgment of, and Obedience to the same Laws. Now, in a large Sense, all who acknowledge the Authority of *Christ*, and profess Obedience to his Laws, may be said to acknowledge the same Laws. But if all are left at Liberty to obey these Laws, in what Manner they think fit, without any common Obligation or Contract to express their Obedience to these Laws by the same visible Behaviour; they can  
never

never *appear* to obey the same Laws, or in the least Degree to be united, *as a visible Society*, in the Obedience of them. If therefore the Church be a visible Society, form'd upon the Laws of *Christ*, the Members of it must not only be oblig'd as Christians to obey his Laws, but as Members of a *visible Society of Christians*, they must be under some common Obligation to express their Obedience to his Laws, by the same visible Actions, and consequently to conform their visible Actions to the same common Rule; and no Way can be devis'd, how this common Rule should be establish'd, but by the Agreement, or (which in the Result will be found the same Thing,) by the Authority of the Society.

IF it be said, That the Laws of *Christ*, as deliver'd in Scripture, as clearly direct Men to the same outward Actions, as any social Laws form'd upon them can do; and consequently, that Men may as well be united as a visible Society, by the Laws of *Christ*, as deliver'd in Scripture, as by any Laws of the Society form'd upon them; I would observe, 1. That this cannot be contended for by those who lay it down as a Principle, that there is no *certain Way of arriving at the design'd Sense* of any Passage of Scripture, or that no determinate Sense can be assign'd of any Scriptures, which all Christians are oblig'd to receive. For if this be the Case, 'tis inconceivable how any Number of Christians should pitch upon the same Sense of *Christ's* Laws, and consequently, that they should express their Obedience to them by the same visible Actions.

Such an Uniformity of Practice appears to me so perfectly irreconcilable with the Doctrine taught by Mr. S. that I can challenge him to prove me oblig'd to perform or avoid any one visible Action, in Obedience to any one Law of *Christ*, which he shall assign, if he will allow me to defend my self upon the Principles he has asserted. But, 2<sup>dly</sup>, Supposing any Number of Men to perform the same Actions, in Obedience to the *Laws of Christ*; yet, unless they are engag'd by a *mutual Compact* so to obey them, they will not perform such Actions, as Members of a visible Society. Should ten Men all act according to the same Conclusions of *Reason*, or of the *Law of Nature*, in Matters of Justice towards one another; yet so long as this came to pass only by Accident, and as each happen'd to be led by his own Judgment, this will not incorporate them as a Society. Before this can be conceiv'd, they must be oblig'd by some social Laws to perform these Actions. These Laws are the Laws of the Society, the Terms of Union upon which it subsists; and if these Men are under no Obligation to submit to these Laws, but are at the same Liberty to act as their own Humour or Judgment leads them, as they were before, they cannot be a visible Society. The Men indeed may be visible; but their Union, as Members of a Society, will, to me at least, be invisible. I conclude then, That the Church of *Christ* cannot subsist as a visible Society, unless the Members of it express their Obedience to his Laws, by the same visible Actions; and unless they are oblig'd by Compact,

and some social Laws, so to express it. As to the Contract enter'd into at *Baptism*, all that Mr. S. will permit to be requir'd of Men in it, is, *That they should profess to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and promise in general to obey his Commands.* But if every one is left at Liberty to perform this *Promise*, and obey these Laws in what Manner he pleases; or in other Words, if every one is at Liberty to act according to any Interpretation of *Christ's* Laws, which he thinks them capable of: How can these Men appear to be united as a Society in the Obedience of *Christ's* Laws? Take, for Instance, the Profession allow'd to be requir'd that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*: The visible Obedience to the Law of *Christ* requiring this Faith, is openly *Professing*, and, if we are called to it, openly *Teaching* this Doctrine. Now, if ten Men shall, in their Obedience to this Law, *teach* ten different and contradictory Propositions, as the Doctrine prescribed by it; How can it possibly appear, that these Men are united in a social Contract, visibly to obey this Law? To make such Union ever visible, they must be oblig'd by some social Law to preach and profess some one certain Proposition, as the Doctrine taught by *Christ*, and requir'd to be preach'd by his Law.

THOSE Laws of *Christ*, indeed, which prescribe the Oeconomy of this Society, and that fundamental Injunction, *that the Laws of this Society should be agreeable to his Laws*; These are properly Laws given by *Christ* to this Society, and so far as these Laws are observ'd

serv'd in the Administration of this Society, so far only is it a *Society* instituted by him. But those Laws, or Rules, by which the Members of this Society are mutually engag'd and directed to express their Obedience to *Christ's* Laws, by performing or avoiding such or such special Actions; these are strictly the Laws of this visible Society: And to these Laws we must add Rules for Order and Decency. For *Christ*, as I have observ'd, having in general directed, that these Ends should be provided for; but not having prescrib'd the special Rules by which they should be provided for, it must of Necessity be left to the Society, *i. e.* to the Authority of the Church, to prescribe them.

THAT the Distinction I make between the Laws of *Christ*, and the Laws of the *Church*, as a visible Society, is founded on a real Difference, must appear from several Considerations. The Laws of *Christ* principally direct the *internal* Acts and Dispositions of the Mind; the Laws of the Church only *external* Actions. The Laws of *Christ* are of *prior* and *superior* Obligation to the Laws of the Church. The Laws of *Christ*, as deliver'd by him, are Conditions of Union with him. But tho' the very same Words may be preserv'd in the Laws of the Church, yet as prescrib'd by the Church, they are Conditions of Union with that visible Society; and only consequentially Conditions of Union with *Christ*, and so far as he has by his Law requir'd us to be united with, and obey the Laws of that Society. But the Distinction of these Laws especially appears, in the different

Penalties annex'd to them, an essential Part of every Law. The Nature of a visible Society requires, that the Transgression of those Laws which are the Conditions of its Union, should be attended with some present visible Penalty. Now, the proper Penalty of disobeying *Christ's* Laws, is eternal Damnation; a Penalty which cannot be inflicted in this Life, which can neither reclaim the Offender, nor give Example to others, and therefore can serve no imaginable End of Penalties in a visible Society. If the Laws of *Christ* are the social Laws, or Terms of Union in the visible Society of the Church, the Breach of them must be attended with some visible Inflictions, the lowest of which kind are *Suspension*, or, according to the Nature and Obstinacy of the Offence, *Exclusion* from the outward Privileges of that Society, and a Rejection from all visible Union with it; and these Penalties must be inflicted on such Actions, as are visible apparent Transgressions of *Christ's* Laws. But then, who shall be Judge what Actions are such Transgressions of *Christ's* Laws, and by what Authority shall these Penalties be inflicted? *Christ*, we are told, is the sole Judge in his Church; but 'tis manifest, *Christ* does not appear in a present visible Execution of that Office. He takes no apparent Notice of the Behaviour of his Subjects, inflicts no present visible Censure on them, but has reserv'd his Judgment till his coming again, when this visible Society shall be dissolv'd; and therefore unless in the mean time, this Authority be committed to some Persons visibly present with the  
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Society, no visible Punishment can be inflicted on those who disobey the Laws of this Society; and, consequently, no visible Distinction can be made between those who are of this Society, and those who are not, which is just the same thing as to say, there is no visible Society. To whomsoever this Authority is committed, if the Laws of *Christ* are the Laws of this Society, it must be exercised in the Suspension or Exclusion of those who visibly offend against *Christ's* Laws, from the outward Privileges of this Society. But the Misfortune is, That the same Persons who contend for this Scheme, which makes the Laws of *Christ* to be the Laws of this visible Society, give us at the same time such a Rule or Measure of Obedience to *Christ's* Laws, that 'tis impossible for one Man ever to know whether another obeys them or not. For so it is, That in obeying *Christ's* Laws, every one is to *abound in his own Sense*, and to act according to that Meaning, which in his own *private Judgment* he thinks intended in them. This is all the Obligation allow'd with respect to *Christ's* Laws. Now, I would fain know, How it can ever appear to one Man, that another breaks these Conditions, or forfeits the outward Privileges of this Society here supposed to be annex'd to them. The Members of this Society may all act contrary to each other; and yet, according to this Rule, all may obey the Laws of *Christ*, and consequently incur no Forfeiture or Penalty for so acting. All must be excus'd, if they act according to their own private Judgment of the Sense of *Christ's* Laws; and if

they are pleas'd to tell us so, we are bound to believe them; for unless we could see the Heart 'tis impossible for us to disprove them. According to this Scheme then, the Laws of Union in the visible Church are such, as no Man can ever be known to transgress; and, consequently, no Man can ever be punish'd, by any *outward* Forfeiture for transgressing. We are told indeed sometimes, but surely with strange

Pag. 200.  
& seq.  
Pag. 176.

Inconsistency, That Christians may *avoid, shun, and withdraw from,* and count as *Heathens and Publicans*, Men, who *openly violate* Christ's *moral Laws*. Such also as *deny any Doctrin*e of Christ, and such *Hereticks* as are *self condemn'd*, whom we are inform'd at the same time

Pag. 203.

'tis impossible for us to discover. Now, as to these *Hereticks*, I think they are pretty safe; and methinks they who apparently *violate* Christ's *moral Laws*, may be as safe too, if they have but the Impudence to say, That they obey these Laws, according to their own private Judgment; that the Opinions, in Consequence of which they act, if they are Errors, are *involuntary*, and therefore *innocent*; that they are not *self-condemn'd*, &c. If this Plea be a good Defence, when urg'd in one Case, 'tis altogether as good, when urg'd in the other; and both will, in Consequence of it, be equally secur'd from this Penalty, of being *avoided, counted as Heathens, &c.*

BUT I observe, that in the Concession above made, thus much is allow'd, *ist*, That on those who openly offend against the Laws of *Christ*, (however difficult it may be to discover them,)



which are here also supposed to be the Laws of the Church, some *visible Penalty* may be inflicted; for such being *avoided, counted as Heathens, &c.* manifestly is, and accordingly is call'd a *Punishment* by St. Paul. 2dly, That this Punishment may be inflicted by *Men, Christians, Members of the Society of the Church.* We will suppose then, for the present, That some Secret will be communicated to us, by which we may be enabled to find out these *invisible Offenders*; and will only ask farther, by whom this Penalty is to be inflicted, whether by any appointed *Officers* of the Society, authoriz'd for this Purpose, or by each single Member of it, according to his own Judgment. Now, *Christ*, Mr. S. says, *has instituted, and ordain'd that there should be Teachers* in this Society; these, it seems, are the only *Officers* that can be allowed; but why *Christ* should ordain, that there should be *Teachers* in the visible Church, any more than *Judges*, I cannot perceive. *Christ* is the *sole Teacher* of his Church, with the same Propriety that he is *sole Judge*, and to a visible Society one Office is as necessary as the other. But admitting, that he has ordain'd that there should be only *Teachers*, their whole Office we are told, consists in *instructing, exhorting, instructing, &c.* none of which Provinces include any Authority to inflict these Penalties. It remains therefore, that this Power must reside with each private Member of this Society; and accordingly, 'tis explain'd to be a *Right of all Christians to avoid open Offenders.* But then, the same Objection will lie against their Exer-

2 Cor. ii.  
6.

Pag. 229.

Pag. 98.

cise of this *Right*, as has been urg'd against the Exercise of it by any appointed *Officers*; for before they can *avoid* any one, they must *judge* him to be an Offender against *Christ's* Laws; and then, *who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant? to his own Master he standeth or falleth.* The Man whom you *avoid*, count as a *Heathen*, &c. may act in the *Sincerity* of his *private Judgment*, and be approv'd by *Christ*. But let us suppose this Difficulty to be got over, and let us see what sort of a *Discipline* this wou'd be, and what Work it wou'd make in a *visible Society*. 'Tis manifest, That if ever we are to put this *Right* in Practice, and *avoid*, &c. any one in Consequence of it, we must *avoid*, &c. such as we judge to offend against a Law of *Christ*. Now, whenever I see any Man act directly contrary to what I am persuaded is a Law of *Christ*, 'tis impossible for me to judge otherwise of such a Person, than that he *openly violates a law of Christ*, and consequently I am to *shun* him, *avoid* him, treat him as a *Heathen*, and a *Publican*, and have no Communion with him, and he, for the same Reasons, is to treat me in the same Manner; and so we are both of us to treat all others, who appear to us to act contrary to what we esteem to be a Law of *Christ*: But in the mean Time, What will become of the *visible Society*, and how will the Union of these Men be *visible*?

BUT, *Lastly*, In whatever Hands the Power of *Excommunication* is plac'd, suppose the Person censur'd will not submit to it. This, it seems, he is not oblig'd to. This is *Passive Obedience*,

ence, what 'tis *Popery* and *Tyranny* to require, or to teach that any Man is bound to. He is *expell'd* indeed all Communion with the Society, but he is still at Liberty to act as a Member, and claim all the Privileges of it, and not suffer himself to be excluded from the Ordinances administer'd in it.

SURELY such a wild incoherent Project, was never before offer'd to the World, under the Name of a *visible Society*. And yet this, as far as I can apprehend this Gentleman, is the Scheme he contends for, and which he has the Modesty to ascribe to *Jesus Christ*, the *Wisdom of God*, as its Author. I should be glad to see this Scheme drawn fairly out into View, and the several Parts of it adjusted to each other; but so far as I can collect it from the Sketches given in this Performance, 'tis such a Scheme, as no visible Church could ever have been form'd upon, and upon which even a Club of ten Men, if they will act up to the Principles of it, could not subsist in Union as a Society for a Month. If a Number of Men professing severally Obedience to *Christ's Law*, but not engag'd by any *social Compact*, to express their Obedience to them, by the same outward Actions; or if such *Compact* being allow'd, he who *visibly* acts contrary to it, is subject to no outward Forfeiture, or Penalty; or if such *Penalties* being allow'd, there is no present visible *Authority* that may inflict them; or if such *Authority* being allow'd, the Offender is under no Obligation to *submit* to it in the Infliction of them: If I say, such a Church as this be a *visible Society*, 'tis such an  
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one as I confess my self unable to form any Idea of. And I think the most scornful Infidel, could reflect nothing more reproachful on the Wisdom of our Blessed Lord, than that intending to institute a *visible Society*, he erected it upon such a *Babel Scheme* as this.

Mr. S. is pleas'd to object, That every Argument by me urg'd, for the Submission I claim to the Laws and Authority of the Church, a *Pagan might with equal Justice urge for Submission to his Jupiter*. He would say, " Such a Submission was necessary to the very being of a Church, as a visible Society. For if the Laws of the Church are null and void, as to any external Obligation, as often as one thinks them not agreeable to the Laws of *Numa*, &c. they can never be executed upon any Offender at all. So that here will be Rulers without any Authority, and Laws without any Obligation. If the *Worshippers of Jupiter* be a visible Society, the Magistrates and Officers of this Society must have Authority to require an external Obedience to their Laws". To this Objection he conceives, *I cannot imagine what to reply upon my Scheme*.

Now, I acknowledge, if the *Worshippers of Jupiter*, a *Monkey*, or a *Crocodile*, are a *visible Society*, the Members of it must be united by some social Laws, and either *actively* obey these Laws, or *passively* submit to be expell'd this Society for breaking them. And if I am a Member of this Society, I am, *as such*, oblig'd to this Submission; but I cannot imagine what Distress this Concession can bring me under: Will  
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it oblige me to be, or if I already am, to continue a Member of this Society? If I perceive the Terms of Union with this Society, to be Actions forbidden by God, I have declar'd myself bound not to perform them. Suppose then a *Priest of Jupiter* should argue with me, *Our Church is a visible Society, and you as a Member of it, are by your own Confession bound, either actively to obey its Laws, or passively submit to be expell'd.* I confess it, submit, and am expell'd, and what has he more to say? Thus also as Mr. S. says, *may every false Religion* argue, and to just as much Purpose. Doubtless all *visible Societies* in the World, civil or religious, and whether the Religion profess'd in them be true or false, must, *as such*, agree in the general Properties of a visible Society, and subsist upon the same general Principles.

BUT this worthy Gentleman acknowledges, Pag. 231. That a *particular Church, such as England, &c.* cannot subsist, unless the Members of it obey ITS Laws; but then asks, *What Relation has this to the Church of Christ?* I reply,

1<sup>st</sup>, SUPPOSING the Obedience I contend for, was necessary only to the Subsistence of the particular Church of *England*, 'tis, I hope, no Crime in me, as a Member of that Church, to contend for what is confess'd necessary to the Subsistence of it.

2<sup>dly</sup>, WHATEVER Principles are subversive of all *particular visible Churches*, must consequently be subversive of the *Catholick visible Church*; because the *Catholick visible Church*, subsists only

ly in *particular visible Churches*, of which, as of its Members, it is compos'd.

3dly, IN all Things *essential* to a visible Society, *as such*, the *Catholick visible Church* agrees with every *particular visible Church*, and all other visible Societies, of what kind soever; and consequently, whatever is necessary to the Subsistence of a particular Church, *as a visible Society*, is equally necessary to the Subsistence of the *Catholick Church, as a visible Society*: And since an Union in some *social Laws*, and a Submission either *active*, or *passive* to those Laws, are necessary to the Subsistence of every visible Society, *as such*, these are as necessary to the Subsistence of the *Catholick visible Church*, as of the *particular Church of England*.

#### S E C T. V.

##### *Of the Duty of Silence.*

UNDER the Notion of *Passive Obedience*, Mr. S. has thought fit to oppose the Duty of *Silence*, when injoin'd by the Church. Pag. 225. He supposes a Person *suspended*, or *excommunicated* by the Church, not therefore *oblig'd to be silent*, but just the contrary, not to be silent; not quietly to suffer what is in his Opinion contrary to the *Laws of Christ*, to prevail without Opposition. This Question will perhaps appear in better Light, if we consider it as exemplify'd in a Case, which is principally concern'd in the Decision of it. Suppose then an appointed *Teacher* is suspended, or depos'd from that Office,

Office, for Preaching a Doctrine prohibited by the Church. This Author determines, That he is obliged not to be silent, *not quietly to suffer what is in his Opinion contrary to the Laws of Christ, to prevail without Opposition*; but he is to attempt to *make Converts to his Notions, &c. i. e.* he is to *Preach* on, without regarding such *Suspension, or Deposition.*

I must observe here, first, That to be *silent*, when the Church commands us to be so, is not an Instance of *passive* Obedience, but of *active*. What a Person suspended, or depos'd from the Office of a Teacher *passively* submits to, is, to depart from all Claim to any *Authority*, under that Character, in that Society. To be *silent*, is a Command of the Church, consequential to his being remov'd from that Office, and reduc'd to the Station of a private Member of the Society, who, as such, are all by the Rules of the Society injoin'd *Silence*, or restrain'd from *publick Preaching*. The *passive Submission* he owes to this Command, is this; If he cannot *actively* comply with it, and be *silent*, to submit to the *Penalties* of disobeying it. When therefore it is inquir'd, whether a Person so suspended, or depos'd should be *silent*, the Question is not properly, whether he should *passively obey*, but whether he should *actively obey*, or disobey the Command of *Silence*. But because Mr. S. has been pleas'd to object to this Submission, under the Notion of *passive Obedience*, this Question shall be consider'd here. He supposes him oblig'd, as a *faithful Servant of Christ*, not to be *silent, not quietly to suffer, &c.*

BUT whence does this Obligation arise? That he cannot be oblig'd thus to act, or preach, in Virtue of any Office committed to him in that Society, is evident, because all such Commission is recall'd, and consequently the Duties belonging to it cease, and he is under no other *Obligation*, but what lies on every *private Member* of the Society. Is it then the Duty, or is it even the Right of every *private Member* of this Society, publickly to preach every Doctrine he thinks true, and oppose every one he thinks false? All the Obligation any Man can be under, and all the Right any Man can have as a Member of any Society, must be deriv'd from the Laws of it. Now, by the Laws of this Society, he is restrain'd from thus preaching, it cannot therefore be his *Duty*, or his *Right* so to *preach*, as a Member of this Society; on the contrary, every Man, as a Member of any visible Society, is oblig'd, by Contract, to observe the Rules and Orders of it, and not to take upon him any *Office*, but what he is call'd to, according to those Rules. Mr. S. allows, That 'tis the *Institution of Christ*, that there should be *Teachers*, i. e. Persons set apart, and by *regular Methods appointed* to this Office, in the visible Society of the Church. This Office, then, every *private Member* of this Society is oblig'd, *as such*, to leave to those who are *appointed* to it. In the Case suppos'd therefore of a Person suspended, or depos'd from the Office of a *Teacher* in the Church, he can claim no *Right*, nor be under any *Obligation* publickly to *preach* any Doctrine, either from the *Commission* he once had,



had, or from his present Station, as a *private Member* of this Society. If he is under any *Obligation* so to act, or *preach*, it must be deriv'd on him from some Law, *prior* and *superior* to the Laws of the Church. And this, I presume, is what Mr. S. means; That the *Laws of Christ* oblige him as a Christian, publickly to preach against, and oppose every Doctrine, which he thinks false, or contrary to the *Doctrine of Christ*. Suppose then for the present, that he is, or thinks himself oblig'd by the Laws of *Christ* so to act; yet the Church, of which he is a Member, may justly expel him for so acting. Mr. S. has determin'd, That *nothing but Necessity can justify any one meddling with the publick Offices, who is not in the regular Methods appointed to them.* If this Necessity does not appear to the Superiors of the Church, however he may be justify'd in the Sight of *Christ*, to them he must appear a Rebel, both against an Institution of *Christ*, and the Laws and Authority of that Society, and as such to merit Expulsion from it. And to such Expulsion I conceive him bound to submit, in Virtue of that Contract upon which he was admitted into the Society. This is properly the passive Obedience I require from him. He can no longer claim any Office or Privilege, which belong'd to him as a Member or a Teacher of that Society. Whether it be his Duty to be *silent*, or to *preach*, depends on the Obligations he is under, purely *as a Disciple of Christ*, under which Character alone he can now be consider'd.

Pag. 130.

MR.

MR. S. then must permit me to ask, what Laws of *Christ* oblige a Man thus expell'd the Church, to set up for a *publick Preacher* and Opposer of all Doctrines he thinks erroneous, or contrary to the Doctrines of *Christ*? 'Tis acknowledg'd, That the Authority of the Church is no Restraint to him. It concerns itself no farther about him, but looks upon him as one *without*, as a Heathen and a Publican, and pretends no more Authority to punish him, than to punish a Heathen Philosopher, for declaiming against the Christian Religion. All the Authority it exercises, with any Regard to him, is over its own Members, whom it warns to be *aware* of his Doctrine, and *withdraw* themselves from him. But it concerns the Person so expell'd, to consider what *Call* or *Authority* he has, and how it becomes his Duty to take upon him the Character of a *publick Preacher*. All the *Call* or *Authority* he had from Men, is revok'd by the same Power that gave it; and if he pretends an *immediate Call* from God, he must produce his Evidences of it. Without such a *Call* Mr. S. can consider him as no other than a *private Christian*, unless he admits the Notion of an *indelible Character, imprinted by Ordination*. Will he then say, That 'tis the bounden Duty of every *Christian, as such*, publicly to *preach* against all Doctrines which he thinks false? If this be affirm'd, I would ask this worthy Author, whether, if he were in *Spain, Italy, or Turkey*, he would think it his bounden Duty, as a Christian, *publickly* to *preach* to the People of those Countries against the

the Errors prevailing in them. If this be his bounden Duty, no secular Terrors ought to fright him from it : And in Consequence of this Position, every Christian residing in *Turky*, and every Protestant residing in *Spain* or *Italy*, will be guilty of deadly Sin in the Sight of *Christ* for not so *preaching*. If this be not the bounden Duty of a Christian in those Circumstances, I would gladly know how it comes to be the Duty of a Person, expell'd any Church, to *preach* against the supposed Errors of that Church. If his Duty as a Christian, a Disciple of *Christ*, does not require him to *preach* in one Case, why does it require him to *preach* in the other? The Consequences Mr. S. objects, are the same in one Case as in the other. The Man who does not preach in *Italy*, or *Turky*, quietly suffers what, in his Opinion, is contrary to the Law of *Christ*, to prevail without Opposition. How then can that Man appear before his Saviour at the last Day, or how can he look upon himself as a faithful Servant?

Pag. 225.

Now if any one is called immediately by God, or if he is sent by the Authority of the Church to preach to *Heathens*, *Mahometans*, &c. it becomes his Duty so to do; and if he neglects it, he will have Reason to look upon himself as an *unfaithful* Servant to *Christ*, and accountable to him for Breach of Trust in the last Day. But if a Person who has no such special Call or Mission resides in such a Country; nay, supposing him even an ordained Person, I do not conceive him bound to *preach* to the People of such Place, against the Errors prevailing

in it; or that he will be guilty of *Unfaithfulness* in the Sight of *Christ* for neglecting so to do. Upon this Principle, and no other, can those of our Clergy, who are appointed to officiate to our Factories, or Settlements, in *Spain, Turkey, &c.* be excused for not preaching to the People against the Errors of their Country. As private Persons, they, and every other Christian, are bound to improve all proper Opportunities, offer'd by private Conversation, to the Advancement of the Gospel. But this differs widely from *publick Preaching*, forming Societies, and *gathering Congregations*, as the Phrase is. This I presume is not the bounden Duty of every Christian, or even of every Clergyman, in such Circumstances, not specially called and appointed to it. And it will be difficult for Mr. S. to find a Reason why a Person, who according to his Principles has no *Call* or *Authority* to preach, special or general, should be more obliged to *preach* against, or *make Converts* from any supposed Errors of the Place where he lives, than a Christian residing in *Turky* is to preach against *Mahometism*.

Pag. 225. And if he is not bound to preach, 'tis not morally impossible, or sinful, in him to be silent. If *Christ* has not requir'd this from him, he will not charge him with *Unfaithfulness* in omitting it, any more than the King in the Parable, requir'd an Account of *ten Cities* from him, to whom he had committed but *one*.

Pag. 222. MR. S. objects—*Had this been the Principle* (that Men sentenced by the Church are oblig'd to Passive Obedience, or Silence) *when the Apostles*

*Apostles preached, they ought to have submitted Passively to the Sanhedrim; and not to have presumed to have openly taught Jesus, when they had so solemnly forbid them.* To this an easy Answer arises from what has been suggested. For,

1. THE Apostles did passively submit, they were cast out of the Synagogues, and suffer'd all that was inflicted on them without any other Reply, than that they were bound to *obey God rather than Man.* But

2. THEY were not *silent, i. e.* they did not actively obey the Command of the *Sanhedrim.* Neither will I require any Man to comply with such Command of the Church, who has the same Call and Commission from God to preach as they had. If they had had no Call or Command from God to preach the Gospel, they had been obliged by the Law of *Moses,* and as Members of the *Jewish Church,* to have obey'd the *Sanhedrim,* and been *silent.* But when God commanded them to *preach,* and the *Sanhedrim* commanded them to be *silent,* they chose actively to obey God, and passively to submit to the Penalties of disobeying Man. As to the Question of *Passive Obedience* then, if this Example of the Apostles proves any thing, it proves that we ought to be passively obedient; for thus did they, they suffer'd and preach'd. And as to the Law of *Silence,* it does not conclude against *Silence* in any Case in which I require it.



## C O N C L U S I O N.

THE Arguments offer'd by Mr. S. in the remaining Parts of his Performance, are, so far as I can observe, in Substance the same with those which have already fallen under Examination. That Part of my Discourse to which they are apply'd was, as the Nature of it requir'd it should be, little more than a Recapitulation of what I had insisted on before; and therefore it was necessary his Answer should lead him to the same Kind of Repetitions. If he has, as he boasts, refuted the two former Parts, I will give him up the latter. And if I have defended the former, I presume, as to any thing material, the latter will need no Defence. In the Review I have now taken of the former Parts, I have endeavour'd, as I pass'd along, to shew that the several Powers I assert to the Church *as a visible Society*, are consistent with the *Supreme Authority of Christ*, and all the *Liberties* that can belong to Christians as *Members of such a Society*; and therefore I may look upon myself as excused from distinctly resuming the Proof of that Conclusion. However, if this Gentleman lays a particular Stress on any thing unconsider'd by me, and thinks it of Moment to the Decision of the Question before us, I promise him to do it Justice whenever I am required. In the mean  
time

time I shall release the Reader from the long Trouble I have given him, after a few more Remarks.

Mr. S. is much offended with me for introducing the Terms *Magistracy* and *Magistrates* into an *Ecclesiastical Dispute*. The Passage to which he first applies this Reflection is this. Pag. 227.

“ A visible Society cannot be conceiv’d without an Obligation to some social Laws, and a *Magistracy* to *inforce* and execute these Laws. If therefore the Church be a visible Society, the *Magistrates* and Officers of this Society must have Authority, &c.” I assure myself it will be observ’d, that in the former Part of this Passage, I speak of *A visible Society* in general, as inclusive of all Societies that come under that Denomination. If a more general Term than *Magistracy* had occur’d, expressive of that Authority which the Nature of every orderly visible Society requires should be lodg’d with some Persons in it, I should rather have chosen it: But as I know of no such Term, I conceive that a Term applicable to the greater Number of such Societies, may, without Impropriety, be used in speaking of all in general. And in the latter Part of this Passage, a Reader of any Candor will allow me to use the Word *Magistrates*, in a Sense only analogous to what it has in civil Applications; and that I am no more oblig’d, by the Use of this Term, to assert a *Civil Power* to the Officers of the Church, than I am to assert a proper *Military Power* to *Christ*, when I call him my *Captain*. But I agree with Mr. S. that it is of so great Consequence

quence to observe the specific Differences between a Civil and an Ecclesiastical Society, that 'tis better to refuse all such Terms as may possibly mislead Men into a Confusion of the one with the other. And therefore I have so far paid a Regard to his Correction, that I have now wholly avoided these Terms, and, I think, all others that might possibly give any Offence of the like kind. But the Imputation he charges on me of *couching a new Doctrine under these Terms*—*Of claiming to the Church a Right to Force and Coaction; and to the Use of all such Means as are necessary to the Preservation of Civil Societies.* This I utterly disown as mere Falshood and Suggestion; on the contrary I say, in Words as express as could be used,

Page. 227. *Disc. p. 82.* That “The Penalties which they (the Governors of the Church) inflict, are *only* Suspension, or Expulsion from their Communion?”

*Disc. p. 79.* *And again*—“That the Jurisdiction of the Church reaches *no farther*, than to exclude from some, or all the *external* Privileges of that Society.” Both these Passages were under this Author’s Observation, for he cites them both. The Word upon which he appears chiefly to raise this Suggestion is *inforce*. This Word is in the Recital distinguish’d, for the Reader’s Observation, in *Italick*; and to keep the Reference in View, the same Character is preserv’d in the Word *Force*, in the Animadversion. But surely, no one, who is acquainted with the Use of this Word in the *English* Language, will imagine it can bear the Weight here laid upon it. I presume either Mr. S. or I, might properly



ly say, that an Argument used by either of us, *Inforced* a preceding Conclusion: And yet, I hope, neither of us should intend that this Argument should Fine or Imprison our Adversary.

THE other Passage on which this Charge is fix'd is, where I say, " We may perform our *Duty as good Subjects to Christ, and as inter-* Disc. p.  
123.  
 " *nally related to him, and yet submit our*  
 " *selves to those whom he has appointed to*  
 " *rule over us as Members of his visible Church;*  
 " nay, since our Submission to these Rulers is  
 " requir'd by a Command of *Christ*, we are  
 " bound, as his immediate Subjects, to obey  
 " this Command: And if we will approve our  
 " selves as acceptable Subjects of his *invisible*  
 " Church, to be dutiful Members of his *visible*.  
 " In themselves therefore, and according to the  
 " Institution of *Christ*, these two Characters,  
 " and the Duty founded on them, are as recon-  
 " cileable to one another, as it is to obey the  
 " *King as Supreme, and Magistrates as those*  
 " *who are sent by him, &c.* From which Al-  
 lusion he imagines me oblig'd to maintain a *Pa-*  
*rallel* throughout, between the Powers commit-  
 ted to the Superiors of the Church, and the Pow-  
 ers of subordinate Civil Magistrates. *A Paral-* Pag. 238.  
*lel*, he says, *which does not hold good scarce in*  
*any one Particular.* Every Man who reads the  
 Place referr'd to, will perceive that no farther  
 Compariſon is there intended than might shew,  
 that our Obedience to a *Supreme* Power may very  
 well consist with Obedience to a *subordinate*  
 Power appointed by that *Supreme*: And in  
 what Cases Obedience to one becomes incon-

sistent with Obedience to the other. So far as I compare them, or argue from them, the Cases are *parallel*, and neither my Comparison, nor my Argument, are affected by their differing in other Respects. The special Powers belonging to Civil Magistrates, and those belonging to the Superiors of the Church, are not here compar'd by me, nor had I any Occasion to compare them. But I wonder Mr. S. should think it an Absurdity, to suppose that a subordinate Power of Legislation may be committed to certain Officers in any Society, consistently with the sole Power of Legislation in the Prince. The most absolute Monarchy that ever was in the World, has not been without such subordinate Legislators. And so long as such Persons act within the assigned Limits of their Power, their Laws are to be submitted to as an Instance of Obedience to the Prince. Every Corporation in this Nation (and such there have always been in the most *absolute Monarchies*) is a known Example of such subordinate Power. They have each Authority to enact, within their District, some social Laws to which their Members are oblig'd as Terms of Union with that Society, provided they are not contrary to the Laws of the Realm. This Allusion Mr. S. is pleas'd to think *softens Matters a little*, and might hold good, if it could be *prov'd, that the Governors of the Church are vested by their Charter to make such By-Laws, and can turn out of the Church such as will not obey them*. Now, I hope, this has been prov'd as a necessary Consequence from the Concession that the Church is  
*a visible*

a *visible Society* instituted by *Christ*. But the Misfortune is, that I can have no Advantage from this Allusion, because 'tis not mine, but *one much more artful and consistent than mine.* Ibid. Now, about five Pages before the Place under this Author's Reflection, the Reader will be a little surpriz'd to find these Words: " As when *Disc. p.*  
 " the Magistrate of a subordinate Corporation, *116.*  
 " in any Civil State, executes any By-Law of  
 " that Corporation on those who transgress it,  
 " the Authority to make such By-Laws, and to  
 " inflict such certain Penalties on those who of-  
 " fend against them, is deriv'd from the Prince, or  
 " Supreme Power in that State, &c. One would imagine from this Instance, that this ingenious Person had taken upon him to answer a Book which he had never read; That only some Excerpts had been put into his Hands—but I leave the Reader to make his own Conclusions from it.

UPON the Whole, *Jesus Christ* having communicated to the World, a System of divine Laws, with Regard both to Faith and Practice, as the most effectual Way to continue the Tradition of these Laws, and preserve the Obedience of Men to them, ordain'd, That his Disciples should be united in a visible Society, formed upon these Laws as its Foundation. Without such a Provision, 'tis scarce probable, that the Scriptures should have been preserv'd down to us, or that the Profession of Christianity should have continued even for a Century. This visible Society must, as I have observ'd, agree with all other visible Societies, in those general Properties, which are essential to a visible Society,

ciety, as such, *viz.* in a mutual Compact, or Obligation by some social Laws to perform the same visible Actions, as Terms of Union with this Society; a visible Authority to inflict some visible Penalty on those who refuse to obey these Laws; an Obligation on the Members to observe these Laws, and, according to their Station, either to exercise or submit to this Authority. These are Properties inseparable from the Idea of a visible orderly Society; and consequently, must be acknowledg'd in the Church, by all who confess it to be such a Society.

UNDER what particular Form of Polity this Society should be constituted, is an Inquiry very distinct from the former, concerning the general Properties of the Church, as a visible Society. If *Christ*, or his Apostles appointed any certain Form of Polity, or Subordination of the Members in this Society, this Polity indeed becomes necessary to the Church; but not merely as a visible Society, but as that special visible Society which *Christ* instituted. Whoever attends to this Distinction, will perceive how weak a Remark Mr. S. has made, in the *gross evident Self-contradiction* with which he charges me toward the latter End of his Performance.

Page 309.

Disc p.  
163.

I had said, “ The general Absurdity with  
 “ which I charge that levelling Scheme of Re-  
 “ ligion, which denies the Officers of the Church  
 “ those ministerial Powers which I ascribe to  
 “ them is, That upon these Principles, 'tis im-  
 “ possible the Church of *Christ* can subsist, as  
 “ a visible Society.” By ministerial Powers, I  
 meant subordinate, as distinguish'd from the su-  
 preme

preme Power of *Christ*. In this Sense I had used this Word before, and in no other, so far as I can recollect, thro' my whole Discourse. That the Powers, on the Denial of which I charge this Consequence, are those which belong to a visible Society, *as such*, must appear to any one who reads the Words following those cited to the Bottom of the Page ; and upon the Denial of these Powers, I continue to think the Consequence unavoidable, That the Church cannot subsist as a visible Society. In a Page or two following, in Proof that 'tis an Absurdity to say, the Church is not a visible Society, I observe, That all Sects and Denominations of Christians, amidst all their various Differences about the Form of Polity instituted or requir'd in the Church, have yet agreed in this, That they have appear'd, and combin'd themselves together under some Form or other of a visible Society. That even the Quakers are manifestly form'd into a visible Society, tho' of *their own devising*, and *without any Affinity to the Church instituted by Christ*. This then is the gross evident Self-contradiction I unhappily fell into, that I suppose the Church cannot subsist as a visible Society, without those Powers and Properties, which are essential to a visible Society, *as such* ; and yet, at the same time confess, that Men may depart from that Form of Polity instituted by *Christ* and his Apostles, and yet be a visible Society : That they may be a visible Society, though they be not that visible Society which *Christ* instituted.

Pag. 309. MR. S. reproves me for abusing the Scheme which I oppose, by calling it a *levelling Scheme*; but I leave it to the Reader, whether a Scheme, which makes all Christians equal, &c. which is the Scheme I oppose, be not a levelling Scheme.

BUT he assures us, he knows no body that denies the Church *to be a visible Society*; but if he knows any body who assigns such a Scheme of this Church, as no visible Society ever did, or ever can subsist upon; the best Advice he can give them is, either to depart from that Scheme, or retract that Concession; for these can never be reconcil'd to one another.

IF I may presume to return the Favour this Gentleman has done me, in directing my Studies, I would persuade him to read the excellent Mr. *Hooker*, and the first Part of Bishop *Stillingfleet's Irenicum*, in whom he will see the Powers I claim to the Church, as a visible Society, deduc'd from Principles of natural Reason, and prov'd necessary to the Church as a visible Society. Or let him sit calmly down, and consider what sort of a Thing a visible Society is, and form some consistent Idea of it, and then try how he can reconcile his Image of a Church to it. But when he has done this, he will have gone but half Way in the Inquiry he is concern'd to make: He may perhaps devise something of a visible Society, but then, before this can be admitted to be the Society instituted by *Christ*, it must be prov'd agreeable to the original Pattern in such positive Institutions as were prescrib'd to the Church by *Christ* and his Apostles. The settling of this Point depends,

as I have observ'd, on a Question of Fact, the Decision of which, must be taken from History: The History of the Scriptures in the first Place, and in Supplement to them from the Writers of the primitive Church, some of which were cotemporary with the Apostles, and others so little remov'd in Time from them, that they cannot be imagin'd ignorant of their Practice or Institutions. As to the Questions that particularly fall under this Inquiry of Fact, tho' the Reader will perceive my Sentiments upon them, yet I desire it may be observ'd, That these are only incidental to the Conclusion I am principally concern'd for, *viz.* That the Powers claimed to the Church, as a visible Society, are consistent with the Supremacy of *Christ*, and the Liberties of Christians. These Powers are much the same, whether they are committed to many or few Hands, or by whatever Methods they are convey'd to the Persons with whom they are lodg'd. And since 'tis acknowledg'd, that the Church is a visible Society; if I have prov'd that the Powers I claim to it as a visible Society, are no other than the Nature of every visible Society as such requires, the Consequence is obvious, That they must be consistent with all Liberties, that can belong to any one as a Member of such a Society: And if this Society was instituted by *Christ*, he must have convey'd to it all these Powers, because otherwise he would not have instituted a visible Society. And hence it will also follow, That these Powers are consistent with his own reserv'd Supremacy, and  
are

are to be submitted to, so far as they are necessary to a visible Society, in Obedience to his Institution.

THE Office of *Teachers*, indeed, (and the same must be said of the Office of *Ministring* in the publick Ordinances of Religion,) does not belong to the Church purely as a visible Society; and therefore the Authority requisite to those Offices, cannot be concluded from the Nature of a visible Society, as such. But the special Nature of the Church, as an orderly religious Society requiring, and the Institution of *Christ* ordaining, that there should be appointed *Teachers* in it; the Persons so appointed, must be acknowledg'd to have a Claim or Right to this Office, exclusive of others not so appointed. This is properly their Authority to exercise this Office: Their Authority in the Exercise of it, is of a different Consideration, and regards the Submission of Assent to be paid to their Judgment, by those whom they are appointed to teach. This Authority I have extended only to such Cases, in which the Person taught cannot judge for himself, from the Reason of the Thing, but must, in the Event, be determin'd by some Man's Judgment or other; and consequently by so submitting he departs from no Right or Liberty of his own private Judgment, that can belong to him as a Man or a Christian.

THERE is no Question, but that all Authority committed to Men, may be abus'd, both by Excess, and Defect in the Exercise of it; and by such Abuses become injurious, both to the  
 Liberties



Liberties of the Subject, and to the Authority of that supreme, from whom it is deriv'd. But all Liberties intrusted with Men, may also be abus'd; and this Objection, as I have observ'd, is altogether as conclusive against one, as against the other.

THE Limitations under which I assert all the Powers I claim to the Church, I assure myself leave them free from any such Objection. Mr. S. has most ingeniously drawn out these Powers, and their Limitations, and rang'd them against one another, as two formidable Armies, not to be reconcil'd. Whenever he is next inclin'd to divert himself this Way, if he is pleas'd to take *Lilly's Grammar*, and dispose the Rules in one Column, and the Exceptions in another, he may furnish out a very pretty Entertainment of this Kind for his Reader, and may possibly approve himself as great a Master of Grammar, as he is of Ecclesiastical Polity.

Pag. 243.  
& seq.

I have only to observe farther, That the Scheme I have taken upon me to defend, is not mine, as Mr. S. is pleas'd to call it, but what I am verily persuaded is the same, upon which the Christian Church was originally constituted by *Christ* and his Apostles; and upon which it has subsisted to this Day. This primitive Scheme, I have endeavour'd faithfully to transcribe, and according to my Abilities, to vindicate from such Principles, which, so far as I can judge of them, appear manifestly destructive of it. The Glory of being Authors of new Schemes, for a Christian Church, I am contented to leave to those,  
who

( 432 )

who are vain enough to think they can mend a Building, of which Divine Wisdom was the Architect, erected upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, *Jesus Christ* himself being the chief Corner Stone.

*F I N I S.*





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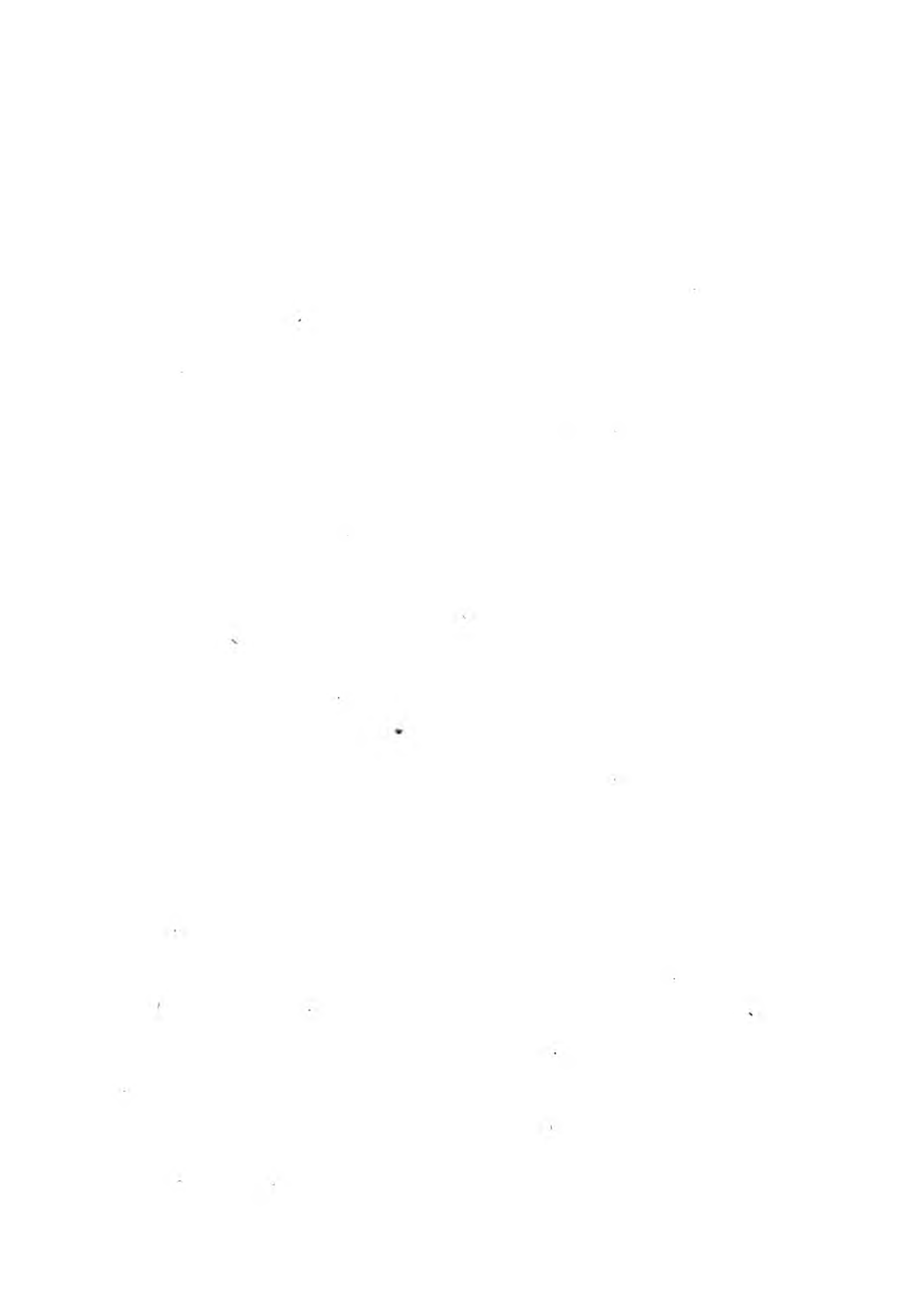
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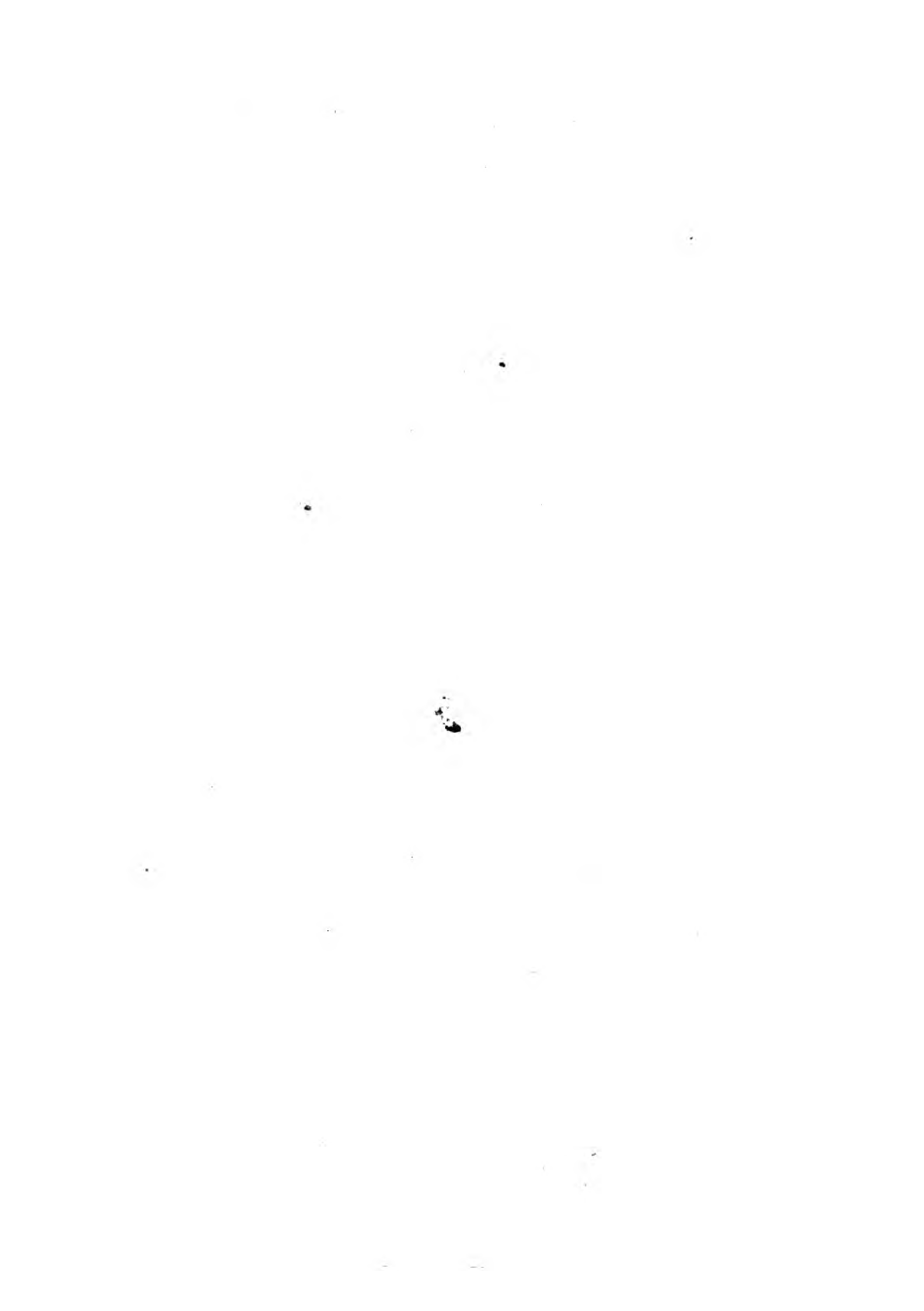
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